

I am from Ecuador, a political science major, and I'm interested in international relations. My main reason for participating in study abroad was for the opportunity to take courses that aren't available at Davidson. I studied abroad for an academic year; Geneva, Switzerland in the fall, and Paris, France in the spring, with two different program providers. My programs were not on Davidson's approved list, so I submitted a petition for each one because they were in different terms. The Study Abroad Office only accepts one per term, however.

Professionally, I am planning to get involved with something in political science. In Switzerland, I was able to take courses at Geneva's Graduate Institute, learn more about the United Nations, and while in France study at Paris VII. All of these institutions are reputed in the political science world, so it was great to experience them. Since I am also passionate about the French language, I wanted to take more "classes in French" and not only "French language classes." I loved Paris and being able to take classes alongside French students was unforgettable.

I did not have any particular challenges during the study abroad application process. My biggest concern was whether or not I could get my student visas on time. Obviously, the visa procedure is different and takes longer for an Ecuadorean than for an American student. However, my program providers worked with me throughout the whole process and it was easier than I imagined.

My advice for international students who want to study abroad is to research the visa regulations of your home and host country in advance so there are no issues later on in the application process. It's also important to consider what kind of an impact acquiring a visa for study abroad will have, if any, on your visa that's issued by the U.S. government. I also encourage you to think about other details like: how am I going to transfer money from my home country to the host country? Is my health insurance appropriate? Do I need extra funds for emergency? Do I have all the vaccines needed to enter to "x" country? etc. These are details we do not think about regularly, but it is important for study abroad. In the end, you'll be relieved you did your background research.