UMass Amherst
Education Abroad Online Essentials
Spring 2020

At the end of this document you will find links to resources mentioned in the presentation as well as our contact information, location, and office hours.

Presenters: Winter Elia, Gabrielle Little and Nick Oo.

Introduction and Welcome

Slide 1
Winter: Hello and welcome to Online Essentials! We are Peer Advisors from the International Programs Office and are very excited to be virtually hosting this session with you today. There is a transcript available that also has links to our website and other resources mentioned.

Slide 2
Winter: But first, some brief introductions. My name is Winter, I use she/her pronouns and I am a senior Comparative Literature Major with a minor in Japanese. I studied at Nanzan University in Japan for the entirety of my junior year.

Slide 3
Gabrielle: I’m Gabrielle Little, I am a senior majoring in Mechanical Engineering. I use she/her pronouns and I spent my sophomore spring at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, or UST because that's a mouthful.

Slide 4
Nick: I’m Nick, I use he/him pronouns and I am a sophomore double major in History and Spanish. The summer after my freshman year I spent two weeks on a UMass Faculty Taught trip to the Dominican Republic.

Objectives

Slide 5
Winter: This is exactly the same information that is given at the in-person sessions so once you’ve watched this video you will have completed Essentials. As the title infers, this covers all the essential information for studying abroad. It’s broken up into five essentials: eligibility and other requirements, reasons to study abroad, resources to help you when you’re abroad, how academics work, and a section on finances.

Eligibility

Slide 6
Winter: Alright, so let’s jump right into it with eligibility. If you are a freshman, you need to complete two full semesters at UMass. This means that you can go abroad as early as your first summer in between freshman and sophomore year! If you’re a transfer student you need to only complete one semester before being able to go. Fun fact, you apply the semester before you go - so that means you’re eligible to apply to go abroad right now! How cool is that?

General Requirements

Slide 7
Gabrielle: There are some important things to know in terms of general requirements for going abroad. The first of which is UMass’ minimum GPA requirement is a 2.5. Some programs have a little bit higher GPA requirement so keep that in mind when looking at them. Also, you cannot have any open disciplinary cases when you go abroad. You are just as responsible for the UMass code of conduct when abroad as you are on campus. Finally, you need a passport to go abroad, so make sure it’ll be valid for six months after you return to the US.

Goals and Benefits

Slide 8
Nick: Now there are many goals and benefits to studying abroad and you want to keep in mind what your own personal goals are when you are picking a program. For example, if you are someone who is looking for a very academic experience then think about what classes you are going to take, if you are looking for a professional experience then we offer many programs that have internship components so you can complete an internship at the same time as studying abroad. Additionally, think about your personal goals as a traveler and explorer of a potentially new country and culture and how you want to plan to get the most out of your experience.

Challenges and Resources

Slide 9
Winter: When thinking about studying abroad, definitely get excited, definitely hype yourself up - but remember that it’s still life, and there will be challenging moments. However…

Slide 10
...there are so many resources to help you through them! First, UMass travels with you, AKA, UMass cares about you even when you’re abroad so there’s a whole bunch of people you can reach out to. You’ll have an Education Abroad Advisor who is available to help you every step of the way. There’s also an IPO staff member whose job is just to be responsible for the health, safety, and security of students abroad. In addition to resources from UMass, your host university and/or partner program will be there for you, too. I got really sick when I was in Japan which could be very scary if I was alone, but the university was there for me. At one point a bilingual staff member walked with me from campus to a local clinic where she helped me through that entire appointment.
You can also be proactive by thinking about what makes you successful here at UMass. If you have any sort of support network, maybe a doctor or therapist that you see regularly, you can talk to your Ed. Abroad Advisor and they can help you set up those resources so you can have them abroad as well and live your best life.

