

University of Edinburgh Orientation Booklet 2023-24



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Students must be aware that not all circumstances are predictable and that one must take self-responsibility very seriously. The University, its agents, and employees cannot be held responsible for the actions of the host institution or of the student.

A WORD ABOUT UR'S APPROACH TO STUDY ABROAD

UR follows a philosophy of study abroad that demands a lot of our participants and also provides deep benefits. We send most of our students on exchange programs, which provide you with the experience of learning and living in the way that the people of your host country do. By taking classes meant for local students, arranging your housing the same way as local students, and interacting directly with the governmental and university administration of your host country, you are gaining substantially greater insight on the workings of the world than if you were taking part in a more American-directed program abroad. Our model requires students to be highly organized and responsible; high standards are part of any aspect of a UR education. Other benefits of exchanges are that they last for a full semester or year, allowing you time to experience more aspects of your host country than if you were going abroad for a shorter term, and they bring international students to UR, enhancing the internationalization of our campus.

CONTACT INFORMATION

University of Richmond Contact:

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Office of International Education
Carole Weinstein International Center
University of Richmond, VA 23173
Tel : (804) 289-8817 Fax: (804) 289-8904
E-mail: abergman@richmond.edu
Web: <https://studyabroad.richmond.edu/>

University of Edinburgh Contacts:

Sophie Conway / Debbie Coutts, Study Abroad Managers (Job Sharing)

Primary Edinburgh contacts for Richmond students
Tel: +44-131-651-5086 Fax: +44-131-668-4565
E-mail: studyabroad@ed.ac.uk

International Office

33 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9JS
Web: <https://global.ed.ac.uk/> or <https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/study-abroad>
Hours: Monday-Friday 10 AM-4 PM
Out of Hours Emergency: +44-131-650-2257

College of Humanities and Social Science (Visiting Student Office)

55-60 George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9JU
Email: HSSvisitingstudents@ed.ac.uk
Web: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/international-and-study-abroad/visiting-student-office>
Tel: +44-131-651-1700

College of Science & Engineering (Visiting Students Office)

Weir Building

Max Born Crescent

The King's Buildings

Edinburgh EH9 3BF

Email: scevisitingstudents@ed.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/science-engineering/studying/international/visiting-students>

Tel: +44-131-650-5739

PROGRAM DATES

The authoritative source for the dates of your program is the acceptance letter you receive from your host institution abroad and/or the website of your host institution's international office. UR lists our best understanding of these dates under "Dates and Costs" on the page for your program on the study abroad website, <https://studyabroad.richmond.edu>.

The exact date by which your program ends, and by which you can plan to leave your program site, depends on your exam schedule. You will not know this until you have arrived on-site and finalized your schedule of classes for the semester. You must not plan to leave your program site until after you have finished your last exam. If you leave your program site without taking exams required for your classes, you will not earn any credit for those classes.

EDINBURGH PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDES/INFORMATION

Edinburgh has very comprehensive getting started & arrival guides and websites – watch for information to be sent to you by Edinburgh. These guides will contain information about orientation, how to get to Edinburgh, airport welcome service, accepting your accommodation offer, paying your rent, matriculation/registration, sports facilities, food, a campus map, and useful addresses. If you do not read the guides, you will risk missing some essential information as no one will remind you of important dates.

ARRIVAL

As stated above, Edinburgh will include detailed arrival information in your pre-arrival guide (such as bus/train information, etc.). In the meantime, you should consult the 'Getting Here' and 'Welcome Week' sections of the Edinburgh website: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/study-abroad/successful-applicants/welcome-events> and <http://www.ed.ac.uk/maps/getting-here>. You should carefully consider your arrival plans and we want to emphasize that you need to be sure to also look up directions to your accommodations and keep them in your carry-on luggage. This is especially important if you miss the welcome service due to a delayed flight or confusion in the airport, for example. You don't want to be wandering around aimlessly on arrival (carrying your luggage, no less), so it is important to plan ahead. Many students have reported that for their initial arrival (when they have all their luggage), they prefer to either take a taxi (\$\$\$) all the way from the airport to their housing (about 30 min.) or take the AirLink bus or a tram (\$\$) between the airport and the Edinburgh city center. The tram is very convenient and will take you to Edinburgh city center rather easily, but reaching your housing from there may be difficult. If you arrive in the city center, make sure you have directions to your housing, or plan to take a taxi from there. See <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students/ready-university/move-edinburgh/travelling-from-the-airport-to-your-accommodation> for more information.

