

## UF in the UK: Exploring Science (May 2024)

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- Unedited student comments from their end-of-course reflection essay are below.
- Trip was 3 nights in Edinburgh, Scotland and three nights in London, England
- This was the first time the trip ran.
- Trip was officially a Spring one-credit course that took place after finals ended and before the start of the Summer A/C semester (students arrived back in Gainesville in time to take summer A/C courses, which many students on the trip were enrolled in)

Below are student comments from their end-of-course reflection essay (at least one comment has been included from each of the 16 students)

I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity to be a part of such an amazing trip. I do not have anything negative to say about my week (except for the fact that it is now over 😊). The trip was very well organized, and each activity was beneficial in its own way. It would not have been the same with a different instructor. Thanks again for an unforgettable experience.

Initially, I was hesitant to study abroad. The idea of traveling alone to an unfamiliar country was slightly frightening, but this experience has shown me that I am capable of doing so safely.

Studying abroad this past week in the United Kingdom has been an unforgettable experience. I enjoyed seeing how different cultures lived, and the things I learned will remain with me.

I am forever grateful to have been apart of such an amazing opportunity and will recommend this trip to anyone interested in science, being an exchange student, or UK culture.

I cannot thank you enough for all the effort and planning you put into making our time in the UK such a blast. It was wonderful getting to know you all and having the opportunity to explore Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London all together, and I will definitely remember this trip as one of the best highlights of my college experience.

I enjoyed my first experience of taking the Underground to navigate the lively and bustling city of London, and being lost the first few times enabled me to become more independent and utilize problem-solving skills to get back on track, always remembering to “mind the gap”.

As a biology major, I was in awe of the Watson and Crick model of DNA at the National Science Museum in London.

I can't express enough how meaningful this study abroad program was for me, but I can say that I learned a lot about scientific discoveries as well as about my personal interests.

This fact may sound silly, but one of my favorite experiences was the London airport the last morning, as I had finally started feeling normal and I had the opportunity to shop around, talk with classmates, and enjoy breakfast for the first time that week as I had intended for the trip. Being sick was unfortunate and I wish that part of the trip had gone differently but I am so lucky I had the most kind and understanding class and a professor who cared about me and made the trip the best possible.

Through this study abroad experience, it gave me confidence and encouragement to participate in future research experiences for undergraduates (REU) abroad and possible study abroad programs that will allow me to conduct research simultaneously.

Overall, this experience was phenomenal, and I met a lot of amazing people. Genuinely, my favorite part of the trip was going on spontaneous trips with groups as we explored more areas of each city.

I thoroughly enjoyed this experience as it gave me a wider perspective of European culture and a deeper knowledge of scientific history.

The tours of the University of Glasgow and University College London that I went on during the trip have increased my interest in and enthusiasm toward participating in a UF exchange program in the future. Going on the trip has cemented my decision to apply to do a full exchange year beginning in 2025.

The UF in the UK program was an incredibly valuable experience for me. First, it has inspired me to continue searching for scientific research opportunities at UF. Seeing a multitude of different scientific discoveries recounted by exhibits in the many museums I visited on the trip has made research seem attainable to me. Second, it has encouraged me to apply to do a UF exchange program in the UK. Hearing from current exchange students showed me what a positive experience these programs can be, and getting to see the universities students can study at has helped me to make initial deliberations as to where I may want to do an exchange year.

Before this trip, I had no idea where Edinburgh was or anything about Scotland. I just assumed it was a rural part of the United Kingdom, essentially the boonies. Arriving in Scotland was a huge culture shock. Edinburgh turned out to be a bustling city filled with beautiful old castles and amazing food. I had always heard rumors that food in the UK was mediocre, but I quickly learned that was not true when I had some of the best Indian and Italian food in the UK. I also thought that UK drivers driving on the opposite side of the road was a myth. I soon realized it was true, and I had to think twice about which side of the road to stand on to avoid going in the wrong direction on the bus.

I loved this program. I had never been to Europe before and it was such a great way to learn about the UK and how things are done in a safe and fun manner.

