


Sheffield
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University

Everything you need to know
before you go abroad

Bon Voyage!





“Studying abroad has taught me so many transferable skills and helped with my confidence so much. I was asked about it during a job interview and my passion and enthusiasm really shone through while talking about my time in Norway – and I was offered the job!”

Molly Stanley
Studied for a semester in Sogndal, Norway

As you are about to embark on your overseas opportunity, we want to make sure you get the most out of your experience. We have invited Sheffield Hallam students to tell their own stories and provide useful tips to help you along the way.

Travelling abroad has so many benefits, which will last far longer than the experience itself. It might be daunting to start with but it's a unique opportunity to make friends across the world. The experience provides the opportunity to develop personally, academically and professionally. It's a once in a lifetime chance to soak up another culture and enhance your employability skills! It's worth reflecting back on your time away when you're thinking about the future – employers are looking for many of the skills you will develop.

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Contributors

Words: Molly Stanley – BSc Geography 2014–2018
Quotes: Rae-Ellen Collins – BA Languages with International Business 2012–2016
Amelia Furniss – BA Languages with Marketing 2013–2017
Morgan Goodwin – BA Primary Education 2016–2019
Curtis Howett – BSc Sport Business Management 2017–2020
Jess Mell – BSc Nutrition and Public Health 2016–2019
Nicole Ramsden – BA Graphic Design 2015–2019
Jess Swiffen – BSc Geography 2014–2018

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In collaboration with



Did you know?

7.2%

Currently only 7.2% of students studying in the UK have an overseas experience while they study. It will make you stand out to future employers for all the right reasons!

Universities UK
Gone International Report 2018

10%

Students who go abroad are 10% more likely to be in graduate jobs 6 months after graduation, compared to those who don't.

Universities UK
Go International, Stand Out, 2018



first
or
2:1

Students who study abroad are more likely to receive a first or 2:1

Gone International: the value of mobility
(March 2017).

International experience can enhance your essential interpersonal skills required in the global workplace, including:

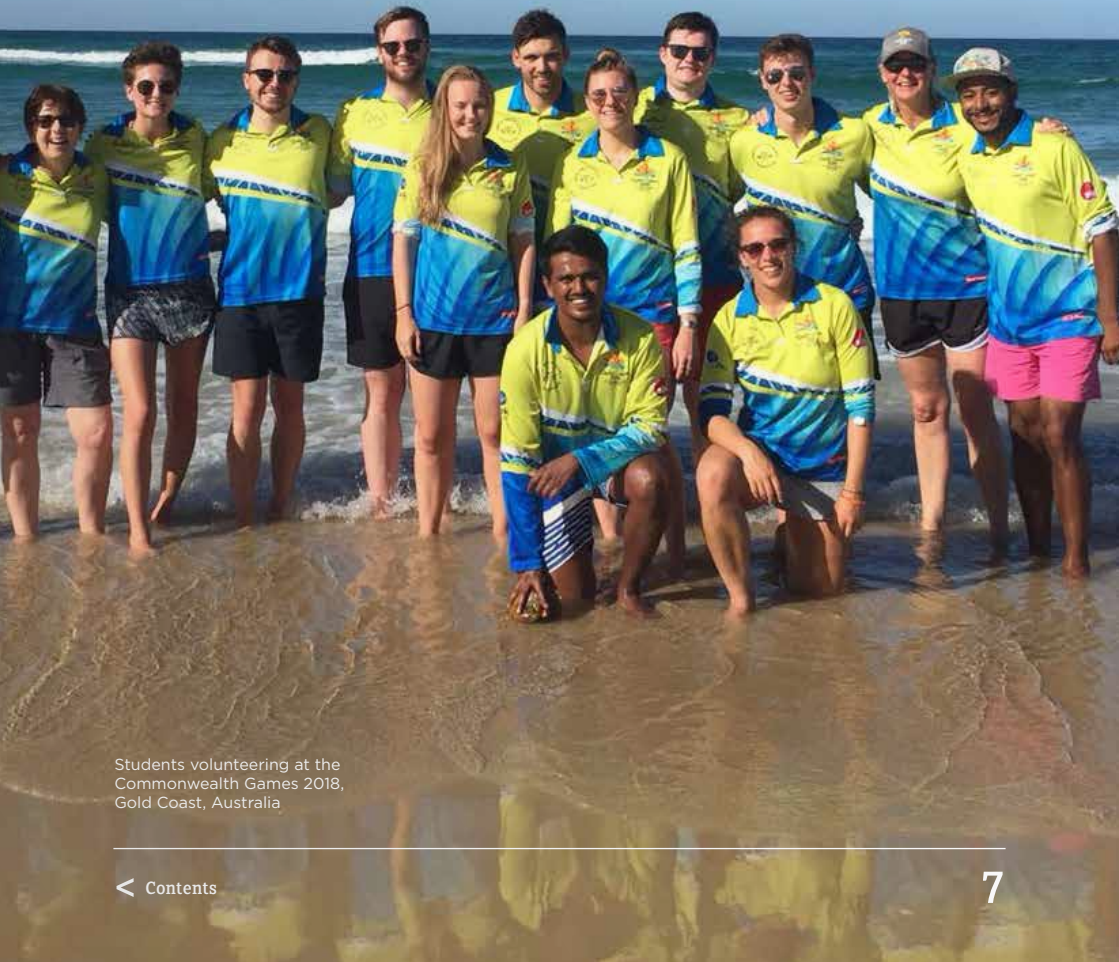
- intercultural communication and language skills
- adaptability and tolerance
- resilience and independence
- problem solving
- confidence
- leadership skills

