Frequently Asked Questions About the 2016 UB Semester in London

I am not a sociology major. Can I still participate in the UB Semester in London program?
Of course you can! The program offers full time SUNY tuition and provides a minimum of 12 academic credit hours that count towards the SOC and (often) SSC IDP majors or free electives otherwise. In some cases, COM students who make appropriate arrangements can have 3 of their 6 internship hours count towards meeting COM requirements (the other 3 count as SOC credit). Regardless, the London semester-long program is an intellectual adventure that is open to all eligible students, regardless of discipline and satisfies free elective requirements for other plans of study. In fact, if you are a north campus student, and if you have taken SOC 101 and take SOC credit for 15 credit hours in London, you finish the requirements for a minor in Sociology. Unfortunately, the SOC minor is not available to students who study entirely in Singapore, due to Ministry of Education requirements.

Are all students required to register for 12 credit hours?
Yes, all students must take at least 12 credit hours to participate in the UB Semester in London program, even if they need fewer than 12 credit hours to graduate. This is a full-time academic program, defined by the Study Abroad Office as a minimum of 12 credit hours/semester. Some students may be able to arrange for additional credit hours by doing an independent study or taking online courses (by prior arrangement). This has worked in the past for Management students (who have taken MGO 302 and MGE 302 online while in London). Other students may be able to take an independent study for 3 credit hours with Professor Street (SOC credit, proposals due December 1), or they may be able to make arrangements independently with another UB professor for an independent study in their own discipline (such arrangements MUST be made by the student, with Professor Street’s approval. If students want extra credit hours beyond 12, they must make their own arrangements with appropriate professors).

Do I really have to share housing with other UB students, even if I have alternatives?
Yes, regardless of your circumstances (aunt lives in London, want to live in a tent), the cost of shared London student housing is part of the package price for the UB Semester in London.

Must all students take the same courses?
Mostly yes. Most students in the program take the 12 credit hours exactly as described in program materials. There are 9 core credit hours in the program that are required of EVERY student, with absolutely no exceptions (SOC 467 Sociology of Social Policy [3 credit hours], and the internship program [6 credit hours]). For the remaining 3 required credit hours, most students take SOC 477 Sociology of Health Care, although some substitute an online course instead. There is only limited flexibility, determined on a case by case basis, subject to approval by the Study Abroad Office and Professor Street. For example, students can try to arrange to take an independent study long distance in their major (working with eligible UB faculty in the relevant department); other students may want to take SOC 499 with Professor Street (contact her to ask how to do that), others may be able to arrange to take online courses to substitute hour for hour for courses they do not take among London program course offerings. Do not assume that just any arrangement will work; check with Professor Street.

Is their flexibility in terms of course offerings?
Professor Street is a sociologist: the courses offered in London are sociology courses she instructs (sometimes cross listed with IDP/SSC). She cannot award academic credit in other disciplines. To take
non-sociology UB credit hours, students must make their own appropriate arrangements with professors in their major Department to have any alternatives to the program as offered, and they must also obtain permission from the Study Abroad Office and Professor Street.

So…what if I don’t need 12 credit hours of sociology credit?
Well, Professor Street thinks it is always a good thing to learn more sociology! Seriously, as mentioned above, some students take online courses offered by UB…business students seem to have the most flexibility for online courses. For example, they may be able to take 6 hours of business courses for credit online (as if they were on their “home” campus) to remain “on time” and “in sequence” in their major area of study, substituting online business courses for SOC 477 (3 hours) and earning 15 hours of academic credit. Choosing to take online courses STILL requires permission from the relevant instructors for online classes to fulfill part of course requirements (usually administration of exams) while in London, and from Professor Street/Study Abroad.

Students majoring in other disciplines may be able to substitute an independent study in their major, or some internship hours towards meeting the requirements of a non-sociology major such as COM (3 hrs), or IDP or PSY (6 hrs) (although the 6 internship credit hours, if awarded as PSY credit, do NOT relieve a student from taking the required number of 400 level letter graded courses for the major in Psychology). COM (3 hours), IDP and PSY (both 6 hours) will sometimes agree on a case-by-case basis whether internship hours can count towards meeting requirements for those majors. I cannot make that decision; setting it up with the appropriate UB department is up to you. If you want to attempt this, consult first with Professor Street, then with the academic advisor or Director of Undergraduate Studies in your major department (COM, PSY, or IDP) to see if such arrangements can be made for supervision of academic work done in London. Then, once you have squared things with the relevant Department for your major, send an email that includes a copy of your correspondence with the professor who agrees to supervise your work and the details of those arrangements to Professor Street.

The process is similar for online courses—contact the instructor of online courses you hope to take, explain that you will be studying in London and the dates of the London program, and determine whether requirements of the course can be met in London during program dates. If the instructor agrees, send an email that includes both the supervising professor and Professor Street, so that everyone knows what is going on. Professor Street will proctor exams by prior arrangement during the period she is in London, but you should not make any assumptions about flexibility about exam dates or times (they are entirely at the discretion of each course instructor), and you should not assume that an instructor will agree to a London exam administration. You may have to take final exams on your home campus. Professor Street and the Study Abroad Office do not make such individualized arrangements, those are up to the individual student who wants to do something other than the UB Semester in London program exactly as advertised. Do not be surprised if you cannot customize this program exactly the way you want it—that is not a reasonable expectation. Deviating from the UB Semester in London course offerings as published requires that students do all the background work to get supervision from an appropriate professor, agree to a plan of work, and explain that plan and obtain permission from Study Abroad/Professor Street.

