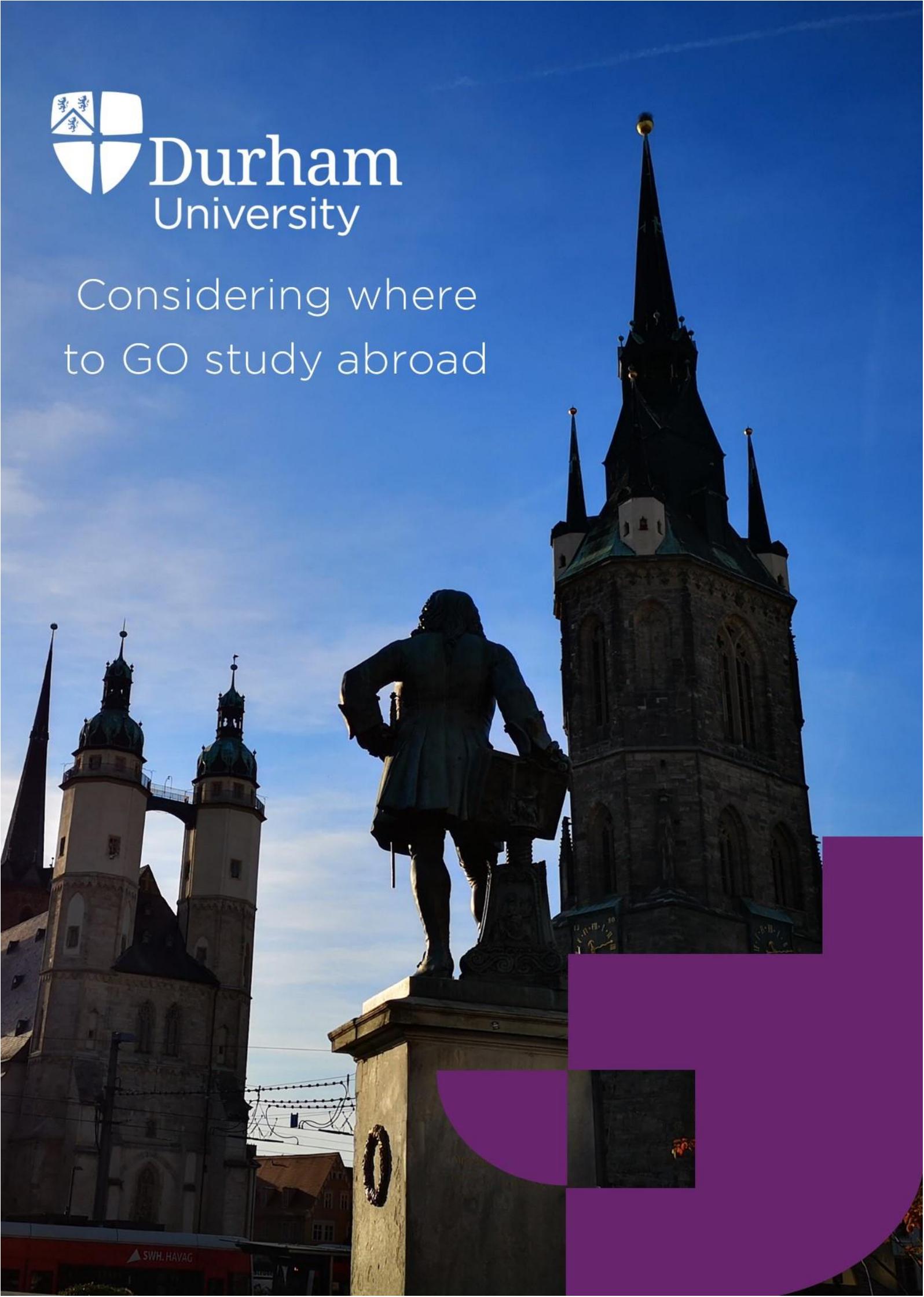




Durham
University

Considering where
to GO study abroad



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Welcome! We are delighted that you are considering spending a year abroad studying with a partner university. This guide is to help students think about where they may wish to study.

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The World Is Amazing – So Keep An Open Mind

The world is an amazing place full of hidden surprises, off the tourist track gems and opportunities out of the blue. Namur is not Cannes but it does have an [International Francophone Film Festival](#). Groningen may not Edinburgh (with its Fringe) but it does have the [Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival](#). On a year abroad you will end up seeing things you had never dreamt of and doing things that you had never imagined, so most students find that they have an enjoyable year abroad regardless of where they go.

There are not unlimited places at our partner universities, therefore, not all students will get a place at their first-choice university. While it is good to think about your first choice, it is also important to put some thought into your second and third choices, and embrace them if you are awarded a place there. (Capital) cities and other locations can always be visited while you are abroad, and you never know, you may find yourself falling in love with a city that had not been on your radar, but in which you feel totally at home.

