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Exploring 10 Years of U.S. Education Abroad Experience in Europe: Evolution, Trends, and Trajectory from the Perspective of Leading Practitioner Universities

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Abstract in English

This article explores the experience of U.S. education abroad in Europe from the perspective of local partnership delivery models and addresses the question: How has study abroad in Europe changed over the past decade, what are the current trends, and where is it heading? Two models of university-based education abroad in Europe are highlighted, examining their reasons for entering the market and their evolution over the years. It reveals the extent to which U.S. study abroad shaped their international programmes and has contributed to their longevity in the market. A strong symbiotic relationship between delivery partners and U.S. home institutions is required but often involves tensions and that reciprocity is not the dominant basis for partnership. Helpful practices to navigate the higher expectations of risk management and customer service required of Europe by the U.S. study abroad market are discussed.

Abstract in Spanish

Este artículo explora la experiencia de la educación estadounidense en el extranjero en Europa desde la perspectiva de los modelos de prestación de colaboración local y aborda la pregunta: ¿Cómo han cambiado los estudios en el extranjero en Europa durante la última década, cuáles son las tendencias actuales y hacia dónde se dirigen? Se destacan dos modelos de educación universitaria en el extranjero en Europa, examinando sus razones para ingresar al mercado y su evolución a lo largo de los años. Revela hasta qué punto los

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estudios estadounidenses en el extranjero dieron forma a sus programas internacionales y han contribuido a su longevidad en el mercado. Se requiere una fuerte relación simbiótica entre los socios colaboradores y las instituciones de origen estadounidenses, pero a menudo implica tensiones y la reciprocidad no es la base dominante para la colaboración. Se analizan prácticas útiles para afrontar las mayores expectativas de gestión de riesgos y atención al cliente que el mercado estadounidense de estudios en el extranjero exigen en Europa.

Abstract in French

Cet article examine comment les acteurs américains ont expérimenté l'éducation à l'étranger en Europe, en se concentrant sur les modèles de prestation établis grâce à des partenariats locaux. Il pose la question suivante : Comment les études à l'étranger en Europe ont-elles évolué au cours de la dernière décennie, quelles tendances dominent aujourd'hui et quelle direction prennent-elles ? L'article met en lumière deux modèles d'enseignement universitaire à l'étranger en Europe, en expliquant pourquoi ces modèles ont émergé sur le marché et comment ils ont évolué au fil des années. Il montre comment les universités américaines à l'étranger ont structuré leurs programmes internationaux et assuré leur pérennité sur le marché. Les institutions américaines collaborent avec leurs partenaires locaux dans une relation symbiotique qui nécessite une forte coordination. Cependant, cette relation génère souvent des tensions, car la réciprocité ne constitue pas la base principale de ces partenariats. L'article présente des pratiques permettant aux institutions européennes de répondre aux exigences croissantes du marché américain en matière de gestion des risques et de service client.

Keywords:

Best practices; education abroad; Europe; partnerships; United States of America

1. Introduction

This article explores 10 years of U.S. education abroad in Europe, using as a springboard the experience of two practitioner universities operating in the space: the Université de Genève (UNIGE), one of the largest and most prestigious Swiss public research universities, and King's College London (KCL) one of the oldest and most respected English public research universities. From the perspective of local partnership delivery models, and the students they receive, it addresses the question: How has study abroad in Europe changed over the past decade, what are the current trends, and where is it heading?

U.S. education abroad in Europe has grown significantly over the years, reaching a peak of 193,000 students pre-COVID in 2018-19 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2024), and as a result has developed into a conceptually advanced and diverse area of education. Its growth has been

underpinned by U.S. government policy, which identifies study abroad as one means by which young Americans might learn the intercultural understanding and transnational awareness that the country needs to foster, so as to achieve its foreign policy goals of strengthening its economic prosperity and national security (USA Study Abroad, 2019).

There is a lot of interest among study abroad practitioners in how to further grow and refine education abroad learning experiences to best optimise and expand participation across the widest of student constituencies. Given the size of the market, there is scope for local European institutions to contribute by hosting individual students or partnering on programmes. However, the educational systems in Europe differ from those found in the U.S. that the students, and the institutions, are used to. European students tend to specialise much earlier in their degree and do not have a broad range of electives available to them in their programmes. Additionally, U.S. students cultivate a strong affinity to their university, something that is not usually produced by the European system.

Study abroad in Europe is conducted in many different modes, and here we explore those factors which individuate U.S.-led education abroad as compared to European-led models. U.S. students who directly enrol in a European institution may get an immersive, academic experience, but may struggle with the novelty of the different academic framework and support structures. In contrast, European study centres established and controlled by U.S. institutions often provide a more familiar experience, offering a U.S. study abroad student an education abroad experience founded on the same support structures and academic approach to learning that those students are used to.

Case studies reveal the extent to which U.S. study abroad shaped the international programmes of two European institutions and has contributed to their longevity in the market. They find that a strong symbiotic relationship between delivery partners and U.S. home institutions is required but often involves tensions that are challenging to navigate. In contradiction to the prevailing pan-European approach, they present how reciprocity does not need to be the dominant basis for partnership in the world of U.S. education abroad.

2. Methodology

Data sets relating to five thousand of Université de Genève (UNIGE) and King's College London (KCL) U.S. students' enrolments informed this paper's analysis along with anonymised student and faculty feedback surveys which students routinely complete at the end of their courses. Forty hours of cross-Higher Education Institution (HEI) interviews with U.S. and European study abroad professionals were conducted alongside interviews with a cross section

of U.S. students who studied abroad at one of the universities. The author received ethical approval to conduct interviews for this research on the understanding that anonymity would be preserved. Of the 193 U.S. study abroad students selected at random from 2023 enrolment lists at each and invited via an open call to contribute, 14 responded (7%) and were interviewed as student stakeholders. Thirty-nine study abroad professionals, some of whom are also faculty members, were contacted by the author and invited to contribute an interview on the basis that their programmes have significant scale and longevity, by which it was understood that their largest programmes have operated continuously over a decade and receive or send more than 300 students annually. With regard to the selection of those who were U.S. based, institutional commitment and a high brand-awareness in Europe stemming from the scale and longevity of their education abroad operations were considerations. Twenty-four of the professionals work at European HEIs in the leading host countries of Italy, UK, Spain, France, Germany and Switzerland. Of the 15 who work in U.S. higher education, four were study abroad professionals in senior leadership roles in U.S. HEIs that feature in the *Leading Institutions by Study Abroad Total 2024* list published by the Institute of International Education. Collectively, the programming led by interviewees teaches circa nine thousand U.S. study abroad students a year in Europe, which equates to approximately a 5% proportion of U.S. study abroad to Europe (IIE, 2024).

