

Being a Student in Another Country

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Students Coming to the UK

Whether you're spending a term or a year here, or if you're doing your entire degree here, there are many adventures to prepare for. The first practical step to studying abroad is to look at your finances; make sure you have enough to have a good time. Visas can be expensive if you're coming from outside the EU and flights and insurance rack up other costs.

The best place to go for financial advice is to your home university's financial centre, or to your UK University's resources. Ask about bursaries and loans, look at what your government and what the UK government can offer you, and see what can be claimed back after you've paid for it. Often flights and visa costs can be reimbursed.

Travel. Travel everywhere you can. See the cities, and expose yourself to all the culture on offer. If you're not from Europe, then this is probably the best opportunity you have to explore as much as can. Use the InterRail, or the numerous coach services that go all over Europe. There's no better chance.

Don't just talk to people you know from home, or other international students. Of course, these are great comforts and can provide an easy atmosphere to socialise in, but you're in a new country; you have that adventure in you. Talk to everyone and fill your time. There's nothing worse than regrets about things you didn't do when you had the chance.

Remember to work. That's why you're here. Hopefully you've picked a university that provides an interesting course. Hopefully this university will provide something that will enrich your life. Enjoy your time studying in the UK; it won't last forever.

Students Leaving the UK

The above advice applies. Do everything, and travel as far and as often as you can. Do remember to study, and do

socialise as much as possible; you never know when you'll want free accommodation in another country.

There is lots of financial help for students spending a year or a term abroad. Student Finance England will often only sustain you for the length of your course plus one extra year; which means that if you had to retake a year, then you may only be able to do a semester abroad. If you are worried, then do talk to your advisor or study abroad team.

Student Finance will support you if you spend a year of your studies on exchange. If you go to a university in the EU, then the Erasmus scheme means that you will pay no tuition fees. Other countries vary, so again, talk to your study abroad office and get all the information.

Many universities will ask you to prove that you have a certain amount of money. This can come from your loans and grants, from your family, and from various other sources. You will have to pay for your flights, health insurance, and visa (if you need one), however, these can often be claimed back. If you are already receiving a grant from Student Finance, then call them, ask them for a form to reimburse costs from the year abroad, and send them all the receipts. Your destination university may also provide bursaries and scholarships, so it's definitely worth asking.

You may or may not be able to get a job abroad. This shouldn't be a problem if you're in the EU, but it may be an issue in other places like the United States. Some universities will let you do some form of work, especially within the university, but if you're on a student visa, you may not be allowed. Always ask the study abroad office in your destination country if you don't know.

Know the laws of the country. Find out what is banned; alcohol, drugs, if you can drive, etc. Don't jaywalk in the US. Don't give alcohol to minors. Find out if you're living on a substance controlled campus. Feel confident in the language of a non-English speaking country; there can be few things more isolating than the reverse.

I've said it a few times, but it's worth repeating: travel. It will never be as cheap again for you to travel around your destination country. If you're in Eastern Europe, go on trips. See as many countries as you can. If you're in the US, go as far as you can. Enjoy the generosity of Americans; if they offer you a lift somewhere, it means they genuinely want to help you and take you places. The best way to see a new place is with someone who knows the area. If you're in Asia, or Australia, or South America, it all applies. Explore the place, the history, the culture, and the way of life. Study Abroad is more than the formal education within the university buildings; don't neglect this part, but realise how much more there is.

Join clubs and go on organised trips, but also make your own adventures. Hopefully you're going to a country that excites you, that holds something special that drew you there in the first place. Do not come back regretting wasted time.

