

# Supporting Visiting Students in Prague



By:

Abigail Brachtl, Tim Connors, Nicholas Markou, and Sophia Silkaitis



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# Supporting Visiting Students in Prague

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By:

Abigail Brachtl

Tim Connors

Nicholas Markou

Sophia Silkaitis

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Report Submitted to:

Michaela Neužilová and Peter Mistrík

Council on International Educational Exchange

Professor Melissa Butler and Kimberly S. Hollan

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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## **Abstract**

The goal of this project was to assist CIEE in helping American exchange students in the Czech Republic alleviate social, cultural, and communication barriers that contribute to social isolation and negatively impact social interactions and emotional states within the student cohort and among locals. The team collected data through surveys and interviews to identify common challenging scenarios students face in order to create a repository of information for a website. At the conclusion of the project, the team presented a list of recommendations as well as a mobile-friendly and maintainable website for CIEE to use and update for future American exchange students visiting Prague.

# Acknowledgments

The team would like to thank those who helped us succeed in completing this project over the last semester:

- Our sponsors, Michaela Neužilová, Peter Mistrík, and Kamila Hofmanová from Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), who put us in contact with interviewees, assisted with the distribution of our survey, and most importantly gave us their time throughout the semester to meet with us.
- Our project advisors Melissa Butler and Kimberly S. Hollan for repeatedly reviewing our project work and instructing us on how to work as a team so we could have a successful IQP project.
- All the students studying abroad in Prague who completed our survey about their study abroad experience in Prague.
- All the CIEE guides whom we interviewed for providing us with their experiences interacting with American exchange student

## Executive Summary

Students from around the world participate in study abroad programs, with an annual increase of 10% in student participation and over 130,000 students studying abroad across the globe in the 2019-2020 school year (*55 Study Abroad Statistics [2022 Updated]*, 2022). Studying abroad comes with an abundance of potential benefits for visiting students, including increased communication skills and cultural awareness as well as broadened social networks (*Benefits of Studying Abroad*, n.d.; Canfield et al., 2009).

However, students also face a number of challenges when studying abroad that can limit their ability to reap these benefits. Many students do not receive the support or preparation necessary to adapt to their new environment. As such, they have difficulty immersing themselves in their host country's culture and connecting with other students in their traveling cohort and locals, leaving these students prone to cultural and social isolation (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). Visiting students are often unequipped to approach language barriers, which exacerbates cultural and social isolation. This isolation fosters homesickness in visiting students, which often increases anxiety and depression and lessens academic performance (*Homesickness in the Modern Age*, 2019).

The Czech Republic has increasingly become a popular destination for students studying internationally, with 13,064 foreign students studying at Czech universities in 2003 compared to 50,121 in 2020 (Czech Statistical Office, 2022). More Americans participate in study abroad programs in the Czech Republic than students of any other nationality (McEnchroe, 2019). The project sponsor, the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE), is the United

States' oldest and largest study abroad organization (*We Are CIEE*, n.d.) whose mission is to maximize the cultural awareness and acceptance that the study abroad experience offers students, thereby increasing global harmony and stability (K. Hofmanová, personal communication, October 11, 2022). With the substantial increase in the number of American students studying abroad in the Czech Republic, CIEE Prague recognizes the importance of addressing how these visiting students' cultural, social, linguistic, and emotional challenges uniquely manifest in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic is a relatively young country, formed in 1992 when Czechoslovakia split into two independent states. In the 1960s, the Soviet Union forced Czechoslovakia under its sphere of influence. Czechoslovakia then experienced multiple decades of Soviet oppression (*Milestones: 1961–1968 - Office of the Historian*, n.d.). Due to their distinct and diverging histories, American and Czech cultures have developed differences in a number of areas, such as in academia and social relationships (Chejnová, 2015; Ogrodzka-Mazur et al., 2021). These differences give visiting students a chance to immerse themselves in a different culture but also risk culturally isolating these students, reducing their gain of cultural awareness (Gallego Balsà, 2018). The language barrier also presents a challenge for students, as less than 1% of Americans speak Czech (Dietrich & Hernandez, n.d.). CIEE does offer a Czech language course to its students, but currently only 30-40% of students take this course (P. Mistrik, personal communication, nd). Thus, a large majority of visiting students may have difficulty communicating and forming social bonds with Czech locals (Basow & Gaugler, 2017).



## 0.1 Project Goal

The goal of this project was to assist CIEE in helping American exchange students in the Czech Republic alleviate social, cultural, and communication barriers that contribute to social isolation and negatively impact social interactions and emotional states within the student cohort and among locals. The objectives to reach this goal were as follows:

- To identify common factors that American exchange students report that lead to experiences of isolation.
- To create a repository of social, cultural, and communication information to house information and resources for students.
- To create an accessible mobile-friendly website that makes it intuitive for American students studying in the Czech Republic.

## 0.2 Identifying Isolation Factors for American Students in the Czech Republic

In order to identify factors that create experiences of isolation in American exchange students, the team distributed a survey to American students studying in Prague through CIEE and Charles University's exchange program. This survey consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions and prompted respondents about their experiences in Prague. It included questions focusing on their cultural immersion, social interactions, perspective on the language barrier, and emotional state. In addition, the team conducted interviews with five CIEE guides, who are local university students that CIEE employs to assist visiting students during their first week of being in the city. These interviews consisted of questions about how American

students integrate into Prague's culture and society, cultural differences between Americans and Czechs, and American students' interest in the Czech language and Prague's various attractions. The team then analyzed the survey and interview data in order to deduce the most prevalent isolation factors for visiting students.

Analyzing the survey and interview data revealed multiple key findings about isolation factors and challenging scenarios to the team. The team found that students lacked the nuanced cultural preparation necessary to approach everyday scenarios, but were proficient in navigating interactions that required a more general level of cultural knowledge.

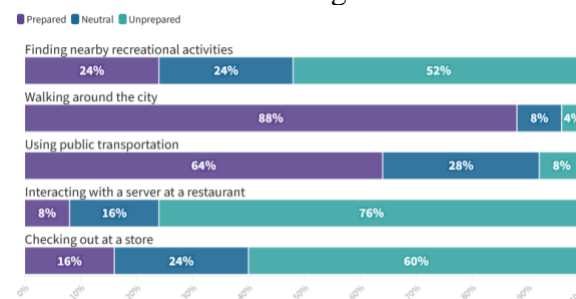


Figure 0.1 Ranking preparedness in facing scenarios (N=25)

Students have difficulty approaching scenarios centered around food and dining. As shown in Figure 0.1, 76% of survey respondents indicated they were unprepared to interact with a server at a restaurant, and 60% indicated that they were unprepared to check out at a store. Eight respondents specifically mentioned that talking to cashiers who do not speak English created particularly difficult social interactions. Respondents also cited a number of cultural differences, such as the use of contactless credit cards and tipping culture as sources of confusion. Finding recreational activities around the city also proved challenging for students. As shown in Figure 0.1, 52% of students indicated they were unprepared for this scenario. Figure 0.2 further demonstrates this, with a majority of

respondents indicating that restaurant (84%), nightlife (63%), and tourist spot recommendations (74%) would help them better immerse themselves in Prague’s culture. Also notable is how all respondents indicated basic knowledge of the Czech language would help them achieve this goal, suggesting that students felt unprepared to meet the language challenges they faced in Prague.

However, students were proficient in navigating scenarios requiring more general cultural knowledge, such as using public transportation or walking around the city. CIEE specifically prepares students for these scenarios, and students feeling prepared to face these scenarios suggests that CIEE’s methods for preparing students are effective. The schism in preparation between these more general scenarios and the aforementioned specific scenarios also unveils that study abroad organizations overlook the importance of preparing students for everyday life at their study abroad destination.

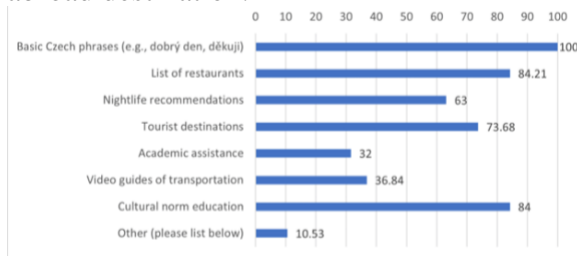


Figure 0.2 Usefulness of resources in integrating into Czech culture and society (N=19)

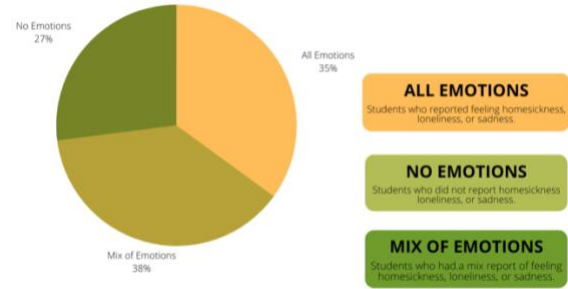


Figure 0.3 Emotion reporting in terms of homesickness, loneliness, and sadness (N=26)

The team also had multiple findings about socio-emotional isolation factors. Homesickness in visiting students correlates strongly with loneliness. As shown in Figure 0.3, only 38% of students felt a mix of homesickness, loneliness, and sadness. Thirty-five percent of students felt all three, and 27% did not report any of the emotions. This could suggest a strong relationship between homesickness, loneliness, and sadness.

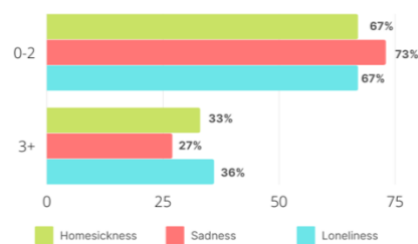


Figure 0.4 Percent of negative emotions reported relating to number of people previously known

Strong social bonds with other American students seem to reduce a visiting student’s susceptibility to intra-cohort social isolation. Seventy-three percent of students who knew three or more people in their cohort before coming abroad reported feeling no loneliness, while 73% of students who knew fewer than three people beforehand reported feeling some degree of loneliness. However, these social ties can also discourage students from meeting new people, decreasing cultural immersion. All five interviewed CIEE guides noted that,

while the American cohort is a source of comfort for visiting students, most students tend to only interact with other Americans rather than meet Prague locals. Additionally, students lacking these pre-existing social bonds often find it difficult to integrate into their cohort's social bubble, with 44% of students indicating that cliques were part of the reason why they found it difficult to meet others indicating that cliques were part of the reason. As shown in Figure 0.4, the team found a relationship between how many other students in their cohort respondents knew and their emotional state. The more people respondents knew prior to coming abroad, the less they reported feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and sadness.

### 0.3 Creating Reference Materials for Visiting American Students

The team constructed the repository of reference materials by first analyzing the aforementioned survey and interview to uncover the most challenging scenarios that American students face in Prague. From these results, the team concluded that it was most important to provide food and dining information recommendations for recreational activities for students. then developed reference materials to help students through the identified challenging scenarios. These reference materials took the form of location recommendations, written translations, visual aids, and cultural education.

### 0.4 Developing Website for Student Use

Lastly, the team developed a website to host this repository of materials. Since CIEE intended for students to access this website while on excursions throughout Prague, the team focused on making the site

mobile-friendly (Figure 0.5) and easy to use. To assess whether the website meets these accessibility goals, the team conducted a focus group consisting of students from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) Prague Project Center cohort. Without any instructions regarding the website navigation, the focus group used the site and provided constructive feedback regarding the website and its navigability. The team then used these suggestions to make improvements to the website's user experience and provide recommendations for future development on the site. Additionally, the team wanted to give CIEE the ability to update and maintain the website in the future. The website includes password-protected administrative privileges that allow CIEE staff to edit, update, and delete content on the website.



Figure 0.5 Website page flow on mobile device

### 0.5 Recommendations

Based on the results of performing the study, the team developed a series of recommendations for CIEE. These recommendations centered around mitigating isolation factors in visiting American students through changes in CIEE's program structure and through further development of the repository and website.

#### Provide Platforms for Students to Meet Each Other

Since the team found that students who knew fewer people before coming abroad reported feeling more feelings of



loneliness, they recommend that CIEE provides platforms for students to meet others outside of their existing social group prior to traveling abroad. Possible platforms include a text group chat or Slack group. This could help students make friends and build comfort with their new social dynamic.

made to source content for the repository that will be displayed on the website.

### Require Participation in Czech Language Class

As previously mentioned, CIEE Prague offers a Czech language course to visiting students that covers basic phrases centered around everyday scenarios, such as ordering coffee in a café. Given that many survey respondents cited the language barrier as a significant challenge, the team recommends that CIEE requires students to take this course and further integrate it into students' curricula. The course would help improve student proficiency in these everyday scenarios and mitigate the effects of the language barrier.

### Incorporate Diverse Guide Groups

CIEE guides currently work with large groups of visiting students that they monitor throughout their first few days in Prague. Given the issues reported with cliques and the relationship between negative emotions and people priorly known, the team recommends that these groups consist of students with no pre-existing social relationships to help prevent cliques from forming and help students socialize more.

### Continue Development of the Website

Given the seven-week time frame of the project, the website is not a finalized end product but provides a foundation for future development. The team recommends further development of the site's visuals and overall user experience. Additionally, the team recommends that more robust efforts be

## Executive Summary References

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# Authorship

<b>Section</b>	<b>Primary Author(s)</b>	<b>Primary Editor(s)</b>
Abstract	Abigail Brachtl	Tim Connors
Acknowledgements	Abigail Brachtl, Tim Connors, Nicholas Markou, Sophia Silkaitis	Abigail Brachtl, Tim Connors, Nicholas Markou, Sophia Silkaitis
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2.6 Lack of Preparedness of American Students Studying Abroad	Tim Connors	Abigail Brachtl
2.6.1: Effective Strategies for Improving Visiting Student Preparedness	Tim Connors	Abigail Brachtl
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# 1.0 Introduction

With an annual increase in student participation of 10%, study abroad programs draw students far and wide all around the globe every year (*55 Study Abroad Statistics [2022 Updated]*, 2022). In the 2019-2020 school year, over 130,000 students studied abroad in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia (Institute of International Education, 2021). Studying abroad increases students' communication skills, cultural connections, and broadens individuals' networks (*Benefits of Studying Abroad*, n.d.). However, these benefits do not apply to every student, as many struggle to get adequate preparation and support for adapting to their new environment. Some students face difficulties with interacting and connecting with their fellow traveling cohort, as well as locals, which furthers social isolation of students abroad (Jessup-Anger & Aragones, 2013).

Studying abroad in the Czech Republic has drastically increased over the last two decades. The number of foreign students at Czech universities grew from 13,064 in 2003 to 50,121 students in 2020 (Czech Statistical Office, 2022). Despite the growth in students studying abroad in the Czech Republic, students often have issues using the language, which leads many to express hesitancy in interacting with locals (Schwieter et al., 2021). This hesitancy, along with the structure of the study abroad program, leads students to stay within their “American bubble” instead of venturing into their new environment.

With the dramatic rise of students studying abroad, universities and countries have begun implementing cultural and language preparation programs to accommodate these students. Many of these accommodations offer a language-centered approach for students, as language barriers can be one of the most prominent barriers students face in their host country. However, even with these accommodations, many students still do not feel confident about their language

abilities (Schwieter et al., 2021). Students can feel like they are only “learners” of a language instead of being “users,” which would aid them in communicating and immersing themselves in the local culture (Yang et al., 2021).

Our sponsor, the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), is the United States’ oldest and largest non-profit study abroad organization (*We Are CIEE*, n.d.). Today, CIEE has study abroad programs in over 30 countries, with the majority of its operations abroad in Europe (*We Are CIEE*, n.d.), including Prague. Currently, CIEE offers a basic Czech course for students, hosts varied weekly activities appealing to a wide array of students, monitors student mental health through academic attendance and performance, and provides a Czech-speaking CIEE employee to accompany students on excursions in the city (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022; M. Neužilová, personal communication, September 27, 2022). Despite CIEE’s extensive support for American university students in Prague, students in the program struggle to find resources that can help them to feel immersed within Czech culture and reduce the significance of language barriers, social isolation, and homesickness.

The goal of this project was to assist CIEE in helping American exchange students in the Czech Republic alleviate social, cultural, and communication barriers that contribute to social isolation and negatively impact social interactions and emotional states within the student cohort and among locals. The objectives to reach this goal were as follows:

- To identify common factors that American exchange students report that lead to experiences of isolation.
- To create a repository of social, cultural, and communication information to house information and resources for students.

- To create an accessible mobile-friendly website that makes it intuitive for American students studying in the Czech Republic.

The team distributed surveys to students studying in Prague through CIEE and Charles University and interviewed CIEE guides to uncover specific experiences and scenarios that contribute to student isolation. These findings served as a basis for constructing the repository, which consisted of reference materials, such as written translations and location recommendations, centered around mitigating difficulty navigating these identified experiences and scenarios and allowed the team to build a website to host this reference material.

## 2.0 Background

This chapter begins by reviewing the history of studying abroad in the United States and introducing the Council on International Education Exchange, or CIEE. It then shifts to discuss the cultural differences between the United States and Prague and how such differences can be isolating factors for students studying abroad. The chapter then discusses the language barrier between Czech natives and visiting American students and how this barrier can result in isolation factors for American exchange students and lead to social isolation of students while abroad in the Czech Republic. The chapter then looks at different practices for preparedness for studying abroad. This topic then leads into sections on isolation within traveling cohorts and homesickness. The chapter then looks at different practices for preparedness for studying abroad. With this background on isolation factors and homesickness, the team was able to tailor methods that can identify isolation factors for students traveling through CIEE to Prague.

## 2.1 History of the Study Abroad Experience in Europe

In the aftermath of World War I, when the world was only starting to heal from the War to End All Wars, Professor Raymond W. Kirkbride, a WWI veteran, pitched study abroad as a way to “promote cross-cultural understanding” (*Our Study Abroad History | University of Delaware*, n.d.). The president of the University of Delaware, Walter S. Hullihen believed that the program “produce[d] better-rounded students, train[ed] future foreign language teachers, and provide[d] experience for students who want[ed] to go into careers with international aspects” (*Our Study Abroad History | University of Delaware*, n.d.). In 1921, juniors from the University of Delaware engaged in the first study abroad experience in France. Shortly thereafter, study abroad began spreading to other universities such as Harvard, Columbia, and Brown. Since 1921, there have been millions of university students who have

engaged in study abroad programs (*Our Study Abroad History* | University of Delaware, n.d.) (Figure 2.1).

