



**PennState**  
Dickinson Law

**EDUCATION ABROAD & EXCHANGE  
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

## OVERVIEW

Dickinson Law has developed a robust education abroad and exchange program portfolio designed to provide Dickinson Law students with opportunities to enhance their understanding of world languages, cultures, and international legal systems so that they may be better prepared as effective and internationally engaged legal practitioners.

Specifically, Dickinson Law has established partnership agreements with reputable institutions around the world where our students can study law abroad alongside their international peers. Currently, there are two distinct education abroad program types offered to Dickinson Law students:

1. *Dickinson Law Programs*. These programs allow students to earn Dickinson Law credit through international study. For example, the [International Justice Program](#) offers students an opportunity to work alongside senior prosecutors at the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands. Moreover, Dickinson Law offers occasional faculty-directed, short-term programs abroad that are designed and organized for student cohorts.
2. *Foreign Institution Programs*. Dickinson Law maintains exchange agreements that allow the reciprocal movement of students between institutions. For example, students may study at Radboud University in the Netherlands for a semester as an exchange student. Exchange students generally pay regular Dickinson Law tuition and fees but are in-residence abroad. One's scholarship package applies as if on campus, provided the student is registered for a minimum of 12 credits. Students may earn a maximum of 12 transfer credits that are integrated into their degree programs at Dickinson Law. Certain restrictions may apply.

Please [see website for specific program offerings](#).

## PLANNING

To ensure students have a comprehensive foundation in the U.S. legal system before studying abroad and are on track to complete their degree program requirements, Dickinson Law students generally participate in semester-length, education abroad programs during their fourth, fifth and sixth semesters. Some education abroad programs may only be available to those in their fifth semester. Other short-term, education abroad program options may be available.

### *Academic Calendars*

Academic calendars differ by institution. It is important to ascertain the alignment of the academic calendar of the international program with one's program of study at Dickinson Law. Moreover, it is important to consider how the beginning and ending dates of a semester abroad program may affect summer employment opportunities.

### *Required and Pre-Requisite Courses*

Some required or pre-requisite courses needed to complete one's degree program at Dickinson Law may only be offered once a year. To the extent possible, it is important to plan accordingly by reviewing degree requirements and aligning your degree audit to ensure degree progress.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Certain eligibility requirements must be satisfied before an applicant is permitted to participate in an approved Dickinson Law education abroad program.

- Applicant must have completed with at least a passing grade all courses in the required curriculum.
- Applicant must be in good academic standing and not subject to an Honor Code proceeding or sanction at the time of application or at the time the student studies abroad.

- Applicant must have demonstrated a strong academic record as demonstrated through their class-standing rank. An applicant must rank in the top 80% of his or her class based on overall cumulative grade point average. However, if the student earned a C or lower in the required legal writing courses, or if the student earned a D or lower in any other course in the required curriculum, then, by the end of the third semester, the student must rank in the top 75% of his or her class based on overall cumulative grade point average.
- Applicant must demonstrate academic achievement, integrity, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills necessary for international study.

Students who have transferred into to the J.D. program from the LL.M. program or from a JD program at another institution, and students who entered the J.D. program with advanced standing are not eligible for semester abroad programs.

Students enrolled in the LL.M., M.L.S., and S.J.D. programs are also not eligible for semester abroad programs but may participate in any short-term programs.

International students are generally permitted to study abroad, although certain visa restrictions may apply.

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION & REVIEW

Students interested in studying abroad must successfully apply for acceptance into a specific program. To apply, students must submit the following documentation to the Director of International Programs and Graduate Education:

1. [Education Abroad Application](#).
2. *Purpose Statement*. In less than 750 words, provide an explanation of your education abroad plans as they relate to your academic

and professional goals. Please explain how this education abroad program will support your professional aspirations.

3. *Academic Eligibility Confirmation*. Confirmation is needed from the Dickinson Law Registrar of good academic standing. An unofficial transcript must be attached.
4. *Recommendation Letter*. At least one letter of recommendation from a Dickinson Law faculty member who is familiar with your academic performance is required, preferably your academic advisor.

Applications are due by the end of the first week in February for programs offered the following fall semester and by the end of the second week in September for programs offered the following spring semester. Specific deadlines will be posted for faculty-directed education abroad offerings.

