



UCL

HOW TO DECIDE GUIDE

FOR STUDENTS APPLYING TO STUDY ABROAD IN 2024-25

This guide is designed for undergraduate students who are due to, or are considering applying to study abroad as part of their degree in 2024-25.

Whether you are a student who will be spending a compulsory year abroad next year, or your degree programme offers an optional route to study abroad, we hope that this guide will help you to make an informed and confident decision about where to apply.

To get the most out of your time abroad, it's important to start thinking as early as possible about your academic and personal goals and the countries and universities that will be a good match for these. We encourage you to think outside of the box and consider universities that you may not be so familiar with; all of our partner universities offer unique academic, social and cultural experiences.

UCL's Go Abroad Week is taking place between 30 October - 3 November 2023 and it's not too late to sign up to attend! The full schedule of events and sign-up links can be found on the [Study Abroad website](#).

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Am I eligible to study abroad?

Your eligibility for study abroad will depend on your academic department, your programme and your individual academic standing. If you are unsure about whether or not you are eligible to study abroad in 2024-25, you should check this with your department before proceeding.

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 enrolled on a degree programme in which a placement abroad in 2024-25 is either a compulsory requirement or is an optional route on the programme**
- **You must be in good academic standing (usually this means maintaining a minimum 2:1 average before departure, although some additional departmental requirements may apply)**
- **You must successfully complete the academic year preceding your placement and progress into the year of study in which you will be abroad, in order to undertake your placement**
- **You must apply for a placement on time via the correct application route**
- **You must ensure that you are selecting universities that are open to your department**
- **Before applying, you should ensure that you are aware of the financial undertakings of the year abroad and that you have researched and budgeted accordingly. This may impact the destinations that you select in your preference list**
- **You must follow advice and guidance from your departmental Study Abroad Tutor regarding the most suitable study abroad options for you**
- **You should attend all relevant Go Abroad Week events to gain an in-depth understanding of the application and preparation process**

Participation in the Study Abroad programme is contingent upon the destination being safe to send students to as per FCDO guidance, the allocation of a study abroad placement (by the Study Abroad Team or your department), your progression into the academic year in which you will go abroad and your allocated host university offering exchange in 2024-25.

Where could I go?

Before you begin researching destinations, you must first identify which opportunities are available to you. Most departments offer a range of European and non-European universities. Our online [Options Guide](#) (published on Monday 30 October 2023) confirms the universities that you are able to consider. It is only possible to apply for universities that are listed for your department.

With the exception of students in SELCS, BASc and Institute of the Americas, who have the option of undertaking a work placement, your placement abroad will be completed at a partner university overseas, where you will enrol and study as an exchange or visiting student.

Study Placements

The large majority of UCL students abroad will be on a study placement. In this instance, you will enrol at your host university (typically as an inbound exchange or visiting student), enrolling on modules and completing a full course load and assessment there.

Across UCL, there are a plethora of exchange placements to choose from at European and non-European universities. Sometimes we refer to these as 'European placements' and 'International placements' respectively, but they are managed in exactly the same way.

Most exchanges are negotiated at faculty or university level; as a result, spaces are typically open to students from a number of departments and are therefore competitive.

You may have heard of Erasmus exchanges with European institutions. Due to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, UCL is no longer able to participate in the Erasmus programme. This does not affect the study placement options available to you, just the terminology that we use around exchange placements.

Work Placements

The option to work abroad is only available to students on certain language programmes in SELCS, students in BASc and Institute of the Americas. Work placements can be a great way for students to enhance their employability, build professional networks and stand out to future employers.

Work placements usually include opportunities organised independently by students and [British Council assistantships](#).

We encourage students interested in working abroad to discuss this in further detail with their departmental Study Abroad Tutor.

Setting Your Priorities

You may already have some idea of where you would like to study abroad. If your programme has a language component, your host country may already be determined based on your target language.

