

Experience Report

Semester Abroad at the University of St Andrews

In the fall of 2023, I had the unique opportunity to spend a semester abroad at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. This brief report aims to provide insight into the reasons for my university choice, my highlights, my daily life as a student, and my experiences with the application process. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Scotland and highly recommend that every student consider a semester abroad at such an institution.

Founded in 1413, the University of St Andrews is the oldest university in Scotland. It is renowned for its excellent academic reputation, centuries-old traditions, and some famous alumni, including Prince William and Catherine, Princess of Wales. Located in northern Scotland, it housed around 10,500 students in 2020. With a population of just 18,500, St Andrews is undoubtedly a classic university town, known not only for its university but also as the "Home of Golf," thanks to the Old Course—the oldest golf course in the world, located in the heart of St Andrews.¹

Why St Andrews?

One reason I chose the University of St Andrews is undoubtedly its international orientation and the resulting cultural exchange. In 2017, about 45% of the students were from outside the UK, coming from 137 nations—only about 30% were from Scotland. Another crucial aspect was the focus on academic performance and the wide range of extracurricular activities. St Andrews specializes in undergraduate education, with about 80% of its students being undergraduates, and offers over 150 societies and clubs. Students can participate in traditional sports like football and rugby, as well as more exotic activities like clay pigeon shooting and windsurfing. Additionally, students can join or start societies related to their studies, countries of origin, or other hobbies and interests. I was part of the German Society and participated in many gatherings and the St Andrews Oktoberfest. I also engaged in the University Consulting Club and tried to keep up with peers in the University Golf Club.²

My primary motivation for participating in a semester abroad at the University of St Andrews was the desire to experience the British university system. The diversity of extracurricular activities was only part of what shaped my daily life in St Andrews and the unique student community.

Daily Life in St Andrews

Living in "Halls" is another aspect that made my daily life special and markedly different from my experience as a student at a German university. In St Andrews, first-year and exchange students live in university accommodations. I lived in St Salvators Hall (my accommodation), where I shared life with students from all over the world and various disciplines. Events organized by the hall, such as the famous St. Salvators Hall "Wine and Cheese Nights" or garden parties on the Sallies Lawn, helped me make many friends in the first weeks. These events and the shared time during breakfast, lunch, and dinner contributed to a very familial feeling with all my hallmates.

Another factor that made everyday life special was the number of contact hours in teaching. The University of St Andrews offers diverse tutorials, projects, office hours, and tutoring sessions free of charge to every student. I took three modules, the recommended study load for a semester, and earned 30 ECTS upon passing all exams.

¹ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_St_Andrews

² https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_St_Andrews

My module selection was as follows:

1. Corporate Finance and Control ³

This module dealt with corporate financing and the role of capital structure. We applied knowledge from lectures to real-world examples in weekly tutorials. The assessment was twofold: an essay on our designed financial model to optimize our investment portfolio, and a traditional exam covering lecture and tutorial content.

2. Organisation Studies⁴

We explored major organizational theories and critically examined organizations in today's society, focusing on socio-ecological systems and their history. The assessment consisted of three essays where we questioned and applied lecture concepts and theories to real situations.

3. Enterprise and Creativity⁵

This module was a classic entrepreneurship course. Throughout the semester, we formed groups of up to five students, started our own businesses, and ran them independently. At the end of the semester, we pitched our business ideas to the staff at the university's Entrepreneurship Center. This presentation, along with a business plan, constituted the assessment.

During my time in Scotland, we often left beautiful St Andrews for day trips and weekend excursions to nearby villages and cities, and once for an extended stay in the Highlands. While the rough weather of the Scottish Highlands may not be for everyone, my peers and I enjoyed it with rain jackets and plenty of time. The Scottish hospitality continually amazed us and provided many wonderful moments.

Application & Planning

Like other universities, the application and organizational effort for studying abroad at St Andrews was significant. Since the University of St Andrews is not partnered with the University of Applied Sciences Ludwigshafen, many questions had to be renegotiated. However, the application to various universities was the most time-consuming part. To ensure a spot, I applied to non-partner universities. The application requirements, process, and subsequent steps are well-documented on the University of St Andrews website. University staff were quick to answer any questions during phone calls. Fellow students at other foreign universities reported that accommodation and module selection could be time-intensive, but St Andrews alleviated these tasks. All "incoming students" are housed in university-provided halls, and module selection is finalized with the help of an "Academic Advisor."

Financing the study abroad is another crucial aspect. Like all universities in the UK, the University of St Andrews is not inexpensive. Despite potentially saving on flight tickets compared to other destinations, accommodation and living costs in St Andrews can be challenging. I recommend budgeting for trips to cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow and a weekend in the Highlands, which were highlights of my stay.

³https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/modules/catalogue/?meta_semester_sand=1&meta_modulecode=MN3101&meta_ayrs_sand=2023%2F4

⁴ https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/modules/catalogue/?meta_semester_sand=1&meta_modulecode=MN3102&meta_ayrs_sand=2023%2F4

⁵ https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/subjects/modules/catalogue/?meta_semester_sand=1&meta_modulecode=ID2007&meta_ayrs_sand=2023%2F4

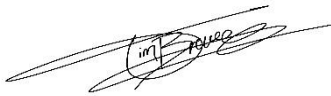
Acknowledgments

I want to conclude my report by thanking my supporters at the university and beyond. Without their great support, this valuable experience would not have been possible.

