

**Cracow
University
of Economics**

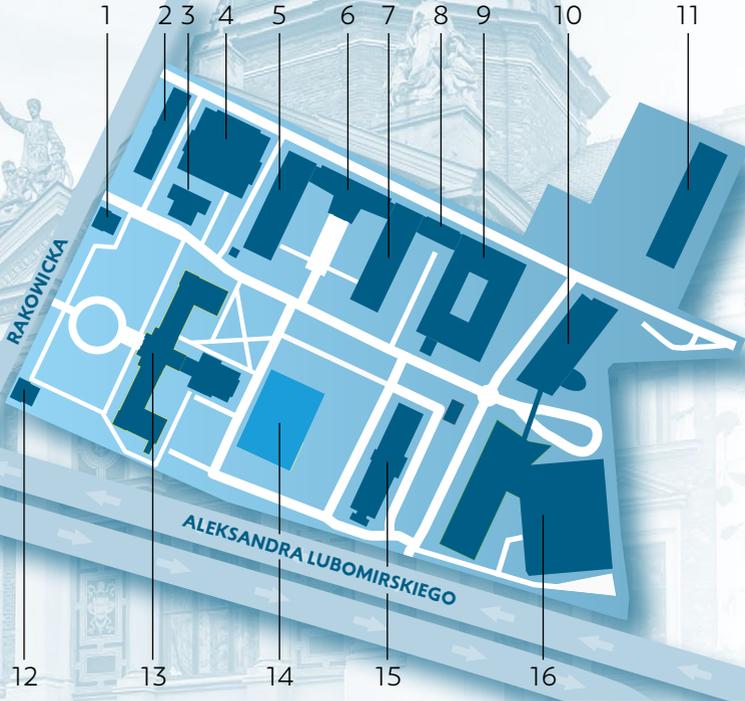
Practical Guide





CRACOW
UNIVERSITY
OF ECONOMICS

Campus map



Virtual tour

QR1



- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Watchman's House | 9. Main Library |
| 2. Building G | 10. Finance Building F |
| 3. Priest's House | 11. Building H |
| 4. Building D | 12. Rakowicka 16 |
| 5. Building A | 13. Main Building |
| 6. Building C | 14. CUE Forum |
| 7. Building B | 15. Ustronie Building |
| 8. Building E | 16. Sports and Teaching Building S |



CRACOW
UNIVERSITY
OF ECONOMICS

Cracow University of Economics

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01

About the University – in a nutshell.



Cracow University of Economics (CUE) is a modern university with traditions dating back to 1925. Conducting numerous research projects, and currently educating about 12 thousand students, the University is one of the largest economic science centres in Poland. Our students advance their knowledge in three colleges: Economics, Finance and Law, Economy and Public Administration, and Management and Quality Sciences. All colleges are accredited with the Polish Accreditation Committee (*Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna*). The Polish Accreditation Committee is an independent institution, acting to guarantee and enhance the quality of education.

For nearly a hundred years without interruption, the University faithfully carries out the mission signposted by its founders: *Rerum cognoscere causas et valorem* („Getting to know the causes and values of things”), while educating the hearts and minds of successive generations of

outstanding specialists. Currently, the CUE offers studies in 30 fields of study in Polish and in English, as well as post-graduate studies and prestigious MBA studies with EPAS accreditation.

The Cracow University of Economics campus is located in the centre of Kraków in the vicinity of the main railway station and bus station. Kraków Old Town is located nearby, within 15 minutes walking distance.

The University owns 15 buildings where lectures and classes take place, also accommodating other facilities: _____

- 👉 Language Centre (QR2)
- 👉 University Library (QR3)
- 👉 Sports facilities: CUE owns a sports complex with a sports hall, fitness rooms, a gym, an outdoor court, a swimming pool, and a sauna.
- 👉 Student Career Centre (QR4)
- 👉 University clinic (QR5)
- 👉 Canteens and cafés

The CUE owns two student dormitories: „Merkury” (QR6) and „Fafik” (QR7), both located outside the university campus.

QR2



QR3



QR4



QR5



QR6



QR7



02

Student services and facilities.



• International Programmes Office

International Programmes Office aims at strengthening and expanding international links between Cracow University of Economics and other academic, professional, and educational institutions from all over the world. IPO applies for EU grants and develops international educational and research cooperation programmes.

• Welcome Centre

The Welcome Centre is a multilingual unit at Cracow University of Economics (CUE), which delivers professional service and help to foreign students, especially to the new-enrolled ones and to candidates, but also to visitors and doctoral students.