All of these will help you stand out in the job market!



“You always hear about all the usual benefits such as learning the language and learning more about the culture but you never hear about how it changes your life. I met so many fantastic people from all over the world... you learn a lot about yourself and about life. The time on Erasmus is limited so you really appreciate every moment.”

Amelia Furniss
Study exchange in Italy



Students volunteering at the Commonwealth Games 2018, Gold Coast, Australia



Accommodation

As soon as you have secured your place, contact your host institution for advice on accommodation. They most likely will present you with a variety of options, but you may have to organise everything yourself, so do your research early. It's worth checking what type and length of contract you will be tied into, and if bills and WiFi are included in the price.

Check on a map where you'll be living in comparison to where you'll be studying or working – have a look to see how you'll get between the two. If you need to use public transport there may be a student discount available.

Speak to other Hallam students who've been to, or even come from, your destination. Join the **Sheffield Hallam International Exchange Network** on Facebook and connect with fellow student travellers. Your Faculty Exchange Co-ordinator can also put you in touch with students who've stayed in the same country.

Another good tip is to talk to agencies that provide support with finding accommodation overseas including:

HousingAnywhere
Student.com

You may need to arrange short-term accommodation upon your return to Sheffield for the remainder of the academic year. There are halls of residence options available with weekly rolling contracts, such as **Liberty Hall**. Or you may want to get help sub-letting your room in Sheffield. In either case contact **Accommodation Services** for advice.

Before You Go

Preparation


Read up on the country where you'll be staying. Buy a travel guide or do some research into the local culture. To make the most of your opportunity find out what the local area is renowned for, be it food, drink, history or art. It's also worth learning a basic phrase or two in the local language, people really appreciate the gesture!

Packing

Remember that you'll be able to buy things once you arrive so don't try to cram everything you own into your bag. It's worth checking what your accommodation provides so you don't waste any space!



Check list

- 
- Valid passport
 - EHIC card (Europe only)
 - Visa (if applicable)
 - SHU Student card
 - Agreement letter from your host
 - Travel insurance documentation (check this covers what you need it for and anything you might do whilst you're there)
 - Medication (you may need to collect extra prescriptions before you go, take a doctor's note with you)
 - Credit card/cash in sterling and foreign currency
 - Food for the journey/first day
 - Travel adaptor
 - Electronics chargers
 - Destination guidebook

Travel tips

- Take a photo of your passport and insurance documentation
- Email the photos to yourself and friends and family
- Print out all your tickets and documentation
- Learn a few useful phrases in the native language
- Pack everything yourself
- Never leave your luggage unattended
- Only take your own belongings through customs
- Map out your journey step by step
- Plan enough time to make your connections
- Only use registered taxis
- Keep an eye on your valuables, don't flash them around
- Don't carry things in your back pocket
- Carry some emergency cash
- Buy a basic first aid kit
- Keep in touch, let somebody know you are safe

“I have always been passionate about travelling and experiencing as much of the world as possible.”

This placement has only made me even more eager to follow these aspirations to travel. However, beforehand I was apprehensive and anxious about being away from home comforts, particularly in an area that the media portray as dangerous, with a group of people I did not know very well. Therefore, my advice to anybody thinking about gaining international experience would be to ignore their trepidations and do it! If I had not pushed myself out of my comfort zone, I would not have gained the life-changing experience that I did in South Africa: I would not have been able to appreciate the beautiful culture, sights and people of the country and I would not have gained the friendships that I have.

I would also tell people that are thinking of completing international experience to be open-minded and curious. Although I was often shocked by some cultural differences due to the immense poverty in the area that I was teaching in, I had to ensure that I did not judge their actions or beliefs by my own culture. Diversity is something that should be celebrated; people should be eager to learn as much as they can about the place and people that they are surrounded by. I may not have the appreciation and knowledge of the South African culture that I do now, if I had allowed my preconceived judgements to overshadow the value which I knew I was able to gain.

