

GUIDE FOR COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY STAFF AND FACULTY
HOSTING STUDENTS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

STUDY USA

2019 - 2020

INTRODUCTION

This guide provides information for the faculty and staff of US institutions in contact with students sent to the United States through the Northern Ireland Study USA program, formerly known as the Business Education Initiative (BEI).

This information should inform host faculty and staff how they can help and guide the students during their year in the US. Issues covered have been identified by former participants in the program as important to their success.

In this guide the term “host institution” refers to the United States College or university which is receiving the students; “home institution” refers to the student's university or college in Northern Ireland.

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1. INTRODUCING THE BRITISH COUNCIL

British Council has offices in 110 countries worldwide, and employs 7500 staff. We have offices throughout the UK in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. The office in Belfast employs 30 staff and this is the office where the Study USA Team is based.

Our purpose is to build mutually beneficial relationships between people in the UK and other countries and to increase appreciation of the UK's creative ideas and achievements.

This work is driven by our strong belief in internationalism, a commitment to professionalism and an enthusiasm for creativity. These qualities, coupled with our integrity and our conviction that cultural relations can help individuals and the world community to thrive, make the British Council a good partner and a special place to work.

2. STUDY USA STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Study USA Email: study.usa@britishcouncil.org

Emergency Number (weekends/out of office hours):

Karen McCormack (Study USA Senior Project Manager): 011 44 7727 666 070

Dr Tony Novosel Study USA Student Support Advisor

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3. AIMS OF THE STUDY USA PROGRAMME

The aims of the program are to:

- To provide students from Northern Ireland with an outward looking, international experience through a year-long placement in a US School.
- To improve the core employability skills of the participating students
- To develop future managers and leaders for the Northern Ireland economy
- To raise the economic, cultural and political awareness of Northern Ireland in the US.
- To contribute to the process of finding a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.
- A collateral benefit for US academic institutions is an opportunity to further the internationalization of their campuses.

4. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Even though it is the responsibility of each student to meet the program's expectations for the year, it is useful for the host institution to know what is required of the students. This will permit the host institution to assist the student in reasonable ways to do what is expected.

- Complete a minimum of 30 credits over one academic year. Students are required to take a minimum of 24 credits in business or STEM related subjects.
- Maintain 100% attendance unless extenuating circumstances arise which can be evidenced e.g. medical issue, family emergency or an absence excused by the Professor in advance.
- Achieve a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or above.
- Ambassadorial Role – give 5 presentations about Northern Ireland over the year.
- Complete voluntary / community work on campus.
- Complete a Business Related Project for submission to Northern Irish University. Please note this work is set and monitored by the student's home institution.
- Complete a Personal Development Portfolio of their experience on Study USA.
- Develop employability skills such as team working, presentation & communication skills which they bring back to Northern Ireland.

4.1 Credits

Students are required to obtain a minimum of 30 credits over the academic year, 24 of which should be in business related classes with the remaining credits made up of elective choices.

Students are required to study full time each semester or quarter. On the semester system, this should be typically defined as at least fifteen hours. Assuming that, this means students will take a minimum of five courses each semester.

Host institutions will be aware that the learning styles at the Higher Education level differ between the US and the UK. The students from Northern Ireland will not be accustomed to the continuous form of assessment and the importance of classroom discussion; instead they typically have end of semester examinations and large pieces of independent coursework. We are of course confident that our students will adapt and learn a great deal from this new system and they have been briefed about the differences in advance.

4.2 Business and Elective Classes

Students are expected to take 24 business credits over the academic year. Regardless of their majors at their home institutions, they are required to take courses that will assist their entrance into the Northern Irish economy upon graduation. If they are majoring in business, they would be expected to take advanced business courses in the United States; if they are majoring in other subjects, they should take whatever business courses for which they meet the prerequisites. "Business" is defined broadly and includes any courses that are business related including Management, IT, Human Resources, Public Speaking, Languages, Marketing, Communication, etc. In addition to their business classes, students should take elective credits also.

From 2019, students will now be able to take STEM related subjects during their academic year. If they are majoring in a STEM field, they would be expected to take advanced classes in the United States.

Students will not be required to take STEM related classes if they wish to focus solely on business for their academic year.

Elective credits might be in Art, Design, Psychology, English, Math, History, Drama for example. Students are free to pick whichever elective they wish.

4.3 Achieve a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or above

British Council together with the home college require students to achieve a 3.0 GPA or above on completion of the year study. British Council will review and monitor the academic progress at set intervals throughout the year. Academic feedback and progress reports will be sought on Mid Term and End of Term grades.