3. The U.S. Commitment to Education Abroad and Its Scale in Europe

In the U.S., study abroad is seen as a means by which to train young Americans to contribute to U.S. foreign policy goals of economic competitiveness and national security:

When U.S. students study abroad, they build cross-cultural relationships and gain 21st century jobs skills that strengthen U.S. national security and economic prosperity [...] It is a strategic imperative of the United States that we have more U.S. students studying and interning abroad in more destinations. (USA Study Abroad, 2019)

Study abroad students are seen as ‘citizen ambassadors’ who will build relationships, debunk stereotypes, and showcase American values. The State Department’s ‘Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students’ programme (IDEAS) has a mandate to grow and diversify study abroad, with a particular focus on increasing the number of active U.S. HEIs, range of destinations and participation amongst underrepresented student groups. IDEAS was founded following the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Programme (2005), which cited global threats as a reason

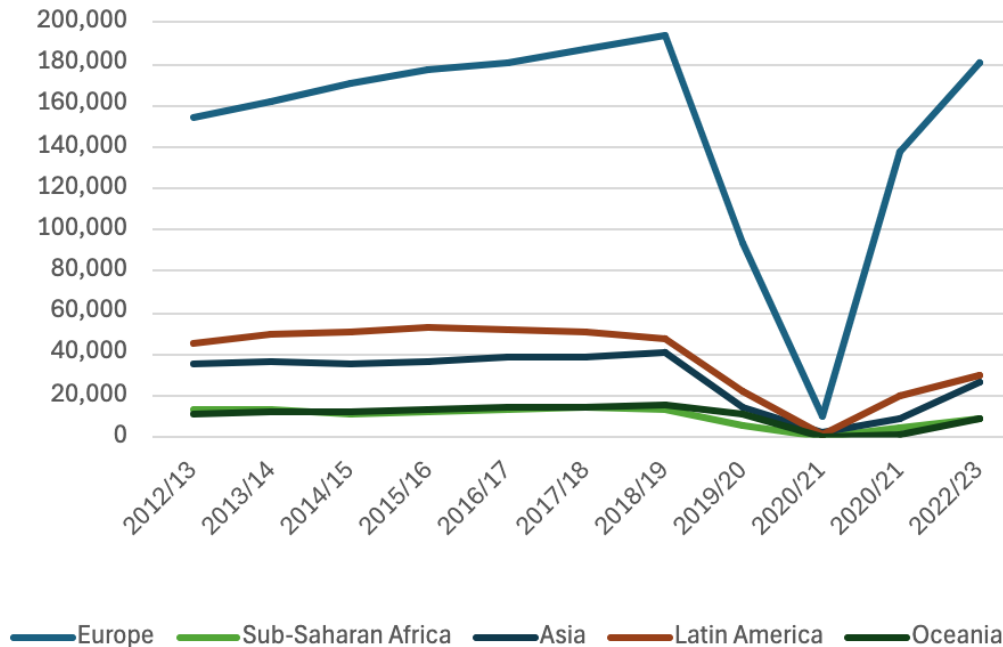
to cultivate a national study abroad strategy to boost enrolments amongst U.S. undergraduates. Back then, Senator Durbin, Commission member and subsequently a co-proposer of two study abroad bills to the U.S. Congress (2016, 2023) observed, “The United States is a military and economic giant, yet it is continuously threatened by a serious lack of international competence in an age of growing globalization. Our world ignorance is now seen as a national liability” (Durbin, 2006, p. 4). The 2023 bill hopes “significantly more students graduate college with the international knowledge and experience essential for success in today's global economy” (U.S. Congress, 2023). It considers study abroad to be “critical to ensuring that those students gain the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to maintain the leadership of the United States in tackling global challenges [...] and succeeding in a global economy” (U.S. Congress, 2023). It proposes renaming IDEAS to the “Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program” (U.S. Congress, 2023) and setting the following goals, to be achieved within ten years: 1) one million U.S. undergraduates to study abroad annually; 2) their demographic composition reflect the U.S undergraduate population; and 3) destinations be increasingly ‘non-traditional’ (as defined by the Secretary of State) with a ‘substantial’ proportion being developing countries. Reaching these goals requires growth in the participation of hitherto underrepresented groups. Their definition has expanded from “minority students, first-generation college students, community college students” in the 2016 version of the bill to include students with disabilities.

The scale of this ambition is being telegraphed to Europe and it looks feasible that U.S. education abroad in Europe will enter a period of renewed growth, as it did in the mid 2000s, when UNIGE in 2005 and KCL in 2009 became European hosts for U.S. education abroad by launching in-house study abroad programs.

Europe was the education abroad destination for 64% (180,781 students) of U.S. study abroad 2022-23 (IIE, 2024). This is an increase of 17% over the decade since 2012-13, but a 7% decrease from its pre- COVID peak of 193,422 participants in 2018-19 (Figure 1). COVID-19 wrought a sizable decline in participants overall as well as a reduction in the range of destinations (Figure 1). Also illustrated is the surge in popularity that Europe experienced with a return to travel after the pandemic. Most recent figures indicate that the post-COVID recovery trajectory is almost complete and that participant numbers will soon return to pre- COVID growth levels.

FIGURE (1)

GRAPH SHOWING U.S. STUDY ABROAD STUDENT NUMBERS TO THE WORLD OVER A DECADE (IIE, 2024)



The UK, where KCL is located, was the most popular global destination until 2019-20, the year of COVID-19, at which point it was surpassed by Italy's popularity, which had risen steadily year on year. In 2022-23, the UK received 19.4% (35,018) of Europe-bound U.S. study abroad students (IIE, 2024). Switzerland, home to UNIGE, is ranked 21st in the Institute of International Education's 2024 list of leading destinations for U.S. study abroad, receiving 1.3% (2,394) of the U.S. study abroad students who headed to Europe in 2022-23 (IIE, 2024).

4. Different Musical Performances of the Same Score? Comparing U.S. Education Abroad and a European Model

Research carried out for this article puts forward several factors which individuate U.S.-led education abroad as compared to European-led models, as summarised below.

2.1. Education Abroad in the U.S. Is Conceptually Advanced

Freshmen not only know about studying abroad, but some begin their degree by enrolling in a first year abroad. It is embedded into the college experience and for many student interviewees, synonymous with it: "[studying

abroad] is such a featured part of your college experience” (student interviewee, 26 February 2024). Students heading to college generally assume that they could study abroad if they choose. Students are committed to paying fees for four years at home and this makes it a financially buoyant market with which to engage as a European host.

