

# Russia

## UCEAP Advising Notes

### Objective of the Advising Notes Document

This document is an advising tool written by a Berkeley Study Abroad adviser to review program specific details that may impact a student's *decision to apply* for an EAP program. The document is *not* a summary of eligibility requirements, academic, housing, application and other logistical details freely available to students on the UCEAP and BSA websites, and reviewed by a student in the Program Self-Assessment.

The best sources of detailed program information are the UCEAP webpages for each Russia option <http://eap.ucop.edu/OurPrograms/russia/Pages/default.aspx> and the Program Guide from the prior academic cycle <http://eap.ucop.edu/guides/Pages/default.aspx>. See also the CIEE newsletters and blogs at bottom.

If any concerns you have are not addressed on the UCEAP website or this Advising Notes document, please contact the BSA Russia adviser in 160 Stephens Hall.

### Adviser Contact Information

For BSA Adviser name, phone, email and drop-in advising hours, visit <http://studyabroad.berkeley.edu/advising>

### Note about UCEAP's Programs in Russia:

This UCEAP program is affiliated with the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE.) You will be required to submit a language evaluation form completed by a professor of Russian to CIEE at a later date if you have studied Russian. Students must complete at least one semester at the UC Berkeley before departure.

### Financial Aid and Scholarships for Study Abroad

View UCB financial aid details and many scholarship opportunities on our webpage: <http://studyabroad.berkeley.edu/finances>

Deadlines to apply for scholarships are earlier than you may think, so do your research now!

Some scholarships that are good for students going to Russia are:

- UC Berkeley's **Institute of International Studies Merit Scholarships** - non-need-based scholarships of up to \$2,000 each to support undergraduate research (can be done abroad) in any area of international studies (deadline is in November) - <http://iis.berkeley.edu/content/undergraduate-merit-scholarships>
- CIEE, UCEAP's partner in Russia, offers scholarships based on merit and financial need. An application for **CIEE scholarships** is available at <http://www.ciee.org/study-abroad/scholarships-grants/>. The CIEE scholarships application must be sent directly to CIEE and is a separate document from the CIEE Study Center Program Application.

*Please note:* Most financial aid, including federal, state, UC, and Berkeley scholarships and grants, cannot be used by students studying on independent (non-UC) programs. Students who receive scholarships or grants from outside organizations should contact those organizations to confirm that the awards may still be used for non-UC study abroad programs.

**IMPORTANT NOTE re: Russian language levels and instruction**

The Summer Russian Language (SRL) program now includes beginning, intermediate, and advanced language levels. Students can also now take Beginning Russian in the Summer Area Studies (SAS) program. No prior Russian is required for either summer option now. The SRL language courses are more intensive and grammar-oriented; the SAS language courses are more communication-oriented. The semester-length Russian Language Program (RLP) still requires through Slavic 4; the Russian Area Studies semester program (RAS) has a maximum of Russian 3. See the UCEAP Russia webpage for further details in the Courses and Credits tab for each option: <http://eap.ucop.edu/OurPrograms/russia/Pages/default.aspx> Consult with Professor Anna Muza in the Slavic Dept regarding placement in the appropriate level of Russian course when you return to Cal, as it will vary depending on how much Russian you knew before you left, which program you participate in abroad, and how hard you work on your language acquisition while you're in Russia.

If you are a heritage speaker of Russian and have never taken a Russian course at Cal, you must ask Prof. Anna Muza to complete a language evaluation of your Russian proficiency and upload it with your UCEAP Russia application materials to your Berkeley online application portal. See the application instructions for further details and the form to fill out.

Consider majoring or double-majoring in Russian. See their Major Advising Page - click on the study abroad options link at the bottom of this webpage: <http://slavic.berkeley.edu/undergraduate/>

**Taking Russian Language Classes at Cal P/NP**

Russian classes you take at Cal may be taken P/NP, *but with your application you must provide a written note from your instructor or the Slavic Department stating what your letter grade would have been. It is your responsibility to make arrangements for this without prompting from the Russia adviser or BSA office.* This is required even for the options that have no minimum language requirement or minimum Language GPA. A Language GPA must still be calculated and provided to UCEAP by our office.