Morgan Goodwin
Teaching placement in South Africa



Personal safety

We want you to have a positive experience while overseas, and this includes keeping safe whilst travelling and staying in your host country. Before you go it's vital that you research the potential risks and the local customs of where you'll be staying.

- Don't have your valuables on display
- Don't venture into areas that you are not familiar with late at night
- Make sure you know how to get back to where you are staying via public transport or if walking, plan a safe route
- If you are returning home late at night and on your own then think about whether a taxi would be the safest option
- Understand the drinking laws, and be responsible
- Make sure all appliances in your accommodation are safe including boilers and gas appliances
- You will need to let your company or host university know of any health issues, including a disability which could affect you during the exchange abroad
- Use accommodation providers you know and trust
- Ensure that your vaccinations are up to date
- Find out the local emergency numbers and the address of the nearest hospital
- Complete a **Risk Assessment** in order to consider what effective arrangements may help you minimise potential risks. Read through this **Risk Assessment Guidance** to help you fill out your own.



Make a list of important numbers and contact details. There's room to do this on page 26.

- Sheffield Hallam University
- Your host institution
- The British Embassy in the host country
- Insurance company
- Bank details

Money matters

It's vital to think about how you are going to manage your finances while you are abroad. Opening an overseas bank account is a good option but may not be appropriate if your stay is short. One method is to top up a temporary travel credit card, or simply check what restrictions your current bank has on using your own card abroad.

If you get charged per transaction it could be worth withdrawing money from a cash machine to last you a couple of weeks. If you're planning on using your card abroad, you will need to notify your bank that you will be out of the UK or they might block payments as an antifraud measure.

It's definitely worth taking some foreign currency with you when you travel so you can find your feet and not have to worry about accessing your bank account.

Things to budget for:

- Travel to destination
- Local travel
- Accommodation
- Food / Drink
- Social activities
- Sightseeing
- Insurance
- Passport (new)
- Visa (if needed)
- Travel & medical supplies
- Course materials
- Vaccinations
- Emergency Fund



Insurance

Sheffield Hallam can provide you with free travel insurance, which includes emergency medical cover, repatriation and cancellation.

It does not, however, include insurance for your possessions, or any special activities you may be involved in. You must therefore take out your own policy to cover anything else that you will be doing, from the day you leave to the day you return. Make sure to check exactly what you are covered for.

To take out the University's insurance plan fill out and submit the online form below.

SHU Travel Insurance Request Form


At the end of your exchange, placement or project you are entitled to be covered for up to three personal days. If your trip has more than three personal days or holidays then you will need your own travel insurance to cover this period.

Most insurance policies do not cover a wide variety of sports, such as skiing, scuba diving or mountain biking. If you're planning on doing anything adventurous, you'll need extra cover.

It is advisable to carry a copy of your passport and insurance policy with you at all times, so that in the case of an emergency you can prove your identity and proof of insurance without delay.

If you are travelling within Europe, you can apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). It provides you with limited state healthcare at a low fee, and sometimes even for free.



A person with long blonde hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, black leggings, and a black backpack, is hiking up a rocky mountain trail. Their arms are outstretched to the sides, holding small white objects. The trail is made of loose stones and is surrounded by green vegetation and rocky outcrops. In the background, there are steep, rugged mountains under a clear sky.

“The placement overseas was probably one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It isn’t just living abroad, it is learning another culture - fully immersing yourself in a place. By doing this, you open yourself up to a whole new world. You build a community of people and a bank of memories which shape you as a person. The transformation in myself was amazing.”

Rae-Ellen Collins

BA Languages with International Business,
study and work placement, France

Orientation

We recommend familiarising yourself with your new surroundings as soon as you arrive.

- Go for a short walk and explore your new home! It is always better to explore in daylight hours, for safety and to recognise your surroundings.
- Take a map, or download an offline map on your phone. If you're in a city you can easily pick up a free map from a Tourist Information point which may also suggest some things to see and do.
- Make a note of the address of where you're staying in case you need to show a taxi driver or local.



- Check out your local supermarket to grab any essentials you might have forgotten. Having internet on your phone can really help translating any unfamiliar food or converting prices (look for free WiFi!).
- In the daytime, locate an ATM that is close to your accommodation and accepts your credit or debit card.



"Something I really recommend is planning your journeys in advance. Copenhagen is thankfully pretty easy to get around, but we had a little trouble figuring out the local bus services – specifically in how you pay the driver. It doesn't hurt to have a quick look online about these things; you'll probably find that most people have had a similar issue. It makes your life easier when you get there, and you're not putting yourself at risk of being fined or yelled at by bus drivers!"

Nicole Ramsden
Sign Painting Workshop in Copenhagen



Culture

When living in another country it is entirely normal to experience a degree of culture shock. You will see everything through a new lens. Be open-minded and try new things. Sometimes you will want your home comforts and that's okay too – share your favourite traditions from home with friends and then ask them to share theirs in return.