At European HEIs, education abroad is more rare than at U.S. HEIs, and is usually within the curriculum of a degree and supported by an exchange agreement. Often, a complex funding model and network of international agreements control the shape of education abroad in Europe whereas in the U.S., individuals can often shape their education abroad journey based on personal objectives. As a result there are a much richer range of experiences available, with supply meeting demand. Decades of operation means that the U.S. education abroad market expects a nuanced variety of options, throughout the year, and for different lengths of time. This variety invites an extensive private sector of third-party providers to help meet demand. Validation for third-party programmes is generally understood, accepted and straightforward. It can be preferred to direct enrolment for two reasons: scalability and risk management. Third parties offer options and volume in places where alternatives do not easily exist and accept responsibility for a level of health and safety and student support that a European HEI struggles to supply.

Across U.S.-led education abroad there is a consensus in approach to managing risk. The Forum on Education Abroad’s (2023) *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* are sponsored by the U.S. government (specifically, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission). These standards reflect a shared understanding of what a U.S. approach ideally includes: pastoral scaffolding, detailed pre-departure information; a post-experience re-entry programme. All interviewees, professionals and students, commented that U.S. undergraduate students are oftentimes uncomfortable with feeling uncomfortable, which students perceive as a ‘red flag’ and wrong. Much of the infrastructure that supports U.S.-specific education abroad seeks to mitigate that feeling. High levels of communication, presence and advice are therefore expectations of a European partner for U.S. study abroad. For European partners, this level of student support for U.S. students has had to be learned over the years as European students are expected to navigate their own path through institutional and pedagogical differences. It is true that historically, where tuition costs were low, European university students were not necessarily constrained by finite timeframes for completion. Where cost has become a factor, like in the UK, institutions must supply a consistently good student experience, with a correspondingly strong support system, to

maximise the student's ability to integrate, succeed academically, and graduate within a predefined time frame.

Increased cost has also brought parents into the equation. Parental involvement is new ground for European universities that often only came with accepting U.S. education abroad students through direct enrolment in the past. European data protection laws (e.g. GDPR) prevents universities from discussing anything to do with an individual with anyone other than that individual, but in the U.S. parental involvement in their child's education is understood and expected. This and other legal differences and challenges (Borio et al., 2025) present European hosts with many challenges when working for the U.S. market.

2.2. The Academic Framework Is Different in Europe

In the U.S., the first two years of an undergraduate degree is commonly accepted as a moment to explore specialisations to adopt in the future. Some U.S. students define their major sooner, but still may not have acquired the same level of knowledge as an undergraduate in Europe who specialised from initial enrolment onwards. The flipside of this is that unlike European degrees which are predicated on the accumulation of specialist subject area modules throughout the degree, U.S. degrees can have a number of general education requirements. This offers an opportunity for European hosts. Study abroad students are often using their general education requirements as a flexible springboard for their European enrolment. However, if U.S. students need specific credits, European partners must be prepared to do extensive curriculum matching as there are strong controls on what credit they can receive for their local classes. Mechanisms for applying external credit to students' education abroad activities are commonplace in U.S. HEIs, unlike in Europe.

European assessment methods also exacerbate the differences. In Europe, final assessments at the end of term or academic year, comprising a significant portion of the final grade, are common. Unsurprisingly, short-term visiting students sometimes misinterpret a lack of directed study time during the year for free time. Final assessments cause considerable anxiety amongst those directly enrolled, as visiting U.S. students feel anchored by the weekly or biweekly feedback they receive from the continuous assessment of a U.S. curriculum:

The education that I'm used to is so much more assistive than this one. If you are not self-driven, I feel like I would find it impossible to do well. [...] There's so much to be gained from feedback. I mean, that's what the professors are there for: to help you [...] That consistent, constant

feedback, I find so integral to learning. This system makes it so... [audible sigh]. (student interviewee, 29 February 2024)

2.3. Growth in Faculty-Led Education Abroad Programs

There was a consensus amongst the professionals interviewed for this article that faculty-led education abroad programs, not a common feature in the European education landscape above high school level, are a fast-growing element of their U.S. education abroad portfolios. The quantity of IDEAS workshops (e.g., Doerr & Cinti, 2020; Strickler & Sekulich, 2020) focused on supporting faculty-led programming design, management, risk assessment, budget and evaluation in recent years also evidences their increased importance, as does the rise in short-term programmes as evidenced in the Open Doors Report (IIE, 2024). As Yana Cornish, Director of Global Education at the University of Georgia commented:

those of us who have been involved in the field know that finding the right faculty to lead a study abroad programme is definitely a critical piece of success if not the main part of a successful study abroad experience (Cornish et al., 2022, 14:26).

The Lincoln Commission found likewise: “Such leadership is the only way that study abroad will become an integral part of the undergraduate experience” (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005, p. 16). Faculty-led programmes are a straightforward way to meet open access criteria as offering an education abroad, off campus iteration of a campus class alongside the on campus version, where both teach the same curriculum, means that no one is denied instruction (Esteves et al., 2022). To this recipe for success can be added that teaching costs for faculty-led programmes can often be funded from within that year’s tuition fee. The faculty interviewees who were planning or already leading a faculty-led course interviewed for this article all mentioned that part of their motivation for offering a course was that the model facilitated the inclusion of underrepresented students.

2.4. Sense of Belonging

U.S. students cultivate strong institutional loyalty to their colleges, unlike many European students. They travel ready to ‘adopt’ their European HEI, but those HEIs often miss out on cultivating their sense of belonging by not offering any or sufficient holistic programming alongside classes to integrate students into their host communities. Student interviewees cited the lasting impact, for example, of networking dinners with local students in their subject area. Access to student clubs and societies were also popular, as they brought the visiting students into the local student communities. Experiential

learning opportunities, like academic excursions which took the class out of the classroom and relocated the learning into industrial or cultural settings also worked well to create a sense of solidarity and belonging across the class, as it put local and visiting students alike in an unfamiliar learning environment.

Students who expressed a sense of belonging in feedback forms and interviews frequently also expressed interest in enrolling in further study with the HEI, making them a strong recruitment opportunity. In the U.S., HEIs use this sense of belonging to cultivate future philanthropy, and some European private institutions could benefit from this thinking too.

3. Current and Future Trends in the U.S. Approach to Sending Students to Study Abroad in Europe

3.1. A Refocus on Key Locations to Manage Risk

Conversations with U.S. professionals for this article revealed that COVID-19 had resulted in an institutional refocus on locating activity in Europe to manage risk. Europe is seen as safe, well-known, and easily accessed, with a network of U.S. study centres. An increased focus on health, safety and security is reflected in the wording of the Sen. Paul Simon Study Abroad Programme Act of 2023, compared to the 2016 version, which has an additional entry under Section 2 ‘Findings’ point 6, “Student health, safety, and security while studying abroad is, and must continue to be, a priority for institutions of higher education and study abroad programs” (US Congress, 2023). One interviewee from a leading study centre reported an expectation of even more detailed, ongoing support for visiting students than before and commented that risk assessments now involve multiple site visits from home institutions: “we have had 13 requests from U.S. institutions to come and visit in the next two months!” (professional interviewee, 13 March 2024).

