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THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Study Abroad Handbook

CONTENTS



Before you go	01-09	Cultural adjustment	22-23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paperwork for Edinburgh • Registration at Edinburgh • Paperwork for your host university • Pre-departure and orientation sessions • Being an ambassador • Withdrawal • Academic disqualification • Accommodation • Important documents to take • Making your travel plans 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture shock • Adjusting to a new place • Dealing with problems 	
Academic matters	10-12	Returning home	24-25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your academic requirements • Transferring credit • Selecting and enrolling on courses • Registration at the host institution • Study plans and learning agreements • Academic problems • Failing an exam 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcript of results • Erasmus requirements • Readjusting to life in Edinburgh • Reverse culture shock 	
Financial matters	13-16	Useful links	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition fees • Student loans • Additional funding • Erasmus grants • Financial assistance with language tuition • Other costs • Debts • Banking 		Contacts	27
Health and safety	17-21	Documents to take with you	28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and research • Contact information and important documents • Health insurance • Immunisation and medication • Laws and regulations • Consular assistance • General tips and advice • Emergency situations and contacts 		Checklist for arrival	29

emergency contacts card

Please find out and complete the relevant contact details indicated on this card and carry it with you at all times in case of emergency.

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STUDYING ABROAD

Studying abroad is not a 'year out' but an integral part of your Edinburgh degree and something that the University of Edinburgh values highly. Whether you will be studying or working in Europe or beyond, your study abroad period will be a positive addition to your CV and, as a life experience, is unique.

It's a fantastic opportunity to see more of the world, to become a global citizen, and to gain a new perspective on your subject, whilst gaining invaluable transferable skills and experience. Study abroad will broaden your horizons, culturally and academically, and may open up many new and unexpected opportunities.

The International Office, along with your School, is here to support you before, during and after your study abroad period. We hope that this handbook will help you in planning and undertaking your year or semester abroad, so please read it carefully before you go and take it with you.

BEFORE YOU GO

The key to preparing for your exchange is to do your research and be organised. Equip yourself with as much information as possible about your host country, city and institution - buy a guidebook, read all the information provided by your host university, by your School or Subject Area, and by the International Office. Use the 'Useful weblinks' section at the back of this guide.

Get feedback from and get in touch with current and previous exchange students via our Student Testimonies pages: www.ed.ac.uk/student-exchanges.

Make your accommodation arrangements in good time. Take out travel and medical insurance to cover your study abroad period. Make sure that you meet all deadlines and keep copies of any documentation you submit. Ensure that you know what Edinburgh requires of you, academically and administratively. Find out if you need to pay fees to Edinburgh next year and how any loans or grants will be paid to you.

Remember that, for data protection reasons, neither Edinburgh nor your host institution can discuss your personal details or your year abroad requirements with anyone other than you, so make sure you do everything that needs to be done if you are going to be away for the summer. If you have any special needs or medical requirements, please inform the International Office and the Disability Service as soon as possible in order that we can advise your host institution and request any special arrangements.

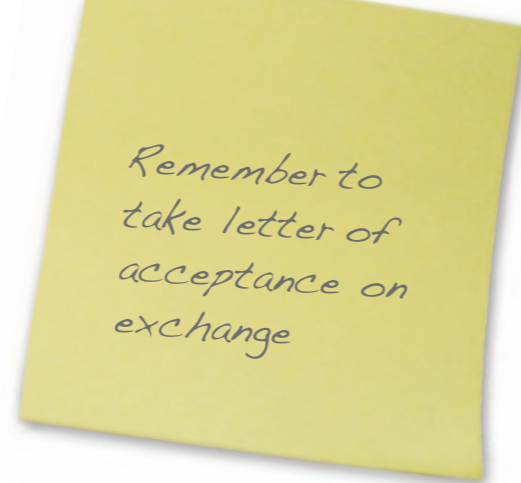




Paperwork for Edinburgh

All exchange students are required to complete and submit a signed learning agreement to the International Office before departure – this outlines your provisional study programme at your host university, and must be signed by your School Exchange Coordinator or Personal Tutor before you leave Edinburgh.

The outlined programme of study may change on arrival at your host university, but it is vital that you complete this before you go to ensure that Edinburgh knows that you have researched appropriate courses at your host university, and to ensure that you know how many courses and credits (as well as what type and level of courses) you will be required to take at your host institution. You must inform your School Exchange Coordinator and/or Personal Tutor of any changes on arrival. (Erasmus students will be required to return another learning agreement on arrival, signed by their host university, as a condition of the Erasmus grant.)



You will also be required to complete a pre-departure checklist to confirm that you are aware of the various aspects, requirements and expectations of your study abroad period. This is an important list and you should spend time reading and considering each point – if you are unclear on any points, you should seek further advice from your Study Abroad Coordinator, Personal Tutor or the International Office.

Erasmus students will be required to complete a grant contract in order to receive their grant funding.

Students undertaking work placements in Europe, who are eligible for Erasmus funding, will also be provided with a training agreement for completion before departure.

You may also have paperwork to complete for your School or Subject Area so make sure you hand in everything they require of you too.

Registration at the University of Edinburgh

Students going abroad as part of their Edinburgh degree programme still need to remain registered at the University of Edinburgh. Your School should do this for you. If you are advised that you have not been matriculated, please contact your School or Subject Area secretary. For more details see

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/matric/register-continuing>



Paperwork for your host university

Your exchange place is usually provisional until you have successfully completed your host university's admission process. This process will vary from country to country, and institution to institution. Many institutions have all their application information online, so please check their website. Otherwise, your host university should send you their application materials either by email or post.

Your host university may request documentation to support your application, which should be included with, or forwarded as soon as possible after you have submitted your application. If your host university requires a transcript, this can be provided by the International Office. For students on the International Exchange Programme, a transcript will automatically be submitted with your application. For students on the Erasmus Programme, a transcript is not usually necessary but if you require one, please request this from the International Office in good time.