• Office for Students with Disabilities (BON)

In cooperation with the University authorities and the academic community, BON makes every effort to ensure that all students with disabilities have equal access to education at CUE. The employees of BON help students find a sign language interpreter, provide psychological consultations (also in English and Russian), or support them in applying for a disability allowance.

• Student Career Centre UEK

SCC's mission is to help students identify their own opportunities on the labour market, and then support them in planning their professional development so that their entry into the labour market is successful.

A young man and woman are looking at a book together outdoors. The man is on the right, wearing a green t-shirt, and the woman is on the left, with long dark hair. They are both smiling and looking down at the book. The book has a dark cover with gold lettering that reads 'DEPARTAMENT DE ECONOMIA I FINANCES' and '1925-2010'.

- **Inter-University**
- **Psychological Assistance**
- **Centre (IUPAC)**

The IUPAC office provides support for students with disabilities, offers free psychological consultations and helps with their inclusion in the academic environment.

- **CUE Language Centre**

The CUE Language Centre is an integral part of the Cracow University of Economics. It offers a variety of language courses, including English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, as well as Polish as a foreign language. It also organises linguistic events and helps researchers prepare their papers.

03

First days at the university – organizational matters.



Before you start your classes at the University, you will be invited to induction meetings in English, where you will learn everything you need to successfully start your academic education. You will also be able to ask questions and dispel your doubts about the various formalities that need to be completed at the beginning of your studies or exchange period. You will also find out which university units you should turn to in order to address specific matters.

At the beginning of your academic adventure, you will receive your student ID – an identity document confirming your student status and entitling you to many discounts. Your ID card also features a unique identification number, which you will use to log into university administrative systems, to register for

your courses, and to generate various types of applications.

If you have been admitted to a full-time study programme, most of the administrative matters related to the course of your studies will be dealt with in the Dean's Office, including online via the USOS system (University Study Service System). At the **Dean's Office** you will collect your student ID and various types of certificates. Each Dean's Office provides student services in English, as does the USOS system, in which you will also find English-language versions of university regulations and procedures as well as document templates with explanations in English.

Students admitted to part-time studies under the exchange program deal with all matters related to their exchange period at the **International Programmes Office**. That includes the collection of their student IDs and

certificates. All employees of the International Programmes Office speak English, and many of them also speak another language, including Russian, Ukrainian, German, French, and Spanish.

Each student at the Cracow University of Economics is provided with a University Student Account (USA). After the enrolment procedure at the University, each student receives an email with login data. Your USA account allows you to login to the following applications:

- 👉 application for managing your USA account
- 👉 student email domain
- 👉 E-Uczelnia platform
- 👉 USOSWeb
- 👉 Wi-Fi EDUROAM network.

Physical Education

With sanitary regime: automatically created groups, walking excursions + classes on Moodle

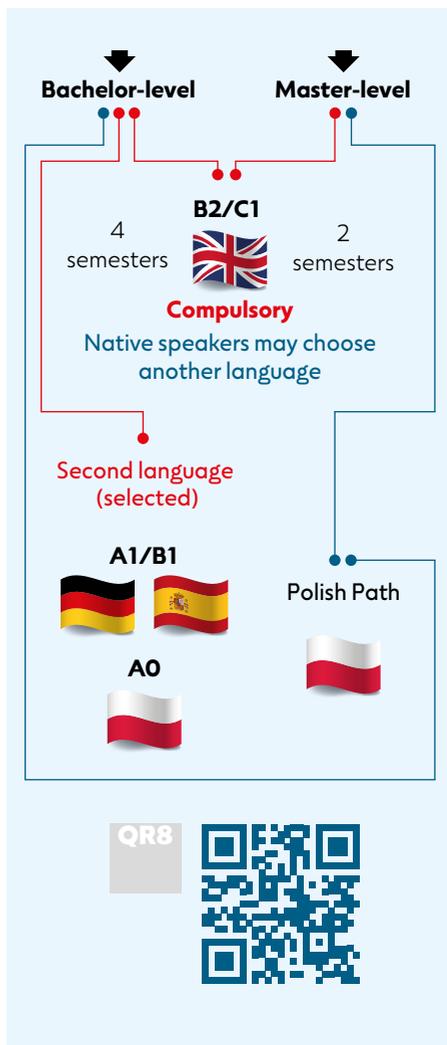
Without sanitary regime: students choose particular sport disciplines through the USOS, according to the schedule provided by the Sport Centre.

Foreign language courses

Bachelor-level students: 2 languages, 4 semesters each; English (B2/C1) – compulsory (native speakers may choose another language); second language (German or Spanish, A1 or B1; Polish for Foreigners – A0) – selected in the USOS.

