Financing your Study Abroad Trip

**Breaking down the dollars and sense of studying abroad**

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First things first, let’s go over the different ways to apply for assistance to fund your [study abroad](http://www.studyabroad.com/programtype.aspx). And no, robbing a bank isn’t a suggested option. There are three main potential sources for funding your time abroad:

* Scholarships
* Financial Aid
* Loans

And don't forget about the old-fashioned savings option. Once you decide where and when you will be studying abroad, you can start working to save up for your trip. Whether it be a work-study job on campus or babysitting those ruffians next door, you can budget and set aside your paycheck for financing your trip abroad. But let’s be realistic, saving up just might not be enough funding. That’s where our three other options come in.

**Scholarships**

[Scholarships](http://www.studyabroad.com/scholarships.aspx) are a great resource that a lot of students neglect simply out of lazoiness. While you may be overwhelmed at the thought of more applications, you should absolutely take the time to scour scholarships. A standard Internet search can yield a lot of results, and speaking with an advisor at your school’s abroad office is important too. Talking to an advisor ensures you getting the information you need from a reliable source.

Advisors may also refer you to smaller scholarships that may not offer as much money but are much less competitive, thereby upping your shot for earning more money. In some cases, universities award scholarships to students just by writing a genuine essay on why studying abroad is important and what you hope to accomplish in a semester abroad.

**Financial Aid**

Then there’s the option of financial aid, but be careful because each university is different. Semesters abroad are becoming more and more popular for students, and now many schools offer students their existing campus-based financial aid package for their study abroad program. This means, the deal you worked out with your financial aid office at home remains relevant for your study abroad experience.

If your school doesn’t have that policy, your best bet is to be proactive and go to your financial aid office. Ask them if there is anything you can do and how you can apply for any special aid packages that might be available. You may end up lucky, you may not. The only way to be sure is to ask and work with the financial powers that be to get more money.

**Loans**

And lastly, loans can also be a viable option. However, anytime you consider loans, be cautious about it. Remember, the a difference between financial aid, and scholarships and loans is that you will have to pay back every dollar of your student loans after you graduate.

For the most part, getting a government loan mid-year, after you are awarded your financial aid package, is near impossible. Of course, it never hurts to double-check and see if there are any Stafford or Perkins options, but it is very slim. Depending on your credit or the credit of your co-signer, you can always look into a private (bank) loan. However, bank loans come with the unfortunate slap of high interest rates, but many students turn to private loans when they need money and accept the fact that it comes with an added cost.

Doing your homework and researching the right bank for you can shave off some of those high interest rates. But fair warning, those rates will generally be the same across all institutions because of the Federal Reserve and the current state of the economy setting the borrowing standard.

**Getting started**

Now that you have an understanding of your funding options, it’s important get started on the right foot. Here are three tips you won't want to forget:

* **Start now**  
  Don’t wait until the last minute to start saving up for your trip abroad or reaching out for some of these alternative options.
* **Ask for help**  
  Ask your abroad advisors, ask your parents and ask your friends who have gone through the process recently.
* **Don’t be afraid to seek multiple resources**  
  If you have to save and apply for scholarships or take out a loan, that’s okay! A combination of options may be the best idea for you financially and if that’s the case, doing all of these things ahead of time *and*getting multiple, well-advised opinions will only make your planning easier.

Read more: <http://www.studyabroad.com/articles/financing-your-study-abroad-trip.aspx#ixzz3M8D6wsl7>