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# ***UB Semester in London***

## ***January 13 to April 23, 2016<sup>1</sup>***

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## **Study Abroad Program Guide**

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<sup>1</sup> We appreciate helpful advice from many people: UB Study Abroad personnel, CAPA staff, Leonard Chew, Fung Shing Wong, Andrew Yeo, and all the 2014 *UB Semester in London* inmates of debiworld, in the preparation of this Handbook. Please do not use any portion of these materials without the express permission of the authors.

# Table of Contents

Welcome from RJ Tan and Debi Street

## Destination London

Special notes about our destination	
Climate and Transportation.....	1
Food and Alcohol.....	3
Special notes about our program	
Useful Websites and Program Director .....	4
The Academic Program.....	5
Accommodations.....	7

## Application & Pre-arrival

English Proficiency Exam (for Singaporean and non-US students) .....	8
Police Certificate of Clearance.....	9
Submission of UK visa application .....	9
Internship Issues .....	9

## Practical Advice

Money.....	12
Computers and wifi.....	13
Phones .....	14
Time, Water, Food .....	15
Transportation to London, Passports and Visas.....	16
Safety and Security, Electrical appliances.....	16
Packing Tips.....	17

## Arrival in London

Arriving and settling in, orientations @ CAPA.....	19
Getting to know your roommates & flat mates.....	19

## In-country Experiences

Commuting.....	21
Juggling Coursework .....	22
Juggling Internships .....	22
Exploring London .....	23
Travelling out of London.....	24

Saying Goodbye .....	25
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Important Emergency Contact Information .....	26
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## ***Welcome! from RJ and Debi***

Congratulations on making a brilliant and life-changing decision to study abroad in London. Although it may seem a long time before the program starts, your January London arrival date will be here before you know it. You'll be settling into your flats, dazed with jet-lag, and wondering if you will be able to remember the names of your roommates when you awaken in the morning.

Believe this: The *UB Semester in London* program will stay with you long after you leave. Our hopes are for you to make the most out of your time abroad. After all, you have already spent quite a bit of time, effort, worry, and money on this endeavor...now it is up to you to make this experience a worthwhile investment in your future. To do that means laying down a solid groundwork of pre-departure preparations at home, taking advantage of all of the opportunities that come your way while you are in London, anticipating challenges and developing coping mechanisms when things don't quite work as planned, deciding to do your best at everything you do in London, and then reaping the rewards of learning, travelling and making friends from all around the world.

There will be, of course, inevitable bumps and bruises along the way. But don't lose hope! And certainly not your sense of humor or curiosity. Being in a new and strange environment is always a little disconcerting and unless you decide differently, there is always a risk that it won't bring out the best in you. Just remember to approach every situation with an open mind and go with the flow. Realize that frustrations, and dealing with them positively, are part and parcel of your journey. Don't whine. Learn from every mistake or embarrassing moment (there will be some, that's okay, we all have them). Laugh at yourself. Laugh with others. Celebrate the novel and diverse perspectives that you will encounter in London. Think big, be generous, give the benefit of the doubt. You have what it takes to overcome seemingly daunting and unfamiliar situations and come out the other side, a stronger, more resilient, more accomplished, better educated, and MUCH more interesting person.

RJ Tan (a former *UB Semester in London* student) and Debi Street (program director) prepared this Guide to help you before and during your time in London. It's essentially everything you need to know (well, almost) about this program. We hope you find it useful and that, when you look back on your adventure, you will discover that you love London as much as we do!

RJ Tan (2014 *UB Semester in London* student alumna)

Debi Street (*UB Semester in London* program director)

**DESTINATION:  
LONDON****SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT OUR DESTINATION*****Climate***

Winter can be grey and cold, sunny and cold, or wet and cold. Every variation of cold will be available for our adventure! Dress in layers. Hats, scarves, gloves and warm socks are a must. While it is unlikely to snow, it will often feel very cold. London is full of old buildings that typically alternate between drafty/chilly and overheated, so having a layer to peel off (and put back on) is important. We also spend much more time outdoors in the elements (walking between destinations, waiting at bus stops) than people from car/taxi cultures might expect. Jeans and sweaters are appropriate dress for most of our activities. Although you may find them most comfortable, sweats, pajamas, tracksuits and running shoes (called trainers in the UK) may make people sneer and think "tacky" in very fashionable London. For at least one or two occasions, having something dressier to wear than daily jeans and sweaters would be nice: dress, skirt, or trousers for women and casual business dress shirt/trousers for men would be most appropriate.

Just about when you think you will never be entirely warm or dry again, spring happens! The sun shines, the temperature warms up so much that you think picnics in the park might be the best way to spend the day—and you are probably right. One advantage of our program is that we start with the shortest days and the worst weather, and end with long spring evenings and (at least some) sunny spells. The layers can be transformed into spring clothing, simply by wearing fewer of them.

***Transportation***

Every student will receive a Zones 1-2 Oyster card upon arrival (more information about this will be provided in your pre-departure briefing). We will travel to program activities via foot, the Tube (underground), buses, and over ground trains. You will learn how to "queue up" (line up) politely to board public transportation in our first few transportation experiences. Remember, putting a bag or (worse) your feet on an empty seat in public transportation is the height of rudeness on a crowded public transportation system. Your public transport travel fare entitles you only to occupy the space of a single seat—if you can find one! Impress people with how courteous UB students are, even in unfamiliar surroundings. Be sure to surrender your seat to disabled or injured passengers, the elderly, or pregnant women—anyone who is less able to stand than you are.

You will do more—much more—walking than you are accustomed to; having VERY comfortable footwear is essential. Wear your most comfortable shoes on the plane and pack another equally comfortable pair. That way, your feet can always be dry/warm. Wet feet get cold; London is cold. Wet feet are prone blisters; London is wet. This is essential: bring/wear comfortable shoes.

*“Download Citymapper on your phone before you get here. It’s going to be the guiding light when you’re trying to figure how to get around.” – RJ Tan*

London is a safe city, but students are encouraged to be very aware of their surroundings (pickpocketing can happen in crowds) and to walk in groups at night. Do not take cruising mini-cabs, call for a taxi if you need one, or take one of London’s iconic regular taxis.

## **Food**

Flats have fully equipped kitchens that you should use, especially with good supermarkets nearby and street markets in abundance. Preparing meals at home in expensive London is a real money saver—spend the pounds saved on dining “at home/from home” for other activities. Most prior students said that they weren’t fully aware how expensive food is in London, and wished they had prepared more of their own meals (cereal for breakfast, packing a sandwich for lunch rather than buying one, bringing along snacks and water). Buying water every day is unnecessarily costly and adds up fast, both in terms of money and harm to the environment (those plastic bottles...).

There are restaurants and cafes everywhere, some are spectacular, others are awful. Food can be very expensive and really blow your budget if you are not careful. Supermarkets and most street markets have high quality, reasonably priced food. However, prices in restaurants range from somewhat to very expensive and serving sizes are often small by US standards (but sensible by other standards). Buying food to take away is usually cheaper than eating in. If you see two prices on the board when you order your food at a cafe counter, the lower price is for takeaway. For UB students from Singapore, there is simply no equivalent to a hawker center in London. However, nearly any type of cuisine imaginable can be found there. Expect to possibly participate in/contribute to one or two potluck meals; having at least a few potluck meals has become a London tradition.

## **Alcohol**

All participants will be of legal drinking age while in London. Every participant must behave responsibly in choices involving alcohol, as the abuse of alcohol endangers not only the individual who does, but other participants in the program as well. Alcohol **abuse** is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program, at the discretion of the program director. However, wine and beer (especially in friendly pubs) are certainly staples of the British culture of food and drink, and can be enjoyed in moderation. Remember, alcohol consumption is never mandatory and students should feel absolutely no pressure or obligation whatsoever to participate in the consumption of alcohol.

## SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

The State University of New York at Buffalo provides for the accredited academic portion of the *UB Semester in London* program. CAPA International is UB's partner, and acts as a supportive organization to provide the services we need for a successful Study Abroad semester. Their role is to provide logistic support—CAPA arranges housing, London transportation passes and internships, and provides visa support. CAPA has its own facilities in the South Kensington area of London, which is where UB orientations and classes are held. The University at Buffalo has designed a highly customized program that is designed specifically to meet the academic needs of UB students and to support their timely graduation. CAPA's role is to assist the University in delivering a high quality program in London. Bear in mind that CAPA also serves other universities and study abroad programs, whose activities and academic programs are very different from the *UB Semester in London* program. Those other programs are designed for other purposes, with many fewer inclusions and activities, and much less personal attention than students receive in the UB program. When in doubt, always ask the UB Program Director (Debi Street) or consult with the UB Study Abroad office to get accurate information about the *UB Semester in London* program. Much of the generic material on the CAPA website does not pertain at all to the *UB Semester in London* program.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.visitbritain.com/en/US/>

<http://www.timeout.com/london>

Access other helpful London/UK sites from <http://london.usembassy.gov/uk4us.html>

## THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Debra (Debi) Street, PhD, is Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University at Buffalo. She taught in study abroad programs for Purdue University and the Florida State University, before designing the *UB Semester in London* program in 2009. She is a former Research Fellow at King's College, London; a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of American; and an elected member of the National Academy of Social Insurance (United States). Besides teaching on UB's north campus, Dr. Street also directs a winter session study abroad program in London (Sociology of Food) and frequently teaches at UB's south-south campus at UB-SIM in Singapore. An award-winning professor, she received the 2011 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Debi is also a theatre nut, a proud Canadian, a patriotic American, a Singaporean at heart, and an Anglophile who is also a citizen of the United Kingdom!

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South Kensington

## THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

We will begin the program with an early-December north campus orientation session, and/or a Skype/email orientation session to UB-SIM that will include an overview of London and details about program specifics. Students are expected to monitor their UB email at least several times a week after program admission (October 1) through December 1 to keep up with important information about activities and travel. After December 1, students are expected to check their UB email daily in case there is late-breaking and/or important information about the program, pre-departure. This is especially important for accessing up to date information about coordinating visas and airline arrangements and transportation to student housing in London.

### ***Program Description***

2016 is the eighth year for the *UB Semester in London* program. Our academic program is detailed below. The academic program will include classroom lectures, readings, written reaction papers, plus fieldwork and site visits associated with expanding knowledge about sociological concepts, public policy and health care. It also includes the London internship and associated coursework. Students must register for at least 12 credit hours. Credit hours beyond 12 (the two classroom-based classes plus the 6 credit hour internship required for program participation) requires students to make their own arrangements for additional or different coursework, in consultation and with prior approval from Professor Street. Unless students make appropriate arrangements with Professor Street by December 1, 2015, the *UB Semester in London* academic program will consist of 12 academic credit hours in sociology.

All course-related site visits and activities will be on foot or via public transportation. All required activities are covered by the program fee. Students also pay for program activities in their program fee, but unless it is a required activity, students may “opt out” with 24 hours’ notice. There is no refund for failing to attend a program event. Many optional activities will be offered on a sign up and go basis: optional activities may sometimes have additional out of pocket costs.

### ***Course Descriptions***

#### **SOC 467: Sociology of Social Policy** (3 credit hours, letter grade)

London is the platform for a critical assessment of how sociological theory and social science research can improve understanding of the development, implementation, and outcomes associated with social policies in different national contexts. Studying here provides the unique opportunity to take an “outsider” perspective, useful for learning about UK policies but with enough distance for a critical look back at US and Singaporean social policies. We examine legislative, economic, and political issues that shape citizens’ daily lives, through analysis of a range of social policies: education, income support, transportation, housing, etc.

#### **SOC 477: Sociology of Health** (3 credit hours, letter grade)

Visits to London health-related field sites will supplement classroom work as we consider sociological perspectives on health care. We will explore the varied roles of patients and providers, treatment facilities and health care systems in the context of other social institutions in developed countries. The approach will be explicitly comparative. Topics we cover will include the cost, quality

and access to health care; the rationales, strengths and weaknesses of governmental versus private control; rights and responsibilities within health care systems; current issues in reform debates.

**SOC 496: London Internship.** (6 credit hours, pass/fail)

Students gain experience relevant to disciplinary interests and professional aspirations in a variety of government, service, non-profit, and business settings. The written component of this course will be primarily about first-hand experience gained in London-based settings and individual reflection on the experiences. Students will have the opportunity to see theories and issues they have studied in courses put into real world practice, the experiential component that occurs in the workplace. This course is an upper level course that straddles academic and professional worlds. Consequently, you will be held to the same standards that would apply if you were attending graduate school and/or embarking on a professional career (not a McJob) in an organization post-graduation.

### ***Assignments***

Students will receive a formal syllabus/description of assignments for SOC 467, SOC 477 and SOC 496 the first week of class. All course work is designed so that it can be completed while in London, depending only on resources readily available in London, and must be submitted by Thursday April 21. Skipping assignments/missing deadlines/failing to fully participate in course and program activities will definitely lower grades.

### ***Grading and Conduct***

All students will be registered by the Study Abroad office for full time SUNY tuition in a block of credit hours under the study abroad program. Because the Study Abroad office will register you automatically as part of your program participation, you don't need to do anything yourself to get registered for spring 2015 (the only exception here is for students taking MGO 302 or MGE 302 online, read important note below and contact Debi Street for more information about that).

At the end of the semester, once all work has been completed, grades will be distributed into the appropriate courses for academic credit. Students will receive letter grades for SOC 467 and SOC 477 and pass/fail for SOC 496. All students are required to take these 12 credit hours (except business majors, who must take SOC 467 and SOC 496, but may choose not to take SOC 477, see note below). In the program courses, students are expected to apply sociological concepts in ways that are appropriate for their level of education, experience, and major—expectations in that regard are reasonable for non-sociology majors and for students with different class standings (sophomore, junior, senior). Student grades can be enhanced or deteriorate depending on willingness to acclimate and adapt to participate fully in the academic component of the study abroad experience.

Frequent debriefing in London for the program courses will help students discuss concerns or resolve conflicts, to accommodate needs and requests, and to assist students with assignments. Students must behave in ways that reflect favorably on our home nations and the University at Buffalo, who we represent. While behavioral problems are not anticipated, any that arise will be dealt with quickly, firmly, and fairly. Serious infractions (such as illegal activity, aggressive behavior, failure to attend class activities or internships without a valid excuse, or willful damage of property) may result in dismissal from the program.



**Important note to all students about their course load in London.** Read this very carefully.

The program fee is for “full time” academic credit in London. Unless prior arrangements are agreed between you and Professor Street by **November 15** and fully arranged by **December 1, 2014**, the *UB Semester in London* academic program will consist of 12 hours of academic credit in SOC 467 (3 hours), SOC 477 (3 hours) and SOC 496 (6 hours). There are a few ways you can alter the combination of coursework you do (to get to 15 credit hours) described below, but only if you act now and consult with Professor Street.

**For most students there are 3 customization options for 3 more credit hours (total 15 hours):**

1. You can make your own arrangements with another professor in a different discipline (or another sociologist, if you want to work on an independent study with one of my colleagues) to do a 3 credit hour independent study course via email/online/other remote means. No professor is obligated to do this, so if you want to try, you should have a good idea and reason why it would be appropriate and get an agreement in place NOW. Professor Street will need a copy of the learning agreement and verification from the professor that they will supervise your work for the independent study while you are in London and that they agree all course work will be completed and a grade reported to me not later than May 13, 2016. If you do this, you will still take the program of 12 credit hours (described above) and add 3 credit hours of independent study for a total of 15 credit hours.
2. You may propose a 3 credit hour independent study in Sociology, supervised by Professor Street. Send Professor Street a 2-3 page proposal (it should describe your topic, research question, method of research, annotated bibliography) by December 1<sup>st</sup>. She will consider whether what you propose to do for 3 hours of academic credit is feasible while studying and interning in London.
3. You may opt to take, for 3 hours of SOC credit (with work mainly through independent effort and not classroom instruction), SOC 471 Group Research. Students must complete a group research project, working mainly independently/in consultation with Professor Street (think of this as a group independent study). If you opt for this, there will likely be some Friday mandatory activities required for course credit.

