

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDY ABROAD

Answers Courtesy of the International Education Office

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<http://www.buffalostate.edu/studyabroad>

Web Site for SUNY International Programs:

<http://www.sunysystemabroad.com/>

A Buffalo News article cited cross-cultural sensitivity and global experience as two of eight characteristics essential for success in the workplace of the future. Buffalo State offers you the opportunity to gain these traits by studying almost anywhere in the world for a summer, a semester, or an entire academic year. Shorter programs are also available.

We help you maximize the benefits of your overseas experience, both before and after you go abroad, with tips on networking, how to describe to potential employers the skills you have gained, and how to build on study abroad when you return.

PLANNING

Q. How far in advance should I start planning to study abroad?

A. It's a good idea to start thinking about it in your freshman year. It gives you plenty of time to meet the requirements (GPA, courses, and language) of the program. However, a year in advance is generally sufficient.

Q. Where can I study?

A. There are over 600 programs in nearly 60 countries available through SUNY campuses.

Q. For how long can I study abroad?

A. It's possible to go for a semester, an academic year, a summer, or an intersession, depending on the program you choose.

FINANCES

Q. Can my financial aid be applied?

A. YES! Most forms of financial aid can be applied to SUNY programs. Once you are accepted into a program, a budget sheet will be prepared by the International Education Office for you to submit to the Financial Aid Office. Many students qualify for additional aid for overseas study if the cost of the program is substantially higher than the cost of study at home.

Q. Can I work while I am abroad?

A. In some countries and on some programs students are not permitted to work. In most cases where work is allowed, the number of hours is restricted (generally no more than 15-20 hours per week). However, the reality is that most countries are experiencing recessionary times, and native workers are given priority over those from other countries. Thus, it is often extremely difficult to get a job even if you are permitted to work. In any case, students should not depend on their earnings to pay for their program expenses. A little extra spending money is all that should be expected of a part-time job, if available and permitted. (The penalties for working illegally are extremely severe in many countries.)

There are a limited number of programs that allow students or recent graduates to work abroad full-time. Further details are available in the International Education Office.

Q. Are there any scholarships available for study abroad?

A. YES! The International Education Office and your public library have reference books on scholarships, grants, and other private funding sources. However, deadlines occur at various times of the year, so your research needs to be done a year in advance to enable you to apply to the maximum number of sources for which you may qualify. If you participate in a Buffalo State program or one sponsored by one of the other four-year SUNY campuses, you need not look for aid specifically earmarked for study abroad, since you will remain registered at Buffalo State and any aid for which you can qualify to be in college can apply to your overseas program. Check out available scholarships at www.buffalostate.edu/scholarship.

April 1 is the application deadline for Buffalo State's own study abroad scholarships for the following summer, fall intersession, and spring. November 1 is the application deadline for scholarships for spring semester programs only.

Early each semester, the International Education Office and the Financial Aid Office present a workshop on financial aid for those students interested in studying abroad.

Q. How expensive are the programs?

- A.** This varies widely. The cost of exchange programs is essentially the same as to study and live on campus here PLUS airfare and spending money. HOWEVER, your financial aid award is based on the actual cost of the overseas program (including travel, spending money, passport, etc.), so you may qualify for aid even if you have not before, or for a larger amount than in the past.

A two- to three-week study tour could cost around \$3,000. There are summer programs available for about \$4,000. A semester-long exchange is possible for about \$10,000, and you could spend a year abroad for about \$20,000. There are, of course, more expensive programs for each of these time spans, but opportunities can generally be found that will fit your particular budget.

Long-range planning will also allow you to apply for scholarships and to save for your overseas program.

TIMING

Q. Do you have to be a junior or senior to go abroad?

- A.** NO! There are programs available for students at all levels. Check the SUNY Overseas Programs book or the SUNY abroad Website for each program's requirements. (Most campuses do not accept first-semester freshmen.)

Q. I only have one semester left; can I still participate?

- A.** YES! This requires more careful planning, but many students do go abroad their last semester. Credits taken on a program sponsored by a four-year SUNY campus meet the residency requirement.

Q. What about going after graduation or for graduate school?

- A.** Since programs for undergraduates are more numerous, undergraduate tuition is significantly less and financial aid for undergraduates is often more readily available, many students choose to delay their graduation in order to study abroad.

Fulbright, Boren, and other grants are available for students to do graduate study overseas. The Fulbright program also offers teaching assistantships to teach English in several countries, some particularly aimed at students preparing to teach the language of the host country.

Since these grant programs are quite competitive, students are encouraged to begin exploring the opportunities and developing proposals several months in advance of the deadlines. Faculty mentors are available to assist in this process.

Q. How can I postpone my graduation?

A. In order to graduate you must apply for graduation; therefore, by not applying you postpone your graduation. If you have already filed, then you must rescind your application at the Registrar's Office. However, you must still have requirements to complete to be eligible for financial aid.