Thanks to the International Office team for their excellent advice, the sponsors of the Deutschlandstipendium and PROMOS program for financial support, and the program directors for their organization and assistance.

Feel free to contact me anytime with questions about my semester abroad at the University of St Andrews via my university email tim.breuer@studmail.hwg-lu.de.

Thank you/ Vielen Dank,
Tim Breuer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Breuer', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Insights into my semester abroad at the University of St Andrews.

All photos were taken by me, Tim Breuer. I reserve the rights to these images and ask that they be used solely for the purposes anticipated in this report.



Old College

The old university building.

On this day, Sunday, the students gathered for a "pier walk". This is where all the university students, dressed in their gowns, walk from the Old College through the town to St Andrews Pier.

Side note: Pier - picture 8



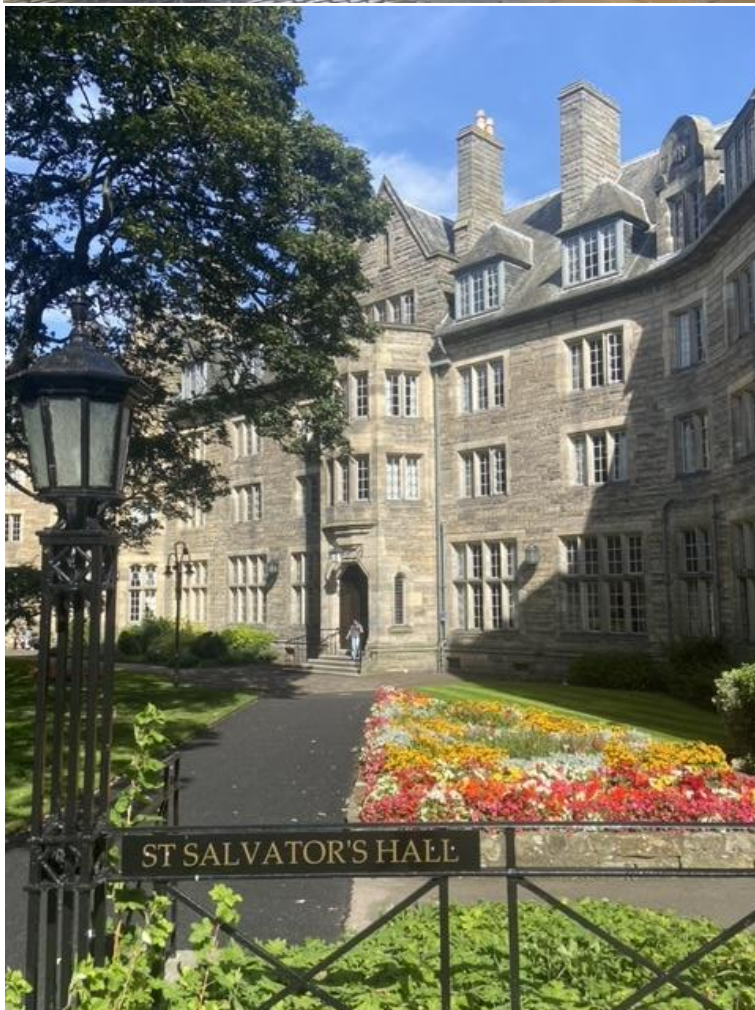
Old College

The old university building on a Monday.



St. Mary's

The St. Mary's building houses the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience and the King James Library.



St. Salvator's Hall

My accommodation during my time in St Andrews.

Side note: In their time, Prince William and Catherine also stayed here and, according to the stories, got to know each other.



St Salvator's Hall

My accommodation from a different angle.



St Andrews

Panoramic view of the Old Course with the town in the background.



Market Street

St Andrews' central shopping street with the Whyte-Melville Memorial Fountain in the foreground.



St Andrews Pier

End of the pier walk.



St Salvator's Hall entrance hall

Preparation for the Hall photo, which is taken once a semester in all Halls and hung in the Common Room as a memento for the students.



East Sands

One of the three beaches that St Andrews has to offer. Here it is traditional to gather around a bonfire on special occasions to celebrate.



St Andrews Harbour

The small town harbor where fishing boats still dock occasionally.



The Scores

View of the North Sea and the west coast of St Andrews. The street that runs along here is called "The Scores". Among others, the university president Dame Sally Mapstone lives here.



East Sands reef

View of the eastern coast of St Andrews.



Highlands

The breathtaking Highlands of Scotland.



Old Course

The oldest golf course in the world in the foreground with the Old Course Hotel on the right and the town in the background.



Old Course

Seventeenth hole of my first round on the Old Course.



Old Course

Seventeenth hole of my first round on the Old Course.



Edinburgh

Edinburgh at night taken from the Christmas market.



Edinburgh Christmas Market

Christmas market at the East Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh city center.