

# MA in Climate Change & Global Sustainability

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR ARRIVAL IN COUNTRY

### 2026-27

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## LOCAL CULTURE, CUSTOMS, FOOD& TRANSPORT

There are numerous guidebooks and online resources for Iceland and Zanzibar that students are strongly encouraged to research and read prior to departure. To learn about local customs and culture, check out the ***Culture smart: The essential guide to customs and cultures*** series, though check the publication date to ensure the most up to date edition. For a list of other guidebooks, [click here](#).

## PRE-DEPARTURE MEETINGS

Approximately one month prior to departure, students will be invited to two virtual meetings with admissions, academic director(s), and country coordination teams to go over program expectations and highlights, arrival day and orientation, health, safety, and well-being, and to answer all student questions. These meetings will be recorded but all students are strongly encouraged to attend.

## ARRIVAL DAY

In both Iceland and Zanzibar, students will be met by an SIT Graduate Institute staff member at the meeting time specified in the flight information document. Please note that students are advised not to arrive earlier than the program start date, due to visa limitations defined by a 90-day stay in Iceland and Zanzibar. If students arrive early, they are responsible for all expenses including transportation from the airport and hotel costs. SIT cannot provide any support prior to the official program start date.

## ORIENTATION

The first several days in each country are an orientation period for students to get accustomed to life in that country prior to the start of classes. The group will stay in a modest hotel during orientation before moving into permanent housing. Orientation in each location will include a cultural orientation, while the orientation in Iceland also will include getting-to-know-you activities and information about SIT and the Climate Change program's degree requirements.

## ACADEMICS

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Robert Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by scholars such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Kurt Lewin. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that expands beyond formal curricula and that involves both content (what you learn) and process (how you learn).

What does this mean for you as a Global Masters student? By the conclusion of your program, you can expect to have achieved the following Learning Outcomes:

### **Knowledge and Skills**

Upon completion of the Climate Change and Global Sustainability degree, students will be able to:

1. Understand climate change and global sustainability as complex concepts and the science of climate change as a critical practice

2. Articulate global and comparative perspectives on climate change causes, impacts to human communities and environments, and sustainable solutions across different geophysical, socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts
3. Apply ethically sound science to identify, study, and mitigate problems and innovate solutions to climate change and its impacts
4. Compose climate change and sustainability policy briefs
5. Demonstrate professional skills essential to climate change and sustainability research, policy, and advocacy—and their interfaces—including interdisciplinary data analysis, interpretation, institutional networking, and the effective communication of science outcomes to the public
6. Apply fundamental research skills to conceptualize, design, and develop a unique capstone project—a research-based paper, deliverable, or policy advocacy position paper—that addresses climate change and global sustainability

To achieve these Outcomes, you will participate in a wide variety of learning experiences (e.g., readings, lectures, and discussions with professors in class and with local experts, field studies, and visits to local sites of practice) and opportunities for reflection (e.g., in-class discussions, preparing projects and presentations, and writing papers). Your learning also will benefit from the vast diversity of cultural backgrounds, disciplinary training, and teaching styles of your faculty.

Please note that as an accredited institution, all SIT courses are required to meet minimum regulations regarding the earning of graduate credit. Thus, students will spend approximately 15 hours in class and related activities plus 30 hours in individual and/or group work, for a total of 45 hours, for each credit earned.

## WHERE CLASSES ARE HELD

In Iceland, classes are held on the campus of a local partner institution, while in Zanzibar students attend classes at the SIT Center in Stone Town and at the Institute for Marine Sciences, a branch of the University of Dar es Salaam. All locations have access to libraries, Wi-Fi, and other resources. Other facilities, such as coffee shops, gyms, or yoga studios are located nearby as well.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

A typical week in each location will include approximately four or five class sessions ranging from two to three hours each, as well as site visits and time for completing course readings, working on projects or papers, and personal reflection.

## LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

While the program does not offer credit-bearing language courses, students will receive ten hours of basic language training in Icelandic and Swahili at the start of each semester, along with basic cultural etiquette. If students would like additional language training, they can arrange private lessons at their own cost, and/or enroll in [Mango Language Learning](#) which is free at the SIT Library. Access to Mango Languages will begin on the first day of orientation.

## PRACTICUM

Beginning in the first semester in Iceland, students will meet with the program Chair about their individual learning goals. Students begin their practicum search upon the start of their second term. SIT will support students in finding an approved practicum with a climate change or sustainability NGO, government agency, university department, business or other organization involved in policy/advocacy work in a global location of choice for the final semester. Students also have

access to an online career workshop run by SIT's Career and Practicum Service Center, which will guide students in the practicum application process.

## CAPSTONE

Upon completion of their core coursework and during their practicum, students demonstrate, assess, and synthesize their learning through the preparation of a capstone project and participation in a one-week capstone seminar at the end of their program. Researching and writing the capstone paper takes you deeply into the experiential learning cycle, where you'll explore the meaning of your reflective practice experience, integrate theory and practice in a written and oral presentation, and make a contribution to the field of climate change and sustainability.

## SITEMAIL - LIBRARY - CANVAS ACCESS

Approximately 30 days before the start of the program, all students will receive an encrypted message from SIT's IT department with their SIT email address and login. Once students log-into their account the first time, they will find an email from the SIT library with information about how to log into the library and SIT's Canvas site. SIT uses Canvas as our learning management system.

## COMMUNICATION & MONEY

Students may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during terms abroad, but please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during your Global Master's program. SIT Graduate Institute recommends moderating time on social media to engage locally. Constant communication with friends and family at home can impact your ability to acculturate.

## PHONES

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working smart phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls throughout the duration of the program. For that purpose, students are required to either (a) bring an open, unlocked smart phone from home to the program that can accept a local SIM card, and is compatible with and usable at the program location, (b) work with the program Chair within the first week upon arrival in country to purchase a smart phone locally, or (c) bring a dual SIM smart phone. DO NOT purchase an international plan. It is critical that you have a local SIM with a local telephone number to connect.

## MONEY

It's best to bring a debit card to withdraw money in local currency rather than bringing cash. All students must contact their bank to let them know of their travel plans and dates so that the debit card is unlocked in all locations. US banks can also provide a list of ATM machines in each country that is compatible with students' debit cards. It is also advisable to alert students' credit card companies that they will be traveling for twelve months. SIT does not recommend students open local bank accounts.

## MONEY TRANSFER

[Wise.com](https://wise.com) is an international money transfer service that is safe, and charges low rates should students need to transfer money to local bank accounts.

## ADDRESS IN COUNTRY

Receiving a package at the program sites can be expensive and problematic. Customs agents must inspect all packages. Students, as the recipients, are responsible for any fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient has completed their program by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged. SIT does not forward student mail and cannot be responsible for lost mail.

Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. If it is an emergency and necessary for someone to send you mail, then program staff can assist you with the most appropriate address to give the sender. Posted letters and packages should be sent via DHL, as this is the service that we have had the most success with for international mail. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

## FREE TIME

SIT Graduate Institute encourages students to schedule visits from friends and family in each location after the conclusion of the formal program. Students are expected to engage in all program activities and coursework during the academic semester. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. Please note that visitors are responsible for their own accommodations and travel expenses.

## TRAVEL

Independent travel within country only is permitted on the weekends and assigned breaks. During orientation in each country the SIT staff will provide guidelines for independent travel.

## FAMILY & PARTNERS

SIT Graduate Institute recognizes that, on occasion, students may wish to have a “companion” (defined as an immediate family member, or partner, to include dependent children) accompany them on their semester abroad. It is important to recognize that the academic and acculturation components require extensive time and energy. Students are expected to engage in every program activity including site visits, excursions, courses, and guest lectures. There are long days with sometimes unpredictable itinerary shifts due to local realities and rigorous academic assignments. SIT requests that students intending to host a companion provide SIT with at least 90 days’ notice of the request. All such requests require approval from SIT. Please contact [Student Health, Safety & Well-Being](#) office for more information.