ORIENTATION

Fall

Upon arrival in the fall, Edinburgh organizes a week-long orientation called Freshers' Week, and new international and visiting students are included. This entire orientation is important for UR students. The exact time and location will be included in the information received from Edinburgh and/or you may find details online. Freshers' Week is one of the biggest events organized by the Students' Association and aims to provide an introduction to the 4,000 or so students that join the university each year. It is a great chance to join clubs and/or sports teams, and to meet both local and international students.

Spring

For students beginning their studies in January, there will be a 3-day Orientation so you will have the opportunity to tour the university campus, gain some practical advice about life in Edinburgh, and meet other students and staff. Your acceptance letter from Edinburgh will tell you when to arrive.

COSTS

You pay tuition to Richmond for your semester abroad, but not housing & food.

This payment includes:

- A \$1,000 credit on your UR account intended to help with your international flight costs
- Advising and orientation at Richmond before departure and after return
- A health insurance plan through Chubb Insurance/AXA Assistance while you are abroad
- Transfer credit for courses taken abroad (see <https://registrar.richmond.edu/registration/programs/study-abroad/> for specifics)

This payment DOES NOT include:

- Housing, food, and utilities abroad
- General start-up costs for linen, kitchen, utensils, telephone connection, and bills
- Books and school supplies
- Local transportation
- Personal entertainment
- Travel expenses (beyond the travel allowance)
- Medical expenses (beyond those covered by the insurance plan); does not cover £470 insurance surcharge for students who apply for the full Student Visa)

For specific cost estimates, check the "Dates and Costs" section of the Edinburgh Brochure Page: <https://studyabroad.richmond.edu/index.cfm?FuseAction=Programs.ViewProgramAngular&id=160>.

Personal travel

Expenses for personal travel and entertainment are not included in the cost estimates in this booklet. *Be aware that this is the single greatest discretionary expense for students on study abroad.* You should make deliberate decisions about where and how you will travel in your free time. Many students succumb to peer pressure and make a lot of short, impromptu and superficial trips while on study abroad ("Come on, you have to hit Prague with us this weekend!"). People often come home saying they have been to 10 new countries, but have not really learned anything about any of them, and have incurred thousands of dollars in debt. IE suggests that you take just a couple of well thought out, longer trips during your semester abroad...you will learn more and spend less.

FINANCIAL AID

Merit and need-based scholarships are applicable to your semester abroad if you qualify. Check with UR's Financial Aid Office (289-8438) for more specific information. It is essential to understand when and how your funds will be disbursed, as aid for room and board is disbursed in a different manner than if you were on campus. See here for more information: <https://financialaid.richmond.edu/managing-your-aid/study-abroad/index.html>.

ALLOWANCES FROM UR

Travel allowances and health insurance premiums paid by Richmond on behalf of its semester/year abroad students are available only to Richmond degree-seeking students accepted to participate on UR-affiliated abroad programs.

HOUSING AND FOOD

Your acceptance packet from Edinburgh will contain information about accommodation. Further information can be found at the following web site: www.accom.ed.ac.uk/. You are responsible for paying for your own housing fees directly to Edinburgh and you will choose either self-catered (buying your own groceries and cooking on your own) or catered (meal plan) living. You must live in Edinburgh-arranged housing (whether residence hall or university flat). Finding your own apartment via Airbnb or other means is not allowed.

