

SIT Master's in Diplomacy & International Relations

Pre-Departure Information Fall 2026-2027

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR ARRIVAL IN COUNTRY

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Local Culture, Customs, Food & Transport

There are numerous guidebooks and online resources for Serbia, South Africa and Washington, DC 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-- check the publication date to ensure the most up to date edition. For a list of other guidebooks, [click here](#).

Pre-Departure Meetings

Approximately six weeks prior to departure to each location, students will be invited to a virtual meeting with SIT's Student Safety, Health and Wellness office, admissions, program chair(s) and country coordination teams to go a range of issues and to answer questions. These meetings will be recorded but all students are strongly encouraged to attend. In addition, the Program Chair will send out regular updates in the weeks leading to the start of the program and is available for one-on-one meetings.

Arrival Day

Students should arrive in Washington D.C. on **Monday, August 31st, 2026**. The **first meeting** of the cohort will take place at **10:00 AM EDT on Tuesday, September 1st, 2026**, at World Learning, **1015 15th Street, NW, Washington D.C.** More information on this first meeting will be distributed to you at least two weeks prior to arrival.

ORIENTATION

The first several days in Serbia and South Africa are an orientation period for students to get accustomed to life in that country prior to the start of classes. Orientation in each location will include a cultural orientation, while the orientation in Washington also will include getting-to-know-you activities and information about SIT and the Diplomacy and International Relations 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).

By the conclusion of your program, you can expect to have achieved the following Learning Outcomes (which include knowledge, skills, and awareness):

1. Analyze core theoretical and applied traditions in diplomacy and international relations
2. Forecast political trends in emergent situation and develop management contingencies to counter them
3. Mediate situations of conflict and crisis through negotiation skills and practices
4. Apply leadership skills and strategic foresight analysis in decision making
5. Research global and regional challenges through qualitative methodologies
6. Integrate managerial and leadership skills in the design, delivery, and promotion of collaborative problem-solving plans in an international context
7. Formulate responses to critical challenges in international affairs through research, policy advocacy, and evidence-based interventions

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

Washington, D.C. programing comes in the form of a ‘traveling seminar.’ During the day students will visit various government agencies, international organizations, and non- governmental organizations to learn about the field of diplomacy and international relations. In the late afternoon students will meet at World Learning, 1015 15th St NW, Washington, DC, to participate in an intensive graduate seminar. During their stay in Serbia students will be attending classes at the SIT Program Center in Belgrade. A few classes will be field based either in international organization or in NGOs in Geneva. For South Africa, student classes will take place at SIT’s study abroad center in Durban.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

A typical week in each location will include approximately three class sessions ranging from three hours to four hours each, as well as site visits and time for completing course readings, working on projects or papers, and personal reflection. Each semester also includes participation in one remotely taught class.

LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

SIT does not offer language classes; however, the Diplomacy and International Relations degree does have a language and cultural proficiency requirement. Information on the pathways to fulfill this requirement can be found in the 2025-26 School for International Training Graduate Course Catalog. You will also have access to [Mango Languages](#) through the SIT library.

PRACTICUM

Your advisor, the SIT Career Services office, and your professors will begin to help you think about your last semester practicum as soon as you start the program. You are free to do your practicum anywhere in the world where you are legally permitted to do so.

CAPSTONE

Upon completion of their 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 held in August of each year. 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 diplomacy and international relations.

SIT EMAIL - 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 the term 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 are 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://www.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 there is an emergency and it is 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 accommodation and travel expenses.

TRAVEL

Independent travel 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 such as a partner and 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 the [Student Health, Safety & Well-Being](#) office for more information.