The following procedure will be taken for students whose GPA is less than a 3.0

- Those who are not able to provide a valid reason for a low score will be withdrawn from the program and must return home to Northern Ireland when results become known.
- Students whose overall score is less than 3.0 by the end of the academic year will not graduate from Study USA.

4.4 Obtain an Internship with US business (if possible)

Internship opportunities are encouraged particularly if they contribute to academic credit (i.e. where they count for credit hours). They provide an excellent way to see first-hand, how American businesses operate.

(It is important that an organization offering an internship has adequate insurance cover.)

4.5 Ambassadorial Role - Deliver 5 presentations on NI during the year

From its inception, the program has assumed that students will enhance their careers if they can speak well in public. The students are expected to seek opportunities to speak in public while they are in the United States. Public speaking gives students the opportunity to share Northern Irish culture and their own personal life experiences. At the British Council pre-departure briefing, students are supplied with background information on Northern Ireland. Students are required to make five presentations over the year on Northern Ireland. Students are advised to look for opportunities to speak to classes or other student groups on campus, at local public schools, or church and civic groups.

At the start of the academic year, students will be provided with a Presentation Record Sheet where they keep a record of their completed presentations. It is their responsibility to keep this up-to-date and to inform their international advisor that each presentation has taken place. Once five presentations have been completed they will request that their international advisors signs the record and returns it to the Study USA team.

4.6 Complete Voluntary/Community Work

It is expected that the Study USA student will take every opportunity to get involved on campus, and seek to give something back to the community in which they are living for the year. The student should be encouraged to participate in various events and volunteer opportunities where possible.

4.7 Project for Northern Ireland College/University

Depending on the Northern Ireland College/University, students are required to complete a business-related project while in the United States. They will be required to submit the paper to their home institution upon return. It would be helpful if the US institution were to take an interest in the projects and assist with the selection of an appropriate topic.

5. HOST COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Administering I-20/DS2019 Paperwork

The Study USA student will complete an information form to obtain an I-20/DS2019. British Council has emailed this information to our contact at the college. The completed I-20 or DS2019 should be mailed to the British Council office, where the Study USA team will then pass it along to the student. Guidance notes have been supplied to assist with completing the paperwork. It may also be useful to send a College View-book (or any other publications) and any other forms that are required.

5.2 Establish a Designated Contact Person

When the President commits the host institution to the program, he or she should designate someone on campus to administer the program. This will be the person with whom the Study USA team will communicate, the one who enrolls the student and the person who provides a point of contact for the student on campus throughout the year. This is usually a member of staff from the International Office or Admissions Office.

5.3 Assign an Academic Advisor

Experience in the past few years has shown that good counseling on the part of host institutions is one of the keys to the students having a successful year. The UK and American educational systems share the same common goals, but the way in which they arrive at these goals is different. Students entering the American system can at times find themselves overwhelmed in strange course requirements and different academic and social expectations. Careful advising can easily overcome these differences and assist the students in fulfilling their expectations.

5.4 Greeting the students

The British Council makes every effort to have the students arrive on campus just prior to orientation, but flight schedules and personal needs sometimes bring the students to campus a few days early. British Council will inform the Contact Person of the date of the students' arrival, but it is often helpful if the college or university can arrange to have the student met at the airport or greeted within a few hours of arrival.

5.5 Classification of the Students

Study USA students are arriving in the US to complete their Junior Year of study.

5.6 Housing Arrangements

The funding from British Council covers double dorm accommodation for the student. In order to gain the best possible exposure to American life and study, we ask that Study USA students share a dorm and should not be housed in a single room. It is ideal if the student can share a dorm with a US roommate, rather than other international students. Whilst some students may choose other options available to them on their housing applications, only a double dorm should be offered unless permission has been given from Study USA.

Some institutions do classify Study USA students as freshmen since they are transferring in with no credits and automatically house the student in freshman dormitories. It may be helpful to know that the students from Northern Ireland are usually older than most freshmen and they can often feel out of place

in a freshman facility.

Sharing accommodation and living with a US student is a vital way to integrate the student into the US culture, as well as assisting with building friendships.

During holidays, when the majority of dorms on campus close it is important that the student has sufficient funds of their own to cover accommodation, food and other living expenses, or that they make alternative arrangements. British Council does not provide funding for food and accommodation outside term time.

5.7 Orientation

If possible, the student should go through Freshman and International orientation since they are unfamiliar with the school and American educational practices.

The student may also need guidance and assistance to enable them to open a US bank account and purchase any necessary items for their dorms.

5.8 Student Support

Spending a year studying abroad is an exciting prospect and naturally students have high expectations of the experience.

Many students report that they are surprised by the difference in culture between the US and Northern Ireland and experience difficulties in adjusting to their new environment.

