UCEAP Thailand Advising Notes

Objective

This document is an advising tool written by a Berkeley Study Abroad advisor to review program specific details that may impact a student’s decision to apply for an UCEAP 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 website. The best source of detailed program information are the UCEAP webpages for Thailand. If any concerns you have are not addressed on the UCEAP website or this Advising Notes document, please contact the BSA Advisor for this program.

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COVID-19 Information

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges related to health concerns and international travel. UCEAP has been updating their website's Coronavirus Notice with up-to-date information on program cancellations for the 2021-2022 cycle. Please note that certain programs listed in this Advising Notes document have been cancelled for the 2021-2022 cycle. All other programs listed are scheduled to proceed at this time, and UCEAP will inform campus offices if there are any updates.

The programs that have been cancelled are:

- International Economics (Summer 2021)
- Public Health (Summer 2021)
- Summer Internship, Bangkok (Summer 2021)
- Thammasat University (Fall 2021, Year 2021-22)

Last updated June 1, 2021.

Quick Links

Below is a summary of the ‘21-‘22 UCEAP Thailand programs available to Berkeley students:

Immersion
- Thammasat University (Spring)

Video & Blog Resources

There are a number of videos provided by UCEAP or UC Berkeley Students to help students learn about their study abroad options. Here are some you can check out:

- 2021: Study Abroad in Asia and Oceania | UCEAP Open House
- 2020: Study Abroad in Korea, Singapore, and Thailand | UCEAP Study Abroad Fair
- 2016: UCEAP Thailand
Citizenship and Passport Considerations

Non-U.S citizens must contact the Royal Thai Consulate General in Los Angeles to determine visa requirements prior to application for the program. The visa process may require additional documents and longer processing time for non-U.S. citizens. In addition, make sure that your passport and U.S. re-entry permit will be valid for the entire length of time you will be abroad. If necessary, contact the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) if you have questions about re-entering the U.S.

Students who are in the process of applying for U.S. citizenship or making any legal name changes are not eligible to apply unless the changes will be completed before application to the UCEAP program. There are no exceptions to this.

For all UCEAP Thailand programs, students cannot be accepted to a Thai university without a valid passport. Your UCEAP application will state how long your passport must be valid after the end date of the program and when a photocopy of it will be due. If you do not have a passport or need a renewal, please review the Passport Information section of the COVID-19 Information for Berkeley Study Abroad Students page, and take action immediately.

Financial Considerations

Semester and year UCEAP programs in Thailand cost less than a semester or year at UC Berkeley (including the airfare to/from Thailand!), so they are highly recommended for students on a tight budget. However, students receiving financial aid need to be aware that financial aid while on UCEAP is based on the cost of the UCEAP program rather than the cost of attendance at Berkeley. Contact a financial aid counselor with any questions about study abroad and financial aid at travelaid@berkeley.edu.
Impacted Programs

In some academic years, we receive more applications for select programs than the number of allotted Berkeley spots on the program. Students should not be discouraged from applying to their first choice; however, all applicants are encouraged to consider other programs for suitable alternatives.

The selection criteria we will use for this program include:

- GPA
- Class Standing
- Student’s coursework background and training in relevant areas
- Statement of Purpose: priority will be given to students who successfully convey why the chosen program in particular is a good fit for them and how the program will benefit them academically, professionally, and/or personally
- Completeness and thoroughness of application. Incomplete applications without sufficient reason could be denied immediately

The following programs are considered impacted. If your first choice is an impacted program, speak with the adviser for this program to discuss if you may obtain permission to apply to a back-up choice:

- International Economics (cancelled for Summer 2021)
- Public Health (cancelled for Summer 2021)
- Summer Internship, Bangkok (cancelled for Summer 2021)

Program Considerations – Summer

Summer Internship, Bangkok (cancelled for Summer 2021)

Starting in Summer 2021, the students will be able to participate in the Summer Internship, Bangkok program hosted by Thammasat University. Since this is a new option, some details are still unknown, but all currently available information is on the UCEAP website.

Public Health (cancelled for Summer 2021)

The Public Health program has a set curriculum. Students take the following three courses, and participate in field trips:

1. Health Realities in Border Populations, 3.3 upper division semester units
2. Mobility & Border Health, 3.3 upper division semester units
3. Thai Language and Culture, 1.3 lower division semester units

Students should be prepared for an intensive fieldwork experience at rural border sites of Thailand and Myanmar.
International Economics (cancelled for Summer 2021)
The International Economics program has a set curriculum. Students take the following two courses for a total of 6.6 semester units:
1. Topics in International Economics, 3.3 upper division semester units
2. Topics in Development Economics, 3.3 upper division semester units

Applicants for this program must be declared Economics majors, and they should be prepared for a strong academic program with project-based coursework. The program also includes a week-long fieldtrip to another Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member country (location varies each year).

Program Considerations – Semester & Year

UCEAP students can select from a variety of courses taught in English through the International Programs in areas including business administration, economics, development studies, politics, international relations with an Asian focus, literature, history, Thai language, religion, and cultural studies. These faculties are located on the Tha Prachan campus in central Bangkok. Courses in departments other than the ones listed above are taught in Thai and operate on a different academic calendar, so they are not available to UCEAP students.

Students in Thai Studies courses are mostly international, while students in Economics, Business Administration, British and American Studies, and Politics and International Relations courses are mostly Thai.

Alumni recommend that students study Thai language, as it will help them learn more about the culture and will delight locals in their daily conversations, such as when they are ordering food.

When researching courses on the Thammasat website, keep in mind that first-year courses (numbered 100s at Thammasat) are not recommended for UCEAP students, and they are transferred back as lower-division UC credit.