IMMIGRATION

The following guidelines explain immigration and visa requirements for the UK. Please note that these criteria are subject to change. You should check <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa> for the most up-to-date information.

If you are a U.S. citizen whose period of study will be LESS than six months (1 semester programs):

You do **not** need to apply in advance for a visa ("entry clearance") and instead can enter the UK with no fee as a "Standard Visitor." As the United States is not on the list of countries whose citizens need to apply for entry clearance in advance, you are considered a "non-visa national." You will request entry to the UK as a Standard Visitor when you arrive. If you enter the UK in this way, when you arrive at the airport you will need to show proof that:

- you are over 18 years old
- your visit will not last longer than 6 months
- you have accepted an unconditional offer on your course of study
- you intend to leave the UK at the end of your studies
- you do not intend to work/intern
- you have enough money to support yourself while in the UK
- you can pay for your return journey home

Therefore, you will need to bring the following documentation in your hand luggage (carry-on):

- a valid passport that will not expire during your time in the UK
- a letter of acceptance from your host institution
- proof of onward travel (return plane ticket, most commonly, but could be train ticket to another country, for example, if you plan to travel afterward, etc.)
- proof of funding for your period of study (e.g. documentation of scholarship funding, federal financial aid, private loans, or personal or joint bank account (it is recommended to show the equivalent of £1,023/month or roughly \$1,302/month as of the exchange rate on December 26, 2023 for living expenses for the duration of your program abroad; ideally the amount needs to have been in your bank account for 28 days minimum and not dipped below the required amount on any day in the 28 day period; bank statement must be dated no more than one calendar month before you enter the UK)
- All one-semester students will need a tuition-exempt letter as part of their "evidence of funds." This shows that you are not responsible for paying tuition to your host school (since you pay UR tuition here) and therefore they will not expect you to show evidence that you have paid the host school tuition costs. International Education (IE) provides those letters for students.

It is important to understand that if you enter the UK in this way (without having applied for a visa in advance):

- You cannot work or take on an internship (paid or unpaid)
- If you arrange your flight via Ireland, which is in the Common Travel Area with no immigration control between Ireland and the UK (and therefore nobody to provide the appropriate visa stamp in your passport), you **MUST** keep evidence of the date of entry into the UK, such as an e-ticket or paper or electronic boarding pass
- You cannot extend your period of study from the UK (so if you decide you like studying abroad and want to extend for a year in the UK, you cannot do so; extending to other locations is fine, like fall at Edinburgh and spring at Konstanz in Germany, for example)
- You must be prepared to present your passport (with the Standard Visitor stamp) and your acceptance letter to immigration authorities upon entering the UK and re-entering (from weekend travel outside of the UK, for example)
- You may typically only arrive in the UK a maximum of 7 days before the study program begins

NOTE: *If you intend to work or intern while you are abroad or if you think you will extend your stay in the UK to the year, you should apply for the full Student Visa (see below for instructions), but be aware that the process is very complex and time-consuming, so only students certain they need the full visa should go this route. Please contact IE to get a new letter for the full Student Visa if you were originally given a 'Standard Visitor' letter.*

If you are a U.S. citizen whose period of study will be MORE than six months (1 year programs):

You must apply for a UK visa under the category of "General Student." See below for instructions on applying. The cost is currently £490. Yearlong students will also need to obtain a UK national identity card and pay the £470 insurance surcharge.

Applying for a Student Visa (if necessary based on above criteria)

You must obtain a Student Visa in advance of your arrival abroad. You should apply no more than 3 months prior to your departure (earliest is 6 months prior for yearlong applicants only) and ideally no less than 2 months prior.

You will see that your host institution must be on a certain approved list of education providers. All of Richmond's partner institutions are fully approved.

- You must apply via the British embassy or consulate nearest you. Check the UKVisas website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>) to find the one that has jurisdiction and to complete the online application.
- Each individual consulate makes its own rules regarding things like:
 - Do you have to apply in person or may you send your application materials via courier?
 - How long will it take to process the visa?
 - What form of payment is accepted (money order, credit card, cashier's check)?
 - If a personal appearance is required, do you need an appointment?
 - How many photos do you need?
 - What form of return postage is accepted (pre-paid courier or ExpressMail envelope? an additional fee?)

