

How to Pursue an Academic International Experience

As an engineering student, you will likely find it challenging to incorporate an international experience into your education, but it is possible to do so with careful planning and diligence. The University of Virginia maintains a diverse array of academic exchange agreements with top academic institutions worldwide. Many of these offer opportunities for you to take technical courses abroad and transfer credit back to your SEAS engineering degree program. It is important to start planning early — in your first year if possible.

Think about what sort of experience you want — academic, professional or service-oriented. If academic, think about where you might want to study and during which semester and year. Consider J-Term and summer study-abroad opportunities that are designed to make it easier to get international experience and are tailored to the needs and interests of engineering students.

The Four Steps to a Study-Abroad Experience

1. Research

As a student interested in studying abroad, be aware that independent research is essential if you are to determine the best option for yourself. The following are resources that can help you in your research:

- SEAS Study-Abroad Web Site
www.seas.virginia.edu/studyabroad
- SEAS Curricular Design Tool
www.seas.virginia.edu/studyabroad/cdt
- U.Va. International Studies Office
www.virginia.edu/iso

2. Network with Advisors

Each department has a faculty member available to consult with you as you put together your study-abroad plan. SEAS students who have had study-abroad experiences are also available to give advice. The following resource can help you with this part of the process:

- International Study Departmental Advisors
www.seas.virginia.edu/studyabroad/advisors.php

3. Plan

Incorporate the information you gathered in your research and networking and combine that with the information you receive at a U.Va. International Studies Office General Information Session (GIS) to formulate your plan.

A GIS provides information about program options, advice on using your personal and academic goals to select a program, and access to a variety of resources. These are mandatory GISs for any U.Va. student who plans to study abroad. The sessions are held Monday–Thursday, 2 p.m.–3 p.m., Room 224, Minor Hall.

4. Implement

Once you know what is possible, work with the SEAS study-abroad advisor in your department and the program director of SEAS International Programs to put your plan in place, get organized and facilitate logistics.

It is difficult to imagine another single component of your education with greater potential to transform the way you view yourself, your aspirations, and your confidence and ability to achieve success.