

MTSU students can choose from hundreds of approved education abroad programs!! While this is exciting, it can also be very overwhelming. With so many choices, it can be quite challenging to figure out which program is ideal for you. To assist you with this important decision, we have listed ten items to consider when you are narrowing down your options and ultimately choosing your life-changing education abroad program! As you will soon discover, these ten items are not the only things to plan for but this list will provide you with a good starting point.

1. **Program Type:** As you can read on the Office of EA website, there are various program types. For example, there is a big difference between a MTSU Faculty-Led group program and a Full Year exchange program. The more you understand the differences between the program types, the easier it will be to narrow down your choices. All of the program types provide excellent options, so it really comes down to your individual interests and priorities.
2. **Academics:** We want you to find a program which meets your academic needs **and** personal interests, if possible! Most MTSU academic departments do not have established education abroad programs in which the course equivalencies have already been established (or maybe they only have one or two options). Therefore, it's typically up to you to work with the Office of EA to find a program(s) of interest and then to work with your department/academic advisor to establish the course equivalencies as part of your application process. The EA Course Approval Form (provided in Step 6 of the Getting Started section of our website) will assist you with this process.
3. **Length/When:** This is a very easy way to narrow down your selection. If you don't want to be abroad for one or two semesters (12-16 weeks per semester – just like MTSU!) then you are probably going to choose a Summer or Winter program, which are usually 2-4 weeks. Another important consideration is *when* you should study abroad! We highly encourage students to consider participating on a program during their freshman (summer only), sophomore, or junior (preferably first semester) years. Why? There are several reasons; however, an easy answer to this question is because you will have more choices and flexibility when you participate on a program earlier in your college career. For example, if you want to participate on a full-year program in Peru then you have to find an approved program which offers the courses you still need. If you are a junior, and have obviously already taken most the courses towards your MTSU degree, then it will be much more difficult (and maybe impossible) to find a program which offers the few remaining courses you still need to graduate!
4. **Requirements:** You will need to meet the Office of EA minimum requirements for education abroad participation, which you can find on our website by clicking on policies. You should be aware that in addition to our minimum requirements, you must also meet the actual education abroad program requirements which may or may not be different. If you do not have a minimum of a 2.75 GPA, for example, then you cannot participate on an exchange program – so you can focus on other program types.
5. **Financial Aid:** This topic can be quite confusing and you should understand that the Office of EA can only provide you with basic advice about this subject. Therefore, you will need to confirm all of these details with the actual Financial Aid Office. However, we can tell you

- that if you plan to use federal aid (loans, Pell Grant, etc.) towards your education abroad fees then you need to find a program which offers courses that are a required part of your degree in order to use that aid.
6. **Budget:** While this topic is very important, it can also be difficult to explain. As all education abroad programs are different, this means that the cost varies as well. In addition, students have different financial concerns and various individual financial aid packages. So it is really not possible to answer the common question of “How much does studying abroad cost?” Students should first understand their current MTSU Financial Aid situation and if those funds can be used towards their program of choice. You can go to the Scholarships/Financial Aid section of our website to find some tips for studying abroad on a budget as well as a cost comparison program sheet. Participation in an in-person advising session will also help with understanding how to budget for a program.
 7. **Location/Climate/Population:** This item is much more important to some students, while others don’t necessarily have a preference. Generally speaking, the more open-minded you are about the location of your program the likelier we will find an academically appropriate option for you. Students should definitely consider the size of the city when choosing a location, although it’s important to keep in mind that public transportation is typically more available and less expensive than in the United States – which means you can visit London, for example, without paying the fees to live there for a semester!
 8. **Passport/Student Visa:** All students will need a passport to participate on an education abroad program. In addition, many countries may require you to also apply for a student visa if you are studying for longer than 90 days – although the rules are different per country. The student visa process varies greatly, but usually the cost is usually between \$100 - \$500 for the processing fee. Some countries require an in-person application to a local consulate, so you should keep this in mind as well (i.e. students studying abroad in France for a semester must go to Atlanta).
 9. **Level of Independence/Responsibility/Support:** One of our most popular education abroad options is the MTSU Faculty-Led group program. These programs are very structured and, because an MTSU Faculty member is teaching the course, a good deal of support is provided as well. You might prefer, however, to participate on a program in which you will attend a local university and possibly even live with a family. You should consider how much support you might need while abroad, as well level of responsibility you feel comfortable with before choosing a program. Speaking to an EA Advisor about this topic will provide more clarity.
 10. **Priorities:** Ultimately in order to choose a program, you should make a list of priorities. For example, what is most important to you? Location? Cost? Course Selection? Level of Support? Program Length? It is unlikely that you will be able to find a program which meets **all** of your preferences, but if you know which items are most important to you then it will be easier to choose.

AND FINALLY....start planning your education abroad program into your MTSU degree now!! The application process should begin at least 6-12 months in advance of the program departure.