**Most students will take the internship for 6 hours of sociology credit. Sociology majors and business majors are eligible for SOC credit only. For students from other majors wanting some or all of their internship credit to count for something other than sociology credit:**

1. If you are a COM student, you may be able to take 3 of the internship hours for COM credit and the remaining 3 for SOC credit. If you want to do this, we will discuss how you can make appropriate arrangements with the COM internship supervisor, Dr. Vivian Williams, to have half of your internship credit to count towards COM. Those arrangements need to be made by Nov 15 and communicated to Professor Street.
2. If you are a PSY major, you may be able to take 3-6 of the internship credit hours for PSY credit, although doing so will not replace the PSY requirement for a specific number of letter graded 400 level credit hours. Professor Street would need to start arranging that with Ms. Christa Greenberg, by Nov. 15, so it is important to inform Professor Street soon after admission to the program.

3. If you are an IDP student, this internship may be able to count for 3 hours of IDP credit and 3 hours of SOC credit. That would need approval from the Director of the IDP program, Dr. Susan Smith, and coordination with Ms. Sandra Handy, the internship coordinator by Nov. 15.
4. These are the only variations in internship credit that are available. Please don't ask about others, there are none available. And these variations are not automatic, you need to request them and have all arrangements/agreements in place before December 1, 2015.

For business majors only:

1. If you are a business major, you may be able to take MGO 302 or MGE 302, which are Digital Access courses, online while you are in London. Let Professor Street know immediately if this is something you want to do.
2. If you are a business major and you enroll in MGO 302 and/or MGE 302 for spring 2015, you must still take SOC 467 and SOC 496, but you can opt not to take SOC 477. Best advice is not to overload in London so that you have ample time to perform well in your required course work, internship, and life in London. You must let Professor Street know what you plan to do and arrangements must be agreed before December 1, 2015.

General notes on non-sociology credits

Students taking courses other than SOC 467, 477 and 496 while in London will receive grades as specified by the instructors with whom they made arrangements for those courses. It may be possible to arrange for credit in courses other than sociology, but it is up to the individual student (in consultation with Professor Street) to make those arrangements. At the end of the semester, the instructor for the non-sociology courses will inform Professor Street of the final grade and the grades will be submitted by her to the Study Abroad office for recording with the registrar.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Students will stay in conveniently located shared flats in/near central London—well-equipped flats in a neighborhood with a lively vibe and good transportation links. Each flat has a fully equipped kitchen, lounges (living rooms) with TVs and shared bedrooms. Same sex students will share rooms. Costs for accommodations are included in the program fee; all students are required to live in program housing. We will study in classrooms at the CAPA London Study Centre on Cromwell Road in South Kensington, which is about a 10 minute walk from Earls Court or Gloucester Road underground stations.

## APPLICATION AND PRE-ARRIVAL

Before any moving to London can happen, you must handle all of the administrative application information which will include your academic application, letters of recommendation, police background checks (certificates of clearance in Singapore) and several other UB- and CAPA-required documents. Only after you have submitted all required documents (and proved English proficiency by IELTS or other approved test, depending on your citizenship, not required for US and Canadian passport holders) will you receive a visa number that will let you apply for the Tier IV student visa that is required for participation in this program.

*TIP:* Monitor email daily, not just occasionally. Take care of time-sensitive issues right away – there's no excuse for failing to do so. Read all of the emails very carefully, from start to finish before asking questions and ALWAYS reply your emails, whether from the UB Study Abroad office, Professor Street, or CAPA. Part of being resourceful enough to study abroad is being responsible for handling your own application requirements, especially those clearly explained in correspondence to you. By all means, ask clarification questions, but read your correspondence and program materials first.

The first thing you had to do was complete the materials for the academic application to the program. Writing a good cover letter and resume were also critical application tasks; these two documents are required to help you secure a good internship placement, not to get a place in the program (see below). The UB Study Abroad office has helped several to strengthen and work on those documents to have the strongest possible internship application. After skype interviews, CAPA personnel might suggest other changes. Be open-minded about doing that—we are all trying to help you get an internship that is a “good fit” for you.

For students who do not hold US or Canadian passports, you must prove English Proficiency to qualify for a Visa from the UK Border Agency.

If you do:

### ***English Proficiency Exams***

Sign up for IELTS or other approved English proficiency test (TOEFL is no longer accepted, check to be sure you have taken the right test) as soon as possible. Exam dates are NOT flexible and are typically based on a first come, first served basis. Book your English exams early as it takes time for exam results to be processed.

Hopefully everyone has booked the IELTS/English proficiency test already, as testing slots and test dates are often limited. For students from Singapore, check this website for more information:

- <https://www.britishcouncil.org.sg/en/ielts-and-exams/ielts>

For non-US passport holders in the United States, seek advice from the Study Abroad office about tests to demonstrate English proficiency that are adequate for the UK Border Agency and get that taken care of NOW.

## **Police Certificate of Clearance**

UB North campus students should check with the UB Study Abroad office about how to complete their police checks, and obtain them as early in the process as possible. For Singapore students, the certificate takes 10 days to process and the office is only open from 8am-2pm. You will have to download and fill in the form from the Singapore Police Force website and submit it to the Police Cantonment Complex at Outram. A screenshot of your acceptance into the program should be sufficient proof of why you need the police certificate.

## **UK VISA Application**

After getting all necessary documents assembled (including IELTS/English proficiency results, if applicable) and demonstrating that you have a valid passport, you will receive a unique Tier IV visa number from CAPA (early to mid-November) that will permit you to submit your visa application at the UK Border Agency. Do that immediately. You cannot process your visa for this program without receiving a visa number from CAPA, and CAPA cannot apply for the visa number until you have completed all of the preliminary paperwork (both UB and CAPA), been admitted to the program, and proven yourself “visa eligible” (including proof of English proficiency for certain non-US students).

Remember to follow the document on visa preparation sent by the CAPA Boston contact (Doreen) closely, and begin your visa paperwork immediately. You have to surrender your passport to the British government for up to two weeks to get the visa, so it is essential that you plan early enough to accommodate holiday closings (Thanksgiving in the US, Christmas and New Year in the US and Singapore) and any other travel you plan that requires your passport.

*“Complete your VISA application before it’s too late! The prices increase for express service if you do it later.” – Cindy Ng*

All students should apply for their Tier IV student visas just as soon as they can—no one can participate in the *UB Semester in London* without one, and no one wants to worry at the last minute about whether they have visa eligibility to be in London.

## **Internship Issues**

It is important to submit your online application materials related to internships promptly, to ensure smooth processing of your internship application. Your cover letter/resume creates everyone’s—CAPA internship team, possible internship sites—first impression of you. Ask CAPA staff when you are interviewed if you should rewrite yours. Here are some helpful websites:

- <https://www.cambridgenetwork.co.uk/recruitment-gateway/tips-for-finding-jobs/cv-tips/>
- <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-write-the-perfect-resume-2012-11?IR=T&op=1>
- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/sethporges/2012/08/29/6-secrets-to-writing-a-great-cover-letter/>

*“The initial letter that you write to CAPA is the most crucial. Know that your cover letter is for the internship you want and not just to get you in to the program.”*

*– Wei Xiang Peh*

When discussing your internship preferences, state clearly the kinds of things you are interested in doing and the skills you already have to put to work to be an incredible intern once you get placed. Be open-minded and think in general areas of potential work experience, rather than demanding specific jobs and/or sites. Be realistic, the fact is that you’re a beginner with little to offer most potential professional placements except your enthusiasm and willingness to learn. You can research about the type of placements or work situations you might like to try in London and you can always ask the CAPA internships team for advice. But please, understand the placement process and your prospects – internships in London are incredibly competitive—mean that landing a good internship depends both on having the necessary skills and on persuading (through your cover letter and resume) an internship site that you really are worth the time and effort your supervisors will invest in mentoring you during your placement. Help the CAPA internship team help you, by having a reasonable set of expectations that are consistent with your experiences and skills!

Recognize that every day on every internship will not be “awesome”...some days may be mundane and boring, a few may even be frustrating. That is what careers in the real world feel like. But you will still learn important things about yourself, gain experience and understand international workplaces. No matter how routine your activities on a particular day, if you make the most of every opportunity, your internship will have value for what you do in your future life. Decide before you go to London that you are going to be the best intern you can be, every single day, no matter what. If you want to have an exciting and gratifying internship experience, the best way to do that is to be an exciting, dependable, and motivated intern.