There are many factors to consider when choosing your preference universities. Though you may think that this decision should be purely academic, neglecting your personal and wellbeing needs could lead to a less enjoyable and productive overall experience. Below, we've included some key themes and questions to help you establish your main priorities. To guide your research, you may wish to rank each factor by its importance to you.

ACADEMIC

- Most countries do not use university rankings in the same way that we do in the UK. It's important to think beyond the universities you have heard of! Universities that rank the highest for your discipline and universities in popular cities may not necessarily be the best fit for you and your interests!
- Are you competent in the language of instruction? Can you attend any additional language classes to boost your level when you arrive?
- What type of academic experience do you want whilst studying abroad? Collaborative or competitive? Small campus community or large student body?
- What is the level of demand at UCL for the universities that you are interested in?
- Do your university preferences offer courses of interest that will meet the requirements of your UCL degree?

WELLBEING

- Moving to a new country can present unexpected challenges. Have you thought about the coping mechanisms and support network that you will draw on if needed?
- If you have a SORA in place at UCL, have you researched support options at your preferred universities and whether the same kind of accommodations may be possible there?
- If you have a pre-existing health condition, have you considered the availability of prescription medication and any specialist treatment that you may require?
- How close to your support network at home would you like to be? Will time difference impact the contact that you will have with those at home?

LOCATION

- Are you looking for a quintessential campus experience abroad or will you thrive in a busy city centre?
- How might the culture/attitudes of the country - e.g, socially and politically - impact on your experience?
- Are you better suited to moderate or tropical climate (weather can have a real influence on mood and productivity!)

FINANCIAL

- What can you reasonably and realistically afford on your year abroad, considering your budget and the cost of living in that country?
- What will your sources of funding be? (Note: Turing funding is not guaranteed for all students)
- How much will it cost to travel to and from your host country? Will you be able to afford to travel home during breaks if you want to?
- Will you need a visa? Will you be required to provide evidence of funds at the point of applying for your visa? (see page 5 for further details)



Practical Considerations

Your Finances

It is crucial to factor your financial situation into your research as this will likely impact the destinations that you consider. If it would help to speak to our team about your financial circumstances during the application stage, please do get in touch; we can help you calculate outgoing costs, compare the cost of living between countries and select suitable destinations. There are three main areas to consider when considering your year abroad finances:

- **Tuition fees:** information on tuition fee rates paid to UCL during study abroad placements can be found on our [website](#)
- **Travel and arrival costs:** you are responsible for your travel, accommodation and living costs whilst abroad
- **Sources of financial support:** Think about your primary and secondary sources of income for your placement:
 - Primary sources include Student Finance England funding, a UCL Bursary (if eligible), personal funds and family support, and/or support from a government or educational sponsor
 - Secondary sources may include SFE Travel Grants, part-time work whilst abroad, and Turing funding*, which will be available for some placements, but this will not be known until after placement allocations have been made, and potentially even after your placement has started

*Turing funding is contingent upon UCL securing funding from the UK Government for study abroad placements in 2024-25. Due to when in the year funding is confirmed by the UK Government, students applying for Turing funding should not expect to learn if they are successful prior to going abroad.

Providing evidence of funds for visa applications

Some countries require evidence of personal funds as part of the visa application process.

Although not an exhaustive list, this is generally a requirement for placements in the USA, Japan and some other Asian countries. If required, you'll need to provide evidence of sufficient personal funds documented through a combination of bank statements and payment confirmation letters from financial sponsors of Student Finance England.

For host institutions in the USA, students are often required to provide evidence of access to funds in the region of \$25,000 USD (around £20,000). If you are thinking about applying for a space at one of our American partners, please take the time to consider your personal circumstances to ensure that you would be able to provide this evidence

You may need to show financial support for visas in Europe, though the funds necessary are much less than what is requested for the USA. In the past few years, students experienced serious delays in obtaining visas for European countries. It is necessary to start the visa request process as soon as possible in order to avoid a late arrival for your placement.

