Study Abroad

How to Decide?

Guide 2014
This booklet is designed for all undergraduate students who intend to spend, or are considering spending, some time abroad as part of their degree programme. The information will guide you to further resources online, or you can print it and use it as a workbook while you make your decision.

As well as some information about the types of placement which you can apply for and the timescales for application and planning, there are some crucial practical points which we hope will help you to make an informed decision.

In the guide:

Am I eligible to study abroad? ....................... 2
My options: what can I do? ............................ 4
   Study Abroad ........................................ 4
   Working Abroad ................................. 5
My options: where can I go? ....................... 6
   Setting your priorities ......................... 7
Practical considerations ............................. 8
   Your finances .................................. 8
   Your emotional wellbeing .................... 9
   Your health ..................................... 9
   Students with disabilities .................... 9
   Cultural attitudes to difference ........... 10
Your application ...................................... 11
   How to apply .................................... 11
   Competition for places ....................... 12
   Application deadlines ....................... 12
Programme requirements

Your eligibility for study abroad will depend on your academic department, your programme and your individual academic standing. Before you begin to apply you should consult the UCL Study Abroad website to check whether you are able to study abroad as part of your degree. If you are unsure, please contact your personal tutor for clarification. If studying abroad is an option for you, UCL requires that you fulfil the following minimum requirements in order to participate in the programme:

- You must be of good academic standing (usually maintaining a minimum 2:1 average before departure)
- You must have successfully completed the minimum number of course units (including all compulsory units) for the degree programme for which you are registered
- You should have a good knowledge of the language of the host country
- You must have approval from your home department and UCL Student Support and Wellbeing Services
- You must respect all deadlines relating to the programme and ensure that relevant paperwork for your application is submitted on time

In addition to this, study abroad students must be willing to undertake the following responsibilities as a condition of participation in the programme:
Follow advice and guidance from your Study Abroad Tutor(s) regarding the most suitable study abroad options for you

Read and understand all information relating to your time abroad provided by your department

Complete the UCL Study Abroad Preparation Programme by the stated deadline.

Ensure that you are aware of the financial undertakings of the year abroad and that you have researched and budgeted accordingly

Understand and complete all of the work required during your period abroad (either set by your UCL department or completed at the host institution)

Undertake thorough, independent research of your placement abroad in order to ensure that you are adequately prepared

You are expected to show respect for and have regard to the laws, cultural traditions and institutions of the country or countries in which you are staying and behave at all times in a manner which does not bring the good name of UCL into disrepute

Some of the responsibilities listed above will be addressed in more detail later in this booklet. However, if you have any concerns or questions please contact the Study Abroad Team for advice.
When considering your options for study abroad, you must first identify which opportunities are available to you. Broadly speaking, there are two options available; either you study at a partner university overseas, or you work for an overseas employer (this option is only available to students on certain language degrees).

**Study Abroad**

Students studying abroad will attend university at the partner institution, following courses and completing assessments like any other student at the university. The way the credit awarded at the host institution is transferred back to UCL will be decided by your department. There are three types of study placement for UCL students – Erasmus exchanges, UCL exchanges and non-exchange placements.

**Erasmus exchanges** take place between participating EU universities, funded by the European Commission. Students participating in Erasmus exchanges benefit from additional maintenance funding to assist with their mobility.

**UCL exchanges** taking place outside of the Erasmus framework are also bilateral in nature, but are not supported by the international framework of the EU scheme. These take place outside of the EU and are negotiated at department, faculty or college level. There is no standard funding structure for mobility in these exchanges, however there are some scholarships and grants available to apply for which are country- or region-specific.

Both of these opportunities are provided by a bilateral agreement between UCL and the partner institution, a cooperative opportunity which allows students to attend overseas universities without paying tuition fees to the host institution.
Non-exchange placements (only an option for students on certain language programmes) are negotiated without a reciprocal exchange agreement and require students to pay fees to the host institution. Some of the tuition fees for these placements can be reimbursed by UCL – please contact your Study Abroad Tutor for details.

Working Abroad

The option to work abroad is only available to students on certain language programmes. Please visit the Where can I go? section of the Study Abroad website for details.