Most European institutions request a Learning Agreement indicating the courses you plan to take whilst on exchange.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit your application and supporting documents in good time and do not miss any deadlines. If you miss your host's deadlines, you may not be admitted. It is also your responsibility to review your application for accuracy. If you do not complete your host university application forms correctly, your admission and visa processing may be delayed or declined.

We would also strongly recommend that you keep copies of all documentation that you submit, in case anything goes astray.

Once your application to your host university has been submitted you will usually receive a letter or email confirming your acceptance or admission. If you need to obtain a visa for your exchange period, you will need your letter of acceptance in order to apply for this.

Pre-departure sessions

The International Office holds compulsory pre-departure sessions in April/May each year. All outgoing students are required to attend one session.

Being an ambassador

While on exchange at a partner university, you will be an ambassador for the University of Edinburgh and should conduct yourself in a responsible manner appropriate to your host university and country. You must abide by Edinburgh's and your partner institution and country's rules and regulations as well as the local laws. Remember that different countries have different laws with respect to traffic, legal age and civil law.





Withdrawal from your study abroad period

If you decide to withdraw from your exchange prior to departure, you must notify the International Office and your Personal Tutor/School Exchange Coordinator as soon as possible, in writing (an email is sufficient). The International Office will notify your host university of your withdrawal.

If you decide to withdraw from your exchange after arrival at your host university, you must notify the International Office, your Personal Tutor/School Exchange Coordinator, and your host university immediately.

If you wish to return to Edinburgh to resume your studies for the year, you must contact your Personal Tutor as soon as possible to find out whether this will be possible. If you have missed more than a week or two of term, it may not be possible for you to return to Edinburgh for the remainder of the year.

If you are receiving financial assistance (such as a scholarship or Erasmus grant), you may be required to return any money advanced to you.

Academic disqualification

Your acceptance on an exchange programme depends on the successful completion of your year's work during the year before you go on exchange. If you fail to get into Honours, or have resits to take during the year before you go away, you may not be eligible to participate in your exchange.

Should you fail any courses during the year before your exchange, you should speak to your Personal Tutor/School Exchange Coordinator to find out whether you will still be eligible to participate.

Accommodation

Housing arrangements vary enormously around the world. Many institutions offer accommodation in student halls or residences, on or off campus – the quality and cost of this accommodation will also vary widely from country to country so try to find out as much as you can about what is on offer. The University of Edinburgh cannot warrant the quality or safety of any accommodation offered by partner institutions.

Accommodation may range from traditional on-campus residences to city apartments and homestays with local families. Information about accommodation will often be included in the host university's information package or notes sent to you after nomination. You may also find information on your host university's website or in the reports submitted by previous Edinburgh exchange students.



Some universities do not offer housing and expect you to find your own accommodation in the private market. In this case, we advise you to begin researching your accommodation options as early as possible. Many universities have an off-campus housing office where they offer help and advice on finding private accommodation.

Others have housing forums that you can log onto from their web pages. If possible it can be helpful to visit your host university during the summer in order to try to secure accommodation before the start of term – this is particularly true in larger European cities which often experience accommodation shortages.

Before departure, if you have your accommodation arranged before you go, make sure you know the location and address, and where to collect your keys.

If you don't have accommodation arranged before you go, book temporary accommodation in a centrally based hostel or hotel for at least 3 days to a week, so you have plenty of time to search for suitable accommodation. Don't plan to arrive over the weekend as you may find letting agencies, universities, etc, are not open. Do as much research as possible into where you might live, and ideally, get in touch with students who've been to your city before for their advice and tips.

For safety, take someone with you when you go flat hunting and find out as much as you can about the area and transport links. Have an idea of what the going rate is, to avoid being overcharged and don't part with any money until you've visited the property and preferably signed a contract. Be aware of bogus websites.

Make sure that you have enough money to cover deposits, that you get a receipt for any money that you hand over, and that you fully understand any contracts you sign. It is also useful to have references from previous landlords / letting agents, as well as bank statements to show that you have sufficient funds to cover a deposit and first month's rent.





Important documents

You must ensure that you have prepared all the necessary documentation for your exchange, prior to departure. The instructions in the following sections will help you get started. We recommend that you apply for these documents early in case of delays.

Passport

A passport is required for travel outside of the EU (and within the EU, unless you have an alternative ID such as a residence permit). It will also be a required document if you need to apply for a student visa or study permit. In some cases, partner universities will request a photocopy of your passport as part of the application process.

Make sure that your passport will still be valid for a minimum of 6 months at the date of your return to the UK. Make a note of its number, date and place of issue. Write the full details of your next of kin in your passport.

It is a good idea to have another means of ID with you (preferably with photograph), as a back-up. It is also a good idea to carry copies of your passport on you and to take extra passport photographs.

Birth certificate

Some countries (eg. France) may require birth certificates in order to issue local documentation. Check with your host country's embassy or consulate as to whether you need one.

Visas

Visas are only required by students studying outside of Europe, or by non-EU students who plan to study or work within Europe. UK and EU citizens do not need visas to study at institutions within the EU or EEA (European Economic Area – Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein).

International Office staff are not qualified to offer consultations or advice regarding visa applications. Nor can we apply on your behalf. Immigration laws are complex and subject to frequent changes – therefore, if you have questions about the process of applying for your visa, you should contact the appropriate Embassy directly. Any student who is not travelling on a British passport should make enquiries about the visa regulations and procedures as pertaining to citizens of their home country.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you do everything possible to meet all your visa requirements in good time. We recommend that you begin the process as soon as possible after your exchange place has been confirmed as the whole procedure may take weeks or even months.