Both extracurricular and academic internships are available on all packages of the Thammasat University program. Students during the academic year have the option of replacing one course with an internship arranged after arrival. Opportunities are coordinated by Thammasat’s Department of Social Policy and Development. For example, a student in economics might be placed at a corporate, public, governmental, or private organization such as Global Tax or other finance and brokerage firms. Students with interests in media might be placed at Internews. Students with interest in political science might be placed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or NGOs. Other opportunities include the Philips Electronics Thailand, public health organizations, hospitals, and more.
Thammasat students placed in the business department will have the option to pursue a summer business internship as an extension. The minimum requirements for the opportunity include junior or senior standing, a GPA of 2.85 or higher, and previous term (Spring) study in the School of Business Administration International Program at Thammasat. Internships will begin early June to late July (8 weeks), and students will intern full time (35-40 hours a week). Placements are with national and international businesses. The summer portion will be worth 6.6 semester units. Students will live in local apartments in Bangkok. If you are interested in this option, please email the BSA Thailand adviser.

During the semester, the study center takes students out for monthly dinners. Alumni really enjoyed this opportunity to eat at nice places together.

There are differences between the Thai academic system and the US academic system, and students are encouraged to research the Thai academic culture. You may receive less feedback on academic performance during the term than you are accustomed to at Berkeley.

**Traveling before the UCEAP program**

Students on a summer program enter Thailand on a 60-day tourist visa, which must be obtained prior to departure from the U.S. Students who enter Thailand earlier than the official program dates in order to travel (pushing their stay over 60 days) will have to apply for a 30-day visa extension in Thailand.

Students on semester or year programs must apply for a student visa prior to departure for the UCEAP program. One requirement of the student visa application is an official letter of acceptance from Thammasat University. Acceptance letters are anticipated in mid-to-late June for the fall and year program, and in mid-to-late December for the Spring program. After you have received your letter of acceptance, you may apply in-person or via USPS to the Thai Consulate in Los Angeles for your students visa. It takes approximately 7-10 business days to process your visa when applying via USPS, or 2-3 business days if applying in-person. Please note the Thai Royal Consulate is closed on both US and Thai holidays. Students planning pre-program travel must be aware that they cannot depart the US without their Thai student visa and plan their travel dates accordingly.

**Health Considerations**

Bangkok has heavy smog levels, so it is recommended that students with asthma or other respiratory health issues discuss participation in UCEAP Thailand with their physician prior to application. Even if you are healthy, you may experience temporary symptoms, such as irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat; coughing; phlegm; chest tightness; and shortness of breath.
Considerations for Transfer Students

Transfer students should review BSA’s I am a Transfer Student webpage for an overview of considerations. As a general rule, transfer students are eligible to apply for study abroad programs that take place after the student has completed one term at UC Berkeley (i.e., if their first term at Berkeley is Fall 2021, the earliest they could study abroad is Spring 2022. If their first term at Berkeley is Spring 2022, the earliest they could study abroad is Summer 2022). This applies for all UCEAP Programs in Thailand.

Considerations for LGBTIQA+ Students

Thailand is included on UCEAP’s list of tolerant destinations for LGBTIQA+ students. Nations on this list are included based on recognition of same-sex unions and the existence of human rights laws prohibiting discrimination against gay individuals. This resource considers potential risks as they specifically affect members of the LGBTIQA+ community, and not necessarily the overall threats posed to all students traveling and studying abroad. As in many countries, tolerance levels vary by region; major cities may be more accepting of the LGBTIQ community than rural areas. No laws criminalize sexual orientation or consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults.

In September 2011 Bangkok’s Central Administrative Court ordered the Ministry of Defense to stop classifying transgender persons as disabled in conscription records. The law does not permit transgender individuals to change their gender on identification documents. In addition, in 2012, voters elected to the Nan Provincial Administration the country’s first transgender provincial council member, Yollada “Nok” Suanyot, sparking public debate about identification policy due to civil service dress code requirements.

Recently, university rectors permitted five transgender students to participate in a commencement ceremony for Thammasat University while wearing gender-specific uniforms of their choice. This decision set a precedent followed by several other educational institutions during the year. Such permissions remained voluntary for each school.

You can review the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 from the U.S. Department of State for more information.
Considerations for Students with Disabilities

If you receive accommodations at UC Berkeley 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 to inquire about your specific needs. That way, if your needs cannot be accommodated in that program, you can investigate other programs that might.

For the Thammasat University program, an exchange student needs to take at least 9 TU credits (=15 UC quarter units) to be considered a full time student and qualified for an Education Visa.

Considerations for Graduating Seniors

Graduating seniors participating on a spring semester program should ensure that they are on the Spring degree list. If they are not yet on this degree list, students should petition to move their graduation term with their UC Berkeley college. However, Spring package grades are often not reported to UCEAP until mid-August, so your grades will not arrive in time for your degree to be processed with the spring degree list (which occurs in mid-July). You will be automatically removed from the spring degree list and placed onto the summer degree list, which is processed in October. Thus, your diploma would display a summer graduation date rather than a spring graduation date. **This policy is subject to change.** For all students, after your UCEAP grades arrive and you are waiting for the next degree list to be processed, you can request a "Certificate of Completion" from the Berkeley Registrar that can serve as "proof" of graduation.

Diversity Abroad Resources

BSA recognizes that there are many nuances to exploring your identities abroad, and these articles may not be representative of all identities and experiences. Diversity Abroad’s resources, however, are a great starting place for your exploration. You can find a variety of articles to help you prepare for your study abroad experience as well as a Thailand Destination Guide.