If I submit my application by the Sept. 30 deadline, am I automatically accepted?
No, not automatically, this is a selective program with a limited number of spaces. All application materials are carefully reviewed by the Study Abroad staff before any admission decisions are made. However, student applications are reviewed as soon as they are complete and admission is made on a
rolling basis (so if you get your application early, it gets reviewed early), first come/first served. Eligible students must be mature enough to handle living with strangers in a foreign city, serious about their intellectual goals, capable of dependably handling the responsibility of internship requirements, performing well in their studies, tolerant, and be confidently fluent in English so that there are no unexpected problems negotiating either course work, living arrangements or internship placements. We will strive to make admission decisions quickly so that students can proceed with planning for future semesters. We carefully look at ALL program materials to make the determination of whether a student is capable of managing to study and intern and live in London—so that means you should submit carefully prepared study statements, cover letters, CVs, etc.

What about the two recommendations—one academic one professional?
There is a form to be filled out by each recommender, generated automatically via email through your online application. Filling out the form is not enough—you also need letters that would be adequate for applying for employment (so ask your professor and your professional reference to please upload a letter on letterhead when they send your electronic recommendation). The letters are reviewed and then sent to internship sites by our London partner (CAPA) for potential matches. Good recommendation letters and a cover letter that “sells yourself” can determine whether or not an internship in a particular organization will be found for you. Send a letter with poor grammar and spelling, or which is careless or sloppily prepared, and you cannot reasonably expect much in the way of high flying internships, for certain.

ADDITIONAL FAQ FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS APPLYING TO THE UB SEMESTER IN LONDON PROGRAM

How do International students apply?
Complete ALL of the application materials online. You are UB students. Consequently, you pay exactly the same program fees (health insurance, housing deposit, etc.) as any other UB student, regardless of “home” campus or your own citizenship.

Get advice, both academic and immigration
All UB international students must seek academic advice from their academic advisors; check in with the Undergraduate Coordinator in your major Department before applying to the London program. Be certain that this program will not interfere with good academic progress in your UB studies. If you are not a U.S. citizen, it is particularly important that you understand completely all US, Singaporean (if applicable) and UK visa requirements that might pertain to you, because you are entirely responsible for the study decisions that you make. No one here at UB can make decisions about your immigration matters, they are your personal responsibility and subject to the laws of your country of citizenship, the US, Singapore (in some cases) and the UK. No UB student can participate in the UB Semester in London program without first obtaining a visa from the UK government that will enable a student to take an internship. Getting a UK visa may be much more complex for nationals of countries other than the US or Singapore. Neither Professor Street nor the personnel in the UB north campus Study Abroad office has the depth of expertise in the intricacies of the UK, US, or Singaporean visa systems for international students. While CAPA and UB Study Abroad will give you what very limited advice and assistance they can, international students are ultimately responsible for arranging UK visas themselves.
and for ensuring that their US or Singapore student visa status is not compromised if they expect to study in London and then return to the United States or Singapore to complete their studies.

**What about the police certificate?**
Police certificates are typically required for all students participating in the *UB Semester in London* program because so many students are placed in internships where they work with vulnerable populations (children in schools, patients in health care settings, etc.) or work in settings with privacy concerns, or handle confidential information. This applies to international UB students too. Find out how to apply for the certificate in Buffalo at the Study Abroad office. For Singapore students, this document is known as the Certificate of Clearance.

**This is really important, and time sensitive!**
You may not participate in the *UB Semester in London* program without a UK visa that permits you to do an internship. International students from certain countries must have proof of English competency before they can even apply for the UK visa. Determine if that is true for you. Some of you may already have test results demonstrating English proficiency, but keep in mind that the UK Border Agency no longer accepts TOEFL. If you have TOEFL scores, you will need to take IELTS or some other English proficiency test approved by the UK government before you can be issued a visa. Schedule the appropriate English proficiency exam immediately upon admission to the program (another reason to apply now)…exam dates fill early. This is a UK visa requirement, a policy of the British government, not a UB program requirement and as such, cannot be waived.

**ADDITIONAL FAQ FOR INTERNSHIP APPLICATIONS**

**HOW TO LAND A GOOD INTERNSHIP IN THE UB SEMESTER IN LONDON PROGRAM**

When you reach the point in the application process where you indicate your internship interests, think “big”…out of the box. Remember, most students will have (at best) entry level skills (or in some cases, pre-entry level skills). Interns simply do not start at the top; avoid disappointment by having realistic expectations! Focus on the broad career areas where you think you would like to get some international work experience, or a career path you would like to try out but may never get a chance again. Asking for a specific internship in a particular organization will never work; students who are too narrow and specific will be disappointed. So “think big,” identify three broad areas where you’re willing to give a work experience a try, and then be open-minded and willing to experiment and learn.

Your cover letter should be perfect, as should your CV. It should tell a reader something about your skills, enthusiasm, dependability—whatever would characterize you as a desirable potential employee. Ask someone to proofread your work and suggest ways to make you even more appealing. Strong letters of recommendation also help—you’ll need two good ones that attest to the fact that you are a mature, thoughtful person who deserves a chance to intern in a VERY competitive internship environment in London (who doesn’t want to work in London???) Be the person who DOES land a great internship position by being thoughtful and flexible.