



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

STUDENT EXCHANGES

A practical guide for studying abroad



In this guide

Going on an exchange is 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. It will broaden your horizons, culturally and academically, and may open up many new and unexpected opportunities.

It's not the same as a 'year out' but instead forms an integral part of your Edinburgh degree and something that the University of Edinburgh values highly. Your time abroad will be a positive addition to your CV and an unforgettable life experience.

This guide will help you to plan for your time abroad and keep you on track during your exchange and when you get back. The Go Abroad team, along with your School, are here to support you through the whole process.

Before you go

Preparation

Do your research	2
Registration at the University of Edinburgh	3
Documentation required	4
Paperwork for your host institution	6
Academic disqualification	6
Accommodation	6
Linguistic preparation	7
Important documents	8
Insurance	10
Immunisations	10
Medication	11
Laws and regulations	11
Making your travel plans	12

Academic matters

Your academic requirements	13
Transferring credit	13
Selecting and enrolling on courses	14

Finance

Tuition fees	15
Student loans	15
Additional funding	16
Living costs	16
Erasmus grants	16
Banking	17

While you're away

Getting started

Registration at your host institution	18
Study plans and learning agreements	18
Academic issues	18
Being an ambassador	19
Dealing with problems	19

Health and safety

Arriving in your host country	20
Using common sense	21
Healthcare	21
Consular assistance	21
Emergency situations	22

Cultural adjustment

Adjusting to a new place	23
Culture shock	23
Mental health	24

Making the most of your exchange

Reflecting on your experience	25
-------------------------------	----

On your return

Returning home

Transcript of results	26
Reverse culture shock	27
Readjusting to life in Edinburgh	27

Useful links	29
--------------	----

Before you go

Preparation

The key to preparing for your time away is to do your research and be organised. The more prepared you are, the easier you'll find the transitions involved and the more you'll get out of the experience.

Do your research

You should equip yourself with as much information as possible about your host country, city and institution.

Here's a list of the kinds of things you should start to find out:

- ★ **Academic** – What are the requirements of your degree programme for your time abroad?
- ★ **Accommodation** – What are the accommodation options available to you? When do you need to make your accommodation arrangements?
- ★ **Administrative** – What will you need to do to register at your host University? How do you stay matriculated at Edinburgh?
- ★ **Clothing** – What clothing will be appropriate for your destination, both in terms of the climate and local culture?
- ★ **Culture** – The more research you have done into the culture of your host country, the easier you will find it to adjust when you arrive. Remember, things which can seem very innocuous in the UK may be quite offensive in another country - for example, chewing gum is banned in Singapore.
- ★ **Environment** – What will the weather be like where you are going to? Will you need to pack things like insect repellent or mosquito nets?
- ★ **Fees and finances** – Do you need to pay fees to Edinburgh next year? How will loans or grants be paid to you?
- ★ **Food and drink** – What is the latest advice? Is street food safe to eat? Should you stick to bottled water?
- ★ **Insurance** – Does your insurance cover your period abroad?
- ★ **Laws** – Laws can vary widely between countries particularly in terms of things like the legal age for drinking and driving. Make sure you are aware of the differences to avoid any tricky situations.

- ★ **Logistics** – How will you reach your host institution? How much luggage can you take with you?
- ★ **Medication** – Are any vaccinations or medication like anti-malaria drugs recommended? If you take medication regularly will you be able to buy it in-country or will you need to take a supply with you?

Here are some resources to use as a starting point!

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) ★ The FCO's 'Travel Aware' service which provides really helpful travel tips to get you started:

www.gov.uk/travelaware

Their travel advice pages provide specific advice about the country you'll be going to and highlight any known issues:

www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Your host institution or organisation ★ Read all the information your host provides. They will have lots of experience in welcoming international students and will know the main issues you might have and how you can deal with them.

Guide books ★ Guide books are an excellent source of information, from practical information about what kind of clothing to pack, through to must see sights and experiences. They will give you a great feel for where you'll be living as well as some great ideas for how to spend your free time.

Other students ★ Students who've been on exchange before can be useful contacts. They've been there and done it and can offer advice on everything from accommodation to course registration.

Join our Go Abroad group:

www.facebook.com/groups/GoAbroadUoE

Meet former Edinburgh exchange students or other students going abroad next year:

www.facebook.com/uo abroad

Read our students' blogs:

<https://uo abroad.com>

Get more advice and tips:

<http://globalgraduates.com>

Registration at the University of Edinburgh

You'll still need to be registered at the University of Edinburgh while you're abroad. You also need to make arrangements to pay your tuition fees, and your School and/or Personal Tutor will need to confirm your attendance for you.

If you find that you have not been matriculated, please contact your School or Subject Area secretary.

