

## 10 Benefits to Studying Abroad



Studying abroad may be one of the most beneficial experiences for a college student. By studying abroad, students have the opportunity to study in a foreign nation and take in the allure and culture of a new land. Here is a list of the top 10 reasons to study abroad!

### 1. See the World

The biggest reason you should consider a study abroad program is the opportunity to [see the world](#). By studying abroad, you will experience a brand-new country with

incredible new outlooks, customs and activities. The benefits of studying abroad include the opportunity to see new terrains, natural wonders, museums and landmarks of your host nation.

In addition, when you're abroad, you won't be limited to traveling in just the nation in which you are studying – you can see neighboring countries as well! For example, if you study in France, you'll have the option to travel through various parts of Europe including [London](#), [Barcelona](#), and [Rome](#).

### 2. Education

Another reason you might consider studying abroad is for the chance to experience [different styles of education](#). By enrolling in a study abroad program, you'll have the chance to see a side of your major that you may not have been exposed to at home.

You'll find that completely immersing yourself in the education system of your host country is a great way to really experience and understand the people, its traditions, and its culture. Education is the centerpiece of any study abroad trip—it is, after all, a study abroad program—and choosing the right school is a very important factor.

### 3. Take in a New Culture

Many students who choose to study abroad are leaving their home for the first time. When they arrive in their new host country, they are fascinated by the distinct cultural perspectives. When you study abroad you will find incredible new foods, customs, traditions, and social atmospheres.

You will find that you have a better understanding and appreciation for the nation's people and history. You will have the opportunity to witness a completely new way of life.

### 4. Hone Your Language Skills

Chances are if you're planning on studying abroad, one of the major draws is the opportunity to study a foreign language. Studying abroad grants you the opportunity to completely immerse yourself in a new language, and there is no better way to learn than to dive right in.

In addition to the considerable language practice you will get just in day to day life, your host university will likely offer language courses to provide you with a more formal education. Immerse yourself in a new culture and go [beyond a purely academic experience](#)

### 5. Career Opportunities

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When you finish your study abroad program and return home, you will return with a new perspective on culture, language skills, a great education, and a willingness to learn. Needless to say, all of these are very attractive to future employers.

Many students find that they love their host country so much that they decide to seek work there. If you can relate, you will find that a local education will be very valuable when searching for a potential job in that country.

## 6. Find New Interests

If you are still questioning why to study abroad, you should know that studying in a different country offers many new activities and interests that you may never have discovered if you'd stayed at home. You might find that you have an as-yet undiscovered talent for hiking, water sports, snow skiing, golf, or various other new sports you may never have tried back home.

You'll also have the chance to discover other new and exciting forms of entertainment. Plays, movies, dancing, nightclubs, and concerts are just a few activities that you can enjoy.

## 7. Make Lifelong Friends

One of the biggest benefits of studying abroad is the opportunity to meet new lifelong friends from different backgrounds. While studying abroad, you will attend school and live with students from your host country. This gives you the opportunity to really get to know and create lasting relationships with your fellow students.

After the study abroad program ends, make an effort stay in contact with your international friends. In addition to rewarding personal relationships, these friends can also be important networking tools later down the road.

## 8. Personal Development

There is nothing quite like being on your own in a foreign country. You might find that studying abroad really brings out your independent nature. Students who study abroad become explorers of their new nation and really discover the curiosity and excitement that they harbor.

A benefit to studying abroad is the opportunity to discover yourself while gaining an understanding of a different culture. Being in a new place by yourself can be overwhelming at times, and it tests your ability to adapt to diverse situations while being able to problem solve.

## 9. Graduate School Admissions

Like future employers, graduate school admissions boards look very highly on study abroad experiences. Students that study abroad display diversity and show that they aren't afraid to seek out new challenges or put themselves in difficult situations.

Most importantly, students who have studied abroad show just how committed they are to their education. Graduate schools regularly look for candidates who will bring a unique aspect to their university. Students who have studied abroad have shown that they have the curiosity and educational acumen to be a leader in graduate school.

## 10. Life Experience

Why study abroad? For most students, this time may be the only opportunity they ever get to travel abroad for a long period of time. Eventually you will find a job and career, and the opportunity to study abroad may turn out to be a once in a life time opportunity.