What most students take away from their internships reflects exactly what was put into it. Speak up for yourself. Be curious, be respectful, ask questions, be punctual, be dependable, try hard. Don’t be afraid—to ask how to do something, to ask for more work, to ask to try something new. Think about ways you can apply your enthusiasm and talent to tasks that matter for the organization where you intern. If you merely wait to be assigned tasks and complete them competently, you will likely have an “average” internship experience. If you are enthusiastic and think creatively about how you can contribute to your internship organization and if you do your work dependably and carefully, you are much more likely to have an “awesome” experience. However, if you merely show up, clock watch, go through the motions, put in the time, and muddle through, you may have an “awful” internship experience, in the sense that you won’t have gained much insight into yourself or the real world of jobs because you did not invest much effort. You will still have international work experience, but without learning as much as you could have, if you had only tried a little harder. To have an awesome experience in your internship, be an awesome intern. Make that role AWESOME.

The CAPA internships team and potential internship sites will review your cover letter and resume/CV, and try to figure out whether you are a highly skilled person who is likely to be professional and dependable, or whether you are a beginner, but a fast learner who seems likely to grow into a challenging and meaningful internship experience (both kinds of people make great interns). Your cover letter and resume are important first impressions that can land you an interview. Or they can cause an internship site to review them and think, no, this person does not really have any characteristics our organization needs. Ask yourself: what can I already do? What specific skills do I have? How can I best sell myself as someone any organization would want to hire if a real job

was on offer? If I was competing for paid employment (think of an internship as a potential pathway to that), what about my resume or cover letter (or letters of recommendation from previous employment or volunteer position) would convince someone to give me a job rather than someone else? Do I bring potential value to the internship site where I might work because of my dedication or enthusiasm, anything that might convince them that they should take the chance to make room and mentor a foreign undergraduate student with relatively limited skills? CAPA staff do a lot of background work (reviewing your resumes and cover letters, setting up skype interviews) so they can do their best to match internships to your interests. But they can only find internships based on the information YOU provide in your cover letter and resume/CV, interview, letters of recommendation. They are not mind readers. Communicate clearly.

CAPA staff can usually only provide internship placement information very close to the time internships actually start. Students rarely ever hear about internship placements earlier than 14 days before the program commences, and often do not hear where they will interview until after they arrive in London. This timing is due to the nature of identifying, contacting and securing interviews for large volumes of students—all at the same time. Our program starts right after the traditional UK holidays and many internship sites simply do not confirm that they will consider taking UB students until after they return to work after the New Year holiday. There is absolutely NOTHING CAPA or UB can do to force the internship sites to make their decisions and commit to taking interns sooner than the sites themselves decide to do that. CAPA requires a several month window to perform its required tasks in securing placement opportunities, documenting them for students, and making interview (remote via Skype, in person in London once you get there) arrangements. These activities are time consuming and complex, placements are very competitive (in fact, getting an interview is just the first hurdle—students need to interview successfully to get a placement).

The CAPA internship team has set structures in place to ensure service delivery. They realize that students are VERY curious about potential internship placements, but best practice indicates that informing all students around the same time is the fairest, most efficient and effective way to proceed. Very rarely (and not at student request, but only at internship site request) would a student ever receive news about a potential internship placement earlier than the 14 days pre-departure, and usually only when a site needs extra information to make an informed choice about a potential intern. Students are updated regularly pre-departure about the status of internship requests and are told just as soon as they are known. Everyone realizes that students are really curious about where they will be interning, but pestering CAPA or UB personnel does not help. There is nothing either entity can do to change the facts of the timing—internships sites make placement decisions on their own timelines, not on ours. Internship placements are communicated as soon as they are known.

CAPA makes 300+ internship placements every spring, the UB program is one of several that they provide services for. With that volume of internship requests to cater for, you want your internship application to stand out. Submit your high quality documents punctually to ensure smooth processing of your internship. If during your skype interview with CAPA staff they suggest you change something in your letter, or have good advice about something you might consider adding (or taking off of) your resume, you would be wise to follow that advice. You want to be sure that when the CAPA internship team and potential internship sites review your documents that you will stand out as a person who looks like they will be worth an investment of time and effort to secure the best possible professional internship for you.

## PRACTICAL ADVICE

### *Money in general*

You will not be able to set up a bank account in London, so the best option for you would be getting a debit card or a credit card from home. Do not carry large amounts of cash. You want to have enough GBP cash for small purchases/daily use, but not thousands of dollars or pounds.

Credit cards are useful for booking coach/train/plane tickets and hotels for short trips, although many charge a higher than prevailing exchange rate and add a 1% commission charge on top of it, which can add up. The advantage is that you may get some reward points and have less cash to carry around.

You can withdraw money at ATM machines or exchange cash at currency exchange bureaus. Both currency exchange bureaus and ATMs are located in every airport terminal. Many Marks and Spencer (a UK department chain) service desks offer favorable rates of exchange and low commissions. DO NOT USE storefront non-bank exchange bureaus; they often have hidden charges that mean you get fewer pounds for your dollars. There are many ATMs all around London, just like in any US city or in Singapore. However, keep in mind that making many small withdrawals from an ATM machine can rack up expensive bank fees; it is usually less expensive to withdraw one larger amount and pay a single bank fee than to make a series of small withdrawals with a fee each time. Check with your bank before you leave home and select a debit card from a bank that has no or small fees for foreign transactions and ATM withdrawals. Credit cards vary widely in whether or not they charge extra fees for foreign transactions. Check and be sure that you carry one that does not charge foreign transaction fees, or that you use only rarely. Credit cards can be used in many places, although some small cafes, street markets, taxis, and pubs operate on cash only. We recommend that you notify your bank/credit card companies and tell them you will be traveling to London. You can ask them questions about how to use your cards efficiently while you are abroad. Most banks question purchases and withdrawals made abroad and if they have not been notified, they may put a stop on your debit card withdrawals and credit card purchases.

*"It's easy to spend a lot of your money at the beginning of your semester here on new food, travelling, Primark... Before you know it, half or more of your money will be gone before Spring break. Spend more of your money after you get to know London a little better."— Angela Yang*

### *Money for Students from the US*

Your credit card will automatically convert the local charges into dollars on your statement, often with a service fee/foreign transaction fee (in most cases) that shows up on your monthly statement. The advantage is the written record of purchases and that you won't need to pay until billed. However, despite the convenience (carrying a credit card is highly recommended) it can be very easy to overspend or get hit with expensive fees. Carry at least some cash and be disciplined about credit or debit purchases. Professor Street mainly uses cash, ordering some from the bank before she leaves. Thereafter she uses an ATM/debit card in London. You get the bank's exchange rate, but there is usually also a fee per transaction. Before departure, find out how much your bank fee is per transaction so that you are not unpleasantly surprised and make sure your bank account allows for

international withdrawals. Double check that your PIN number will work abroad! Not all ATM cards automatically do: some need activation. There also may be problems if your debit card is linked to a savings account vs. a checking account. Make sure you contact your bank to determine what it will cost and how to use your debit card/ATM in London before departure. Find out from your bank if it charges foreign transaction fees for your credit card, which you may want to use for larger purchases (or to have and not use, but as a backup insurance policy in case you run into a cash/debit card problem).

Do not buy traveler's checks; almost no one uses them any longer. Do not carry large amounts of US currency, but have some as a back-up that you can exchange in a pinch, in case of difficulties with your credit or debit card. It is probably a good idea to arrive in London with at least 100 gbp (Great Britain Pounds) which you can order ahead from your bank (plan ahead, it takes several days since they usually have to be ordered). Alternatively, you can "buy" pounds at your US departure airport, although you might not get as good a rate of exchange as from your bank. To summarize: Use cash whenever possible (and an ATM card to withdraw cash as necessary). Keep very close track of debit and credit card usage and fees.

### ***Money for Students from Singapore***

In general, the advice is not very different in terms of "general" suggestions for handling money. According to Singapore experts, best to change currency at money-changers away from the airport, because rates may be slightly better. Popular places include People's Park Complex (near Chinatown), Mustafa (near Serangoon) and Lucky Plaza—it also depends on which of the many money-changers you use. Some heartland money-changers offer good rates too. You want to have enough GBP cash for small purchases/daily use. Credit cards are useful for booking coach/train/plane tickets and hotels for short trips, although many charge a higher than prevailing exchange rate and add a 1% commission charge on top of it, which can add up. The advantage is that you get some reward points and have less cash to carry around. Debit cards are good for point-of-sale purchases, because there is no commission other than the exchange rates, but for ATM withdrawals there is a bank service charge from the Singapore side, and only British debit cards can be used for online purchases. Notify your bank/credit card holder that you will be traveling internationally. Activate credit/debit cards for overseas transactions before departure (especially after the recent new ruling for banks to deactivate magnetic-striped cards).