Read the information on your consulate's website to answer the above questions and telephone them if you have questions.

IMPORTANT: All applications for UK visas will require 'biometric' information as part of the visa application process. Visa applications will not be processed until the applicant has provided the necessary biometric information.

The required biometric information consists of digital scans of all 10 fingers and a full-face digital photograph. Applicants will be required to submit biometrics at visa application support centers located across the United States. While the actual process will take no more than five minutes to complete, students will need to plan accordingly for travel to the visa application support centers. To find the nearest center, use the zip code locator service on this website (scroll down to the map): <https://egov.uscis.gov/office-locator/#/asc>. Students need to bring their printed visa application, original passport, and barcode-printed appointment sheet. Nearest support center to Richmond is in Norfolk or Alexandria. IE does not reimburse for travel expenses to/from the visa support center.

NOTE: Once you have your biometrics done, when sending your materials (which will include your passport) to the consulate for your visa, **never ever use regular U.S. mail**. Use a courier service such as FedEx, UPS, or DHL, or use U.S.

ExpressMail, whichever is recommended or required by the consulate (for example, at last check, the New York office no longer accepts Fed Ex return labels; you can ship to them using Fed Ex, but your return label must be UPS or USPS). No matter which service you use, make sure you can track your shipment and be sure to write down the tracking number before you enclose the return label.

Once you have your visa you will be able to:

- work part-time while in the UK (although we do not guarantee you can find employment) or intern
- extend your course of study beyond six months (if desired), if not already planning to be abroad for a year
- Students getting the full Student Visa who want to arrive early may arrive 1 week early if they will study 6 months or less and may arrive up to 1 month early if they will study more than 6 months.
- Once you get overseas on a Student Visa you will have one month to go to a Post Office to collect your Biometric Residency Permit (yearlong students only). You will receive instructions for this when you receive your visa.
- Periodically after your arrival in the UK you may also need to go to census points, which is essentially a 5-minute task to check in at Student Administration (Registry) on three occasions through the year.

British Council USA Website

The British council website (<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/planning/visas>) is a great source of information for anyone planning to study in the UK, and you can click the link to view or download an immigration guide.

VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES

If you are an EU citizen:

EU citizens are not required to obtain a student visa in order to enter the UK.

If you are a non-U.S. citizen studying abroad for any period of time:

Citizens of other countries (called “visa nationals”) studying abroad for any length of time should consult the website of the British Embassy or Consulate in their home country for information on their requirements. See <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>. If you do need a visa, see above for instructions on applying. Note that visa nationals applying for the Standard Visitor Visa (6 months or less) will likely need to apply for it in advance, rather than receiving this upon entering the UK (see <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa> for more information).

YOUR HOST INSTITUTION

- The University of Edinburgh was founded in 1583 and is ranked within the top ten universities in the UK.
- It has a student population of approximately 20,000 full-time undergraduate students (31,000 total). As opposed to a campus setting, the city of Edinburgh is the campus.
- Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland and is located approximately 393 miles (4.5 hours by train) from London.
- It has a population of approximately 500,000 and remains a compact city with libraries, museums, theatres, shopping, and business areas in close proximity.
- It is a great place to live and study as it contains an enormous number of historical and cultural sites.

ACADEMICS

Course load and credits

At Edinburgh, a full year's worth of credit is equal to 120 Edinburgh credits; one semester equals 60 Edinburgh credits. The normal course load consists of three 20-credit courses per semester. However, certain faculties (departments) have begun offering 10-credit courses, so students should adjust their course load accordingly. The *minimum* course load for a Richmond student is 50 Edinburgh credits per semester.