Student visa

A student visa or study permit is a document issued by your host country granting you entry as a student. To obtain a student visa:

1. Research your host country's visa requirements. Not all countries require a student visa and the requirements differ according to your own country of citizenship. Some countries will not allow you to apply for your visa until 3 months before your departure date.
2. Gain admission to your partner university.

Once you receive your formal letter of acceptance, submit it with your visa application to the appropriate office and keep a copy for your records. Processing times may be several months. (Note: for some partner universities, you have to submit your visa application with your application for admission).

Multiple-entry visa

If you plan to travel outside your host country during your exchange, you should make sure that your student visa is a multiple entry visa. Before leaving Edinburgh, find out about the visa requirements for other countries you intend to visit.

Work visa

If you hope to work in your host country during or after your exchange, check with your host country's consulate or embassy about your eligibility to work, and any related visa requirements. Many countries prohibit international students from working while on a student visa. In general it is not a good idea to assume that you will be successful in finding employment at your host destination. Far better to assume that you will not be able to find work and then any income that you derive from work you do find will be a bonus.

Working conditions and conventions in your host country may be different from those in the UK. Do some research to find out how many days a week you may work and how many hours per day, and find out what the provisions are for time off, holidays, etc.

Dual citizenship

If you have dual citizenship, make yourself aware of any potential issues regarding dual citizenship in your host country. If you travel with two passports, you could be subject to increased scrutiny by immigration and security officials. You could be questioned about missing entry or exit stamps, as well as your reason for having two travel documents. In some countries, possession of a second passport could result in its confiscation or a fine. You may even be prevented from leaving the country. If you are considered a citizen of another country, you may be obliged to do military service or pay particular taxes.

If you do run into problems because of your dual citizenship, contact the nearest UK embassy, consulate or government office.





Medical exam certificate

Some countries require that you have a medical examination certificate before entry. You may even have to obtain one to support your host university application. Make sure to check your host country's regulations regarding this requirement.

Power of attorney

You may wish to assign power of attorney to someone you trust so that while you are away, they can act on your behalf for such things as:

- Signing your student loan documents
- Acting on your behalf with your bank

Making your travel plans

How you get to your host destination is up to you. The International Office does not recommend that you buy tickets for travel before you have received your letter of acceptance, and your visa (if you require one).

Before deciding on your travel dates, check your host university's academic term dates to find out if you are expected to attend orientation sessions, language courses, or similar. Also check when you can gain access to your accommodation, and arrive a few days early, if possible, so that you have time to settle in before classes start. If you have to look for private accommodation it is a good idea to arrive a couple of weeks before classes start.

If you can afford it, you may wish to purchase a flexible ticket. This will make it easier for you to accommodate any changes in plan. Once you buy your ticket, check that all the details on it are correct.

However you travel, we would recommend purchasing an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) in order that you can take advantage of any student discounts. The ISIC is widely accepted as proof of student status and entitles you to discounts on a wide range of products and services, including air, bus and train travel, student restaurants, cinemas, theatres, concert venues, shops, museums and travel agencies. More information is online: www.isiccard.com

Your relevant funding body or the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) may be able to provide some financial support towards the cost of your travel, particularly if your study abroad period is a compulsory part of your degree (ie. you are required to spend a period abroad). Please enquire with your funding body or SAAS.

Check semester dates, including exam periods and orientation programmes, before booking travel.



Baggage restrictions

Some airlines limit passengers to 20 kg of luggage and some countries restrict the kinds of goods you can bring in. Find out how much your airline charges for excess baggage if you intend to take more than 20 kg of baggage. You may want to compare this amount to the cost of shipping items to your host country. Remember that you will have to get your luggage from the airport to your destination, and back at the end of the year! Don't overpack – clothes, toiletries and household items may be cheaper and better suited to the climate at your host destination.

Duty and customs

Generally, you may take personal computers, cameras, MP3 players, CD players, radios and other similar items duty free, provided that they accompany you and that you declare them at the time of entry. But please ensure all valuable items of luggage are covered by insurance.

Electrical appliances

Find out the voltage and the electrical outlet prong combinations used in your destination country. You may need to buy a transformer and adaptor plugs in advance to be able to use your own appliances in another country. Travel irons, shavers, blow dryers, and many laptop computers are available with built-in adaptors for all electrical currents.

Driving abroad

Driving is permitted on a valid UK licence in EEA (European Economic Area) countries. You will need to be fully insured. More information is available on the AA's website: www.theaa.com/getaway/idp. Remember that traffic laws and driving habits vary widely around the world. Be sure you know the rules before you get behind the wheel in another country. If you are taking your own car, make sure your insurance, MOT, etc. will cover the period you are abroad.





ACADEMIC MATTERS

Your School Exchange Coordinator/Personal Tutor should always be your first point of contact for questions regarding academic requirements.

Your academic requirements

It is vital that, before you leave Edinburgh, you have a clear idea of what you need to achieve during your year or semester abroad to satisfy your academic requirements. You need to know the number of credits required to pass the year. You also need to know whether any of the grades obtained whilst abroad will count towards your Edinburgh degree (this is normally the case for Modern European Languages students). Remember that what *you* need to do may not be the same as for students on a different degree programme so make sure you know your own requirements.

Finding appropriate courses that meet your degree requirements at Edinburgh is one of the key issues to consider when selecting courses at your host university.

When selecting courses, consider the following:

1. Are there any courses that I have to take to meet my degree requirements at Edinburgh?
2. Am I expected to take courses at a particular level?
3. How many courses am I required to take / how many credits am I required to attain whilst on exchange?

Transferring credit

Credit systems may vary from place to place, but you should be aware that, wherever you are, you must obtain a 'pass' grade in order to receive credit for a course.

Most European institutions use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), awarding credits which are comparable and equivalent throughout Europe. A typical annual course load at Edinburgh of 120 SCQF credits is equivalent to 60 ECTS credits.