Master-level students: only English (native speakers may choose another language) – by default

In addition to the compulsory language classes, you can also sign up for a Polish language course for foreigners, for example the „Polish Path” (👉 QR8).



04

Accommodation during your studies.



Cracow University of Economics offers accommodation to international students in its own dormitories. There are two types of dorm rooms available: double or triple rooms with shared bathroom (cost around 100-150 euro per month) and single rooms with a private bathroom and a kitchenette (cost around 250 euro per month).

Students who prefer private accommodation should be prepared to pay around 200 euro per month or more, depending on the number of flatmates and on the flat standard and location.

Kraków is a student-friendly city, also in terms of accommodation. Finding a room or a flat for rent does not pose a problem. There are numerous real estate agencies as well as many accommodation offers available from private individuals.



Student dormitory „Fafik”



05

Student organizations and research clubs.



At the Cracow University of Economics, you can become an active member of the academic community by joining one or more student organizations and thus creatively partake in many interesting projects and events. It is also an opportunity to make new friends and build your professional career through the experience gained while working for the university community. Activity in research clubs allows you to expand your knowledge of your study major and other areas of interest related to the university's profile. Plus, students who apply for a foreign scholarship receive valuable recruitment points for active membership in student organizations and research clubs.

- **Independent Students' Association of the Cracow University of Economics (NZS UEK)**

Through the implementation of projects, NZS UEK supports the cultural, scientific and social development of students

and the integration of the academic community at the Cracow University of Economics. Through its activities, the organization seeks to foster the personal and professional development of its members, making them into leaders, and enabling them to gain experience valued by entrepreneurs on the labour market.

The main sections of the NZS activity are:

- ☞ Connecting and integrating the student community through the organization of various events, thus enabling the development of pro-social attitudes.
- ☞ Supporting culture – facilitating students' access to cultural assets by organizing concerts, film screenings, or meetings with famous figures from the world of business and culture.
- ☞ Organizing university-wide charity events, in which you can take part as coordinators on behalf of the NZS, as volunteers

in cooperation with the NZS, or simply as supporters.

- ☞ Supporting personal development and fostering leaders – supplementing qualifications and building up students' skills, as well as promoting active participation in academic life.

• **CUE Association of Students with Disabilities**

The Cracow University of Economics Association of Students with Disabilities was established on January 7, 2004 on the initiative of students with disabilities. The main task of the Association is to help all students with disabilities in solving their individual, everyday problems, as well as to provide them with any help they may need in their educational process. As persons who have experienced first-hand the difficulties faced by people with disabilities, the members of the Association want to contribute to the continuous improvement of the situation of disabled students studying at CUE and encourage them to actively participate in the life of the academic community.

• **CUE's „Dominanta” Choir**

For vocally gifted students, membership in the university choir will be an excellent opportunity to apply and practice their skills. „Dominanta” is a mixed choir of about 45-50 people. The ensemble consists mostly of students and graduates

Main Building



of the Cracow University of Economics. It represents the university during many concerts, events, festivals, and competitions, both in Poland and abroad.

During its 45 years of activity, the choir has performed in such countries as: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, and Turkey.

The choir's repertoire includes Polish and international works, from the Renaissance to contemporary music, both classical and popular. In addition to a cappella pieces, „Dominanta” performs grand choral forms with the accompaniment of an orchestra or a piano.

You can also choose to join one of the following organizations:

☰ CUE Student Parliament

CUE Student Parliament (PS UEK) is the student self-government body whose task is to represent the interests of all students before the University Authorities. They seek to animate student life

by supporting the scientific, cultural and sports undertakings. PS UEK members sit on the University Senate, on Institute and Senate committees and groups, as well as on Institute Council meetings. They also support the work of all student organizations, co-decide on the regulations and distribution of financial assistance funds among individual causes, and are also members of the scholarship committee. They attend to securing students' basic rights, increasing the quality of education, and making our studies more attractive. They also assign additional points in the recruitment for study placements abroad.

This is a perfect place for students who want to have a real impact on the life of the university and on the quality of their own and their colleagues' study experience. Active membership in the Student Parliament can make a significant contribution to your personal and professional development path.

☰ CUE Erasmus Student Network

The CUE Erasmus Student Network (ESN UEK) section was founded in 2003 as a local section, part of the international organization ESN AISBL. It is one of the largest organizations – at the University of Economics, and in Kraków in general. ESN UEK is made up of extraordinary young people who work every day to make all foreign students feel at home. It has 85 active members who form various Working Groups, such as PR, Social, Travel, Sport, and Party group. The Tour

de Cracow group is in charge of organising the program for all students who wish to spend a wonderful weekend in Kraków. The ESN UEK blog allows Erasmus students to share their stories with other students and learn from each other's experiences.