Find out more:

www.ed.ac.uk/student-systems/support-guidance/students/matriculation/continuing-students

To remain fully matriculated throughout your time abroad you must complete all the required documentation by the stated deadlines. If you don't, it could result in your exclusion for non-attendance.

Top tip

- ★ You can access all the required documents through your Mobility Online account

Documentation required

These are the documents you'll need and when you'll need to submit them.

Before departure

★ Risk Assessment	30 July 2017
★ Learning Agreement	<i>For Erasmus:</i> Before you depart <i>For International:</i> 30 July 2017
★ Grant contract	<i>Erasmus only:</i> Before you depart
★ Final checklist	Before you depart

After arrival

★ Certificate of Arrival	Within 1 week of arriving at your host institution
★ Post-arrival questionnaire	Within 3 weeks of arriving at your host institution
★ Confirmation of Semester 1 courses	<i>International only:</i> At least one week before your host institution's deadline for making course changes
★ Updated Learning Agreement (Semester 1)	<i>Erasmus only:</i> Within 4 weeks of the semester start at the host institution
★ Confirmation of Semester 2 courses	<i>International only:</i> At least one week before your host institution's deadline for making course changes
★ Updated Learning Agreement (Semester 2)	<i>Erasmus only:</i> Within 4 weeks of the semester start at the host institution

After completion

★ Certificate of Departure	Within one week of departure
★ Final questionnaire	Within one month of departure
★ Erasmus Feedback Report	Within one month of receiving the link to the online questionnaire

Top tip

- ★ You can access all the required documents through your Mobility Online account

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment is essential preparation designed to guide you through any known issues and risks relating to your host country and how you can minimise risk. It will give you the tools and knowledge you need to keep yourself safe. It is also required to activate the free travel insurance provided by the University of Edinburgh.

You will receive a risk assessment form from the Go Abroad team. You should refer to Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice when completing your form:

www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

You need to upload a completed and signed risk assessment to your Mobility Online account before you depart.

Final Checklist

You should complete your pre-departure checklist. This confirms that you're aware of the various aspects, requirements and expectations of your study abroad period. Spend time considering each point – if you are unclear on any points, you can seek further advice from your Exchange Coordinator or the Go Abroad team.

Learning Agreement

All exchange students are required to complete a learning agreement and to have it approved and signed by your School Exchange Coordinator. It outlines your provisional study programme at your host university. The signed copy must be submitted to the Go Abroad team before you depart.

For Erasmus: Your learning agreement must also be signed by your host institution before the start of your exchange, as a condition of the Erasmus grant.

If you make any changes to your course enrolments at your host university you should update your learning agreement at the beginning of each semester. Your updated learning agreement should then be sent to your Exchange Coordinator for approval before being submitted to the Go Abroad team.

For Erasmus: Changes to your learning agreement must also be approved by your host institution.

This approval process is essential to ensure that your programme of study at the host University meets the requirements of your degree and that you will receive full credit for your time abroad. If you do not submit a learning agreement you are not guaranteed any credit for your time abroad which could result in a fail for the whole year.

Certificate of Arrival

For International Exchange: This document confirms that you have arrived at your host institution. You will also need to provide an in-country contact for any emergency situation.

For Erasmus: This document confirms the dates of enrolment at the host institution and must be signed by the host institution.

Certificate of Departure

This document confirms the conclusion of your time abroad.

For Erasmus: please note that Erasmus students will also be required to have this signed by the host institution.

Questionnaires

The two questionnaires are your chance to let us know how we are doing, your experience of the partner institution, and any other matters relating to your exchange. Your feedback is valuable to help the Go Abroad team improve the service they provide.

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.

Paperwork for your host institution

Admission process

The procedures for admission varies from one university to another and the overall process will vary depending on whether you are participating on an Erasmus or International Exchange. In all cases your exchange is provisional until you have been formally accepted by the partner institution.

For Erasmus: It is your responsibility to find out about the host institutions application process. Application materials are usually available on their website, but they may also send them out to you by email or mail. Make sure you know how and when to complete the process.

For International Exchange: You will be emailed full information about your host institution's application process and deadlines by the Go Abroad team. Deadlines are final so ensure that you do read this information carefully and check both your clutter and junk email folders regularly.

Transcripts

For International Exchange: A transcript will be automatically provided for use with your application by the Go Abroad team. Arrangements will depend on how the application is submitted and who submits it.

For Erasmus: If your host university requires a transcript, this can be provided by the Go Abroad team. Make sure you allow plenty of time for this to be processed.

Submitting your admissions documents

You are responsible for submitting your application and supporting documents on time and correctly. If you miss your deadlines or provide inaccurate information, it can cause delays or you may not be admitted to your host university.