Take this opportunity to travel the world with no commitments but to study and learn about new cultures. Studying abroad is an experience unlike any other.

## UK vs. USA Education System



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According to the world university rankings compiled by the Times Higher Education, more than half of the world's top 200 universities are located in either the US or the UK. Both countries share a rich tradition of quality higher education, excellent research facilities, and a culture that promotes intellectualism as well as academic freedom. However, while both certainly provide an excellent environment for learning, there are many differences between the two countries regarding the structure of the university as well as student life. In this article, we will explore the primary differences between the American and British systems of education.

### Length of Time

Perhaps the most important difference between the education system in the US and the UK is the amount of time it takes to finish your degree (except in Scotland, where a bachelor's degree also lasts four years). In general, degree programs in the US take about one year longer than programs in the UK, although this varies depending upon whether you receive a Master's degree prior to a PhD. In both systems, you can go directly to a PhD program out of your undergraduate program, but in the UK it is more common to complete a Master's degree program before moving on to a PhD. Courses of study are shorter in the UK because the course programs are generally much more focused than in the US.

### Academic Term

Most universities in the US begin their terms in mid to late August, although smaller liberal arts colleges may start later. Most take a rather lengthy break beginning in mid-December and begin the second semester in early to mid-January. However, universities that are on different calendars, such as a trimester or quarter-based system, may begin their winter break at the Thanksgiving holiday, which falls at the end of November. The academic term in the UK is a bit more varied. While most also use the semester system, the trimester and quarter systems are used in some universities. Many schools start in September or October and end in May or June, making for a slightly longer academic year. However, the academic term is less standardized throughout the United Kingdom; if you choose to study there, your university might use a much different calendar.

### University Organization

Many universities in the UK are made up of "colleges" which are dedicated to a specific subject matter. While the colleges are still governed by the university, each college has quite a lot of autonomy from each other as well as the university itself. You live with others in your college, eat with others from your college, and generally stay within your college for the duration of your studies. Rather than applying to the central university admissions department, like you do in the US, you either apply directly to the college of the subject you want to study, or in the case of undergraduate programs, you apply through a centralized system which allows you to apply to several colleges at once. This system is called the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, or UCAS. This means that you have to know what you want to study before you even apply.

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By contrast, in the US, you apply to the larger university and for the first year or more, you take courses from a variety of fields and only declare a major at the end of the first year or perhaps even during the second year. American universities have different “schools,” or departments, such as the School of Arts and Sciences, which houses a number of related majors. However, even after you declare a major at an American university, you are still expected to take classes outside of that field, known as “electives.” For this reason, we can say that the general emphasis of higher education in the US is breadth, or getting a range of knowledge from a variety of different subjects. In the UK, the emphasis is more on depth; getting a very thorough understanding of your chosen subject.

### **Homework and Grades**

Because the US system emphasizes breadth, courses require weekly or even biweekly readings as well as other assignments such as small writing projects, major research papers, and oral presentations throughout the course. In the UK, most schools are much more lecture-based, with only occasional assignments throughout the semester. In some cases, there may be no actual required assignments and instead your entire grade may be based on one final exam. In the US, your grade will be based on your performance on the variety of assignments, with a final exam making up only a percentage of your total grade.

### **Cost**

The cost of education in both countries is far from cheap, but the cost of an education in the United States is generally higher. According to a law passed in 2012, universities in England may charge up to £9000 (approximately \$14,300) per year. Of course, this applies only to citizens of the UK and the EU, not international students. Fees for international students can be significantly higher. The government sets the limits for tuition fees, and each individual school sets its own fee up to that limit.

By contrast, the government has very little control over what universities charge in the United States. The US differentiates between in-state tuition fees and out-of-state tuition fees, as well as between private and public universities. These distinctions determine the tuition fee. The average tuition fee for public two-year institutions is around \$3000 per year, while the average fee for private four-year institutions is around \$29,000 per year. Finally, some private four-year institutions can cost up to \$50,000 per year. In order to help students cover the cost of tuition in both countries, loans are available through the government with favorable terms and interest rates.