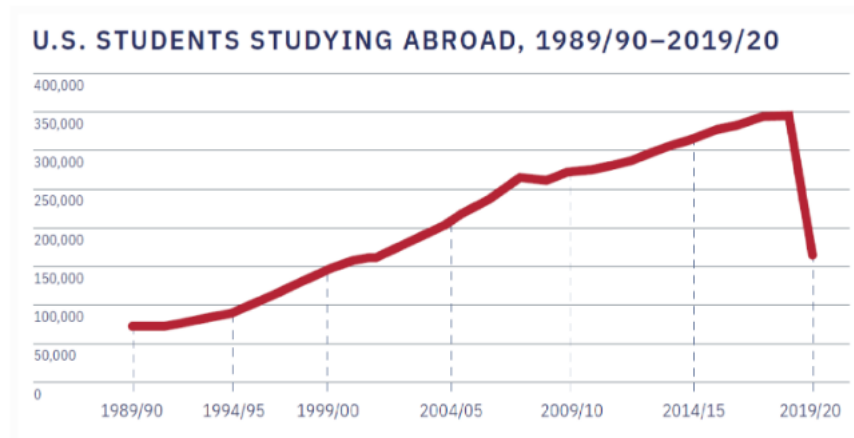


Figure 2.1 U.S. Students Studying Abroad 1989-2020

### 2.1.1 Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)

The growth of study abroad programs has led to the emergence of study abroad organizations that work with universities to coordinate and manage study abroad programs. Established in the 1940s, CIEE, the Council on International Educational Exchange, is a non-profit organization that has sought to provide “educational experiences that transform the lives of all they touch” (*History*, n.d.). This organization was founded shortly after World War II and thus sought to provide programs that encourage “peaceful coexistence and respect between nations” (*History*, n.d.). To date, the organization has developed centers in 30+ countries around the world, servicing thousands of students in their study abroad experience (*We Are CIEE*, n.d.). With a desire to bridge cultural exchange with students from different nations, CIEE recognizes the problems that language and culture can cause between students.

In 1992-93, a few years after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 ended communist rule in Czechoslovakia, CIEE established a study abroad program in Prague (K. Hofmanová, personal communication, October 11, 2022). In accordance with CIEE’s mission, CIEE Prague strives to



“increase global harmony and stability by helping individuals learn to embrace people different from themselves and ideas different from their own” (K. Hofmanová, personal communication, October 11, 2022). In the years leading up to the 2020 pandemic, CIEE in Prague was working with over 200 students, who engaged in projects, internships and educational courses, each semester (K. Hofmanová, personal communication, October 11, 2022). With the increase of American students traveling to the Czech Republic to study abroad, it has become clear to CIEE that there needs to be a revised support system in place to accommodate students once they arrive.

## **2.2 Unique Cultural Differences Found in the Czech Republic**

While the Czech Republic is a relatively young country—formed in 1992 when Czechoslovakia split into two independent states—its citizens have not forgotten their country’s recent past. In the 1960s, countries invaded Czechoslovakia under the Soviet Warsaw Pact, and Czechoslovakia was forced under the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence (*Milestones: 1961–1968 - Office of the Historian*, n.d.). Multiple decades of oppression under the Soviet Union have caused most of the Czech population to have a strong anti-Russian ideology. This notion can even extend to students abroad from Russia. Russian students studying abroad at New York University’s satellite campus in Prague reported that they felt disrespected and unwelcomed by locals because they were from Russia (Starr-Glass, 2014). As a result, these students found it difficult to socialize with Czech natives, and the students left the country with a negative study abroad experience. This sentiment is more pronounced due to the history of Soviet influence in Czechoslovakia. While this is only the experience of a few Russian students, it can show how different the study abroad experience can be for any individual, and why students going abroad should be aware of the cultural differences between the Czech Republic and their home country.

American students, on the other hand, can expect a much more neutral, if not positive experience with Czech natives, due to the view that the United States played a pivotal role in defeating communism in Czechoslovakia. This can be seen today, as a street in Prague 6 was renamed to Ronald Reagan, in honor of President Ronald Reagan (*“Reagan Street” In Prague*, 2011), who was the president of the United States during the fall of communism in the 1980s. Despite the Czech Republic’s embrace of democracy, the lingering effects of communism on the country's people have preserved some of their pre-democracy cultures, creating noticeable differences for any American while studying abroad.

The complicated political history of the Czech Republic has led to cultural differences, such as in academia. Historically, respect for authority is at the forefront of all forms of communication between faculty and students, with professors expecting students meeting with them to be polite and address them formally. However, the current culture of student and professor relations is undergoing some change, with 52.8% of Czech students reporting that they would prefer to have semi-formal conversations with faculty at universities, using phrases such as “dobrý den,” which translates to “good day” in English, without adding the title of the professor (Chejnová, 2015). It is important for American students who are studying abroad to be aware of these differences to ensure they have a good time studying abroad by forming good relations with their professors. If these students are not aware of the differences, they could accidentally appear to be impolite to the professor, ruining the chance of having a productive relationship with them. Along with learning the differences between student-professor relations in the Czech Republic compared to the United States, it is also beneficial for students studying abroad to understand the culture around social ties in the Czech Republic.

In a study done at Ostrava University, a university in the Czech Republic, researchers asked Czech students how socially connected they felt with groups of people with similar and different social ties. The study found that less than 15% of students felt associated with non-Czech people, but overwhelmingly felt associated with groups local to the Czech Republic based on family, ethnic, and national groupings (Ogrodzka-Mazur et al., 2021). Many students at Ostrava University reported having this association, which demonstrates the significance of family and other tightly knit cultural bonds. American students may feel isolated while studying abroad in the Czech Republic because of how Czech social groups form.

The lack of cultural bonds between Czech and American people can cause the relationship between the two to be formal and respectful, similar to a relationship between a student and a professor. In addition, Czech people tend to have a strong bond with family and others with whom they share a cultural or ethnic background. It is important for students going abroad to be aware of these differences to ensure they can develop good relationships with their professors and other Czech natives they will meet during the study abroad program. Otherwise, this lack of bonding may result in students feeling disconnected from Czech society, inducing the feeling of social isolation. Without preparation for these cultural differences, students could struggle to immerse themselves in the culture of Prague because of a lack of connection with native Czech peers.

### **2.2.1 The Importance of Cultural Immersion**

Despite the previously mentioned challenges and barriers that can limit students acclimating to Czech society, cultural immersion remains an important part of making a study abroad program successful. The goal of cultural immersion is “to expand cultural awareness and enhance the empathy and sensitivity of students, in the belief that such an experience may serve

as a catalyst for expanding intercultural awareness and counseling effectiveness” (Canfield et al., 2009). Research shows that cultural immersion positively impacts learning while abroad and makes students more culturally aware (Canfield et al., 2009). One study noted that students who spent most of their time with their traveling cohort limited their access to the culture and were not as successful in their studies compared to those who immersed themselves in the culture (Gallego Balsà, 2018). These results show that it is important for students to immerse themselves in the local culture to get the most out of their time living abroad. If a student can succeed in immersing themselves in the culture, they can connect more to the locals and therefore reduce the effects of the Czech culture of distancing themselves from those with whom they do not share strong ties.

## **2.3 Importance of Language in Shaping Study Abroad Experiences**

When studying abroad in the Czech Republic, American exchange students have the best chance at immersing themselves in the local culture by learning Czech. However, as of 2019, less than 1% of the US population over 5 years old spoke a Slavic language other than Polish or Russian (Dietrich & Hernandez, n.d.). Due to the low percentage of Americans speaking Czech and the importance of language learning preparation, students studying abroad in the Czech Republic could greatly benefit from learning Czech. While it is crucial for students to immerse themselves in the culture of the Czech Republic through language, it can be difficult due to the language barrier and issues with traditional language learning environments.

### **2.3.1 Issues with Traditional Language Learning Environments**

Students face many barriers when learning a new language. A major indication of how well students will fare when learning a new language is their current proficiency in their native one as understanding complex language concepts and grammar transfers from one language to

another (Stankova et al., 2022). However, traditional language learning environments prior to studying abroad do not provide enough preparation for students (Schwieter et al., 2021).

Along with mastering a language in an abstract classroom environment, students also face barriers in communication. Many find that the most difficult part of mastering a language is speaking (Stankova et al., 2022). CIEE currently offers a two-week-long Czech language course to students. The curriculum of this course includes basic Czech phrases for everyday situations, such as ordering coffee in a café. However, only around 30-40% of students decide to take this course, and the course only covers very basic words and phrases (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022). Because few students have the tools necessary to properly communicate within their environment, they are more likely to struggle with immersing themselves in the culture and community around them. To remedy this, students need a different way to prepare themselves for the different languages they will encounter abroad.

### **2.3.2 Learning for Specific Purposes**

There is a difference between learning a language and using a language. One study showed that students who focus not only on grammar and speaking but also engage in interactions outside of the classroom consider themselves users of the language. Self-identified “users” felt that they were better able to participate and communicate with locals in their area (Yang et al., 2021).

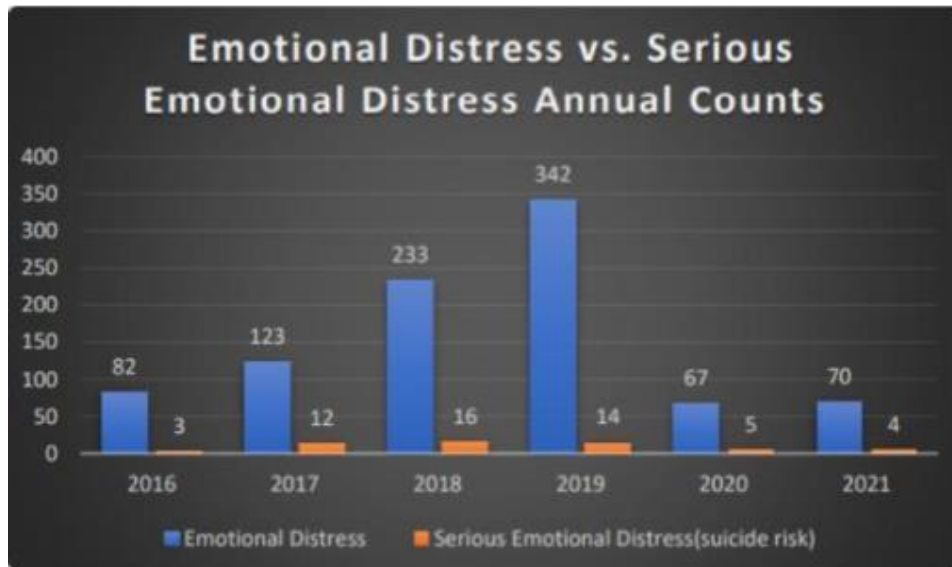
Another study looked at Czech students' ability to learn technical English such as local geography, personal information, and shopping (Lustigová, 2013). This class's approach towards English learning was English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and its purpose is “to meet the specific needs of the learner,” and “makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves” (Lustigová, 2013). This study confirmed the efficiency of specific learning-

based teachings, the importance of videos in learning, and focused on words and phrases that students found necessary to know in the classroom environment.

## **2.4 Social and Cultural Differences Fostering Isolation for Visiting Students**

While the accumulated evidence suggests that students studying abroad who can access and use the language of the host country more easily interact with the environment around them, they still face barriers when confronted with social and cultural differences. Homesickness and isolation often develop in different magnitudes as a result of social isolation, the language barrier, and a lack of cultural immersion. This is a concern, as “homesickness...[has] a major impact on international students’ psychological well-being, especially in academic performance, eating and sleeping problems, and low energy and headache; [it is] also associated with cultural stress and depression among international students” (Rathakrishnan et al., 2021).

However, students who prepare for different socio-cultural traditions, communication systems such as language and street signs, and regulate their mental health through coping mechanisms and mindset are less likely to experience feelings of homesickness and isolation while abroad. A study of exchange students in Costa Rica found that student preparedness with the local language could help decrease the gaps between the locals and the students (Basow & Gaugler, 2017). Additionally, a source tailored with socio-cultural information such as restaurant etiquette, street signs, and emergency policies could prepare students and help mitigate the stress that can cause homesickness and isolation.



*Figure 2.2 Emotional Distress Reported at CIEE Over Six Years*

In a study of exchange students in Malaysia, researchers found that students faced moderate levels of homesickness, high adaptability of culture, and high levels of “perceived stress.” This stress correlates homesickness and socio-cultural adaptation (Basow & Gaugler, 2017). Figure 2.2 shows that students studying abroad in 2019, through CIEE, experienced varying levels of emotional distress, with 342 of students reporting emotional distress and 14 students labeled as a suicide risk (CIEE Health, Safety and Security Team, 2022).

## **2.5 Homesickness in Students Studying Abroad**

Homesickness is a type of separation anxiety characterized by a preoccupation with thoughts of home while in an unfamiliar environment (Harrison & Brower, 2011). Those suffering from homesickness often exhibit an assortment of other negative emotions and behaviors, such as anxiety, depression, reduced cognition, and poor academic performance (Harrison & Brower, 2011). Homesickness is prevalent among students in study abroad programs, with a 2019 survey finding that 92% of students studying internationally say that they “miss the familiarities of home” (*Homesickness in the Modern Age*, 2019).

The degree to which homesickness affects a particular student studying internationally depends largely on that student's psychological makeup. A 2018 study that tracked the homesickness of international exchange students throughout their study abroad experience found that difficulty adapting to a new society and culture was the strongest indicator of homesickness among the students (Götz et al., 2019). Students who struggle to integrate into their host country's society and culture are the most likely to also have strong feelings of homesickness. Pre-existing difficulties with symptoms that link to homesickness can also exacerbate homesickness (Harrison & Brower, 2011). Additionally, the way students perceive and cope with challenges is a strong determinant of how much homesickness they feel. Students who tend to view challenges as opportunities for personal growth instead of as a threat to their safety exhibit less homesickness (Harrison & Brower, 2011).

### **2.5.1 Impact of Intra-Cohort Dynamics on Homesickness**

Intra-cohort dynamics between visiting students also have a significant impact on the students' mental health and their likelihood to experience symptoms associated with homesickness. Within the last 45 years, American study abroad programs have shifted towards a collectivist experience, with students traveling in cohorts with their peers to their host country (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). This contrasts heavily with more traditional study abroad experiences, in which students individually travel to their host country and are generally isolated from other Americans during their stay (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). CIEE implements this group-oriented approach at their Prague site, with students living together in small clusters and taking classes entirely with other visiting American students (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022). The group-oriented approach to studying abroad presents additional challenges for visiting students, as they must manage their social standing within their



cohort and be conscious of the group dynamics. A 2013 study analyzing the social interactions of a group of Americans studying abroad in Australia and New Zealand found that students tend to take up distinct roles within their cohort's social structure (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). Researchers categorized two of the nine students that they interviewed as "loners" who experienced "awkwardness and isolation within the cohort" (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013) and struggled to fit in with their peers. Loneliness is one of the most heavily contributing factors to homesickness in study abroad students (Götz et al., 2019; Harrison & Brower, 2011). As such, addressing loneliness stemming from intra-cohort dynamics is critical to reducing homesickness in group-oriented study abroad programs.

## **2.5.2 Mitigating Homesickness While Abroad**

While managing homesickness is a significant challenge in the study abroad experience, there are practices that researchers have recommended to help students mitigate it. Maintaining a strong support network of fellow traveling students and faculty and regular connection with friends and family at home reduces homesickness (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014). Time is also influential in reducing homesickness while abroad, as feelings of homesickness generally peak early in the trip and then regress to a manageable level (Götz et al., 2019; Harrison & Brower, 2011; Lillyman & Bennett, 2014).

In group-oriented programs, organizations integrate varied activities that also help socially isolated students build this support network of peers (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). CIEE incorporates this strategy at their site in Prague, organizing 2-3 optional activities per week for students (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022). These activities are varied by CIEE so that students with similar interests can interact with each other and allow students to form stronger friendships within their cohort (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2,

2022). CIEE actively encourages students experiencing social isolation at the beginning of their stay in Prague to attend these events. CIEE also monitors academic activity and contacts students if they notice a sudden drop in attendance (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022). If a struggling student is currently in therapy, they advise the student to contact their therapist to discuss their current difficulties (P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022).

## **2.6 Lack of Preparedness of American Students Studying Abroad**

American students who study abroad tend to display a lack of cultural and linguistic preparation specific to their destination and academic circumstances. One survey consisting of responses from approximately 350 Americans in study abroad programs found that only 25% of the students received cross-cultural training prior to departure (Berdan, 2013). Lack of preparedness can result in students having difficulty adjusting to the culture of their destination. For example, a study that observed American university exchange students in Thailand found that the visiting students underwent an initial period of shock upon exposure to Thai culture (Rybo-LoPresti & Rhein, 2021). This was due in part to the students' inability to prepare for the significant cultural discrepancies between the United States and Thailand, the most substantial being America's individualism contrasted with Thailand's collectivist social structure. Thai academic programs and students placed a heavy emphasis on group work and coming to a consensus among students due to their collectivist society. Visiting American students found this jarring, as they normally work individually and forming their own opinion on an academic concept (Rybo-LoPresti & Rhein, 2021). Study abroad programs often attempt to generalize their teaching of culture and language, leading to visiting students lacking the nuanced understanding of these subjects that is necessary to integrate into a foreign environment. Researchers examining

28 English-speaking students over the course of their study abroad process found that the students had difficulty in administrative and academic settings at their host university, feeling that they lacked comprehension of the relevant terminology (Ball, 2000). The students also reported that they were insufficiently prepared to interact with the culture of their destination, especially that of the local university students (Ball, 2000).

### **2.6.1 Effective Strategies for Improving Visiting Student Preparedness**

Institutions have both recommended and implemented a variety of strategies to alleviate the struggles American students face while studying abroad due to a lack of cultural, social, and linguistic preparation. These strategies take two forms: improving student preparedness prior to their arrival at their abroad location and reducing the impact of inadequate preparedness after their arrival.

Multiple studies recommend that prior to student arrival at their international destination, universities should encourage students to engage in self-driven preparation rather than only taking the mandatory steps necessary to study abroad, which usually take the form of filling out documentation and attending brief cultural preparedness sessions integrated into the study abroad program (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2018; Graham, 2018). Students tend to believe that international study will produce some sort of inherent benefit without requiring active student engagement, which directly leads to under-preparedness and subsequent social and cultural isolation.

Since hosting institutions cannot always influence how students prepare to study at their university, it is also useful to aid students who arrive at their destination lacking sufficient preparation. Researchers recommend check-ins with students during their trip abroad, integrated meetings and social exposure to locals, and information hubs to assist students (Graham, 2018; Rybo-LoPresti & Rhein, 2021). As it relates specifically to Prague, a study done by Charles

University found that courses designed to teach visiting American students Czech helped reduce their anxiety about learning the language and produced confidence in participating students by the end of the course.

In general, researchers identified the language learning process as being one of the areas that needed the most improvement in the preparation process. One study recommended the usage of a task-based language teaching approach to language preparation in study abroad programs. Under this framework, instructors would first create a needs analysis for the students, which details the types of tasks the students will need to perform at their destination. Instructors measure the learners' proficiency by their ability to carry out these tasks in their target language rather than by their grasping of linguistics concepts (Camus & Advani, 2021). A task-based language teaching approach is therefore highly adaptable to a particular set of traveling students' unique circumstances and fulfills their unique needs instead of merely teaching them general and possibly irrelevant information (Camus & Advani, 2021).

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter examined the current state of American study abroad programs in the Czech Republic. It identified challenges that visiting American students face while studying abroad and how those challenges manifest themselves in the Czech Republic specifically. Study abroad programs have become increasingly popular since their incarnation, making addressing visiting student difficulties more important than ever. Due to historical differences, the United States and the Czech Republic have developed distinctly different cultures. It is important to recognize and prepare for these cultural differences, to mitigate the effects of cultural isolation on Americans studying abroad in the Czech Republic.

The social, cultural, and communicative differences American students face in the Czech Republic foster isolation and stress in students. Students are generally underprepared to face these differences. The inability to cope with these barriers can create intense feelings of homesickness in visiting students. This homesickness can be exacerbated by loneliness caused by poor intra-cohort dynamics in group-oriented study abroad programs like CIEE. Using research discussed in this Background chapter, the team developed methods to identify isolation factors within the traveling cohort and with locals that students face when studying abroad in the Czech Republic.