From a student perspective, Europe represents good value as its small geographic area offers multinational travel opportunities within a limited timeframe. All student interviewees mentioned this, commonly describing the host country as a base for exploratory travel: “this is a landing ground and from here I’m going to travel all of Europe in 6 months” (student interview, 29 February 2024). As most home institutions do not allow external credit for modules where the student is not already an advanced speaker of the host language, the availability of courses in English had limited students’ choice of study destination, so exploratory travel opportunities beyond that destination were prized. Merle (2024) comments on this, showing that students studying abroad in Florence, Italy, valued travel opportunities far above academic

considerations, and Robinson, Barneche, et al. (2025) showed that student independent travel during a semester abroad is significant and a priority.

Back in 2006 Senator Durbin (2006, p. 6) remarked,

Only one third of those students chose to study in locations outside of Western Europe. Yet, an estimated 95 percent of the world's population growth will occur outside of that area in the next 50 years. How does that prepare our next generation of leaders?

How indeed? In that regard the pandemic has turned back the dial. From IIE's (2024) statistics, the 'European Covid correction' currently remains, but they also show that a diversity of world destinations is trickling back and with it will come a return to study abroad being pioneering in achieving foreign policy goals.

3.2. The Prevalence of Study Center Programs, Faculty-Led Programmes, and Third-Party Programming in U.S. Education Abroad

The U.S.'s commitment to education abroad in Europe is visible beyond the data, notably in study centre real estate. These are often in highly desirable locations such as Florence, Paris, Madrid, or London to attract students, and their largest costs are real estate and other fixed costs. Fixed costs aside, once the flow of students is established, often a fraction of their U.S. degree tuition fees comfortably covers the cost of teaching and other locally incurred educational costs. Study centre programmes ("island programmes" was the term used by most interviewees) are their principal activity, particularly where the local language of instruction is not English and they offer a fairly seamless education abroad experience by seeking to reproduce a U.S. campus education outside of the U.S.. Credit is awarded directly rather than transferred, so credentialing does not require the additional curriculum-matching that studying with a local university entails.

That said, study centres are not immune to tensions with their U.S. partners. Each has its own set of expectations, so navigating differences is challenging despite a shared understanding of broad aims, expectations, and pedagogical approach. A 2020 survey of resident directors across ten European countries found that frequently noted as the biggest challenge was reconciling U.S.-centric expectations with local operational context and the different employment, data protection and immigration laws: "Straddling the gap between the U.S. (unacknowledged) expectations and assumptions and European culture and legalities" (Robinson et al., 2020, p. 71) or as another put it: "make them understand that things need to work differently in another country" (Robinson et al., 2020, p. 72)

Local integration can be an elusive element of a study centre student experience. One interviewee working in a U.S. HEI's study centre described it as “only sufficient” and “exposure at a distance” rather than a “lived”, integrated academic experience. Therefore, a priority for study centres is to create opportunities for their students to engage with the local community and develop their intercultural awareness while they are abroad.

Faculty-led programmes and third party programming are a strong feature of the current U.S. education abroad landscape in Europe. As an example of just how much of a feature, 30% of the institutions in IIE's (2024) list *Leading Institutions By Study Abroad Total* have their own study centre(s) in Europe and 100% offer faculty-led programmes and/or third party as part of their education abroad offer to students. Instruction in English is often a motivator for students to choose these education abroad options. Another part of their appeal over local HEIs is that students enrol with a (sometimes much) lower grade point average, which increases the range of students who can participate, and opens the door to greater student diversity.

3.3. Changes in Duration of Education Abroad Experiences and Their Impact on Inclusion and Diversity

Regarding programme durations, IIE's (2024) data show students are enrolling for a shorter timeframe, typically several weeks, rather than months. Year-long immersion programmes are not preferred unless a student is a language major. There is an increase in holiday programming in January (called J-term, usually 2-4 weeks), Spring Break, and summer, being the most popular. Ten years ago, summer and a semester enjoyed similar levels of popularity as a preferred time frame, accounting for 37.8% and 33.6% respectively of U.S. study abroad. Latest figures from 2022-23 show a decline in semester-long enrolments to 30.5% and increase to 40.6% in summer enrolments (Institution of International Education, 2024). Education abroad experiences of less than two weeks either in the summer or during the semester now account for 17.9% of U.S. study abroad. Interviewees commented on the noticeable rise in low time commitment but highly specialised short courses where specialist learning happens in a setting that offers real-world vocational application of the knowledge and expect it to continue:

It was about a week long, not even, and we packed in so much in a week. So that was, I think another great thing, just to have an opportunity to study abroad in such a short amount of time was actually amazing. So I think that even with just a week or two you can get that experience. I really felt that that experience this past summer was similar to the experience that I had when I was an undergraduate where it was three or four months. There were so many similarities. [...] even in such a

short amount of time I really felt like it was something that would stick with me for a long time. (student interview, 26 February 24)

It is significant that the State Department's web pages describe international education of any duration or format as valuable, if undertaken with thoughtfulness and purpose (USA Study Abroad, 2015). Programmes of shorter duration are more compatible with busy lives and cheaper and therefore also more inclusive (for an example, see McGrew (2021) who comments on this as an impulse for Indiana State University's programme development). Students with families, caring responsibilities and those with jobs have more chances of being able to participate in a short course.

3.3.1. A Greater Focus on Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion and diversity is writ large on the future shape of U.S. education abroad European programming. For many, it is about diversifying the student body and increasing accessibility rather than growing enrolments, and three interviewees noted an increased drive in their HEI to include graduate and professional students. Intracurricular faculty-led education abroad is an effective facilitator and doing so has already wrought a change in the range of sending institutions, with data charting participation numbers within the 'Community College - Leading Institutions' list (IIE, 2024) showing a steady growth trajectory since 2011-12 when the data first became available.

The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act of 2023 redefines "underrepresented groups" to include disabilities, bringing a focus to this particular group. IIE's (2024) statistics confirm that only 17% of institutions reported students' disability status. The recorded proportion of 10.8% of study abroad students having a disability is, therefore, unlikely to accurately represent the disability status of the student body. Ethical approval to access and analyse institutional data pertaining to student disability disclosures for this article was not sought from profiled universities, but the author notes that doing so would be a useful basis upon which to begin a separate research study with student disability as its central focus. Research for the present article has, however, identified a history in which both of the practitioner universities under consideration have welcomed students with disabilities in their education abroad programs. Each has measures that ensure adjustments are made to support disabled students, so enrolment in local HEIs, either directly or indirectly, could be an avenue for U.S. HEIs to increase their participation.