### **Accommodation**

Both countries provide students with residence halls in which to live. They are roughly equivalent, although in the UK it is more normal to have a bedroom by yourself, whereas in the US, you may very well share a bedroom with at least one other person. However, after the first year, students in the US may have additional housing options available to them, such as private housing or off-campus housing. It is also more common for dormitories to be self-catered in the UK, while the US normally provides a range of full dining options for its students. One potentially significant difference is that maid service is common in the residence halls in the UK, although students pay a nominal fee for this service.

### **Conclusion**

While both countries provide a great education, each system approaches education slightly differently and there are advantages and disadvantages to each. If you are considering getting your education in either the US or the UK, you should take into consideration the various differences mentioned in this article, especially the amount of time it takes to finish the degree, the tuition fees and whether you prefer more depth or more breadth in your degree program.

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|                                | <b>America</b>   | <b>Britain</b>  |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Length of Time</b>          | BA: 4 years<br>MA: 2 years<br>PhD: 5-7 years or longer   | BA: 3 years<br>MA: 1 year<br>PhD: 3 years   |
| <b>Academic Term</b>           | Most schools use the semester system, but some use a trimester or quarter system. Most schools start in mid to late August and end in May. | Most also use a semester system, but some use trimester or quarter systems. The start and end of an academic year varies by university. |
| <b>University Organization</b> | Universities are often divided into schools by subject, but these schools do not typically have a lot of autonomy from the university.     | University acts an umbrella organization for the different colleges. Colleges are fairly independent of one another.                    |
| <b>Style of Education</b>      | More varied, liberal arts, study outside your major.   | Take only classes in your college.  |
| <b>Depth vs Breadth</b>        | Breadth  | Depth   |
| <b>Homework</b>                | Constant reading and writing assignments   | General assignments or no assignments throughout the semester   |
| <b>Cost</b>                    | High   | Moderate  |
| <b>Grades</b>                  | Based on overall performance on all assignments  | Based mostly on the final exam  |
| <b>Athletics</b>               | Important social activity; athletic scholarships available.  | Intramural sports; generally no athletic scholarships available.  |

|                         | <b>America</b>   | <b>Britain</b>  |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Living Situation</b> | Dormitories with roommate.<br>Off-campus housing occasionally available.             | Dormitories without roommate generally.<br>Off-campus housing generally available.  |
| <b>Types of Degrees</b> | Associates, Bachelors, Masters, PhD, variety of vocational and professional degrees. | Higher National Diploma, Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education, Foundation Degree, Bachelors, Masters, PhD, variety of professional and vocational degrees. Postgraduate degrees divided into taught and research degrees. |

**\*Associate's degree (USA):** An associate's degree is an academic program taken at the undergraduate level (the first stage after secondary school). It aims to give students the basic technical and academic knowledge and transferable skills they need to go on to employment or further study in their chosen field.

Associate's degrees are most commonly offered in the US, but you'll also find them in some parts of Canada, Hong Kong, Australia and the Netherlands. Other countries have similar programs but under a different name, such as foundation degrees in the UK.

In the US, associate's degrees are available at various types of college, including community colleges, junior colleges and technical colleges, affiliated colleges of universities and university institutes. It typically takes two years full-time to complete an associate's degree.

For some students, an associate's degree provides preparation for a bachelor's degree, while for others it's a qualification in its own right, helping to improve employment prospects compared to only having completed a secondary-level education.

More info at: <http://www.topuniversities.com/blog/what-associates-degree>

**\*Foundation degree (UK):** A foundation degree is a degree level qualification which combines academic study with work place learning. Designed in association with employers, they are qualifications to equip people with the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve academic results as well as improve performance and productivity in the work place.

Foundation degrees focus on a particular job or profession. They are intended to increase the professional and technical skills of current or potential staff within a profession, or intending to go into that profession.

A foundation degree is the equivalent of two thirds of a full honours degree and is a fully flexible qualification allowing students to study part-time or full-time to fit their lifestyle.

More info at: <http://fd.ucas.com/FoundationDegree/About.aspx>

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## Recognition of academic diplomas

**There is no automatic EU-wide recognition of academic diplomas.** You may therefore need to go through a national procedure to get your academic degree or diploma recognised in another EU country, if you seek admission to a further course of study there. If you already know that you will eventually want to pursue further studies in a different country, check before you start whether your diploma will be recognised there.