For students going elsewhere around the world, you should check the International Office's Guidance Notes for your host university to find out how many courses/credits you are expected to obtain.

For students who are not studying a Modern European Language, the grades you receive during your study abroad period will not be converted into Edinburgh equivalents and used in the determination of your final degree classification. Your degree classification will be awarded only on the basis of work completed whilst at the University of Edinburgh.

For students undertaking a Modern Language as part of their Edinburgh degree, grades obtained whilst studying abroad may be counted towards your final degree classification. Make sure you know before you go away how your School will assess your work abroad.



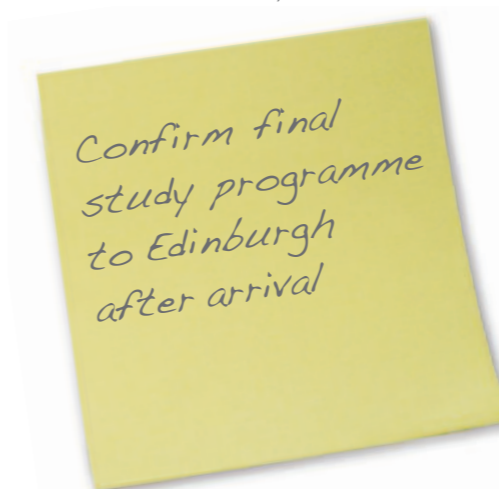
Selecting and enrolling on courses

Academic systems can vary greatly around the world, and this can sometimes be a challenge when it comes to researching and choosing your courses. As an exchange student, however, you will normally have a wide selection of courses to choose from and, often, you will have the opportunity to take courses that are not offered at Edinburgh.

Your host university's course options will often be available on their website although many universities will not publish their course catalogues until a few weeks prior to the academic year starting, so you may need to make provisional course selections based on the previous year's options.

You may sometimes find, on arrival, that courses you wanted to take are full or have restrictions on them. In such cases, it is often worth going to talk to the course organiser or department to see if there is any way that they can fit you in. You should ensure that you have some backup choices in case you cannot get onto your first choice of courses.

Some institutions allow you to attend classes for a few weeks before registering – this is often a useful way to find out whether you think you will enjoy the course (and understand the lecturer!)



Registration at the host institution

The registration and enrolment process is different at every institution. Some universities may have an online registration system and expect you to register before you arrive. Others will not allow you to register until you are physically at the host university.

The procedures at your host university may be quicker and easier than at Edinburgh, or incredibly slow and frustrating – either way, it's a process that must be completed. If you have any serious problems with registering and enrolling on courses, you should contact the Study Abroad/International Office at your host university in the first instance.

Study plans and learning agreements

Many universities require that students submit a study plan, or learning agreement, as part of the application process, and in some cases, this plan is used to enrol you on courses on arrival.

Erasmus students are normally required by their host university to submit a learning agreement with their application, signed by their School Exchange Coordinator at Edinburgh. This will then be signed by the host university on arrival and should be returned to the International Office at Edinburgh as soon as possible after arrival.

Any changes to your study plan or learning agreement must be approved by your School Exchange Coordinator/Personal Tutor at Edinburgh, by email.



Academic problems

Should you have any academic difficulties that might prevent the satisfactory completion of your exchange period, you should contact the International Office and your School Exchange Coordinator/ Personal Tutor as soon as possible. (This would include strikes or other disruptions to your host university's teaching or examination periods).

What constitutes a full workload may vary from institution to institution and country to country. If you feel that your workload is not appropriate or manageable, make sure that you contact your School Exchange Coordinator/Personal Tutor to discuss whether there is any leeway for flexibility.

You are responsible for keeping a complete record of what you have studied at the host institution, including copies of all written work and any feedback you receive from tutors regarding your academic progress.

Failing an exam

If you fail an exam whilst on exchange, and it is reasonably possible for you to do so, you will usually be expected to return to retake the exam – for students studying in Europe, this is obviously a more realistic prospect than for those studying outside Europe.

Please contact your School Exchange Coordinator/ Personal Tutor immediately if you fail an exam, for advice on what your School or Subject Area requires you to do.

Credit will only be recognised by Edinburgh for courses you have passed and for which a transcript of results is provided – if you return to Edinburgh with insufficient credit for the year or semester abroad, you may not be permitted to progress into the subsequent year back at Edinburgh.



FINANCIAL MATTERS

Tuition fees

When on exchange, no tuition fees are ever paid to the host university.

Tuition fees at Edinburgh for your year abroad may vary depending on your fee status, what kind of study abroad you are undertaking and for how long, and whether your study abroad is a compulsory part of your degree. You may be required to make arrangements to have your Edinburgh fees paid.

To find out what your Edinburgh tuition fee arrangements should be, see the Student Fees section's webpages:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-funding/tuition-fees>

Student loans

Students who study abroad (where the work will be credited to their Edinburgh degrees) are entitled to student loans as usual during their exchange year. Ensure that you complete and return all the paperwork your funding body or Student Loan Company requires of you. Any delays on your part could hold up your payments.

Remember that you will need to make arrangements for your loan to be paid directly into a bank account or be sent to your parents' address or another suitable alternative.

You should expect to receive a payment schedule outlining the dates when your instalments will be paid. Bear in mind that if your study abroad period begins earlier than at Edinburgh, you may not receive your student loan until several weeks into the semester, so ensure you have enough money with you to tide you over.

If you submitted your paperwork in good time but don't receive a payment schedule, then contact the Student Loans Company to check that they have everything they need.