What do Würzburg (Germany) and Okanagan (Canada) have in common?

Both are located in idyllic cities with vineyards on their doorstep, and have thriving cultural scenes and festivals. Just like many international students may not have heard of Durham (compared to Edinburgh and London) before coming here, you may never have heard of these towns compared to Munich or Vancouver. University cities have so much to offer, so when looking at our partner lists, don't disregard a place just because you don't know it.

Photo (next page): Würzburg – a vibrant UNESCO university city, with a town centre vineyard and home to the [Wein am Stein](#) festival.



Did you know that Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile is ranked 350 places lower than the Chinese University of Hong Kong?

Who cares? Your average graduate employer won't know the difference between the archaeology department at Leiden or at Utrecht, or the quality of the computer programming course at Chulalongkorn compared with Yonsei. They are more likely to be impressed *by the fact that you have taken a year abroad (or your good grades afterwards!)*.

It is easy to be blinded by irrelevant numbers, but don't forget that rankings are an arbitrary set of criteria that someone has invented. They:

- have certain biases (e.g. North American universities tend to be higher ranked than South American, with PUC actually being a prestigious Chilean university);
- have scores that may weight some subjects (e.g. medical research) higher than the subject area that you are studying - so they distort how good a place may be in reality;
- give no indication of the appropriateness of the modules available to you, the facilities for your department, the distance of accommodation from the campus or the international student opportunities at the university;
- **Most importantly rankings don't necessarily correlate what is right for you.**

Therefore, don't just choose a university because it is highly ranked. Look into what is on offer and whether it fits your ambitions and motivations.

Big or Small?

Both have their merits! Again, think about what kind of international experience you would like and what you may have to do to achieve it.

In a small city it is possible to truly get to know a place and become embedded in the local scene and culture. You'll no longer be *another* English (speaking) tourist and get sense of belonging to a place – a sense of home. An international student visiting a London university isn't necessarily going to Buckingham palace every day, but an international student in Durham may find they get a very quintessentially British experience. In small(er) locations you may find a deeper international experience with locals, rather than an international experience based on what is being offered to the busload of American tourists wanting to look at Checkpoint Charlie, the Arc de Triomphe or the leaning tower of Pisa. Finally, have a look at a map – some big city campuses are nowhere near the city centre, whereas a smaller city may be walkable and locate you in the middle of a social and cultural life.

Conversely, a big city may also be right for you. Some big cities can have a small feel: in Berlin the Freie Universität is set in the outskirts close the botanic gardens and Wannsee lakes. This offers a different experience to the Humboldt University, which is right in the tourist centre (both are connected though with excellent light rail). A large university is likely to have many international students, which could be a comfort blanket, but you may also want to get away from English being the lingua franca.

Either way, there is no right answer, pick locations that you have looked into and feel that they are right for you. And don't forget: if you wanted to go to a capital but don't end up at your first-choice university, most places can be visited easily on weekend trips.

Photo: (next page) Tokyo at dusk – buildings and people as far as they eye can see.



Dare to be Different

Durham's Global Opportunities programme is truly global and we have partners right across the globe: from Iasi to Iceland. Each year we have a number of students who visit less well-known countries and partners and end up having a wonderful and unique experience. Being exposed to different cultures and ways of life can be challenging, but it can also be affirming as across the world you can find a real depth of human connection. So why not consider the University of Iceland in Reykjavik or the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest!?

Do Your Research

Above all: **do your research**. Only you can come up with a set of choices that suit your needs. Properly looking into the options will help you get a sense of what is available and help prepare you for being abroad. Further, it may even reveal some cities and ideas that could visit on trips. Along with the thoughts about module choices, city size etc, have a think about things like:

- Look at a map! Check the location, geography and topography. This will save being surprised that (e.g.) Paris Cergy is located an hour by train from the Eifel Tower. Or help you find some mountains if you are hillwalker/climber/fell runner. Moreover, you may want to see whether most accommodation is within walking or cycling distance of the campus and lectures.
- Check your hobbies – use a search engine to see what sports / clubs / societies there are? These are a great way to meet like-minded people, so if you have a niche favourite activity, it is worth seeing whether you can do it there.
- Look at the cost – we have worldwide partners and cost of travel and cost of living varies greatly.

And Finally...

Once you have had a good look, make a choice based on what, on balance, feels right for you. But still keep an open mind - both in terms of all of your choices but also in terms of when you arrive on your year abroad. Part of doing a year abroad is being exposed to different things and keeping an open mind will help immerse you in the opportunities presented.

All of Durham's partner universities can be found here: [GO Study Abroad: Where](#).

Photo (next page) – Tamsui Environment Arts Festival (Taipei)