Individual governments of EU countries remain responsible for their education systems and are free to apply their own rules, including whether or not to recognise academic qualifications obtained elsewhere.

### Find out whether a country will recognise your foreign diploma

#### Sample story

Kathrin completed a university degree in Germany. She then moved to France to pursue a postgraduate degree, but found that the French authorities did not recognise her diploma, requesting that she obtain a document certifying her qualifications from a French university. After discussion with a French university, she was able to get her degree recognised as equivalent to a “*licence*” in the French system – a type of diploma obtained there after only 3 years of study, and which she felt covered much less ground than the studies she had already completed in Germany. Nonetheless, she had to pursue 2 further years of undergraduate study in the French system before she could apply for the postgraduate course she wanted there.

#### Get your degree “compared”

In most cases, you can obtain a “statement of comparability” of your university degree, stating how it compares to the diplomas delivered in the EU country you are moving to. To do so, contact the [ENIC/NARIC centre](#) in the country where you would like your diplomas assessed for “comparability”. This could be your home country if you return home after your studies, or another EU country if you move there for work or further study.

For the UK: <http://www.enic-naric.net/united-kingdom.aspx>

Depending on the country where your diplomas are assessed and the purpose of the assessment, the ENIC/NARIC centre will either evaluate them itself, or transfer them to the competent authority.

Before the assessment, make sure you check:

- how much the service will cost (if there is a fee)
- how long the assessment will take – it could be several weeks to several months depending on the country, the purpose, and the complexity of your file
- what type of document you will get as a result – it could be a full equivalency, or a comparative report
- what you can do if you disagree with the assessment (how to appeal)

If you provide documents in the Europass format (such as the Diploma Supplement), your degree can be more easily compared and recognised.

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## The Explanation of Major & Minor in College Degrees (USA)

People often talk about having a degree in a specific topic. Although the letters on their undergraduate diploma generally read "Bachelor of Arts" or "Bachelor of Science," their transcript will show a concentration in a focused area, or a major. A minor is a less intensive course of study that is secondary to the major.

### Definition of a Major

A bachelor's degree typically requires 120 credit hours of course work, with an average semester course load of 15 credit hours. Your major is the main field of study, where you direct your focus as an undergraduate student. For example, you might choose to focus on mathematics, engineering, business or something particular course of study. Most majors require 30 to 60 credit hours of coursework for completion, depending upon both the major itself and the university.

### Refining a Major

The requirements for a major are defined by different academic departments within the university. Majors can be broadly or narrowly defined depending upon how specific the options offered by the department. For instance, some schools might offer a major in economics," while others might offer more narrowly defined studies, such as Latin American economics. A broad major allows you to choose an array of electives, or optional classes, while the major with a narrower focus often allows fewer choices in courses.

### Defining a Major

A college minor may be optional, and it requires fewer courses than your major. Whereas a major will often require prerequisite classes and classes across a different fields within the department, a minor may be more of a survey of the department. Completion of a minor sometimes requires completion of as few as five classes within the academic department. Not all academic departments offer courses of study for minors.

### Purpose of Minors

Students can elect to minor in a field for a multitude of reasons. A very common reason is to supplement a major. Business majors frequently minor in economics, while majors in the liberal arts underpin their primary study with a minor in philosophy. Education majors are often required to select a teaching field as their minor. Some students also choose to minor in something they are passionate about but that does not pertain to the field in which they seek employment. An interesting minor can also be a good way to make a student stand out in the job market or when applying to grad school.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/10865699/Universities-to-offer-US-style-major-and-minor-degrees.html>

from *The Telegraph*, Monday 09 February 2015

## Universities to offer US-style 'major and minor' degrees

*David Willetts, the Universities Minister, backs the introduction of major/minor degrees in Britain, saying the system is needed to meet student demand for greater 'breadth'*

British universities are increasingly offering US-style degree courses to drive up student numbers in the face of mounting competition from overseas, it has emerged.

Rising numbers of institutions are running “major/minor” courses – an established feature of American higher education – to meet rising demand for more flexible degrees.

