Please refer to your IAP General Handbook for a complete list UW policies. This handbook supplies information unique to the University of Iceland Exchange program.

UW Contacts
For Program Academics & Logistics: Lindsay Heiser
IAP Study Abroad Advisor
lheiser2@studyabroad.wisc.edu

For Applications and Course Equivalents: Katie Robinson
IAP Enrollment Specialist Advisor
robinson3@studyabroad.wisc.edu

UI Contacts
Aníta Hannesdóttir
Coordinator, International Office
Háskólatorgi Sæmundargötu
University of Iceland
Direct tel. +354 525 4469
Email: anita@hi.is Web: http://english.hi.is/

Embassy Registration
All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register with the U.S. Embassy before departure as this will help in case of a lost passport or other mishap. You can register on-line at https://travelregistration.state.gov. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country’s embassy or consulate.

The Academic Program
There are some important differences between the educational systems in Iceland and the U.S. which you will need to keep in mind as you approach your study abroad experience at the University of Iceland.

Good academic study does not differ much from country to country, but there is difference of emphasis. A key difference between the evaluation methods of the American and European education system, Icelandic students are expected to plan and carry out their own work. Recommended readings are what many American students may consider as optional; your cohort in Iceland will studying the recommended readings. The amount of classroom contact may vary from the UW, with a correspondingly greater reliance on independent study in the form of directed reading and essay writing. Other classes may require a significant amount of group presentations. Read your syllabi carefully, and if you have questions about the expectations, ask your professor at the beginning of the semester.

Class formats may vary in size and format depending on your faculty. You will also find varying start dates for the faculties within University of Iceland. Be mindful of this as you review your course schedule. Acquiring this level of responsibility and adjusting to a different academic system presents a challenge, but it makes for a rewarding experience.

Course Selection
The University of Iceland (UI) teaches courses in both English and Icelandic. UI requires students to take 60% of their coursework in the faculty of their major. You submit your course form shortly after acceptance. The faculty you are accepted to is firm, and cannot be changed. Select only classes that you are qualified for, making sure that you meet any pre-requisites, that the course is offered in English, and that the course is at the appropriate level.
Review the course guide here: https://ugla.hi.is/kennsluskra/index.php?tab=nam&chapter=leitb

On the left tool bar you can narrow down classes. The most helpful ones will be:

- School-Faculty (choose the faculty that best matches your major)
- Semester (semester you are attending)
- Language (English)
- For courses, check both Undergraduate box and Undergraduate and Graduate box, then Search.

Click into the classes that interest you. A red or yellow flag means there are required or recommended pre-requisites. Ensure you have them.

**Limits and Load**

Students are required to take at least 30 credits each one semester. This is both a UI and Iceland residence permit policy. Additionally, you must take 60% of your coursework in the faculty of your major. If the faculty of your major does not teach courses in English, UI may assign you to another faculty. You would need to take 60% of your coursework in this faculty. As a participant on an IAP Study Abroad Program, you are required to take no less than 12 UW Madison credits and no more than 18 UW Madison credits per semester.

**Grade Conversion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iceland (grade on transcript)</th>
<th>UW Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.0-10.0</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.00-7.99</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.50-6.99</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.00-6.49</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.50-5.99</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0-5.49</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Credit Conversion**

In Iceland, an academic year consists of 60 ECTS (European Credits Transfer System) credits. ECTS credits are a numerical value (between 1 and 60) allocated to course units to describe the student workload required to complete them. They reflect the quantity of work each course unit requires in relation to the total quality of work necessary to complete a full year of academic study at UI, that is, lectures, practical work, seminars, tutorials, field work, private study (in the library or at home), and examinations or other assessment activities. ECTS is thus based on a full student workload and not limited to contact hours only.

1 full academic year = 60 ECTS credit
1 semester = 30 ECTS credit

Please be very careful when selecting courses. Some courses are offered that carry fewer than 5 ECTS (equivalent to 3 UW credits). Courses must be worth at least 2.5 ECTS to be approved at UW. Courses under 2.5 ECTS should be combined with other courses of similar content to create a UW course equivalent. The combined courses should be at least 5 ECTS to provide meaningful credit.