## **3.0 Methodology**

The goal of this project was to assist CIEE in helping American exchange students in the Czech Republic alleviate social, cultural, and communication barriers that negatively impact emotional states within the student cohort and among locals. The objectives to reach this goal were as follows:

- To identify common factors that American exchange students report that lead to experiences of isolation.
- To create a repository of social, cultural, and communication information to house information and resources for students.
- To create an accessible mobile-friendly website that makes it intuitive for American students studying in the Czech Republic.

This project took place in Prague from October 24th, 2022 to December 16th, 2022. The team focused on the struggles that American exchange students go through due to social isolation, cultural differences, language barriers, and homesickness. Homesickness and isolation were the most important topics for CIEE, as prior students have reported their struggle to connect with their traveling cohort (M. Nežilová & P. Mistrík, personal communication, November 2, 2022). The team used interviews and surveys to collect data on the struggles students experienced while abroad to develop a website that might help them to overcome these struggles. In addition, the team used a focus group to test the website to ensure it contained useful content for the students with an intuitive and user-friendly design.

### **3.1 Identify Common Isolation Factors**

Through surveys and interviews, the team gathered data on common scenarios in which American exchange students experience social isolation. The team targeted this

objective through questions about cultural immersion, problems with the language barrier, homesickness, connection to cohort, and preparedness.

### **3.1.1 Survey Current Students**

Surveying students currently studying through CIEE programs helped the team gather data on common experiences when traveling abroad in Prague. The team developed the survey (Appendix A) using an online survey making service called Qualtrics. The survey used both open- and close-ended questions to explore how students experienced isolation in Prague both in and outside of their student cohort, the extent to which they felt immersed within the local culture, experiences with the language barrier, and the level of preparedness students had prior to traveling to Prague. Open-ended questions became visible to respondents based on previous answers and allowed them to provide more details related to their experiences. The survey gathered information on isolation factors that American exchange students felt in the Czech Republic and allowed the team to identify isolation factors that students commonly face.

The team contacted students via email through their sponsor, CIEE, who had access to students currently studying abroad in Prague through CIEE as well as other study abroad organizations. The team sent an email to these different organizations to maximize survey responses from students currently studying abroad in Prague. The team also asked CIEE to distribute the survey by posting QR codes in the CIEE building.

### **3.1.2 Interview Czech Guides at CIEE**

CIEE coordinates with local Czech university students who act as guides to help students studying abroad acclimate to Prague. The team interviewed Czech students working with CIEE to obtain Czech students' points of view on how American students integrate into Prague's culture, how interested American students are in learning the language, and common places

American students are interested in visiting (Appendix C). Interviews took place in the CIEE building and lasted anywhere from 30-60 minutes to complete depending on the length of respondents' answers. At the start of the interview, all respondents gave their consent to participate in the interview. Additionally, the team allowed respondents to leave the interview at any point and skip questions they did not want to answer. Through interviews, the team obtained additional perspectives on possible factors that lead to social isolation for visiting American exchange students. These interviews were useful for the team as they provided qualitative data that enabled the team to both gather more information on isolation factors that students face, as well as identify currently implemented solutions CIEE has in place.

### **3.2 Assemble Repository of Useful Information**

The second objective was to construct a repository of materials for mitigating isolation factors amongst visiting American students in Prague. This repository centered around scenarios in which students in surveys and guides in interviews reported to be challenges for American students in the Czech Republic. This repository attempts to mitigate these isolation factors by providing preparation material for students to learn social, cultural, and communication context. The team conducted quantitative analysis of the data from the survey to gain perspective on which isolation factors and scenarios were most critical to address. For close-ended questions related to isolation factors and scenarios, the team compared the answer distribution by percentage to deduce which issues were most critical to address. The team then performed a content analysis of the interviews as well as the responses to open-ended survey questions to deduce deficiencies in students' knowledge of Czech culture and language that most directly led to cultural and social isolation. The team used deductive coding to highlight the appearance of isolation factors in the data. The team also used inductive coding to identify specific scenarios

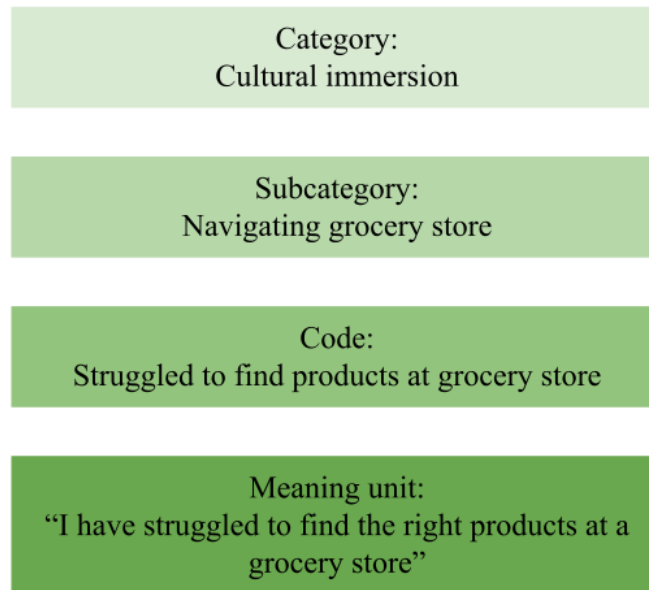


that American students struggle with the most while in Prague, with a particular focus on identifying the scenarios representative of the most critical isolation factors as identified in the qualitative analysis of the survey. The team then created a collection of materials to assist students in these situations. The repository consisted of the materials associated with each of the specific scenarios.

### **3.2.1 Analyze Isolation Factors and Uncover Scenarios**

The team first analyzed the numerical survey data, which provided a quantitative reference for uncovering the frequency of the themes and identified challenging scenarios among the greater CIEE Prague student population. To analyze the themes, the team found the distribution of all the respondents' numerical answers to the questions regarding preparation, integration into Czech culture and society, Czech language learning, and homesickness during the study abroad experience. When using the quantitative data to analyze scenarios, the team paid particular attention to questions that prompted respondents to consider specific experiences in Prague with which students may struggle (Q20 and Q37 in Appendix A). To cross-analyze answers for matrix questions, the team made an Excel spreadsheet of all the responses, created a list of possible response combinations, and then tallied individual responses to understand the data. The team then read through responses to open-ended survey questions and interview transcripts, highlighting keywords and meaning units that pertain to each isolation factor to perform the coding, paying particular attention to the most prevalent isolation factors identified in the quantitative analysis. The team also noted any solutions participants cited as being effective in mitigating isolation. This helped provide a greater perspective on the significance

and prevalence of these themes, guiding the team in distinguishing the problem areas that needed the most attention.



*Figure 3.1 Coding of a meaning unit from a survey response to Q34*

In order to analyze the data from the open-ended survey questions and interviews, the team used coding to categorize participants' responses. Coding allows for the unearthing of themes and categories in data through researchers identifying snippets in transcript and survey data that are significant to the purpose of the research (Williams & Moser, 2019). This was ideal for the purpose of this project's data analysis, as the team intended to connect common threads and identify patterns in the qualitative data.

Through deductive coding, the team assembled a small list of categories prior to analyzing data that designated the high-level concepts relevant to the project. These categories included the previously defined isolation factors, such as social isolation or cultural immersion, as well as a category for any suggestions respondents had for reducing isolation. Coding entailed compiling small meaning units representing respondents' sentiments towards a particular

isolation factor. The team further broke down the specific reasons individuals gave for these isolation factors being significant into subcategories that represented scenarios and experiences, as shown in Figure 3.1, which is an example of the coding for one piece of data the team analyzed. The overall structure of the coding resembled a collection of trees, with each category having one or more subcategories contributing to it and each subcategory having one or more codes contributing to it.

### **3.2.2 Develop Reference Materials for Students**

The team used results from content analysis from surveys and interviews to develop content that may help students confront specific tasks that they might struggle with due to language, cultural, and social barriers in Prague. This content formed the basis of the repository that students will be able to access on the website. The team took a mixed-methods approach in creating the content of the repository, providing written translations, images, and etiquette recommendations for student consumption. Since the team's research showed task-based learning to be an effective mechanism for providing students with specific cultural and linguistic knowledge (Ball, 2000; Camus & Advani, 2021), the team decided to focus on specific tasks and scenarios with which students struggle.

The repository had multiple sections containing "guides" for students facing situations in which cultural and social isolation most often manifests. If, for instance, visiting students had difficulty interacting with cashiers at a store, students can refer to a collection of guides that cover Czech social etiquette in stores and basic language tips. Additionally, a guide may have listed behavior considered rude or disrespectful in a Czech tram that Americans may not be aware of. The team consulted CIEE staff members who are proficient in the Czech language while creating the reference material to ensure that the information was accurate and relevant.

### **3.3 Developing an Accessible Resource**

The third objective was to develop an accessible and easy-to-use resource for future study abroad students to access. The team originally had the option to display the data through a website, mobile application, or paper-based guide. To decide which one to develop, the team explored several factors and constraints. The team decided against a mobile application as it would have required the team to develop two different apps to account for different mobile phones, such as Apple and Android phones, which was not feasible given the seven-week time constraint. A paper-based guide was also not as feasible as it would not be easily accessible for students if students damaged or misplace, and it would be difficult to keep up to date as it would have required updating online and then re-printing and redistributing. Ultimately, the team decided on a website, as it was the most feasible based on time constraints, upkeep, and accessibility.

#### **3.3.1 Website Development**

To ensure the created website is sustainable for many years to come, the team decided to use a modern and widely used framework for its development. For the frontend, the data that the user interacts with, such as a button, the team decided to use ReactJS as it is frequently used for website development at the time of writing. For the backend, the data that processes input from the user from the frontend, the team decided to use Express.js because it simply communicates with the frontend software. Furthermore, it is very simple to further develop and easy to understand because of the framework structure.

During the development process, the team kept a mobile-friendly focus on how to present the content. The team achieved this by using large buttons and hyperlinks that users on smaller-sized phone screens can easily click on. The team also decided to make some style changes when

users access the website from larger devices, such as a laptop, such as making two items show up in one row, compared to only one item per row on mobile devices. The color scheme was a simple choice for the team, as CIEE provided their branding guide which included the colors they used for the organization's primary website (Appendix G). The team also carefully considered the development of the management page for CIEE staff. This is because not all of the staff are well-versed in programming websites. This made it crucial for the team to make the management page as intuitive and user-friendly as possible, so CIEE staff could continue to use and modify the website once the team left Prague at the end of the IQP.

### **3.3.2 Testing Website with a Focus Group**

To ensure that the website was easy to use, the team then conducted a focus group, which allowed us to find commonalities on what users like and do not like about the website and gave the team insight into how users will approach the website and common issues with design or information placement. The team reached out to students in their Prague Project Center IQP cohort inquiring about joining the focus group. The team conducted the focus group on December 10th in the lobby of Aparthotel Susa. The focus group consisted of six people, two women and four men. At the start of the focus group, the team set a five-minute timer in which participants spent navigating the website without instruction from the team. The purpose of not providing instructions was to simulate a student entering the website with no prior knowledge of how it works, therefore eliminating any bias or assumptions the team and the participants could have about the usage and ease of the website.

The team then asked students to interact with the website in whatever manner they wanted. The participants verbally articulated their opinions about what they were seeing and doing while agreeing or disagreeing with the students around them. These thoughts included

their opinion on the ease of the website, and their likes and dislikes of website mechanisms, and visual layout of the website. After the students went through the website, the team asked them a variety of open-ended questions referenced in Appendix E. The team recorded these thoughts in a table to find common factors that the team needed to address regarding the website (Appendix F).

After the focus group, the team came together and coded the data. The team worked to understand the opinions of users on the website, what functionalities and mechanisms worked and were easy to find and use, and which ones need improvements. The team then adjusted the website using data collected from the focus group as a guide. The team adjusted the displayed content on the website for better readability, changing colors that were distracting, and fixing the layout on mobile phones. The team then finalized the functioning prototype with all achievable mechanisms given time constraint. The team left complex comments in the recommendations report for future maintainers to further research and implement.

After the team finalized the prototype, the team then discussed their work with their sponsor, CIEE, about upkeep and any further testing required to keep the website sustainable and useful for future students. The team developed a guidebook of website maintenance tips that their sponsor CIEE could use in the future when they desire to update the website.

### **3.4 Gantt Chart**

Figure 3.2 contains the Gantt chart the team used in the Czech Republic during B term to organize and complete tasks to reach our project goal. The team organized the chart into the eight weeks they worked on the project, with each week containing its five weekdays. On the left side of the chart, the team organized tasks into categories, which then have a section for the specific task completed. When a team member worked on a task, they checked the day in the row

with the corresponding task to make it green. On the right side of the chart, there is a counter for how many days the team has spent on tasks to ensure the team distributes our work evenly enough for our important tasks.

Category	Task	10/24-10/28					10/31-11/4					11/7-11/11					11/14-11/18					11/21-11/25					11/28-12/2					12/5-12/9					12/12-12/16					Days spent
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri						
Data Collection	Conduct Interviews with CIEE Guides																																				3 days					
Deliverable Development	Create Frontend of Website																																				21 days					
Deliverable Development	Create Backend of Website																																				12 days					
Deliverable Development	Test website usability																																				1 days					
Deliverable Development	Finalize website with collected data																																				4 days					
Preparation	Contact CIEE for resources																																				3 days					
Project	Modify background chapter																																				18 days					
Project	Modify methods chapter																																				14 days					
Project	Modify intro chapter																																				6 days					
Project	Modify results chapter																																				12 days					
Project	Modify recommendations chapter																																				4 days					
Project	Meeting with sponsors																																				8 days					
Project	Final Presentation																																				9 days					
Pereparation	Create and Modify Survey																																				6 days					
Pereparation	Create and Modify Interviews																																				4 days					
Pereparation	Create and Modify Focus Group																																				2 days					
Data Collection	Run Website Focus Group																																				1 days					
Data Analyzation	Analyze Website Focus Group Data																																				2 days					
Project	Meet with advisors																																				11 days					
Project	Weekly Presentation																																				11 days					

Figure 3.2 Screenshot of our Gantt chart which contains our progress throughout B term

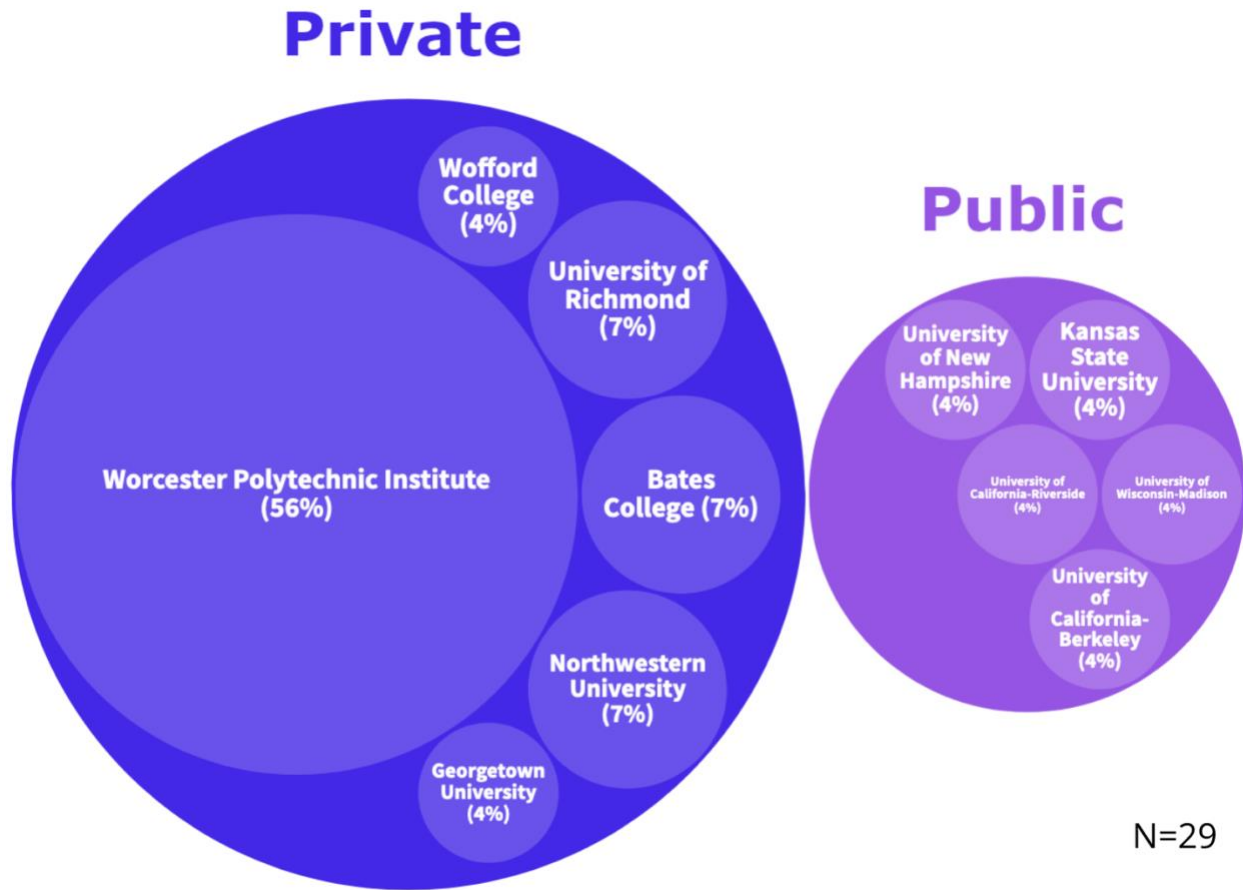


## **4.0 Results and Analysis**

After implementing and analyzing the proposed methods, the team identified three barriers that exacerbated social and cultural isolation. First, the team identified cultural isolation challenges for students. Next, the team pinpointed social isolation factors for students within their cohort and Prague as a whole. Lastly, the team looked at how the emotional states of students and their relationship to the social and cultural isolation factors previously identified. This chapter presents these findings in greater detail and includes isolation scenarios for the website and ideas for its longevity.

### **4.1 Preparedness for Cultural Isolation**

The team identified cultural isolation factors by surveying students studying abroad in Prague and interviewing CIEE guides. The survey remained open for 26 days, beginning on November 2nd, 2022 and ending on November 28th, 2022, resulting in 41 responses, of which the team discarded 11 incomplete responses. The survey was split evenly between males and females with an age range of 18 to 21+. The university origin of the respondents that reported are listed in Figure 4.1. The team also completed five interviews with CIEE guides to discuss differences in culture and socializing between Czechs and Americans and to solicit suggestions for American students to help them better adapt to Prague culture and society.



*Figure 4.1 Percentage of students who attend private schools vs public school.*

Regarding preparedness, many students learn Czech history, research cultural norms, and receive training from CIEE for the navigation of the city. However, they remain unprepared in many everyday scenarios, such as interacting with professors in academic settings, servers at restaurants, and cashiers at stores. Several students also agree that understanding basic words and phrases would help them in integrating, as well as understanding financial information, such as tipping culture.

### 4.1.1 Gauging Preparedness to Experience New Cultures

The team asked students (N=30) what they did to prepare before coming abroad and how often they prepared. While the majority of students (83%) reported that they learned some Czech history less than (10%) reported learning “often,” while 43% indicated a moderate amount of learning and the rest (30%) said they “rarely” learned about Czech history (Figure 4.2).