Once your application has been submitted you will usually receive a letter or email confirming your acceptance or admission from your host university.

It can take up to two months for applications to be processed and for admissions decisions to be issued.

Top tip

- ★ Keep copies of all the documentation that you submit

Academic disqualification

To participate in a year abroad you are required to meet two conditions:

- 1 To pass all courses taken in the year preceding the time abroad at first sitting.
- 2 To hold a full credit load for all years successfully completed. So students going abroad in their third year must hold 240 credits.

If you don't meet either of these conditions you won't be able to go on your exchange. If this is the case, please contact the Go Abroad team or your Exchange Coordinator as soon as possible.

Accommodation

Housing arrangements vary enormously depending where you are going. Many institutions offer accommodation in student halls or residences, on or off campus. The quality and cost of accommodation will also vary widely from country to country so find out what is on offer.

Many universities have an on-campus housing office where they offer help and advice on finding private accommodation. Others have housing forums online.

Some universities do not offer housing and expect you to find your own accommodation in the private market. In this case, you should look at your accommodation options as early as possible.

It might 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.

If you don't have accommodation arranged before you go, book temporary accommodation in a central hostel or hotel for at least 3 days to a week, to allow time to find suitable accommodation. It's better not to arrive over the weekend as you may find housing agencies and universities are not open.

Top tips

- ★ **Do your research** – find out all you can about where you might live, and ideally, get in touch with students who've been to your city before for their advice and tips.
- ★ **Safety first** – take someone with you when you go flat hunting and find out as much as you can about the area and transport links.
- ★ **Know the cost** – find out what the average cost of accommodation is in the area to avoid being overcharged and don't pay any money until you've visited the property and preferably signed a contract. Be aware of hoax websites.
- ★ **Money matters** – Make sure you have enough money to cover a deposit and the first month's rent.
- ★ **Understand the small print** – Make sure you fully understand any contracts you sign.
- ★ **Useful documents** – Get receipts for whatever you pay for your accommodation. Take references from previous landlords or letting agents, as well as bank statements to show that you have sufficient funds to cover a deposit and first month's rent.
- ★ **Know where you're going** – know the location and address of your accommodation and where to collect your keys.

Linguistic preparation

If you are studying in a non-English speaking country, language courses might be included as part of the exchange programme – check your host university's website for information.

Online Linguistic Support

If you are an Erasmus student at an institution where the main language of instruction is in one of the following languages, you'll be required to complete an Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Assessment before and at the end of your exchange:

- ★ French
- ★ German
- ★ Italian
- ★ Spanish
- ★ Dutch
- ★ Czech
- ★ Danish
- ★ Greek
- ★ Polish
- ★ Portuguese
- ★ Swedish

You might also be offered an Online Linguistic Support (OLS) language course.

Completion of the online assessment is a condition for receiving the Erasmus grant if you are studying in one of the OLS languages.

Reimbursement for language tuition

If you are an Erasmus student at an institution where the language of instruction is not covered by the Online Linguistic Support outlined above, and you don't study a language as part of your Edinburgh degree programme, you can request reimbursement of tuition fees for language courses (only the host country language) taken in the UK or at the host university, before or during the time you are away.

You can request up to €500 in reimbursement of language course fees, as long as the course is delivered by a recognised provider of language training. This only covers fees, not books or other materials. You'll need to submit the original receipts and proof of attendance to the Go Abroad team in Edinburgh.

Important documents

You need to make sure you have all the documents you need for your exchange, prior to departure. It is best to apply for any documents you need as early as possible. Here are the main things you'll need:

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's also needed to apply for a student visa or study permit.

Make sure that your passport will be valid for a minimum of 6 months after the date of your return to the UK. Write the full details of your next of kin in your passport.

Top tips

- ★ Have another form of photographic ID with you (like a driver's licence) so you can leave your passport in a safe place
- ★ Make photocopies or scans of your passport in case you lose it
- ★ Take extra passport photographs with you
- ★ Make a note of your passport number, date and place of issue

Birth certificate

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

It's useful to keep a copy of your birth certificate - if you lose your passport while overseas it can make the process of applying for a replacement quicker.

Visas

Visas are only required if you are studying outside of Europe, or if you are a non-EU student (to study or work within Europe).

UK and EU citizens do not currently need visas to study at institutions within the EU or EEA (European Economic Area – Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein).

You are responsible for applying for a visa if you need one.

It's best to apply as soon as possible once your exchange place is confirmed. You must meet all visa requirements and in plenty of time. It may take weeks or months to go through the process and some countries, like the USA, require an interview in London which you should factor into your plans.