3.3.2. Student athletes

Student athletes also will benefit from shorter, more flexible programming arrangements. Their training and competition commitments are inflexible, and their education may be funded by a sports scholarship. Sporting

commitments of this nature are found specifically amongst U.S. students, and only now are European hosts thinking strategically to realise the opportunities that this group offer. For example, they can be a key to partnering more synergistically with the sponsoring university's mission if alumni philanthropy is heavily invested in supporting sports scholarships:

Sports and athletics [...] is a high reputation point for us. We don't see too many of those athletes and sports players here in London. The sports are almost semi-professional and, in some cases, nearly fully professional at this point, so it's really hard for them to be away [...] We occasionally see them, and we are seeing a trend towards these students; their formation is important to us as well and they are going to have limiting parameters, so let's build [...] shorter immersive things, which is a fairly new project. (U.S. professional interviewee based in Europe, 5 March 2024)

On campuses where sports are primary elements of campus life, non-athletes who are keen on their social dimension also make decisions about when to study abroad based on the sporting calendar. As one interviewee explained:

In the U.S., we have a sports culture where the entire first semester is very intensive on social life. Everybody wanted to stay for the fall because they didn't want to miss football games. They don't want to miss these huge events... so there is this huge wave of people who want to study [abroad] in the spring. (student interviewee, 5 March 2024)

3.3.3. Travel Study Programmes

Travel study programmes are short, faculty or third-party provider-led education abroad experiences where students travel as a group to explore a subject in-country, such as Mozart in Austria, or Balzac in France. The location brings the subject alive, adding context and depth to learning. Ogden (2017) attributes the shift to shorter programmes to this desire "to see the artwork firsthand and to interact with members of the community that produced it" (p. 9). When asked in 2020, the height of the COVID-19 pandemic what might be the future focus of U.S. study abroad in Europe, Clementina Acedo Machado, then Director of Webster University in Geneva and the then Chair of the Association of American Colleges and Universities in Switzerland (AUCS) answered "courses that are more relevant to the region, where there is particular expertise from a professor or a [link] with an international organisation" (EUASA, 2020), which is certainly true of travel study programs. They are a type of experiential field trip where cultural experimentation is the aim and cultural immersion is limited because of the short duration and travelling as a group (Di Gregorio, 2015; Dwyer, 2004). Programmes address this in part by including immersive, cross-cultural interactions within the

pedagogical design (Jackson & Oguro, 2017; Wiese & Wickline, 2014). One participant in this study, a U.S. HEI study centre interviewee, felt they were often little more than “educational tourism”, perhaps illustrating Ogden’s (2007) characterisation of ‘colonial students’ (also see Doerr, 2022). Others perceived them to be field trips which encouraged education abroad in the future.

3.4. First Year Abroad

The idea of beginning a degree abroad is not new but is newly attractive to some U.S. institutions as a means to offset financial losses from Covid-19. They begin by quantifying attrition rates (‘the melt’) within the first year then offering an equal proportion of wait-listed students the opportunity to start their degree abroad within a global programme, therefore limiting financial exposure. After spending their first fall semester abroad, participants return to take the spring semester on the U.S. campus, filling beds and class spaces left from ‘the melt’. One interviewee, a senior leader of a U.S. HEI included in IIE’s (2024) list *Leading Institutions by Study Abroad Total*, commented that their institution has already observed how their students return from their first ‘global’ semester with a maturity and intercultural awareness that bolsters their ability to thrive in their degree and that they are more likely to study abroad again in their junior or senior year.

3.5. Focus on Academic Specialisation; Credentialing and Resumé-Building

In terms of academic considerations, all professionals interviewed noted that students were increasingly focused on enrolling in academic specialisations and credentialing, with one terming it a rise in “intentional programming” (professional interviewee, 27 March 2024). Research for this article found that although students request classes that could supply them with major/minor credit when they apply to go abroad, significant numbers of them subsequently do not transfer their credit back. Ultimately, it seems, they find that they either already have sufficient to graduate without their study abroad credit or choose to pick up credit in their final year when they return to the U.S.

Seeking the award of specialist academic credentials, in STEM fields for example, seems to have led to an increased need to enrol in European HEIs. Although statistically now the largest constituency of education abroad students at 27% of U.S. study abroad (IIE, 2024), interviewees reported that STEM majors are still underrepresented in education abroad. The ‘building block’ nature of these degrees offers little or no flexibility in the cannon of requirements for students to step out of the carefully cumulative curriculum.

Study centres do not often have specialist laboratories or healthcare facilities, so a local partnership either through direct or indirect enrolment is one solution. All four interviewees from those U.S. institutions listed in the IIE's (2024) list *Leading Institutions by Study Abroad Total* suggested that rankings and research impact scores matter when they are looking to partner with European hosts for the sciences. One commented:

We all know what ranking tables are, what league tables are, but they matter, they do matter because that is how people are assessed. Research impact is one of the biggest areas there. So looking at our global network as not only areas of global education opportunities for our students, undergraduates and postgraduates, but also opportunities for all our faculties and schools to get involved in developing research partnerships and collaborations that come out of these types of work [...] cultivate research partnerships that could develop into joint funding, co-PIs, that's where we see some of that opportunity there to begin enabling those things in ways we haven't always focussing solely on getting students abroad [...] the research profile of the university, partnerships that have substantive impact in our global networks. (professional interviewee, 5 March 2024).

Brand awareness can be a driver for students, too. Multiple student interviewees considered studying abroad at UNIGE or KCL might make them more attractive employees to local recruiters, should they choose to relocate. One had chosen UNIGE as a step towards working for an international organisation in Geneva.

Presumably due to their ability to fulfil students' credentialing desires, anecdotal evidence points to an increase in direct enrolment in those local European universities who have improved their ability to service U.S. needs over the decade. That was certainly a concern mentioned by the third-party professional interviewees who talked about feeling compelled to offer a fuller study abroad package around the academic core, for example providing support services or becoming technical specialists for offering internships to emphasise their value in the sector.

Demand and competition for work placement internships is certainly increasing. Restricted timeframes for completion, calendar availability, a desire for experiences of only a few weeks, rather than months, and strict visa compliance requirements are a challenge that has given rise to the 'academic internship'. These are an experiential element within a taught course. They can comprise job shadowing, practitioner masterclasses and industry visits and often focus on building intercultural competency alongside an understanding of industry. Internships within a taught course are usually unpaid, making academic internships easier to source with European host companies.