❖ CUE Academic Sports Association

When studying at CUE, you also have a chance to develop your sports skills. In addition to the compulsory physical education classes included in your curriculum, you can join the Academic Sports Association of the CUE. It has been operating efficiently on the University campus for more than 50 years now. It is part of the nationwide AZS organization and reports to the AZS Regional Organization in Kraków, and is the fifth largest club in Małopolska. In recent years, the Club has never left the podium in the national classification in its category – universities of Social Sciences and Life Sciences.

You can choose from among the following sports disciplines:

- 🏸 Badminton
- 🚣 Rowing machine
- 🏈 Futsal
- 🏀 Basketball
- 🏐 Handball
- ⚽ Football
- 🏐 Volleyball
- 🏊 Swimming
- 🏓 Table Tennis
- 🎾 Tennis
- 🏋️ Powerlifting.



- **Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society, Ring No. 7 affiliated with the CUE**

Students who enjoy travelling and hiking are welcome to join Ring No. 7 of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society. The Society offers the opportunity to meet and get to know your travelling companions in the charming corners of Poland, while participating in organized trips and visiting not only those most popular, but also less frequented routes. This is a great chance to expand your geographical and cultural knowledge of the country you have chosen as your place of study.

- **AIESEC Kraków**

AIESEC is the world's largest independent youth-led organization, operating in 122 countries at local, national, and global level. It has been active in Poland for over 45 years, fostering the development of leadership qualities in young people through practical experience in international exchanges, and through projects supporting their implementation. AIESEC operates in the 15 largest academic centres in Poland, where, through initiatives implemented in teams, young leaders emerge and make an impact on their local communities in a responsible manner.



Main Building

AIESEC Kraków, based on the CUE campus, is one of the largest AIESEC branches in Poland. Currently, the organization counts nearly 100 members – young people who want to improve their skills, take advantage of new opportunities, and support the development of others.

In the implementation of its projects, AIESEC Kraków collaborates with many educational institutions, organizations, enterprises and start-ups.

The list of student organizations with links to their websites: [🔗 QR9](#).