If you have questions about the process of applying for your visa you should contact the appropriate embassy directly. The Go Abroad team are not qualified to offer advice regarding visa applications, and they can't apply for you.

If you're not a British passport holder you should make sure you follow visa regulations and procedures appropriate for your nationality.

Student visa

A student visa or study permit is a document issued by your host country allowing you to enter the country as a student.

To obtain a student visa:

- ★ 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.
- ★ Gain admission to your partner university.

Processing times may be several months.

Once you have been accepted by the partner institution they will send you information about the visa application process for their country, and will provide supporting documentation, such as a formal visa letter, if appropriate.

Multiple-entry visa

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

Work visa

If you plan 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 don't allow international students to work while on a student visa.

It's best not to assume that you'll find work at your exchange destination. It's better to assume that you won't find work which will mean if you do find work and earn some money it 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 about the work culture – How many days a week can you work? How many hours per day? Do you get time off or holidays?

Dual citizenship

If you have dual citizenship, be 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.

Medical exam certificate

Some countries require that you have a medical examination certificate before entry. You might even need one to support your host university application. Check your host country's regulations about medical examination certificates.

Insurance

It's essential that you have appropriate insurance for your time overseas. The University of Edinburgh offers cover under its Travel Insurance Policy to all exchange students, free of charge. This is only available if the required documents are submitted by the stated deadline.

Key features of this policy include:

- ★ Unlimited Medical Expenses – this includes pre-existing conditions as long as you are fit to travel and haven't been advised against doing so by your GP
- ★ Repatriation
- ★ Cover for Personal Belongings - there is an excess of £30 for claims made under the Personal Belongings section of the policy
- ★ Cover for loss of personal money/credit cards
- ★ Personal liability - some partner institutions will still require you to take out their Health Insurance on top of this policy. However as the benefits of our Travel Insurance are far broader than just health, we would recommend that you take out both

www.ed.ac.uk/finance/about/sections/insurance

If you choose not to opt into the University's scheme then it is essential that the insurance you choose meets the requirements of the University and of your host institution. The level of insurance you need will depend on your personal circumstances (ie pre-existing conditions).

The University of Edinburgh requires that your insurance policy covers repatriation to the UK (or your home country) in the case of serious illness or death. If it doesn't you'll need to take out an additional policy to cover this.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have appropriate cover in place – the Go Abroad team cannot check insurance policies for you.

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:

www.ehic.org.uk

Immunisations

You need to find out if any immunisations are required for your destination at least 6 weeks before you leave. Some vaccinations are required to be given over a number of weeks so you need to allow this time to complete the full series before you leave.

Make sure that you get all the necessary vaccinations for your host country, but also for any other countries you plan to travel to.

Some countries require that you have vaccination certificates with you enter or depart. Be aware that your travel insurance may be invalid if you have not taken the appropriate immunisations before you travel.

For more information on travel immunisations and general advice to stay healthy whilst overseas:

www.nathnac.org

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

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. Get translated copies of any important health documentation you might need. If you are in doubt as to whether your medication is legal in a country that you'll be travelling to, consult the consulate of that country.

You should expect the medical system and hospitals in your host country to be different to the UK.

Laws and regulations

Familiarise yourself with the laws and regulations of 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 - for example, the legal drinking age in the United States is 21.

Be aware that some nations have very harsh penalties for crimes that would be considered minor in the UK and penalties can include deportation and imprisonment.

Your host institution will also have its own rules and regulations and you are required to be aware of these and respect them.

During your orientation at your host 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.

Making your travel plans

How you get to your host destination is up to you. Don't buy tickets for travel before you have received your letter of acceptance, and your visa (if you need one). The University Travel Insurance Policy won't cover the cost of your flights if you aren't able to travel because your visa wasn't issued in time.

Before deciding on your travel dates:

- ★ Check semester dates at your host university, including exam periods and orientation programmes, or language courses.
- ★ 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. If you have to look for private accommodation it is a good idea to arrive a couple of weeks before classes start.

It might be a good idea 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.

International Student Identity Card

However you plan to travel, it's worth purchasing an ISIC card to take advantage of student discounts including air, bus and train travel, student restaurants, cinemas, theatres, concert venues, shops, museums and travel agencies. It is also widely accepted as proof of student status.

Find out more: www.isiccard.com

Funding for travel

Your relevant funding body 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. Contact your funding body to find out more.

Baggage restrictions

Some airlines limit passengers to 20kg of luggage and some countries restrict the kinds of goods you can bring in.

Remember that you will have to take 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 can take personal computers, cameras, smart phones, laptops and other similar items duty free, provided that they accompany you and that you declare them at the time of entry.

Make sure your 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.

Driving abroad

Driving is permitted on a valid UK licence in EEA (European Economic Area) countries. You will need to be fully insured.

