

## Graduate School Abroad

This information was compiled by a current Master's student in International Development, at the University of Northumbria in Newcastle, England. It was developed as a guide for future University of Maine students who wish to complete their Master's degree abroad.

### Choosing a university

There will always be countries you are more interested in than others, but make sure the university you want to attend will benefit your future career goals. Don't set your heart on a specific location; knowing the country is helpful but the universities in particular cities may not have programs geared toward your field of study. For example, earning a Master's degree in Social Policy at a university that doesn't have a developed program may make it more difficult to form connections while attending your program. It will be important to make these connections, especially if you want to stay in the area after graduation!

*"I chose England because it is a hub for International Development all around the world. I hope to work in Eastern Europe in the future, and studying in the UK brought me close to that region. I chose the University of Northumbria at Newcastle (England) over the University of Newcastle, one of the best Universities in England, because they had a great master's program for International Development. The University of Northumbria runs its own Centre for International Development in the area, which will give me great hands on experience and allow me to make connections in the work force."*

For example, if you are studying Zoology but want to go to a country that doesn't have a well developed program in Marine Biology, you are not maximizing your opportunity. Going to countries like Australia or New Zealand, where the Marine Biology programs are greatly developed, will likely offer more opportunities for current, relevant research and hands on experience. There will be a greater network of people in your field, which means more opportunities for your future!

*"When I was looking for universities abroad, I got the opportunity to speak with the dean of my program. I went to College Fairs in Newcastle while studying abroad in a neighboring city that showcased universities from around the country. By meeting with these representatives and professors from the program, I was able to see what kind of programs would give me the proper support to succeed. I was also able to discuss the layout of the program and classes I would be taking with the Professors, so see if they were the kind of people I would want to work with. Even if you cannot meet with these people in person, emailing is similarly as effective."*

### Contacting professors

Do you know a professor at UMaine who completed his/her graduate studies abroad? Talk to him/her about the university attended and his/her research there. This will help give you a place to start looking or develop a connection with a university. Contact professors at the university of

interest about their research and possibly working with them in the future. If you show interest, and can demonstrate your competence as a student, you will likely stand out when applying for the program. The application may ask if you have been in contact with any of the professors, so having previous contact allows you to add that to your application.

## **Graduate school in the US vs. abroad**

### **Comparing program costs**

This includes all costs including living, transportation, school related and travel. Some programs seem less expensive, but that may only be because the tuition is lower. Transportation may be more expensive than you think, therefore, it is important to research local cost of living expenses. It is important to factor in flights to the program site, Visa costs and insurance (usually not included).

*“To study in England, you need a Tier 4 visa. For a 1-year visa, the price was \$530. While you can usually use your federal loan money to pay for this, the initial cost comes out of pocket!”*

### **Program duration**

Many Master’s programs require 12-month intensive study. Some countries also differentiate between two kinds of Master’s programs: thesis or research. With a thesis Master’s there is more guided coursework, while a research track is more independent. Doctoral programs are generally independent as well. It is also important to remember that while some programs allow you to begin in January, most begin in September and end the following September.

### **Graduate school is different than studying abroad**

Graduate programs are more intensive than undergraduate programs, and are sometimes accelerated in comparison to those in the United States. It is important to educate yourself on the difference before committing to a program abroad. As with any graduate education, dedication is essential. Using graduate studies abroad as an opportunity to travel is not the best investment of time and money.

## **Paying for your program**

### **Federal financial aid**

If you plan to apply for federal financial aid, make sure the university you plan to attend can be found on this database:

<https://fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/schoolSearch>

These are the schools approved by the federal government to receive financial aid funding. If the university is not on the list, you will need to secure alternative sources of funding.

## Applying for aid

- Fill out the FAFSA form the same way as you would for a regular year at UMaine; however, you will need to change the Federal School Code. Find the school code on the database: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/schoolSearch>.
- Fill out a new Master Promissory Note.
- After filling out the FAFSA information and it is submitted to the university, a Cost of Attendance sheet will be sent out. Fill it out to the best of your ability, as this is how funds to be disbursed are decided. The Federal Government says you can borrow up to \$20,500 a year in Stafford Loans for your program, but it is the university that approves these figures. If this isn't enough to cover your program, look for other federal loans like Graduate Plus Loans or external scholarships.
- Some programs have merit scholarships that can be used to pay for your program. Take that into consideration, but don't budget it into your overall cost to begin with. That money is no guarantee, and it would be a nicer surprise to get that extra money after the fact than to expect a discount that never comes.
- Many programs require a down payment but you can usually use Federal Aid money for this cost. Make sure that your Federal Aid is approved by the deadline for your down payment to avoid a late payment or even deferment of your program.