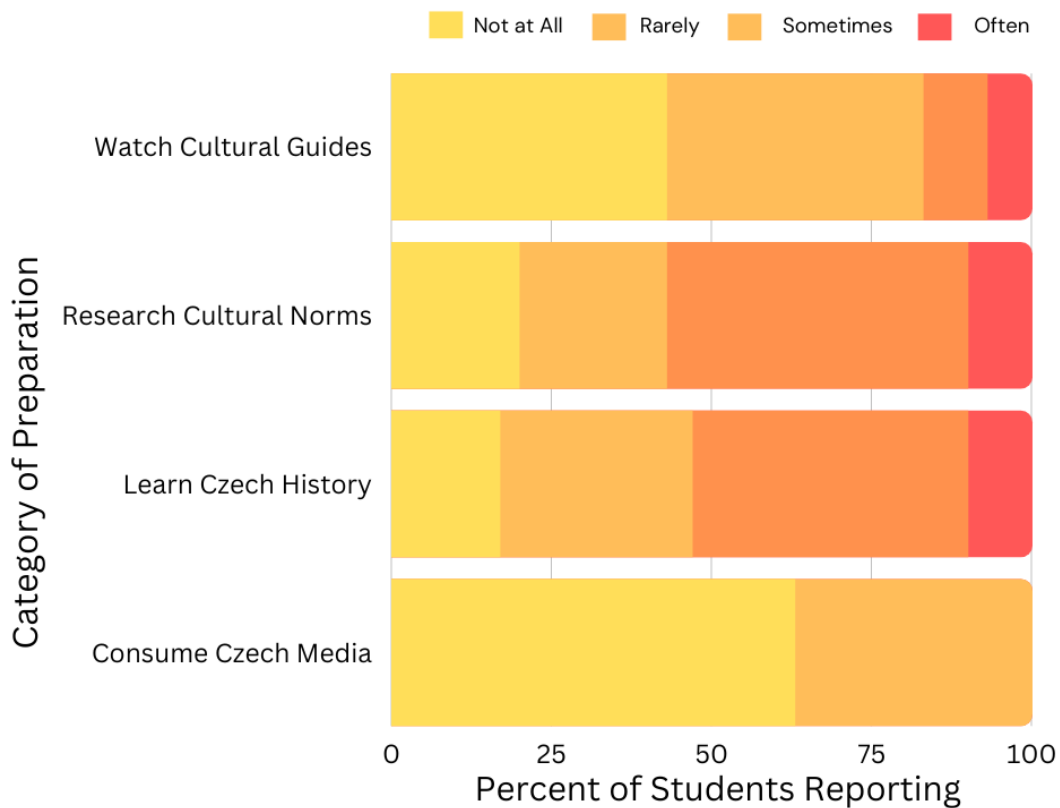


Figure 4.2 Modes of Preparation and Frequency

The second most common mode of preparation for students was researching cultural norms (80%) with 47% reporting that “sometimes” they researched Czech cultural norms and another 10% reporting they “often” engaged in this kind of research. On the other hand, very few students watched cultural guides to prepare for their trip with 40% reporting they rarely watched guides and 43% reporting they never watched them. Finally, the majority of students (63%) reported not

engaging with Czech media, such as Czech television shows and music, and the other 37% reporting they only rarely engaged with it.

From the figure above, the team gained several critical insights. The team discovered that the majority of students learn about Czech history and Czech cultural norms, which is consistent with our background research that learning the history of a country also allows students to learn how those cultural norms emerged within society (Starr-Glass, 2014). A major finding was that most students do not prepare by engaging with Czech media to go abroad. As discussed in the Background chapter, only a small minority of the U.S. population speaks Czech, so it can be that students do not know methods of accessing that media (Dietrich & Hernandez, n.d.). There is also no significant incentive for American students to learn Czech fluently as Czech is a language only used in the Czech Republic rather than multiple places such as Spanish.

#### **4.1.2 Identifying Level of Cultural Preparation for Food and Dining Scenarios**

The team's analysis of survey data also unveiled that students felt unprepared to face the cultural challenges of scenarios related to food and dining. Figure 4.3 visualizes the relative preparedness respondents felt facing a set of scenarios while in Prague. As shown in the figure, 76% of respondents felt unprepared to interact with a server at a restaurant and 60% of respondents reporting that they felt unprepared for checking out at a store. When answering an open-response question asking about challenging interactions in Prague, three respondents indicated that going to grocery stores was difficult because of issues finding the correct products and paying. There are several cultural factors that respondents identified as contributing to this lack of preparedness. Six respondents wrote about being unaware of particular etiquette when purchasing food. For instance, tipping was a particular source of confusion, with one respondent saying that "you'll get trapped into it as an American." Three respondents also described having to adjust to the use of tap cards

in the Czech Republic as opposed to using chip cards. One respondent mentioned that “Tap cards are used almost exclusively [in Prague] ... having a chip card makes transactions different and harder.” These cultural struggles were a symptom of the overarching theme of a lack of cultural preparation in visiting students. Additionally, the findings suggest that study abroad organizations often overlook these nuanced cultural challenges of everyday life.

### Ranking of Student Preparedness in Facing Scenarios by Percentage N=25

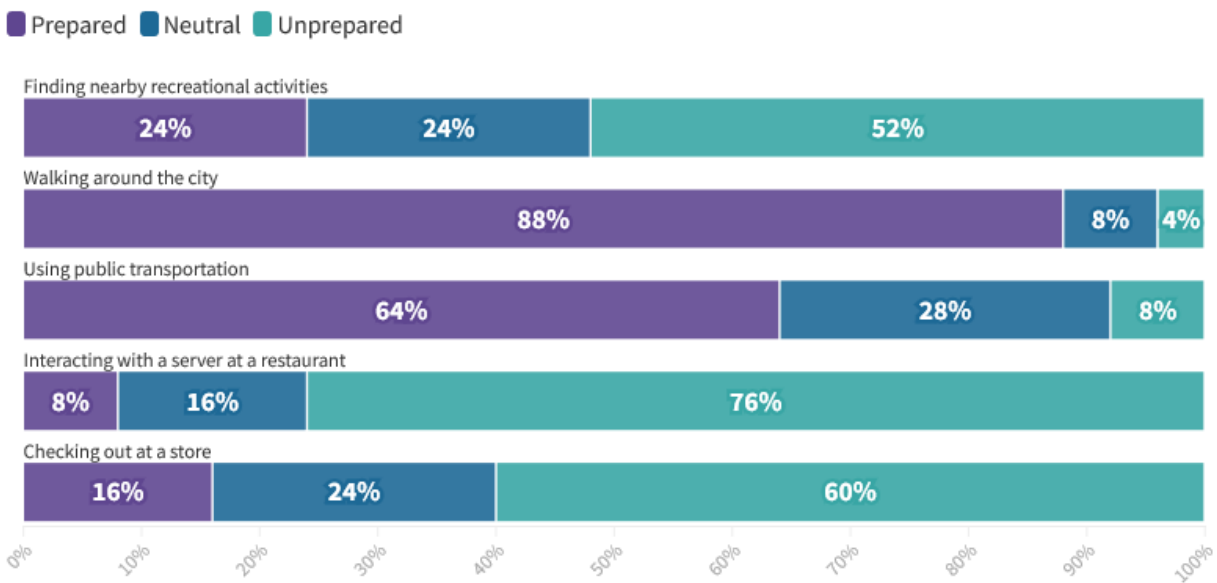


Figure 4.3 Ranking preparedness in facing scenarios

#### 4.1.3 Assessing Preparation for Navigation

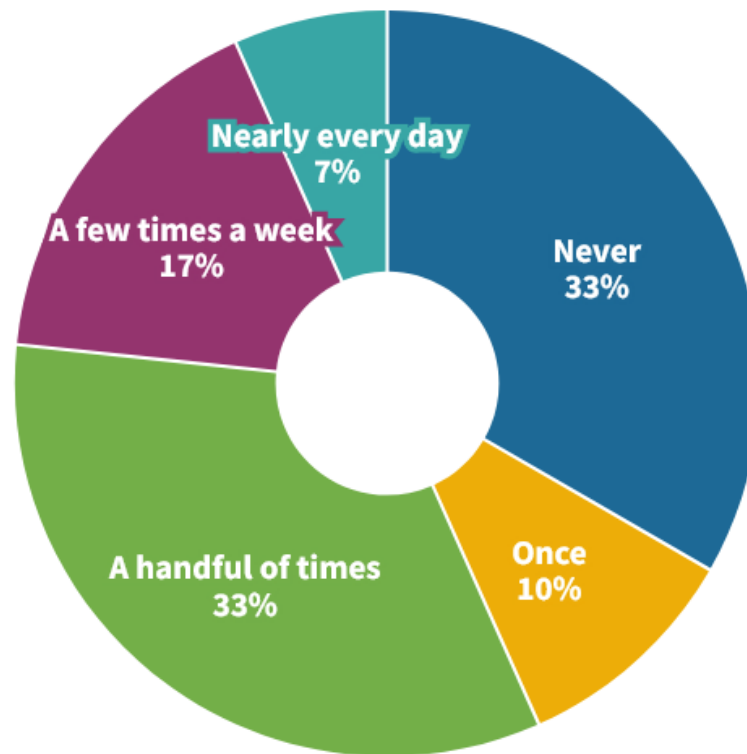
While students struggled in certain scenarios regarding their environment, they showed proficiency in approaching others. As mentioned previously, survey data visualized in Figure 4.3 showed that, in general, survey respondents identified being well prepared to navigate throughout the city. Eighty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they were prepared to walk around Prague, with only 4% indicating they were unprepared to do so. Additionally, 64% reported they were prepared to use public transportation in the city, with only 8% reporting that they were

unprepared to do so. This likely explains why only 37% of survey respondents felt that video guides on the public transportation system of Prague would be beneficial for their cultural and social immersion (Figure 4.9). All five of the CIEE guides the team interviewed mentioned that they accompany visiting students throughout Prague during the first few days of their stay in the city, first meeting the students at the airport and then leading them to their housing. The guides also described how their responsibilities included helping students orient themselves in the city with public transportation and clearing up any confusion students might have. Additionally, guides said that students go on a neighborhood walk with the guides at the beginning of their stay, which gives them an overview of the stores near their residence. This suggests that CIEE's method for helping students learn how to navigate the city is highly effective and can serve as a reference for how to support students in other scenarios where they experienced more difficulty.

#### **4.1.4 Evaluating Language Preparation**

Survey results also revealed that students did not engage in a significant amount of Czech language learning prior to their arrival in Prague with only 33% of respondents practicing Czech more than a handful of times before their trip (Figure 4.4). This lack of significant Czech language preparation is evident in respondents' poor Czech proficiency at the time of taking the survey. When asked to evaluate their Czech ability, no respondent considered themselves conversational or fluent in Czech. Only 30% indicated that they were at an intermediate level, with the remaining 70% only knowing one or two words and phrases. This lack of preparation and proficiency in Czech had practical implications for students. Eight respondents cited talking to servers and cashiers as a difficult interaction, and two respondents indicated that talking to cashiers who do not speak English was a particularly challenging task. Students recognized that their lack of proficiency in the Czech language negatively affected their cultural immersion. Survey results

revealed that 100% of respondents indicated that learning basic Czech phrases would assist them in cultural integration, signaling how significantly the language barrier contributes to the difficulties visiting students have bridging cultural boundaries and suggesting that language courses at CIEE be part of a more integrated approach.



*Figure 4.4 How Often Visiting Students Practiced the Czech Language Before Arriving in Prague (N=30)*

#### **4.1.5 Discerning Academic Differences Between Czech and American Students**

Without awareness of academic culture at universities, American exchange students might experience isolation from Czech students and professors. As noted by 80% of the CIEE guides, American students tend to be more open about asking questions, even what they might consider “stupid questions.” On the other hand, many Czech students will check multiple resources before they go to their professor for help. One guide noted that a professor told her to leave his office hours for bringing up a stupid question. When asked when the appropriate time is to ask questions

of professors, another guide stated, “have a look [at the textbook] if the inferred information is not there, I can ask my friends and my schoolmates, and then I'm going to ask the teacher” (Interview #5, Personal communication, November 22, 2022). Though the four guides mentioned that many professors discourage “stupid questions” and prefer to lecture, it is important to note that two guides reported that there are some professors that will help with any question that a student asks.

Culturally, American universities structure courses to encourage class discussion and questions, whereas research suggests that Czech students have an expectation to remain formal in universities (Chejnová, 2015). This difference in culture can affect students studying at Charles University through CIEE in how they engage with other students and faculty. Whereas Americans might find any relevant question to be valid, Czech students and professors could find them to be “stupid questions” based on how readily the student can find the answer in textbooks or with other students. With there being an expectation to be polite to professors, the team can infer that a “stupid question” can be viewed as impolite to the professor. Different cultural norms in academia can affect how professors and Czech students view American students. This is consistent with survey results in which 84% of students indicated that cultural norm education would help them integrate in Czech culture and society. Preparation on this cultural gap could help prevent American students from speaking or behaving while in a Czech course.

## **4.2 Social Challenges for Visiting Students**

Through analyzing the data from interviews and surveys, the team identified social challenges that can propagate social isolation in American students while in the Czech Republic. The first finding surrounds the American cohort and how cliques can affect students. The second finding is about recreation and how students want recommendations related to social interactions.



The last subsection explores American social interactions with Prague locals and the findings the team could draw from them.

#### 4.2.1 Pinpointing Issues with Intra-cohort Dynamics

To identify social isolation challenges, the team relied on survey questions about barriers to acclimating to the new environment of the Czech Republic. The team first looked at the emotional states of students, focusing on the negative emotions of homesickness, loneliness, and sadness. Half of respondents reported feeling homesickness for several days (N=24). Forty-seven percent reported feeling loneliness and sadness for several days (N=26). More than 1/3 of students don't feel any homesickness, loneliness, or sadness, and of students who do report these emotions, they tend to only last for several days. Only 12% percent of students felt homesickness for over half of their days abroad and 8% reported that they felt loneliness and sadness for over half of their days (Figure 4.5) While around half of respondents felt at least one of the negative emotions, the feelings are not prevalent over the majority of students' time abroad.

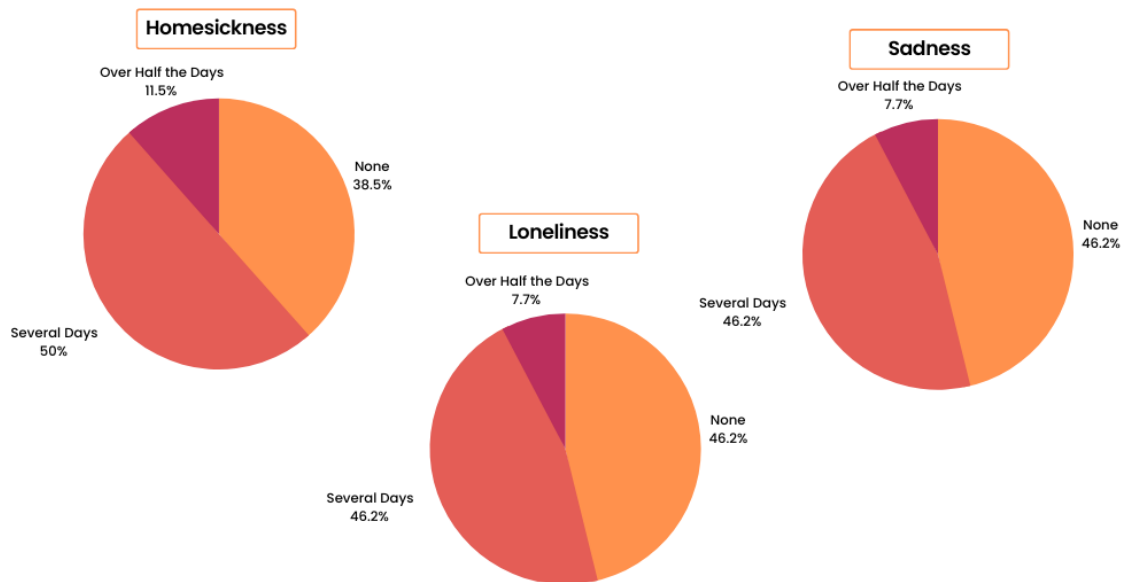
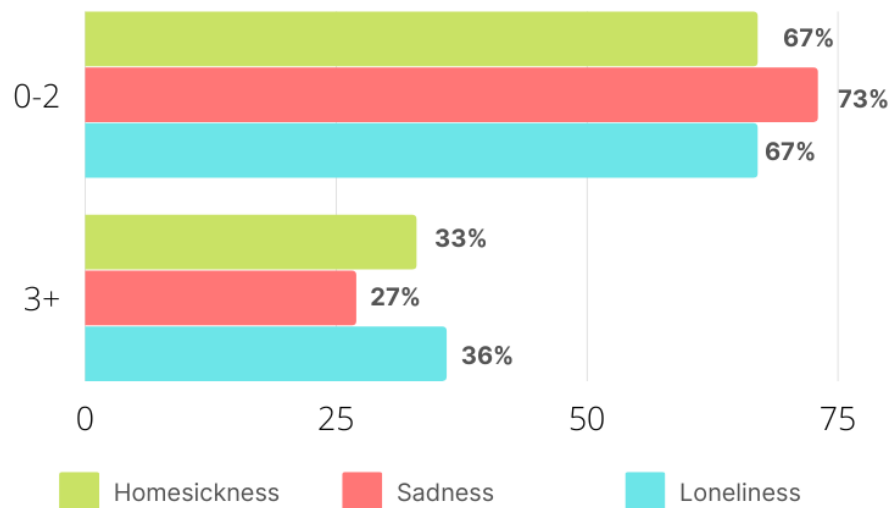


Figure 4.5 Frequency of homesickness, loneliness, and sadness

Looking at students’ emotional state and what could affect it, a major theme of cliques emerged. As noted in the Background chapter, a strong connection to the American cohort can help support students and mitigate symptoms of homesickness (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014). In contrast, a lack of connection with the American cohort could foster homesickness as students might feel lonelier and sadder without a group of students to identify with (Jessup-Anger & Aragonés, 2013). Of the nine respondents to an open-ended question about difficulties meeting people, 44% reported issues of isolation from cliques within their cohort. Figure 4.6 shows the answers in relation to how often they experience homesickness, loneliness, and sadness. Students who knew two or less students reported more homesickness (67%), loneliness (73%), and sadness (67%) (N=15). The figure shows that students who knew 3 or more other students prior to coming abroad reported less homesickness (33%), sadness (27%), or loneliness (36%) (N=11).



*Figure 4.6 Percent of Negative Emotions Reported Relating to Number of People Previously Known*

The emotional state of students compared to how many people they knew can shed light on how intra-cohort dynamics can affect students and how connection with other students is necessary to

mitigate isolation. However, while students reported a range of negative emotions, such as loneliness, homesickness, and sadness, they also reported feeling other emotions. Out of 26 respondents, 90% reported feelings of happiness and excitement for over half of their days abroad. Figure 4.7 shows how many students felt anxious, overwhelmed, stressed, or exhausted over half of their days abroad. The figure shows that almost half of students (46%) felt exhausted over half of their days abroad while 27% felt feelings of anxiety, 19% felt overwhelmed, and 4% of students reported feeling very stressed.

