

Parent's Guide to Study Abroad





The Rochester Institute of Technology

Parents' Guide to Study Abroad

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 WELCOME

- Welcome Statement
- The Study Abroad Staff

2 STUDY ABROAD AT RIT

- Types of Programs

3 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

4 FINANCING STUDY ABROAD

- Deposits
- Billing Process
- Financial Aid & Scholarships

5 GRADES & CREDITS

- When & How Your Student Will Receive Credit
- Grading and Transcripts

5-7 PRACTICAL PREPARATIONS

- Travel Documents
 - Health
 - Insurance
 - Safety
 - Accessing Money
 - Travel Planning
 - Keeping in Touch
 - Emergencies
 - Data File
- 



Welcome

We are very excited to be working with your RIT student as they consider and prepare to study abroad. The Study Abroad staff realizes this is an important decision, not only for your student, but also for you.

At RIT, our top priority is the safety and success of the students. We work closely with the students and all contacts abroad to be sure our students have the most positive experience possible while participating in their selected program.

This packet of information will explain how the study abroad process at RIT works, what programs are available for RIT students, the steps students must take in order to go abroad and tips for preparing to go.

The Study Abroad & Fellowships staff at RIT is always available to answer questions from students and parents. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns. If you happen to be on campus, feel free to stop in the office and say hello.



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About Our Programs

In order to ensure that RIT students have access to the best possible experiences abroad, RIT offers several different types of study abroad program options including Gateways, Global Campus, Faculty-Led and Affiliate programs.

Gateway

A Gateway Program is one in which RIT sends a handful of students to a sister university overseas and the sister university sends a handful of students to attend RIT. Gateway programs offer a typically more culturally immersive experience for a fewer number of students based on the exchange agreement with our partner. They also tend to be more academic program specific.

Global Campus

These programs take place at RIT's international campuses located in Dubrovnik & Zagreb, Croatia; Dubai, United Arab Emirates and Pristina, Kosovo. They follow the same academic calendar as RIT and students directly enroll in the university for a semester abroad. Classes are in session year round, but course offerings will vary depending on the campus and term.

Faculty Led

These programs are completely designed and developed by an RIT faculty member, who leads a group of students on a program abroad. The location, duration and course offerings of the program depend on the interest and expertise of the faculty member.

Affiliate

RIT has set up partnerships with other nationally ranked universities, allowing our students to travel on their already established programs. Our affiliates include Syracuse University, New York University, Arcadia University, The School for Field Studies, Denmark International Studies, Queens University, CIEE and a handful of others. Students from RIT who wish to study abroad can choose from any of our affiliated programs and the credits they earn on those programs will count as RIT credits upon successful completion of the program.

RIT Global is very selective when choosing schools with which to affiliate. This ensures the education our students receive while on study abroad meets the same rigorous academic standards that they would get if they remained on campus taking classes. All courses taken abroad are pre-approved by the students' academic advisor(s) before they depart.

The best way for your student to familiarize him/herself with the variety of study abroad opportunities offered at RIT is to visit our website at <http://studyabroad.rit.edu>. Here you can view the programs offered, get helpful travel/international information and learn about other international opportunities (work abroad, fellowships, etc.). If a student needs specific information about a particular program, he/she can always contact our office directly via email (goabroad@rit.edu) or by phone (585-475-4466).





The Application Process

Due to the variety of program types available, the study abroad application will vary. In general each student is required to register on our study abroad database, **the Compass**. Students participating in an affiliate program may be required to complete a second, affiliate specific, application. In addition, most students must allow us to check their student conduct record, make an appointment with their academic advisors to pre-approve overseas classes and make an appointment with financial aid to understand their financial aid options for the program. A study abroad advisor will walk each student individually through each of these steps which are detailed below:

1. [Check out our website or the Compass](#) for available programs.
2. [Register on the Compass, the Study Abroad database system](#). This will add you to our e-mail listserv, allow you to complete important paperwork, and keep the office informed of your plans.
3. [Make an appointment with a Study Abroad Advisor](#) to understand the study abroad application process and obtain the necessary forms such as the Course Pre-Approval form and a Budget Worksheet for your program. To make an appointment, email goabroad@rit.edu or call (585) 475 - 4466.
4. [Set up an appointment with your Academic Advisor](#), print course descriptions for all courses you would like to take abroad including a few extra as alternates. Take the course descriptions along with the Course Pre-Approval form (given by the Study Abroad Advisors) with you to the meeting to discuss how they will count toward your degree.
5. [Submit an RIT application](#) to the program you wish to attend through The Compass.
6. If necessary, [complete your program specific application](#) through the affiliate provider.
7. [Make an appointment with your Financial Aid Advisor](#) to review the Budget Worksheet and determine how much of your financial aid or scholarship can be used abroad. (In order to use financial aid, a student must take a full-time course load while abroad).
8. [Drop off a copy](#) of your acceptance letter and other required forms to the RIT Global Office.
9. [Attend the mandatory Pre-Departure meeting](#) to learn about health and safety abroad, culture shock and other travel tips to prepare for your journey.
10. Go abroad.
11. When you Return, [attend the mandatory Global Engagement Seminar](#) to reflect on your experience and learn how to incorporate your experience into your future career and job search.
12. 3-4 months later, ensure that overseas transcripts have arrived and grades have been processed.