QR9

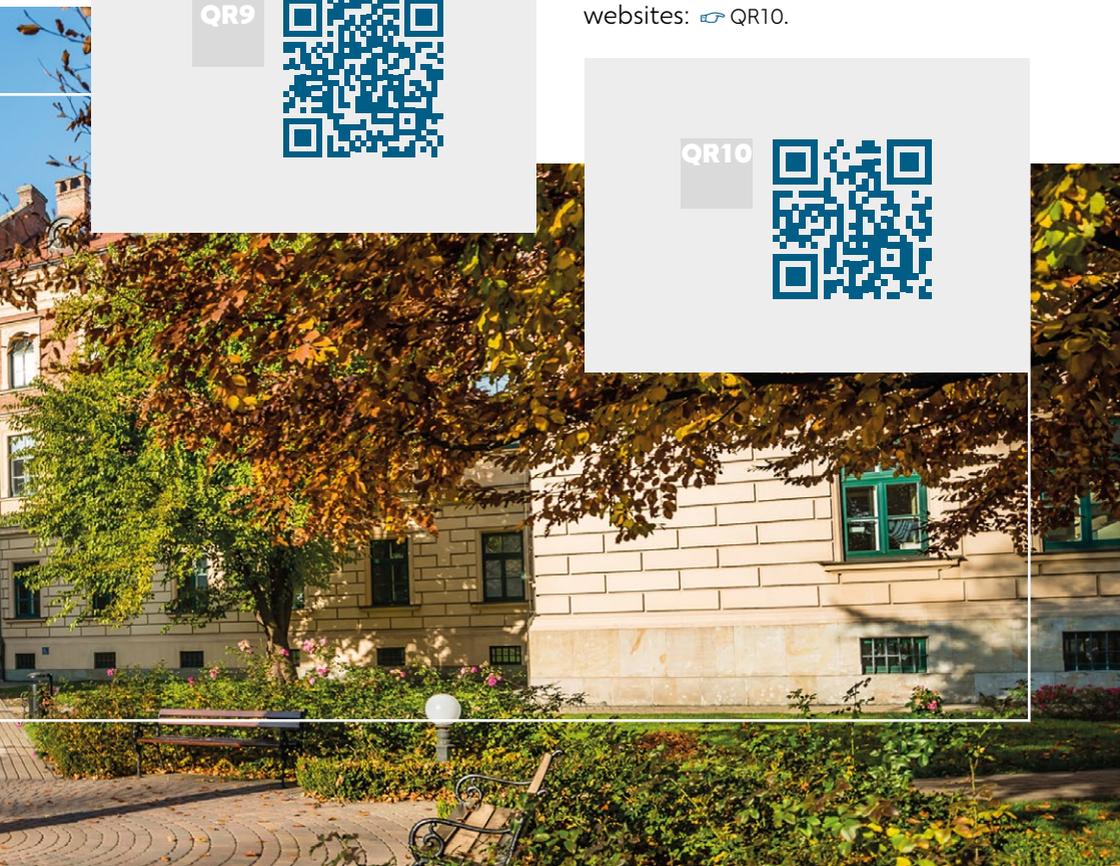


⋮ Research clubs

The needs of students who want to focus on expanding their knowledge and skills in the field of their study major are met by a broad selection of research clubs. As active members of these clubs, you can take part in many interesting scientific conferences in Poland and abroad. If you are thinking of a career in the academia, you can begin by writing your first research publications under the supervision of your professors, and start building a network of contacts in research centres around the world through mobility and participation in seminars.

The list of research clubs with links to their websites: [🔗 QR10](#).

QR10



06

Practical information – student life.



When commencing your studies, you will receive an identity document confirming your student status – this is your student ID. Just before the start of the academic year, you will receive information when and where you can collect your ID card. Please remember to have a valid identity document when collecting it – your personal ID or passport. Your student ID entitles you to discounts on public transport, as well as reduced admission to many cultural institutions and ticketed events. You must have a valid student ID on your person and produce it in order

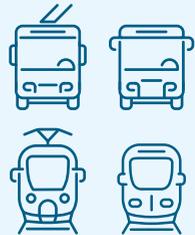
to take advantage of these discounts. Its validity is extended every semester in the relevant Dean's Office. Please remember – no document other than the ID card entitles you to a discount.

• Travelling by rail and bus • around Poland

There are institutional discounts on tickets at state-owned carriers for holders of a valid student ID from a Polish university (up to 26 years of age). The discounts are approximately 50% of the ticket price.



the discount of
50%



Reduced-price tickets for students: monthly semester single-use

Current ticket prices and information on the amount of discounts can be found on the Kraków MPK (municipal transportation) website ([🔗 QR11](#)).

In other Polish cities you can also count on student discounts in public transport. Remember, however, that in other cities ticket prices may differ from those you are used to in Kraków.

• Museums, cinemas, theatres, • and other cultural institutions

You can expect reduced admission prices to various types of museums, cinemas, theatres and other cultural institutions. Usually the discount will not be as high as 50%, but nevertheless you will pay much less than the full ticket price. The same is true for ticketed events such as concerts or sports events. Look for information on student discounts on the websites of institutions or event organizers. As with travel, you need to have your valid student ID card with you, and show it when

purchasing your ticket, and then again you will need to produce it on the door, along with your ticket. Your student ID is the only basis for issuing a discounted ticket and for admission to the event with such a ticket.

Good news: in Polish cinemas, films are usually shown in their original language with Polish subtitles.

• Sport and Recreation

Very often, discounts for students are also offered in gyms, fitness clubs, swimming pools and other places that promote physical culture. Information about current discounts can be found on the websites of the specific places you are planning to visit.

• Other discounts

It is also worth asking about student discounts in places like restaurants, lunch bars, pubs, and music clubs. Many establishments of this kind apply such discounts, especially those located in the vicinity of Kraków's universities, and those whose profile is geared towards student clientele.

Also check the possibilities of cheaper subscription to streaming services, and discounts on the purchase of computer equipment (from some producers) for members of the academic community. Software producers are offering reduced prices as well.

QR11



Sports Building S

You may also profit from special offers for students wishing to open a bank account. Typically, student accounts mean lower banking fees, or lower charges for the issue of cards.

Academic bookstores very often offer attractive student discounts on the purchase of textbooks or teaching aids. You can also ask in large chain bookstores whether they are offering discounts for students.

Based on your university student ID, you can apply for an ISIC or EURO26 card. These are international cards that provide you with insurance coverage and entitle you to discounts at many commercial and service points (hotels, shops, restaurants, sports facilities) around the world, and will allow you to pay less for museum entrance tickets or transportation. Prices upon presentation of an ISIC or a EURO26 card are usually 30-40% lower.

