

# Study Abroad

## and the Pre-health Student

Future health professionals will need to be broadly-educated, mature, adaptable citizens who have had significant experience in the world beyond the classroom. Study abroad is an ideal vehicle for developing some of the skills and attitudes that are valued in the practice of medicine—flexibility, self-reliance, and sensitivity to other cultures. Study abroad can offer pre-health students a unique chance to observe diverse health care systems, explore different cultural attitudes towards health and healing, and often, to gain volunteer experience in a unique healthcare setting. In recent years, students studying in South Africa have participated in AIDS education campaigns, for example. Such experiences can enhance your knowledge of health issues as they impact people in a range of settings, making you better prepared for the future—not only in terms of medical school applications and interviews, but also in terms of the perspective you will have in your medical education, training, and ultimately in your professional life.

Many Princeton pre-health students have been able to study abroad. Taking one semester abroad is quite doable with careful course-planning. Similarly, study abroad for both junior-year semesters can work if you are willing to wait to apply to medical school until after senior year, or if you have AP credit and complete the pre-medical requirements early, taking the MCAT in the summer after sophomore year. Of course, most students are stronger candidates after senior year anyway, so taking a “gap year” is a common approach whether or not study abroad is a factor. Note: When considering taking the MCAT after sophomore year, students should be aware that scores start to expire after three years.

If you want to have the grades for your work on study abroad computed into your GPA by AMCAS, you must be sure to have your coursework recorded on a U.S. transcript. This is possible, even if you are enrolled directly in a foreign university, if the study abroad program is sponsored by an American college or university. Note: You should plan to take all your premedical requirements in the U.S., as science curricula abroad may differ greatly from ours, and most medical schools refuse to accept pre-medical sciences taken abroad.

The courses at Princeton that meet the premedical requirements are:

<b>General Chemistry:</b>	CHM 201 (or 207) + CHM 202 (or CHM 215 if 1 unit of AP)
<b>Organic Chemistry:</b>	CHM 303 + CHM 304
<b>General Biology:</b>	Ecology & Evolutionary Biology (EEB 211) + Molecular Biology (MOL 214)*
<b>General Physics:</b>	PHY 101 + PHY 102; or 103 + 104
<b>Math:</b>	2 semesters (see notes on p.4)
<b>English:</b>	2 semesters literature/writing (WRI counts as 1 of these)

\*MOL 215 may be taken instead of MOL 214 if student has sufficient AP credit in biology, physics and calculus; MOL 215 is a more quantitative approach and is not to be taken by those with the AP credit.

***For students without any AP credit*** who wish to study abroad, we often suggest the following schedule:

**Freshman Year:** CHM 201 (or 207) + CHM 202, along with some Math (for a description of your Math options, see “A Note about Math” under “Pre-med/Coursework” on the Health Professions Advising (HPA) website, [www.princeton.edu/hpa](http://www.princeton.edu/hpa) or on p. 4 of the HPA handout, “Planning for a Career in the Health Professions.”

**Sophomore Year:** EEB 211 + MOL 214 and either CHM 303 + 304 or PHY 101 + 102 (or 103 + 104)

**Summer after Freshman or Sophomore Year:** Pre-approved course in physics (equivalent to PHY 101 + 102 or 103 + 104) or a pre-approved course in organic chemistry (equivalent to Organic Chemistry, 303 + 304, at Princeton)—depending on which course the student already took during the school year.

If you take Physics or Organic Chemistry during the summer after the freshman year, you will be able to take the MCAT as early as the summer after sophomore year. You will then have the option to be abroad for either or both semesters of junior year. If you take the course in the summer after sophomore year, you would be able to be abroad in the fall of junior year, returning to Princeton to take the MCAT in the spring.

***Students with AP credit in biology, chemistry, physics, or math*** should read the HPA handout, “Planning for a Career in the Health Professions,” very carefully, where potential “Plans” for completing coursework are laid out in detail. Generally speaking, AP credit allows a student to skip certain introductory courses in the four main science requirements for health professional school, but upper-level coursework in those subjects will be required.

***A year off?*** We cannot over-emphasize the fact that you have the option to finish your pre-medical requirements during senior year, or beyond, and then apply to medical school after graduation, taking at least one year off before matriculating at a medical school. It is important to note that *over half* of Princeton applicants to medical school each year are taking at least one year off before matriculating. If you do plan on taking a year off, you have senior year in which to complete requirements, and summer coursework is often not necessary. Or, should you choose to complete your requirements during the first three years, you have the fall of senior year to study abroad.

Of course the timing of study abroad will also depend on the requirements for your major. Do not hesitate to see one of the advisers listed below if you have questions about setting up your schedule. For undergraduate students on their way to becoming doctors, studying abroad can be a once-in-a-lifetime chance to become fully immersed in another culture for an extended period of time. We, in both International Programs and Health Professions Advising, would like to help you reap the benefits of this exciting opportunity.

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