Practical Considerations

Language of Instruction

Our online [Options Guide](#) indicates the language of instruction at our partner universities.

If you are proficient in a language other than English and there is an option for you to attend a university that teaches in that language, it is strongly recommended to add a language option in your university preferences.

If you are allocated a space at a university teaching in a language other than English, you will likely be required to provide evidence of your proficiency as part of your application. The majority of our partners require an intermediate proficiency in the target language.

Health and wellbeing

Being away from home means being away from your primary healthcare provider. If you have any ongoing health issues for which you receive treatment, or have received treatment for recently, it is important to discuss this with your healthcare practitioner before deciding to go abroad.

If you are taking any long-term prescription medicine, 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 country or university.

Moving to another country and adjusting to a new culture and academic system can be disorientating and can present unexpected challenges at times. 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.

Support systems overseas also vary. If you are allocated a place at one of our North American or Australian partners for example, you may find yourself in a campus environment with a highly developed support network for exchange students. Closer to home within Europe, you may be expected to manage your affairs as independently as a local student. There is a wealth of support available to UCL students abroad and you can find information on this [here](#).

You can also discuss these issues in confidence with your departmental Study Abroad tutor or the Study Abroad Team.

Students with disabilities

The UCL Study Abroad Team is committed to ensuring that Study Abroad opportunities are accessible to all. If you have a disability and anticipate that you will need specific support whilst abroad, we encourage you to reach out to us, the Study Abroad Team or the [UCL Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team](#) as early as possible in the process to discuss this further.

The UCL Study Abroad Team can also be contacted for advice on destinations and additional funding support available to students with specific educational or physical needs.

Practical Considerations

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 series of comprehensive Equality and Diversity policies.

However, attitudes to disability, gender, religious beliefs, sexual, ethnic or social identity can be different in other parts of the world and you should take this into account when making decisions about where to study abroad. It is important to research carefully and seek advice if this is a concern for you, as experiencing direct or indirect prejudice or discrimination can cause emotional distress for many people, and potentially put your safety at risk.

We encourage you to reach out to the UCLU Student Networks and use the resources below. You are always welcome to reach out to us, the Study Abroad Team to discuss matters relating to cultural difference and your own personal circumstances.

- [UCLU Student Networks](#)
- The [Diversity Guide to Study Abroad](#) provides useful information and guidance to students from all backgrounds

Semester Structure

Whilst at UCL, the school year typically runs from September to June, our partners in the Southern Hemisphere operate a January to December academic year structure. If you're hoping to study abroad at one of our partners in Australia, New Zealand or South America, your year abroad would look something like this:

- Placement begins in July 2023 at the start of your host university's second semester, finishing in November
- Long break from November to March (approx)- this is your host university's Summer vacation
- Return in March to complete your second term, finishing in July 2024

You can find academic calendars for all of our partner universities via their websites. If your programme includes one semester abroad, you should ensure that the term dates abroad do not overlap with UCL term dates.

Your summer plans before and after your year abroad

If you are hoping to undertake an internship or work placement during the summer before or after a year abroad, the dates of any such opportunity cannot overlap with the term or examination dates at your allocated host university.

Our partner universities are not able to accommodate late arrivals as a result of clashes with other commitments. If you are allocated a study abroad placement, you must prioritise this over your summer plans.

How to apply

You will either apply for a placement through the central application route (managed by the Study Abroad team) or through your department's own application process (managed by your department). The process to apply for your placement depends on your department.

Our [How To Apply webpages](#) outline the application route for each department.

It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the relevant process for you and ensure that you have sufficient time to research your options and meet the application deadline(s). Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.

Central application process at a glance

If you are in a department applying through the central application route, you will need to follow the in-depth instructions that are available on our [How to Apply webpages](#). The flowchart on the next page (page 10) gives a brief overview of the key steps and dates of the process.