An important advantage of these cards is that they will also be useful when traveling abroad, because in addition to insurance coverage, they also give you access to a variety of discounts – on public transport, in museums, cinemas, restaurants and shops across borders. Remember that your Polish student IDs may not be honoured abroad – therefore, if you have a traveller's streak, all the more reason to consider getting an international student card.



07

Health insurance and safety issues.



Health insurance is **mandatory** for all students for the entire duration of their stay in Poland. Health insurance regulations for **EU citizens** and for **non-EU citizens** are different. You will find out more about this below.

EU CITIZENS

In Poland EU citizens are allowed to use their own health insurance from their country of origin, provided that they are in possession of the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Using the services

of the Polish healthcare system requires presenting the EHIC card ([QR12](#)).

Non-EU CITIZENS

Non-EU citizens are advised to conclude an insurance agreement with the Polish National Health Fund and pay a monthly contribution to the above-mentioned institution ([QR13](#)).

Students with a **Pole's Card** or a certificate of **Polish origin** issued by the Polish Consulate do not have to pay health insurance contributions on their own. In such cases, the obligation to provide health insurance rests with the University ([QR14](#)).

QR12



QR13



QR14





Sports and Teaching Building S

• In the event of accidents • and emergencies.

Services in a hospital emergency department (SOR) are provided in an emergency mode to patients in urgent cases. These also include services, which require immediate diagnostics and treatment based on the patient's health condition.

The list of all hospital emergency departments in the Małopolska region (including the city of Kraków) can be found on the official website of the National Health Fund ([QR15](#)).

• Night-time and holiday • health care.

Night-time and holiday health care are benefits in the scope of primary health care provided from Monday to Friday from 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. the next day, and 24 hours a day on public holidays.

In the event of a sudden illness or a sudden deterioration of health, the patient may seek help at any night-time and holiday health care unit, regardless of where they live.

You can receive the help of a doctor and a nurse at night, on days off, and on public holidays in the event of:

- ☞ sudden illness
- ☞ sudden deterioration of health, when there are no symptoms suggesting a direct threat to life or significant damage to health,

and the applied home remedies or over-the-counter medications have not brought the expected improvement

- ☞ when there is case for concern that waiting for a clinic to open could have a significant negative impact on health.

The list of all night-time and holiday health care units in the Małopolska region (including Kraków city) can be found on the official website of the National Health Fund ([QR16](#)).

QR15



QR16



QR17





- **After dialling the emergency number, when the dispatcher picks up, calmly and clearly say:**

What happened?

Are there victims/persons affected – if so, describe their condition (are they conscious, are they breathing)?

The place of the event (address, name of the facility/building, characteristic features of the place).

Your name and surname, telephone number from which you are calling.

Should you need any help from representatives of the administration of your country, here you can find the list of foreign diplomatic missions in Krakow ([QR17](#)).



08

Basic information about Poland.



Poland is a member state of the European Union and belongs to the Schengen Area.

The currency in Poland is the złoty (PLN): 1 złoty = 100 groszy. In most shops, restaurants, and service points, you can pay by card. This is also true for most ticket machines and public transport vehicles.

Polish is the official language. Many Poles also speak a foreign language, often English.

Poland has very diverse geography: the country has access to the Baltic Sea, it abounds in lakes (for example in the Masurian Lake District), and there are mountain ranges in the south. In

individual regions, you can also come across differences in dialect (for example in the Tatra region or in Upper Silesia), as well as a variety of local cuisines.

In Poland, the dominant religion is Catholicism. Below you will find a list of religious and national holidays that are statutory days off work and study. During these days you will not have any classes and you won't be able to organise any errands on the campus or in government offices. Shops and service points will also be closed. Most shops, offices, and service points are also closed on Sundays.

☸ Religious holidays.

- ☞ Moveable feasts – Easter (March or April) and Corpus Christi (June)
- ☞ August 15 – Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- ☞ November 1 – All Saints' (Day of the Dead)
- ☞ December 25 and 26 – Christmas



State holidays.

- 🗓 January 1 – New Year
- 🗓 May 1 – Labour Day
- 🗓 May 3 – national holiday, anniversary of the Constitution of May 3, 1791
- 🗓 November 11 – national holiday, anniversary of regaining independence in 1918

Good to know.

If you speak Polish, be careful about overusing the pronoun „ty” (familiar „you”) and using your interlocutor’s given name. In Poland, it is customary to refer to unfamiliar or elderly people by „Pan/ Pani” (Mr/Mrs). In some cases, if you don’t follow that rule, you may even be told that you are being rude. The pronoun „ty” and using someone’s first name will be appropriate in contacts with your peers, and also with those people older than you who expressly suggested switching to that form of communication, and introduced themselves to you using their first name.