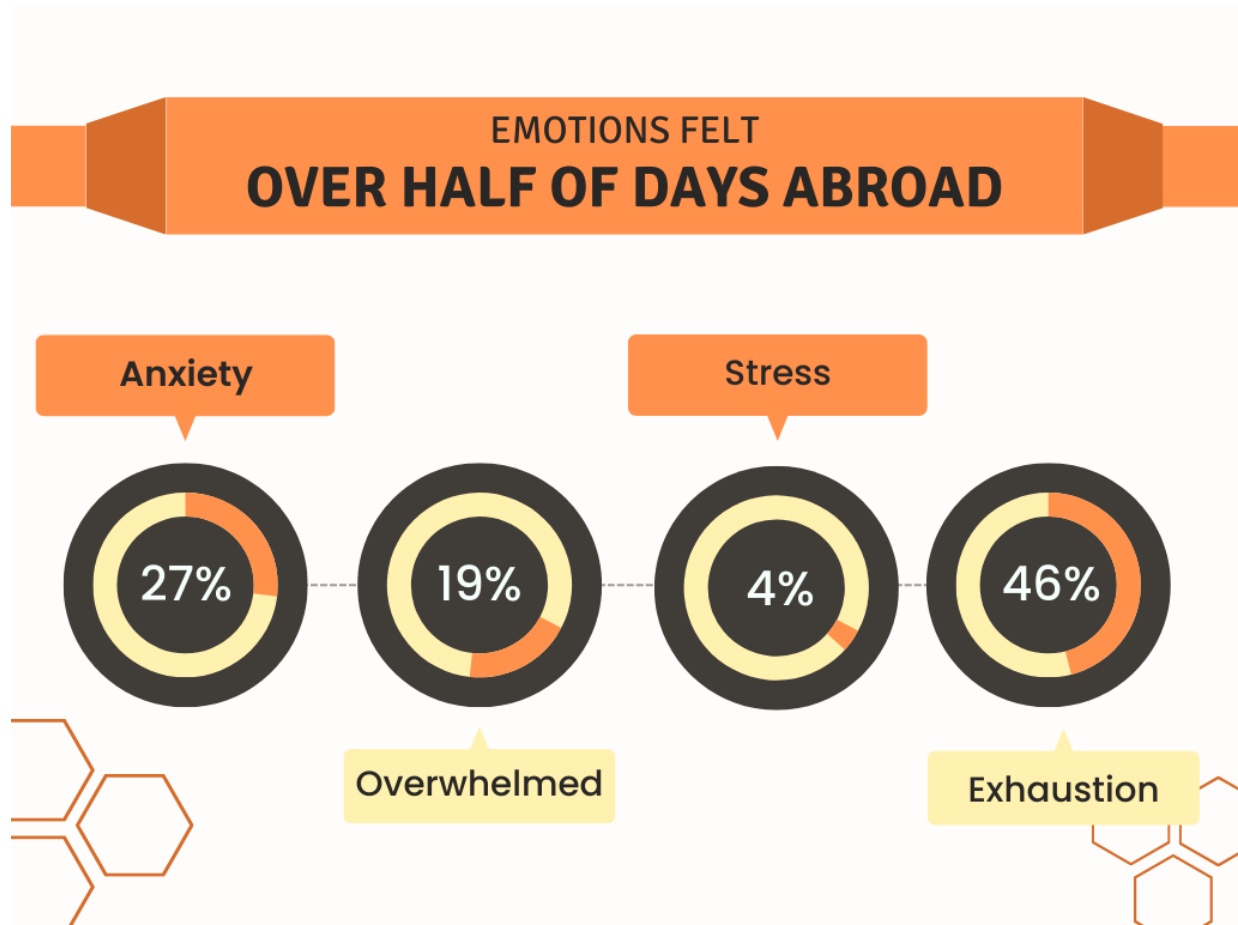


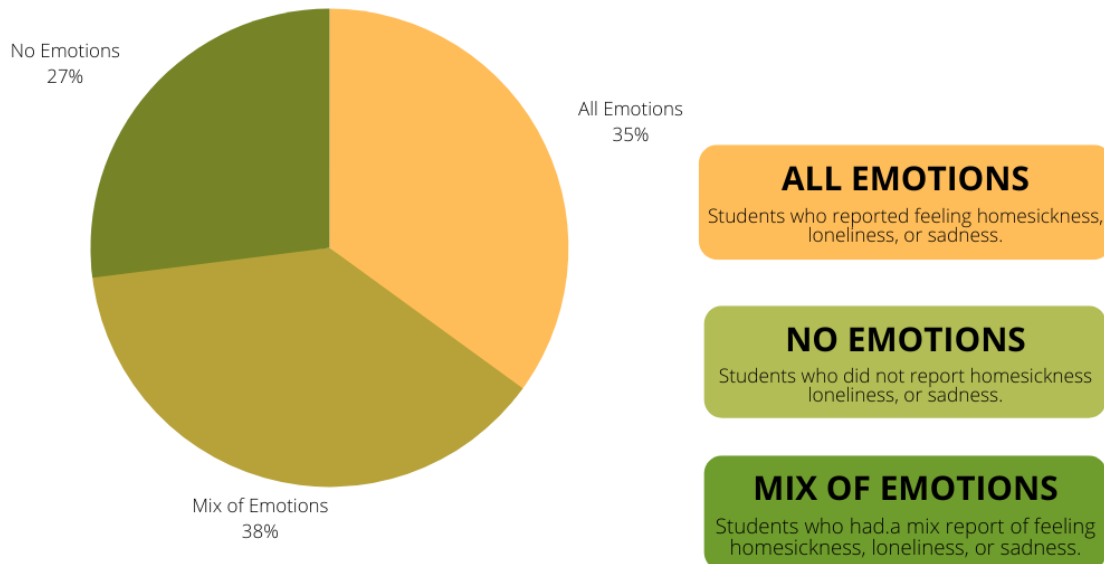
Figure 4.7 Emotions Felt Over Half of Days Abroad

The team gained valuable insights from the above findings. The more students a person knows prior to their study abroad experience, the less likely they are to report feelings of loneliness,

sadness, and homesickness. However, with cliques being a barrier to social integration, it could be that students who know each other prior to coming to Prague tend to stick together, making it harder for others to adjust socially and meet new people. This is important for CIEE to understand as they can implement programs that get students from different schools together to break up cliques. The team also found that many students also felt exhausted or anxious in over half of their days abroad. However, the team attributes this to schoolwork, tests, and other everyday factors that exist outside of the study abroad experience. This is important data for CIEE to note as they should be aware how common students report exhaustion and anxiousness when studying abroad.

#### **4.2.2 Analyzing Homesickness, Loneliness, and Sadness**

With the relationship between homesickness, loneliness, and sadness concerning how many members of their cohort students knew prior to studying abroad, the team further explored the connection between the three emotions (Figure 4.8). Only 38% of students felt at least one of the emotions but not all. For the rest of the respondents, 35% reported feeling homesickness, loneliness, and sadness, and 27% reported never feeling an instance of the three in their time abroad.



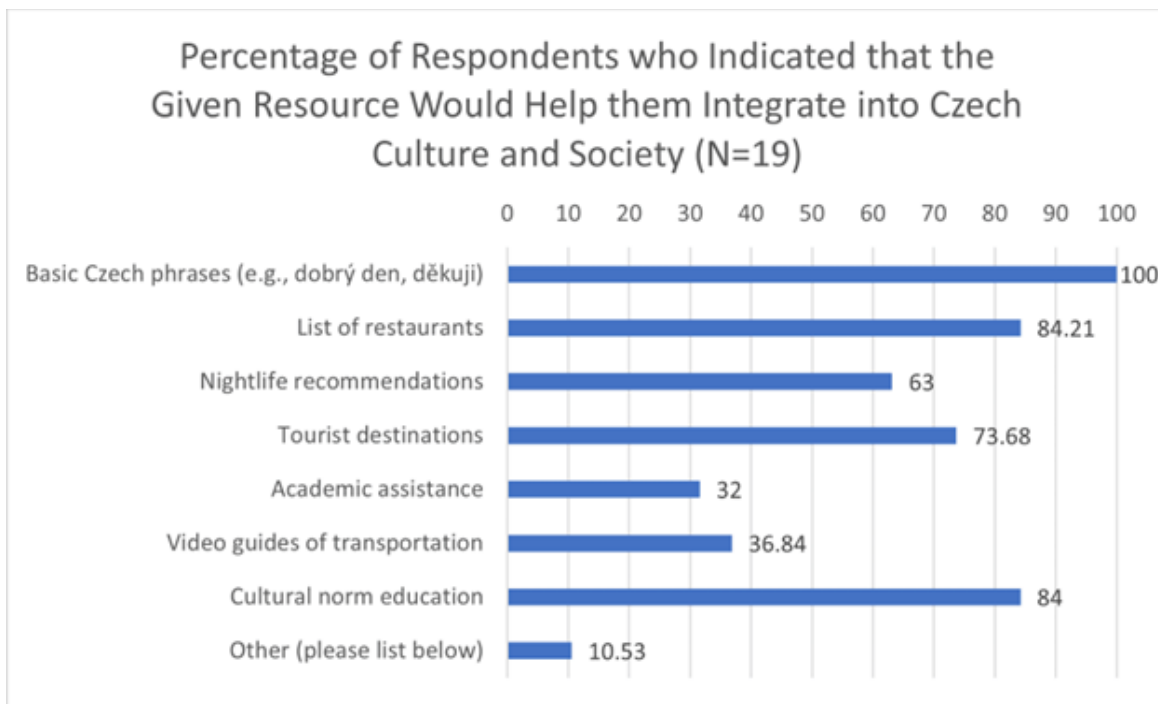
*Figure 4.8 Emotion Reporting in Terms of Homesickness, Loneliness, and Sadness*

There are many factors that can contribute to whether a student feels homesick, lonely, or sad. The team can infer a connection between the three emotions. Over half of respondents felt all or none listed. This is important for CIEE as if they target one of the negative emotions, they are targeting them all. A strong connection with the American cohort can lessen the number of isolating emotions a student feels.

### **4.2.3 Identifying Difficulties with Finding Recreational Activities**

Exploring the different recreational activities of Prague can allow students to culturally immerse themselves within the city. However, the team found that students often had trouble finding recreational activities around Prague. Figure 4.9 shows that 52% of survey respondents felt unprepared to find recreational activities, suggesting that this was a particular area of difficulty for students. When asked what would help students (N=19) integrate into Czech culture and society, 84% reported a list of restaurant recommendations, 74% reported recommendations for tourist destinations, and 63% reported nightlife recommendations. Two (40%) of the CIEE guides

interviewed also noted that students come to them asking for recommendations on where to find good restaurants and recreation, corroborating this finding. All five of the CIEE guides in interviews suggested a wide array of locations they personally frequent throughout the city, including tearooms, parks, bars, clubs, and gyms. Each of these locations had its own unique identity that had distinctly different appeals.



*Figure 4.9 Usefulness of resources in integrating into Czech culture and society*

#### **4.2.4 Evaluating Recommendations for Different Personalities**

From the perspective of all the CIEE guides, every cohort has a varying number of personalities with different interests and mindsets. One guide noted that some students only ask for recommendations on the best parties or best alcohol recommendations. Other students inquire about the history and culture of the city and indicate their interest in learning about Prague. Some students do not approach guides at all and choose to do their own thing (personal communication, Interview # 5, November 22, 2022). When the team asked these guides the common recommendations that they give to all these types of students in the cohort, most listed similar

recommendations such as bars and clubs. The team found through these interviews and survey data that different personality types need different recommendations for immersing in Prague rather than recommendations just tailored towards more outgoing people. For example, one student might like a club as a suggestion, whereas another student might like a tea shop. This notion supports the different suggestions that CIEE guides gave in the interviews when the team prompted for personal recommendations. Some guides gave recommendations for places such as bars, and more shy guides gave recommendations for more reserved people, such as parks. However, all guides noted that students tend to ask for recommendations tailored to their interests. Two guides (40%) mentioned that in the first few days there are usually students who engage with them and ask questions, and there are also students that are quiet that do not engage with the guides at all. Many students will ask what the words for “beer” and “wine” are in Czech and ask for recommendations for the best clubs and pubs. However, this might not reflect the collective interests of the cohort. It is important to be aware that students might need prompting to receive recommendations that match their interests. This is also an important finding to consider when developing a website tailored with suggestions for American students.

When asked in the survey how often respondents interact with their cohort outside of academics, 80% of respondents reported interacting often with only around 10% reporting irregularly interacting. CIEE guides noted that it was a comfort to many students to have Americans to relate to within their cohort. They acknowledged that the transition to Prague can be challenging for students and that it is easier to connect with their fellow Americans rather than meet new people in Prague. American students might not feel comfortable with locals as they might not feel able to connect and relate as easily. While the American cohort can decrease social isolation, it can also increase cultural isolation. When asked in an open-ended question about how

comfortable respondents are with interacting with Czech locals, no respondents reported feeling “a lot” or a “great deal” comfortable with 88% reporting a “little” (N=26). Every guide noted that Czech people can be more reserved and harder to approach, which could be jarring to an American student who might engage in small talk with strangers, or more simply smiling at a passerby. Though some Czech people may not be as approachable as Americans, every guide noted the importance that befriending a Czech would have in helping American students to immerse themselves socially in the Czech Republic. These interview findings support the survey results suggesting that students tend to stay within the American cohort social bubble.

Students might receive appropriate suggestions for immersing in Prague, but if they remain in their American cohort they might not be as inclined to reach out and meet new people and try new things. Thus, the American cohort can help students adjust to Prague as they can relate with a group of people. Dialectically, the American cohort can prevent students from socially interacting with locals and immersing in Prague. This is something that is notable for CIEE when tailoring social and cultural programs for students. This is important for students to balance social and cultural integration; students should monitor their dependence on the American cohort.

### **4.3 Limitations and Future Research**

A small sample size and limited demographic questions made it impossible for the team to find correlations between respondents’ demographics and how strongly they felt isolated during their study abroad program.

Only 13 of the 30 survey responses (45%) were from non-WPI students. The team attributes the low response rate to opening the survey the day before CIEE had a week-long break. As students were not in school, many might have missed the email or ignored it. This also resulted in a significant selection bias due to the unique study abroad experience that WPI students have



compared to typical CIEE students. The respondents from WPI knew many people coming to Prague with them because they had been working together for seven weeks prior. This could have made them less susceptible to being lonely compared to students in a traditional study abroad program, thus skewing the data. The team also encountered problems with respondents completing the survey, so some questions have smaller sample sizes than the total number of respondents to the survey. The survey also included open-ended responses, which received fewer responses than closed-ended responses, which went as low as nine responses compared to the thirty survey responses. One limitation of the team's research into identifying challenging scenarios for students is that the team did not interview CIEE students studying abroad themselves. This limited the qualitative data that the team could collect from students. Answers to open-response survey questions were valuable and effective data during the analysis process, but they lacked the depth and nuance that the transcripts of the interviews with the CIEE guides provided. One weakness is that the survey only gauged the preparedness students felt for scenarios relative to other scenarios, rather than asking respondents to evaluate all of them individually on the same scale. Because of this, it is difficult to discern the exact extent to which students struggled with each scenario. From these deficiencies, the team learned how useful it is to gather varied types of data in varied contexts. A very limited amount of data on a key aspect of a project is often not enough, even if the data is high-quality. To draw strong conclusions, it is important to consider multiple perspectives on an issue. In addition, the recommendations that respondents offer can be highly dependent on their personal experience. Because of this, implementing these recommendations may not necessarily be an effective way to improve the project's central problem for the general population it affects.

### **4.3.1 Interview Limitations**

The team was also only able to conduct five interviews during the seven- week term, which limits the number of perspectives that the team could have used to lead to more findings. Additionally, the team's recording system produced some inaccurate transcriptions which may have been due to the background noise the audio captured as the team conducted interviews or the accents of the guides resulting in the transcription software transcribing inaccurate answers to interview questions. Another limitation was that some of the notes taken during the interviews did not have a lot of detail, thereby limiting the team's ability to fully analyze interview transcripts.

### **4.3.2 Future Research**

For future groups conducting this research, the team recommends collecting more demographic information on students in surveys. More demographic information could allow more findings to connect with each other. Within surveys, the team recommends inquiring more about recommendations for website content. Rather than focusing on solely identifying isolation factors and scenarios in the surveys as well as focusing on what helps the students mitigate homesickness through recommendations. Additionally, for better data collection in the future, the team recommends sending out surveys earlier in the term and to more people, as well as being aware of the CIEE academic schedule. Future teams could also expand their data collection to beyond CIEE students; there are other study abroad agencies that host students from the United States in Prague, such as Charles University and New York University. By reaching more students, future teams can collect more data on how to best support students in Prague.

For a future team servicing the website, the team recommends spending time with the visuals of the website to make it more appealing to CIEE students. As per the focus group, multiple respondents agreed that seeing a search engine on the website would make it easier to find

information. Additionally, the current content on the site consists of information from surveys and interview recommendations. This content might not be relevant in the future, or there simply may not be enough of it. Thus, the team recommends CIEE add more content to the website via future research with surveys and interviews. From analyzing the results, the team recommends that CIEE tailors more content towards students of varying personalities from future research. Participants of the focus group requested the team to display content in an easier-to-use way, such as using a table in the language preparation and phone number sections for better layouts. The team recommends continuing to follow this guidance as the website grows and becomes more complex because being easy-to-use has been the guiding principle throughout its development.

## 5.0 Recommendations and Conclusions

A major finding from the Results section was that students tend to form tight knit groups before and at the beginning of programs, and that students who knew fewer people before coming abroad reported more feelings of loneliness. To counteract this, the team recommends that CIEE try to get students to communicate with other students outside of their social group, through means like a text group chat, a Slack group, or a Facebook group, prior to traveling abroad. This can help students make friends and build comfort with the new social dynamic when they go abroad, thus preparing students for the social adjustment in Prague. Additionally, students reported interest in learning basic Czech, and the team's research indicates that knowledge of the language can help students socially and culturally integrate in Prague. Thus, the team recommends that CIEE increase the advertising of their Czech language course to students. Advertising the benefits of this course could both encourage more students to take the course and encourage students to prepare for the language barrier prior to going to the Czech Republic.

The team recommends that CIEE creates subgroups out of the entire traveling cohort. These subgroups could engage in a diverse set of activities with an assigned CIEE guide to encourage student interaction between different schools and serve as a way for students to connect with a Czech peer. Through these subgroups, CIEE can introduce students to each other more intimately, which could lessen the issue with cliques brought up previously. It could also help introverts feel comfortable connecting with other students, give students the opportunity to find recreational activities that match their personality type, and allow students to get closer to their guide. A closer relationship with the Czech guides could help open American students to aspects of social and cultural life of Prague not found on common travel guides.

The team conducted research through surveys and interviews to determine isolation factors and scenarios that contribute to the social, cultural, and emotional challenges that students face when abroad in the Czech Republic. From the research, the team found various findings as mentioned in Results that the team used in the construction of the repository of the website. However, the team found that the limitations identified from the methods and results of the team's research to be cause for future research for the content of the repository and technical maintenance and improvement of the website.

