

CMNS Student Advisory Board information session study abroad forum

Panel:

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General resources from Education Abroad Office and CMNS:

<http://www.international.umd.edu/studyabroad>

<http://www.chembio.umd.edu/undergraduate/academicplanning/studyabroad>

What are the kinds of study abroad opportunities?

The different kinds of opportunities might confuse you, but all of these paths lead to similar enriching experiences. *For all of these paths it is critical that you work both with the Education Abroad Office and with your academic advisor.* Much work has to be done by the student, in advance, to ensure a smooth and enriching experience. This may seem cumbersome, but the process of finding the right study abroad experience for you will teach you a lot about navigating a complex system.

1. **Resident credits.** These are programs that put credits on your transcript as if you were still taking courses at UMD. These courses are part of structured study abroad programs and have been evaluated as so close to UMD courses that they are listed on your transcript as if you took the courses here at UMD. They are included in your UMD GPA. Most of the resident credits in study abroad are in humanities and social science, but there are a few CMNS courses and programs in this category, such as some courses in the Copenhagen program.
2. **Transfer credits.** Most study abroad content courses in CMNS and many other courses are transfer courses. They are listed at the top of your transcript as transfer courses and they are not calculated into your GPA.
3. **Exchange programs.** UMD has some formal exchange programs as defined by the Education Abroad Office. These programs often simplify the application process and the issues of use of financial aid, but in the end the experiences abroad are the same as other experiences.
4. **Semester long programs.** These traditional programs involve students taking a full semester of credits abroad.
5. **Summer and winter programs.** Many CMNS students go abroad during winter or summer. Many winter courses are led by UMD faculty and carry General Education credit. These are excellent opportunities for CMNS students.
6. **Study abroad outside of any organized Education Abroad Office program.** CMNS students are innovative, assertive, creative, and persistent. Many find their own study abroad experiences outside the normal channels. Pay attention to

the points below if you strike out on your own, outside of the Education Abroad Office programs. And do work with your advisor as you plan your experience.

How do I start my quest to study abroad?

The first place to start is probably the Education Abroad Office. Peer Mentors in that office can help you talk through what are your goals, what regions you might wish to visit, and can link you to Education Abroad advisors. But your quest will have to be multifaceted. Search the internet for places and topics you might want to study. Be sure to talk to your academic advisor. Don't expect the advisor to tell you what to study abroad, but discuss your ideas, when you might go abroad, how it can fit into your four year plan, and how to stay on track to graduate incorporating your study abroad experience.

How do I know which and how many credits will transfer in a study abroad experience?

Many different sources can help you here. The transfer of credits means that someone in an academic department looked at the course and determined whether it transfers at all, and then whether it transfers as a particular UMD course or as elective or general credit. As with all aspects of study abroad students will have to visit and consult with several offices and people to sort it all out. Here are some general guidelines.

1. The Education Abroad Office has information about courses in specific programs that have been approved for transfer.
2. Another useful source is the Transfer Credit Center webpage. You can find the link to this webpage on Testudo. There you can look for particular institutions, or particular courses, and see what courses have already been determined by UMD faculty to transfer to UMD.
3. If you want to take courses that are not in the system this means they have not been formally evaluated. Here you will have to do some leg work. First, you need to get as much information about the course as you can, such as syllabi and how many credits they carry. The issue of credits may be confusing, and the Education Abroad Office can help you sort that out. When you have all that information, and a study abroad form from the Education Abroad Office, you take all that to the appropriate departments for approval of the courses, and then to your academic advisor for final consideration and approval of the overall plan.

How do I choose which courses to take abroad?

1. One thing to consider is looking for more courses to take than you actually will take. Often foreign universities do not plan their course offerings long in advance. Students can find that their top choices for courses are not offered, or the schedule does not work. To make sure you are prepared for what you will find have many options before you get to your destination. Choose several course options before you go, and make sure all of them have been examined and evaluated and will transfer back to UMD.
2. Another thing to consider is whether the courses are taught in English, or a language in which you are fluent. Most organized study abroad programs have

courses in English. Or, you might be excited about taking a course in another language. Make this decision before you get to your destination.