### ***Computers and wifi***

Your flats will have wifi access and there are many public places in London where wifi is available and free (many libraries and museums, some cafes, McDonalds, Starbucks, etc., the number of wifi hotspots has grown exponentially in recent years). Slow internet connections seem to be a pervasive problem in the UK—it is an old place, and updating the information infrastructure has been a challenge! It can be really frustrating...but it is a first world problem that you should not whine about. Maybe this is the time to liberate yourself from constantly being online. You will be able to access computers at CAPA routinely for email and course work. This point cannot be emphasized enough: you will enjoy London MUCH more if you REALLY limit time online/using social media/texting and messaging. Streaming movies and constantly updating Facebook/Instagram will actually undermine your enjoyment of the program. We'll likely have a 24 hour challenge early in the program to "go bare"—spending an entire day without using any personal electronic



equipment...yikes, using old-fashioned paper maps...and that may be one of your best days in London! Limit calls/texts/messages home to the bare minimum—you'll enjoy London more if you are (mind, body, soul) fully IN London, not home. Show off your adventures and spectacular travel photos once you get back home. Doing that from London verges on gloating, and that's not nice.

### ***Phones, Generally***

Constant texting and talking on the phone really undermines the value of the study abroad experience. When we are involved in any program activity—that is, in a classroom, on a walk, traveling to or from a site, in a museum or library, at a meal—during ALL class/academic time, texting and talking on the phone are off limits (unless you have my prior permission). If you must be in communication with someone not in our program, keep conversations brief and texts to a minimum. Chronic texting/talking during program activities will result in grade deductions.

While you may want to touch base occasionally with families and friends (to let them know that you arrived safely and how you are doing) please advise them not to expect daily contact. Spending extensive time communicating back home takes you out of the social mix, heightens homesickness, undermines social relationships forming in London, and actually makes you something of a nuisance to me and fellow students. It interferes with full enjoyment of London. If you want to be in constant touch with people at home, staying home is probably the best choice. There is not much point coming to London if you do the same old things in the usual ways you do them at home. So...liberate yourself from constant contact with the familiar—dare to live “offline”—and fully embrace the adventure—new city, new people, new ideas, new friends, new conversations. You can only immerse yourself in London if you are fully present, not tethered to your technology.

As a matter of courtesy in a busy, crowded city, do not walk in/obstruct public places while reading or sending texts or taking photographs. Step out of the way and stop to do those things, so that busy passersby who work and live in London can get where they need to go. Otherwise your awareness of surroundings declines, making you a potential target for pickpockets and your slow pace arouses the ire of busy people who need to dodge around people who thoughtlessly stroll and scroll. Such discourteous and self-centered behavior singles out such individuals as thoughtless persons who are not smart enough to appreciate and adapt to a culture where courtesy is still highly valued.

### ***Phones for American Students***

Contact your cell/mobile phone carrier and find out if your (typically locked) US phones will work in London—my guess is that they will, but that it could be expensive to make calls (that might be okay, you could decide to just notify people that you arrived safely via email, and decide not to make a phone call from London unless there's an emergency). You can also use phone cards to call the US, and Skype/FaceTime are other good ways (if you don't spend hours using them) to keep in touch. Historically, most US phones were “locked”—that is, tied to a contract with a service provider which means you might need a new or supplemental plan to use your phone internationally. That is slowly changing. So if you happen to have an unlocked phone, read the “phones for Singapore students” below. Every student is required to have a phone.

### ***Phones for Singapore Students***

Most students from Singapore who studied in London last year brought along smartphones and used Giffgaff mobile, because it had a generous data/3G allowance, unlimited UK texts, and free

calls between Giffgaff users. Last year that cost 12 GBP/month for a goody bag consisting of 250 minutes of local calls and unlimited data. International calls are relatively cheap too at 3p per minute to the US and 2p to Singapore and roaming is supported in many European countries if you travel elsewhere at the end of the program (works by credit top-up, separate from the goody bag package). This might be cost-effective. However, Giffgaff operates differently from other operators in that it doesn't have physical stores from which to purchase the SIM cards. It works by word-of-mouth and relies on existing users to introduce new users. You probably need a Giffgaff friend in London for this to be practical to set up from Day 1, though if you have the patience to wait a few days you can probably do this yourself once you are in London. Every student is required to have a phone.

There are MANY other feasible options with UK mobile operators (like Orange, Vodafone and 3, with stores to purchase relatively inexpensive pay as you go SIM cards just a block or two from the study center), for students who bring unlocked phones to London.

Arranging phone matters is up to each student, although each student in London is required to have a cell/hand/mobile phone (it has different names in different places). This is the limit of Professor Street's information about phones. She has a simple mobile phone (text and calls only) that I purchased years ago in London and which she continues to top up when she is there—she doesn't have any additional expertise to share for iPhone or smartphone users.

## ***Time***

There is a five hour time difference between US Eastern time and London, and eight (usually) between Singapore and London. You will have some jet lag the first few days in London, but it passes quickly and time to adjust is built into our program. Despite somewhat warmer weather, London is further north than Buffalo—so daylight hours are very short for the first weeks we are in London. It gets dark around 4:30/5:00 pm. For Singaporeans, this is a HUGE change from the typical 12 hours of daylight and hot humid weather you are accustomed to. But that's okay, London is beautiful when we are bundled up for the cold and she wears her cloak of city lights at night.

Londoners are noted for punctuality and good manners, so do not be surprised if lateness draws unwelcome attention to such inconsiderate behavior. All class activities will start on schedule, we will not wait for stragglers.

## ***Water***

Water is safe to drink from all taps in homes/businesses in London. Save money and plastic waste by using a refillable water bottle rather than unnecessarily purchasing bottled water. Even if you purchase a single small bottle of water each day of the program, at 1gbp/bottle (it is often more expensive, and we all need more water than that) you will have spent at least \$160 USD (nearly enough for a weekend in Scotland) for something you can have for free.

## ***Food***

There are no special warnings about food. European and British food safety laws seem to keep most people free of food-borne illness most of the time. Use common sense in terms of safe temperatures for cooking and storing food items for consumption in your flats. Save a TON of money by preparing most of your own meals.

## TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TO LONDON

Students arrange their own air travel and ground transfer from the London airport to central London. Do not purchase your airline ticket until you have your passport (with the UK Tier IV visa) in hand. Additional travel is best done at the end of the program. Arrive in London, recover from jet lag and get your bearings, finish your program, then travel.

The main international airports are London Heathrow (LHR) and London Gatwick (LGW). If you want to coordinate travel with other students, say so when you fill out the program survey (coming in late October) and Professor Street will put you in touch with others who want to do the same thing. She always fly into LHR because it the easiest airport for where we live in central London. But you may find a cheaper air fare into Gatwick—if so, that is definitely manageable too. You will receive clear directions for traveling to your flats from both major London airports. Early arrivals/late departures cannot be accommodated. Students should plan travel to arrive in London at an appropriate time on the morning of January 13. That likely means an overnight flight the evening of January 12, to arrive in London January 13. Triple check travel plans to be sure you are booked to ARRIVE in London the morning of Jan 13, 2015. Housing check in is Wednesday Jan 13 (time TBD). All students must leave flats the morning of April 23<sup>th</sup>.

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS

All program participants must have a valid passport for travel to the United Kingdom that will be valid for at least six months beyond the end of the program. Now (today) is the time to ensure that your passport will be valid until at least the end of October 2015. The UK Border Agency will issue your visa, based being a university students with prepaid tuition/accommodation, and which entitles you to study and intern in London. Make sure your passport is in order so you can get the visa.

Singaporeans and some non-US passport holders studying in the U.S. must prove to the UK that they are English proficient. IELTS meets those requirements, but the UK Border Agency no longer accepts TOEFL scores. All students receive a visa number from CAPA, and then are responsible for making their own visa arrangements. Our CAPA partners and Study Abroad staff can offer limited advice, but likely only enough to get you started. Failure to make timely visa arrangements would mean you cannot join the program in London and may result in the loss of program fees.