## **Team Reflection**

Our time in Prague was a very rewarding one, but not without challenges. As a team, we learned how to compromise and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses and grow as team members. Being able to interact with other Czech students our age and get their insights into their education versus American education, their perspective on current events, and culturally how we differ and relate was very eye-opening! Our sponsors were very open to any ideas we had and were willing to work with us to make those ideas possible. All of us on the team experienced homesickness, loneliness, or troubles acclimating in some way, and working on a project to support others in the same position as us was a very unique experience. Having this database and being able to mitigate it in future students studying abroad is very meaningful. We are proud to leave our sponsors a website that can help support future students in Prague!

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## Appendix A: Survey Questions for Isolation Factors

This is a survey about supporting American exchange students abroad in the Czech Republic.

We are interested in your experiences studying abroad in the Czech Republic, including any challenges you encounter during your time here. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you have the right to skip any question or exit the survey at any time without cause. All responses will be recorded anonymously.

If you have any questions about this survey, contact our team at

gr-support-b22@wpi.edu.

**Q1** Do you consent to taking this survey?

Yes

No

Skip To: End of Survey If Q2 = No

In this section, we will be asking for demographic information.

**Q2** Are you studying abroad in the Czech Republic through CIEE?

Yes

No

**Q3** How old are you?

18-19

20-21

22+

**Q4** What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other/Prefer not to say

**Q5** What university are you coming from?

---

**Q6** How often do you travel within the United States?

Never

Rarely (not travel every year)

Sometimes (1-3 times per year)

Often (4+ times per year)

**Q7** How often do you leave the United States for travel?

Never

Rarely (not travel every year)

Sometimes (1-3 times per year)

Often (4+ times per year)

**Q8** Would you consider yourself more of an introvert or an extrovert?

- Introvert
- Extrovert

In this section, we will be evaluating your preparedness for the language, culture, and social life in Prague. If you lack clarification on a question select Not Applicable, write N/A, or leave it blank.

**Q9** To what extent did you engage in Czech language preparation before coming to Prague?

	None	Once	A handful of times	A few times a week	Nearly every day
Language app (Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University language classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private lessons/tutoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conversing with Czech-speaking family or friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q10** How often did you practice Czech language learning?

- Never
- Once

- A handful of times
- A few times a week
- Nearly every day

**Q11** How frequently did you engage in the following activities to prepare for the culture in Prague?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Watched Czech travel guides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Researched Czech cultural norms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learned about Czech history	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consumed Czech media (movies, music, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q12** How many other visiting American students within your study abroad program did you know prior to coming to the Czech Republic?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

In this section, we will be evaluating your current standing with the language, culture, and social life in Prague. If you lack clarification on a question, select Not Applicable, write N/A, or leave the question blank.

**Q13** How long have you been in the Czech Republic?

- Less than 1 week
- Between 1 week and 1 month
- 1-3 months
- 3+ months

**Q14** What is your current proficiency level with the Czech language?

- No words or phrases
- Basic (1-2 phrases/ words)
- Intermediate
- Conversational
- Fluent

**Q15** During the following time intervals of your study abroad experience, to which extent did you struggle to meet new people within the cohort you traveled abroad with?

	Not at all	A bit	Somewhat	A lot	N/A
Within 1 week after arrival	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between 1 week and 1 month after arrival	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1-3 months after arrival	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3+ months after arrival	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If **Q15** = A bit

Or **Q15** = Somewhat

Or **Q15** = A lot

**Q16** What are some factors that make it difficult to meet people within your study abroad group?

---

**Q17** How often do you interact with other visiting American students within your study abroad program outside of academics?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

**Q18** What are some things you have done to connect with people traveling through your study abroad program?

---

**Q19** In your time in the Czech Republic so far, how much have you experienced the emotions listed below?

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day	Every day
Homesickness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sadness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loneliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excitement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Happiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anxious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overwhelmed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhaustion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q20** Rank the following scenarios by how prepared you felt facing them, with 1 being the most prepared and 5 being the least prepared.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Checking out at a store
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interacting with a server at a restaurant
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using public transportation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Walking around the city
- \_\_\_\_\_ Finding nearby recreational activities

**Q21** Were there any other scenarios and/or places where you were not prepared with what to say or do?

---

**Q22** How much does the language barrier affect your social integration with people in Prague?

- Not at all
- A bit
- Somewhat
- A lot
- A great deal

**Q23** How comfortable do you feel interacting with Prague locals?

- Not at all
- A bit
- Somewhat
- A lot
- A great deal

Display This Question:

If **Q23** = Not at all

**Q24** Why don't you feel comfortable interacting with Prague locals?

---

Display This Question:

If **Q23** = A bit

**Q25** Why do you feel a bit comfortable interacting with Prague locals?

---

Display This Question:

If **Q23** = Somewhat

**Q26** Why do you feel somewhat comfortable interacting with Prague locals?

---

Display This Question:

If **Q23** = A lot

**Q27** Why do you feel very comfortable interacting with Prague locals?

---

Display This Question:

If **Q23** = A great deal

**Q28** Why do you feel extremely comfortable interacting with Prague locals?

---

**Q29** How different would you describe Czech cultural norms to American cultural norms?

- Completely different
- Somewhat different
- Somewhat same
- Completely same

**Q30** How socially immersed do you feel to Czech individuals your age?

- Completely isolated
- Isolated
- Somewhat isolated
- Neutral
- Somewhat immersed
- Immersed
- Completely immersed

**Q31** How often do you socialize with Czech individuals in your age group? If you do not go to one of the following locations, please select N/A.

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Almost every day	Every day	N/A
Restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Bar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Club	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Park	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If **Q31** = Other [ Several days ]

Or **Q31** = Other [ More than half the days ]

Or **Q31** = Other [ Almost every day ]

Or **Q31** = Other [ Every day ]

**Q32** What are the other place(s) that you socialize with Czech individuals in your age group?

---

In this section, we will ask you to look back and identify difficulties due to local social and cultural norms prior traveling to Prague. If you lack clarification on a question, select Not Applicable or write N/A.

**Q33** List interactions in which you did/said something that wasn't accepted or widely done here (e.g., tipping, using ketchup, etc.).

---

**Q34** List interactions you have struggled with while in Prague (e.g., talking with a cashier).

---

**Q35** What are some things you wish you had known before traveling to Prague?

---

**Q36** What are some things you have done that help to decrease isolation or feelings of homesickness?

---

**Q37** Check all the boxes of tools that would help you socially and culturally integrate and adapt to the language barrier.

Basic Czech phrases (e.g., dobrý den, děkuji)

List of restaurants

- Nightlife recommendations
  - Tourist destinations
  - Academic assistance
  - Video guides of transportation
  - Cultural norm education
  - Other (please list below)
-

# Appendix B: Qualitative Survey Scenario Data Coding

Suggestions

Cultural immersion

Social isolation

Homesickness

Language barrier

---

**Q37 - List interactions in which you did/said something that wasn't accepted or widely done here (e.g., tipping, using ketchup, etc.).**

- Forgetting to take my shoes off in a house
  - Meaning unit: “Forgetting to take my shoes off in a house”
  - Code: Forgetting to take off shoes in a home
  - Subcategory: Home life
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- Talking on public transportation
  - Meaning unit: “Talking on public transportation”
  - Code: Talking while on public transportation
  - Subcategory: Navigation
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- Smiling on the street, slouching on the tram, buying a larger amount of groceries
  - Meaning unit: “Smiling on the street”
  - Code: Smiling while walking on the street
  - Subcategory: Navigation
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “slouching on the tram”
  - Code: Slouching on the tram



- Subcategory: Navigation
- Category: Cultural immersion
- 
- Meaning unit: “buying a larger amount of groceries”
- Code: Buying lots of groceries
- Subcategory: Food and dining
- Category: Cultural immersion
- saying "to go". Czech people say "take away"
  - Meaning unit: “saying ‘to go’. Czech people say ‘take away’”
  - Code: Saying “to go” instead of “take away”
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- tipping, wearing comfortable clothing out (sweatpants / slippers)
  - Meaning unit: “tipping”
  - Code: Tipping
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - Meaning unit: “wearing comfortable clothing out (sweatpants / slippers)”
  - Code: Wearing casual clothing in public
  - Subcategory: Apparel
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- Saying ahoj to a worker
  - Meaning unit: “Saying ahoj to a worker”
  - Code: Saying ahoj in a professional setting
  - Subcategory: Basic Czech words and phrases
  - Category: Language barrier
- Tipping, you’ll get trapped into it as an American
  - Meaning unit: “Tipping, you’ll get trapped into it as an American”
  - Code: Encouraged to tip because of American nationality
  - Subcategory: Tipping
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- told the waiter to keep the 20% tip
  - Meaning unit: “told the waiter to keep the 20% tip”
  - Code: Unknowingly gave abnormally large tip
  - Subcategory: Tipping
  - Category: Cultural immersion

**Q38 - List interactions you have struggled with while in Prague (e.g., talking with a cashier).**

- **Asking for directions**
  - Meaning unit: “Asking for directions”
  - Code: Difficulty asking for directions
  - Subcategory: Navigation
  - Category: Language barrier
- **Finding new Czech friends**
  - Meaning unit: “Finding new Czech friends”
  - Code: Difficulty making Czech friends
  - Subcategory: Interacting with Czech people
  - Category: Social isolation
- **Talking to cashier, mailing something at post office**
  - Meaning unit: “Talking to cashier”
  - Code: Difficulty taking to cashier
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “mailing something at post office”
  - Code: Difficulty mailing through post office
  - Subcategory: Postal services
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- **Talking with anyone who didn't have a slight English background**
  - Meaning unit: “Talking with anyone who didn't have a slight English background”
  - Code: Difficulty communicating with people who were not proficient in English
  - Subcategory: Locals’ English proficiency
  - Category: Language barrier
- **Checking Out at the grocery store**
  - Meaning unit: “Checking Out at the grocery store”
  - Code: Difficulty checking out at grocery store
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- **talking to cashiers who don't speak english, reading the instructions on a pin pad when it is in czech, interacting with people who are not in a good mood**
  - Meaning unit: “talking to cashiers who don't speak english”
  - Code: Difficulty taking to cashier due to lack of English proficiency
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “reading the instructions on a pin pad when it is in czech”
  - Code: Difficulty reading Czech instructions on PIN pad
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores

- Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “interacting with people who are not in a good mood”
  - Code: Difficulty interacting with people in a bad mood
  - Subcategory: Social etiquette
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- talking with cashiers at grocery stores have been the most difficult, in many cases the cashiers do not speak english
  - Meaning unit: “talking with cashiers at grocery stores have been the most difficult, in many cases the cashiers do not speak english”
  - Code: Difficulty taking to cashier because many have a lack of English proficiency
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Language barrier
- I have struggled to find the right products at a grocery store and in checking out
  - Meaning unit: “I have struggled to find the right products at a grocery store and in checking out”
  - Code: Difficulty finding correct products and checking out at grocery store
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- Knowing how to pay at cafe/restaurant
  - Meaning unit: “Knowing how to pay at cafe/restaurant”
  - Code: Difficulty knowing how to pay for food
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- talking to server/cashier
  - Meaning unit: “talking to server/cashier”
  - Code: Difficulty talking to servers and cashiers
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Language barrier
- Ordering food at a restaurant, matching the clothing standards, adjusting my diet
  - Meaning unit: “Ordering food at a restaurant”
  - Code: Difficulty ordering food
  - Subcategory: Communicating at restaurants
  - Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “matching the clothing standards”
  - Code: Difficulty dressing to fit in
  - Subcategory: Apparel
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “adjusting my diet”
  - Code: Changing diet eating the food offered in Prague
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- People expecting that I can speak czech

- Meaning unit: “People expecting that I can speak czech”
  - Code: Difficulty adjusting to people expecting Czech language proficiency
  - Subcategory: Lack of Czech proficiency
  - Category: Language barrier
- Talking to cashiers, moving through large crowds and saying “pardon” with it not working
  - Meaning unit: “Talking to cashiers”
  - Code: Difficulty talking to cashiers
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “moving through large crowds”
  - Code: Difficulty moving through large crowds of people
  - Subcategory: Navigation
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “saying ‘pardon’ with it not working”
  - Code: Trying to say “pardon” but people not reacting as expected
  - Subcategory: Lack of Czech proficiency
  - Category: Language barrier
- I tried talking to a cashier at a thrift store and he knew very little english
  - Meaning unit: “I tried talking to a cashier at a thrift store and he knew very little english”
  - Code: Difficulty communicating with cashier who did not speak much English
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Language barrier
- Speaking with workers
  - Meaning unit: “Speaking with workers”
  - Code: Difficulty communicating with workers
  - Subcategory: Lack of Czech proficiency
  - Category: Language barrier
- cashing out at self-service
  - Meaning unit: “cashing out at self-service”
  - Code: Difficulty using self-checkout machine at stores
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- Supermarket, self-checkout, server at restaurant
  - Meaning unit: “Supermarket”
  - Code: Difficulty navigating supermarkets
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “self-checkout”
  - Code: Difficulty using self-checkout machine at stores

- Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “server at restaurant”
  - Code: Difficulty communicating with servers at restaurants
  - Subcategory: Communicating at restaurants
  - Category: Language barrier
- 

**Q39 - What are some things you wish you had known before traveling to Prague?**

- The use of the word "prosím", and how it can be useful in almost every public interaction. Also, I wish I had known that it's normal to feel homesickness or out of place. I felt this way for a really long time, like I didn't belong here, but it's only just started to change in the past few weeks (I've been here since June 2022).
  - Meaning unit: “The use of the word "prosím", and how it can be useful in almost every public interaction.”
  - Code: Prosím is an important and useful word
  - Subcategory: Basic Czech words and phrases
  - Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “it's normal to feel homesickness or out of place”
  - Code: Homesickness and feeling out of place is normal
  - Subcategory: Commonality of homesickness
  - Category: Homesickness
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “I felt this way for a really long time, like I didn't belong here, but it's only just started to change in the past few weeks (I've been here since June 2022).”
  - Code: Just starting to feel less homesick and out of place after months of being in Prague
  - Subcategory: Severity of homesickness
  - Category: Homesickness
- I feel like CIEE prepared me very well
  - Meaning unit: “CIEE prepared me very well”
  - Code: Feels prepared by CIEE
  - Subcategory: Current successes
  - Category: Suggestions

- The best nightlife is arguable in Prague
  - Meaning unit: “The best nightlife is arguable in Prague”
  - Code: There is no single best place for nightlife in Prague
  - Subcategory: Location recommendations
  - Category: Suggestions
- I should’ve done a little more cultural research
  - Meaning unit: “I should’ve done a little more cultural research”
  - Code: Needed to do more cultural research prior to arriving in Prague
  - Subcategory: Preparedness
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- Tap cards are used almost exclusively (having a chip card makes transactions different and harder), tipping is almost never expected and to avoid tourist restaurants (because they will force a tip), most places in old/new town are tourist traps (expensive), probably less than 50% of the locals speak english, laundromats do have dryers, don't rely on doing work at cafes (not spending money there is rude), water always costs money at restaurants
  - Meaning unit: “Tap cards are used almost exclusively... tipping is almost never expected”
  - Code: Tap cards are very common, tipping is rarely expected
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “avoid tourist restaurants (because they will force a tip), most places in old/new town are tourist traps (expensive)”
  - Code: Avoid tourist restaurants; most places in Old Town and New Town are tourist traps
  - Subcategory: Location recommendations
  - Category: Suggestions
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “probably less than 50% of the locals speak english”
  - Code: Less than about half of Prague locals speak English proficiently
  - Subcategory: Locals’ English proficiency
  - Category: Language barrier
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “laundromats do have dryers”
  - Code: Laundromats have dryers like in the U.S.
  - Subcategory: Cultural similarities
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “don't rely on doing work at cafes (not spending money there is rude)”
  - Code: Staying at a cafe to do work without spending money is rude
  - Subcategory: Social etiquette
  - Category: Cultural immersion
  - 
  - Meaning unit: “water always costs money at restaurants”

- Code: Unlike in the U.S., you have to pay for water at restaurants in Prague
  - Subcategory: Food and dining
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- general things to do and places to see never hurts
  - Meaning unit: “general things to do and places to see never hurts”
  - Code: Recommendations for recreational activities would be helpful
  - Subcategory: Location recommendations
  - Category: Suggestions
- more of the language
  - Meaning unit: “more of the language”
  - Code: Having more knowledge of the Czech language would be helpful
  - Subcategory: Language
  - Category: Suggestions
- How popular "tap card" are compared to using cash
  - Meaning unit: “How popular "tap card" are compared to using cash”
  - Code: Tap cards are much more popular than using cash
  - Subcategory: Paying at stores
  - Category: Cultural immersion
- People don't speak as much English as I'd expected... Czech is by far the primary language
  - Meaning unit: “People don't speak as much English as I'd expected... Czech is by far the primary language”
  - Code: Locals' English proficiency is lower than expected
  - Subcategory: Locals' English proficiency
  - Category: Language Barrier
- Good restaurants
  - Meaning unit: “Good restaurants”
  - Code: Restaurant recommendations would be helpful
  - Subcategory: Location recommendations
  - Category: Suggestions
- Other CIEE students
  - Meaning unit: “Other CIEE students”
  - Code: Knowing other CIEE students before traveling would be helpful
  - Subcategory: Intra-cohort social dynamics
  - Category: Social isolation
- there is more of a language barrier than expected
  - Meaning unit: “there is more of a language barrier than expected”
  - Code: The language barrier is more significant than expected
  - Subcategory: Locals' English proficiency
  - Category: Language barrier
- Just some more of the language
  - Meaning unit: “Just some more of the language”
  - Code: Having more knowledge of the Czech language would be helpful
  - Subcategory: Language
  - Category: Suggestions

## Appendix C: CIEE Guide Interview Questions

- What's your favorite thing about Prague?
  - Where is your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, etc?
  - Where is your favorite place to visit?
- What is the campus environment like at your university?
  - How engaged are professors with their students?
  - Do students participate in any activities together outside of academics?
    - If so, what? (ex clubs, organizations)
- How many times have you worked with school groups from the United States?
  - How long have you been a guide?
  - What are your job responsibilities?
  - How would you describe your relationship with exchange students?
  - What are your experiences with students?
  - Why do you continue to be a guide?
- In your experiences, what are some Czech and American differences in cultural or social norms?
- How would you describe the difference between Czech and American students academically based on your experience in university?
  - Do both groups typically have the same motivation for their grades?
- Do students tend to practice Czech with you? If so, how often?
- How well do you think students immerse themselves in Prague?
  - Do they try Czech food? Participate in Czech cultural events? Watch Czech TV/Listen to Czech music?
  - What might prevent students from participating in cultural events, engaging in Czech media, or trying Czech food?
  - In your experience, what are things that American students could do to feel more at home in Prague?
- Have you noticed any American phrases or social norms with different meanings in the Czech Republic or that come across as offensive or odd?



- For example, coffee shop in the Czech Republic means dispensary
- If you could change the structure of the CIEE Study Abroad program what are some things you would change?
- What are some things American exchange students should know when traveling around Prague or the Czech Republic?

# Appendix D: CIEE Guide Interviews

## Interview 1

11/16/22

Interviewers: Abigail Brachtl, Sophia Silkaitis

Scribe: Tim Connors

- What's your favorite thing about Prague?
  - Where is your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, etc?
    - **Restaurants**
      - Students always asking these types of questions
      - Not Czech food restaurants
      - Indonesian restaurant called
      - Japanese restaurant called
        - Medium-level pricing
      - Kathmandu: Indian restaurant, never been
      - Will email list afterwards
      - Brazilian restaurant near astronomical clock
        - All you can eat
        - Waiters come around with big pieces of meat
    - **Coffee**
      - Cube-themed restaurant → Grand Cafe Orient
  - Where is your favorite place to visit?
    - Interviewee moved to Czech Republic from Armenia at 9, Prague soon after
      - Considers themselves 95% Czech
    - Interviewee doesn't go out to bars
      - Likes the music bar with 90s music on Fridays
      - **K-Star Karaoke**
        - Get small room with private party
- What is the campus environment like at your university?
  - How engaged are professors with their students?

