



# Durham University

## GOing Abroad With SEND





# Welcome!

Durham is proud to have a diverse student community and we want our Global Opportunities (GO) to reflect this. Students of all backgrounds and abilities are able to gain an international experience abroad through a variety of GO options and this guide is here to help provide some guidance.

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### Images

Cover –Market Square, Leipzig

p.3 – Street art, Barcelona

p.5 – Seamus Heaney Exhibition, Dublin

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# 1. Thinking About Going Abroad

## Know before you go!

It is good to start planning early. This will help give you time to think about:

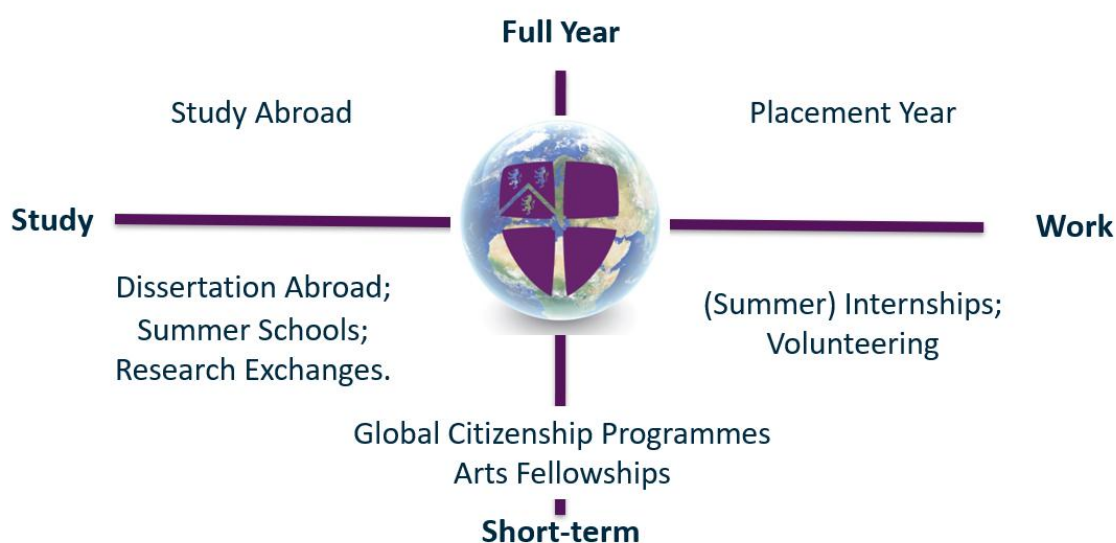
- What kind of placement do I want to do?
- How long do I want to go for?
- What are the practicalities of getting and being there?

Early planning will give time to ensure you get support structure and care in place for you to make a success of your experience. Try not to leave everything to the last minute, as can make things stressed and rushed or risk things such as appropriate accommodation being unavailable.

## What kind of placements can I do?

Many SEND students go on all Global Opportunities offered by Durham. We encourage students to think about two questions:

- 1) Do you want to work / volunteer? Or do you want to study / research?
- 2) Do you want to go for a full year? Or would you prefer a shorter (e.g. summer) placement?



## Get inspired

Many SEND students have been abroad and have amazing stories to tell. There are blogs, Instagram accounts and articles out there, where other have described their experience. For example, this article in Time Higher Education: [Studying abroad with a disability](#). Spend some time reading about these experiences... hopefully you will get inspired and learn some tips helpful to you.

Reading and researching about the country you are going to can help prepare you for cultural differences and attitudes to disability. Guidebooks, travel blogs, and international newspapers are great sources of information and these days there are a multitude of websites which can provide you with more information.

## Personal Support networks

It is not unusual to experience feelings of stress, anxiety and even isolation when moving to a new country. These feelings can be amplified if you have a disability or long-term condition. Therefore, it is a great idea to think about how you will construct a support network using the support services at Durham both before you go, and while you are away. It is important to have a think about who you can contact if you need to speak to someone. It is useful to be aware of and make a plan for how to access different support services available both before you go and when you are away:

- at Durham this may involve: [Disability Support](#), [Counselling and Mental Health Service](#), College pastoral support, friends, family, GPs etc.
- abroad: you may wish to look into what local services are available. Just be aware that these may not be in English (depending on what you are doing abroad) and their services may not be of the same standard as Durham.