Read about the cultural customs of the country before you depart. The more knowledge you have, the easier your transition will be.

Try not to retreat to your room or only socialise with other English-speakers. This can often reinforce negative feelings and make it even harder to acclimatise to your new environment. Go out to meet locals and start talking. You will be amazed at how enriching the experience can be!

“We hosted a dinner party with our other international friends and all brought a dish from our own country. Obviously I took Yorkshire puddings!”

Jess Swiffen
Studied in Italy

Find someone who has lived in your host country and ask them for advice. Specifically, ask them what about elements you may have a hard time adapting to and what you can do to make things easier. Each country has its own nuances, so you're going to face a different situation in France as you would in Thailand.

Celebrate the culture of your new home. Immerse yourself into the lifestyle of the people around you and make the most of everyday. It's worth checking out the famous landmarks and characteristics your host country is renowned for, and find out about any festivals or events that are going on so you don't miss out!

“Although I lived in Norway, I came back with far more knowledge about the culture of so many more countries thanks to the friends I met along the way. We celebrated each other's celebrations and festivals and each took it in turns to cook food from our home countries... I just hope I did the British roast dinner proud!”

Molly Stanley
Studied in Norway



When intercultural communication is in danger of becoming confused or of breaking down, certain techniques may be useful. Here are some of the more commonly used ones:

- Use good tone and tempo
- Emphasise the positive more than the negative
- Be human, show warmth
- Ask lots of questions
- Keep It Short and Simple (KISS)
- Structure things clearly and logically
- Summarise often
- Use body language
- Check that you are understood
- Show that you are listening
- Say exactly what you mean
- Use humour where you can
- Avoid sarcasm
- Clarify any doubts you have
- Look for signs from the person or people you are speaking to

Excerpt from Intercultural Resource Pack – Derek Utley, Cambridge University Press 2004

“Being involved in an international volunteering role, participating in team building events and listening to lectures have helped to develop an array of skills that I can use to benefit my personal and professional life.”

In Bali I was able to develop my communication skills to adapt to the wide range of audiences that I was interacting with. Whether it was the elderly villagers or the school children, I had to understand what was the most appropriate method of communication and also be aware of my language and accent.

This was challenging because in England it is easy to assume that people are aware of what you are saying, however, when in an international country most people have very limited knowledge of English. This also demonstrated that it is fundamentally important to be respectful of the local community's language and culture, which is why I tried to learn basic greetings whilst in Bali.

I will be able to use these skills throughout my life whilst travelling, but also in my future career aspirations of working in public health. Knowledge of communication, organisation, research and adaptation that is required to interact effectively to suit certain audiences will be crucial in my professional life.

Jess Mell
**Healthcare Promotion Volunteering
in Bali, Indonesia**



"I cannot recommend gaining international experience enough."

Not only would any international experience look great on your CV, it also shows that you are a dedicated individual who seeks opportunities and takes the initiative. You can have the experience to see a whole new culture which develops your cultural capital. Working in an international organisation, there were many different nationalities and it was so interesting to hear about all the different cultures from their backgrounds.

Therefore, international experience can not only develop your academic and professional skills, but your social skills too. The Go Global Fund helped me immensely as it meant basic costs such as food and travel could be covered. This helped me relax and not have to worry about financial situations which I would have if it wasn't for the fund. This, in turn, helped me focus purely on my job knowing that I have the full support of the university.

Curtis Howett
Work placement, International
Paralympic Committee, Germany

Don't forget

You are not alone! We know it can be a daunting experience but we promise it will all be worth it! SHU have set up the **'Sheffield Hallam International Exchange'** Facebook group which is a network of students who have either already been, or will be going on an exchange themselves. It's the perfect place to ask any questions you may have, or to speak to someone who may have been to your host country/city before.

There are many ways to document your international experience, including writing a blog or producing a short video. You will appreciate being able to look back in the future. Before you go, check out the GoGlobal website for student experiences and stories of their time overseas. It may give you some hints for what to expect!

You can also speak to any of the Sheffield Hallam teams below for support and guidance.

Erasmus Team

Email: erasmus-exchange@shu.ac.uk

International Experience Team

Email: internationalexperience@shu.ac.uk

Faculty Exchange Co-ordinators



Send your travel photos to the International Experience Team to have them featured.



The Erasmus+ App includes useful information to help you prepare if you are travelling to Europe, including tips and guides relevant to your host city/country, and customised check-lists.

If things go wrong...

Enter your emergency contacts here

Sheffield Hallam University

0114 225 5555

Your host institution

British Embassy of your host country

Insurance Company

Bank





Connect with us

International Experience Team
T: +44 (0)114 225 3813
E: internationalexperience@shu.ac.uk

