

STUDY ABROAD INFORMATION

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I study abroad?

Nearly without exception, BU Law students who have studied abroad say that that it was one of the true highlights (if not the best part) of their law school experience. Hands down, they'd do it again. Participants describe the experience as transformative, as an invaluable opportunity to gain new perspectives on the law and its global dimensions, and on their professional paths.

It's inevitable: No matter what area of practice you enter, the employers and clients you'll serve will have issues that transcend national boundaries. Studying abroad enables you to gain familiarity with the foreign legal regimes in which these issues arise – and gives you the skills to address them. Importantly, a foreign experience can signal to employers that you have the competencies and character qualities that are most sought after in the 21st century workplace: intercultural awareness, curiosity, open-mindedness, flexibility, self-reliance and an ability to engage in diverse, multi-cultural teams. If these traits resonate with you, studying abroad presents a unique opportunity to align these instincts with your professional profile. And let's face it: there are very few opportunities in life to step outside of your environment and live or work in another culture.

What's the best way to learn about the ins-and-outs of a study abroad experience? For example, what I need to consider and what I need to do to apply?

That's easy. Read the school's [Study Abroad Guidelines](#). We expect all students who are considering studying abroad to do this before they apply.

If I am a 1L, is it too early to start thinking about Study Abroad?

No, not at all. In fact, you need to. A semester or full-year abroad obviously means time away from campus. As you plan for this, you need to understand the myriad options you have, the trad-offs at play, and sorts of decisions you'll face. It is helpful to discuss your academic pathway and overall interests and goals as early as possible. You are welcome to begin a dialog with us anytime. Just email us at gradint@bu.edu.

Can I study abroad as a 3L if I do not have a post-graduate job secured?

Absolutely. There is no reason to assume that you will suddenly be unable to find success in the marketplace if you spend a term developing global legal competencies at a premier foreign law school. Much of your marketability rests on your "narrative" to potential employers. If you can explain your decision for studying abroad and effectively weave it into your "sales pitch," you can leverage the

experience to your advantage. Your job search should not come to a screeching halt when you are out of the country. Will you have to be more purposeful? Yes. Should you dedicate a set time each week for remote networking and your job search? Yes. Should you use the summer before you go to mitigate any time you will be out of the country? Yes. None of this means, however, that you should forsake studying abroad.

We encourage you to think broadly and for the long haul. It is a big world out there. In the long arch of your career (and life), time abroad will not derail your success in the profession. To the contrary, it may enhance your marketability and be one of the most enriching experiences of your life. As you consider studying abroad, we encourage you weigh some very real short-term fears you may have (we get it!) against the feasibility of continuing your job search from abroad and the long term benefits an international learning experience. As part of the application process, we require students to meet with their CDO advisor prior to committing to a study abroad program because it is important to understand fully the potential opportunity costs of foreign study as it pertains to your individual situation.

When is the ideal time to study abroad?

Like with so many questions, it depends. Generally speaking, 2Ls tend not to study abroad in the fall, either because of on-campus interviewing; a desire to take foundational upper-level classes; journal participation or other sound reasons. Spring is more popular for them. Third year students often choose the fall. Several single semester options are only offered in the fall. The spring semester is viable as long as the partner school's academic calendar is generally compatible with BU Law's, such as our Oxford Program. For 3Ls who have not yet secured a post-graduate position, the fall semester is preferred as the spring offers a better window to conduct a small-mid size or public interest job search.

Can I study abroad and still do a clinic or externship?

Yes, you can. Study abroad credits (12 per semester) are counted as non-GPA credits – and students are allowed up to 17 non-graded credits without needing a waiver from the Academic Standards Committee. (Note, however, that our full-year JD/LLM programs are exempt from that cap.) Since clinical seminars and fieldwork count as GPA credits, you should be able to do a clinic and not brush up against the non-GPA limit. If your credits exceed the cap, you can petition the Academic Standards Committee for an exception. To be prudent, you should make an appointment at the registrar's office to request a "credit audit" to ensure you are on track to complete your degree requirements.