4. Exploring University-Based Education Abroad in Europe Through the Example of the Université de Genève

4.1. Reasons for Entering Market and Influence of U.S. Study Abroad on Their Initial Approach

Operating from the geographic heart of Europe but outside of the European Project, the Université de Genève (UNIGE)'s geography is ostensibly Swiss but undeniably global. It maintains close relations with '*Genève internationale*' ('International Geneva'), the hub of international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and permanent missions to the United Nations that make Geneva a seat of global governance and multilateral diplomacy. It physically and philosophically entwines global activities in a way to which other education abroad operators can only aspire. Its faculty, curriculum and research agenda are responsive to the global society that has shaped the international cooperation work of International Geneva. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was the direct requests from U.S. universities to access its learning opportunities and connections with the organizations of International Geneva that led to it beginning to engage with U.S. study abroad.

UNIGE saw U.S. institutional interest as an opportunity to further its own international strategy aims. They are to 'connect deeply' with International Geneva; to give students and staff international experiences ('mobilité'); to internationalise study programs, partnerships, and research; and to promote itself internationally and raise its profile. For UNIGE, enabling outgoing student mobility of its students is an essential response to increased demand from students for global outreach and international exposure. The opportunity it offers for lived experience allows participants to acquire academic and intercultural competence and build their networks. For this reason, exchange agreements are their preferred basis by which U.S. study abroad students from the University of California Education Abroad Programme (UCEAP) plus UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, the Universities of Wisconsin-Madison, Pennsylvania, Northeastern, Boston (BU), Smith College and Harvard Law School access its education and impressive relationship with the organisations of International Geneva.

4.2. How Things Have Changed Over the Last 10 Years

From 2005-2015, UNIGE operated the Geneva International Students Programme (GISP). It was designed in response to a demand from partner universities for courses taught in English. It comprised courses with strong international appeal like International Relations, Law and European Studies

combined with modules in French language. Strategically, it hoped participants would be encouraged to enrol in further study at UNIGE.

After 10 years of operation and having reached a consistent level of enrolments year-on-year, it became clear that this programme did not encourage pipeline student recruitment into further studies and that, largely, it supported exchange agreements rather than direct enrolments. So, UNIGE decided to close it. They did this knowing that they now offered more courses taught in English than previously within their degrees, so incoming exchange students had sufficient options even without this programme. By channelling exchange students into the core curriculum, the university also hugely alleviated administrative pressure. End-of-session exams had proved to be something of a challenge for significant numbers of participants and in the event that students had failed assessments, the resulting need for retakes and additional marking in the standalone GISP had been a burdensome administrative undertaking.

Furthermore, UNIGE had launched its summer provision in 2012 with a portfolio of open access academic content taught entirely in English with the express purpose of servicing both international and local demand for its short course content. Between these two English-taught options, the university considered the demand for courses from international students to be met.

The Geneva Summer Schools (GSS), founded in 2012, comprise a dynamic summer portfolio of inspiring, intensive classes which represent the university's academic offer. Classes are open to local and international students at undergraduate, postgraduate and research level, as well as to junior professionals. They are successful in attracting a diverse, international student body and showcasing what further studies could look like at UNIGE, which is one of their strategic aims.

Courses are innovative and interdisciplinary, with a strong emphasis on where academic research meets its professional application. Over the last 10 years, the GSS has honed its often multidisciplinary content around the key specialisations of global health, law, human rights, and environmental sustainability, aiming to connect ever closer with International Geneva by incorporating co-teaching with IOs and experiential learning components as standard elements of its classes. Participating in co-creating and co-teaching these short courses has been shown to create strong links between academics, IOs and NGOs, facilitating networking and ongoing knowledge-sharing across and beyond GSS programme delivery. This achieves one of UNIGE's wider institutional aims for its teaching.

One example of their content is the four-week Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summer School predicated each year on one of the United Nations SDGs. This four-week programme is taught both on campus in Geneva and in a range of international locations and focuses on team-based problem-solving. Each year, a set of real challenges are set by experts from IOs. In 2023, these included the Global Fund, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and UNESCO. The participants, some undergraduates, some masters-level students, then work together to devise a solution and create a collaborative, working prototype. That year, students produced the Yoma UNICEF project. It is a prototype application to survey Nigerian water sources using a 'citizen science' methodology to collect data. The project then facilitated its deployment on Goodwall social network to collect data on public wells, pumps, and faucets in most of Nigeria's states. UNICEF's Nigeria-based WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) then funded DonateWater's student team to use their application in the Sahel region, which is suffering the effects of climate change.

4.3. Influence of U.S. Study Abroad on Their Evolution, Longevity and Success

GSS specialist short courses are popular with U.S. students, who make up around 5% of summer enrolments. Courses are especially attractive to graduate students who are seeking multidisciplinary learning allied with professional settings, like the organisations of International Geneva. For example, medics interested in the intersection of policy and law make connections that inspire the next steps in their academic and professional career plans in these short courses. Each year, several U.S. participants join the programme thanks in part to ThinkSwiss Summer School Travel Grants, which bring high quality students from North America to Switzerland for further and specialist study. In 2023, two summer courses were awarded these grants: Leveraging Innovative Technologies for Ageing Well and the Global Health Law Summer School. Both, as is immediately apparent from their names, are transdisciplinary, with strong real-world applications.

The intracurricular internship programme for UCEAP launched at UNIGE in 2016. Students enrol in spring, completing a full-time internship in summer when the taught element of the course ends.

Over the years, mirroring the decline in U.S. study abroad to Switzerland, the volume of U.S. students choosing the programme has declined; but those that do enrol are stronger academically. The immersive nature of the experience has been a challenge to U.S. students over the years and colleagues there have gradually grown a supportive membrane of nurturing coaching for their incoming U.S. students to support their transition to an 'International

Geneva' approach. This includes seminars and events to raise their intercultural awareness so as to prepare them to apply for and begin an internship at one of the IOs. Teaching appropriate modes of address, attire, expected attitude; these are all elements that form part of the supportive training programme. U.S. students, naturally, do not come to Geneva automatically aware that their pronounced American-ness can work against their desire to integrate in Genevan organisations if it is not balanced with simultaneously exhibiting an intercultural understanding and desire to understand local approaches and protocols.

Each year, the seriousness with which the U.S. Mission to the U.N. receives these students while they are enrolled at UNIGE pleases participants and keeps their commitment levels high. The experience affirms to them that they are citizen ambassadors of their country and that they are their country's investment in the future. When they are received by the ambassador, it also serves as a soft launch into the world of International Geneva, where they work as interns.