For example: Systematic Botany (2 ECTS) and Practical course with Field Exercise in Systematic Botany (3 ECTS) = UW’s Botany 400 (3 UW credits).

It is possible to have courses approved as 2 UW credits instead of 3 UW credits. However, if you are taking courses to apply to major, certificate, or college requirements, the ECTS must be equivalent to the UW course’s credits. For
example, Botany 130 is 5 credits at UW. If this course is needed for your major, certificate, or college requirement, you need to combine UI courses to equal at least 9 ECTS. If you have any questions on course credit, please contact your IAP Study Abroad Advisor.

UW credit hours will be determined by this Credit Conversion Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECTS Credits</th>
<th>UW Madison Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 or 3,5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or 4,5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 or 5,5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or 6,5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 or 7,5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Important Registration Notes**

- As part of the application process, you will select classes you would like to take while at UI. UI faculty will review the requests and accept or decline your participation in that faculty or specific courses.
- UI cannot 100% guarantee that a course will have space (full degree students get top priority). This is why UI asks for alternative choices on the application form.
- Because you are allowed to take up to 40% of your courses from faculties outside of your own, there may be timetable and semester start date conflicts.
- You will finalize your registration after you have arrived in Iceland and secured your ID number with your residence permit.

**Passport**

A passport is needed to travel to Iceland. Apply immediately for a passport if you do not already have one. Passport information and application forms can be found on the U.S. State Department website ([http://travel.state.gov/passport](http://travel.state.gov/passport)). If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

**Residence Permit Information**

University of Iceland residence permit guide: [http://english.hi.is/files/kolbrun/haskolinn_how-to-applyvef_0.pdf](http://english.hi.is/files/kolbrun/haskolinn_how-to-applyvef_0.pdf)

UI Exchange Student site: [http://english.hi.is/university/prospective_exchange_students](http://english.hi.is/university/prospective_exchange_students)

Please note that Iceland requires you to secure immigration permissions PRIOR to entry (you cannot arrive as a tourist and switch your residence status later). Your first step is to secure what is commonly called an FBI background check. It’s now named Identity History Summary, and instructions for how to obtain this are located under the Travel & Visa tab in your MyStudyAbroad portal. The check can take some time (months) to receive unless you go through an approved channeler, which is more expensive. Please start your application now for the FBI summary as you will need it to
complete your Iceland permit application, which must be complete and received in Iceland by July 1 for fall students and by November 1 for spring students.

Additionally, Iceland immigration will only accept certain providers for proof of insurance and they are very strict on the providers. Your handbook on applying for the permit from University of Iceland lists a few companies you may want to use. IAP reached out to several of the companies noted by the University of Iceland handbook. One wrote back: Sjova. For their plan, visit [http://www.sjova.is/english.asp?cat=1233](http://www.sjova.is/english.asp?cat=1233) and click onto the yellow square: Valmynd. Then, go to English at the bottom. From there you can learn more and apply. The cost of their insurance for people 20-24 years old is 11,540 ISK (about $77) for 6 months (their minimum block).

In addition to the national insurance you purchase directly from the provider, you will be covered by the CISI insurance through IAP during your term abroad (CISI enrollment is required of all UW System study abroad students). You can use CISI insurance to be reimbursed for medical costs accrued while studying abroad in addition to providing emergency evacuation services or reunion support. Icelandic insurance does not cover evacuation or reunion benefits, thus it is important to have both. CISI information is here: [https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/insurance.html](https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/insurance.html).

Also, a few tips when completing your permit application: always ask for official stamps from the bank on your financial paperwork. Even if it is a return address, government institutions really appreciate a stamp. And, make copies of every document you submit to Iceland immigration in the event items are lost (and be sure to get a tracking number for anything you mail).

**Housing Information**

As our website for the University of Iceland exchange program ([https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/program.asp?program_id=440](https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/program.asp?program_id=440)) states, students on this program are responsible for finding their own housing. The majority of IAP’s study abroad programs offer guaranteed housing for students; however, the Iceland exchange is not one of those programs and thus requires a high level of independence and initiative from participants (this program is not a good fit for all students given this requirement).

