

EDUCATION ABROAD

Credit Allocation Guidelines for Education Abroad Programs

Background Context and Framework

Semester Credit Hour Definition: The Ohio Board of Regents guidelines state, “One semester credit hour will be awarded for a minimum of 750 minutes [i.e., 12.5 hours] of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an average of two hours for every hour of formalized instruction. The instructor bears the primary responsibility for formalized instruction, which may be delivered in a variety of modes.” Further, the BOR notes that “credit hours may be awarded on a different basis for other types of instructional activities,” but in all cases the foundational assumption is that one semester credit is the equivalent of approximately 2,250 minutes [i.e., 37.5 hours] of coursework, combining formalized instruction with out-of-class work. For laboratory or studio course work, for example, that requires little or no out-of-class study, the BOR states that “One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 2,250 minutes [37.5 hours] of instructional time”; for laboratory or studio courses in which “instruction is supplemented by out-of-class assignments which would normally average one hour of out-of-class study preparing for or following-up the [laboratory or studio] experience, then one hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 1,500 minutes [or 25 hours]” of instructional time. The BOR does not establish specific guidelines for awarding credit for education abroad experiences, but working within the framework established here, we have developed the following guidelines for determining appropriate credit awards for education abroad programs.

Credit Allocation for Education Abroad Courses

Traditional Ohio State courses require 12.5 hours of formalized (i.e., classroom) instruction per 1 credit hour. Similarly, formalized, instructor-led coursework in-country is credited as all other formal classroom experiences, with a requirement of 12.5 hours of instructional time per credit. Assigned educational experiences outside of such formalized settings as a conventional classroom, faculty-led tours or lectures in situ, or organized discussions with local authorities, will be regarded as analogous to the hybrid studio/lab course model described in the paragraph above, which requires 25 hours per credit.

To determine credit hours for an education abroad program, the students’ experiences should be regarded as falling into one of the following general categories, with the attendant credit-hour guides:

- **Formalized instruction.** This includes traditional classroom time (either at a foreign institution or in Ohio State faculty-led class sessions); formalized lecture/discussion sessions “in situ,” led by a faculty member or resident academic authority. These Credit Allocation for Education Abroad Courses should be considered regular class-time, i.e., requiring 12.5 contact hours per credit.
- **Other required or structured educational experiences, not conducted by an approved instructor.** These include visits to cultural locations (museums, monuments, historical or cultural sites) that do not include formal lecture components by the designated instructor; visits with local authorities/experts; independent but assigned observations of local cultural phenomena; etc. These should be considered out-of-class work to be assessed using the standard of 25 hours per credit.
- **Informal “free time” in-country,** including travel time, meals, socializing, independent touring. While these experiential activities are an integral part of the education abroad experience, they do not count toward credit-earning hours.

Additional Guidelines

- There are many possible configurations for education abroad experiences, with various durations: these may range from formal classroom instruction at a foreign institution to Ohio State-faculty-led study tours; from self-contained incountry courses to courses that require an on-campus course prerequisite to on-campus courses that include an in-country component as part of the course; etc. Regardless of the format or duration, the credit allocation guidelines articulated here will apply.
- Program leaders/instructors are encouraged to schedule academic content hours prior to and after the in-country part of the program. Pre-travel academic content might include assigned readings about the location, the cultural context, and the subject area under study. These academic components may be computed into the credit-earning instructional time. Pretravel sessions on travel logistics and/or the standard Health/Safety orientations required by the Office of International Affairs (OIA) should not be counted in the computation of credit-earning time. Post-travel academic content may include facilitated “reflection” time so students can process and assess their in-country experiences; additional reading/research; writing papers for the course; or completing class projects. This time may be incorporated into the computation of credit-earning class time.
- If a single course has both on-campus and in-country components, credits should be based on the cumulative instructional time of both components. However, if an education abroad program requires the student to enroll in a separate, on-campus course as a pre- or co-requisite, coursework completed for the on-campus course may not be double-counted for credit for the education abroad program.
- Typically, the Global May courses (not discipline-specific and aimed chiefly at first- and second-year undergraduates) involve roughly 3 ½ weeks in-country, and the successful completion of these courses typically earns 3 semester credits. A number of successful programs exist for both longer and shorter durations than this—ranging from 1-week study tours to full semester study at a foreign institution; but credit for education abroad programs of any length should be calculated using the guidelines articulated above.

Questions regarding curricular components and/or credit allocation for education abroad programs may be directed to Jeannie Simmons, Director of Study Abroad, simmons.272@osu.edu. Questions specifically relating to the College of Arts and Sciences education abroad programs may be directed to the Arts and Sciences Curriculum and Assessment Office (154 Denney Hall; (614) 292-7226; asccas.osu.edu).