*Most foreign institutions require a secondary application process. In some cases, their deadlines may be earlier.*

In consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Director of International Programs and Graduate Education will review all education abroad applications. As most programs have limited availability, the following criteria will be prioritized:

- Academic performance;
- Assessment of purpose statement;
- Faculty member recommendation; and,
- Class standing.

Students will be notified within a reasonable period. If needed, a waiting list will be maintained for each partner institution.

Upon acceptance, Dickinson Law submits nominations to the appropriate international institution. In most cases, it will also be necessary to apply to, and be accepted by, the host institution. As such, it is important to observe all application deadlines and related requirements of the host institution.

## PREDEPARTURE PREPARATION

International study can be a valuable part of a student's degree program. Dickinson Law strives to support its students at all phases of the education abroad experience, including providing ongoing orientation programming that bridges pre- and post-program planning. There is much however that is solely the responsibility of participating students that requires good judgment, attention to detail, clear judgment and long-term planning.

### *Travel Safety Network*

All students must record their international studies in Penn State's [Travel Safety Network \(TSN\)](#) prior to departure as outlined in the [University's International Travel Requirements Policy](#). The TSN is a resource that allows Penn State to confirm the locations of its students and provide emergency assistance, medical support, and/or travel resources as needed.

This also gives students access to Penn State's International Medical Insurance, which includes comprehensive medical coverage, payment of medical expenses, medical evacuation or repatriation, security and natural disaster assistance and evacuation. This also includes registration for the U.S. Department of State's Smart Travelers Enrollment Program (STEP) and access to Country Specific Travel Resources, including trip planning, logistics, customs regulations, safety and security advice.

Students may also need to attest to being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the time of travel.

As part of the registration process, students are required to complete an [Emergency Preparedness Workshop](#) at least 30 days in advance of the departure date.

Questions should be directed to [tsn@psu.edu](mailto:tsn@psu.edu) or 1-814-863-8788.

### *Post-Acceptance Application Materials*

No later than one week prior to departure, all students are required to complete a [Health and Emergency Contact Form](#) requesting in-country contact information and any health-related information that would be relevant in the event of an emergency. This information will be used by Dickinson Law in the event of an emergency or crisis. It is the responsibility of each student to keep this information updated with the Director of International Programs and Graduate Education.


### *Course Registration*

Students are required to register for a full course load for each semester abroad that meets both the host country's student visa requirements and requirements at Dickinson Law.

All courses to taken abroad must be pre-approved by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs via the [Associate Deans Approval Request Form](#). When doing so, please include the following in one document attached to the submission:

- Approved foreign institution of study and country;
- Semester of study;
- Proposed course selections, course descriptions and number of total credits;
- Method of instruction delivery (in-person, remote, hybrid etc.); and,
- Any additional information needed to review the request, including consideration of any potential overlap of content with Dickinson Law courses you have taken or may want to take upon return.

Students must affirm, "I understand that if these courses are approved, Dickinson Law will award a maximum of 12 academic credits on a credit/no credit scale towards my J.D. degree. I understand that these credits are considered co-curricular and I am not to exceed the 22 co-curricular credit maximum. I agree that I cannot take classes in the future that substantially duplicate the content of courses taken abroad."



Each education abroad student should enroll in a full course load at Dickinson Law for the education abroad semester when registration opens. The Dickinson Law Registrar will drop these classes once the student has been admitted by the partner school. At that time, the student will be enrolled in ABROD 901 for 12 credits. Irrespective of the specific courses taken abroad, students will only see ABROD 901 (12 credits) on their Dickinson Law transcript.

### *Passport and Visa*

You must obtain a passport to travel outside of the United States. If you already have a passport, be sure it is valid for at least 6-12 months beyond your program's end date. It is your responsibility to obtain these documents. Visit the [U.S. Department of State's Passports](https://travel.state.gov/passport) website to find out how to apply for a U.S. passport or to check on the status of a pending U.S. passport application.

You may also be required by the host country to apply for and obtain a student visa prior to departure. A visa is a stamp in a passport which officially grants permission for the holder to enter a country for a specified period of time for a particular purpose (e.g., study). Student visa requirements vary from country to country and from consulate to consulate. With the assistance of the host institution, students must allow sufficient time to complete the visa process. Additional costs may apply.

Some Schengen area countries, such as the Netherlands, do not require a student visa beforehand; instead, students get a residence permit upon arrival in the country. To avoid problems at the Schengen border control, students who plan to obtain their residence permits upon arrival in the destination country should fly directly to their host country or transit via a non-Schengen country.