3. Consider non-traditional courses. You might think that you can only take traditional, structured courses abroad. Your fellow students, however, have done many interesting things. Some have taken structured field course in biology, or geology, or a related field. Others have found research experiences for themselves, even with credit for that research. If you work with the people at your intended institution and with your advisor, you can sort out the credits and how the experience will work. You can start with a traditional program and work to add research or field experience. Or you can start looking for a research or field experience. Look for all input you can to put together these less traditional study abroad experiences.

Can I take CMNS major courses during study abroad?

The answer to this varies among majors, and you should work with your academic advisor to determine this. Take all information about the courses you are considering and discuss it with your advisor. Courses that are specifically prescribed by the major are less likely to be taken abroad. In some CMNS majors there are general electives in specific content areas that can be fulfilled by a list of courses. Sometimes these major electives can be satisfied by study abroad courses. You should work with your advisor to determine this.

What courses might I consider beyond CMNS major courses?

Most CMNS students take electives in study abroad. CMNS majors have room for elective credits and study abroad is an excellent way to explore your interest beyond science and math courses.

When can CMNS students study abroad?

Work with your academic advisor to find the best time to study abroad. Many CMNS students study abroad during winter or summer terms.

Where have CMNS students gone to study abroad?

CMNS students have studied in many places. Some of the organized programs with resident credit are Barcelona, Copenhagen, Nice, Rome, London, South Africa, Uganda, Sydney, New South Wales, China, and San Ramon, Costa Rica. Students in less formal programs have studied in many locations, such as South Korea. Computer Science and other students have studied in

Maryland-in-Barcelona (semester)

Maryland-in-London (semester)

Maryland-in-Rome (semester or summer)

AIFS Florence (semester)

Bogazici University

Hanyang University

IES Abroad Siena

ISA Granada Spain (Intensive Spanish)

Peru: Engineers without Borders

Nanyang Technological University
Uppsala University
USAC Czech Republic
USAC Ireland: Galway

Is there financial aid for study abroad?

For most organized programs, financial aid can be used, but the rules are complex. Education abroad office can provide help. There are other options, like Fulbright, etc. Some require foreign language and some are in fifth year. Some students have found their own funding within the university. Should you choose to design your own abroad experience which “enhances or expands [your] educational and professional development”, you can apply for the CMNS Alumni Association Undergraduate Summer Research, Travel, and Educational Enrichment Award:

<http://cmns.umd.edu/summerenrichment>

If your abroad experience involves a full-time research project, the Maryland Center for Undergraduate Research funds a scholarship to support unfunded research opportunities:

<http://www.ugresearch.umd.edu/summerscholars.php>

Note that these scholarships have fairly early deadlines – late January/early February. Early planning is important! There are many more such funding opportunities, so be sure to do your homework and find which funding sources for which you are eligible.

What are some of the advantages of working through the Education Abroad Office?

The Education Abroad Office provides many services beyond choosing a program. The major point is that the Education Abroad Office will help you to get all the dots connected to go abroad. For example, Education Abroad Office will help you to be sure your housing arrangements are settled, that your courses are evaluated, that you are ready for your courses abroad.

It is generally said that CMNS students cannot study abroad. Is this true?

Many students have the impression that CMNS students cannot study abroad. Pre-medical students, computer science students, and many others have this impression. CMNS students may have difficult and heavy schedules, but there are always options for study abroad. As indicated above many CMNS students study abroad during winter or summer terms. Others take major’s courses in summer to free up time for study abroad during a semester. Others take an extra semester to finish their degree to study abroad. Any CMNS student who wishes to study abroad should do the leg work to plan ahead, talk with advisors and Education Abroad Office, and take advantage of the opportunities.

What happens at UMD when you are not here for study abroad?

Students must make sure all the right offices and people know that they are going abroad for a semester. The Education Abroad Office has a checklist to help you make sure everything is in order. For example, if you live in the dorm communicate with Resident

life. Make sure the registrar knows you will be gone and that you have not just left the university. Find out what parts of your financial aid can be used. Make arrangements to meet with your academic advisor via email or Skype, and to register for the next semester online.

What is it like to live in another culture?

It is important to consider issues of your comfort zone for where you go and how you adjust. Choose places that fit your comfort zone in terms of language, immersion in the culture, the structure and organization of the program, whether your destination has any safety issues. Often these programs have these little “bubbles” of English speaking students and some American students interact mainly with other Americans. But foreign people also are interested in practicing their English, in getting to know Americans and so many students abroad do reach out to explore the local culture. Think carefully about these cultural issues before you go abroad.