If a student is unhappy, homesick, struggling to settle in or having difficulties keeping up with the academic requirements, we have a support system which both the student and US College/University can draw on for help.

Firstly the Study USA team in Belfast is available to lend support. Contact details are at the start of this document.

There is also a designated Student Support Advisor, based in Pittsburgh, to assist Study USA students while they are in the US. Dr. Tony Novosel is based at the University of Pittsburgh and has been providing support and guidance to the students for 20 years and will be happy to take a call, respond to emails, talk via Skype/Facebook, or even arrange to visit your campus if necessary. Tony's contact details can be found at the start of this document.

If students are having difficulties on your campus please take the following steps:

1. Ask the student to meet with the designated contact at their college to discuss the issues and discuss steps to overcome any problems/issues. It may be useful to make the student aware of any campus counseling services.
2. Encourage the student to contact the Study USA Student Support Advisor, Tony Novosel.
3. Contact the Study USA Team at British Council.

The Study USA team is experienced in dealing with problems and is able to contact students directly if necessary.

5.9 Certification of the Completion of the Study USA Year

Host institutions will be asked by British Council to certify that students have completed the full academic year and the expected courses. Students must have left the host institution in good standing and have completed all requirements.

Each Study USA student has signed a waiver which is included in their enrollment paperwork to you. This waiver states that the Study USA staff may have access to any details that may be required in connection with their academic achievement and Grade Point Average. Should state laws prevent the passing of such information to third parties, this waiver should be regarded as their authorization to release the required information.

6. CAMPUS LIFE

Study USA students are sometimes concerned they will find it difficult to adapt to a different social life than they are used to in Northern Ireland. They are leaving behind old friends and are hoping to find new ones in the United States. They have grown up in a culture where the legal age to consume alcohol is 18 and may be concerned about American and campus restrictions in this area. They will not have a car or the money to travel too far.

The students have been told that they must accept the responsibility for their own social life, but any assistance from College staff will be appreciated. Many colleges operate the “host family” system which provides a chance for international students to enjoy occasional meals and social interaction away from campus.

6.1 Involvement in Campus Activities and Sports

One way to develop a satisfying social life is to become involved with one’s community. Students are encouraged to participate in campus life, but most of these students come from large home universities where the opportunity for extensive involvement is limited. The host institution can help students to become involved by suggesting possibilities to them. They have already been encouraged to volunteer in the near-by community, but they may need some contacts.

Each year a number of the students express interest in sports, both intramural and intercollegiate. Many are very fine athletes and could contribute to the campus teams. Students are encouraged to email the Athletic Director at the host institution ASAP if they are interested in intercollegiate sports, but if your institution can assist the students in finding their way to the right people on campus - a coach, the captain of an intramural team, or the staff of the recreation center, that would be much appreciated.

6.2 Exposure to American Culture and Travel

Most of what international students know about the United States they have learned through the media. Therefore the Irish students are encouraged to experience the variety of American life. Again, the responsibility for this lies with the students, but the host institution might assist by arranging for them to meet local families, visit various churches, attend local sports and cultural events, etc.

6.3 Part Time Work on Campus

The Study USA scholarship covers all student expenses during term time, e.g. food, lodgings, text books etc. and students are only required to pay for the basic necessities. Many students may wish to look for part-time work to help support themselves over the holidays and British Council does not object to this, so long as the students do not violate visa regulations.

If possible it would be helpful if the designated contact person could help the student to secure their Social Security Number. British Council do not wish to put pressure on the institution to find students work and acknowledges that the institutions have already made a major contribution to these students by waiving tuition. Nevertheless, if work is available and the students want it, this is acceptable.

7. FUNDING

The Study USA program is managed and administered by British Council and funded by:

- The Department for the Economy (DfE) / British Council
- USA Church affiliated Universities through the waiver of tuition fees

A placement on Study USA represents a scholarship of approximately \$40,000. This represents a considerable investment on the part of the US colleges and DfE / British Council.

7.1 US College/University Contribution

The US College or University very generously waives the student's tuition fees for the two semesters of study.

7.2 British Council Financial Contribution

DfE provides through British Council the following funding:

- Round Trip Flight to the US
- Room and Board (Term time only, Double Dorm, Full meal plan)
- Text Books (\$1100)
- Other enrollment costs (application fees, activity costs etc.)

NB: Vacation/Break Allowance is not provided.

Any additional funds required in respect of the student(s) should have the prior approval of the British Council before funds are made available.

7.3 Student Financial Contribution

The Study USA student is responsible for the following costs:

- Visa application & SEVIS fee
- Travel and medical insurance
- Extra costs incurred throughout the year, e.g. if the student wishes to change their meal plan, upgrade housing to a single room, replacement ID card fees, or needs to receive any vaccinations/health checks.
- Bookstore charges, e.g. Stationery, Clothing, Art supplies, Computer Equipment etc.
- Any additional campus charges e.g. paid campus events/trips, music lessons, rentals.