Find out more:

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, and other documents cover the period you are abroad.

Academic matters

Your School Exchange Coordinator is always your first point of contact for questions regarding academic requirements.

Your academic requirements

Before you leave Edinburgh, you should fully understand what you need to achieve to during your time abroad in order to meet your academic requirements, including how many credits you need 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 achieve may not be the same as students on a different degree programme so make sure you know your own requirements.

Transferring credit

Credit systems may vary from place to place. Wherever you are, you must obtain a grade in order to receive credit for a course – the University of Edinburgh doesn't accept courses which are graded 'Pass/No pass'. Courses which offer a pass for attendance only are also not acceptable.

For Erasmus

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

For International

Check the International Exchange Credit Requirements for your host institution:

www.ed.ac.uk/global/exchanges/before-you-go/academic-matters

Unless you are studying a Modern European Language, the grades you receive during your study abroad period won't be converted into Edinburgh equivalents and used in the determination of your final degree classification. Your degree classification will only be awarded for work completed at the University of Edinburgh.

For students taking a Modern Language as part of their Edinburgh degree, grades obtained whilst studying abroad may be counted towards your final degree classification. Before you leave make sure you know how your School will assess your work abroad.

Selecting and enrolling on courses

Know what is expected of you

Finding appropriate courses that meet your degree requirements at Edinburgh very important when selecting courses at your host university.

You should consider:

- ★ Are there any courses that you have to take to meet your degree requirements at Edinburgh?
- ★ Are you expected to take courses at a particular level?
- ★ How many courses are you required to take? / How many credits do you need to get?

To get the most out of the courses you take you also need to understand why you are being asked to take them. Take time to consider the learning outcomes for third year on your programme at Edinburgh to help you understand how the courses you take while on exchange fulfill these requirements. It will also help your transition back to studying at Edinburgh.

Choosing your courses

As an exchange student, you will normally have a wide selection of courses to choose from and often you will have the opportunity to take courses that aren't offered at Edinburgh.

Things to be aware of

- ★ Academic systems vary depending where you study
- ★ Your host university's course options may be available on their website
- ★ Many universities publish their course catalogues just a few weeks prior to the academic year starting, so you might need to make provisional course selections based on the previous year's options
- ★ When you arrive you might find that courses you wanted to take are full or have restrictions – you should talk to the course organiser or department to see if you can still be enrolled
- ★ Have some backup choices in case you can't get onto your first choice of courses
- ★ Some institutions allow you to attend classes for a few weeks before enrolling – this is a useful way to find out whether you will enjoy the course (and understand the lecturer!)

Finance

It's important to make arrangements for your finances during your exchange. You should know how you'll fund your time abroad, access your money, and what your financial commitments will be.

Tuition fees

When on exchange, you don't pay tuition fees to your host institution.

Tuition fees at Edinburgh for your year abroad 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.

Find out more:

www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/tuition-fees

Student loans

If you study abroad on a programme where successfully completed work will be credited to your Edinburgh degree, you are entitled to student loans as usual during your exchange year. You should complete and return all the required paperwork to your funding body or the Student Loans Company.

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 receive a payment schedule outlining the dates when your instalments will be paid. Payment dates follow the University of Edinburgh's academic calendar so make sure you have enough money to last you if the dates at your host university are different. For example, you could start studying as early as July, but wouldn't receive your first loan payment until September.

To avoid delays or issues with your student loan:

- ★ Complete the Loan Request Form for the Student Loans Company (SLC)
- ★ Provide correct bank information and check all details in your paperwork carefully
- ★ Return all paperwork to your funding body on time
- ★ Be aware that SLC will only discuss your application with you (family members or university staff won't be able to act on your behalf)

If you have any issues relating to your student loan, contact the Student Loans Company.

www.slc.co.uk

Additional funding

You might be eligible for extra funding from your relevant funding body. Contact the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) or Higher Education Funding Councils elsewhere in the UK to find out if you are eligible for funding towards travel costs or other expenses.

The Students and Scholarships Office also offers other funding awards for travel abroad. Find out more:

www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/current-students/study-abroad

Living costs

You are responsible for all costs during your year abroad.

Make sure you've budgeted for:

- ★ Accommodation and food
- ★ Books and supplies
- ★ Insurance
- ★ Travel to and from your host country
- ★ Local transport while you're there
- ★ Personal expenses

Erasmus grants

The Erasmus grant assists Erasmus students with the extra costs of studying and living abroad. You will be asked to sign a contract before departure to confirm how much funding you will be eligible for and that you will repay some or all of the grant if you withdraw or don't complete your exchange. You'll also be asked to provide your bank details to the Go Abroad team in order to make the payment.