**Academics**

*Slide 11*
Gabrielle: So academics, it is study abroad and not be abroad. You can take classes for your major, your minor, GenEds, certificates, or just elective credits because why not? What’s really cool about studying abroad is that you have access to classes you would not find anywhere else, and, I mean, when else are you going to get to take those? If you’re in Isenberg, the college strongly recommends that you save your Breadth requirements for a semester abroad because then you can go just about anywhere and take just about anything, which is amazing!

*Slide 12*
Gabrielle: But there are some logistics; some important pieces of information that everybody has to know. First and foremost, you can’t take any courses Pass/Fail. You will be graded and you will be graded according to your host university’s standards. We don’t have any control over that so take some time to figure out how your host university grades before getting freaked out about it. Because there’s a school in Melbourne, Australia where a “D” is the highest grade you can get because it means “distinction”, but as an American student, getting a “D” on something you worked hard on is rather jarring.

When your grades come back they are recorded on your transcript with the equivalent UMass grade because yes, grades do go on your transcript, but they don’t go into your GPA. The GPA you leave UMass with is the GPA you come back to UMass with.

There are some courses that are restricted, you cannot take the Junior Year Writing or Integrative Experience abroad, those have to be taken here. Additionally, you might have some major classes that are restricted to UMass campus only, that cannot be taken abroad. So be talking to your academic advisor because it’s really important that you get the credits you need to graduate, that you’re on track to graduate, and your academic advisor is a fantastic resource for that. I really can’t stress enough how valuable working with your academic advisor is because we want you to graduate, we want you to have a successful experience abroad, and they’re just one of many resources you have to make that happen.

**Finances**

*Slide 13*
Nick: Now it’s time to talk about paying for study abroad. We at the IPO understand that finances can be a sensitive topic for some people, so feel free to share with us as much as you are comfortable sharing, but here are some important things to know regarding funding your study abroad experience:
The IPO offers many scholarships that can help you pay for study abroad, two scholarships through our own office, and many others through third party sources. A link to our scholarships page will be provided in the transcript. In addition to scholarships, advisors in IPO and financial aid can help you find additional sources of funding such as loans and grants.

In terms of program costs, consider how much you pay for a semester here at UMass as some of our programs, such as those in Europe, may cost more than a semester at UMass and some of our programs, such as those in Latin America, may cost less than a semester at UMass.

We are happy to help students get answers to their financial aid questions and find the necessary resources in order to help make studying abroad affordable for everyone!

What Now?

Slide 14
Gabrielle: So we’re getting to the end of this session, so you might be thinking, what now? First and foremost, start doing your research. Think about what you need in a program and what needs to happen to make it possible. To that point, think about your goals because it’s really important to consider, like, what do you want to get out of it? A semester abroad can look a lot like a semester at UMass, but it could be wildly different, and that’s all dependent on what you want to make of it. I said it before and I’ll say it again, talk to your academic advisor. We want you to graduate on time, we want you to get credits, and they’re the person who’ll make it happen. And, of course, us peers are available to help.

Next Steps

Slide 15
Nick: What are your next steps in the study abroad process?

We highly recommend meeting with a peer advisor. We can help you navigate through our program database, show you how to search for programs in relation to major or minor, how to find your classes abroad, how to find all necessary info for each program such as costs and deadlines, as well as any other questions or concerns you may have regarding this process.

You can come meet with a peer advisor as much and as many times as you want!

Good luck and we hope to see you soon!!
The International Programs Office is located at 70 Butterfield Terrace.
Our office is open from 8:30am – 4:30pm, when the University is open.
Our email is abroad@ipo.umass.edu.
Our phone number is 413-545-2710.
Our website is www.umass.edu/ipo/education-abroad

For more information on Academics and Eligibility: tinyurl.com/vccynxf
For more information on Education Abroad Finances: tinyurl.com/wkaw42q
For more information on Scholarships: tinyurl.com/yxvepoel
To search for Education Abroad Programs: tinyurl.com/s5v75qo