For those who wish to work abroad, they can either arrange an independent internship placement, an independent teaching assistantship or apply for a British Council Teaching Assistantship. Guidance on this can be sought from your Departmental Study Abroad Tutor or Departmental Study Abroad Officer. Independent internships have the advantage of offering work experience in the career you may wish to pursue in the future. However, these are often offered unpaid or on a very low pay rate, so can be a significant financial undertaking.

British Council placements are funded by their respective organisations and assistants will receive a monthly stipend as remuneration for their work. This experience is often very beneficial to students’ language skills, and as such is very competitive. As a result, students will have very little control over their placement location aside from designating a host country/language. Links to further information on British Council and Comenius placements, including assessment and credit transfer, can be found on the SELCS Undergraduate Moodle Handbook (available to current SELCS students only).
UCL has student exchange partnerships with over 250 institutions in 40 countries. The options available to you will be determined by your course (and programme route in some cases). You should refer to the Where can I go? section of the website for more specific information about where you can go, then speak with your Study Abroad Tutor to discuss your specific interests.

While you do your research, start making notes on your available destinations; you will need to do thorough independent exploration into each of your possible choices, so make sure to put aside some time to really get to grips with each institution. Making lists of pros and cons or mind maps to work through your options may be useful.

My options:

Toronto - great city, good student population, could be expensive...

Australia

- Awesome weather
- Expensive airfare
- Great universities
- Amazing opportunities to travel
- Research hub
Before beginning your more detailed research, it is important to identify your priorities for your placement destination. Though you may think that this decision should be purely academic, neglecting your personal and social needs could lead to a less enjoyable and productive experience overall. Use the themes and questions below to establish your main priorities. Perhaps also rank these according to importance to help guide your research.

Questions to ask yourself

**Location**
- Will you thrive best in a large city, small town or countryside village?
- How far from home are you willing to go?
- Will you be miserable in a freezing winter or blistering summer? Climate can have a big effect on many people’s moods!
- Do you have friends or family overseas who could offer you support?

**Financial**
- What can you reasonably afford on your year abroad? What will your travel and visa costs be?
- What will your sources of funding be?
- What is the cost of living?

**Academic**
- Which institutions have the most prestige in your area of interest?
- What are the assessment methods at each institution - are you comfortable with these?
- Are you competent in the language of instruction?
- Can you attend any additional language classes to boost your level when you arrive?
As well as the questions on the page before, you need to keep in mind that your year abroad will be a personal journey as well as an academic one. The headings below should help you think through some of the areas which may impact your personal wellbeing.

**Your finances**

It is vital that you start to consider your financial situation as early as possible in the application process, as you will need plenty of time to apply for financial support. It is also important to note that some study abroad options will open up more opportunities for funding, so it is worthwhile taking some time to research.

You will need to think about three main areas when considering your year abroad finances:

- **Tuition fees** - make sure you apply to the SLC for the correct (usually reduced) fee amount (if applicable)

- **Travel and arrival costs** - have you budgeted for flights and your first month’s rent? What other costs might you need to cover in your first few weeks?

- **Maintenance** - what are you eligible for? Will the amount of your loan be reduced because of your study abroad option?

To help with your maintenance abroad, it is recommended that you complete a realistic budget before you start applying for placements, to make sure that you have understood the financial undertakings of the experience. You can find out more about financing your time abroad, including a free downloadable budgeting worksheet, on the *Finance* section of the Study Abroad website.
Emotional wellbeing

Undertaking a year abroad is a significant emotional upheaval for many students. The stress of moving abroad, away from friends and family (sometimes for the second time in a short period) can be more difficult for some people than others. Before deciding to go abroad, it is important to ask yourself frankly whether you think you will be able to deal with the effects of moving overseas. You can discuss these issues in confidence with your Study Abroad tutor, or look for guidance from friends and family or the wider UCL support network. See the Study Abroad website or the UCL Support Pages for details on how to access further support.

Health

Being away from home means being away from your primary health care provider. If you have any on-going health issues which you are receiving treatment for, or have received treatment for recently, it is important to discuss this with your health practitioner before deciding to go abroad.

If you are taking any prescription medicine long term, it is also important to seek advice about availability of these medicines overseas and ways you can manage this abroad, as this may affect your choice of institution.