You may also start thinking about making a plan of how you will make friends abroad. This may also inform your choice of activity. E.g. if you are a keen singer, is there a choir you can join? If you are a keen rock climber, is there a crag or wall at or near your placement? If you are offered a place abroad you can then start reaching out to these clubs and societies to ensure that you have contacts on arrival.

## 2. Support

While abroad students experience new cultures, people, attitudes, food, music, languages etc. Just as life in Durham has ups and downs (from the pressure of essay deadlines to post exam euphoria), it is normal for life abroad to range from challenging to amazing. While this guide strongly encourages pre-planning to ensure that students are well prepared, each student will react differently to their experiences. Durham has services that can offer support through the whole process, from pre-departure; on-placement; to return.

### Disability support & Mental Health and Counselling

These remain available to Durham students while abroad. Students may use Durham's services with both online and telephone appointments. Many partner universities offer some kind of counselling service. Some university partners offer these services in English, but others may not, hence why you can still draw upon Durham's own teams while abroad.

### College support

Similar to Disability and Mental Health and Counselling, College pastoral support staff may still be contacted during a period abroad. These are often great as a first "lighter touch" check in.

### Academic Support

Each Durham department has a [Departmental Exchange Coordinator](#). These are there to support students with academic related matters on a year abroad. Therefore, you are struggling and/or if a partner does not make academic adjustments for SEND students, your coordinator may be able to advise what Durham can do to ensure you pass a year abroad. Remember, for most students a year abroad is an Additional Year that does not bear credit and does not affect your final degree mark.

In addition, each academic department has a [Department Support Team](#) who can also provide support while away.

### International Office.

If you wish to discuss your support needs abroad further, you can contact the Global Opportunities Team. They can help facilitate contact with the placement provider. The email address is [exchanges.studyabroad@durham.ac.uk](mailto:exchanges.studyabroad@durham.ac.uk).

### Website

While abroad you can also find all the above links at the Global Opportunities [Welfare and Support](#) webpage.

# 3. International Cultural Context

## Cultural differences and legal status – what this may mean for you

One of the great things about going abroad is that it gives you the opportunity to be exposed to different cultures and practices. This, however, does mean that you cannot expect to be guaranteed to receive the same treatment as you may receive in the UK.

UK disability legislation doesn't apply to countries abroad and even the UN Convention on The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD) is interpreted and implemented differently amongst signatories. This, therefore, means that you may find there are cultural differences in how SEND rights are interpreted and applied abroad. For example:

- In Durham equality may be viewed in terms of 'opportunity to succeed' with adjustments (such as extra time in exams or staggered deadlines) made to facilitate this.
- In some countries, equality may be viewed as 'opportunity to participate' with everyone subjected to identical conditions (ie. with no adjustments made) seen by the host placement provider as equitable to all.

Therefore, just because a student receives X adjustments while in Durham they are not guaranteed to also receive X at a placement provider abroad. However, be assured Durham will seek alternative ways to support where possible.

## Things you may wish to consider when planning

Medication, aids and adaptations:

- Some countries have import restrictions on any medication, aids or adaptations. It is wise to check your desired destination and make a plan about how to receive them.
- If you are able to bring medication, can your GP provide you with sufficient quantities of your medication?
- Is any medication you take available in your host county? Will you be able to get replacement medication if you run out or misplace it?
- If you need ongoing treatment or regular health reviews how will this be provided/ funded?
- Will you need any specific medical insurance due to your health/ medical needs?

Accommodation:

- Do you know who organises the accommodation and the different types of accommodation available?
- Do you have any specific accommodation requirements such as adaptations, en-suite, location, accessibility adjustments etc. The earlier that you communicate your needs with your host university the more likely it is that any specific requirements can be taken into consideration.
- Have you looked into where the likely accommodation areas are? In some cities you may need to travel to and from placement? If so, it is wise to find out whether (e.g.) public transport meets your mobility needs.