This is related to the fact that hierarchical approach is still dominant in Polish society, and communication between people who are not good friends is quite formalized. Remember about this also in class, during the discussion. You have the right to disagree with your lecturers; however, you should communicate any differences of opinion or doubts in a polite and respectful manner.

Poles also pay attention to the way of dress that is appropriate to the occasion. Clothes that are too revealing may be considered inappropriate for university context.

Punctuality is important to Poles. Remember that this applies both to your class attendance at the university, official matters and meetings, and to social contacts.



⋮ **Legal regulations on stimulants.**

In Poland, it is forbidden to drink alcohol in public places (for example in the street, or in a park). For non-compliance with this prohibition, you may be fined approximately PLN 100.

Possession of drugs (even small amounts for personal use) is punishable by imprisonment.

Smoking is forbidden in places such as railway stations, bus stops, and parks. There is a risk of high fines for breaking this ban – even up to PLN 500.

If you buy alcohol or cigarettes in a store, you may be asked to show your ID, and if you are under 18, also if you do not have an ID document or refuse to show it – such products will not be sold to you.



09

Basic phrases in Polish.



English expression	Polish equivalent	How to pronounce?
Good morning	Dzień dobry	[jeh̃n dohbrih]
Good evening	Dobry wieczór	[dohbrih vyeħ choor]
Good bye	Do widzenia	[do vee zen yah]
Good night	Dobranoc	[dobrah noħts]
Hi	Cześć	[cheħ sh ch]
Please/Here you are	Proszę	[prosheħ]
Thank you	Dziękuję	[jyeh̃n koo yeh]
Excuse me/I'm sorry	Przepraszam	[psheħ prah shahm]
Yes	Tak	[tahk]
No	Nie	[nyeh]

English expression	Polish equivalent	How to pronounce?
I don't know	Nie wiem	[nyeh vhyem]
What...?	Co...?	[tso]
Where is...?	Gdzie jest...?	[ggeh yest]
When...?	Kiedy...?	[khyedi]
How much does... cost?	Ile kosztuje...?	[eeleh koshtuyeh]
Mr	Pan	[pahn]
Ms	Pani	[pahnee]
Do you speak English? (For a man)	Czy mówi Pan po angielsku?	[chih moovee pahn po anhngyelskoo]
Do you speak English? (For a woman)	Czy mówi Pani po angielsku?	[chih moovee pahnee po anhngyelskoo]
I understand	Rozumiem	[rozoomyehm]
I don't understand	Nie rozumiem	[nyeh rozoomyehm]
I'm lost. (Of a man)	Zgubiłem się	[zgoobeewehm shyeh]
I'm lost. (Of a woman)	Zgubiłam się	[zgoobeewahm shyeh]
Please write it down	Proszę napisać	[prosheh napeesach]
I would like to order...	Proszę o...	[prosheh oh...]
Help me please	Proszę mi pomóc	[prosheh mee pohmoots]

10

Student well-being. Tips on how to easily adjust.



For many students, moving to another country for the period of study is an exciting adventure, filled with new experiences and friendships. Nevertheless, some of you might find it quite a challenge to adapt to living in a place where you don't know anyone and you are not fluent in the local language either. You have left behind your friends and family in your home country – the people who have been your safety net – a support network, especially in the difficult moments of your life. Furthermore, any psychological or emotional difficulties, which in your usual environment may have been insignificant or remained under control, can be felt more acutely or become more pronounced if you change your environment and are faced with new challenges – and

therefore they may require more attention and planning on your part.

The following tips may help you adjust to the new situation:

- ☞ Stay connected with family and friends
- ☞ Get enough sleep and maintain a balanced, healthy diet and regular meals
- ☞ Limit the consumption of alcohol and other stimulants
- ☞ Get involved in community life through volunteering or membership in student organizations
- ☞ Practice sports
- ☞ Cultivate your hobbies and interests
- ☞ Report any difficulties you may have; talk about it.

☸ Culture shock

The phenomenon of culture shock affects people who have moved to an unfamiliar environment, and interact with a foreign culture for a prolonged period of time – therefore it can also affect you as students abroad. You don't even have to travel far in order to experience culture shock. Acculturation stress is a common reaction to a change of environment. When functioning in a familiar setting, one you are used to, you know how to behave in specific situations. When you change the environment to unfamiliar, many situations become blurred and unclear. Not knowing the new rules can lead to multiple misunderstandings,

leaving you feeling alienated, helpless, misunderstood, and stressed out by constant insecurity. After arriving in a new place, a person is often unaware of what awaits them; they are surprised by the turn of the situation and therefore what they experience is called a culture shock. Research shows that preparation before leaving on your journey abroad, and collecting reliable information about the new culture helps to reduce stress and adapt better. Nevertheless, something may happen to you that will surprise you; something that you have not been prepared for. Culture shock cannot always be avoided. However, you can be ready and simply better equipped to deal with it.