**Competitiveness of the Programs**

Students who meet the minimum eligibility requirements and submit a well-prepared application with an articulate Statement of Purpose will have a good chance of being selected.

**Grad Students**

Please read the "Graduate Students" link on the UCEAP website at <http://eap.ucop.edu/OurPrograms/Pages/GraduateStudents.aspx> in order to know what you need to do right away to find out if EAP can work for you, i.e., complete and submit to our office the "Graduate Preliminary Inquiry Form" (GPIF) or the "Graduate Student Agreement" (GSAG.) The GSAG is different from the GPIF. The GSAG is specifically for summer language & culture programs, and it basically confirms that the graduate students and their departments are aware that the courses offered on the program are only at the undergraduate level. The GPIF is an academic planning form that graduate students fill out for semester and year programs to confirm with the study center that the EAP program offers graduate courses they will be able to use towards their degree.

**Selection Interviews**

If you need to be interviewed, you will be notified by the BSA Russia adviser in 160 Stephens Hall after your application has been reviewed.

**Passport, Visa Application, and International Travel Prior To The Program**

Your passport must be valid for **18 months beyond the end date of the EAP program in Russia** --- check the EAP Russia webpages to see the tentative end dates.

Also, your MyEAP application name and your passport name must be identical (not similar!) If there is a discrepancy of even one letter, hyphen, etc, the Russian consulate will not issue you a visa. Please check your passport name and use precisely that name on your MyEAP on-line application, even if it doesn't match the name you use at UC Berkeley. If your passport name has an error, either get your passport fixed before you apply for EAP, or simply use the incorrect name on your MyEAP application in order to avoid a crisis later on.

*FYI - international travel just prior to the program:* The student visa application process for Russia is quite bureaucratic and time-consuming. Therefore, do not make any international travel plans for the months before the program starts until you receive all the details about arrival and visa application requirements that will arrive from UCEAP and CIEE via e-mail a few months prior to departure. Unless the Russian consulate changes its procedures (which is unlikely), you will have to relinquish your actual passport for 60 days or longer while the consulate processes your student visa. That means you can't leave the country during that period. It may be possible to apply for a duplicate US passport, so if you must travel outside of the US during the few months prior to the official start date of the program, you should contact the National Passport Agency immediately to find out how long it will take to get a second passport and how to apply for it.

Likewise, if you are thinking of participating in back-to-back options, it would be wise not to choose Russia as your second program abroad due to the visa application process; better to go to Russia first, and then to a country with an easier visa application process second. Please remember: applications for back-to-back applications must be approved by both BSA advisers BEFORE you start them!

**Male Russian Citizens or Dual Citizens - Military Service Requirement**

Male students who have Russian citizenship or who were born in Russia and did not formally renounce their Russian citizenship can be conscripted into the Russian military if they are 18-27 years old and have not satisfied their Russian military service requirement. Please check with the US State Dept or the Russian Embassy in Moscow for more information on this issue.

**IMPORTANT NOTE re: Visa for Russia:**

Students (male and female) who have both Russian and American citizenship, or who have American citizenship but were born in Russia, should also contact the State Department or the Russian Embassy in Moscow regarding their ability to obtain a Russian visa with an American passport. Students who fall into any of these categories should also notify their campus EAP adviser immediately in order to obtain further guidance from the UCEAP systemwide office.

**Additional Application Materials for CIEE**

After selection to the program, students must complete CIEE and host university application materials which will take additional time to prepare, including, but not limited to, letters of recommendation, official transcript, and passport-size photos. Please do not take action until you have been given detailed instructions for these items by UCEAP and CIEE.

