

## University Abroad in Uncertain Times: Some Good News

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Global uncertainty appears to be a common thread—“un filo conduttore,” as they say in Italian—in much of the news these days. In the field of education, we’ve received disheartening word about proposed budget cuts to US federal funding for financial aid, the uncertain future of university tuition fees for EU students, and the introduction of possible new work permits for British and European nationals, post-Brexit. In this vortex of relentlessly fluid information, it’s easy to feel swept away by the raging currents of our times.

Yet in the field of international university advising, still centered on young people and their future possibilities, it’s crucial to balance today’s real challenges with those guiding principles that have withstood the tests of time and may lead to promise, nevertheless. The good news is that there are still “safe harbor” practices that can help students and families navigate more securely the changing waters of university abroad. As small oases of calm in uncertain times, I would suggest several encouraging responses to the most Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Can a student apply simultaneously to multiple university systems in different countries?**

Absolutely. Seeking a diversity of international options is a premise that many expatriate families have traditionally enjoyed and may now employ even more purposely. This tried-and-true flexibility offers students the gift of time. On this note, a metaphor may be used to describe the college counseling process for students: a farmer prepares his or her fields with hard work over a period of time—ploughing, tilling and fertilizing the academic soil, so to speak—before finally sowing the seeds, those handfuls of university dreams with their respective applications. At the start of the season, it may be difficult to predict precisely which seeds will take root nine to nineteen months afterwards, so part of the process is to discover which possibilities flower and bear fruit, as time goes on. Just as this “wait-and-see” approach may pertain to individual universities and courses within one country, it is particularly advantageous for decision-making across national university systems, allowing increased time for the dust of any geopolitical events to settle in the meantime.

- **Regarding preparation for higher education, which high school study program provides the widest range of national options for university?**

Part and parcel of keeping one's options open is embarking early on a high school curriculum that affords the widest range of subsequent university choices. In this sense, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma permits comparatively seamless entry into many university systems around the world. Because it is an academically challenging curriculum that relies heavily upon strong student writing skills, many universities in the US and Canada may also award advanced credit or placement for final marks of 5-7 on Higher Level subjects. Please note: individual IB certificates (without the full IB Diploma) do *not* carry the same academic weight and, therefore, are *not* sufficient for regular entry to full undergraduate degrees, particularly in the UK, Italy and European countries. (<http://www.ibo.org/university-admission/recognition-of-the-ib-diploma-by-countries-and-universities/>)

- **How do universities handle multiple citizenships or EU residencies, in terms of tuition fees and student loans?**

As a comforting baseline, citizens of each "home country" are generally eligible for the most comprehensive, cost-effective tuition and funding schemes available nationally. This means, for example, that despite other residencies or citizenships, US citizens are eligible for federal financial aid at US universities; similarly, UK citizens are usually charged "home fees" and are eligible for government-based student loans at British universities. Moreover, the UK government has stated that EU students starting university in 2017/18 will remain eligible for student loans for the duration of their courses. (<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/eu-students>) Likewise, many English universities have committed to maintaining "home fees" (£9,250) for EU students who begin their undergraduate studies this fall. As more good news, Scotland has recently confirmed that EU students entering Scottish undergraduate programs for the first time in 2018/19 are still entitled to government subsidy of their entire cycle of tuition fees, currently £1,820 per annum. ([http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/eu\\_referendum\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/eu_referendum_guidance.pdf))

- **Besides the most common study destinations of the US and UK, which other countries offer recognized university degree programs delivered in English and work opportunities for non-citizens?**

Beyond direct family ties to the US or the UK, global students may be wise to consider two additional countries for their excellence and range of university degrees taught in English: Canada and the Netherlands. Both nations boast top-notch institutions that are well-established in diverse academic fields, being regularly recognized in international university rankings and research. As an added bonus in uncertain times,

both Canada and the Netherlands provide generous work opportunities for students and young graduates in relatively stable, political contexts.

The Co-operative Education Program in Canada (<http://www.cafce.ca/coop-defined.html>) allows international students to engage in productive, full-time work for a specified period of time with university-approved employers, for which they receive remuneration and evaluation, under professional supervision. Of course, in the Netherlands, EU students are free to work without employment permits, and international students may work part-time during their studies or full-time in summer holidays. (<https://www.togetherabroad.nl/Working-while-studying-in-the-netherlands.html>) Other countries such as France, Ireland, Spain and Switzerland also offer interesting programs delivered in English, particularly in niche subject areas.

With any luck, these suggestions represent some hopeful signposts for charting one's path to university abroad. Despite uncertain times, if families take the initiative to start the process with enough lead time (early in the penultimate year of high school, or even before), these resourceful approaches and the potential guidance of an experienced counselor can help students set their sails towards university success.