Financing Study Abroad

The cost for study abroad varies depending on the overseas program selected. Typically study abroad fees include tuition, a program fee (which may include room and board, visa fees, travel excursions, transcript fees etc.) and estimated out-of-pocket expenses such as airfare, spending money, etc. To participate in an affiliate program, students are required to pay an External Program Fee (\$750 for short term programs, \$1,100 for long term programs) which contributes toward the cost of administering these programs. Once your student has applied and been accepted to a program, they will be responsible for paying the required deposit (amount varies for every program) directly to the program provider. For affiliate programs, the affiliate school bills RIT for the cost of the program (tuition, program fee and affiliate administration fee), minus the deposit paid, and RIT will bill the student's RIT account directly. Payment is made to RIT just as if the student was taking classes on campus, but the amount will be the affiliate charges, not RIT tuition. RIT, in turn, pays the affiliate. Faculty led and Global Campus participants usually pay RIT tuition and may have other applicable fees.

When students meet with a study abroad advisor to discuss the program they plan to attend, RIT Global will provide him/her with a Budget Worksheet for that program. The worksheet will outline all charges such as tuition costs, room and board costs and estimated out-of-pocket expenses.

In most cases, RIT financial aid can be used to help fund a student's study abroad experience, as long as they take a full-time course load. The student will want to make an appointment with his/her financial aid advisor once they receive the budget worksheet. Their financial aid advisor can then determine how much financial aid and/or scholarship can be awarded for the study abroad program.

The intersession term in December-January is a popular time for students to study abroad, but because it is condensed, it is impossible for students to take a full course load and therefore receive financial aid. To ease this burden, RIT faculty-led and global campus courses during intersession are offered at a significantly discounted tuition rate.

RIT Global also has a list of third party scholarships and resources available for students to assist with the cost of study abroad. This list can be found at <http://fellowships.rit.edu>.



Keep in mind, in addition to tuition and program fees, there may be additional expenses to study abroad. We provide an estimate on the budget worksheets, but you and your student may want to do additional research on items such as flight costs, travel costs within the country, travel costs to other areas they would like to visit while abroad, and the daily living expenses in individual countries, as they will vary greatly.

It is a good idea for students to start planning for study abroad early so that they can begin to consider and plan for the cost of study abroad. The earlier they make the decision to go abroad, the earlier they can start saving money, along with researching and applying for scholarships.



Grades and Credits

RIT Programs: Faculty-led, Global Campuses, Gateways

All approved study abroad programs will earn RIT credit or transfer credit. Students will be directly registered for RIT courses, so individual course names and letter grades appear on a student's transcript. Grading is handled the same way as on campus RIT courses; students will receive letter grades and they will calculate into a student's GPA.

Affiliate Programs

If a student participates in an affiliate program, the affiliate school will send RIT a final transcript of all courses taken abroad and the letter grades received for each course. A grade of "C" or higher will count as passing and will show as "S" for satisfactory on the RIT transcript, the grades will not be counted towards the GPA. However, if the student receives an F, he/she will receive an F on the RIT Transcript and it will be counted towards their GPA. While the actual letter grade does not appear and will not affect a student's GPA, we do inform students that it is a possibility that future employers or graduate school admission boards can request the original transcript, which shows the original letter grade, so grades DO matter!



Practical Preparations

For more detailed information and a other useful resources, go to our website and click on the student planning guide.

- **Travel Documents**

Make sure that your son or daughter's passport and any required visas are in order. Most program providers will have at least basic information regarding the entry requirements for U.S. citizens to the country where your student will be traveling. Students will also need to renew their passports if their return date is within three months of their passport's expiration date. Document processing can take a while so be sure to have your son or daughter start the process as soon as they have decided to go abroad.

- **Health**

Before going abroad, your son or daughter should have a routine physical and dental exam. Be sure your student packs a complete medical record and typed copy of any prescriptions and their ingredients (including vision prescriptions). Many countries will not allow medications to be mailed from foreign countries, so discuss with a doctor the best way to handle routine medications that need to be taken.

Also, be sure to find out if your son or daughter will require any special vaccinations for the countries to which they plan to travel. Check online at travelersvaccines.com, the National Health Department website.