If you have any problems in receiving your student loan, you should contact the Student Loans Company (<http://www.slc.co.uk>) in the first instance. They should be able to tell you what the problem is and why you have not received your payment. The most common problems are that students have not provided bank details, have provided incorrect details, or haven't completed the Loan Request Form. The Student Loans Company will not usually speak to third parties (eg. your parents, or the International Office) – for reasons of data protection, they will only discuss loan applications directly with the applicant.





Additional funding

Students going abroad are sometimes eligible for extra funding from their relevant funding body or the Student Awards Agency for Scotland. It is worth contacting them to find out if you can apply for any extra funding or reimbursement of your travel or other expenses.

Further information is available on Registry's web pages:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/matric/loans>

Erasmus grants

The Erasmus grant is intended as a contribution to assist Erasmus students with the extra costs of studying and living abroad. All Erasmus students will be asked to sign a contract before departure to confirm that you have not previously received an Erasmus grant, and that you will repay all or some of the grant should you withdraw or not complete your study abroad period. You will also be asked to provide your bank details to the International Office in order for us to make your payment.

The grant is usually paid in two instalments. Students going on exchange for the full academic year or for Semester 1 only will usually receive their first allocation in October/November and their second around May. Students going away for Semester 2 only will usually receive their first allocation shortly after their arrival at the host institution and the second around May.

The first allocation normally accounts for 60-70% of the total grant available, with the second allocation providing the remaining 30-40%.

The International Office cannot advise on how much funding students will receive until the summer before the exchange period (for the first allocation) and usually not before March (for the second allocation).

Note that grants will not be paid unless you have submitted your Erasmus grant contract to the International Office, and until you have returned proof of your arrival at your host institution.

Financial assistance with language tuition

For students studying in non-English speaking countries, language courses are sometimes included as part of the exchange programme – check your host university's webpages for information.

Students on Erasmus exchanges, who are not studying a language as part of their Edinburgh degree programme, may request reimbursement of tuition fees for language courses (in the language of their host country) either in the UK or at the host university, before or during their exchange period.

Reimbursement of up to €500 may be requested for courses taken, on submission to the International Office at Edinburgh of all original receipts and proof of attendance on the course. Language tuition must be delivered by a recognised provider of language training and reimbursement will only be provided for tuition fees, not for books or other supporting materials.



Erasmus students going to a country whose language is not widely spoken or taught abroad, can apply for any Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC) offered in your host country. These are free, although you have to pay for accommodation and meals, and normally last for between 3 and 8 weeks, in the weeks prior to your exchange period. See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc902_en.htm

Other costs

You are responsible for all costs during your year abroad and should budget for the following:

- Room and board
- Books and supplies
- Insurance costs
- Travel to and from the host country
- Local transportation
- All personal expenses

Debts at the host institution

Ensure you make any outstanding payments to your host institution before departure. Your transcript of results may not be released if you have any outstanding debts.

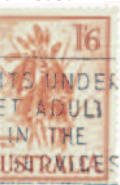
Banking

Make sure your bank knows you are leaving the country and for how long. If possible, make an appointment with them before you go abroad and inform them of your plans, the timing of events, and your individual needs. Look for answers to the following questions:

- Does your bank have a branch or an affiliation with another bank in your host country?
- What is the most convenient bank to use in the partner country for transferring funds?
- How much does it cost to wire money to transfer funds?
- If you plan to set up a bank account abroad, should you transfer money between your UK and account abroad in pounds sterling, or is it better/cheaper to exchange the money into another currency in the UK before transferring it?
- What are the terms for cash advances on your credit card?
- How do you replace debit or credit cards whilst away?
- What is the best way to communicate with your bank whilst away?

You may consider internet banking as a good way to control your money from anywhere in the world. Your local branch will be able to advise on how to set this up.

It is often useful to find out what previous students to your host destination would recommend. Not all banks will accept you as a customer, and you are unlikely to have overdraft facilities on a foreign bank account.



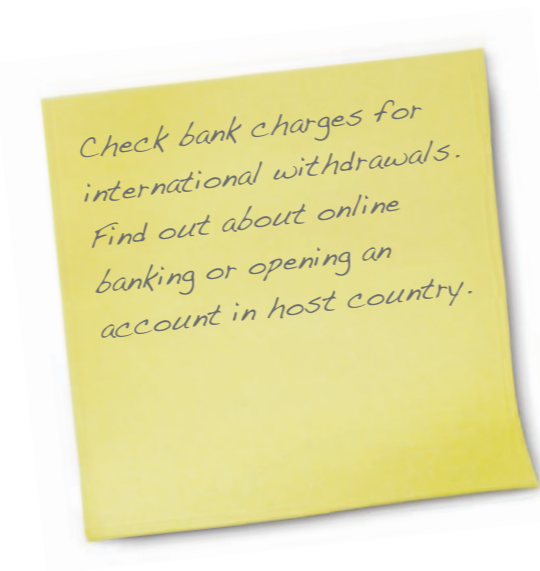
Ask your bank at home to provide a letter of introduction, if you are considering opening an account abroad. This is a standard letter and maybe helpful in enabling you to open an account in your host country.

Useful documents to take with you when opening a bank account are:

- Birth certificate
- Copies of your passport
- Passport photos

Credit/debit cards

Check the expiry date on your credit/debit cards and make a separate note of their numbers. Be cautious when using your credit/debit card and destroy your slips before disposing of them. Inform your credit card company/bank of your travel plans and be sure to get their contact information for the country you'll be studying in.



HEALTH & SAFETY

While there is always some inherent risk with any kind of travelling experience, there are a number of steps that you can take to help to make your time overseas healthier and safer.

Preparation and research

Consider and prepare yourself in advance for the risks that you may encounter at your host destination as well as the legal, environmental, political, cultural and religious conditions that exist in your host country. To do this you may wish to review the evaluation forms that previous Edinburgh students have submitted for your host country, talk to returned students, read travel guides, familiarise yourself with any information sent by the host institution and check FCO guidelines www.fco.gov.uk/.

