**Study Abroad letter Year 1**

4 August 2023

Dear Fresher,

You will shortly be beginning your studies in the School of Law at the University of Glasgow. You may already be experiencing a mixture of emotions – excitement, apprehension, anticipation. But perhaps surprisingly, I now am writing to encourage you to think about leaving Glasgow for part of your studies.

As the International Mobility Officer for the School of Law, I am aware that many of you will have chosen Glasgow because of the unrivalled opportunities it offered for studying abroad in your third year. Our School has the highest percentage of ‘study abroad’ participation of any law school in the UK. When figures were last analysed, it appeared indeed that 1 in 18 of all Erasmus participants in Scotland (including language students) are Glasgow law students.

Studying abroad in year 3

Why take part in ‘study abroad’? Students return to Glasgow at the end of their 3rd year reporting strong benefits including increased confidence, new skills, international friendships, and awareness and understanding of another legal system. In short, ‘study abroad’ has positive outcomes in the academic, personal and professional spheres. In particular, employers report they view ‘study abroad’ favourably, on account of the many benefits it brings. This – in a time of real pressure in the jobs market – is a significant reason. But it’s also enjoyable: almost every one of our students (a staggering 97%) report positive/highly positive experiences.

We have study abroad places in English-teaching universities in Europe, North America, Asia and Australasia. We also have law with language links not only in Europe but also in South America. We’ve recently extended our links to include Hamburg (Bucerius), Brno and Ljubljana, and established the only ‘Law with Russian’ programme within the EU (with European Humanities University in Lithuania). You will have the opportunity in September to hear about the opportunities and experiences ‘study abroad’ offer from returning Glasgow students.

Developing your language skills

Some of you may also be interested in improving language skills (and even possibly studying in France, Germany, Spain or Italy in a foreign language) - if ‘study abroad’ is looked upon favourably by employers, ‘law with language’ programmes are even more beneficial in future employment. If you have a language skill, try to **keep it going**, and develop it further while you are in the School of Law in Glasgow or abroad. Whatever Scotland’s constitutional future will entail, there will be a need for graduates with language skills.

There are several ways in which you can develop (or even start) a language.

* If you have applied for a ‘law with language’ programme, you will study another language as part of your normal curriculum, and you will study in that language when abroad. You will be able to take part in a short study visit in year 1 to explore some destinations available to you and to meet level 3 students from Glasgow who are studying in another language abroad. (The German visit normally takes place at the end of November, the French visit in March and the Spanish visit in March/April).
* If you have language skills and interested in keeping these going (or even starting a new language) without embarking upon a ‘law with language’ programme, there are a number of options, including student-organised weekly language-group meetings with incoming law students. We also have exchange places in Spain, France and Germany where the teaching is in English but you have the possibility of improving your language skills (ie, you are on a ‘standard’ law programme but you can also get credits for language study).

Short-term mobility opportunities

The Law School also has an unparalleled range of short-term outward mobility opportunities for students who feel they cannot go abroad in year 3 for a semester, or for students who can and do, and want even more mobility. These are also available to accelerated law programme students. For example, we offer a comparative law project (with Mainz) and the level 4 European Human Rights Project (in Strasbourg and Freiburg). Law students have also signed up for summer programmes: working with people in areas devastated by flooding (in Germany); finding out about policing (at the Brandenburg Police Academy); learning languages and taking a range of courses (at Nijmegen); and taking business-oriented courses (at Stockholm).

Of course, the Brexit referendum outcome was deeply disappointing to put it mildly. Glasgow was strongly in favour of remaining within the EU (in line with higher education institutions across the UK), but a majority (just) of the UK electorate that turned out to vote on the day decided to imperil your opportunities to study and to work abroad. Britain has certainly become a more inward-looking place. Even more concerning than Brexit was the UK Government’s decision in 2020 that students in Great Britain would no longer be able to take part in the world’s most successful exchange programme, ERASMUS. The UK Government’s replacement funding is a poor replacement (only 44% of the University’s 2022 bid was successful). More positively, the Scottish Government’s manifesto contained a commitment to reinstate a programme similar to ERASMUS in line with that introduced by the Welsh Government, less positively, it is not clear whether any such replacement scheme will be in place in time for you to benefit it, even if the UK Government does not seek to hinder this initiative.

Whatever happens, we will do our utmost to make sure that our outward exchange programme will continue, and that it will be available to all students no matter their financial background. The University of Glasgow is a proudly international institution, deeply rooted in the best European traditions of learning and committed to offering our students the widest possible opportunities. Whatever the constitutional situation for Scotland in the future, the country will need graduates who have the skills and outlooks that study exchange enhances.

Please begin even now to think about study abroad and the opportunities, benefits and choices this entails. You will have the chance to hear more about study abroad opportunities in semester 1 of year 1, so there is plenty of time to prepare for your third year abroad. And very best of luck with your legal studies at one of the world’s top law schools.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Jim Murdoch

School of Law International Mobility Officer