What courses should I plan to take as a 2L if I want to study abroad my entire 3L?

If you are a rising 3L applying to a dual JD/LLM degree program, during your 2L you need to complete three requirements of the JD program: Professional Responsibility; six credits of practical skills coursework (clinics count towards this) and the upper-class writing requirement. Before you depart, you also need to secure arrangements to complete the 2-credit independent paper required of all full-year abroad students.

Can I apply to more than one program?

Yes, you can certainly apply to more than one program (but you can only attend one at a time!). Many students do. Our goal is for students to be placed in a program best suited to their academic interests and long-term goals. There may be a "good fit" with more than one program. During the application process, we will ask you to rank your program preferences if you apply to more than one.

What if I hear along the rumor mill that many students are applying to program X and BU is only allotted two spaces for that program? Should I apply to program Y instead?

No. Don't do that. Rather, be honest: Apply to your first choice and tell us why this is so. (You can still apply to other programs as well.) We want to get you where you want to go if it is possible to do so! We sometimes have an historical imbalance in a program which can enable us to negotiate sending additional students to a partner school in a particular year. We ask that students keep an open mind in the process and be transparent in their thinking. Likewise, we always inform candidates of situations where strong student demand may require seeking additional slots in a program.

I'm interested in the Oxford program but my GPA is below the minimum 3.7 GPA required. Should I even bother applying?

Oxford University has a 3.70 minimum GPA requirement for all its visiting undergraduate and graduate students (not just BU Law students). We have on occasion nominated – and Oxford has accepted – students whose GPAs were below (but close to) 3.7. They performed well and had fantastic experiences. But they understood that the Oxford program is not for the faint of heart. The reading is onerous. Preparing for each tutorial meeting requires countless hours of independent study. Some say it's like reading period all semester long. Serious candidates with GPAs below 3.7 may still apply, but they should also consider applying to other programs they believe would suit their goals and interests. We can discuss options with you in person before you submit your applications.

Does my scholarship/financial aid extend to study abroad programs?

Yes. We have never run into a situation where a student's financial aid did not cover a study abroad experience. You pay tuition directly to BU Law so there is no change in your tuition costs. For students studying at Oxford, your overall expenses are significantly less as room and board are included in your tuition. While some programs are in cities that are notoriously expensive (Geneva, for example), many students find that their living expenses are reduced while living abroad because their housing costs are lower. Please note: All participating students are required to meet with the Financial Aid office prior to departure just to confirm that there are no outstanding issues.

What is the application process like?

The application process is straightforward. You are required to fill out a [study abroad application](#), submit a resume, a letter of recommendation and statement of interest for each program for which you apply. If you are studying in a foreign language, there are additional requirements to prove language proficiency. The Oxford program also requires a writing sample. Applications are due on February 5 at noon. Shortly after submission, you will have an interview with Dean Riccardi and Maureen Tracy Leo. In most cases, you will hear about a final decision as to your nomination before the start of spring break. We ask students to accept (or turn down) the nomination by the Monday after spring break. It is important to use the time after your interview to assess whether this is the right path for you, as we need to inform our partner schools of our nominees soon after spring break ends.

Who should write a letter of recommendation on my behalf?

Students should obtain a letter from a faculty member at the law school rather than an employer or a member of the administrative staff. We are looking for academic fit so an academic letter of reference is required.

What happens after I accept an offer to study abroad?

Our office will nominate you to our institutional partner. You will then be contacted by the foreign institution with instructions on how to apply to their program. Please note that students often have very little turnaround time between being nominated and the host school's application deadline. Because of our academic calendar, we have a compressed timeframe in this selection process so students should be prepared to act quickly and to meet the foreign partner's application deadlines.

On the BU side, you must read the Study Abroad Guidelines and complete the Pre-Departure Checklist, which includes having a consultation with the CDO, the registrar and financial aid offices before April 10.