It is strongly recommended that you attend all orientation sessions at the University of Edinburgh before departure and at your host institution on arrival. If you have any questions or concerns then ask the International Office, your Study Abroad Coordinator or the host institution contact.

Contact information and important documents

You should ensure that both the University of Edinburgh and your host institution have complete and accurate personal information and any other data that you feel is necessary to plan and facilitate a safe and healthy study abroad experience. You should maintain regular contact with your School Exchange Coordinator/Personal Tutor.

You are advised to inform your parents/next of kin about your participation, provide them with up to date contact details and keep in contact on a regular basis. It is recommended that you keep photocopies and scans of all of your important documentation including passports before you depart and that details are kept of all important contacts in country for example; lost or stolen credit cards, the British Embassy or Consulate, local emergency services and travel insurance contacts. In addition to having paper/electronic records of these it is advised that you pre programme these contacts into your mobile phone before departure.

You are advised to check whether an entry visa is required for the proposed destination country. Visa regulations often state that passports must be valid for a period of at least six months beyond the proposed dates of travel. There should also be sufficient space for visas and stamps in your passport. Visas commonly take several weeks to obtain and you are therefore advised to allow time for this process. Once the visa has been obtained, you are advised to make a photocopy of it.

You are advised against carrying passports around as a means of identification while you are overseas, excluding entering or exiting a country. It is recommended that alternative photographic identification be used, such as a valid driving licence, on a day-to-day basis. If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the police and your country's embassy immediately and give them the passport details.



Health insurance

Taking out valid health insurance for the length of your time overseas is essential; don't leave home without it! Take out suitable insurance coverage as required by Edinburgh and your host institution and abide by any conditions imposed by your insurers. Please ensure that the policy covers repatriation to the UK (or your home country) in the case of serious illness or death and if it does not then take out an additional policy to cover this.

Students on work placements should ensure that their policies cover them for working in their host country. In addition to health insurance you should take out travel insurance to cover yourself for delays, cancellations or loss of money or belongings whilst getting to and from your host institution.

You can purchase travel insurance through the University's Insurance Department. This provides comprehensive cover and should be suitable for most travel abroad programmes:
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/finance/about/sections/insurance/policies

If you are travelling within the EEA (European Economic Area) or Switzerland you should also obtain a free EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) which will entitle you to reduced cost or free emergency health care in your host country. You can get this from the Post Office or apply online at www.ehic.org.uk

Immunisations

It is vital that you verify what immunisations may be required for the country that you are travelling to before departure and at least 6 weeks before travel. You should make sure that you have obtained all the necessary vaccinations for the country you will be studying in but also for any other countries that you may plan to travel to. Some vaccinations are required to be given over a number of weeks so ensure that you have sufficient time to complete the full series before departure. Some countries require that you take vaccination certificates with you when entering/ departing and note that your travel insurance may be invalid if you have not taken the appropriate immunisations before travel. The following websites provide excellent information on travel immunisations and general advice to stay healthy whilst overseas.

www.nathnac.org/

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/

www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdvice/ForTravellers/fs/en

www.uvig.org



Medication

If you take medication regularly you should take an adequate supply if possible, provided they are not perishable. It is also a good idea to get a letter from your doctor explaining what your medication is in case you get stopped at Customs. Be sure to get translated copies of any important health documentation you have. If you are in doubt as to whether your medication is legal in a country that you will be travelling to, consult the consulate of that country.

You should expect the medical system and the hospitals in your host country to be different. During the orientation session at your overseas university, be sure to obtain information about on-campus and other nearby medical facilities that you may visit, as well as a list of telephone numbers for health emergencies. You should register with a doctor as soon as possible after arrival. It may also be useful to take a small first-aid kit with you initially until you are able to source first aid necessities after arrival.

Laws and regulations

You should familiarise yourself with the different laws and regulations that may exist in the country you are travelling to. Information is available on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website and travel guides for the country that you will be travelling to. During orientation at the overseas university you should find out more about the laws of the country and ask about any which may be of special concern to you as a student. For example, the legal drinking age in the United States is 21. You should be aware that many nations have very harsh penalties for crimes that would be considered minor in the UK and penalties can include deportation and imprisonment. The institution at which you will study will also have its own rules and regulations and you are required to be aware of these and respect them.



Consular assistance

The local British Embassy, Consulate or High Commission will be able to offer a range of services including issuing replacement passports; assistance if you are hospitalised or the victim of a crime and liaison with family and friends of your behalf. You are strongly advised to locate your nearest British Consulate to your host destination and take a note of the telephone number and address. Most British Consulates operate an answerphone service outside working hours with a emergency number if needed. To find your nearest Consulate visit: www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy/

You may also wish to register for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's free LOCATE service which provides regular updates and information for UK nationals overseas. Details are available at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website. For those students who are nationals of another nation you are advised to locate your nearest Consular representation and follow the same guidance.

General travel tips and advice

- Be responsible for your own decisions and actions
- Be respectful of laws and customs and respect the rights and wellbeing of others
- Take heed of health and safety advice offered by the host institution
- Don't take risks – adopt a common sense approach to your health and safety
- Avoid excessive consumption of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs
- Report any problems to the International Office

Emergency situations

Should an emergency situation occur whilst you are abroad your first action should be to make contact as soon as possible with your nominated contact at your host university and your family. The host co-ordinator often has the local knowledge and "know how" to advise and support you.

It is also very important for you to contact the University of Edinburgh. During normal office hours you should contact your School Exchange Coordinator and the International Office. Out of normal office hours the University maintains a 24 hour phone line (+44 131 650 2257). You should explain your situation and the emergency phone operator will seek to transfer you to a staff member in the International Office. Depending on the type of emergency it may also be appropriate to report to your nearest British Consulate or make contact with them for advice.