Some countries may also require that students complete a residency registration process upon arrival.

### *Pre-Departure Orientation*

All students are invited to participate in a pre-departure orientation provided by Dickinson Law (if provided). Upon arrival, students should provide detailed contact information to Dickinson Law to be used in the event of an emergency.

### *International Travel*

Students should carefully research their flight options and should investigate the various possible airline fees when trying to book their transportation to/from their abroad destination. When making travel reservations, students should be sure to use one's name exactly as it appears on their passport.

## **ACADEMIC GUIDELINES**

### *Credit Transfer*

Students are permitted to transfer the equivalent of 12 credits from an international institution (including credit for language courses taken abroad). Dickinson Law students must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits in order to maintain full-time enrollment status.

To receive credit for any coursework completed abroad, the student must receive a passing grade as determined by the host institution.

As noted above under Course Registration, students should obtain a course description or syllabus for each course taken at the host institution. Each course must be separately reviewed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to assess its academic rigor prior to the start of classes at the host institution. Failure to do so may complicate the credit transfer process. Students should also keep copies of their work from abroad (assignments, syllabi, tests, etc.) as Dickinson Law faculty may request to see these materials upon return.

Irrespective of the credits taken abroad, students are permitted a maximum of 12 transfer credits.

### *Transcripts*

Any credits earned abroad are included on the student's transcript by reference only, and no attempt is made to convert grades to Penn State Dickinson Law equivalents. Earned credit will be listed as ABROD 901 (12 credits) on the Dickinson Law transcript. As noted, each course must be reviewed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for academic rigor.

Students will also receive a transcript from the partner institution which will indicate all courses completed and grades received. It is the student's responsibility to request a copy of the transcript from the partner institution to be submitted to the Dickinson Law Registrar. Failure to do so may result in no credit being awarded for the coursework taken.

### *Co-Curricular Credit*

Students should review the law school requirements on co-curricular credits. Co-curricular credits are credits earned in ungraded settings or settings that do not involve attendance during a semester in regularly scheduled Dickinson Law classroom sessions, or settings that lack direct faculty instruction. This includes credit earned through internships, the International Justice Program, education abroad, etc.

Students are not permitted to enroll in more than 22 co-curricular credits. For example, if a student earns 12 credits abroad via an exchange program, that student may earn no more than 10 additional co-curricular credits.

Dickinson Law's academic rules about co-curricular credits reflect the requirements found in Standard 311 of the accreditation standards adopted by the Council of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Because the co-curricular credit rules are based on accreditation Standard 311, waivers of the co-curricular credit rules will not be granted.

### *Independent Study*

Some education abroad and exchange programs may require a student to undertake an independent study under the supervision of a Dickinson Law faculty member during the semester the student is abroad. Dickinson Law protocols for independent study apply.

### *Law Review*

Whether a student may maintain a position on a Dickinson Law journal during their time abroad will depend on the position and the journal. Students should consult the relevant editors.

### *Duplicate Coursework*

Students may not receive credit for two courses with substantially similar subject matter. If students have questions about whether a course at a partner institution will duplicate subject matter in another course they intend to take, they should consult with their Dickinson Law faculty advisor or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the specific program in advance.

### *Student Ranking*

Students are not ranked during the semester they are studying abroad.

### *Graduation Requirements*

Students are responsible for ensuring that all course requirements for graduation are met. It is important to plan accordingly by reviewing degree requirements and aligning one's degree audit to ensure satisfactory degree progress. Seminar requirements may not be fulfilled through education abroad or independent study.

### *Enrollment Reporting*

Semesters when students are abroad are considered semesters-in-residence for purposes of the six-semester residency requirement. Dickinson Law will consider the semester abroad the same as spending a semester at Dickinson Law.



## HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY

### Health

Before traveling internationally, students should take the necessary steps to ensure their healthcare abroad, including medications, immunizations, and vaccinations. The availability and legality of certain medications varies by country, as do the vaccination requirements to be granted entry. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides health and medical information for countries and regions.

- *Medication.* Medication brand names, strengths, applications, etc. may vary in different countries. What is over the counter in the U.S. may not even be legally sold in your host country. Students should make sure their medications are not considered illegal under the countries' laws. Any medications should be left in their original container and be clearly labeled.
- *Immunizations & Vaccinations.* Some countries may require certain vaccinations prior to entry. Visit the [Penn State Travel Clinic](#) or other health care provider as soon as possible to get required immunizations and other pre-travel medical and health advice. It is important to make this appointment early, as some vaccines require multiple injections over a period of time.
- *COVID-19 Vaccination.* Students will likely need to attest to being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the time of travel.