Students from lower income backgrounds may also be entitled to a monthly Erasmus grant supplement.

The grant is usually paid in two instalments. The first allocation is normally 70% of the total grant, with the second allocation providing the remaining 30%.

- ★ If you start your exchange in Semester 1 you will receive your first allocation after you arrive at your host institution and submit the required documents, normally in September/October and no later than 05 November.
- ★ If you start your exchange in Semester 2 you will receive your first allocation after you arrive at your host institution and submit the required documents.
- ★ You'll receive the second instalment after you have completed your exchange, submitted the Erasmus+ online feedback report and your certificate of departure.

The Go Abroad team will advise you on how much funding you'll receive as soon as the grant rates and funding allocations have been confirmed by the British Council.

Grant payments may be delayed or withheld if the requested paperwork is not returned.

Banking

You should tell your bank that you're leaving the UK and for how long. If possible, make an appointment with them before you go abroad and tell them your plans.

You might need to find out:

- ★ 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 transfer funds?
- ★ Are there charges for using your cards in your host country?
- ★ If you plan to set up a bank account abroad, should you transfer money between your UK and international accounts 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 while you are away?
- ★ What is the best way to contact your bank while you are away?

Top tips

- ★ Internet banking can be a good way to manage your money. If you haven't already, check with your bank about how to set this up.
- ★ Check the expiry dates of the debit or credit cards you plan to use while you're away.
- ★ Always use your cards safely: keep your PIN secret, be aware of fraud, take care of your card and inform your bank straight away if you lose it.

Opening an account abroad

If you are considering opening an account abroad ask your current bank to provide a letter of introduction. This is a standard letter and should help 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

While you're away

Getting started

If you've planned well, you'll have a good understanding of what to expect on your exchange. There are some important administrative and academic course-related matters to consider when you are there.

Registration at your host institution

Registration at your host institution is essential. The registration and enrolment process is different at every institution – procedures may be faster or slower than what you've experienced at Edinburgh. Some universities may have an online registration system and expect you to register before you arrive. Others will only allow you to register when you get there.

If you have any issues you should contact the Study Abroad/International Office at your host university.

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.

If you are an Erasmus student your approved learning agreement was submitted when you applied.

If you want to make changes to your learning agreement it must be approved by your School Exchange Coordinator in Edinburgh.

Academic issues

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.

If you experience any issues that could prevent the satisfactory completion of your exchange period (this includes strikes or other disruptions to your host university's teaching or examination periods) contact the Go Abroad team and your School Exchange Coordinator as soon as possible.

Failing an exam

While you're on exchange, you'll usually be expected to return to retake any exams you fail. For students studying in Europe, this is obviously a more realistic prospect than for those studying outside Europe.

If you fail an exam you should contact your School Exchange immediately 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 received a grade for, and with a transcript of results provided. If you return to Edinburgh with insufficient credit for the year or semester abroad, you might not be permitted to progress into the next year in Edinburgh.

Withdrawal from your exchange

If, for any reason, you decide to withdraw from your exchange it is essential that you contact the Go Abroad team and your Exchange Coordinator as soon as possible. The sooner you let us know, the more we will be able to do to help.

Our first response will always be to work with you to see if we can arrange for additional support or make other suitable arrangements to help with the problems you are facing and to enable you to continue with your exchange.

If these attempts are not successful we will look into alternative options for you. The options available will depend on your individual circumstances, but it's important to note that a return to Edinburgh to complete your third year is not guaranteed and is normally only approved in exceptional circumstances.

Changing your host institution

You are only permitted to change host institution if one of these conditions are met:

- ★ You are unable to satisfy your academic programme requirements due to lack of appropriate course offerings by the host institution

- ★ You have transferred to a different degree programme at Edinburgh and in order to meet the requirements of the new degree programme you would need to undertake a part of your year abroad at a different institution

If you meet one of these conditions above and your School approves the change, the Go Abroad team will try to support your request. This is only possible if partner nomination deadlines or application deadlines have not passed and there are places available.

Being an ambassador

While on exchange at a partner university, you'll be an ambassador for the University of Edinburgh and should act 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 to the UK with respect to traffic, legal age and civil law.

Dealing with problems

If you run into difficulties, you should seek help at your host university. This could be your personal tutor or supervisor, your local International or Study Abroad Office, Welfare Office, Accommodation Office, or another support service at your host university. They will know the local systems and environment and will be used to dealing with students in your situation.

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

You may also find the University's Health and Wellbeing website helpful:

www.ed.ac.uk/students/health/things-not-going-well

Health and safety

There are a number of steps that you can take to help to make your time overseas healthy and safe, and to minimise risks.