- Professors not at all engaged with students compared to U.S.
  - Don't have common spaces
  - Interviewee is medical student: university only has academic buildings, hospital, small hang out room, library which is only to study in
    - Technical library: good place to study
      - Ticket to get in
- Do students participate in any activities together outside of academics?
  - Some do
    - Parties once in a while
    - Around Christmastime, get together for Christmas traditions
  - If so, what? (ex clubs, organizations)
    - There are clubs and organizations
- How many times have you worked with school groups from the United States?
  - How long have you been a guide?
    - 4-5 years
  - What are your job responsibilities?
    - Guides students at the beginning of their time here, 3-5 days
  - How would you describe your relationship with exchange students?
    - Not in touch with many students because there are so many
    - Knows some students in the film program because it's smaller
  - What are your experiences with students?
    - Students ask about places to go: restaurants, parties, etc.
      - Nothing deeper because only interacts with students in the first few days
      - Sometimes students don't want to build a relationship with guides
    - When students arrive, take care of them at the airport
      - Sometimes people get lost
      - Take everyone to taxi, which takes them to housing

- Another group shows them around housing, explains rules
    - Evening walk that takes students around the city
  - Interviewee would like to interact with students more, but not all of them
    - People who have never been abroad are more appreciative
    - Some people are here to party and don't want to build relationships
- Why do you continue to be a guide?
  - Likes it
  - Likes helping people navigate the city and telling them what to avoid and what not to do
  - Studied abroad in Spain for medical school
    - Program did not help with city, but people who they worked with did
    - People are the main aspect of making it a good experience
- In your experiences, what are some Czech and American differences in cultural or social norms?
  - Czech students don't ask questions in class or when studying
    - When going to university, get discouraged
      - Instead of asking questions in front of people, look it up by themselves afterwards
    - Teachers want Czech students to be more like American students
    - When Interviewee first arrived to the Czech Republic/Prague, they were asking questions but soon got discouraged
  - American students ask anything
    - Tend to be a lot more open and expressive
      - Americans/tourists are only people you hear on the tram
        - Considered rude, interviewee even feels uncomfortable talking on the phone
  - Help Americans coming here adjust
    - Staying on right side of the tram
    - Not giving huge tips

- At restaurants, bills usually come to the table but nowadays have to go up at some places
  - Americans perceive workers as being rude to them because they can't speak Czech, but those people are like that to everyone
    - Not super happy and friendly like Americans
- How would you describe the difference between Czech and American students academically based on your experience in university?
  - Do both groups typically have the same motivation for their grades?
    - In medical school
      - Americans are focused on having the best grades possible
        - In Czech schools, not a big deal unless you want to study abroad
      - Not passing exams or getting good grades is not as important in the Czech Republic
      - In the U.S., teachers try to teach the basics
        - In CZ, teaching is more about theory
    - Went from gymnasium to university
      - Grades were not a big stressor for getting into university, she loves that about CZ
      - University will take certain amount of students based on their grades
        - Some schools allow you to take special test to boost resume
        - Otherwise, you take an exam and get in based on the result
          - She likes tha
- Do students tend to practice Czech with you? If so, how often?
  - They do and she loves it
  - First thing is how to order beer
  - Then want to know bad words and swears
  - Thinks students learn by hearing something and wanting to know how to say it
    - Also learn in Czech class
      - Students sometimes motivated at beginning but get discouraged

- How well do you think students immerse themselves in Prague?
  - They do, but mostly stay in their groups
    - When people go abroad, always want to do everything they can
      - Some people even go out to party on the first while being jet lagged
    - When you live here, you don't go out as much because you know it will always be here
  - Do they try Czech food? Participate in Czech cultural events? Watch Czech TV/Listen to Czech music?
    - No TV
  - What might prevent students from participating in cultural events, engaging in Czech media, or trying Czech food?
    - Some people meet CZ people in bars
    - People who stay in groups prevents them
  - In your experience, what are things that American students could do to feel more at home in Prague?
    - Sports and going to the gyms and events
    - Hard to meet new people even for her, have to be very active to do so
    - Could go to schools and see if CZ students are interested in hanging out with Americans
      - At her gymnasium, there were Americans coming up to speak to her even though she couldn't speak English
      - Game nights, lots of things happening in Prague
- Have you noticed any American phrases or social norms with different meanings in the Czech Republic or that come across as offensive or odd?
  - For example, coffee shop in the Czech Republic means dispensary
    - Has not heard of this
  - Can't think of anything in particular but bets that there are a lot
- If you could change the structure of the CIEE Study Abroad program what are some things you would change?
  - Thinks CIEE does really well

- Heaven compared to programs Czech students have
  - They do everything for you
    - Help out with transportation
  - Does not know anything about academics
- What are some things American exchange students should know when traveling around Prague or the Czech Republic?
  - Americans students always say it's safer here
    - It is safe, but don't go out alone at night in an unknown place
    - Students sometimes get over-excited about freedom and forget about safety
      - Sometimes don't know whether or not what might be strange behavior is normal here
    - Other people can tell you're not from here
  - For safety
    - Call police
    - Carries pepper spray
    - Do not go to main metro station at night, like after 12am
      - If you see someone drunk on the train, don't go on and instead wait for the next train
    - Use the same judgment you do at home
    - Call 112, which is for English-speakers
    - Run away, avoid fighting as much as possible
- For our project, we plan to develop reference materials to help visiting American students like translations for common Czech phrases, recommendations for places to go around the city, and instructional videos. Would you be interested in helping us with our project by proofreading our written work or acting in videos?
  - Does not have time, super busy with medical school
- END OF INTERVIEW
- So much sugar in U.S.
- Does not really like Dog Bar
  - Surprised that students coming to Prague always want to go there for some reason

- Always wanted to go to U.S., was her dream
    - Knew someone who found a family willing to house them in Salem, MA
      - Avoided all the fees associated with programs
      - Stayed for about 2 months
      - Also went to Canada
    - Everything in U.S. is huge
      - Fell out of car because it was so big
      - Ice cream in U.S. is huge
  - People in Prague will just pick something to eat when asked what they want even if they haven't decided yet instead of asking for more time
  - Emailed list of restaurant recommendations
- 

## Interview #2

Interviewer: Sophia Silkaitis

Scribe: Nicholas Markou

- Favorite thing about Prague
  - Architecture, atmosphere
- Grew up:
  - Small village, 15 minute by bus out of the city
  - Country side
  - Went to high school in Prague
- Favorite place to visit:
  - Park to hang out
- University environment:
  - Personally, self sustained
  - Very open to communication, you can ask any question and the professors will support you



- UIS
- University of economic and management
- Studying political sciences
- Personally doesn't participate in clubs, but they do exist
- This was his first semester as a guide at CIEE
  - Why?
  - Always wanted to meet different people around the world
  - Enjoys it
- Job responsibilities
  - Assist moving around and talking to the students
- Relationship with exchange students?
  - Just met, getting to know each other
- What are Czech and American differences? Cultural, social
  - Enthusiastic, friendly
  - Czechs take longer to open up and don't smile as much
- Difference from Czech and American students academically?
  - Same motivation for good grades
  - There are groups that are highly motivated and those who skip classes
  - He considers it to be the same
- Practicing Czech?
  - Asked for some words that they hear a lot and that's about it
  - What words?
  - Words used on public transport
  - Hello, other basic words
- How well do students immerse themselves in Prague?
  - Unsure
  - Attended events with others for a Mexican holiday
  - Not a Czech event
- What would prevent them from attending these?
  - Doesn't think there is anything blocking them
- What could they do to feel more at home?

- Doesn't know what they're doing in their free time usually other than visiting pubs
- American phrases with different meanings?
  - None that he remembers
- Changes or additions to the program where they guide students
  - More time to be with them and to attend events
- Also working alongside this job
- Important things for the students to know
  - Be careful for frauds
    - ATMs, with a guy standing next to them
    - Fake money
  - Pickpockets
  - Prague is a safe city - but it isn't always

Assisting with video or other content to go on the website

- Shy on camera
- Wouldn't mind helping in some other ways
- Feel free to contact him again

Interview #3

Interviewer: Abbie and Sophia

Scribe: Abbie

- Consent?
  - YES!
- What's your favorite thing about Prague?
  - From Slovakia, Prague is special outside of Czech Republic
    - A lot of different people from different places (international)
    - People are close, better version of Slovakia
  - Where is your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, etc?

- Vatslv Namnesti (Wens Square?) Dumpling place
    - Tromoska Park
      - Nature and quieter
    - Prague is both a quiet and big city
    - Parks help to get out from the city noise → Space from people
  - Where is your favorite place to visit?
- What is the campus environment like at your university?
  - Charles University Student
    - Charles doesn't have a shared campus → split up
      - Students dont have strong relationship with campus
      - Students who want to engage can, but they have to go out to pursue it.
    - How do students meet other students?
      - Few options, balls, university activities (one sport)
        - Not popular
      - Parties
  - How engaged are professors with their students?
  - Do students participate in any activities together outside of academics?
    - If so, what? (ex clubs, organizations)
- How many times have you worked with school groups from the United States?
  - 4-5 groups (some for the whole semester and some for half semesters)
  - How long have you been a guide?
    - Last January
  - What are your job responsibilities?
    - Take care of students so they have the best experience in the first few days
    - Help them in a new surroundings
    - Explain the residence, local grocery, drug, laundromat, unlock the doors
  - How would you describe your relationship with exchange students?

- Very short term as they only meet for the first few days
    - In the beginning things are very new so seeing them later you can see the difference in the students from the first days
    - No one reaches out after the first few days
  - What do students commonly ask
    - That's cheap?
    - Local pubs to visit, restaurants
    - Nearest markets
    - How to say hello, basic language
  - What are your experiences with students?
    - Groups differ
      - On the walking tour, super jet lagged and can be a bit crabby
      - One time with a small group of girls were very interested, always needed the WC
      - Beer in the beginning after the tour (in the summer)
        - Students usually really like it
        - A really good bonding experience for students
        - Beginning dinner with students
          - Difference between the students. The extroverts and the introverts stand out very quickly
  - Why do you continue to be a guide?
    - Met a lady at an international office
    - Best way to speak english with international students
    - Loves the environment at CIEE
- In your experiences, what are some Czech and American differences in cultural or social norms?
  - Czechs are more distanced from people
    - When talking it's usually with a close friend
    - Harder to make relationships
    - More organized
    - Parties are ways to meet new people, attend organized events

- Americans are good at talking to new people and forming connections
    - Don't have everything planned
- How would you describe the difference between Czech and American students academically based on your experience in university?
  - Same motivations
  - Americans find logical relationships and form understandings
  - Czechs get book and teach themselves, different approach, taught to memorization but not necessary to understand it
  - Asks questions in her one experience but most schools don't ask questions. Most people are taught and that's it
  - Do both groups typically have the same motivation for their grades?
- Do students tend to practice Czech with you? If so, how often?
  - Students practice Czech
    - Swear words, basic, never conversationally
    -
- How well do you think students immerse themselves in Prague?
  - Do they try Czech food? Participate in Czech cultural events? Watch Czech TV/Listen to Czech music?
    - Drinks and food → yes
    - Movies and music → no (maybe try one movie)
    -
  - What might prevent students from participating in cultural events, engaging in Czech media, or trying Czech food?
    - You have to get used to the Czech culture in order to engage.
    - If it is very different it might be confusing and scary to engage
    -
  - In your experience, what are things that American students could do to feel more at home in Prague?
    - Approach Czech people and go outside of CIEE cohort
    - Understand the culture by connecting with Czech people
    - I.e. drinking at 10am is ok

- Have you noticed any American phrases or social norms with different meanings in the Czech Republic or that come across as offensive or odd?
  - For example, coffee shop in the Czech Republic means dispensary
    - “Hey” instead of “Hi” can be rude
    -
- If you could change the structure of the CIEE Study Abroad program what are some things you would change?
  - Help foreigners by meeting with more czech students
  - Branching out from the cohort and meet more czechs outside of guides
  - Maybe guides can help with this?
- What are some things American exchange students should know when traveling around Prague or the Czech Republic?
  - People are different, they dont always ask how people are unless they are really interested. Hard to approach
  - Making friendships
  - Some people aren't nice at grocery stores or at offices
  -
- For our project, we plan to develop reference materials to help visiting American students like translations for common Czech phrases, recommendations for places to go around the city, and instructional videos. Would you be interested in helping us with our project by proofreading our written work or acting in videos?
  - A bit shy so might not in videos
  - Doesnt speak czech so might not proofread.

#### Interview 4

11/22/22

Interviewer: Abbie Brachtl

Scribe: Tim Connors

- What's your favorite thing about Prague?

- Not originally from Prague, but been here since 15
- Been here for about 10 years, still has things to explore
  - Has a lot to offer in culture, food, friends
  - Big city, but still sees people he recognizes every day
- Where is your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, etc?
  - Tea rooms
    - Likes a particular one that is very international and cultural
    - Has board games
    - At one table, intimate and relaxed atmosphere
- Where is your favorite place to visit?
- What is the campus environment like at your university?
  - The student staff organizes events for the students
    - Not too hard to meet friends and form a community
  - Still does not have a campus
  - From Charles University
  - How engaged are professors with their students?
  - Do students participate in any activities together outside of academics?
    - If so, what? (ex clubs, organizations)
    - Students go to local bars and clubs together
      - Meet new people there as well
- How many times have you worked with school groups from the United States?
  - How long have you been a guide?
    - Been guide for 5 years, about 7-8 semesters (missed some due to COVID)
  - What are your job responsibilities?
    - Very important during the first days students are in the city, guides them around the city and shows them the public transport
    - Pick them up at the airport
    - When they arrive, help them organize getting food, water, etc.

- How would you describe your relationship with exchange students?
  - Sometimes befriends one student during a semester
  - One time befriended one student and spent about 4 days with them throughout the semester
- What are your experiences with students?
  - Loves the Czech Republic and believes that love should be shared, wants to share his love for his country with students
  - Likes talking about politics, culture, etc.
- Why do you continue to be a guide?
- In your experiences, what are some Czech and American differences in cultural or social norms?
  - American students sometimes think that Europeans are more racist
    - Since Czech Republic is about 95% white, people might sometimes stare
      - Doesn't think it's intended to be racist but could still be considered a microaggression
      - Unfortunately need to expect this if you are BIPOC
  - When they go out, 99% of Czechs turn off the lights
    - Conserve energy
    - Sometimes needs to remind American students to do this
  - Public transportation makes getting around not too difficult if you have a physical disability
    - Still might run into issues
  - Likes that Americans are more open, Czech people are more reserved
    - Once you can get a Czech person to open up, it's very worth it
- How would you describe the difference between Czech and American students academically based on your experience in university?
  - Not sure because being an American student in the Czech Republic is different than being an American student in the U.S.
    - Hard to compare because of this
  - American students are more active in discussion



- In high school and at both universities he's been to, the entire class works together and collaborates
  - Feels like in the U.S. people operate in small groups instead
- Do both groups typically have the same motivation for their grades?
- Do students tend to practice Czech with you? If so, how often?
  - At the beginning, students ask how to say specific things
    - Tries to explain the basics
    - Most students don't go beyond that
      - Had a whole conversation with a visiting student in Czech, but they were also Russian American and could speak Russian
- How well do you think students immerse themselves in Prague?
  - Mostly they stay in their American bubble
    - Still experience some Czech culture within their bubble by going to bars, etc. together
  - In CIEE there are a lot of Americans so it makes sense that you would stay with other Americans
    - In Europe, have study abroad programs where you study abroad with Europeans from other countries
  - Do they try Czech food? Participate in Czech cultural events? Watch Czech TV/Listen to Czech music?
  - What might prevent students from participating in cultural events, engaging in Czech media, or trying Czech food?
    - Live and study together with Americans, so it is your safe space
      - Hard to leave that comfortable position and be alone for a while
  - In your experience, what are things that American students could do to feel more at home in Prague?
    - A lot of Erasmus students here who have Erasmus parties, open to speaking English and want to meet new people
- Have you noticed any American phrases or social norms with different meanings in the Czech Republic or that come across as offensive or odd?
  - For example, coffee shop in the Czech Republic means dispensary

- If you could change the structure of the CIEE Study Abroad program what are some things you would change?
- What are some things American exchange students should know when traveling around Prague or the Czech Republic?
- For our project, we plan to develop reference materials to help visiting American students like translations for common Czech phrases, recommendations for places to go around the city, and instructional videos. Would you be interested in helping us with our project by proofreading our written work or acting in videos?

#### Interview #5

Interviewer: Abbie

Scribe: Nick

- What's your favorite thing about Prague?
  - The city - not originally from Prague
  - Feels like a big city, many more opportunities here
  - Food and Coffee culture
  - Where is your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, etc?
    - Coffee Source
    - Collector Coffee
    - ? Espresso Bar
    -
  - Where is your favorite place to visit?
    - Parks and Greenspaces
- What is the campus environment like at your university?
  - Doesn't really have a campus, pretty much just one building
  - Faculty likes to do a lot of events like small concerts, charity things, cultural events
  - One school is out of the city area so they have spaces for green houses, etc.

- How engaged are professors with their students?
  - Some professors really hate “stupid questions”, stuck in a communist ideology
- Do students participate in any activities together outside of academics?
  - If so, what? (ex clubs, organizations)
  - Hard to find a good place for those who come over from the US
- How many times have you worked with school groups from the United States?
  - Long time, maybe 4 ish years
  - How long have you been a guide?
    - 6-7 semesters
  - What are your job responsibilities?
    - Given tasks before the semester begins
    - Some wait at hotel to show the students how everything works
    - Some take them from point a to point b - very important for the first day
      - Ensure you start with 10 people at point a and have 10 at point b
    - Explain how public transport works + neighborhood tour
    - Waiting at the airport for students arrival
    - Help organize food, prepare other things for their arrival at CIEE building
  - How would you describe your relationship with exchange students?
    - Everyone is different, sor
  - What are your experiences with students?
  - Why do you continue to be a guide?
- In your experiences, what are some Czech and American differences in cultural or social norms?
- How would you describe the difference between Czech and American students academically based on your experience in university?
  - Do both groups typically have the same motivation for their grades?
- Do students tend to practice Czech with you? If so, how often?
- How well do you think students immerse themselves in Prague?

- Do they try Czech food? Participate in Czech cultural events? Watch Czech TV/Listen to Czech music?
  - What might prevent students from participating in cultural events, engaging in Czech media, or trying Czech food?
  - In your experience, what are things that American students could do to feel more at home in Prague?
- Have you noticed any American phrases or social norms with different meanings in the Czech Republic or that come across as offensive or odd?
  - For example, coffee shop in the Czech Republic means dispensary
- If you could change the structure of the CIEE Study Abroad program what are some things you would change?
- What are some things American exchange students should know when traveling around Prague or the Czech Republic?
- For our project, we plan to develop reference materials to help visiting American students like translations for common Czech phrases, recommendations for places to go around the city, and instructional videos. Would you be interested in helping us with our project by proofreading our written work or acting in videos?