Going on the UF in UK Exploring Science study abroad trip has significantly altered my perspective on other cultures, particularly European, English, and Scottish culture. Coming from Lima, Peru, and having lived in the United States for most of my life, I had certain preconceived notions about what to expect from the UK. However, the experiences I had during the trip challenged and reshaped many of these beliefs.

I believe this trip to be a valuable experience to any student, regardless of their major, as anyone can learn to appreciate different cultures and people working to improve the world and lives around them. My favorite part was being able to not only explore the museums for as long as I liked but also exploring the cities in my free time and seeing the natural beauty of a different part of the world.

I had never studied abroad before, and when I found out about this trip, I knew that I wanted to try studying abroad and “get my feet wet.” I always had studying abroad for a longer period of time in the back of my mind, but I didn’t know if I would want to be away from home for that long. This trip far

exceeded my expectations, and I realized that I thrive when I am traveling, and all of my problems seem to go away, at least temporarily.

As someone that nearly fainted during the fetal pig dissection lab in Biology 2, I have never been particularly interested in anatomy. However, one of my favorite parts of our trip was exploring the Hunterian Museum at the University of Glasgow. It was fascinating to see how ahead of his time William Hunter was. Many of the specimens documented important observations that have been built upon to reveal answers to medical secrets.

I had so much fun on the trip and am so thankful that you gave us this opportunity! I truly enjoyed learning from you and would love to discuss the graduate school process and any career advice when I get back to Gainesville in August.

Visiting Scotland and London through a scientific lens was a life-changing experience for me. I could not have been more grateful for the opportunity to go on this trip through the support of the University of Florida.

Before the UF in the UK trip, I was not planning to attend a future exchange or study abroad program given that I am entering my last year at UF. After learning more about the possibility of receiving a master's in neuroscience at University College London, thanks to our wonderful tour guide, or spending time in partnering lab to learn skills, the idea of pursuing my graduate education outside of the United States was enticing. I definitely can now say I have an increased desire for a future study abroad program of some kind. I began exploring how to apply for a master's in neuroscience at UCL as an international student as well as the research disciplinarys of this program. In addition to this, I am open to the idea of extending my graduation to Summer 2024 in order to take advantage of another wonderful opportunity offered through UF. Finally, as I hope to acquire interviews with the graduate programs I apply for this Fall, international learning opportunities will be a high-priority question for me.

I am endlessly appreciate of the wonderful study abroad program put on by UF, Dr. Harfe (hi!), Katie Walker, and AIFS. My knowledge and gratitude for science, the disciplinary of genetics, and the world of international scientific collaboration, has grown tremendously in the span of just one week.

This study abroad trip has definitely increased my desire to study abroad in the future. The experience of living and learning in a different cultural setting has broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of global perspectives, even for just a short time.

Embarking on this journey was a spontaneous decision, yet it is one that will remain in my memory for a lifetime. The idea of studying abroad had long been a cherished dream of mine, but I found myself hesitating, unsure of what leaving the familiarity of home would entail. However, the adventure of exploring the UK has not only provided me with reassurance but has sparked a newfound passion for studying abroad in the future.

Despite my brief time in the UK, the knowledge and experiences I have gained surpass anything I could have encountered back home. Immersing myself in the vibrant culture, rich history, and scientific discoveries abroad has not only expanded my understanding but has also fueled my intellectual growth and fostered a deeper sense of cultural competency within me.

Perhaps the most eye-opening part of this trip was realizing the endless possibilities available for studying abroad. I can truly say that this trip has been the most enriching experience in my academic career thus far, and has convinced me to participate in exchange programs in the future.

Based on my experience, this program undoubtedly increased my desire to study outside of the United States in the future.

My favorite part of the trip was being able to see and do whatever we liked. As mentioned, I was able to go to many extra museums, all for free, as well as Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, Kensington Palace, Buckingham Palace, and more. There was always enough free time to go out and see different landmarks or museums, and I appreciated that we did not have a set schedule.

All around, it was an amazing experience, and I am so thankful for the opportunity! I am strongly considering applying to a graduate program abroad.