## SAFEGUARD YOUR VALUABLES

Do not bring irreplaceable items to London. Expensive jewelery should be left at home. Carry money, credit cards, passport, etc. on your person or store safely. Purchase a “wallet” to wear under your clothes, whether on a cord for around your neck and under shirts, or for under clothing around the waist. Losing money, credit cards, cash or (worst of all) your passport will make London memorable, but unpleasant. Be sensibly careful. Scan your passport and credit cards and leave a copy at home with someone easy to contact, and a PDF file that you store safely elsewhere and can access online can be a life-saver if you lose such items in London.

## ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

London standard is 220V; most laptops, tablets, etc. have built in conversion capacity. Other US electrical appliances (like curling irons, etc.) typically need expensive and heavy voltage converters. Best to buy things like hair dryers and curling irons/straighteners in London, and share within flats. Singaporean voltages (likely?) are the same as the UK. Even if you don’t need a volatage converter, you may need a special “plug” to fit into the wall sockets, they are cheaply available in London

## PACKING TIPS

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Traveling light is WAY better than struggling with luggage! This can't be overemphasized. You might have fewer "outfits" to choose from, but who cares? Buy a new scarf at a street market!
- Dark clothing, laundered regularly, is best. Pack for a week or 10 days, and do laundry.
- Shopping is plentiful if you ever decide that you need something you did not bring.
- Check with your airline for baggage allowances (number and weight varies widely by airline).
- Bring a small bag to use for excursions (a regular campus-sized backpack is ideal). It can probably double as your personal carry on item (check to be sure about carryon luggage limits).
- Pack your luggage and then walk around the block and up a flight of stairs with it. If that is a struggle, repack and eliminate some items. You must be able to handle your luggage by yourself.

### **Additional Observations:**

- Winter weather in London typically ranges from cold to very cold. Don't lose heart, it warms up!
- You will walk A LOT. You must have comfortable shoes. Do not buy new shoes unless you have time to break them in completely before you leave. If your feet hurt, everything hurts. Two pairs of shoes is a best (one on your feet, one (maybe) drying out).
- Plan for rapidly changing temperatures, inside and out, by dressing in layers. Shirt, sweater, and jacket; tights, pants, jeans, even silk long johns. Most British university students would rather be caught dead than be seen in public in sweats. Hoodies seem okay; sweats/PJs, not so much.
- Include at least one dress/skirt/dressy trousers for women and casual business attire for men (nice shirt, khakis) for special occasions, i.e. performances, special dinners, clubbing, etc.
- Although dress is casual for most course activities, if there is any different expectation in attire it will be communicated in plenty of time for students to adjust.
- Obviously, students are free to dress as they prefer for London's night life (though be forewarned that young men and women often dress up) and for other informal occasions.
- Internships typically require business casual clothes. Pack according what you would need to wear in a similar workplace in your home city. Try to bring clothes that do "double duty." Good for work/class/relaxing.

### **Recommended Clothing:**

- Jeans/long trousers (two or three)
- Shirts - long sleeves for layering
- T-shirts/turtlenecks/sweat shirts for athletic use and warmth as under/over layers.
- 1-2 warm sweaters, nice enough for work, also functional enough for everyday use in the cold
- Warm jacket or coat for cold weather and rain
- Underwear, maybe long johns and warm socks/tights
- Scarves, hats, and gloves, maybe ear muffs if you don't like winter hats.
- Casual shoes and/or boots, comfortable for walking. Weather may be chilly and wet.
- Think you will be going clubbing? A nice outfit for that.
- Something to dress up a bit (not formal, but at least a way to dress up from just jeans/T-shirts)
- Stating the obvious: you will NOT likely need a bathing suit, shorts, or sunscreen.

**Personal Care\*\*\*:**

- Travel size shampoo and conditioner, toothbrush and toothpaste
- Comb and/or hairbrush
- Antiperspirant, skin moisturizer and other creams
- Make up, razor/shaving cream, if needed
- Vitamins, daily OTC medications
- Over-the-counter generic brands of personal use and first-aid items

\*\*\*All of these items are readily available if forgotten. A trip to Boots to buy them is fun!\*\*\*

**Other necessities:**

- Small organizer to hold passport etc., such as a "neck wallet" that hangs inside your shirt, that way you don't have to worry about potential thefts or losses.
- Camera/i-device/folding umbrella/sunglasses
- Prescription medication/birth control pills, etc. in original containers, carried on plane with you
- Addresses/phone numbers/etc. for contacting friends and relatives

**Important Suggestions:**

Do not worry about “not bringing enough”: 10 out of 10 students over-pack their suitcases and regret it almost immediately after seeing how many flights of stairs they have to climb to reach their flats and the relatively small amount of storage space. Do not be one of the over-packers.

*“Pack light, pack comfortably and pack staples – jeans, a good jacket (with a hood for rainy days) and a good pair of walking shoes.” – Katherine Balys*

You are responsible for hauling your own luggage at both ends of the trip. Try to travel with a single wheeled suitcase plus a small duffel bag/backpack as your personal carryon. Check with your airline for size/weight limits for carryon luggage and personal items. Know that one legendary US student brought a single wheeled carryon and backpack for an ENTIRE four month semester in London.

Carry essential medications, contact lenses/glasses, a change of clothes and “starter” toiletries with you on the plane. Doctor's notes/prescription may be needed to import prescribed drugs into the UK (checking that is your responsibility). Checked bags sometimes get lost. You will be more comfortable if you have a toothbrush or change of underwear after a long journey; being without prescription medication could harm your health. Dragging too much stuff isn't pleasant; your flat mates won't appreciate stepping over your stuff. Know what you **need** in London (bring that) and what you *might want* (leave most of that at home) and you will be well-prepared for this adventure.

*“Pack light. You'll be buying a TON of stuff.” – Sarah Borth*

London as your opportunity to be a sophisticated urban minimalist—a savvy traveler, not an annoying tourist. It is not the things you bring to London, but the experiences you take away, that will make this a wonderful learning and life adventure. Acquire knowledge, memories, new friendships, once-in-a-lifetime experiences, magnificent (in)sights and flavors, and manage all of that with as little “baggage” as possible (less stuff, less prejudice, a more open mind than usual). If you do that, you will make the most of this study abroad experience.

## PLANNING FOR IN-COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

### Arriving and settling in

Welcome to London! Once you live in London, you may never want to leave. When you are away from London, you will long to return. Its efficiency, pragmatism, blending of cultures and embedded history are likely to keep you coming back for more. When you live in London, as a member of this program, you feel truly a part of the entire world. When you live in London, you are also likely to come to think that London is the most wonderful place in the world. Apart from all its obvious and world-renowned attractions, the theatre, the galleries, the walks by the river, London is a perfect melting pot. London is a city for lovers, artists, jokers, rebels, hedonists and unexpected heroes. It is a city filled with infinite possibilities and everyone is always welcome. This is going to be the best four months of your life. Cherish it; don't let one minute of it go to waste.

Keep in mind that you are on a study abroad program that includes classwork, program activities, and experiential learning through internships. Always keep track of your deadlines and work schedules. It is after all, a STUDY abroad, not a touring abroad program. Learn to manage your time wisely early in the program: leave enough time for school, work, and play. All are important.

A tip for all students: ASSIGNMENTS START TO PILE UP TOWARDS THE END OF THE PROGRAM. You honestly do not want to spend your last five weeks in London stuck in your flat doing course work. At the very least, keep up. Stay ahead if you can.

### Orientations at CAPA

Attending ALL orientation programs organized by CAPA is mandatory. CAPA personnel have a lot of experience and the orientations are designed to try to help you get a good start and accustomed to living in London. Many of the orientation programs provide students with tips regarding everyday life. For instance, "How to live in London on a budget" is exceptionally helpful – you do not want to miss out on this, especially since life expenses in London can get ridiculously high if you don't watch your spending.