UI has very limited UI-owned housing. Students will receive a database link upon acceptance for a private housing market, but most UI housing goes to matriculated students. Students should apply early, as housing is not guaranteed.

Here are the housing resources that IAP is aware of:

Refer to pages 12-13 of the University of Iceland’s Guide for International Students ([http://english.hi.is/files/kolbrun/guideforinternationalstudents2015.web_0.pdf](http://english.hi.is/files/kolbrun/guideforinternationalstudents2015.web_0.pdf)) for housing information from the host institution.

Contact SHI, which is the University of Iceland’s student union ([http://www.student.is/node/142](http://www.student.is/node/142)), and/or connect with their organizations via social media in order to network with students and find housing leads. Keep an eye on this housing board for advertisements, or post an ad here: [http://www.fs.is/is/studentamidlun/husnaedi-i-bodi/](http://www.fs.is/is/studentamidlun/husnaedi-i-bodi/)

Contact returned ([https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/return_student_network.asp?start=1&country=Iceland](https://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/programs/return_student_network.asp?start=1&country=Iceland)) and fellow program participants (fellow participants’ emails are in your MyStudyAbroad portal under the “My Experience” tab) to discuss housing possibilities.

Some students have found semester-long housing before departure, whereas others have reserved a hotel/hostel for the first few weeks of the program and then have located more permanent housing after arrival. Tolerating this level of ambiguity is challenging but may be necessary if full housing cannot be secured pre-departure.
Money and Banking
ATMs are widely available in Iceland. If you are considering credit/debit card use, be sure to inform your provider that you will be using your cards in a foreign country so your account is not blocked due to unexpected activity. Exchange rate information is available at http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/.

Health and Safety
Iceland has modern medical facilities, pharmacies are located throughout the city (typically denoted with a green “+” sign), and tap water is safe for travelers to drink. You may smell a slight sulfur odor from your shower or bath water.

The Department of State’s information page for Iceland (https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/iceland.html) is a helpful resource as well as this recent OSAC report: https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=17422. Iceland is fairly consistently ranked the most peaceful country in the world [http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/GPI-2016-Report_2.pdf] and while we cannot guarantee students’ safety abroad, no incidents have been reported to our office from students who have studied in Reykjavik.

Health hazards to travelers come mainly through contact with environmental features (such as scalding water in thermal springs, icy trails, or exposure to freezing water and winds)—risks that can be mitigated by careful packing and preparation for outdoor activities, using caution near natural features, and heeding any posted warnings.

Your on-site orientation will provide specific information once you arrive to your host campus, but some general tips to encourage safety in any location include:

- Use caution when traveling around the city.
- Do not travel alone after dark.
- Tell someone your whereabouts.
- Have a working telephone on your person.
- Intoxication compromises your ability to make safe choices and may increase your risk for being a target of crime.

Life in Iceland
Bus is the main form of public transportation in Reykjavik. The Icelandic word for the bus is strætó, which is short for strætisvagn (streetcar). As of July 2016, a single ride costs 420 ISK. Drivers don’t give change and don’t accept credit cards so it’s important to have exact fare or purchase a pass. Once you pay the fare you can ask for an exchange ticket that allows you to transfer busses as often as you need in 75 minutes. If you have to make more than one transfer, make sure you just show your ticket to driver instead of handing it over. Visit http://www.straeto.is/english/routes/ for routes, schedules, and ticket prices.

Bonus and Kronan are grocery store chains with locations in Reykjavik; cooking at home is a great way to save money as eating out is more expensive in Iceland than in the US. Stores may charge a small fee if you want a bag for your groceries, so it’s wise (and green) to bring a backpack or tote. To compare cost of living in the US versus Iceland visit http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/.

Electrical sockets are different in Iceland than in the US. For information on what adapter you need, see http://whatplug.info/from/usa/to/iceland

The Reykjavik Grapevine is a popular English-language publication (online and print) featuring an events calendar, articles of local interest, and more.