The most important step takes place at the very start of the application process: to conduct specific and detailed university research into the options available in your department. As part of this process, you should discuss your proposed university options with your [departmental Study Abroad tutor](#). Your research and choosing process should begin as early as possible, before Part 1 applications open.

Please ensure that you leave enough time to submit each part of your application by the appropriate deadline. You can only progress to the later parts of the application if you have successfully completed the preceding part(s) on time.

Departmental application process at a glance

If you are in a department who manages applications and the allocation of study abroad spaces themselves, you should consult with your department for information on the application process.

A note on your programme type

Students enrolled onto 'with Study Abroad' degree programme (or equivalent i.e. 'International Programme' or 4-year languages programme) where the year abroad is a compulsory component of the degree programme will be allocated placements in the first instance.

Students enrolled on degree programmes where the opportunity to study abroad is optional but not a compulsory year of the programme are welcome and encouraged to make a study abroad application. If you are on an optional programme and choose to submit a study abroad application, you make a commitment at the point of applying that you will take up the place if offered one. If you cannot commit to this at application stage, study abroad may not be the best fit for you. If you are flexible and strategic with your preference list, you stand a great chance of being offered a place at one of your preferences.

The Central Application process

For students applying through the central application process, you will be applying to us, the Study Abroad Team. We will assess your application and make decisions about allocations. Here's an overview of the application steps you'll complete.

It is important to complete all steps, by the advertised deadlines, in order to be considered for a Study Abroad space.

Further information on each step can be found in our Application Instructions on the [Study Abroad website](#).

1. RESEARCH ALL OPTIONS

Use the Options Guide and How to Decide Guide to research all of the options available to your department. Be flexible and open-minded!



2. DISCUSS WITH TUTOR

Meet with your departmental Study Abroad tutor to discuss your options and goals for your year abroad. Narrow your options and build a strategic list.



3. PREPARE APPLICATION

By 5pm on Friday 3 November, Part 1 of the application process will open. Part 2 questions will also be released giving you plenty of time to work on your answers.



4. SUBMIT PT 1 PREFERENCES

In Part 1, follow the guidance to list your four university preferences in order from 1 - 4. The deadline to submit Part 1 is 1pm on Monday 20 November.



5. AWAIT PT 1 APPROVAL

Your study abroad tutor reviews your preference list. If your preferences are approved, you'll be sent a Part 2 application link via email in early December.



6. SUBMIT P2 APPLICATION

Take your time and follow our guidance to produce a detailed and specific Part 2 application. The deadline to submit Part 2 is 1pm on Monday 18 December.



7. RECEIVE ALLOCATION

In mid-February you'll receive your application outcome via email. All university allocations are final and cannot be negotiated.



8. APPLY TO HOST UNI

Await info on how to formally apply to your host university. This process ensures you are enrolled as an exchange student. Deadlines vary from February to April 2024.



Selecting your universities

It is crucial to approach your preferences list with a flexible and open mind. A strong list will include a range of universities across different Levels of Demand and geographical areas, as much as your department's list in the [Options Guide](#) allows.

To maximise your chances of being allocated one of your four preferences:

1. Start early with your research and consider a wide range of factors in your choosing process, using the information on [Page 4: Setting your priorities](#)
2. Include **no more than one Ultra High Demand and one Very High Demand placement** in your preference list
3. Select at least one European university as one of your preferences, if available to you
4. Include at least one Lower Demand university placement in your preference list
5. If you are interested in an Ultra High Demand university, you should only put this as your first or second choice university
6. It is important to make full use of all four preferences

Understanding Level of Demand for spaces

If you're applying through the central application, you will rank your preferences in order from 1 to 4. It is important that you research all preferences as thoroughly as your first choice, and that you are equally prepared to accept an allocation at any of your four preferred universities.

Spaces on exchanges, and especially for non-European exchanges, are limited and demand is usually extremely high. European university spaces are usually negotiated at departmental level, which means that you'll typically be competing with students in your own department, whereas competition for non-European spaces is usually UCL wide. The table below corresponds with each university's 'Level of Demand' on the [Options Guide](#).