However, it is not recommended that students register for a minimum course load as this will leave you in a bad position if you later need to drop a class (you cannot be registered for less than a full-time course load), or if you get a grade lower than C in one of your classes (leaving you with less than a full semester's worth of credits at the end of your program).

Credit conversion to units

The chart below shows how Edinburgh credits are converted to Richmond units.

Edinburgh	Richmond
one 10-credit course	0.8 units
one 20-credit course	1.5 units
one 40-credit course	3 units

Course level

Students who want to take Edinburgh honours courses must be majors in that subject area and must have completed at least three-four major courses with a grade of B or better. The 100 and 200 levels at Edinburgh are generally more advanced than first- or second-year courses at UR. A greater emphasis is placed on independent study. Very often there is no detailed schedule or syllabus, but a reading list from which the student must choose what to read. Keep this in mind as you register for courses.

Assessment

You must take your courses for a grade and earn the equivalent of a C or better in order to receive transfer credit on your Richmond record. **No transfer credit is awarded for courses taken on a pass-fail basis.** Although grades earned abroad are not calculated into your GPA at UR, they remain part of your permanent academic record.

Grading scale

Edinburgh	Description	UR Equivalent
70-100	An excellent performance-very rare	A
65-69	A very good performance	A-
60-64	A very good performance	B+
55 – 59	A good performance	B
50-54	A good performance	B-
40 - 49	A satisfactory performance	C
35 – 39	A marginal fail	D Not eligible for transfer credit
0 – 34	Fail	F

Maintain your high standards

Though your study abroad grades will not appear on your UR transcript, you should plan to work hard and get good grades while abroad for several reasons. One is that if you ever apply to graduate school, medical school, law school, etc., the institutions to which you apply can require you to submit transcripts from all of the places at which you have taken classes, including any at which you studied abroad. The same is true of potential employers. Another reason to work hard is that you will not get any transfer credit for classes in which you get grades lower than the equivalent of a C; if you do not earn a full semester's worth of transfer credit, you may fall behind in your progress toward graduation and you may put your financial aid status in jeopardy. And a third reason to work hard is that if you do not, you will tarnish the reputation of UR and of the people of your home country.

TRANSCRIPTS

Your host institution will send one official transcript to Richmond's Office of International Education after you have taken your final exams and your grades have been reported. We suggest that, before you leave your program site, you should arrange for your host institution to send you one or two extra copies so that you can use them to apply for graduate school, law school, fellowships, etc. This will involve paying a fee and providing an address to which they should send it. When you receive it, note that opened transcripts become unofficial transcripts, so be cautious.

Specifically for Edinburgh: You should contact the college (Humanities & Social Sciences or Science & Engineering) in which you are/were enrolled. You can do this while you are abroad or after you return home. If you are requesting a transcript after you've returned home, you should refer to your matriculation number, semester and year of your study abroad, and your home university (University of Richmond, USA).

REGISTRATION WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Registration at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country you are visiting makes your presence and whereabouts known, in case it is necessary for a consular officer to contact you in an emergency. During a disaster overseas, American consular officers can assist in evacuation, should that become necessary, but they cannot assist you if they do not know where you are.

You can register directly via the relevant website: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts may not be released to inquirers without your expressed written authorizations. Registration through the website is not considered proof of citizenship. Remember to leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.

HEALTH INFORMATION

CDC health information

Please check <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/> for updates and specific details and recommendations.

Study abroad insurance

University of Richmond students are automatically enrolled in a travel, accident & sickness insurance plan called Chubb Insurance/AXA Assistance, for which the costs are paid by UR (see <https://international.richmond.edu/study-abroad/health-safety/insurance.html> for exclusions and details). Your Chubb/AXA insurance card is available to you on your Gateway Abroad file, in the 'Insurance/Emergency Cards & Letters' (IECL) section. The policy wording, instructions on how to use the insurance, and a claim form are all online at the above web address. The study abroad insurance covers you worldwide except in the USA.

