

# Study Abroad in Liberal Studies

**“Study Abroad provides the perspective and insight that just cannot be captured within a traditional classroom setting. It brings liberal education to life.”**

**Steve Glass, Associate Dean  
College of Interdisciplinary Studies**

**“...a truly good study abroad experience will change you in some way. It will force you to grow as a person and question perspectives you once accepted as commonplace.”**

**Michelle Merriman, GVSU Graduate, 2007  
Liberal Studies Major**

**“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”**

**- Mark Twain**

Many study abroad programs are open to Liberal Studies Majors. An international learning experience offers countless opportunities to reflect, create meaning, and discover your own and others’ values. It will expand your academic and professional horizons immensely. Studying abroad will provide you with essential skills to work effectively in business, education, or any career you may choose. You will transform your life and perspectives, strengthen your character, and broaden your thinking and experiences in our ever-shrinking global community.

## **Study abroad can help you...**

- Find great interdisciplinary coursework and curriculum to enhance your emphasis area
- Understand your emphasis area and interdisciplinarity from international perspectives
- Expand your cross-cultural communication and problem-solving skills
- Prepare to work in an increasingly diverse and international workplace
- Strengthen your resume

- Globalize your world view
- Improve your language skills

Liberal education takes place in cultural contexts, so there is much to be gained from understanding the history and traditions of cultures outside your own. Study abroad is one very exciting way to begin to discover new approaches and perspectives and to build your professional skills. No matter what areas you are seeking to integrate in your emphasis area, study abroad can add both depth and breadth to your study plan and future goals.

## **Set goals and plan for results**

Liberal Studies majors can study abroad anytime during their four years. Just like the process of creating your emphasis area, selecting a study abroad program involves reflection and critical thinking about who you are and what you hope to accomplish.

- Begin at least six months in advance of your study abroad. It is never too early to start planning.
- Set some goals. There is not one program best suited for Liberal Studies majors. There are many good study abroad programs, and the best one for you depends on **what you want**.
- Prioritize your goals. Consider your long-term academic and professional goals, as well as your on-campus degree requirements.
- Consider long-term programs.
- Prepare academically. You may need to take language or other prerequisite courses for your chosen program.
- Give yourself time to research and talk to advisors and students who have studied abroad.

With proper planning study abroad can help you prepare for your professional life in today's global context.

## **Can I afford to study abroad?**

YES! Early planning for study abroad helps you make cost-effective program decisions, and it also helps you prepare your finances through savings, scholarships, and financial aid. Financial aid applies to study abroad and, in some cases, your loan eligibility will increase to cover additional expenses.

Grand Valley State University's Padnos International Center offers a variety of grants and scholarships to qualified study abroad participants. Stop by the PIC to research all your options.

## **Will it take longer to graduate?**

With good and advanced planning, you can take courses that can apply toward your emphasis area, contextual electives or even the General Education Program. Study abroad is not meant to delay your graduation, but to

## **Do I need to speak a foreign language?**

No! Most programs offer instruction in English, even in non-English speaking countries. However, learning a language can help you better understand and deepen your appreciation for the culture. Engage the opportunity to study and learn as much of the language as you can!

## **What classes can I take while studying abroad?**

### **General Education Requirements**

Students may take selected general education requirements through study abroad. Many students choose to fulfill foundation requirements.

### **Emphasis Area Courses**

Since you already have a custom-designed Emphasis Area, many courses you take abroad can fulfill credits in this area. Be sure to work closely with your advisor to determine which courses will best serve your needs in this area.

### **Contextual Elective Courses**

Again, you may determine what these may be, in conjunction with your advisor. The same freedom of choice that applies to you and your Study Plan with GVSU courses, applies with study abroad courses. Just be sure that you consult with your advisor to make sure the courses you choose will transfer and are approved by GVSU.

### **Custom Theme Abroad**

Another popular option is to fulfill your theme requirement while studying abroad. For information on how to propose a unique study abroad theme, visit the Padnos International Center website at:

<http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad>

## **Living what you are learning**

A great advantage of studying abroad is learning experientially. Learning about the history, language and literature of your home-away-from-home enhances your classroom experiences. Your daily interaction with local and regional culture also helps bring whatever subjects you may be studying to life. Keeping a journal of your experiences both in and out of the classroom is highly recommended for Liberal Studies majors. Many seniors create a section for study abroad experiences in their Integrative Portfolios, created in the capstone course, LIB 495.

## **What are my next steps?**

### **Talk to your Advisor**

Since all Liberal Studies majors have unique and individualized Study Plans, it is important that you let your advisor know that you are planning to study abroad. Your advisor may have some suggestions or advice that could help you contextualize and plan your goals more effectively. Use a credit transfer form to get approval for specific courses in your emphasis area or contextual electives. Keep in mind you are also able to fulfill General Education requirements abroad, including a customized theme.

### **Attend an Information Session**

Learn about study abroad resources and advising by attending an Information Meeting at the Padnos International Center. See [www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad](http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad) or call 616.331.3898 for the latest schedule.