Other cultural differences:



- When looking into (e.g.) studying abroad, find out as much as you can about the country's culture and how they view disability; this will help you make a more informed choice of where to go and what you may want to do.
- It is important to be aware that your host country may view disability and accessibility quite differently from England. Cultural norms may be more or less accommodating for certain disabilities and long-term health conditions. However, you can work with Durham to enable Durham to make adjustments.

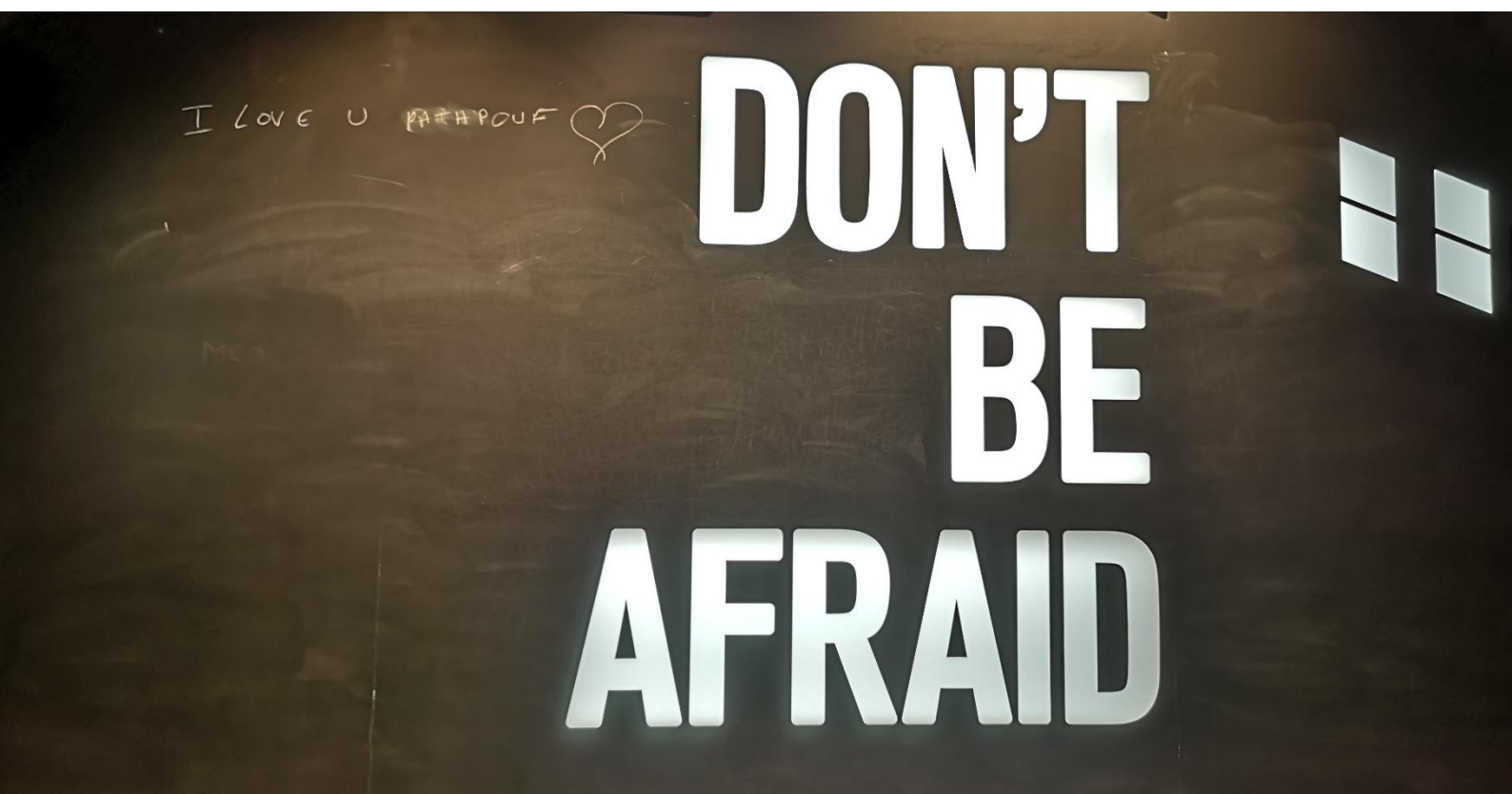
### Adjustments

Not all universities abroad offer the same range of academic adjustments or support as Durham or the UK and provision may depend on their country's legislation.