Exemptions approved by Penn State offices hold no influence with foreign governments or international educational institutions, many of which have enacted strict vaccination protocols. Therefore, students who are not vaccinated, even those who have been approved for an exemption by Penn State, may face limitations or restrictions in their participation in education abroad programs,

including cancellation of their admission, due to regulations by foreign governments or international educational institutions.

### Safety

The [U.S. Department of State](#) provides helpful information and resources for studying abroad, including an extensive pre-departure checklist. It is very important for you to provide your family and Dickinson Law with your physical address and mobile telephone number (and landline, if you have both) as soon as you have these numbers available.

- *Emergencies.* When an emergency occurs while studying abroad, immediately seek local assistance. Depending on the type of emergency, take one, some, or all of the following steps:
  1. Contact the local police or emergency services.
  2. If you are an American citizen, contact the nearest [U.S. Embassy, Consulate, or Diplomatic Mission](#).
  3. If you are not an American citizen, contact the consulate of your country.
  4. Contact the local institution or organization at which you are working or studying.

If hurt, go to the nearest medical facility and contact the insurance company once you are stable. The telephone number (call collect 24 hours per day) is on your insurance card.

If needed, contact Penn State University Police, at 1-814-863-1111. Police services are available 24/7.

Stay calm and go home, if it is safe to do so. Do not go to the scene of the incident because the emergency personnel need space to do their work properly and to secure the area. Stay abreast of the news for security and safety updates. See the [U.S. Department of State Emergencies and Crises Advice](#) website for additional information.

- *Communication.* Students should carry a functioning cell phone that is turned on and charged. Students should also make sure they have appropriate equipment to use host country plugs and voltage and know how to make phone calls from the country.
- *Documentation.* It is recommended to make copies of travel documents and credit cards. Copies should be kept separate from originals.
- *Alcohol & Drugs.* Many students fall victim to crime and other hazards while under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Students under the influence of alcohol can find themselves in compromising situations. Alcoholic content is often much higher outside the United States. Students should be aware of the cultural norms in the host country and abide by all local laws and customs.
- *Water Safety.* In some locations, tap water may be undrinkable. When in doubt, drink bottled water and check with the international office of the host institution.
- *Fire Hazards.* Fire regulations differ from country to country. Smoke alarms, sprinklers, and fire exits do not exist in many places. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the safety conditions in their home.
- *Sexual Harassment and Assault.* Due to differences in gender relations and attitudes in other cultures, situations may arise in which students find themselves in uncomfortable or unsafe situations while abroad. Laws in other countries vary, so it is important to consult with the international office regarding the local legal system. Resources for victims of sexual assault and harassment will likely be different from those in the United States also.
- *Sexual Orientation.* In order to maximize the education abroad experience, all students should become familiar with the host country's laws and social norms pertaining to LGBTQ people and their rights.

- *Women's Safety.* Women may experience some difficulties while abroad and facing the unfamiliar can raise the anxiety level. U.S. women have a reputation for enjoying a lifestyle which contrasts with more traditional behavior in many countries. U.S. students may encounter people who do not understand that their familiar way with strangers is a gesture of friendship and nothing more.

### *Security*

International travel is most secure with advance planning and research. The following resources provide important security information.

- [OSAC](#) provides in-depth safety and security information to U.S. higher education institutions and education abroad programs.
- The [U.S. Department of State Countries and Regions Information](#) provides background information on countries and regions.
- The [Penn State University Libraries](#) provides country information to help with country-specific research (i.e., background, constitution, economy, politics, statistics, and data).

As a first step in planning any visit abroad, check the [Travel Advisories](#) for your intended destination. The world at a glance can be seen on the U.S. Department of State's [color-coded map](#). Note that conditions can change rapidly in a country at any time.

Students should also consult Penn State's Travel Guidelines, which offers comprehensive international travel guidance. These guidelines have been developed with the health and safety of the entire University community in mind, in accordance with the latest information and requirements from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the governor's office, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Department of State.



## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The cost of education abroad can be high, but with advance planning international study can be available to all students. Students are eligible to receive financial aid if studying on an approved Dickinson Law education abroad program, provided the student meets application deadlines and eligibility criteria.