## Appendix E: Website Focus Group

- Did you find the website helpful?
  - If so, is there a particular situation or means that it helped you in? (such as translations, street signs, outings, etc).
  - If not, why wasn't the website helpful? What do you think it lacks?
- What do you like most about the website?
- What can be improved?
- Do you have any suggestions to make the website better?

## Appendix F: Focus Group Data

Website Mechanism	The Comment	# of Students Who Agreed	# of Students Who Disagreed	Potential Fixes
Mobile layout	Content is only on the left half of the screen	6	0	Fixing vertical layout of the screen (Fixed)
Home screen	S in “service” is lowercase on the home page, T in “to” is uppercase	1	0	
Language Prep	Table to separate Czech and English word	2	0	
Language Prep	Include pronunciation guide next to word so you know how to say it	2	0	
Text	Should be an accent on the “ý” in “dobrý den”	2	0	

Phone numbers	Put into table with line in between to separate different numbers	1	0	
Layout	Did not know where to find restaurant list	2	0	
Content	Include difference between pharmacy and drug store	1	0	
Did you find the website helpful?	Yes	6	0	
Healthcare	Was useful, didn't know before	1	0	
Basic and complex phrases	Nice to know	1	0	
Transportation guide	Nice to know	1	0	

Website usability	Easy to use	6	0	
Layout	Tabulate the data	2	0	
Layout	More pictures	3	0	
Transportation	Add map of metro or tram or description of stops	3	0	
Transportation	Walking across the street, mention curfew	2	0	
Places to go	Addresses	1	0	
Layout	Add search bar to the header that brings you to the page with the inputted term	2	0	
ATMs	Don't see anything for ATMs or	2	0	Already have information for that, was just



	financial information			accidentally not implemented in current version (Fixed)
Styling	Lots of pictures, smaller buttons, background images	1	0	
Text	Reword “Language Prep” to be more specific	2	0	
Language Prep	Include recommendation for Duolingo	1	0	
Restaurants	Put price range for restaurants so students know how expensive they are	3	0	
Content	Could not find where the description of	1	0	

	traditional Czech food and culture was			
Safety	Include information about pick- pockets	1	0	
Restaurants	Include small description of restaurant with the recommendation	3	0	

# **Appendix G: Website Repository**

## **Things to Do in Prague**

Looking for more? Here's a map full of stuff to do in Prague created by locals! If you want a free paper copy, head to the second floor of the Scouts Institute in Old Town (Near the Astronomical Clock).

<https://www.use-it.travel/cities/detail/prague/>

## **Attractions**

There are so many amazing attractions to see while in Prague! Listed below are some of the most popular places. More can be found through local maps and conversations with locals!

### **Prague Castle**

Accessible by tram, Prague Castle is a must-see attraction! With a valid university card, students can get discounted tickets to see St Vitus Cathedral, walk down the Golden Lane, ascend 280 steps to see a sprawling view of Prague, and more!

### **Old Town Square (Staroměstské náměstí)**

Accessible by tram or metro, Old Town Square always has lively crowds and beautiful views of Prague architecture. Be sure to watch your pockets as this is a very active place.

### **Astronomical Clock**

Just off Old Town Square, the Astronomical Clock is the world's oldest clock in function. At the top of every hour, the twelve apostles begin a procession!

### **Wenceslas Square (Václavské náměstí)**

Site of important social and historical events, Wenceslas Square currently has cinemas, clubs, restaurants, shops, and the National Museum. Accessible via metro and tram.

### **National Museum**

Located in Wenceslas Square, the National Museum is the largest museum in the Czech Republic. Located steps away from the Metro.

### **Charles Bridge (Karlův most)**

Oldest bridge in Prague known for the 30 statues of saints carved as decoration across the bridge. The most famous statue is St John of Nepomuk.

### **Vyšehrad**

Just steps away from the CIEE building, Vyšehrad offers stunning views of the city, and the park area holds fascinating architectural finds such as the Romanesque Rotunda of St Martin, the neo-Gothic Church of St Peter and St Paul, the national cemetery Slavín, and the underground casements housing original statues from the Charles Bridge.

### **Lennon Wall**

Named after the notable artist, John Lennon, the Lennon Wall represents peace, love and freedom for people in Prague.

## **Prague Jewish Quarter**

There are numerous synagogues, museums, and cemeteries that show the past and present of Judaism in Prague. Some notable sites being the Spanish Synagogue and the Klausen Synagogue.

## **Prague Zoo**

Once one of the top five zoos in the world, Zoo Praha has around 5,000 animals and 685 species. This is the largest zoo in the Czech Republic and is home to some amazing animals such as pangolins and gorillas!

## **National Technical Museum**

Founded in 1908, this museum stores a collection showcasing the history of technology and technological advancements in the Czech Republic.

## **Gardens and Parks**

Need a break from the city and want a moment to ground yourself in nature and be alone? Here are some recommendations:

### **Botanical Garden of the City of Prague**

The Botanical Garden of the City of Prague is a vast garden including a tropical forest in a greenhouse, a vineyard, a Japanese meditation garden, and a cafe. If you're looking to take a walk through nature, stop by between 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday - Sunday.

- Address: Trojská 800/196, 171 00 Praha-Troja

- Admission Fee: CZK 150
- Operating Months: January - December

### **Vrtba Garden**

The baroque Vrtba Garden was established in 1720 with unique architecture. If you're looking to take a minute to relax and see the Vrtba Palace, come here between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Monday - Sunday.

Address: Karmelitská 25, 118 00 Malá Strana

Admission Fee: CZK 120

Operating Months: April - October

### **Stromovka Royal Park**

Established in the thirteenth century, this City Park stretches over 90 hectares and sits on the floodplains of the river in the city. Open 24 hours, every day of the year, this park is a great place to sit or walk through.

Address: Královská obora, Bubeneč, 170 00 Praha 7

Admission Fee: Free

Operating Months: January - December

### **Waldstein Garden**

Overlooking the Senate Palace, this seventeenth century park includes pools and baroque statues.

Stop by between 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. any day of the week to see this amazing garden and artificial grotto.

Address: Letenská 123/4, 118 00 Malá Strana

Admission Fee: Free

Operating Months: April - October

### **Letná Park**

Overlooking the Vltava river and the bridges, Letna Park is open year round to visitors. Open 24/7, in the summer months, you can find people playing sports, picnics, and children running around.

Address: 170 00 Praha 7 – Holešovice

Admission Fee: Free

Operating Months: January- December

### **Academics**

Interacting with professors

In the Czech Republic, interacting with professors can be different than interacting with American professors. CIEE Guides concur that students in Czech classrooms do not ask questions often. They consult every other avenue, such as textbooks and friends, before going to the professor for help. This might be noticeable if you attend a class with Czech students or if Czech professors do not leave much room for questions. Students also only refer to their professor formally and professionally.

### **What to Expect in a Classroom**

Along with differences in interactions, classes are also held differently. Classes in the Czech Republic are lecture-based, with little to no discussion.

## **Nightlife**

### **KStar Karaoke**

Have some fun with Karaoke! While you can do a large group, smaller groups tend to have more fun.

Address: Legerova 78, 120 00 Praha 2-Vinohrady

### **Bohemian Boards and Brews**

Come here for a fun night of playing board games with a drink! Before you go, make sure you have a reservation before coming, and know about the 60 CZ per person charge added to the bill.

Address: Charkovská 441, 101 00 Praha 10-Vršovice

## **Places to Eat and Drink**

Prague has a large variety of restaurants and amazing foods to offer. There are also plenty of vegetarian options when trying to find something to eat. In the Czech Republic, lunch is usually considered the biggest meal of the day. Dinner is usually a lighter meal that is easier to digest. For restaurants, reservations are very common and it is always better to make a reservation in advance to ensure you have seating. When ordering delivery, the most common service is Wolt.



Some common Czech foods include dumplings with many variations of sauce (Rajská sauce, Svíčková sauce or Goulash), Potato salad with schnitzel, fried cheese, fruit dumplings, knedlo vepřo zelo. Also recommend trying Kofola from the tap!

### **Garuda**

- Address: M. Horákové 686/12, 170 00 Praha 7-Holešovice
- Menu: [garudarestaurant.cz](http://garudarestaurant.cz)
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway
- Type: Indonesian

### **Miyabi**

- Address: Navrátilova 664/10, 110 00 Nové Město
- Menu: [miyabi.cz](http://miyabi.cz)
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway, Delivery
- Type: Japanese

### **Manifesto Market**

- Address: Ostrovského 34, 150 00 Praha 5-Anděl
- Menu: [manifestomarket.com](http://manifestomarket.com)
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway, Delivery

### **Brasileiro U Zelené žáby**

- Address: U Radnice 8/13, 110 00 Staré Město
- Menu: [zabadomu.cz](http://zabadomu.cz)
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway
- Type: Brazilian Buffet

### **Restaurace V Cípu Michalská**

- Address: Michalská 459, 110 00 Staré Město
- Menu: <https://www.vcipu.cz/>
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

- Type: Czech Pub

### **Havelská Koruna**

- Address: 21 a 23, Havelská 501, Staré Město, 110 00 Praha 1
- Menu: <https://www.havelska-koruna.cz/restaurace.html>
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway, Delivery
- Type: Czech

### **Dhaba Beas**

- Address: Multiple
- Menu: No official menu online, but all vegan and vegetarian food!
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway
- Type: Vegan Bistro Chain

### **Wokin**

- Address: Multiple
- Menu: <https://www.wokin.cz/menu>
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway
- Type: Noodle Chain

### **Bageterie Boulevard**

- Address: Multiple
- Menu: <https://www.bageterie.com/our-offer/bagety>
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway
- Type: Sandwich Chain

### **U Slepé mrkvičky**

- Address: M. Horákové 38, 170 00 Praha 7-Holešovice
- Menu: <https://www.slepamrkvicka.cz/menu/>
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway, Delivery
- Type: Salads and Wraps

### **Creme de la Creme**

- Address: Multiple
- Menu: onemenu.cz
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway, Delivery
- Type: Best Ice Cream in Prague!

### **Jizerske Pekarny**

- Address: Dlouhá 928, 110 00 Staré Město
- Menu: No Online Menu
- Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

Type: Bakery

### **Cafes**

Coffee culture is huge in Prague! There are a bunch of cafes. They're a great place to sit down and drink some coffee, or get your work done.

#### **Choco Cafe**

Address: Liliová 250/4, 110 00 Staré Město

Menu: <https://www.choco-cafe.cz/menu-english/>

Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

Vibe: Amazing hot chocolate

#### **Cafe Platyz**

Address: Národní 416/37, 110 00 Staré Město

Menu: <https://www.cafeplatyz.cz/jidelnilistek/#napojovy-listek>

Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

Vibe: Sit-down

### **Grand Cafe Orient**

Address: Ovocný trh 19, 110 00 Staré Město, In the Czech Museum of Cubism

Menu: [Grand Cafe Orient Menu](#)

Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

Vibe: Cubes

### **Ema Espresso Bar**

Address: Na Florenci 1420/3, 110 00 Nové Město

Menu: [Photo of Menu](#)

Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

Vibe: Homework

### **Coffee Source**

Address: Francouzská 106, 101 00 Praha 10-Vršovice

Menu: [Photo of Menu](#)

Services: Dine-In, Takeaway

Vibe: Homework, Specialty Coffees

### **Financial Information**

When navigating Prague, most places accept both cash and card and will ask you how you're paying. However, some places will say cash-only at the very bottom of the menu, so it's always wise to ask before you order. It is also recommended that you carry **500** koruna. For using your card, tap cards are most prevalent in the city, and cashiers typically assume you are using tap. If

you have a chip card, you just have to mention that it is a chip and ask to insert it. If asked if you should pay in Czech Koruna or USD, always choose Czech Koruna as it is the cheaper option.

## ATMS

ATMs without fees

Raiffeisen Bank

ČSOB

UniCredit

It is not recommended that you use an ATM that does not have a bank listed above it. Often those ATMs will charge you a large fee for having a foreign card.

## Common Scams

You should always be careful when withdrawing money from an ATM outside. Make sure you keep your bank information safe and be aware of your surroundings.

A common scam for ATMs is where someone will stand near you while you withdraw money. After you withdraw it, they will ask you if you're willing to exchange for the same amount, just in smaller bills. NEVER agree to this, as the money they offer to exchange is fake.

Another scam can come from the ATM itself. If you are withdrawing money and the ATM asks if a conversion fee is alright, you do not have to say yes! Selecting no allows you to withdraw the money without the fee!

## Basic Words and Phrases

English	Czech

Yes	Ano
No	Ne
Hello	Dobrý den
Good Morning	Dobré ráno
Good Afternoon	Dobré odpoledne
Good Night	Dobrou noc
Goodbye	Na shledanou
Nice to meet you!	Těší mě
Please &  You're Welcome	Prosím
Thank You	Děkuji
Attention/Warning	Pozor
What is your name?	Jak se jmenujete?
My name is ...	Jmenuji se...
How are you?	Jak se máte?
I understand	Rozumím
I don't understand	Nerozumím
Do you speak English?	Mluvíte anglicky?
I don't speak Czech	Nemluví česky

## Using Services in the Czech Republic

### Restaurant

#### How to order

In the Czech Republic, most restaurants have you seat yourself (there might be some exceptions) as hostesses are not common in the Czech Republic! Once you've made it to a table, most restaurants will have an English translation within the Czech menu. If not, you can ask the waiter for one. If all else fails, whip out Google Translate.

When ordering, waiters usually like to get everyone's drinks then everyone's food, even if you are ordering them at the same time. If you want water, but do not want to buy it from the bottle, ask for "tap water". Usually places will give it to you for free (but not always). When everyone is done eating it is best asking the waiter if they want you to pay at the table or up at the front where the cashier is. In Europe, they do not bring you the check until you ask as it can be seen as rude as if they are asking you to leave. This can make dining experiences long if you assume the check is going to come.

Also note that in Europe it is called "take-away" rather than "take out". In Czech it is "s sebou". If you have left over food, sometimes you have to pay for the take away box (usually around CZK 10-15, nothing major but something to note).

### Etiquette

As in a lot of places in the Czech Republic, it is important to keep the volume of voices down in restaurants. Loud talking or laughing is acceptable in pubs and bars. When it comes to tipping, it is recommended to round up your meal if you were very satisfied with your service. Waiters have a working wage in the Czech Republic, unlike the United States where most waiters rely on tips. If your meal was 220 and you really enjoyed the service, the food, etc. you might like to round up to 230, 240, 250, etc. Tips usually do not exceed 15% and often hover around 10%. Some waiters might ask you for percentage tips because they know you are American. Feel free

to say no, or a much less scary option, choose the number you want to round up to. Some ways to avoid waiters like these are to avoid touristy areas (such as in Old Town).

## **Grocery store**

### Getting around the store

Based on the CIEE walkthrough of the neighborhood, it is probably known that there are different types of stores for different types of items. An example being that DM is a drug store that does not carry food. At all of these different stores, however, note that cashiers might be a bit grumpy or stone faced! This does not mean that they hate that you are American or that you speak English, it is just how they want to act at that moment with a customer. It's nothing personal, but if you are having a bad day here there is no obligation to smile and small talk with people.

It is also common to bring your own bag to stores. Cashiers will offer them if they see you have a big purchase, but most prefer you bring a reusable bag. Bags in stores are often a small extra charge.

## **Transportation**

### Transportation Pass

When getting around the Czech Republic, the public transportation available is a great choice. It is very reliable and safe. The pass you have covers the Metro, Tram, and Bus services.

It is recommended that you carry your pass with you at all times in and have it in a place that you can quickly retrieve it. You do not have to scan the pass anywhere, and can just walk on any transportation. However there are inspectors that dress in plainclothes on the trams and buses.



They go up to you and flash their medallion, and then you show them your pass. On the metro, once you get off the train, there will sometimes be police officers waiting to check your pass. If you do not have your pass, you will be fined CZK 1500 (around \$65), or CZK 1000 (around \$43) if you pay within 15 calendar days.

### Transportation Social Norms

You will notice in your time in the Czech Republic that people are not chatty on public transportation. It can be considered rude to have loud conversations when on the metro, bus, tram, etc. You can still have quiet conversations, but don't be surprised if people start giving you looks. Also note that public transportation is often very clean! This is because food and drink are not allowed on transportation.

### Metro

The metro operates between 5:00 a.m. and midnight every day. During rush hour the trains come every 2 minutes, and come between four and nine minutes after 7:00 p.m. Trains take longer on Sundays.

### Trams

Trams operate 24/7 in the city. The more popular trams run every four minutes, and less popular trams run as late as every ten minutes. Between midnight and 4:30 a.m., the trams run on a reduced schedule, coming every 30 minutes.

### Buses

Similar to trams, buses operate 24/7. Daytime buses operate between 4:30 a.m. to midnight and come every 6-8 minutes during peak times, and every 10-20 minutes off-peak. Between 12:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m., night buses run every 30 to 60 minutes.

### Central Train Station

Accessible via metro and a short distance from trams, this station offers trains to places both in the Czech Republic and to other countries. Minutes prior to train departure, the display will update the train's track number.

### Taxi and Liftago

Late at night or early in the morning, it is usually best to use the Liftago app (a version of Uber) to get back to your apartment. Listed below are contacts to CIEE recommended taxis.

## **Emergency**

### Numbers

112- Universal EU emergency number that will connect you to

police, fire, and ambulance services. It can be called

without a SIM card or phone number. This is the most recommended as it will always have English translators.

158- Emergency number for police in life-threatening situations.

156- Non-Emergency number for police.

155- Emergency number for ambulance services in

life-threatening situations

150- Emergency number for fire services

If you are having an emergency while somewhere in Prague, the lampposts in the city have a six digit number posted at relative eye level that can help emergency personnel find you.

### State Hospitals

Hospital Královské Vinohrady

Address: Šrobárova 1150 /50, 100 34 Praha 10-Vinohrady

Number: +420 267 161 111

General University Hospital in Prague

Address: U Nemocnice 499/2, 128 08 Nové Město

Number: +420 224 961 111

### English Speaking Clinics

Poliklinika Na Národní

Address: Národní 9, Praha 1

Hours: M-F: 8:30 AM - 5 PM

Number: +420 222 075 120

UNICARE

Address: Na Diouhém Lánu 11, Praha 6

Hours: M-F: 8 AM - 8 PM, Sat: 9 AM - 1 PM

Number: +420 235 356 553

Canadian Medical

Several locations, online booking

Number: +420 222 300 300

### Health Insurance

iNEXT

Number: +1 866 723 3063

Website: [www.inext.com](http://www.inext.com)

### Lost Passport

US Embassy

Address: Tržiště 365/15, 118 00 Malá Strana

Number: +420 257 022 000

# Appendix H: Mobile Website Screenshots

Homepage:



Things To Do

Language Prep

Using Services in the Czech  
Republic

Upcoming Trips offered by CIEE

Section of posts:



## **View Posts**

### **Attractions in Prague**

There are so many amazing attractions to see while in Prague! Listed below are some of the most popular places. More can be found through local maps and conversations with locals!

Opening a post:



## Attractions in Prague

**There are so many amazing attractions to see while in Prague! Listed below are some of the most popular places. More can be found through local maps and conversations with locals!**

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- **Wenceslas Square (Václavské náměstí)**

Site of important social and historical events,

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