

# Studying Abroad

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For many people, studying in a foreign country can be very rewarding. Experiencing another culture may help you grow personally and develop options for your future. Many students report a higher interest in international events, improved academic performance, and increased self confidence following a study abroad experience. Study abroad options include attending a U.S. university study program, participating in a U.S. organization's program, attending an "American" college located in a foreign country or attending a foreign university.

Like any decision, the decision to study abroad requires considerable thought. To help determine if it would be a good option for you, some issues which warrant consideration are listed below.

## Do I go Independent or College-Sponsored?

### **Independent Study Abroad**

Arranging to study abroad independently gives you considerable freedom in creating and fine tuning your experience. If you are highly motivated, have good academic and foreign language skills, and/or have international contacts, attending classes at a foreign university and living in that culture can be quite rewarding. Remember though, you must take complete responsibility for all arrangements; a substantial task that needs to begin well in advance of your actual travel. If you plan to study abroad, particularly if your plans include independent study, start at least one year in advance of your projected departure and consider the following:

Will my credits transfer back to FSU (or another university I attend)?

Do I need my credits to transfer to FSU or is the experience worth possibly losing some credits or delaying my graduation?

Where will I study?

To what countries are my language skills, finances, cultural and academic interests suited?

What will I study?

How will my interests, major, language skills, and career choice affect my course selection?



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How is the culture different than my own and how will I come to understand it?

How do these countries respond to foreign visitors, specifically, Americans?

What kind of documents, permits, visa, and health considerations do I need to arrange?

Do I want to work to offset the cost of my experience? If so, will I need a work permit? Is it feasible to work and maintain my academics in a different educational system?

Will I travel alone or with others?

What are my social and relationship needs and how will I meet them in this new environment?

Do my thoughts about finances include transportation to and from the country (e.g., airfare), transportation within the country, tuition, books and supplies, documentation/passport/permit fees, food and living costs, differences in the exchange rate, climatic differences, and possible emergencies? Do I need insurance?

These questions provide some very specific areas to consider when preparing to study and travel abroad. The listing at the end of this guide provides additional resources that will help answer these questions and supply other topics to consider.

### **College-Sponsored Study Abroad**

Going on a college-sponsored program relieves you of many of the technical problems that studying abroad can entail. Some programs offer instruction in English at centers maintained by the U.S. institution, i.e., the Florence and London Study Abroad programs offered by FSU. Other programs enroll students in classes at foreign universities. Housing is usually arranged by the sponsoring institution. You will have the security of English-speaking friends and advisors, and transfer of credits is more easily arranged. These programs can make your experience of living in a different culture much easier.

### **How Long Do I Want to Study Abroad?**

One of the most important questions you must ask yourself is how long you wish to be in a foreign country. College-sponsored programs vary in length from short summer courses to a full academic-year. Independently arranged study can last as long as you wish. It would be advisable for you to assess how long you feel you need to be abroad to meet the goals

of your experience. Other factors to consider include level of personal maturity and tendency to become homesick. If you decide to go abroad, the season as well as the length of your stay should be considered. In summer or more temperate seasons, you will be more likely to run into tourists and less likely to experience the feeling of living like a native of your host country. Pay particular attention to the seasons; countries have vastly different climates and varying times when tourists seek to visit. If you are planning a very short stay, you may not want to invest in a railpass or other travel pass—your time for travel away from your study center may be too limited to make a “pass” worthwhile.

### **How Well Do I Need to Know the Language?**

If you are studying independently in a non-English speaking country, you must know the language sufficiently to attend lectures (the teaching format of many universities here and abroad), take notes and to take exams in that language. This often requires near-native fluency. You may have to pass a language fluency test before you are allowed to enroll. Many countries have language institutes to prepare foreign students for their educational work. Some countries take a dim view of visitors who fail to learn the native language, who expect that English will be spoken; or who think that others will automatically help them because they do not know the native language.

If you study with a college-sponsored program, the degree of fluency needed will depend, in part, on whether or not your class work is in English. Remember, even if your classes are in English, you will have to deal with many non-English speaking persons in your daily life abroad. The greater your ability to relate to them, the more you may derive from your experience. Part of the excitement of studying abroad is in learning the language of your host country and meeting its people. While it is true that English is a second language to many, it is courteous to speak to people in their native language. You will find that you are usually rewarded by their genuine appreciation of your effort and by their assistance in helping you develop your language skills.

### **How Do I Behave in a Foreign Culture?**

Being immersed in a foreign country with different cultural norms can be exciting, stimulating, and perhaps frightening. People cope with this in

differing ways. Americans, in general, are sometimes viewed as “Ameri-centric” by members of other countries. In essence, Americans sometimes act as if things that differ from American norms and values are wrong, immoral, weird, etc... It will make your experience more valuable if you attempt to experience the foreign culture and its people with an open mind. Acting as if other cultural norms are “wrong” or “strange” will not only take away from your experience, it may offend others who are a part of that culture.