In recent years, UNIGE has hosted faculty-led programmes from University of California Berkeley, University of California Davis, New York University, University of Miami, Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy, and Stanford University Law School. Sometimes programmes arise on the basis of faculty relationships. Other times, programmes are seeking a partner with connections to International Geneva in which to base their global programmes, whose destinations vary depending on the content and faculty specialisations that year. It also partners with Boston University to offer modules on campus to students studying at Boston University's local Geneva study centre.

UNIGE welcomes and celebrates these relationships within its holistic internationalisation strategy and sees them as opportunities to strengthen its profile and international connections while showcasing International Geneva.

5. Exploring University-Based Education Abroad in Europe Through the Example of King's College London

5.1. Reasons for Entering the Market and Influence of U.S. Study Abroad on Their Initial Approach

King's College London (KCL) formally entered the study abroad market in September 2009 by opening a Study Abroad Office and appointing its first Head of Study Abroad. The latter's remit was to take the university into the

market proactively, shaping programming, signing study abroad agreements with commercial study abroad partners, and tailoring local student support services to receive study abroad students. Becoming a service provider in such an established market was attractive for two reasons. Firstly, it brought new income at a time of need. University funding had changed and was now based largely on tuition fees. Those fees were capped by the UK government and HEIs were experiencing short falls in income. Secondly, competitors were already welcoming visiting students, and it was building their international profile effectively and further internationalising the classroom.

From the outset, the U.S.'s highly communicative way of doing business and cultivating partnerships influenced the way that KCL constructed a study abroad programme. U.S. market demand shaped the initial proposition and educational offer. Initially, the university used distinctly American terminology, routinely speaking of 'JYAs' (Junior Year Abroad students). 'Study abroad students' only gradually entered the institutional lexicon as the Study Abroad Office began embedding its programmes.

As was typical of a U.K. university at that time, outgoing student opportunities were limited to language degree students with a compulsory, immersive year abroad in a country where their language(s) of study were spoken, either as exchange students, or in work placements. The French Department at KCL in particular responded unexpectedly combatively to their students becoming part of a growing constituency of outgoing education abroad students in the university. The idea that one institutional office would represent and strategically grow access for all students to enrol in education abroad opportunities, either as elective options or as part of their accredited degree, was anathema to them. They opined that an immersive language-based year abroad was not the same as 'JYAs', which shows how limited a strategic understanding of internationalisation was at the time.

Study abroad was founded as one of the first steps in an institutional international strategy that set out strategic objectives around curriculum, student exchange and plans for partnerships with different parts of the world. At the same time, four geographic research institutes focused on Brazil, India, China and Russia were established to explore an agenda based on contemporary economic expectations of the BRIC countries and memoranda of understanding were signed with seven universities who became institutional strategic partners, with programmes of engagement at all levels of the university. Two of the seven were leading U.S. institutions: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and University of California San Francisco. The other five were: National University of Singapore; Jawaharlal Nehru University (New

Delhi); Renmin University of China (Beijing), University of Hong Kong, and University of São Paulo.

5.2. How Things Have Changed Over the Last 10 Years

The U.K. government's removal of degree student recruitment caps has heavily shaped the university's overall capacity in classes and therefore also its ability to host visiting students within its semesters. Consequently, the number of places available on its intra semester study abroad programme has shrunk to enable a greater number of places to be reserved year on year for students received by the university in exchange for its students being taught elsewhere for a semester, summer, or year abroad. However, its summer opportunities have been expanded and continue to grow, offering upwards of 2,000 direct enrolments as well as bespoke options to accommodate faculty-led courses and specialised STEM programmes, not just in summer but also across the academic year.

5.3. Influence of U.S. Study Abroad on Their Evolution, Longevity and Success

In many respects, the needs and expectations of U.S. study abroad students foreshadowed what investment was needed in the student experience after the 2012 introduction of £9,000 per annum tuition fees (roughly 12,300 USD in late 2024). At that point, students became customers (not a popular definition of the relationship between student and university), and argued for an enhanced student experience, alongside better safeguarding and wellbeing considerations.

The European Project's university-level education abroad activity, Erasmus, which shapes much of the thinking and policymaking amongst European education abroad practitioners also seed-funds most education abroad initiatives in the region (see Coleman, 1998). U.S. study abroad offers flexibility and academic dexterity that is not mirrored in Erasmus' more restrictive operational framework, and it has enabled the university to launch its opportunities for students with a speed that could not be replicated within Erasmus. This meant the university maintained a flow of sustaining income from U.S. study abroad that could help support the learning of local students. Since the UK left the EU, it has developed its own programme, the Turing Scheme, which seeks to knit together with Erasmus so that intra-European student mobility could continue. Turing shares many logistical characteristics with Erasmus, such as student funding for education abroad, but brands itself as a global scheme rather than Europe-wide (The Education Hub, 2021). This is akin to the State Department's IDEAS programme but its mission statement is more nebulous than that the State Department's ambitions of U.S. foreign

policy goals of economic competitiveness and national security: “The Turing Scheme contributes to the UK Government’s commitment to a Global Britain, by helping organisations enhance their existing international ties and forge new relationships around the world” (Capita, 2024, p. 9).

Engagement in such an innovative, expansive market as U.S. study abroad provided an outlet for creative programme design and educational innovation, which has also benefited degree students at all levels of the curriculum:

Education abroad short courses at KCL have been a creative sandpit for improving pedagogy and learning experiences for the wider community. Their intensive delivery model coupled with a highly diverse and international student body has meant that active learning techniques like peer-to-peer learning, continuous in-class assessment and experiential learning are the most effective ways to ensure that students retain what they are learning. The real time continuous feedback means that lecturers can amend and improve their approach immediately and this has meant that student satisfaction scores are consistently over 95% positive. Modules originally designed for visiting education abroad students have been integrated into degree curricula at undergraduate, masters and doctoral level. We have learned a lot over the years. (KCL interviewee, 15 March 2024)

As a direct consequence, bespoke international education short term study in the summer has become a flourishing component of the university’s educational offer to visiting students from across the world. Other markets in Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America access programmes whose prototypes benefited from development originally for the U.S. market.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The U.S. is currently the principal and controlling market for education abroad as a portion of a degree. No other nation sends as many short term study abroad students, has such a diverse student body or accredits as extensive a range of programming options. Education abroad has long been a priority within the U.S. higher education system and consequently financial investment in enabling and scaling options for students is unrivalled. With this financial incentive comes world interest and systematic innovation driven by student demand. Unlike most state-sponsored education abroad schemes, like the UK’s Turing Scheme and the EU Project’s Erasmus, it is not slowed down by bureaucracy aimed at devising or servicing equivalent options across multiple nations.