It is important for you and your family to understand how your health insurance works *before* you need it. Read the policy description closely before you depart. It is difficult to absorb detailed information when you are sick, injured, or upset, and it is easy to make expensive mistakes when you are trying to make important decisions under such circumstances.

Health care in the UK

Exchange Students whose period of study lasts less than 6 months are not eligible for free primary health care at the University Health Center, however you may still be seen as a temporary patient. Check the following web page for the latest health updates concerning the United Kingdom and Western Europe: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>.

Medications

Some students may need to bring medications with them overseas or may need to fill a prescription while they are abroad. Here is important information: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/your-health-abroad.html>.

SAFETY RESOURCES

A safe trip abroad

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-checklist.html>

Visit the Department of State web site frequently for updates and changes:

Main site: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>

Travel Advisories and Public Announcements:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

Worldwide Caution Public Announcements:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/worldwide-caution.html>

Emergencies in a Foreign Country: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies.html>

Help for U.S. Victims of Crime Overseas: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/crime.html>

Read the brochure about alcohol & drugs abroad to learn what your responsibilities are and what the U.S. Consulate can and cannot do for you (opens a PDF): <https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/students-abroad/pdfs/alcohol.pdf> and <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/what-state-dept-can-cant-do-crisis.html>

Phoning the Department of State

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S./Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Road Safety

Traffic and road conditions abroad are quite different from those in the U.S. and are a major cause of accident and injury to visiting students. The University of Richmond advises you not to rent or purchase a car while abroad. It's your responsibility to inform yourself about driving and conditions in the host country:

- Driving abroad (see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/driving-and-road-safety.html>)

Water Safety

Be especially careful in and around the ocean, lakes, ponds, rivers, canals, pools, ponds, and beaches. Even when a body of water appears calm and harmless, there may be hidden objects, swift currents, and other dangers lurking.

Fire/Natural Gas Safety

Students need to be aware of safety in their residence. As one would do in the U.S., be sure to locate the nearest fire escape route and know the phone numbers of emergency services in case they are needed. It is a good idea to take a battery-operated smoke detector with you abroad since many buildings are older and may not have smoke detectors or sprinkler systems in place. See this website to learn more about fire safety abroad: <http://www.firesafetyfoundation.org/>.

As in the U.S., natural gas may be used to provide heat as well as to provide hot water. Be aware of the heating situation provided by your host institution and host residence. For locations where carbon monoxide-producing appliances may be present - i.e., any appliance that burns fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal – be sure to ask for detailed information on usage of these appliances in order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. For further information, please visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq>.

SAFETY IN THE UK

Pub life

Being in bars raises safety issues. If you choose to drink, do so in moderation. Avoid traveling home alone if you have been drinking because you could become an easy target for thieves and you may become disoriented on the public transport systems. Please be aware that beer in the UK has much higher alcohol content.

Geopolitical terrorism

Due to the possible threat of terrorism, please read all travel alerts sent to you from IE while you are abroad. In addition, to help prevent terrorist acts involving airplanes, increased restrictions concerning carry-on luggage have been put in place in the UK and are strictly enforced. American citizens are advised to check with the UK Department for Transport (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport>) regarding the latest security updates and travel updates or restrictions.

Vigilance urged

Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. For more information about UK public safety initiatives, consult the UK Civil Contingencies Secretariat website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/emergency-preparation-reponse-and-recovery>.

Northern Ireland and terrorism

The political situation in Northern Ireland (which is part of the UK) has dramatically improved since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the announcement by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) on July 28, 2005, that it would end its armed campaign. Within Northern Ireland, flash-points for sectarian confrontations still exist, but they are generally removed from areas where tourists congregate. The potential remains for sporadic incidents of street violence in isolated areas in Northern Ireland during the summer marching season (April to August), with tensions heightened during the month of July, especially around the July 12th public holiday. As a result, study abroad students traveling in Northern Ireland could experience delays and disruption.

