



STUDY ABROAD

and the Prehealth Student

Future health professionals will need to be broadly-educated, mature, adaptable citizens who have significant experience in the world beyond the classroom. Study abroad is an ideal vehicle for developing skills and attitudes that are valued in the practice of medicine, including flexibility, self-reliance, and cultural competence. Studying abroad can offer prehealth 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 have studied in South Africa while participating in AIDS education campaigns, investigated tropical biology in Panama, considered the differences between health policy in the US and UK, and pursued biochemistry research at Oxford, 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, and ultimately in your professional life. Many Princeton prehealth students have spent time abroad.

If you want the grades for study abroad courses computed into your health professions application GPA, these grades must be recorded on a US transcript. This is possible if the study abroad program is sponsored by an American college or university. Note: You should plan to take all your prerequisite courses in the US. Science curricula abroad vary widely and most professional schools will not accept prerequisite sciences taken abroad.

The courses at Princeton that meet the prerequisites for most medical schools are:

General Chemistry:	CHM 201 (or 207) + CHM 202
Organic Chemistry:	CHM 301 + CHM 302/304
Biology:	EEB 211 (Life on Earth: Chaos & Clockwork, offered in Fall) + MOL 214 (Intro to Cellular & Molecular Biology, offered in Fall/Spring)
Physics:	PHY 101/103 + PHY 102/104/108
Biochemistry:	MOL 345
Math:	2 semesters (see “Preparing” handout from HPA for specifics)
English/Literature:	2 semesters literature/writing (WRI counts as one of these)

Students interested in other health professions (e.g., veterinary, nursing, dental, physician assistant) should consult with HPA advisers regarding their course planning.

Students with AP credit in biology, chemistry, physics, or math: Refer to the HPA handout, “[Planning for a Career in the Health Professions](#),” and then consult with an HPA adviser. AP credit allows a student to skip certain introductory courses in biology, chemistry and physics for health professional school, but upper-level coursework in those subjects will be required. If you have AP in Math, no additional coursework is required.

When to study abroad? Studying abroad in the summer will not affect your prehealth prerequisite planning; studying abroad during the academic year is possible with careful course planning. To go abroad for an academic semester, fall of junior year will cause the least logistical issues in terms of preparing your health professions school application, including taking the required standardized test (e.g., MCAT for medical school). Sophomore spring, junior spring and senior fall are other possibilities. Consult with an HPA or study abroad adviser to discuss the pros and cons of timing decisions, depending on your curricular plans as well as your prehealth plans. Following are three possible timelines that take into account premed prerequisites, MCAT, applications, and study abroad.

Glide Year Study Abroad Plans, No AP credit: For students who wish to study abroad for 1-2 semesters and apply for matriculation with a glide/gap year, here are two possible schedules:

	Fall	Spring	Summer		Fall	Spring	Summer
Fr	General Chemistry Math WRI/FRS	General Chemistry WRI/FRS		Fr	General Chemistry Math WRI/FRS	General Chemistry WRI/FRS	
So	EEB 211 Organic Chem or Physics	MOL 214 Organic Chem or Physics	Organic Chem or Physics	So	EEB 211 Organic Chem	MOL 214 Organic Chem	
Jr	Abroad	Abroad		Jr	Physics Biochemistry	Physics	MCAT
Sr	Biochemistry	MCAT (April/May) Graduate	Apply	Sr	Abroad	Graduate	Apply
Glide Yr	Interviews, work/fellowship			Glide Yr	Interviews, work/fellowship		
	Matriculate at health professions school				Matriculate at health professions school		

Glide Year(s)? Over 70% of Princeton applicants to health professions school take at least one year off before matriculating (often called a glide year or gap year). Planning to take a glide year provides flexibility in meeting requirements that can facilitate study abroad. Learn more: hpa.princeton.edu/pre-health-after-princeton/glide-year

Direct Entry Study Abroad Plan, No AP credit: For students who wish to study abroad for a semester and apply for matriculation directly following graduation, we often suggest the following schedule:

	Fall	Spring	Summer
First-Year	General Chemistry Math WRI/FRS	General Chemistry WRI/FRS	
Sophomore	EEB 211 Organic Chem or Physics	MOL 214 Organic Chem or Physics	Organic Chem or Physics
Junior	Abroad	Biochemistry MCAT (if premed)	Apply
Senior	Interviews	Interviews Graduate	
	Matriculate at health professions school		

This timeline is challenging. It compresses your prerequisite course work and you will have to manage some of the logistics of preparing your health professions school application from abroad.

Summer Courses: Students should work with their Director of Studies/Dean for pre-approval of summer courses taken at another institution. There are a numbers of pros and cons involved in deciding whether or not to take summer courses. Please consult with HPA advisers if you are considering this option.

Other Abroad Opportunities: Many students pursue volunteer or internship experiences abroad in the summers. Some students take advantage of Princeton and national fellowships to study/work abroad during glide years. Explore these options with HPA and Office of International Programs advisers.

Do not hesitate to meet with advisers in [Study Abroad](#) and [HPA](#) to discuss your options and your course scheduling. For undergraduate students on their way to becoming health professionals, 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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