A quality student experience is paramount in U.S. education abroad. On U.S. campuses, the onus is on the institution to give the student the support they

need to achieve academic goals. Professors regularly check in to ensure students are on track. As one student interviewee (14 March 2024) said, “if you don’t go to class your professor will email you on a Sunday and ask if everything is ok.” As their payment of expensive U.S. tuition fees is most often still made when they are abroad, a comparable level of service is expected. In comparison with European students, U.S. students are higher touch and higher engagement, so European hosts must communicate clear expectations to visiting U.S. students and actively manage expectations as part of risk management. This is most effectively done through a U.S.-centric orientation for visiting students, charting minutiae of differences in pedagogical approach, learning experience, expectations as well as cultural nuances of learning in European location versus U.S. perceptions. Up-to-date risk assessments with mitigations for overcoming differences or navigating incompatible elements in the academic calendar such as January exams for the fall semester need to be mapped out in advance and communicated clearly. High-level, constant communication between U.S. and European partners is sacrosanct to successful hosting. Making sure everyone is clear about any and all changes to approach or procedure and always communicating nuanced detail is a level of transparency that is expected.

Of increasing importance is the range of U.S. education abroad educational experiences: a universe of education abroad that encompasses the span of world versions that the students represent and the diverse providers participating in its supply. Almeida (2020, p. 9) terms its inherent multiple perspectives “a kaleidoscope of different images”. Academic subject knowledge may be secondary to travel opportunities in some, from a student perspective at least. Other options are immersive and rooted in local HEIs, supplying specialist academic credit or a brand for student resumés. Understanding that fundamentally there is a different value proposition is key for European partners. U.S. education abroad is focused on the attainment of objectives: gaining credits; travelling to multiple places; gaining onsite experience. Students often assume and want an *à la carte* approach to choosing their classes precisely because their home degree requires versatility in components, incorporating at the very minimum a major, minor, and general education requirement. Students may even be double majors with a minor giving them three area studies to fulfil. This versatility of subject is absent in European education, where students specialise from an early stage, so U.S. students are often enrolled in courses from multiple teaching units. This contrasts strongly to the single-department affiliation of local students and explains why U.S. students can feel lost in European institutions. The support systems do not expect students to be taking electives across multiple departments and at multiple levels of the curriculum. It is not uncommon that

their exact degree does not exist in the European institution, and that the courses that their home institution deem eligible for credit transfer may be associated locally with differently named disciplines. Institutions that appoint a single advisor for each student have the starting point for helping U.S. education abroad students navigate institutional differences. Being sensitive to a potential lack of foundational elements for equivalent study is important. U.S. degree specialisations develop later than in European degrees so U.S. students can therefore find local classes more rigorous and specialised than they were equipped for or were expecting. Enabling juniors to take sophomore-level courses in Europe can ease the transition to learning in the new environment while still offering credits in the specialist areas they require for their major/minor credit transfers.

Students interviewed commented that they found their education in Europe characterised by the need to study theoretical frameworks to contextualise their learning. They noted the increased level of self-discipline required to complete the independent reading and study needed to pass the class. At home, they are accustomed to their learning rate being regularised for them by their professors, with a process of continual assessment compartmentalizing their learning into smaller blocks and feeding back on how well they manage the course content. European partners should be alert to the sense of jeopardy that comes with Europe's favouring of final assessments over continuous assessment (Carnine & Pérez Calleja, 2025). A European setting is a very different pedagogic environment which assumes students will largely self-inform and be self-motivated. Where HEIs see that visiting students are misinterpreting independent (that is, undirected) study time for free time, being told to read the reading list can help them on the path to academic success during their time in Europe. Practice tests shared U.S.-style at the start help students understand how much memorization or application assessments will require.

At the heart of successful U.S.-European partnerships is a strong and consistent relationship. It requires frequent, detailed communication that is attuned attention on the part of the European partner to the precise needs of the incoming U.S. students and, currently and perhaps increasingly, an openness to customise programmes to ensure they are suited for, and even tailored to students. In a large, lucrative, highly competitive buyers' market, nothing less than superb attention to customer service will enable suppliers, for that is what they are seen to be, to survive.

Third-party providers, study centre or island programmes, and faculty-led programming seek to seamlessly cater for students and do so by importing a U.S.-approach. Home-spun, local offers based at HEIs naturally cannot

remould their approach around the needs of the U.S. market, attractive as it is. Instead, the response has been to create a matching service, in the form of a local, specialised team who induct incoming U.S. students in the local institution. These colleagues maintain close relationships with U.S. institutions and third-party providers, smoothing out wrinkles as best they can with the aim of providing an authentic, integrated, and accredited learning experience. It is not unusual for American students to remain unexposed to a local student population, with the inevitable difference in the shape of their intercultural development that isolation within one's own familiar cohort brings. Not to say that intercultural development does not occur, but it is along a different path. Being the source of immersive experiences for island or faculty-led programmes is an opportunity for European HEIs and therein lies an opportunity for them to showcase themselves and potentially attract U.S. students to enrol in future studies.

For European HEIs, the concept of reciprocity, and its companion philosophy of collective knowledge transfer, is embedded in Erasmus, so many European partners experience the U.S.'s approach as a completely different way of working to their core method. Processes and funding have often been designed around Erasmus audit requirements. To receive U.S. students is therefore to rupture their usual approach, perhaps break with tradition, and to learn and structure a new way of doing things. This can be culturally difficult especially in older institutions. As U.S. tuition fees are not comparable to European fees, financial reciprocity is not feasible. Those high fees are still paid at home when students are studying away and provide ample funds to cover European tuition as well as maintain the expense of continued U.S.-based student support. This means that although many exchange relationships exist, they are not preferred. 'One way' study abroad is still the default choice of U.S. institutions and the industry options that have grown up around it, like study centre programmes, third-party providers, faculty-led programming, work well for U.S. institutions as they offer great optionality, manage risk, deliver variety and volume and fine tune a local academic landscape to the U.S. education system's requirements. Symbiotic partnerships can certainly exist without reciprocity.

The two HEIs explored here are at a crossroads in their relationship with U.S. education abroad. Having established memoranda of agreement over the last decade, internal strategies that were initially focused on forging international connections are now looking inwards to accommodate the growing education abroad needs of their own students. So increasingly any growth in one way traffic into their institutions is being channelled through their short-term specialised education abroad units: Geneva Summer Schools

at UNIGE and Summer Programmes at KCL. These units make it their business to understand U.S. needs in education abroad, its potential role in achieving national foreign policy objectives and how these intertwine with the human experience of the students at its centre.

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