

Student exchange programmes

If you long to travel, and maybe have a bit of adventure, then studying in another country is an amazing opportunity that you might not want to pass up. Scottish students seem to appreciate the benefits of overseas study, with more than 38,000 Scottish students studying overseas in 2014/2015 (an increase of 5% from the previous year).

Even if you haven't thought about overseas study before, it's a rewarding and life changing experience well worth considering full of exciting possibilities:

- learn to adapt to a new culture and meet interesting people
- live in a sunny climate or beautiful surroundings, maybe, that you might not get back home!
- broaden your life experience and view of the world – or become more 'worldly'
- learn many new transferable skills and perhaps a new language
- make you more attractive to prospective employers as an independent and proactive person – not every student studies abroad!
- make important contacts abroad – you might end up getting a job back there
- make new friends in a new country that you keep in touch with – and maybe return for a visit!

According to the Prospects graduate careers website, the top five places to study abroad are Germany, Australia, Canada, France and the USA.

What options are available?

The most common route is through student exchange schemes at the university you are studying at. They all run information sessions and provide information about each institution abroad it has an exchange partnership with.

In all cases you are expected to research what, where and how long you want to study for, and whether it is compatible with your degree course content. You will also be expected to have reached a certain academic standard and passed set examinations on the course before you can go.

You will really need to contact current exchange students at your choice of institution and course to get their advice and feedback on the experience. This will help you decide if studying abroad is really for you. While you are there, you should give careful thought to your personality, such as; are you homesick easily, can you make friends quickly? You need to be mature enough to manage your finances and buckle down to your studies, whilst having all these distractions and changes in your life!

A deciding factor is the length of stay; if you want a taste but no long term commitment, then studying for a semester is a good choice.

Study in Europe - Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is an educational programme funded by the European Union, promoting student and staff mobility between universities throughout Europe with 32 participating countries. Spain, Germany and France

remain the most popular destinations for students.

It's not just language students who get to study abroad, with most universities offering Erasmus placements across the majority of their courses. Not every course is suitable though, which varies at each university, so you will need to check availability at individual institutions.

You can apply for a study exchange placement at a partner university lasting between 3 and 12 months. This can be done from the 2nd year onwards of your bachelor or masters degree, although 3rd year is most typical. If you are getting SAAS funding, this will still continue, and you will also get an Erasmus-funded grant towards the cost of living and travel during your placement.

Erasmus+ also offers traineeship work placements that can last between 2 and 12 months.

International Exchange programmes

You can also apply to study at universities outside the European Union, through global student exchange (GSE) schemes. Typical destinations are Canada, the USA, Australia, China, New Zealand, Brazil or Singapore. Placements normally last one full academic year, depending on the course and year of study, and usually take place in your 3rd year. The availability of courses and subject choice varies from institution to institution.

Competition is also high for international placements, and are not guaranteed, even if you meet the necessary academic requirements.

As with Erasmus+ placements, if you are receiving SAAS funding, there are no additional fees to be paid to the exchange institution. If you are in receipt of an SAAS loan this should also not be affected. However you will need to pay for your own travel and accommodation costs. You may be able to work part time, but some countries may not allow students to work, especially outside the campus.

Independently arranged study placements

You don't need to go through an official exchange programme if you want to study abroad. For example, you might like the idea of a longer stay, and studying the whole degree abroad. This has its advantage in that you have more control over choosing the place you study at, course content and your length of stay.

However independent study abroad means lots of discipline and basically funding your own studies and expenses – including medical insurance. You will have to either take out a loan or secure a scholarship from your chosen institution or from home. You may well also have to find a part time job when you are there, however some countries may not allow students to work off campus, even part time.

It's worth noting that it's cheaper to study in Europe compared to international destinations such as America and Australia. Some universities within the European Union may not charge you tuition fees, but you will still have to fund your living and travel expenses.

Sources

- Erasmus+ is the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport – <https://erasmusplus.org.uk>

- **Erasmus Programme** is a useful and informative site developed and maintained by Erasmus students – <http://www.erasmusprogramme.com>
- **The Complete University Guide** – <http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/international/studying-overseas/funding-overseas-study/>
- **The Fulbright commission** website gives a wide range of information about the various opportunities for studying in the USA – <http://www.fulbright.org.uk>