### *Tuition*

Students participating in semester abroad exchanges pay tuition and mandatory fees at Dickinson Law. Students do not pay tuition or mandatory fees to the host institution. Tuition covers the number of classes considered a full course load by the partner institution. If a student wishes to take courses in excess of the full course load, they may be required to pay separately for those courses to the host institution. At some schools, additional language courses are offered at the host institution for an additional fee.

### *Financial Aid*

Students studying in semester abroad programs are eligible for financial aid. It is possible that due to the differences in semester start dates, financial aid disbursements will not be correctly timed. Students should address financial considerations prior to applying to study abroad.

### *Additional Expenses*

Students should budget for additional expenses while abroad, which may include the following:

- Airfare and other travel costs
- Inoculations
- International Health Insurance (UHCG)
- Housing
- Meals
- Passport/Visa costs
- Personal Expenses

### *Funding Sources*

Students are encouraged to start researching and

applying for scholarships well in advance of studying abroad. The following is a selection of scholarships for study or research abroad available to graduate students:

- [Boren Fellowship](#) provides scholarships to add an international language component to their graduate studies abroad
- [Fulbright](#) offers a variety of scholarships to support international study.
- [German Academic Exchange Service](#) offers scholarships for studies, research and language courses in Germany.

The following are some databases that have been designed to provide students with information on various funding opportunities.

- [IIE Passport Study Abroad Funding Scholarships.com](#)
- [StudyAbroad.com Scholarship Database](#)
- [Study in Australia Scholarships](#)
- [International Scholarships](#)
- [Scholarships Abroad](#)

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

One of the most rewarding aspects of education abroad is the experience of being immersed in another culture. Students often return from abroad with an understanding of new foods, art, sports or models of business, science, or government. This expanded knowledge helps participants to be more effective and innovative in their working lives and more satisfied on a personal level. Prior to departure, students should familiarize themselves with issues related to cultural adjustment, stereotypes, the rewards and challenges of being immersed in another culture, and for tips on how to live and study successfully abroad.

### *Cultural Adjustment*

The key to dealing with culture shock is to remember that this is a natural process that accompanies being in a new culture for an extended period of time. It is very important to

allow enough time to adjust to the new surroundings, remain positive, and not become discouraged. The [UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) offers helpful information on understanding cultural adjustment.

It is important to learn about the history and culture of the host country and to stay informed of current events in the region. Here are a few other ways to find support and channel your adjustment challenges into something positive:

- Participate in social and community events.
- Talk with the international office at the host institution.
- Join a student club or society.
- Meet with other international students.
- Keep a journal.
- Stay informed about news at home.
- Keep in contact with people from home.

### *Cultural Differences*

While abroad, students will encounter numerous cultural differences. At times, these differences can be frustrating but mostly, they enrich learning. Here are a few key cultural differences.

- *Tippling.* Tipping is not a universal practice. Any if anything, one may leave small change in appreciation.
- *Bargaining.* Although bargaining is generally not common in the U.S., it can be expected elsewhere. This can be a fun way to engage the local culture and practice other languages.
- *Personal Lives.* Americans are generally open people and like to share a lot about themselves. It can take longer in other cultures for people to open up.
- *Humor.* Humor is probably one of the most difficult things to understand when learning a new language and culture; do not feel frustrated if you do not understand some of the jokes that you will hear. Americans have strong senses of humor and like to tease each

other but be careful because this may not translate across cultures.

- *Local Mindsets.* Due to the size of the U.S., news and culture are focused more locally than globally. As this is not the case elsewhere, do not be surprised if those you meet know quite a lot about the United State. Be prepared to address some of the questions they have about the U.S. and its engagement in the world.
- *Values.* Punctuality, individual responsibility, a strong work ethic, politeness, and proud patriotism are all valued in the U.S. Know that Americans expect everyone to wait patiently in line or to “wait their turn” for everything—do not try to move in front of someone who was waiting before you.
- *Religion.* The United States was founded on the principle of religious freedom and is therefore religiously diverse. In other countries, people may be more hesitant to talk openly about their religious beliefs and consider religion a private matter.
- *Politics.* Politics can similarly be considered a private issue, but one should not be surprised to encounter lively conversations about local politics. It is best to be familiar with the local political structures and mindful of hot button issues.

### **QUESTIONS**

Direct questions about education abroad and exchange programming the International Programs and Graduate Education Office, at [DickinsonGradEd@psu.edu](mailto:DickinsonGradEd@psu.edu).