At least six universities offer, or plan to offer, the degrees including King’s College London, Southampton, Sheffield, Keele and Worcester.

As part of the course, students normally spend around two-thirds of their time studying their principal – major – subject and a third on the minor element.

In 2015, Surrey will become the latest to offer major/minor degrees, introducing 65 combinations covering the social sciences, psychology, languages, literature and the arts, with more planned in future years.

The move comes on top of a separate drive by a number of British universities to introduce liberal arts degrees – multidisciplinary courses that are also a popular feature of studying in the US.

It is designed to make courses more appealing to students and meet demands from employers for staff with a broader set of skills.

The move also represents an attempt to claim a bigger share of the foreign student market, pulling would-be undergraduates from the US, which is currently the top destination for overseas study. It may also keep more British students in this country following a steady rise in numbers crossing the Atlantic in recent years.

David Willetts, the Universities Minister, said: “It’s another example of universities responding to pressure from students.

“When you hear about students going to study in the US, often one of the reasons they cite is the breadth they’ve got in a liberal arts course or the opportunity to combine a major and a minor. We need to allow people to pursue a wider range than is usually available in the UK.”

He added: “The English system is unusual in specialising so early, both at A-level and university.”

But a leading academic warned the move risked introducing a “pick-and-mix” style approach to degree courses in which students fail to develop proper expertise in one subject.

Alan Smithers, director of the Centre for Education and Employment Research at Buckingham University, said: “Degrees in this country are very short compared with those elsewhere so it’s important that they are focused and actually mean something. The great danger with this approach is that degrees become a kind of pick-and-mix, with no great appeal to employers or a platform for further study.”

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Most British students currently take single-honours degrees focused on one subject. Combined honours – two subjects split 50/50 – have also been popular in the past.

But universities insist the major/minor approach is increasingly appealing to students who want to take a more diverse range while still retaining expertise in one area.

Most major/minor courses are focused on social sciences, humanities and arts subjects, principally because boundaries between them are more “fluid”, leading to greater overlap between disciplines. Keele is one of the few universities to offer major/minor options in the sciences and maths.

Students normally have to meet entry requirements for both parts of the degree course in the same way as those taking the single-honours option.

Simon Usherwood, associate dean of Surrey University, said combined degrees with a straight 50/50 split “may make sense for some people but we find that students generally have stronger interest in one area than another”.

“This allows students more time to focus on one subject – to explore it in depth – while maintaining a secondary area of work in a substantial way,” he said.

He added: “It is about existing provision, packaged in a way that’s of wider interest. The international market is one where British universities are having to innovate to remain competitive.”

In addition to major/minor degrees, many universities are offering liberal arts courses in which students normally study a wide range of humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

This includes Exeter, Birmingham, Surrey, King’s College London, Kent, Winchester and the University of East Anglia.

Nicola Dandridge, chief executive of Universities UK, the vice-chancellors’ group, said: “Major/minor degrees allow students to get a deep understanding of the main degree subject, while also developing breadth across a range of other subjects.

“By interacting with students and academics from several disciplines, it may help broaden students’ horizons and skills. The aim of all degrees is to produce graduates able to deal with a complex world.”

## USEFUL LINKS:

- **Studying in the UK – International Student**

[http://www.internationalstudent.com/study\\_uk/](http://www.internationalstudent.com/study_uk/) for general information

- **UK Council for International Student Affairs**

<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Preparing--planning/Choosing-a-course/>

- **UK Government website**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/2992/made> - for recognised bodies

<https://www.gov.uk/check-a-university-is-officially-recognised/recognised-bodies>

- **UK National Recognition Information Centre**

<http://www.naric.org.uk/Europass/Individuals/Studying%20in%20Europe.aspx>

<http://www.enic-naric.net/united-kingdom.aspx> recognition by country

- **Universities UK – list of UK Universities**

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/aboutus/members/Pages/default.aspx>

- **Universities and Colleges Admissions Service - UK**

<https://www.ucas.com/> where to apply to up to 5 UK universities

- **Your Europe**

[http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/education/university/recognition/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/education/university/recognition/index_en.htm) information on titles recognition