### **Will My Credits and Financial Aid Transfer?**

If you attend a college-sponsored program, including one from your own institution, you should check well in advance to find out if your credits will be accepted. You should also be prepared for possible delays in getting your credits processed, even if they are accepted. In all cases, you should discuss the issue of your credits before you leave the U.S. See your faculty advisor, the coordinator of your study abroad program, and/or your Dean. In some cases you may need to have documentation of course content so that your institution may determine if it will give you credit for courses taken, and if so, how much. Some schools may require prior approval to authorize the transfer of credits before you leave the US to attend the program. You may need to know in advance what supporting papers are required so that arrangements can be made while you are enrolled abroad and before you return home. Dealing with foreign universities via overseas mail can be frustrating and can hinder your own timetable for graduation when you return to the U.S.

The Financial Aid you receive at your home institution may be able to be used during your study abroad experience. If you attend a program with your home school, you will likely be able to use the state and federal aid. If attending a program with another university, you may be required to get a written agreement between your home school and study abroad university.

### **Study Abroad Checklist**

Identify reasons you want to go abroad.

Discuss your plans with a study abroad representative and your academic advisor.

Discuss the program with recent alumni.

Before you go, obtain a written agreement concerning academic credit from an appropriate official with the foreign organization or college you want to attend.

Increase your knowledge of the host country and its language through courses, individual reading, and discussion with professors and others who have been there. Write to its embassy information service for additional information.

Increase your knowledge of U.S. history, geography, government and cultures, so that you will be able to answer questions while abroad.

Apply for a passport and any visas that may be required.

Make transportation arrangements well in advance of your intended departure.

Have a physical and a dental checkup, and obtain any special vaccinations which may be advised by your physician. Bring extra supplies of medications, contacts, etc. Request a copy of your medical history record to keep with you overseas.

Be sure you have insurance that covers you for international travel and during your stay abroad.

Purchase traveler’s checks and/or obtain an international credit card or letters of credit.

Obtain an international student I.D. card.

Before leaving home, make arrangements to receive housing, financial aid and preregistration materials for your first term back at your home institution.

Check climate information to determine what clothing you will need to pack.

## Where Can I Learn about FSU Programs?

For information on FSU Study Abroad programs, contact the Office of International programs located at A5500 University Center or visit their web site at [www.international.fsu.edu](http://www.international.fsu.edu)

FSU programs located in London, Florence, Panama City, and Valencia are offered for the summer, fall, and spring semesters. Classes are taught in study centers owned by FSU. The Belmopan, Sucre, Tianjin, San Jose, Dubrovnik, Prague, Paris, Dublin, Tokyo, Moscow, Leysin and Zurich programs are only offered during the summer semester. Classes for these programs are taught at foreign universities. Students entering the Costa Rica program are minimally required to have taken the equivalent of two years of high school Spanish.

## Where Can I Learn about Other Programs?

Visit the library in the Office of International Programs (A5500 University Center) to obtain information on other schools that offer study abroad programs. Remember to check to see whether the other programs offer credits that can be transferred back to FSU. Also consult resources available in The Career Center, listed in this guide.

## Additional Information

### **Books and Other Resources**

These resources can be found in the Career Center Library.

<i>The ISS Directory of Overseas Schools</i> .....	VIC I65
<i>Vacation Study Abroad</i> .....	IIIE3 C6
<i>Academic Year Abroad</i> .....	IIIE3 C62
<i>It's Your World: Student's Guide to Education Abroad</i> .....	IIIE3 H6
<i>Study Abroad: The Astute Student's Guide</i> .....	IIIE3 J8
<i>Study Abroad</i> .....	IIIE3 P4
<i>Postgraduate Directory</i> .....	IIIE3 R4
<i>The Gourman Report-Undergraduate Programs: A Rating of Undergraduate Programs in American &amp; International Universities</i> .....	IIIC G41
<i>Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors - International Membership Directory</i> .....	VIB3 A75
<i>File #1 (Mobile Files) Module 14 (Study Abroad Programs) Overseas Programs (by country)</i> .....	File #7

### **Web Sites**

[www.nrca.com/](http://www.nrca.com/)  
[www.studyabroaddirectory.com](http://www.studyabroaddirectory.com)  
[www.culturebridge.com](http://www.culturebridge.com)  
[www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)  
[www.studyabroad.com](http://www.studyabroad.com)  
[www.iiepassport.org/](http://www.iiepassport.org/)



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850.644.6431 • [career.fsu.edu](http://career.fsu.edu)

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