

Questions to Ask When Considering Study Away Options

by Jodi Walder-Biesanz

Is the study abroad program directly from your college, taught by professors from your college that go abroad with you? Is it a program pre-approved by your college but taught by staff at the host university? If you elect to go on an alternate program, what is the process for getting credits approved by your college?

Is the program taught in English, the native language, or some classes in each? If classes will all be taught in the native language, do you need to pass a language proficiency exam before being accepted? Is there an in-country language intensive immersion program available before the start of the abroad program?

Will your cohort of students be other students studying abroad, or will you be in classes with native students of that country who go to school there?

Will all or some of the classes you take abroad fulfill your college's graduation requirements? Can they only be used for general education and elective requirements, or can they count toward requirements in your major?

If you plan ahead starting freshman year in college, is it possible to study abroad for a year, a semester, a quarter or a summer and still graduate in four years? Are there some majors that are so requirement-intensive that study abroad is not possible?

What percentage of students at your college actually take advantage of a study abroad program?

What pre-approved domestic study away options are available at exchange universities in the US? Are there some non-university options such as a semester in Washington DC or at the United Nations for political science majors, or a term in New York City or Hollywood for acting majors?

Do you pay tuition to your own college and they handle the exchange? Do you pay an independent study abroad organization? Can your US financial aid package be used for the study abroad program? Does it make more financial sense to "withdraw" for a term from your own college and pay tuition directly to your host college? Is plane fare included in the program cost?

Does the cost of the study abroad program include room and board? Will you live in a dorm with native students or live with a cohort of study abroad students, or with a host family? Are those arrangements made for you by the program, or do you need to handle them yourself? What meals are included or will you be doing all or some of your own cooking?

If you have health insurance through your school, is that insurance valid while you study abroad? If not, does the study abroad program include health insurance? If you are insured under your family's plan you need to check whether the insurance will be valid during your time abroad.