Your priority is to keep yourself safe at all times. It is important that in an emergency situation such as a natural disaster or political upheaval you keep well away from problem areas and heed any instructions from local authorities for example obeying curfew restrictions. You should monitor the emergency situation as best you can via any available media channels and maintain regular contact with family and host/home institutions. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office monitors emergency situations in countries abroad and maintains an excellent website with practical information and advice. Please check this website regularly www.fco.gov.uk

Please note:

The University of Edinburgh can not be held responsible for the impact that natural disasters or other "Force Majeure Events" may have on your exchange experience.

All students are advised to check their University e-mail account on a regular basis as this will remain the main channel for official communication even whilst overseas. Please ensure that the International Office has your most up to date contact details including your mobile phone number. If at any stage you wish to withdraw from your host institution then you should immediately advise the University of your intentions and seek advice about how this will impact on your degree studies. If the University decides that it wishes to recall any students from an institution or a country then it will communicate this decision directly with you and will provide support and information about how to proceed.

Emergency Contacts

- Your family
- Your contact at the host organisation
- Your School Exchange Coordinator
- The International Office
+44 131 650 4296 (office hours)
+44 131 650 2257 (out of office hours)





CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Living abroad is not the same as going on holiday – the experience of living in a different culture is a real challenge. It can be exciting, fun, difficult, frustrating, and life-changing! Even if you are going to a country with fairly similar values, systems and standards of living as the UK, you may find certain things about the society different, and this can result in feelings of culture shock.

Culture shock

Don't worry if you experience a degree of culture shock during the first few weeks abroad. Many students are surprised by how homesick they feel at the beginning of their study abroad period. It can be stressful getting used to interacting in a new language, being away from friends and family, and dealing with a different way of doing things in your host institution.

In some cases, you may not experience any culture shock in the first few weeks, with the initial excitement of your new surroundings, and you may find that this hits you some months into your study abroad period.

Coping with culture shock will be easier if you have prepared well for your year abroad and have made yourself aware of any obvious cultural differences. It will also help to know how to sort out practical problems on your arrival and to know who can help you. Make use of the host university's support services, such as the International Office, Welfare Office, Counselling Services.

To succeed in your new environment, you will need to have a sense of humour, be resourceful, determined, tolerant, and willing to make and learn from your mistakes!

Try to use the following strategies to combat culture shock:

- Give yourself time to adapt and allow yourself to feel sad for a short time about things you miss.
- Know yourself, your values, and your expectations. Recognise that the people you meet on exchange may not share your values or expectations.
- Stay in touch with family and friends.
- Talk to other international students or to staff at your host university if you're feeling frustrated or down.
- Record and share your experience online through blogs or social networking sites. Try to remain objective about your experiences.
- Establish simple goals and celebrate your successes.
- Focus on maintaining a sense of humour, flexibility, tolerance, and a non-judgmental attitude.
- Work to establish a new network of friends but remember that this takes time.
- Join a club or become a volunteer. This is a great way of meeting local people and learning more about the local culture and language.
- Devote some energy to maintaining your sense of personal identity.
- If there is something you do at home to help relieve stress keep doing it!
- Find ways to live with the things that don't satisfy you 100%.
- Don't be too hard on yourself.

Be willing to initiate contact and conversation, and be open to learning the culture of your host country.



Don't focus negatively on cultural differences.

Adjusting to a new place

Many partner universities offer an orientation programme before the academic year begins. We strongly recommend that you participate in these programmes – they are an excellent opportunity to meet other international students, learn more about the university's services and ask any questions you may have. At many institutions, the orientation programme may be compulsory so ensure you will arrive in time to attend. There may be a charge for the orientation programme that is not covered under the reciprocal exchange tuition fee waiver.

Dealing with problems

If you run into difficulties, you can seek help from a variety of sources. It is usually better to begin with your host university (ie. your personal tutor or supervisor, your local International or Study Abroad Office, Welfare Office, Accommodation Office, etc) – they will know the local systems and environment and will be used to dealing with exchange students in your situation.

If you are unable to resolve problems at your host university, contact the International Office at Edinburgh and we will do whatever we can to help.





RETURNING HOME

Make sure you know what arrangements need to be made for your return to Edinburgh after your year or semester abroad. Your School should be able to advise on course options, or other academic requirements. Contact them well before the end of your time abroad if they have not already been in touch with you.

Transcript of results

All students undertaking an exchange at a host university must obtain a transcript of results showing the courses taken, marks obtained and credit awarded. You will not normally receive credit for any courses that you have failed at your host university.

If you have undertaken project work or research, then please obtain a short summary from your supervisor outlining the work completed.

Transcripts may be provided in various forms so please find out what your host university provides and how you should obtain it. Some countries require you to submit your individual marks (for example, *Scheine* in Germany or a *Libretto* in Italy) to a central office in order to produce an official transcript for you.

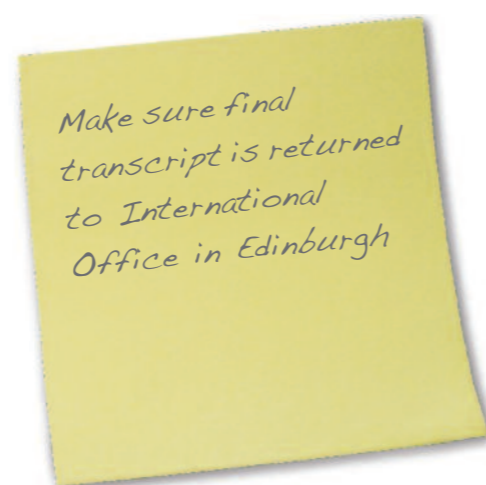
Some institutions will automatically mail Edinburgh a copy of your transcript after your period of study abroad. However, other institutions will require you to request or order your transcript, and may send it directly to you.