- **Insurance**

Many of the affiliated programs offered at RIT provide health insurance for students when they go abroad. If not, check with your student's current insurance provider to see if their current plan will cover them while they are overseas. In many cases, it will, but be sure to get confirmation in writing. If that is not an option,

RIT Global can provide assistance with some other options. In most cases, if your student requires medical attention overseas, payment will be required up front and the student will need to submit documentation to the insurance company for reimbursement. Be sure to have an emergency plan in place that details how to cover such costs. Continue to carry your student as a dependent on your health insurance if you already are, even if they will have other coverage while abroad.

- **Safety**

All programs have in-country staff available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assist students in any type of emergency from a lost passport to an emergency evacuation. In addition, all students attend a mandatory pre-departure meeting and an in-country orientation where health and safety is thoroughly discussed.

It is a good idea to have your son or daughter register on the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. STEP is a free service offered to U.S. citizens who are living or traveling in a foreign country. STEP will email the student regular travel updates and alerts and allows for better governmental assistance in the case of an emergency. More information and registration can be found at: travelregistration.state.gov

- **Accessing Money**

Decide with your son or daughter the best way for him/her to access money for everyday needs, as well as emergency situations. Because students will not be in country long, most students refrain from getting an in country bank account. Typically students use an ATM/Debit card and a credit card for emergencies. It is important to check with your chosen bank to ask how or if its ATM card will function abroad and what extra fees may be applied.

It is also important to inform your bank when and where you will be traveling. If you neglect to do this, they may suspect that the overseas charges are fraudulent and may shut off the account without warning.

Also, remember to arrange for payment of monthly bills your student may have back at home. Car payments, loan payments and other monthly bills will continue to be due while your student is abroad, so you will want to be sure that they are being paid.



- **Travel Planning**

Once your student has been accepted into their chosen program, it is a good idea to start looking for flights right away – the earlier you book, the better the price will be. Some of the affiliates also offer group flights for their programs. Be sure to check for any flight options offered through the program provider before booking flights on your own.

Be sure to review the regulations regarding the amount, type and size of luggage that can be carried on your chosen airline. Help your son or daughter pack lightly – remember, they will be able to do laundry while abroad. Make sure to leave some extra room for souvenirs purchased while abroad.

• Keeping in touch

Have a telephone number where you can reach your student and know the times he or she is likely to be there. If your student wishes to get an international cell phone while abroad, it is best to do research for cell phone options in the country your student will be studying. There are also internet phone options such as VOIP providers (i.e. Skype), that may be worth researching. You will want to have an international phone card to use when you are calling your student overseas. Some of the program providers also offer cell phone options, so be sure to check with them prior to planning. Usually, the very first effort to contact a student after they have gone abroad is the most challenging. Students and parents are hit with the reality that he/she will be gone for an extended period of time. If you have not made arrangements in advance about when you might first talk to your student, it can be a nerve-wracking wait. Keep in mind that when a student arrives at their destination, they will be jetlagged, focused on trying to locate their luggage and where they will be staying, and they will most likely have a few days of orientation for their new program. Before departing, you should make a plan with your student about exactly when that first call or email will occur, so you will both know what to expect.

• Emergencies

All of the affiliate programs will provide students with on-site emergency contacts. Every program has residence directors and other program personnel on-site at all of their locations. RIT Global also has a list of these contacts and you can call us anytime (585-475-4466) if you need help reaching your son or daughter, or have questions or concerns.

Discuss how you will handle any family emergencies that may arise while your son or daughter is abroad. It is wise to have a written emergency communication plan listing the methods of communication to use and the order in which to use them. Give your student a copy of the plan. It should include: all family telephone numbers, access codes to any necessary messaging devices (answering machine, voicemail etc), several email addresses and information for the contacts at the program site.

In the case of security issues or natural disasters, the program provider for your student's program and/or RIT will be sure to keep you up-to-date with the latest information available.

• Data File

Gather all of the information you and your student might need while he or she is away. Keep one copy for yourself at home and make sure the student keeps a copy with them while abroad:

- Contact information for:
 - Your student (if housing has already been assigned)
 - On-site Resident Director
 - Affiliate Program Home Office
 - RIT Global/Program Director
 - RIT Campus Safety (475-3333) (24 hour RIT emergency contact)
 - Student's home physician
 - Nearest U.S. Embassy to where student will be
 - U.S. State Dept. Office of Overseas Citizens
- Insurance policy numbers & information on how to submit claims
- Copies (front & back) of your student's credit cards & a record of any bank account numbers
- Passport info:
 - Two passport photos
 - Official copy of his/her birth certificate
 - Photocopy of passport's photo, signature and visa pages
 - Passport number
- Program Calendar