*"CAPA staff tries really hard to help students make the most out of their time here. Their advices are extremely insightful!" – Jo Tan*

### Getting to know your flat mates and roommates

It is definitely an adventure and a challenge: a pretty intimidating and nerve-wracking and/or exciting experience when you first arrive in London and are ushered into flat with a bunch of other students (strangers) with whom you will be spending the next 4 months. However, the worry that you might stick out like a sore thumb and/or be lonely without your close friends and family will soon fade after you've gotten to know your flat mates and other UB Semester in London students. Not a single person who has met these strangers halfway (because that is where we all need to meet, in the middle) has failed to make new, lifelong friends. They will become your family away from home and there will always be something crazy, hilarious and heart-warming happening at home in London, yes, with those people who started out as strangers in your flat. It is these unexpected

surprises and bonds you create with your new London family that make transitions all the more bearable and enjoyable. Remember, everyone is in the same boat; no one is “at home” yet.

Still, making new friends and adapting to living with people who start out as strangers takes some thoughtfulness and sometimes, some hard work, and definitely, an open mind and tolerance. If you come to London determined to do things the way you always have in the past, or to always get your own way...making friends will be tough. So let go, let live, make friends.

*“Be respectful towards your roommates – have an open communication.  
But always remember to have fun!” – Sarah Hussain*

Some tips to help you live in harmony with your roommates:

1. Compromise. Really – that’s the key
2. Create a shared understanding – talk through your usual habits with others, try to understand theirs, and then...meet in the middle. There is almost always a way to understand the other person’s position. If you insist on always getting your way, that is the same as telling others that YOU are more important than they are. If that is the way you act, don’t be surprised if you encounter problems.
3. Be open-minded. Don’t judge. You don’t know everything/all the circumstances.
4. Talk through any problems when they happen; deal with “problems” fast, don’t nurse grudges.
5. Be respectful of cultural differences – remember that you are all new to London and that your roommates may be from half way across the world and have different practices or habits they deem as “normal”. Some examples include room temperature, how kitchens are used and when/where dining occurs, what is meant by “clean” and wearing shoes in flats. For example, UB students from Singapore come from a tropical climate to study in a cold one, while students from north campus are experiencing “usual” temperatures. Consequently, the Singapore students’ preference for really warm flats clashes with north campus students’ preferences for (what to Singapore natives) are much cooler places. Layers, patience, understanding the perspective of the other, and taking turns controlling the temperature can go a long way to managing this difference. Wearing shoes in the house is customary in North America where feet otherwise get cold; it is not in Singapore. It does not mean North Americans are dirty people and Singaporeans are clean ones—it means one set of people is accustomed to wearing shoes in the house, the other is not. That’s all. Ask questions. Talk about such differences with roommates to see if you can understand each other and make some kind of agreement about how to manage clashing cultures.
6. Making friends with someone from a different country is extremely exciting. Talk to them about your local culture and you will be surprised by how fascinated they will be about your different experience. Singapore is not in China. The United States is not just what you see on TV and in the movies. Try to learn from one another!
7. Have a huge welcoming dinner, soon after arriving in London, and make sure to include everyone in the program. What better way to get to know one another than through food? Tastes and smells from different parts of the world can take some getting used to, but it is worth the effort to get used to different—that is, after all, why you are in London, right? Remember that slurping and lip smacking in many Asian cultures can indicate enjoyment of food, not bad manners—and cooks like to know that their food has been enjoyed!

## In-country Experiences

London holds something for everyone – if you don't like the craziness of Piccadilly Circus and Regent Street, take a walk to Hyde Park or Green Park and the many other beautiful parks for which London is famous. If the Tate Modern doesn't suit your taste, then it's off with your head at the Tower of London. The boroughs of London each have their own personality, their own vibe and their own culture. It is diverse and extreme, beautiful and rough, fast and sleepy, noisy and peaceful all at the same time. This can be overwhelming at first, but give yourself a week or two and you'll find your "zone" for enjoying all that London has to offer.

One need never be lost for words with the national conversation starter at hand. "Is it raining? Some weather we're having, isn't it?" Yes, it rains a lot in London. But on a grey and misty day there's no better place to be than the inside of a cosy pub or café or museum. However, when March arrives and spring approaches, there will be often be an unspoken spontaneous public celebration when there's thirty minutes of uninterrupted sunshine, and all of London seems to pour out into sunny streets and parks.

## Commuting in London

You'll constantly find yourself trying to juggle between work, school and play during your stay in London. It is vital to master time management, which includes building in extra time for traveling between local destinations and getting course work done. Students often have a 9 to 5 internship on non-school days, and also some half days to be sure they get in enough hours for academic credit. Oh, and by the way...internships are not identical, expecting them to be would be silly. Make the most of YOUR internship, and don't worry yourself about someone else's.

Leave ample time for commuting to your internship site and to school. It is very important to be punctual—that is a "soft skill" that creates a good habit for school, work and life. You will likely find yourself spending a lot of time commuting around London on the Tube, as it is definitely the most efficient way of getting around London.

*"There are plenty of service disruptions in the Tube due to technical faults and "man under the train". Make sure you have ample time to reach your destination in case of Tube breakdown. If you can, follow Transport for London on twitter and check for updates before you leave the house!" – Collette Miles*

Some advice for you from previous students about travelling on the Tube:

1. *"Don't talk on the Tube, it will be frowned upon. If you must, do so quietly. People live in their own personal bubbles when they ride the Tube and Londoners prefer it that way. Many like to read so don't disturb their quality reading time."* – Nicole Aloisio
2. *"Always make sure you have your Oyster card with you."* – Jeremy Teo
3. *"Make sure you have ample time while travelling. Sometimes trains break down and you may have to find an alternate route."* – Lynn Choo
4. *"Read the free newspapers (Metro, Evening Standard) that they give out. It's good to know what's happening in the country that you live in."* – Valissa Yap



5. *“Stand on the right when travelling on the escalator. People who are in a hurry would walk on the left side.” – Margi Malhotra*

Be sure to check the Transport for London website ([www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)) before setting out on any journey—it gives real time information and maps for walking and cycling, on delays and line closures, weekend Tube closures, bus schedules...everything you need to know to move around the city efficiently.

## **Juggling Coursework**

The classes you are assigned to during this study abroad program offer the chance for you to gain different perspectives regarding London, America and Singapore. The course work that you do while in London will definitely give context to what you're seeing and experiencing around London during your free time. So make sure you go to class, participate fully, understand the subject and do your assignments! Just remember, it's a good idea NOT to crash your GPA while studying abroad.

Students often are tempted to neglect and procrastinate about their school work at the beginning of the program and then regret it in April. So get your act together early, manage your time wisely. Prioritize your assignments and keep in mind of all the datelines. Consider forming a reading or study group, or designating specific times in your flat when everyone will be involved in their academic pursuits. It will make a big difference if you can keep organized and up-to-date so on reading materials. You'll never even have to worry about catching up.

## **Juggling Internships**

Moving away from the comfort of books and classrooms to face a company or organization where putting your skills into practice and confronting real life challenges becomes more important than memorizing facts or understanding concepts, can be quite intimidating. We know how to be students, we haven't quite figured out how to be workers yet. An internship is often a stark contrast to the student lifestyle that you are accustomed to, especially if you've never held down a job. It involves approximately 20 hours a week and a whole load of hard work. However, it is also a great opportunity to learn about life in the work world, to gain hands-on experience in your chosen field and to see and learn from professionals in action. In short, an internship is a brief taste of what real, full-time employment, holds in store for the future.

Some might even say that the experience you get during an internship programme is of as much value, in some fields even more, than your actual academic qualification. This is your chance to put all your talents, dedication, and skills into action, to prove that you can do what you believe you are qualified to do. Proving your abilities speaks volumes to potential employers and that is where the value of an international internship really lies. Superb performance in an internship can lead to great employment opportunities later, accompanied by glowing letters of recommendation.

Here are a few insights into the work place culture in London that may help you prepare for your internship:

1. Many workplace settings in the UK are rather informal, at least in terms of day-to-day interactions among employees.
2. Informal does not equal to unprofessional.
3. Sarcasm, irony, and humour are highly appreciated in the workplace.
4. What many students consider to be vulgarities are the norm in some workplaces.
5. Your colleagues will make you tea, and sometimes you're expected to do the same. This is NOT a menial task; it is a shared norm of British workplace culture.
6. Be open-minded, you are, after all, from a different culture and you are the stranger in their midst. Sit back and learn for a few days, ask questions, then step up and participate.

