

The University of New Hampshire-University of Ghana Program

Is Ghana Safe?

The short answer to this important question is that Ghana is a democratic and politically stable country with crime rates that are comparable to those of US cities. Participants in the UNH-UG program undergo three orientation programs that address safety, among other subjects—one pre-departure session at UNH, a session upon arrival provided by the Aya Centre, and two days of orientation sessions at the University of Ghana. UNH closely monitors safety considerations for all its international programs.

Students and their parents or guardians should know:

- ***Ghana is a democratic and politically stable nation:*** The first sub-Saharan African nation to achieve independence from colonial rule, Ghana is often seen as a model for political and economic reform in Africa. Ghana has a high-profile peacekeeping role in West Africa and has had a democratic government since 1992. Indeed, its standing as a stable and peaceful country with a welcoming people is one of the reasons Ghana was our destination of choice.
- ***Violent crime rates in Ghana are low compared with industrialized nations, including the United States:*** Crimes against property, such as pickpocketing and other forms of theft, are more a concern than violent crime. The general rule is for students to exercise the same cautions they would use in a large city in the U.S.
- ***Participating students have access to on-site 24/7 emergency support:*** UNH has partnered with the Aya Centre, a service learning organization located just outside University of Ghana campus. Directed by an American professor with over twenty years of international education experience, the Aya Centre will serve as a first-responder for any emergencies, and it will provide cultural and academic orientation and support services to U.S. students. This measure is *in addition to* the services and support already provided by the UG International Programmes Offices.
- ***All UNH students studying abroad receive International SOS coverage:*** UNH is an institutional member of *International SOS*. Through their worldwide network of alarm centers, clinics, and health and logistics providers, International SOS offers local expertise and advice, as well as emergency assistance during critical illness, accident, or civil unrest. With over 8,000 employees working in 70 countries, *International SOS* works in partnership with businesses, governments and non-governmental organizations and offers access to medical care that meets international standards.
- ***The UNH-UG Study Abroad Program underwent an intensive vetting and approval process with safety as a primary consideration:*** Over the course of more than two years, twelve UNH faculty, administrators, and staff members—including the Director of the Center for

International Education, the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts—made site visits to Ghana and the University of Ghana campus to assess standards and safety for our students. Additionally, four different UG faculty members visited UNH during this time. As a result, the UNH Center for the Humanities has developed strong ties with the UG International Programmes Office and UG faculty and staff, the Aya Centre staff, as well as the Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Accra, Ghana. Finally, the program itself was approved by the University Committee of Study Abroad (UCSA) in fall 2010 and approved upon successive reviews.

More generally, it is important that parents and guardians know that:

- ***The UNH-UG Program was created with a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of State:*** Recognizing the importance of broadening students' horizons in the globalized world in which we live, the Department of State awarded the UNH Center for the Humanities a grant with the goal of developing this program. Safety is a significant concern of the funding agency.
- ***The University of Ghana is a world-class educational institution:*** Recognized as a center of excellence all over the world, the University of Ghana is one of Africa's flagship institutions and a member of the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the League of World Universities. The International Programmes Office holds collaborative partnerships with many U.S. institutions such as Tufts, Columbia, Brown and New York University as well as colleges in Canada, Europe, and Asia. In any given semester, UG hosts hundreds of international students from the US, Europe, and beyond, and the institution has long and deep experience in receiving international students.
- ***Josh Newall, a UNH senior Political Science major, who studied at the University of Ghana, wrote:*** "If anyone is worried about safety, don't be. I feel safer in Ghana than I have in any American city. Violence simply isn't in the Ghanaian culture (although of course, there's always the exception). Let's just say, I go into Accra all the time, even at night, and I have yet to feel threatened."

For further information, please contact Professor Burt Feintuch, Director of the Center for the Humanities (burt.feintuch@unh.edu / 603 862 4356) or Jim Parsons, the COLA Center for Study Abroad Coordinator (james.parsons@unh.edu / 603 862 3962).