We asked the Study Abroad Peer Advisors for tips on how to research your study abroad options and here is what they told us...

Are my language skills sufficient to study abroad in a non English-speaking country? If not can I attend a language course or register with the self-access language centre in Nottingham?

Sarah, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
In most cases it isn’t necessary to speak a foreign language to study at a partner university as many universities offer modules taught in English. However if you are considering going to one of these countries, perhaps you might wish to learn the language.

At the beginning of each term it’s possible to sign up for language modules in the language centre where many levels from beginner to quite advanced are possible. If you have spare credits leftover for the semester/ year you may be able to just add them. If not, it is also possible to do the language courses and pay a fee. It’s a good idea to sign up early as the modules are popular.

The self-access centre is also there to help assist language learning. It’s free to join and has TV, audio, films and written material in a variety of languages.

Am I only interested in studying in an English speaking country such as Australia or Canada, or do I want to experience a more diverse culture, where English is still widely spoken, like Singapore, Hong Kong or Sweden?

Ales, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
I prefer places that offer not only academic, but also offer personal, cultural and linguistic enrichment. In this respect partner universities in cities such as Montreal, Singapore or Hong Kong would represent a great choice thanks to their fantastic mix of cultures, bilingualism and opportunities for travel in the region.

Chris, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
I would highly recommend studying in a country where English is not the primary language - from my study abroad year I think countries like Malaysia, where the native language is Bahasa Malayu but English is widely spoken all over the country, have a greatly different and much more diverse culture than the UK.

Am I prepared to research my academic programme at a partner university by finding equivalent modules, or would I prefer to study very similar modules to my degree programme in Nottingham at the China or Malaysia campus?

Philippa, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
It's important to actually know what you're going to be studying while you're abroad - it is the reason you've got the opportunity to go away, so if you want to stick with a very similar programme to the one in Nottingham, then our campuses in China and Malaysia would suit this. However, many of our partner universities offer different module choices, and the majority of departments here in Nottingham encourage you to take the opportunity of studying modules which are
not available here, as long as you get them checked first! If you really want to enjoy studying while you're abroad, you should be prepared to research what modules are available, to stop the risk of ending up with whichever modules the partner university had room to fit you on.

James, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
Although sifting through the module catalogue at your preferred uni might seem tiring now, I found taking different modules to those offered here to be one of the best aspects of studying abroad. I found there to be a greater choice available and once there found them to be much more interesting than those offered in Nottingham. Getting modules approved really doesn't take too much time if you have researched carefully, and in the end it's worth it.

Am I ready to study abroad for a full year or would one semester be more appropriate for me? Is a short term programme the best place to start instead?

Philippa, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
Find out on the International Office website what your school offers as it has to fit in with your degree here, many will tell you the time and length of your study abroad experience, for example I was told that if I wanted to go away it would be for the first semester of second year. If you're unsure if you're ready to go for the full year, have a serious think about whether you would have enough money to come home during a holiday if you wanted to. The chances are once you're out there you won't want to come home! If your school gives you a choice then it's perhaps best to talk to previous students who have been for a semester/full year to hear about their experience and to see what would be most appropriate for you.

Tarana, Study Abroad Peer Advisor
I studied abroad for a semester since a year away seemed daunting at first sight! However, when I was actually on my exchange, I was having such a great time that it made me wish I had gone away for the whole year instead. A full year abroad would mean that you would avoid the hassle of finding accommodation for your semester stay here in Nottingham and then your host university. Saying that, a semester away is great to experience a different culture and academic environment and at the same time not be away from home for too long.

Which country and which partner university would best help me attain my academic and career goals?

James, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
By simply studying abroad you've already demonstrated a set of capabilities that can only enhance your attractiveness to employers. If you are looking to work or live in a specific country in the future then having shown some experience of living there already will also be beneficial. Academically, many of the partners are some of the best in the world, e.g. Hong Kong is 21st, UBC 30th, so by participating in academic programs there you have shown yourself to be capable of learning at the highest level.
Tarana, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
When deciding on partner universities, I wanted a university that would give me a different academic experience and would enable me to study my subject from a completely different angle. I think it’s important to consider what the country and university can offer you in terms of your goals. Research the university and the modules offered as much as possible. It is also important to consider how living in that country may help facilitate your future career goals. For instance, living in an Asian country may help you understand the Asian consumer better which will certainly help in variety of careers. Alternatively, if you’re interested in improving your language skills then a country where you can practise this language will obviously greatly benefit you.

Am I prepared to research my academic programme at a partner university by finding equivalent modules, or would I prefer to study very similar modules to my degree programme in Nottingham at the China or Malaysia campus?

Chris, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
All study abroad programmes are a great addition to your CV, no matter where you go or how long you go for. All of the partner universities are world class, but I would recommend looking into which partner university is best for your particular course, and which university has the best teaching style suited to you to make sure you get the most out of the experience academically.

James, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
Although sifting through the module catalogue at your preferred uni might seem tiring now, I found taking different modules to those offered here to be one of the best aspects of studying abroad. I found there to be a greater choice available and once there found them to be much more interesting than those offered in Nottingham. Getting modules approved really doesn't take too much time if you have researched carefully, and in the end it's worth it.

Can I afford to study a long way from home or would it be more appropriate for me to study in Europe, where flights are cheaper and I am eligible for the Erasmus grant?

Sarah, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:
It is very important to really take a good look at what you will be expected to spend for the different destinations you are considering. This will help to prevent nasty surprises arising in the future.

I would recommend taking a two prong approach to looking at this issue. Firstly the arrival and set up costs, so the flights (transport generally) visa costs, different types of insurance, etc and then the living costs, the accommodation fees, money for food, money for study materials, money for going out and miscellaneous, travel etc. Work it out for the time you are going to be there, then you should be able to see clearly if it’s a feasible option or if it’s outside your budget. Try and be realistic, don’t base everything on a part time job you would like to get when you’re abroad.

Sometimes the arrival and set up costs are high but then the living costs will be considerably lower than in the UK. This would be the case at some of the Asian partners for example. However countries like Australia and Canada are expensive to get to and
expensive to live in. Staying in Europe can be cheaper regarding arrival and set up costs however some of the big cities can be quite expensive for accommodation for example.

It’s also a good idea to discuss the issue with your parents as well so they can be aware of what is going on and they may be able to offer some financial advice or even some financial help.

**Ales, Study Abroad Peer Advisor:**

Budgeting is essential, but I would look at the total price for the exchange rather than just flights. The long distance flight is only one aspect of study abroad. Many places, particularly in Asia, offer much cheaper living environment and the higher price of air fare in comparison to Europe is often more than balanced by relatively cheap food, accommodation and transport in the area.