And you may want to keep in mind these few tips from previous students...

1. *"Advocate for yourself – ask for meaningful projects to do!" – RJ Tan*
2. *"Make an effort to get the most out of your internship." – Angela Yang*
3. *"Always try your hardest. You may very well need these connections in the future." – Erika Labaff*
4. *"Tell your supervisor what you want to do; they may have connections to let you do more stuff." – Jasline Tob*
5. *"Have realistic expectations." – Viona Ho*
6. *"If you are uncomfortable with your internship, do not be afraid to talk to the CAPA internship team. They can probably help." – Sarah Borth*

Working within a company or organization is often an eye-opening experience and it is almost impossible to fully understand the realities of your chosen career without doing some hands on work. Interning is a great way to try out your chosen field to make sure you like it before you commit on a more permanent basis.

Performing poorly in an internship is not an option. Students must be dependable—that is, go to their site every day, on time, and perform to high standards. In order to get academic credit, students must fulfill their learning agreements, work at least the minimum number of hours, do all the course-related writing assignments, and get a satisfactory evaluation from the internship supervisor. Although it has never happened to a UB student, blowing off an internship and getting "fired" could get a student dismissed from the program. It is NOT okay, ever, to miss an internship day for optional travel, sleeping in, or catching up with course work.

## Exploring London

London is a great big city where the past meets the present with an endless amount of opportunities and places to explore. With two thousand years of history, London is the perfect combination of the old and the new. You can find some of the oldest buildings in the world along with some of the most modern designs standing right next to one another. There is ALWAYS something new to do and something new to see around London. So get out of bed, walk out of your flat, use that Oyster pass to its full advantage, and go explore this amazing city you now call home.

A few suggestions for you from former students:

1. *"Get up a little earlier on weekends to check out markets like Brick Lane, Shoreditch & Spitalfields Market!" – Christine Goh*
2. *"Go alone! Go solo! Immerse yourself in the new culture" – Chelsea Reinhardt*

3. *“Try and take the bus sometimes. You’ll see much more a lot more of London as compared to being underground while on the Tube.” – Meghan Murphy*
4. *“Buy a proper pair of shoes that doesn’t hurt your feet when you walk around London.” – Rob Walsh*
5. *“Get lost in London.” – Sherlin Ong Wen Lin*
6. *“Don’t leave exploring London till after Spring Break. Do something every weekend, you only have a short time in London.” – Jie Huan Chua*
7. *“MAKE A BUCKET LIST.” – Elizabeth Sim*

## Travelling out of London

London’s geographic location allows for flexibility to travel to many different cities and neighboring countries like France, Belgium, Netherlands and Scotland – but it is time for another reminder: You are on a study abroad program in London, not a four month vacation. Do not be too ambitious a traveler. Even if you don’t travel out of London for the entire duration of your stay, you will still have a wonderful time. Your first obligation is to perform well in your classes and professionally in your internship. Still, many students have a four day school and work week, leaving ample amount of time for exploring different cities in the UK and neighboring countries during some weekends.

CAPA has a travel fair the first week you are in London. A number of different tour operators provide information about student-centered travel that can make excursions outside of London fun, hassle-free, and affordable. CAPA also leads some trip; those fill up quickly, so if you are interested in a CAPA guided trip, be prepared to sign up and pay your deposit early.

Some websites that may be helpful while you plan your travels:

Trains & Coaches	<a href="http://www.thetrainline.com">www.thetrainline.com</a> <a href="http://www.nationalexpress.co.uk">www.nationalexpress.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.eastmidlands.co.uk">www.eastmidlands.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.virgintrains.co.uk">www.virgintrains.co.uk</a> <a href="http://www.eurostar.co.uk">www.eurostar.co.uk</a>
Air travel	<a href="http://www.ryanair.com">www.ryanair.com</a> <a href="http://www.expedia.com">www.expedia.com</a>
Accommodation	<a href="http://www.booking.com">www.booking.com</a> <a href="http://www.hostelworld.com">www.hostelworld.com</a> <a href="http://www.hostelbookers.com">www.hostelbookers.com</a>

Some final travel tips for you...

1. Travel alone, at least once, even if it’s just a day trip. Just do it—be entirely solo, pleasing only yourself, depending on no one else. Part of the reason you studied abroad was to be independent. Nothing will feel more rewarding than solo-navigating your way through buying tickets, traveling, arriving, and enjoying a destination all by yourself.
2. Live every day with the mantra “my time here is short”, because it really is.
3. Don’t travel “too much.” What “too much” is may vary by student, but if you spend most weekends outside of London, you won’t take full advantage of the wonderful city you are living in for a very short time, or the accommodations you have already paid for. Consider limiting travel to a weekend or two, or maybe just spring break, and doing more extensive travel at the end of the program.

## Getting ready to leave London...

The day will come when it is time to say goodbye to the beautiful city you've been calling home for the past few months. It will honestly feel like time flew by in a blink of an eye. During the last few weeks you will want to be doing everything you haven't yet done—and unless you have planned ahead, while trying to juggle final term papers, final exams, and wrapping up your internship.

So here are a few tips or suggestions for you before you leave:

1. Finish up ALL your assignments before you leave London.
2. Do your best work on assignments, final exams, wrapping up your internship.
3. Make sure you've seen everything you want to see, and done everything you want to do. If you haven't, why aren't you out there doing those things?
4. Appreciate the people who have worked to make your time in London rewarding. Thank the staff at CAPA. Drop them an email or just head downstairs when you're in CAPA for class and thank them. They've worked very hard behind the scenes to make the past 4 months the best time of your life.

Last but definitely not the least, you're probably wondering about how to say goodbye to your friends who have become your family away from home. Know that there is honestly no easy way to say goodbye. The French say “au revoir” which loosely translates into “until we see one another again” and that might be the best way to think about this. Goodbye in London does not mean forever. Friends can always meet up again (even if friends are half the world away from you). There's always Skype!

*“It's really not ‘goodbye’, it's just another ‘see you later’.” - David O'Brien*

The friends you will make in the *UB Semester in London* program shared your fears, your affection and adventures and will be part of you forever, even if only in memories. The lessons you've learned together as a member of this group will change you. And—at least, if you've done London right—you will be surprised by how much YOU have changed (usually for the better) by the end of April. You will know more about the world. You will be more open-minded and tolerant. You will be more interesting and better informed, about yourself, about your own country, about the world.

The friendships you made and the professional relationships forged in your internships will have shaped the four months you are in London. These wonderful, quirky, funny, frustrating, interesting individuals and experiences are irreplaceable and unforgettable. When this extraordinary experience comes to its bittersweet end and it's time to say goodbye, you will realize that this past semester would not have been the same with the absence of any single one of your companions. You had a semester that was perhaps, not “real life”, in the sense that it is how your life will unfold, but very real in the experiences and friendships you made in London. These are definitely built off of real love and affection--the experiences you have had in London will express themselves in the future in wonderful and unexpected ways.

You will always long to return to this beautiful city – and know that this city will always welcome you back with open arms.

## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

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✉: [maryodrz@buffalo.edu](mailto:maryodrz@buffalo.edu) or [studyabroad@buffalo.edu](mailto:studyabroad@buffalo.edu)

### United States Embassy in London

24 Grosvenor Square  
London, W1A 2LQ  
United Kingdom

Switchboard from US: ☎ 011 44 2074 999000  
Direct dial in London: ☎ 0207 499-9000

In the case of an emergency involving a U.S. citizen **outside of office hours**

- ☎ telephone on: 01253 501106 if dialing from the UK
- ☎ telephone on: 011 44 1253 501106 if dialing from the U.S.
- ☎ telephone on International dialing code +44 1253 501106 if dialing from elsewhere.

In the case of an emergency involving a U.S. citizen **during office hours**

- ☎ the Embassy on: 02890-386104 if dialing from the UK
- ☎ the Embassy on: 011 44 2890 386104 if dialing from the U.S.
- ☎ the Embassy on international dialing code + 44 2890 386104 if dialing for elsewhere.

**Office hours** are Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm, except closed on American, British, and Northern Irish holidays. **The above numbers are for emergencies only.**

Students from UB-SIM who have an emergency (we do not anticipate any) would contact the high commission of Singapore for assistance.

### High Commission of the Republic of Singapore in London

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