7.4 Medical Insurance

In discussion with the US Faith Based Higher Education Association, the US College President has agreed that the Study USA student is not required to purchase the US College international insurance plan. Instead, each student is responsible for purchasing their own insurance for their year in the US, from a UK insurance provider.

The student insurance policy will provide comprehensive cover for all travel arrangements (cancellation, curtailment, lost baggage, delayed departure, lost passport) as well as medical and dental cover whilst in the US. (injury, illness, hospital confinement, personal accident, personal liability, legal expenses, death, repatriation of body). The policy will also cover the student over the holidays and for trips home during

the year.

The students are given guidance as to what to purchase, and usually purchase a dedicated Study Abroad policy from a company in the UK. The student will have purchased this policy before leaving the UK and the policy will be fully comprehensive to cover every aspect and emergency during their year in the US. It is therefore unnecessary for the student to purchase any other policy or cover whilst they are in the US.

7.5 Vaccinations

The Study USA program does not cover the cost of any enrollment vaccinations or required health checks such as TB tests or general medicals. We would ask that the student be notified of any required vaccinations prior to their departure to your college so that they may receive the medication in Northern Ireland.

7.6 Changes in Accommodation or Meal Plan

If the student should decide to change the accommodation or meal plan while on campus the student is responsible for any extra costs incurred. British Council cannot provide additional funds for individual students for upgrades or personal trips and expenses.

The student will be in charge of budgeting their meal plan and British Council strongly advise that the student does not use their meal plan card to purchase additional drinks/treats in campus shops.

7.7 Book Bursary

A book bursary of \$1100 is paid directly to the US college/university and is allocated onto the Student Account. With regards to book purchases, we recommend that the student purchase only essential core text books and make full use of the library on campus. British Council cannot increase the book allowance and students will need to prioritize and budget carefully.

The Study USA program may, at times, need to monitor the spending activity in relation to a student's book allowance. Students should not be given any portion of their book allowance in the form of cash/cheque as this makes it difficult for the program to monitor the spending that is taking place.

The Study USA scholarship does not provide funds to cover costs for materials required for elective classes/private tuition such as piano lessons/guitar lessons, art supplies etc. If in doubt, please consult a member of the Study USA team.

7.8 Reconciling Student Accounts

Please note for auditing purposes, at the end of the academic year the British Council will seek reconciliation for each student account. At that stage the British Council will pay any outstanding amounts and any surplus monies should be returned to the British Council. More information on how to make payments will be circulated at the end of the academic year.

8. IRISH AMERICAN SCHOLARS (IAS) PROGRAMME

As a means of thanking our US Colleges and Universities for hosting our students, the Northern Ireland Institutions offer a limited number of study places on the Irish American Scholars Program each year. This Program enables a limited number of American students from supporting Colleges to spend one or two semesters at a University or College in Northern Ireland.

Each Fall, the US Faith Based Higher Education Association for your college will write to US College Presidents inviting two applications from Junior students who have a GPA of 3.2 or above. The students will be considered for a place at a Northern Ireland Institution.

Through the IAS program American students may opt for courses in any subject area available, for which tuition fees will be waived. (They will however have to cover their living and other costs while in Northern Ireland.)

Further details of this interesting opportunity may be obtained from your US Faith Based Higher Education Association, the addresses for which are included in Section 9 of this document.

9. US FAITH BASED HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION CONTACT DETAILS

Jeff Arnold

Executive Director
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Tamara K. Gieselman

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TN 37203
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10. CONTACT DETAILS FOR NORTHERN IRISH COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES

Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)

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Manager
Titanic Quarter Campus, Belfast, Northern
Ireland
Tel: 011 44 2890 265 028
Email: jstirrup@belfastmet.ac.uk

North West Regional College (NWRC)

Bronagh Fikri, European and International
Projects Officer
Strand Road, Londonderry, BT48 7AL, Northern
Ireland
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Email: bronagh.fikri@nwrc.ac.uk

Northern Regional College (NRC) Ballymena

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Queen's University of Belfast

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Saint Mary's University College Belfast

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Ireland
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South Eastern Regional College (SERC)

Mr Zia Nazar, International Officer
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Ireland
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Southern Regional College (SRC)

Frank McCourt, Careers Advisor
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Northern Ireland
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Email: mccourt@src.ac.uk

South West College (SWC)

Damian James, Curriculum Manager - Health
and Life Services
1 Dublin Rd, Enniskillen BT74 6AE, Northern
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Stranmillis College Belfast

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University of Ulster

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