ELIGIBILITY

Q. Do you need to know a foreign language to study abroad?

A. NO! There are many programs available in non-English speaking countries where English is the language of instruction or where you can take courses in English while learning the language.

However, there are many exciting opportunities for study, internships and/or work in countries where a certain level of proficiency in another language is required. So consider registering for foreign language courses, even if they are not required for your major.

Q. Is there a GPA requirement?

A. Each campus determines the GPA requirement for their programs. The minimum GPA is normally a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, but exceptions are sometimes made if a student has good letters of recommendation and if special circumstances contributed to the low GPA.

Q. How competitive are the programs?

A. It depends on the size of the program and sometimes on the requirements of the overseas site. Since exchange programs are one-for-one, it may also depend on the number of students from the exchange university who want to come to the U.S. in a particular semester or year.

COURSES AND CREDITS

Q. How do I get credit for the courses I take abroad?

- A.** If you are a student at a four-year SUNY campus and go on an overseas program administered by another four-year SUNY, a transcript supplement is automatically issued and sent to the Registrar's Office, where the courses are then placed on your official transcript. On any other program, you must complete an official transcript request form to have the grades sent to your home institution. **BEFORE YOU GO, MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL FOR TH COURSES YOU WILL TAKE ABROAD. HAVE A COPY OF THE APPROVED LIST PUT IN YOUR FILE AND GET A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.** Buffalo State students will use the International Program Advising Agreement for this purpose.

Q. How do I get specific information about the overseas universities where I might study?

- A.** The International Education Office on the sponsoring campus generally has catalogs and other materials or can request further information of the host university. Most universities also have sites on the Internet.

Q. Where do I go for advisement?

- A.** After securing information from the sponsoring campus about the courses offered overseas, you need to see your regular adviser to determine which courses are most appropriate for you. You should have your adviser approve a longer list of courses than you will actually take, in case some are not available when you get to your program site.

The International Education Office will assist Buffalo State students in determining equivalencies for courses to be applied to general education requirements. Buffalo State students will be asked to have their departments complete an advising agreement indicating equivalencies for courses to be taken overseas that will apply to the student's major or minor.

Q. What is the difference between an exchange program and a study abroad program?

- A.** On an exchange program, a student simply changes places with a student from the host institution. Each pays the normal tuition, fees, and occasionally room and board at his/her home campus. Generally, exchange students have access to the full range of courses available at the host institution.

On a study abroad program, American students study at an overseas site, sometimes at a university and sometimes not. Frequently, the choice of courses is more limited and classes are usually only for students enrolled in the program.

Q. How many times can I go abroad?

A. There is no specific limit, but if you wish to go more than once you need to work closely with your adviser and the International Education Office to determine in advance how the credits taken overseas will meet your degree requirements. For financial aid purposes, no more than 25% of the degree should be done abroad.

Q. Can I receive credit for overseas experiences other than study?

A. There are overseas internships and service projects for which credit can frequently be granted. Contact the International Education Office for more information.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Q. Where can I get an application?

A. For most Buffalo State programs the application is completed at <http://buffalostate.studioabroad.com>. Check the sponsoring campus's website for information on the application required by other SUNY four-year campuses. The International Education Office will assist you with the application process for SUNY community college programs and those outside of SUNY.

Q. Are there any application fees?

A. Application fees vary from campus to campus. You should contact the sponsoring campus to see if there is such a fee. (Buffalo State's application fee for its overseas programs is \$25.00.)

Q. Will I be interviewed? By whom?

A. Buffalo State has faculty/staff committees that conduct interviews for all semester and academic year programs and most shorter programs. Some other campuses have a similar process, but most make their decision based solely on your application and letters of recommendation.

Q. How do I register for study abroad?

A. Once you are accepted into your program, the International Education Office will provide you with a CRN to register in Banner.

Q. If I have questions, whom can I contact?

A. If you are interested in a Buffalo State program, contact the International Education Office in South Wing 410. If you are interested in a program sponsored by another SUNY campus, the Buffalo State office will have basic information, but for more details you will need to contact the sponsoring campus.

HOUSING, TRAVEL, AND OTHER DETAILS

Q. What about housing?

A. This varies greatly. Some programs offer accommodations with a host family, others house students in residences halls, and others assist students in arranging accommodations in apartments.

Q. Do I have to make my own travel arrangements?

A. It depends on the program you choose. If a program has a large number of participants, a group flight will often be arranged by the sponsoring campus. In some programs you will be met at the airport and taken to the university; in others you are given instructions on how to get there on your own.

Q. When should I apply for a passport?

A. You should apply for your passport as soon as you are accepted into a program, preferably before. It generally takes a minimum of four weeks to process the passport application (longer during the summer months). The passport fee is \$135.00 (not including passport photos).

Q. Will I need a visa?

A. Not all countries require a visa. The sponsoring campus will normally notify you if the program requires one. There may be a fee for the visa.