CRIME IN THE UK

Crime rate

The United Kingdom benefits from generally low crime rates; but crime, including violent crime, has increased over the last few years, especially in London (if you are traveling through London on your way to/from Edinburgh, this is good information to know). Incidents include pick pocketing, mugging, “snatch and grab” theft of mobile phones, watches, and jewelry, and theft of unattended bags, especially at airports and from cars parked at restaurants, hotels, and resorts. Since 2007, there has been an increase in the number of muggings involving knives. Avoid walking alone late at night, avoid isolated areas, and avoid intoxication to reduce the chances of becoming a victim.

Pick pocketing and other crime

Pickpockets target tourists, especially at historic sites, restaurants, on buses, trains, and, if you are traveling in London, on the London Underground (“Tube” or subway). Thieves often target unattended cars parked at tourist sites and roadside restaurants, looking for laptop computers and hand-held electronic equipment. Walking in isolated areas, including public parks, especially after dark, should also be avoided, as these provide advantageous venues for muggers and thieves. In London, travelers should use only licensed “black taxi cabs,” or car services recommended by their hotel or tour operator. Unlicensed taxis or private cars posing as taxis may offer low fares, but are often uninsured and may have unlicensed drivers. In some instances, travelers have been robbed and raped while using these cars. Travelers should take care not to leave drinks unattended in bars and nightclubs. There have been some instances of drinks being spiked with illegal substances, leading to incidents of robbery and rape. In Scotland, these incidences are reduced significantly.

Protecting your passport

Due to the circumstances described above, visitors should take steps to ensure the safety of their passports. Visitors in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Gibraltar are not expected to produce identity documents for police authorities and thus may secure their passports in hotel safes or residences.

ATM fraud

ATM fraud in the UK is becoming more sophisticated, incorporating technologies to surreptitiously record customer ATM card and PIN information. Travelers should avoid using ATMs located in isolated areas. In addition, the traveler should not use the ATM if there is anything stuck to the machine or if it looks unusual in any way. If the machine does not return the card, it should be reported to the issuing bank immediately. Common sense personal security measures utilized in the U.S. when using ATMs should also be followed in the UK.

Drug Use and Laws

Like many countries around the world, Scotland experience some drug-related problems. From marijuana to ecstasy, so-called “recreational drug use,” particularly among club-goers, can be a problem. When clubs and night spots close, there are often problems with the resultant foot and vehicular traffic on the streets. Petty crimes (theft, robberies, etc.) may be committed by drug-users to support their habit. According to the World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems, in Scotland the “[p]roduction, supply, possession, possession with intent to supply, and offenses related to the importation and exportation of controlled drugs are illegal.” Do not turn your study abroad experience into a nightmare—do not participate in drug activity of any kind.

SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Telephone numbers given on emergency cards are usually provided in the format used by one particular country; it is not possible to provide all of the possible telephone number formats on one card. For example, you cannot usually make an 800 call from a country other than the U.S. or Canada. When you get your health insurance card, you should check to see if/how you need to modify the phone numbers provided on it so you can reach the insurance company from the country where you will study. The same applies with phone numbers for cancelling credit cards & ATM cards.

Also, be aware that many countries do not have one emergency phone number, like 911, that can be used in any emergency. Many countries have separate phone numbers for calling the police, ambulance, & fire services.

Additionally, be aware that in some countries, the emergency service numbers are different if you are dialing from a land line or a cell phone.

Emergency numbers in the UK: AMBULANCE or POLICE: 999

SCOTLAND, ENGLAND, AND THE UK

You need to know the difference. Ethnic identities are very strong in the British Isles. It would be worthwhile to read about the history of the region so that you can speak intelligently on these matters.

VOCABULARY

It may take a few weeks to get used to the accent, but even longer to get used to the jargon. So be prepared to listen carefully and don't be surprised if they do not understand you at first either. Many first-time visitors to the United Kingdom find that there is more of a communication problem than they expected. This is especially the case for Americans confronted by familiar words used in unfamiliar ways. The mini-dictionary below should help you to prepare for your time abroad.