- you may wish to look at the disability service at your host to check whether they can put in place any support and exam arrangements that you may need.
- Departmental Exchange Coordinator at Durham have the discretion adjustments about how we interpret pass grades if a partner abroad cannot offer certain adjustments.

### Supporting you through this

Be assured that each year Durham's support teams help many students through this process. Please reach out as they will be happy to support you too!





## 4. Application & Pre-Departure

When making an application the International Office's Global Opportunities Team is there to support students. Should you have questions, they will be happy to answer them (or point you in the direction of who can): [exchanges.studyabroad@durham.ac.uk](mailto:exchanges.studyabroad@durham.ac.uk).

### Do I need to declare a disability when applying to a Durham University programme?

When applying for a Global Opportunity, you may be asked whether you have a disability. For Durham-led programmes, like [Study Abroad](#), this information is held separately to the scoring of applications. The question is asked as disability information:

- Makes sure that the University can access financial aid from the government to support international placements for students with SEND requirements (e.g. through the Turing scheme).
- Enables the University to liaise at the earliest opportunity with the placement provider with regards to any support that you may require.

Some programmes have 'Fair Access' schemes that particularly encourage expressions of interest from students from backgrounds where participation in study or work abroad is traditionally low. SEND may be a category included in this Fair Access scheme.

Therefore, often the decision to declare a disability is yours, however, it may be in your interest to do so.



## Do I need to declare a disability to the placement provider?

If offered a place on a scheme by Durham, some placement providers, as part of their entry and registration requirements, may ask students for a health declaration. This is common practice, particularly among Asian study abroad partners and under their laws, they have the right to ask this question. On occasion, this declaration is a form (provided by the provider) that needs to be signed by a GP. The placement provider will expect an honest disclosure.

If you have questions or concerns, the Global Opportunities Team and relevant services (Disability support etc) will be happy to assist. For example, the University can help plan your care and help frame this in a constructive manner.

### Example 1:

- Simply stating that you *have X condition requiring Y medication*, may result in a Japanese university raising concerns about your ability to undertake an exchange owing to laws against medical imports.
- Stating that you *have X condition, for which you have a care plan. The care plan involves Y medication, that you have checked with the Japanese [Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare](#) list and y does not require a "Yunyu Kakunin-sho" application*. This approach shows you are prepared, provides greater reassurance for the Japanese university, and smooths your entry to Japan.

### Example 2:

- Stating you *have X mental health condition. Durham gives you extensions for assignments, extended deadlines, 10% extra time in exams and separate room. You receive Y treatment from Durham's Counselling Service and would like to have the same or similar from [the placement provider]* may result in a provider raising concerns about your ability to undertake an exchange or a reply saying that they do not offer these accommodation (see: Cultural differences and legal status – what this may mean for you)
- Stating the above but showing that you have an agreed plan should academic concessions not be available. This plan may include: Durham's Counselling Service to access their services remotely if required; your College for pastoral support; your Departmental Exchange Coordinator for academic progression, so that success of an exchange is not contingent on the provider making adjustments. This approach pre-emptively addresses questions a partner may have and help a smooth registration.

Therefore, we strongly encourage students with needs to: 1) consider their support requirements, 2) discuss these with a professional and 3) ensure that this plan is fully set out and conveyed in any health declaration required by a provider.

## Do I need to declare a disability to Durham?

All students (regardless of SEND status or otherwise) undertaking a full year abroad have to go through a Health Declaration Process as part of the pre-departure requirements.