### **Investigate Programs**

Use the Study Abroad catalog, resource center, website, and advisors to find a program that fits your

goals. More suggestions are listed below.

### **Once you have selected a program**

Liberal Studies majors planning on studying abroad will need to communicate closely with their academic advisor throughout their planning process. When you decide on the program that will work best for you, you should begin an online study abroad application at [www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad](http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad). Be sure to pay close attention to application deadlines.

- Be sure to meet with your advisor at least **three months prior to departing** for your program. Your advisor must approve any emphasis area courses or contextual elective courses you wish to take to ensure that they will be counted toward your degree requirements. Bring the course descriptions of the courses you would like to take abroad to this meeting along with the credit transfer form provided by the Padnos International Center. Please note: students that wish to complete a custom theme abroad should contact the Padnos International Center directly for information on the appropriate process.

# **Suggested Program Options for Liberal Studies majors**

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Since Liberal Studies students custom-design their majors using a variety of disciplines from across the university, exploring the PIC Study Guides from other departments may be advantageous, as many of them list specific course equivalents in addition to recommended programs. As always, be sure to collaborate closely with your advisor when choosing programs and courses. Some places and programs of interest may include the following:

## **Africa & Middle East**

### **Ghana**

The University of Cape Coast was established in 1962 primarily to serve as a leader in teacher education. The university is located just west of Cape Coast, on a hill overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Two of the most historical sites in Ghana, Elimina Castle and Cape Coast Castle, are located just a short distance from the university. Visit <http://www.ucc.edu.gh> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

# Asia & Oceania

## China

Founded in 1991, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) is a young, dynamic and internationally renowned research university. Instruction is typically in English. Only 15 years after admitting its first students, HKUST has already been recognized among the world's leading universities, alongside institutions that have had centuries to forge their reputations. It is highly recommended that Liberal Studies students desiring to study abroad in China talk to Dr. Greg Mahoney in the Liberal Studies Department. Visit the HKUST website at: <http://www.ust.hk/eng/index.htm> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

## Australia

Founded in 1994, University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), located in Sippy Downs just one hour away from Queensland's capital of Brisbane, is considered an outstanding performer of higher education in Australia. USC is one of the fastest growing campuses in Australia with a current enrollment of 4,000 students from over 39 different countries. Visit <http://www.usc.edu.au> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

# Europe

## England

Kingston University, with an enrollment of 13,500 students, has many years of experience receiving overseas students on study abroad programs. Visiting students take the same classes as Kingston students, offering them an opportunity to integrate into student life. Located on the River Thames, only 20 minutes by train from the center of London, Kingston is a mixture of old and new. Visit <http://extranet.kingston.ac.uk/avsp> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

## Poland

Crakow University of Economics (Winter Semester) is located in southern Poland, and has an abundance of museums, theatres, concerts, and festivals. As one of the few major European cities that escaped devastation during World War II, many of Crakow's medieval structures still stand. Students

can take a variety of political science, history and economics courses in English. Students may receive a stipend from the government for expenses. For more information visit [www.fetc.ae.krakow.pl/ibs/](http://www.fetc.ae.krakow.pl/ibs/) for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

## Italy

John Cabot University was founded in 1972 as a four-year college of liberal arts and sciences, with all courses taught in English (except Italian Language and Literature courses). The main campus is situated near St. Peter's and the Vatican in the charming Trastevere quarter in Rome. The central Rome location means that students are literally surrounded by the history and art of thousands of years. Visit <http://www.johncabot.edu> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

## Turkey

Imagine a highly selective, world-class research institution, a gigantic and forested campus of over 11,000 acres, a rich history with ancient artifacts continually unearthed on campus, and regular bus service to clear Mediterranean beaches: You have Middle East Technical University in Ankara. The most selective of all GVSU's partner institutions, METU is renowned for its range of first-rate science, technology, and engineering programs, as well as its strong programs in the humanities and social sciences. Visit <http://www.metu.edu.tr/> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

## Romania

Babes-Bolyai University (UBB), is located in Cluj-Napoca, the heart of Transylvania. The city, the second most important academic, cultural and industrial center in the country, is located in the historic province of Transylvania, being also its historic capital. It is located between Bucharest and Budapest. UBB adheres to a policy of multiculturalism, its students and teaching staff being Romanian, as well as Hungarian and German. Visit <http://www.ubbcluj.ro/en/despre/istoric.html> for a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

# South and Central America

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## **Mexico**

The Tecnológico de Monterrey is a Mexican private educational institution founded in 1943. Currently it has campuses distributed throughout Mexico, and academic centers in Mexico and other Latin American countries. It also has international offices in North America, Europe and Asia. Through its Virtual University it is present all over the world, by means of learning networks and advanced information technologies. Many international students study in Mexico because they want to interact and meet local students, yet want to participate in classes taught in English to help grasp the Spanish language. Visit <http://www.mty.itesm.mx/rectoria/pi/internationalstudents/> for more information

And a variety of course options and see Padnos International Center for Course Descriptions.

**Please note:** These are just a handful of places and programs to consider. Talk with your advisor and visit the Padnos International Center to more fully explore the options available to you.

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