Please ensure that the International Office receives a copy of your transcript by the beginning of the September following the end of your exchange period. It is your responsibility to ensure that your final transcript of results is returned to the International Office at the end of your study abroad period.

If you anticipate applying for postgraduate study in the future, you may wish to order extra transcripts from your host university. Find out if and how you can order more original transcripts, how much this will cost, and how long you will be kept on your host university's system – your record may not be on file indefinitely.

Erasmus requirements

Students in receipt of an Erasmus grant will be required to complete and return a questionnaire at the end of their Erasmus period – this is a compulsory requirement and a condition of the award of the Erasmus grant. Students on placements will also be required to return a short report from their employer. Students will receive all necessary forms before the end of their study abroad period.



Readjusting to life in Edinburgh

Returning to Edinburgh may require some readjustment. There are a number of internationally-themed groups and societies of which you may not have been aware prior to your study abroad period, but which you may find rewarding to be involved with.

EUSA societies

See EUSA's A-Z of societies:

<http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/listings/>

The International Student Centre (ISC)

The ISC organises social events and subsidised trips for incoming international students to Edinburgh as well as offering a meeting space on campus – you can get volunteer or find out about being on the ISC committee:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/student-life/isc>

TANDEM

TANDEM is a language exchange programme run by EUSA. If you want to keep your new and improved foreign language conversation skills going, find a partner on their website :

<http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/tandem>.

TANDEM also run a regular Language Cafe – find out more on their Facebook page.

Exchange 360

The Exchange 360 society is for current and former exchange students from Edinburgh, in addition to those thinking about studying abroad. Join them on Facebook.

Study Abroad Fairs

The International Office runs Study Abroad Fairs for 1st and 2nd year students during the year. We need you to volunteer on your country's information desk, to share your experiences with students who are thinking about studying abroad. You will be contacted by email about these events.

Reverse culture shock

Some students are surprised to find they experience culture shock on returning home! You may find that your interests and values have changed while those of your family and friends may not have. You may find that friends and family have new and different interests. Acknowledge this as part of your study abroad experience and give yourself time to readjust to your home environment. Keep in touch with the friends you made in the host country and find like-minded people back in the UK who have had similar experiences.



USEFUL LINKS

University of Edinburgh

International Office Study Abroad webpages:
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/international-office/exchanges>

Registry (for registration queries):

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/matric/how-to-matriculate>

Fees section (for fees enquiries):

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-funding/tuition-fees>

Insurance Office:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/finance/about/sections/insurance>

Health and Safety Department:

http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/Safety/general/travelling_abroad.pdf

UK Council for International Student Affairs

information for UK students studying abroad
<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/ukstudent/index.php>

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Travel advice:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/>

LOCATE service:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/Locate/>

Find a UK embassy overseas:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy/>

Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS):

<http://www.saas.gov.uk/index.htm>

Student Loans Company

<http://www.slc.co.uk>

European Health Insurance Card

<http://www.ehic.org.uk>

International Student Identity Card (ISIC):

<http://www.isic.org/>

Third Year Abroad

<http://www.thirdyearabroad.com>

International Association of Medical Assistance to Travellers:

<http://www.iamat.org>

International Lesbian & Gay Association:

<http://www.ilga.org>



Useful contacts

University of Edinburgh

International Office
 33 Buccleuch Place
 Edinburgh EH8 9JU
 Scotland, UK

TEL: +44 (0)131 650 4296

FAX: +44 (0)131 651 1236

EMAIL: enquiries.international@ed.ac.uk

The International Office is open from

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm GMT.

Outside office hours, you can call the University's

24 hour emergency phone line: +44 (0)131 650 2257

My School Exchange Coordinator at Edinburgh

CONTACT PERSON: _____

EMAIL: _____

TEL: _____

My insurance details

COMPANY: _____

TEL: _____

EMAIL: _____

POLICY NUMBER: _____

My host institution contact

CONTACT PERSON: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

TEL: _____

FAX: _____

My emergency contact at home

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

TEL: _____

Host country Information

BRITISH EMBASSY ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

TEL: _____

LOCAL POLICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES: _____

TEL: _____

My address abroad

ADDRESS: _____

TEL: _____

LANDLORD'S NAME: _____

TEL: _____



DOCUMENTS TO TAKE WITH YOU

- This handbook and any other handbooks or information provided by your School
- Emergency contact card (in front cover of this handbook)
- Official immigration documents (if applicable)
Students studying outside Europe or non-EU students studying within Europe will normally have to show immigration documents on arrival in the host country. Ensure you carry these in your hand luggage.
- Official documents from the host institution
The paperwork you have received from your host institution will vary depending on where you are going. Ensure you have any official acceptance letters or confirmation of enrolment on courses. Carry these in your hand luggage too in case you need them as proof of your stay.
- Your student card
It is a good idea to take your Edinburgh student card with you as proof of identity when registering at your host institution.
- ISIC card
You can get an International Student Card from STA travel or online. It is the only internationally accepted proof of your student status and will give you access to many discounts, as well as to the ISIC 24 hour free helpline.
- European Health Insurance Card & insurance documentation
- Letters explaining any medication
- Provisional learning agreement or programme of study



CHECKLIST ON ARRIVAL

- Confirm your safe arrival with your family
- Confirm your safe arrival, address and contact details with the International Office at Edinburgh
- Attend all induction and orientation programmes offered by the host institution
- Follow any advice or instructions provided by the host institution
- Obtain local safety and security advice
- Register with your host institution
- Enrol on courses
- Obtain approval for your final course selections from your School Exchange Coordinator or Personal Tutor at Edinburgh
- Register with a local doctor
- Get involved in societies, events and activities at your host institution
- Keep in touch with Edinburgh
- Enjoy your year or semester abroad!

