

SCOTLAND

Shortly after I told people I wanted to study abroad, they'd often ask "But aren't you an international student? Aren't you already abroad?" Technically, yes, but I also wouldn't equate my experience at Davidson to what study abroad means for domestic students, although there may be some similarities.

When you study abroad as a Davidson student, you're only going to be gone for a semester or two, and you will definitely come back to a familiar place after your experience. The Office of Education Abroad provided me with a lot of great information, so I was well prepared to be abroad.

I spent a semester at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. To be honest, I decided on the University of Edinburgh on a whim, since my major motivation for studying abroad was to take a break from Davidson. Although I love my Davidson family and the education I'm receiving here, I'm often overwhelmed by the workload and perfectionist culture, and I realized spending a semester away would be a healthy choice to avoid burning out.

At the University of Edinburgh, the teaching method was very different, but much more suited to my learning style. The teaching was less direct, and students had more responsibility over their readings for class. I also preferred the system of large lectures combined with small group tutorials to the discussion-based courses common at Davidson. Furthermore, the classes were pass/fail, which allowed me to focus on enjoying the material rather than worrying about grades.

As a visiting student in general, you feel less pressure to be a leader, establish connections, or research career options because you know your time there is limited. As an introvert, I personally experienced fewer social pressures attending a large university, where I could don a cloak of anonymity walking amongst the sea of students (I also had a single room where I could catch up on much-needed alone time). It was also nice to take a break from my regular group of friends at Davidson, because it allowed me to explore different parts of my personality and to meet an even greater variety of people. For example, during my semester, I lived in a flat with three other international students from China, Russia, and Austria, and we would often gather around the dining table and chat about our different cultural experiences or share some traveling tips and stories of Scotland, the U.K., and the rest of Europe.

Overall, study abroad has been the best part of my Davidson experience. I learned so much, and I'm even more eager to spend the rest of my life traveling around the world. Study abroad has really helped me appreciate the role international students play at Davidson and that all the homesickness, missed festivals, and cultural misunderstandings are worth it in the end because you're helping to foster a community of international discourse, tolerance, and openness. While "studying abroad" is not the same as being an international student, they are both equally important, and sometimes experiencing one helps you appreciate the other.