Your sexual health abroad is also an important thing to consider, as attitudes can differ considerably from country to country. More information about your sexual health and general health when preparing to go abroad can be found on our website.

Students with disabilities

The UCL Study Abroad Team is committed to ensuring that Study
Abroad opportunities are accessible to all. Our guidelines for students with disabilities considering study abroad are available at the Study Abroad Fair and to download from the UCL Study Abroad website. Advisers from Student Disability Services will be happy to go through them with you to help you make an informed decision. The UCL Study Abroad Team can also be contacted for advice on destinations and additional funding options.

**Cultural attitudes to difference**

London is a vibrant, liberal, multi-cultural city. As a community, UCL works to safeguard the rights of all students and staff through a comprehensive Equality and Diversity policy (available from the UCL website).

However, attitudes to people from ethnic or sexually diverse groups can be extremely different in other parts of the world and students identifying as such should take this into account when making decisions about studying abroad. It is important to research carefully and seek advice if this is a concern for you, as coming up against racial prejudice or homophobia can cause emotional distress for many people. To help you research your prospective host country, please refer to the *Equality and Diversity* page on the Study Abroad website, which includes useful links and brief guidelines for LGBT+ students, minority ethnic students and students with disabilities who are planning to study abroad.

You can also contact the UCLU LGBT+ officer or Welfare and International Officer for advice, or refer to the UCL Support Pages for further support options.
How do I apply?

The application process is not the same for everyone. Your application requirements will depend on your course of study. For detailed guidelines of how to apply, you should visit the Study Abroad website or refer to your Departmental Information Sheet. Students in SSEES, SELCS, Pharmacy, the Bartlett, ESPS, Slade and History do not apply via the process described below.

Meet your tutor

Before submitting an application to study abroad, it is crucial that you meet with your Study Abroad Tutor to discuss your options and gain provisional approval from your department.

Approval request

Once you have chatted with your tutor, you should complete a request for study abroad approval online via Portico. To do this, log into your Portico account and click on the Study Abroad link on the left hand panel. Full instructions are available on the website.

Application form

Complete online application form via Portico and submit it before 4pm on 28 November 2014. The form consists of five questions about your motivation and suitability for Study Abroad, details of your academic referee, an up to date CV and evidence of your language ability (where necessary). Full instructions for this year’s application will be online at www.ucl.ac.uk/studyabroad/how-to-apply
Competition for places

Before applying, you should be aware that competition for places on non-Erasmus exchanges is usually very high. When applying through the central process, you will be asked to rank your choices as 1st, 2nd and 3rd preference. It is important that you research all of these choices as thoroughly as your first choice, and that you are equally prepared to accept all of these placements.

To help you decide on your order of preference, we have produced a traffic light system to reflect the demand for each institution on our list. Please have a look at this list online before submitting your application.

You are strongly advised to only include one High Demand or Very High Demand placement in your choices where possible in order to avoid disappointment.

Application deadlines

Please note the following key dates and deadlines:

Applications open via Portico: **28 October 2014**
Applications close: **4pm on 28 November 2014**
Provisional allocations released: **Late January 2015**
Deadline to withdraw from Study Abroad: **4pm on 01 March 2015**

Students are advised that incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.
The 2014 Study Abroad Fair will take place on Tuesday 28 October 2014 - 4-6pm in the UCL Front Quad and Wilkins North Cloisters.

UCL's annual Study Abroad Fair is aimed at all undergraduate students who are taking part in, or are considering taking part in, the study abroad programme at UCL. Although the information is primarily aimed at students on non-language degrees, students from SELCS, SSEES, BASc and ESPS are welcome to attend and there will be representatives from those departments available to take questions.

Attending the fair is a chance to:

- View information about UCL's partner universities
- Speak to UCL students who have recently returned from a period of study abroad about their experiences
- Meet exchange students from our partner institutions who are currently studying at UCL
- Find out more about the Erasmus programme and talk to other students who have taken part in the programme
- Talk to representatives from UCL services and external companies who work to support study abroad students.

There is no need to register for this event - please just come along and bring your friends!

Questions?

www.ucl.ac.uk/studyabroad

Email: studyabroad@ucl.ac.uk

Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 0121 (9am-5pm Monday-Friday)
Or drop in to the Student Centre on Tuesdays 2-4pm