Stages of culture shock (not necessarily happening in this order; also note that not all stages may apply to you personally):

☸ **Honeymoon**

At first you get the impression that everything is fine. Often, but not always, the „exotic“ quality of the new culture fascinates you. You feel like a tourist and you look at everything through rose-tinted spectacles. On top of that, you have high expectations.

☸ **Frustration**

You start to grapple with the reality of living in a foreign country, which may cause very strong stress reactions. As a result, hostile and aggressive thoughts may arise towards your host country and its people. The language barrier has much bearing on this situation. At this stage, you can mainly see the differences between your own culture and the new one and the conflicts that stem from these differences. Conflict can arise – expressed either as clashes with other people, or as an internal struggle – in terms of your values, habits, and preferences, when contrasted with the norms and expectations of the new culture. Cultural differences begin to bother you more and more; you experience the feeling of irritation that comes from being misunderstood and not being able to act in the way that you’re used to. You feel increasingly alienated, often

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homesick, and possibly frustrated. In such moments, the support of your loved ones and friends can be very useful. This is the most difficult time when you might be tempted to pack up and go back home. Unfortunately, this is not always possible – and then you need to take some steps to stabilize the situation.

Examples of actions you can take:

- ☞ Study Polish to feel more confident and understand your surroundings
- ☞ Nurture social contacts and build relationships with the environment – mix with colleagues in your student group, look for opportunities to join hobby groups
- ☞ Write a diary or a blog to let out difficult emotions and to gain some perspective
- ☞ Get used to the idea that adaptation is a difficult process that requires effort on your part
- ☞ Seek outside help: psychological consultation, asking for support from family and friends

⋮ Adjustment

Your knowledge of the language is getting better, and your self-confidence and ability to cope with even the most difficult situations, which was lost at the previous stage, returns. There are still some difficulties, but you deal with them, you feel stronger, your good mood comes back, and your opinion of your hosts improves.

❖ Adaptation

You begin to accept the customs of the host country, its values, norms, and traditions, and you perceive them simply as a different way of life – not necessarily worse, merely different.

There is also the phenomenon of reverse culture shock. If, after studying in Poland, you decide to return to your hometown, you might want to read about its mechanisms, as described below.

Some people, after returning to their country of origin, experience re-adaptation difficulties. That is the reverse culture shock, when it is not easy to rebuild one's world and find oneself in it. Going back home and reintegrating in your home culture after getting used to the new one can have the same effects as going away to a foreign country. Reverse culture shock generally has two parts: idealization and expectations. When you spend a long time abroad, you focus on what has been good in your past and create an idealized version of it. Second, when removed from the familiar environment and placed in an alien setting, you assume that the world you came from has not changed. You expect things to remain exactly the same as when you left them.

What can you experience on your return:

- ☞ Boredom
- ☞ Lack of interest in your experiences on the part of people around you





- ☞ Difficulty expressing and describing your experiences – or lack of understanding from the listeners
- ☞ Being surprised by the changes that have occurred in your family and your social circle
- ☞ Being surprised by the changes in your country – especially those changes which you perceive as negative
- ☞ Hostile reaction of the environment to the changes that have occurred in you
- ☞ Feelings of alienation
- ☞ Inability to use the newly acquired knowledge and skills
- ☞ Sense of loss – you have left the country that was your home during your studies, as well as your friends, favourite places, and customs that you liked.

How to avoid or minimize reverse culture shock:

- ☞ During your studies, stay in touch with your family and friends; stay informed about what is happening in your country.
- ☞ After your return, keep in touch with the people you met during your studies.
- ☞ Remember that you always have the option of returning to Poland – either to visit friends, or permanently.
- ☞ Be patient with yourself and your loved ones. Allow yourself to experience and express difficult emotions, do not deny them – but

all the while remember to respect the feelings of the people around you.

- ☞ Stay active; do not isolate yourself from your surroundings. As with going to a foreign country, it can be helpful to get involved in voluntary work or cultivate your own hobby.
- ☞ Be yourself and use the lessons learned. Some people may find

it helpful to blog or organize meetings about their experiences abroad.

- ☞ Seek outside help – in case of increasing difficulties, consult a therapist or a psychologist. They will help you understand your emotions and give you valuable tips on how to survive the difficult period of re-adaptation.