Level of demand	Number of applications across UCL for one place at the host university
Ultra High Demand	11+
Very High Demand	6-10
High Demand	3-5
Lower Demand	1-2

Whilst the table above aims to give you an idea of how popular each university is amongst UCL students, please note that:

- the number of applications for every university fluctuates each year
- the 'Level of Demand' is not indicative of the quality of the institution or the experience you could have there; it's a measure of how many UCL students tend to apply for each university. Therefore it's vital to conduct detailed research into each university that is open to your department - by following the crowd, you could miss out on a great fit university for you!

Study Abroad Terms and Conditions

Once you have submitted your Study Abroad application you cannot make changes; your first submission will be taken as final. Please check and double check that you are happy with your preferences and responses before clicking submit.

If you are successfully allocated a placement, this offer is considered final. It is not possible to negotiate your offer and unfortunately, due to the volume of applications we receive, we cannot provide personalised feedback.

We do not operate a waitlist for alternative placement offers. For example, if you are offered a place at your third preference university, that is your final allocation. You will not be added to a waitlist for your first or second preference in the event that another student withdraws from the study abroad programme.

Withdrawal process

When you submit a study abroad application, you make a commitment that if you are successfully allocated a place, you will take it up and prioritise it over other plans. This is important because where students accept a study abroad place but withdraw at a later stage, another student can no longer benefit from that place.

Of course, we understand that there may be changes to your personal circumstances between the date of application and your placement starting that mean you need to withdraw from the programme. If you accept your place but subsequently withdraw after the withdrawal deadline (to be confirmed in your offer), please note that you may be subject to a fee, except for in exceptional circumstances where you may need to provide supporting evidence. Exceptional circumstances typically include:

- personal illness - mental or physical - preventing travel
- health concerns relating to travel to the destination country
- illness or bereavement of a close family member
- significant changes in financial circumstances
- withdrawal for academic reasons
- circumstances in the host country making it unsafe or impossible to pursue your placement
- significant changes in circumstances between the date of application and date of withdrawal

If you withdraw at any stage, you must complete the study abroad withdrawal process in full.

Force majeure and Study Abroad

Opportunities advertised for 2024-25 study abroad are expected to run in-person, however, please be aware that forces outside of UCL's control (e.g. Covid-19 restrictions, conflict within the country) may result in some programmes being cancelled.

If placements are cancelled before the start of term, every effort will be made to offer affected students an alternative option, but we cannot guarantee that an alternative space will be available or, if one is, that it would be at one of your listed preference universities.

Your Next Steps

Join us for Go Abroad Week!

If you haven't yet signed up to attend one of our many virtual and in-person sessions running throughout Go Abroad Week (Monday 30 October to Friday 3 November 2023), you can find the full event schedule [here](#).

Familiarise yourself with the correct application route

Our [How To Apply webpages](#) outline the application process for each department. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted so it's really important to ensure that you know how and when to apply.

Find out which universities are available for you to consider

Our online [Options Guide](#) provides information on the universities open to students in each department.

Spend time fully researching your university preferences

Whether applying to us centrally or to your department, you will be asked to demonstrate your motivation to study abroad and the research that you have undertaken into each of your preferences. Make sure that you have discussed these with your departmental Study Abroad Tutor before you begin Part 1 of the application.

Reach out to us in the Study Abroad Team

If you have questions about your application, contact us via [AskUCL](#) or come and visit us from 2-4pm on Wednesdays in the Student Enquiries Centre

Apply for your placement!

Whether you are applying centrally for a study abroad placement or directly to your department, we wish you the best of luck with your application and are here to help with any questions you might have along the way; contact us via [AskUCL](#)

UCL Study Abroad Team
[Website](#) | [Instagram](#)

Information within this guide is correct as of October 2023