

Here's my Study Abroad Story

Tara Jotwani

**The London School of Economics and Political Science
London, United Kingdom**

Major: Economics-Accounting

Program: The General Course is a year-long study abroad program. The program accepts approximately 300 students from all over the world, although many of them are from North American universities. Essentially, as a General Course student you are treated as a full-time student at the LSE. However, along with the first-year students, or “freshers”, you are guaranteed housing in an LSE or inter-collegiate dorm. Unlike at Claremont, these dorms are spread out across London and range from being just 10 minutes to almost an hour away from the main school campus. Although the majority of participants are Economics majors, once at LSE they are placed in departments across the social sciences including Accounting and Finance, Economics, Economic History, Sociology, International Relations, and International History. Students select just four courses—instead of being on the semester system, all LSE courses last an entire year. I am in the Department of Accounting and Finance and am taking Managerial Accounting, Finance, Organizational Theory, and Philosophy. The school system is very different than it is in the US—there is just one cumulative exam at the end of the year. Although the program is quite academically challenging, as a social sciences student, studying at the LSE is an amazing experience. You are taught by leading academics—many of the lecturers have written the most well known textbook of their field. Because the LSE is a world famous institution, you have the opportunity to attend incredible lectures. Speakers in the past few years have included Ben Bernanke, Paul Volcker, and Madeleine Albright. Finally, being in Central London is unbeatable—the school is located very close to Covent Garden and the city of London, Westminster.



Typical Day: On days that I have school, I generally wake up around 8:00 am. I live in High Holborn, a self-catering residence, so I make myself a simple breakfast before heading off to class, usually cereal or yogurt. Although school is just a 15 minute walk from my dorm, I generally do not come back to my room until my classes are over for the day. Between classes, I either go to the library and work, or hang out with friends. For lunch I either go to a cafe on campus, or, because the school is right in Central London, I generally take advantage of one of the many informal restaurants in the area and grab a quick bite to eat with friends. Once classes are over for the day I head back to my dorm.

I usually stop at the grocery store on my way home from school. I normally eat dinner with my American friends on my program that live in my dorm, or with my British flat mates. London is an expensive city so I try to eat in my dorm as much as possible, but I do go out to dinner often as well. Depending on the night, I either do work after dinner or attend a social event. I am on the Netball team (a British sport that is a cross between basketball and ultimate frisbee), so I often go to LSE Athletic Union events on Wednesday nights. On days that I do not have classes—Wednesdays and weekends—I explore London and catch up with work away from campus. My friends and I do things such as go to museums, markets, walk around the city, and shop. You can also get half-price theater tickets, discounted student tickets for concerts and exhibitions, as well as enjoy the wide range of free cultural events going on around the city. There is so much to do in London, it is impossible to fit it all in!

Highlights: My main highlight has just been living in London. I am completely in love with the city and British culture, and could definitely see myself living here in the future. Going abroad for the year has also been great. After

first semester, “Michaelmas Term”, I had a good sense of London but also felt as though I was on some sort of extended trip. After having returned for another semester, I actually feel like I live in London, which is awesome. I no longer need to look at a tube map to get around and I’m even able to give tourists help with directions! Also, being abroad for the year has given me the chance to make great friends—both British and American—that I know I will continue to keep in touch with. One of my favorite memories was a General Course trip to Bath, England. London is an extremely international city so I loved having the opportunity to see a completely different part of



England. Finally, in addition to having many friends visit me in London, I have loved being able to travel around Europe! Some of my trips have included visiting Barcelona and Prague.

Challenges: Although going abroad for the whole year has been a highlight, it has also been a challenge. I miss my friends, classes, and the overall comfort of being in Claremont. I lead a very independent lifestyle both because of the way that the LSE is set up and because I am living in a different country. Unlike Claremont, students at the LSE live in different parts of London and do not necessarily spend a lot of time on campus. It is not a problem, but it is definitely an adjustment to cook all of your own meals as opposed to popping into the dining hall, and make the special effort to reach out to people all the time instead of running into people on campus. Also, getting organized at the beginning of the year was a little bit of a challenge.

Advice: My advice regarding going abroad would just be to keep an open mind! There are many similarities between the US and England, but there are almost as many cultural and academic differences. There are times where you need to be flexible, but eventually everything works out and you will absolutely love living in London! Also, if you’re doing the General Course take full advantage of London, even though you might feel like you are abroad for a long time. Believe me, it goes by quickly! It is a tough program because you have to balance a full academic load with exploring London, Europe, and having a good time. But, as long as you maintain a good balance between school and being abroad you will have an amazing experience!