Arriving in your host country

When you first land in your host country is when you'll feel most vulnerable. You may feel disorientated, tired, jet lagged after a long journey, and excited. The combination of all of these factors can leave you less sensitive to potential risks than you might normally be.

Top tips

- ★ Book a transfer in advance or take advantage of your host institution's welcome service if they offer one. If visiting a higher risk country you may want to agree a secret phrase or password with the person who will be meeting you so that you can check it is really them.
- ★ You might be desperate to use your smartphone to let everyone at home know you've arrived safely, but be careful. You'll be laden down with your bags and could make a tempting target.

Contact information

Make sure that both the University of Edinburgh and your host institution have complete and accurate personal information, including your phone number and email address, 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 should inform your parents or next of kin about where you are going. Make sure they have your contact details and keep in touch with them on a regular basis.

You should also check your University e-mail account on a regular basis as this will remain the main channel for official communication from the University.

Keep a list of important contacts as a hard copy and saved to your mobile phone - for example, to report lost or stolen credit cards, the British Embassy or Consulate, local emergency services and travel insurance contacts.

Important documents

You should take photocopies and scans of all of your important documentation with you, including your passport.

Top tips

- ★ Keep your passport safe – use a photocopy or a different form of photographic ID, such as a drivers license, on a day-to-day basis.
- ★ If your passport is lost or stolen, contact the police and your embassy immediately and give them the details.

Using common sense

Take a common sense approach - following a few simple guidelines can help ensure you have a safe and healthy experience:

- ★ Take care of your valuables - when you go out only take what you really need with you. Avoid drawing attention to your valuables.
- ★ Avoid drawing attention to yourself - even after a full year abroad you still won't be indistinguishable from a local, but you can help yourself blend in by adopting local norms for clothing and by respecting local customs.
- ★ Don't plan to arrive at a place you are not familiar with at night or when you're alone.
- ★ Avoid going out alone at night where possible, particularly before you know a place well. If you do have to travel alone at night stick to well-lit areas, avoid poorly lit areas, even if it's a short cut, and walk with confidence and sense of purpose, even if you're lost.
- ★ Get to know your location and avoid areas with high crime rates.
- ★ Try to maintain awareness of your surroundings to avoid being caught by surprise.
- ★ If a situation makes you uncomfortable, leave quickly. It sounds obvious, but fear of causing offence often causes people to remain in a situation far longer than they should.

- ★ Don't get drunk - an unrealistic suggestion perhaps, but if you do drink alcohol make sure you are with a group of friends you trust at all times and try to stay in control.
- ★ Stay in regular contact with friends and family and make sure they know your schedule and any travel plans.

Healthcare

During orientation at your host institution, get information about any on-campus and other nearby medical facilities you can use, as well as a list of telephone numbers for health emergencies.

You should register with a doctor as soon as possible after arrival.

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.

Locate your nearest British Consulate to your host destination and take note of the telephone number and address. Most British Consulates operate an answerphone service outside working hours with an emergency number if needed.

Find your nearest British Consulate:

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy

If you are not a British national you should locate your nearest Consular representation and follow their guidance.

Emergency situations

In an emergency situation you should make contact as soon as possible with your nominated contact at your host university and with your family. The host coordinator often has the local knowledge and ability to advise and support you.

It is also important that you contact the University of Edinburgh as soon as you are able. During normal office hours you can contact your School Exchange Coordinator and the Go Abroad team.

**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 transfer you to a staff member at Edinburgh Global.

It is essential that you follow all guidance promptly.

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 should be 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, such as obeying curfew restrictions.

Monitor the emergency situation 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.

www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

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.

Adjusting to a new place

Many host universities offer an orientation programme before the academic year begins. Participating in these programmes will give you 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 is compulsory so ensure you arrive in time to attend. There might be a charge for the orientation programme that you'll have to cover.

Culture shock

Don't worry if you experience a degree of culture shock during the first few weeks abroad. 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. Many students are surprised by how homesick they feel at the beginning of their study abroad period.

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 further into your study abroad period.

To help cope with culture shock you can make use of your host university's support services, such as their International Office, Welfare Office, Counselling Services or other available services.

These strategies could help 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.

Mental health

Moving and living abroad can be a stressful and anxious time. It's important to be aware of the impact that cultural and lifestyle differences can have on you. Remember to look after your mental health, as well as your physical health.

These resources help you to prepare for and manage your time abroad.

Go International provides links and resources for managing your physical and mental health whilst abroad:

<http://go.international.ac.uk/digital-resources-health-and-wellbeing>

The University's Student Counselling Service also offers some online self help tools:

www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling/self-help

Making the most of your exchange

Your time living and studying abroad can be life-changing. It's important to be able to reflect on your experience to make the most of your exchange.