**Graduating Seniors Spending their last UC Term Abroad in any UCEAP Program**

Graduating seniors must enroll in a full course load while abroad, even if they do not need the courses or units for graduation. (Requests by DSP students who provide documentation may be considered for a reduced course load.) Only one-third of units taken abroad may be on a P/NP basis (typically about one course); the rest must be letter-graded.

### HIV Test

The Russian consulate will require a *negative* HIV test result with your name on it in order to grant a student visa. More details after selection. If you have any reason to suspect that you might be HIV+, you might want to get tested anonymously first to avoid having this information become part of your permanent medical record.

### Hepatitis A & B Vaccines

If you have not been vaccinated against Hepatitis A & B, you should investigate the vaccines and consider getting them, as these diseases are more prevalent in Russia than in the US. It's best if you can spread the shots out over a period of 6 months, so don't wait until after you have been selected to make a decision about these vaccinations. See <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/> for further information. The Tang Center has the vaccines.

### DSP Students

If you receive accommodations at Cal and would like to know if they are also available in the program abroad that interests you, it is a good idea to email your BSA adviser in 160 Stephens Hall to inquire about your specific needs. That way, if your needs cannot be accommodated in that program, you can investigate other programs that might.

### Medical Marijuana

Marijuana is not legal in Russia, even if you are approved for medical marijuana use in California. Please consult with your primary care physician for a legal substitute before applying to the program.

### Harassment and Discrimination Directed at Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (LGBTI) Persons

The US Department of State website <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/russia.html> (see "Local Laws and Special Circumstances" then "LGBTI Rights") states:

"Discrimination based on sexual orientation is widespread in Russia. Harassment, threats, and acts of violence targeting LGBTI individuals have occurred. Government officials have been known to make derogatory comments about LGBTI persons. In June 2013, the State Duma passed a law banning "the propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" to minors. Foreign citizens face up to 15 days in jail, and deportation. The law is vague as to what Russia considers propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations. As a result, commentators have suggested the law makes it a crime to promote LGBTI equality in public. Violence against the LGBTI community has increased sharply since the law was passed, including entrapment and torture of young gay men by neo-Nazi gangs and the murder of multiple individuals due to their sexual orientation. Many view this legislation as encouraging such violence, with the majority of attacks against members of the LGBTI community going unreported."

LGBTI students should review the U.S. Department of State LGBTI Travel Information page <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/lgbt.html>, the US Department of State webpage for Russian Federation <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/russia.html>, the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad, [Student Life](#) chapter, and UCEAP's webpage on LGBTI issues abroad: <http://eap.ucop.edu/Diversity/Pages/LGBTQ.aspx> These webpages contain many further resources for personal research.

A recent gay student on the program told us that he chose to keep a low profile about his sexual orientation (he chose not to come out to his homestay family) and did not experience such harassment. While LGBTI students should exercise caution in discussing their sexual orientation or gender identity with people they do not know well, students on the program report feeling safe and comfortable in general, and there are openly gay bars and clubs in St. Petersburg. As a tourist destination, St. Petersburg attracts a diversity of visitors.

If you have concerns about this information, please discuss them with the BSA Russia adviser in 160 Stephens Hall. He might be able to get you in touch with the recent Russia alum.

### **Study Abroad Alumni/ae**

Students who have studied in Russia are some of your best resources for information about Russia. If you would like to be put in touch with such students, simply send the Russia EAP Adviser an email addressed to the alums (e.g., “Dear alums, I have some questions about studying in Russia ...”) and the message will be forwarded to them.

### **CIEE Newsletters and Blogs from Russia**

There are UC students featured in many of these.

- <http://study-abroad-blog-st-petersburg.ciee.org/2015/08/index.html> = newsletters (see Archives for more editions)
- <http://study-abroad-blog-st-petersburg.ciee.org/weblogs/> = blogs (see Archives for earlier blogs)

### **Social Media about CIEE in St. Petersburg**

**Vk.com:** <https://vk.com/cieepetersburg> (a bulletin board)