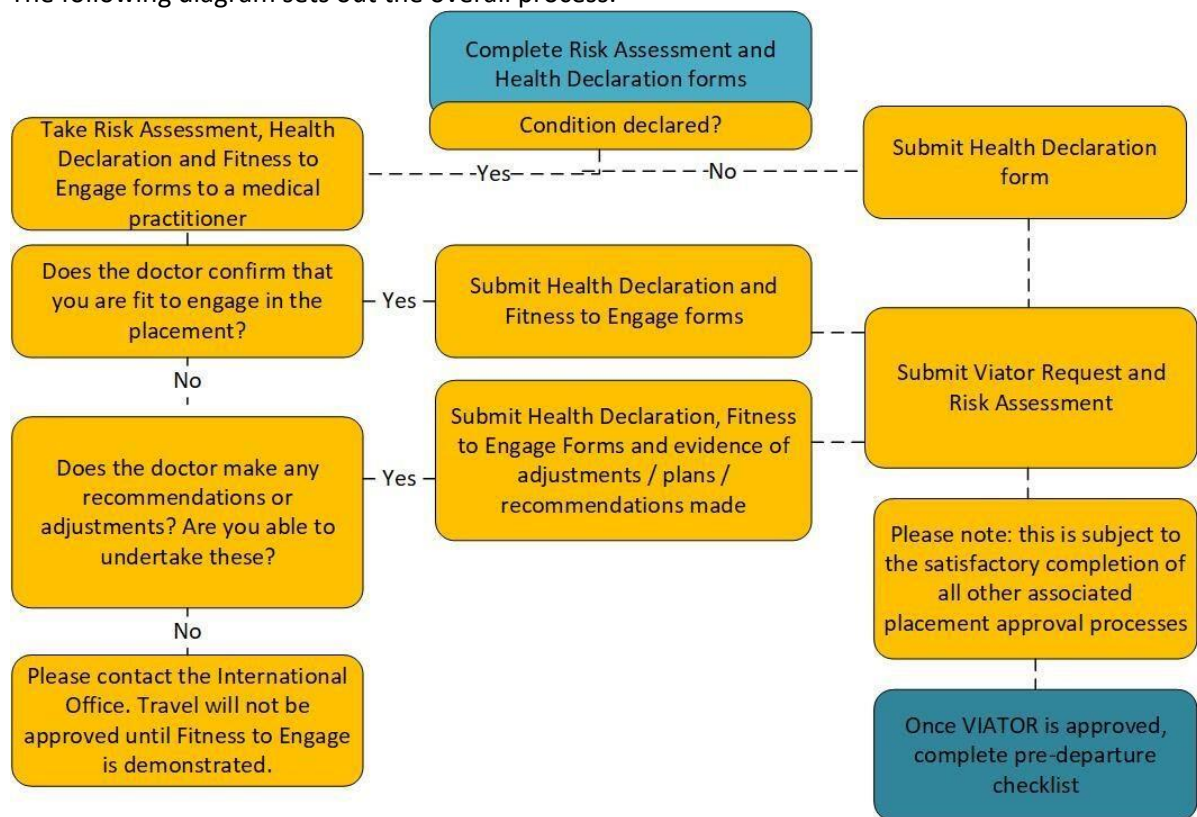
The process is intended as permissive: it is there to make sure you are prepared to engage in your year abroad whilst ensuring your health, safety and wellbeing. It should be completed alongside the Risk Assessment. You will need to:

- Complete the Health Declaration accurately, with reference to the Risk Assessment.

- Seek advice and guidance from your own medical practitioners, the University Mental Health Advisors and/or Disability Support in a timely way, to ascertain whether it is possible for you to engage safely before submitting this form.
- Assemble any evidence that is needed to support your Health Declaration and develop a support plan in collaboration with Durham's Mental Health Advisors if needed.
- Complete the form accurately and submit it in advance of the deadline for your activity. For VIATOR travel cover purposes and to qualify as university activities that contribute towards your academic course, it is essential that the Risk Assessment and Health Declaration process are complete prior to travel.

We understand that that this sounds like a lot. If you have any questions members of the Global Opportunities Team can be contacted to help you through the process one step at a time: [exchanges.studyabdoad@durham.ac.uk](mailto:exchanges.studyabdoad@durham.ac.uk).

The following diagram sets out the overall process.





## 5. While abroad

We hope things go right and for the majority of students it does. Should you be struggling with something abroad, feel free to get in contact. The support teams (see: section 2) genuinely do not mind you contacting them and will be happy to help.

## 6. And finally

We do hope that students of all abilities feel empowered to undertake a Global Opportunity. If you do, don't be afraid to encourage others through your Durham networks.