Reflecting on your experience

There are many benefits to participating in a student exchange, but as well as the obvious academic and cultural benefits going on exchange could also help you develop the following attributes and skills and will give you a wealth of interesting examples to give at future interviews!

- ★ Problem solving
- ★ Ability to manage change
- ★ Cross-cultural communication skills
- ★ Planning and organising
- ★ Assertiveness
- ★ Initiative
- ★ Drive
- ★ Resilience
- ★ Openness to new ideas and experiences

To get the maximum benefit from your time living and studying abroad give yourself time and space to reflect on your experiences. How you reflect is entirely up to you – it has to be something you will want to engage with. It could be an old fashioned approach like a travel journal, or maybe take a digital approach like a blog or vlog. You decide!

Stages of successful reflection

There are three key stages to any successful reflection:

- 1 Set goals:** Write down some goals before you leave. This could be anything from skills you hope to develop, courses you want to take or new experiences you hope to have. Research has shown that you are far more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down.
- 2 Record your experience:** Your exchange really will pass in a flash, so keep a journal or a blog so you have a record of the things you have done.
- 3 Look back:** After the experience look back at your initial goals. Did your exchange meet your expectations? Did you achieve everything you set out to? What went well? What didn't go as well as you hoped? Taking time to think through questions like these will definitely ensure you get maximum benefit from your exchange.

www.ed.ac.uk/global/go-abroad/students-stories

The TATA (Taking Advantage of Time Away) resource is designed to help you get the most out of time away from the University – whether as part of time abroad or a placement. This is an optional online module accessible through Learn:

www.ed.ac.uk/employability/student-information/expanding-your-potential/tata

On your return

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

You must get a transcript of results showing the courses you've taken, marks obtained and credit awarded. You need to send a copy of your transcript to the Go Abroad team by the end of August following the end of your exchange period. It is your responsibility to ensure that the Go Abroad team receives your transcript.

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'll receive 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.

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

If you received an Erasmus grant you'll have to complete and return an online feedback report at the end of your Erasmus period - this is a compulsory requirement and a condition of the award of the Erasmus grant. You must also submit a certificate of departure confirming your dates of attendance at the host institution and complete the second OLS assessment if necessary.

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.

Readjusting to life in Edinburgh

Returning to Edinburgh might mean you need to readjust. These options might help the process:

EUSA societies ★ 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:

www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/societies

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:

www.ed.ac.uk/global/student-advisory-service/social-connections/isc

TANDEM ★ TANDEM is a language exchange programme run by EUSA. If you want to keep up your language skills, you could find a conversation partner or attend a regular Language Café:

www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/tandem

Exchange 360 ★ The Exchange 360 society is for current and former exchange students from Edinburgh, in addition to those thinking about studying abroad:

www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/society/Exchange360

StAR programme ★ Join the programme - the Go Abroad team run events during the year to promote opportunities abroad. Become a Student Abroad Representative and help us spread the message - share your experience, give us your feedback, or become a buddy to incoming students:

www.ed.ac.uk/global/exchanges/be-a-star

Useful links

University resources

- ★ Go Abroad
www.ed.ac.uk/go-abroad
- ★ Student administration (for Registration)
www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration
- ★ Student funding (for fees enquiries)
www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/tuition-fees/undergraduate/year-abroad-continuing
- ★ Insurance Office
www.ed.ac.uk/finance/about/sections/insurance
- ★ Health and Wellbeing
www.ed.ac.uk/students/health
- ★ Student Disability Service
www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service
- ★ Student Counselling Service
www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling
- ★ EUSA Student Groups
www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation/studentgroups

The University's 24 hour emergency phone line:
+44 (0)131 650 2257

Other resources

- ★ UK Council for International Student Affairs
www.ukcisa.org.uk
- ★ Foreign travel advice
www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice
- ★ Travel Aware
www.gov.uk/travelaware
- ★ Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)
www.saas.gov.uk
- ★ Student Loans Company
www.slc.co.uk
- ★ European Health Insurance Card
www.ehic.org.uk
- ★ International Student Identity Card (ISIC)
www.isic.org
- ★ Global Graduates
<http://globalgraduates.com>
- ★ International Association of Medical Assistance to Travellers
www.iamat.org
- ★ International Lesbian & Gay Association
www.ilga.org



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Global

The University of Edinburgh
33 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh, EH8 9JS

T: +44 (0)131 650 4296

E: enquiries.international@ed.ac.uk

Edinburgh Global is open from Monday to Friday,
between 09.00 and 17.00 (GMT)

Emergency

Outside office hours, you can call the
University's 24 hour emergency phone line:

+44 (0)131 650 2257



Erasmus+

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