Do I have to worry about not being accepted by the foreign institution?

Our institutional partners give great deference to our selections: we have never faced a situation where a nominee was not admitted to the host school's exchange program or LLM program. Your primary concern should be meeting their application deadlines, as those are often inflexible.

What if I decide that I no longer wish to study abroad after I accept the nomination?

You shouldn't. If you commit to going, we expect you to honor that commitment. Our foreign partners go to considerable expense and effort to facilitate your visa processing and place you in their program. It is very important for our institutional relations that students respect the process and attend after committing to the program. The time for discernment is before you are nominated.

What is the Pre-Departure Check List?

The [Pre-Departure Check-List](#) is required to ensure that you are on track academically and personally to transition to your studies abroad.

PRE-DEPARTURE ISSUES

What is the difference between the "educational objectives" essay that is on the Pre-Departure Checklist and the "personal statement" that was part of the application? The personal statement already asked for educational and personal goals.

While these submissions will likely overlap, they serve different purposes. The personal statement helps us evaluate you as a candidate for our study abroad programs. The "Statement of Education Objectives" is an ABA requirement of all JDs who study abroad. The ABA's Standards require that each student develop a statement in consultation with the student's study abroad advisor (Dean Riccardi). Your Educational Objectives essay will include some of the drivers you first identified in your personal statement, but it should also include some detail about how the specific (anticipated) course offerings will help you achieve your learning goals. You will need to amend your statement if it turns out that the courses you hoped to take were not available. Students' Educational Objectives statements are subject to ABA review during the law school's reaccreditation process.

My foreign program's course listings do not have information about class meeting times and schedules, which the BU course plan requests. How do I obtain information about the schedule of classes offered next semester at the foreign program?

It is likely that you will not be able to complete the checklist in its entirety until closer to the time of enrollment and/or until after you have arrived on campus. It is critical, however, that you secure the requisite internal BU Law approvals from the CDO, registrar and financial aid offices by April 10.

Will I be guaranteed to get into the courses I put on my plan?

No. The initial course list that you submit to BU Law is an internal requirement, mandated by the ABA. Doing the credit calculation based on a full-time program of study is important for ABA oversight purposes and Dean Riccardi's approval, but you will not likely be able to confirm your courses until your program has begun. For that reason, all students must submit a FINAL course list for Dean Riccardi's approval as soon as their studies are settled.

If I am taking a full-degree program, is the preliminary course plan supposed to be for classes for both spring and fall?

Full-year abroad students should submit an initial and final plan for the fall. They should submit a separate initial and final plan for the spring (these may very well be the same) once they begin spring registration at the host school.

Am I required to purchase airfare prior to the April 10 deadline for the Pre-Departure Checklist?

No. You can obtain flights at your convenience, but you need to confirm your travel plans with the university via BU's Global Travel Registry.

What is [BU's Global Travel Registry](#)? Why do I have to register for it?

Staying connected to BU and obtaining accurate, real-time information regarding your safety and security. Unrest in Hong Kong, Paris street demonstrations and COVID-19 have all highlighted the importance of being able to trouble-shoot any issues that may arise during your foreign study. The Global Travel Registry enables BU to do this. It's imperative that you complete it before your departure. It's entirely for your own safety and security.

POST ARRIVAL ISSUES

Am I required to carry health insurance from a health insurer in the host country?

This varies by program and you should contact your administrative contact at your host program to inquire.

Why do I have to fill out a mid-semester survey and final report for my study?

Getting feedback from your studies at the beginning, mid-point, and conclusion of your studies is required for us to adhere to the ABA's standards regarding the level of academic oversight of your studies at a foreign institution.

I still have so many questions! Can I make an appointment to talk to someone?

Yes! We are eager to connect students with these transformative experiences abroad. Email gradint@bu.edu to make an appointment. We look forward to working with you!