BRITISH

bathroom
bin
bloke
brolly
Cheers
chips

AMERICAN

exactly that; where one bathes
trash can
a fellow, guy
umbrella
like goodbye, used at the end of a conversation, or used to mean thank you
French fries

cinema/the pictures	movie house/theater
crisps	potato chips
Continent	Europe
chemist/pharmacist	drug store
duvet	comforter
fag	cigarette
fortnight	two weeks
ground floor	first floor
hire	rent (goods)
lager, bitter, “real ale”	beer
lemonade	like 7 UP
let	rent (real estate)
lift	elevator
loo/WC	toilet
LV's	Luncheon Vouchers
lorry	truck
mate	friend, pal
mind	look out for (as in danger)
pissed	drunk
postbox/pillar box	mailbox
restroom	where one takes a rest (not a toilet)
rubbish	garbage
queue	waiting line
quid	pound sterling
reverse charges	call collect
ring	to call on telephone
rubber	eraser
salad cream	salad dressing
sorry	pardon me
spirits	liquor
stone	equal to 14 pounds of weight
surgery	doctor's office; a period when doctor sees patients
telephone or ring up	call
trunk call	long distance
tube/underground	train, subway, metro
wally, divvy (Liverpool)	nerd, dork

*The British tell time differently than Americans. For example, half six is 6:30. Brits generally do not say it is “ten of six;” rather they would say it is 5:50 p.m. or ten till six.

MISCELLANEOUS

Weather

The weather in Scotland is fairly moderate year-round, with typical highs in the spring semester ranging from 42-55°F and typical highs in the fall semester ranging from 43-59°F. Annual rainfall is said to be on par with New York. Bringing a sweater or dressing in layers is wise, as the weather can be changeable throughout the day.

Banking

Some students open a bank account in the UK, but most returned study abroad students report that they managed very well by using ATMs. If you have a debit/credit/check card for an account in the U.S. that has the Cirrus, Plus, Visa, or MasterCard symbol on the back, it is usually possible to withdraw money from your account in the States while abroad. Your parent or guardian could deposit money to your account so that you can access it while abroad. Check with your bank for details and ask whether your ATM card can be used in the place where you are going. In particular, read up on the “Chip and PIN” system [here](#).

If you bring a credit/check/debit card with you, remember to call your credit card company to inform them that you will be traveling and living abroad temporarily. Some companies do not accept international purchases unless they are given advance notice and could lock or freeze your card as they might think the transactions are fraudulent.

Other Financial Advice

Remember that you will need money immediately on arrival for meals, etc. Your requirements will depend on your port of entry and how long you expect to spend between arriving in the UK and your arrival at Edinburgh (and therefore might include money for overnight accommodation). Travellers' cheques can be cashed at airports and at *Bureaux de Change*, though beware of the fee for cashing them in. Currency: One pound Sterling (£1.00) is divided into one hundred pence (100p). The coinage is 1p, 2p, 5p, 20p, 50p, £1, and £2; the notes are in denominations of £1, £5, £10, £20, £50, and £100. If you are carrying a credit card, please make sure that you sign it before you begin your journey. The UK has moved over to the Chip and PIN security system (see above), which means you will need to know your PIN number to make purchases using your VISA or Mastercard. American Express and Diners Club cards are not widely used in the UK; you may find that retailers charge a surcharge for their use.

USEFUL WEBLINKS

ABOUT THE UK

Greater Britain Travel – <https://travel.org/britain.html>

British Tourist Authority – <https://www.visitbritain.com/us/en>

SAFETY & HEALTH

Safety advice from the U.S. Dept of State – <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>

Health advice from the Centers for Disease Control – <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

NEWS

BBC – <https://www.bbc.com/news>

Reuters – <https://uk.reuters.com/>

MONEY

Currency converter – <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

Currency converter & printable cheat sheets – <https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

TIME ZONES

Make a personal, multiple time zone clock – <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/personal.html>

HAVE A GREAT ADVENTURE!