How to Choose a Program

Thoughtful planning is the key to a successful study abroad experience! Allow yourself plenty of time to consider your academic goals and personal motivation when looking at study abroad program options. Follow the steps outlined below to navigate the planning process. Don’t worry, many of the questions you may not be able to answer on your own – make an appointment with a Study Abroad Advisor!

**STEP 1: Determine Academic Priorities, consider:**

- Am I interested in taking courses that are related to my major or minor while abroad, or do I want to explore elective areas?
- Do I need to fulfill any specific requirements for my major or minor? Can I fulfill these abroad?*
- Do I have the flexibility to take electives? How many?*
- When do I plan to graduate?
- What is the language of instruction? Do I have the requisite language skills, if the language of instruction is not in English?
- What kind of academic setting do I prefer? Examples: a large institution vs. a small program, classroom-based instruction vs. fieldwork, etc.

**STEP 2: Personal and Lifestyle Preferences, consider:**

- What do I want to get out of this experience (i.e., language skills, new perspective on major/career, resume builder, cross-cultural experience, adventure, etc.)?
- How will I challenge myself through this experience?
- What extra-curricular interests do I want to pursue while abroad?
- How long would I like to study abroad?
- Do I have any additional needs (physical, psychological, learning, other)? What type of accommodation do my needs require?
- Do I have any lifestyle preferences? Do the destinations I am considering support these preferences?
- What level of immersion into the local society/culture am I interested in?
- How much support/independence do I need/want?

**STEP 3: Location, consider:**

- Am I drawn to a particular destination? What draws me to it?
- What language skills do I need to have for a particular location?
- What kind of setting would I prefer: urban or rural?
- What is the cost of living in the location I am considering? What will be the cost of transportation to the location I am considering?

* = Consult a Study Abroad Advisor for this information

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STEP 4: Budgeting

☐ Compare the costs of living, traveling, and other associated expenses for different locations you are interested in

☐ Compare your total projected education abroad costs (program cost, travel, associated personal expenses) to your total costs of on-campus education for the same term

☐ Students participating in Coggin Semester Exchange programs will pay regular UNF tuition and mandatory fees, but should consult their host institution (university abroad) materials for additional expense estimates (housing, books, local transportation etc)

☐ If finances are a concern:
  • As you research program options, research UNF, Coggin and national scholarship and funding sources. Keep in mind that scholarship application deadlines do not necessarily correspond with program application deadlines. In fact, scholarship deadlines are typically earlier than program application deadlines – start researching early!
  • Students are encouraged to work closely with a Study Abroad Advisor who may be able to direct them towards information and resources.
  • Semester and year-long study abroad is particularly cost-effective. Remember that expenses such as airfare, passport, some visas, etc. are the same amount whether your program is two weeks or a full semester!
  • Consider the opportunity costs/losses. For example, if you work in the summer to support yourself, look for study abroad options during other terms.
  • Look for destinations with an affordable cost of living that matches your personal and lifestyle preferences (see STEP 2)

STEP 5: Meet with an advisor

Once you have read through all the steps, you are encouraged to meet with a Study Abroad Advisor. Advisors are specialists in the field of international education with program expertise. They can help you evaluate program options in order to meet your goals, answer specific questions, and guide you throughout the process of applying and preparing to study abroad. When requesting an appointment, please specify your major, academic goals for your international experience, program(s) and term you are interested in, and a list of specific questions you would like to discuss.

Coggin-In and Faculty-Led Programs: Caitlin Jaeger, Coggin Study Abroad Advisor
Semester Exchange Programs: Shelby Huber, Coggin Study Abroad Advisor
Double Degree Programs: Kate Mattingly Learch, Associate Director of the IB Flagship

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