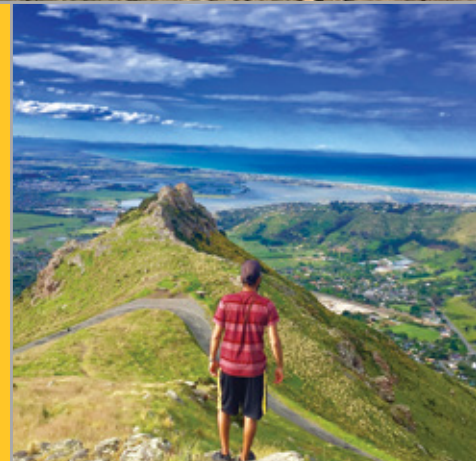
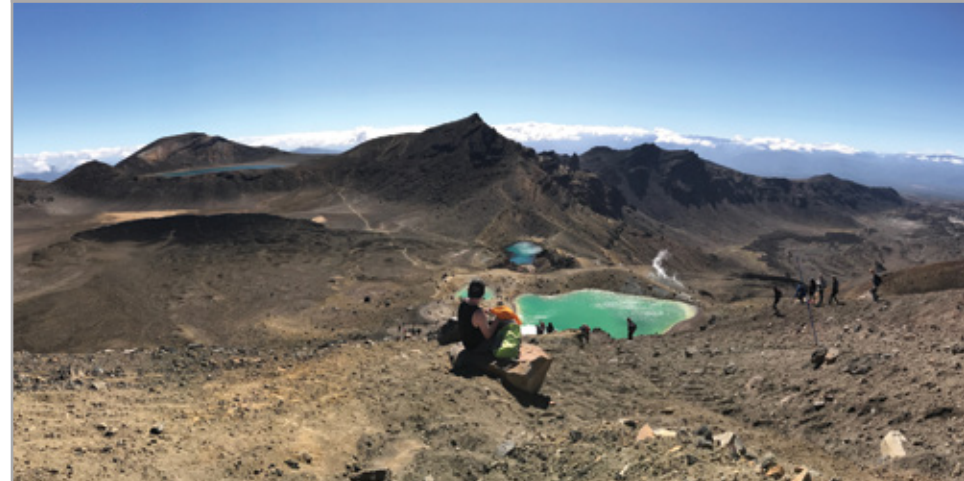


## ASSURING QUALITY OF TRANSFER CREDIT IN LEARNING ABROAD PARTNERSHIPS

Transfer credit for learning abroad should be approached differently than traditional transfer credit. Different systems of scheduling, credit assignment, grading approaches and elective requirements require substantial institutional knowledge, flexibility and strong communication with partner institutions. Such a flexible and tailored effort often leads faculty to question the equivalencies between the learning abroad academic experience and their own program requirements. Sound quality assurance practices can play an essential role in reassuring faculty that the experience is a credit-worthy and appropriate part of a student's program. In this resource we summarize five quality assurance practices that will support your institution to maintain strong learning abroad partnerships and transfer credit systems.

This resource supports institutions to assure quality of transfer credit in learning abroad partnerships. It is just one chapter in CBIE's capacity-building series *Assessing and Implementing Credit Transfer in Student Mobility Partnerships: A How-to Guide for Post-Secondary Institutions* as part of the national *Learning Beyond Borders* campaign.



## I. RIGOUR IN STUDENT SELECTION

Apply rigour to your student selection processes in order to maintain the academic standard agreed upon in each partnership. Robust due diligence in your institution's learning abroad application process (references, cover letter, student's academic goals for the program etc.) will help you conduct a general screen for students most likely to succeed, but also help you identify appropriate matches according to individual student strengths and interests.

## II. TRACKING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OVER TIME

Measure student academic performance prior to and after credit transfer is awarded. This life-cycle approach will enable you to identify long-term trends in performance of students abroad at partner institutions over time, providing an objective assessment of quality.

When new partnerships form or a new discipline/department is added to an existing relationship transfer credit must be implied based on the principle that the partnership was established on the equal quality of both institutions. To facilitate quality assurance in new arrangements students should bring complete course outlines and other materials back to their home institution. The student who is setting precedent at a new partner institution must be protected with a guarantee of credit.

## III. TRACK ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF INCOMING PARTNER INSTITUTION STUDENTS

Incoming student tracking is valuable for quality assurance as well, especially for courses at your institution with a particularly high level of pre-requisite knowledge. Over time institutions will gain a better understanding of those courses particularly suited to incoming exchange students from various partners which will lead to better academic counselling. Exchange of performance information between partners can often modify student selection criteria in both institutions.



## IV. CONDUCT STUDENT EXIT INTERVIEWS

Exit interviews are a key aspect of partnership quality assessment. Some themes to cover include the quality of readings provided, discussion in-class and the student's perspective of their own learning. The results of these interviews can greatly enhance the pre-departure orientation process and better prepare the student for the academic culture s/he will enter.


## V. CONDUCT PARTNERSHIP REVIEWS EVERY 5 YEARS

Well-implemented quality assurance programs which track information and student performance over time help faculty and staff review existing partnerships and validate the suitability of learning abroad partnerships over time. In addition to data, face-to-face discussions with partners at one-another's campus and at international conferences can help maintain healthy bilateral relationships and introduce new issues or opportunities to approach together. Topics to cover in these face-to-face meetings include:

- Updates on curricular changes
- Meeting faculty
- Learning about new initiatives
- Reviewing safety measures and support services for students

Sharing partnership review results across your institution is a transparent and accountable way to grow understanding and appreciation for the quality of international partner credit transfer.

Learning abroad is not just something we are making available to students, we are actively encouraging it. We need to ensure our faculty members are confident that the credits they are approving represent equal academic work and can therefore create strong transfer credit pathways that will enable a growing number of students to learn abroad.



**IN PRACTICE:** "By tracking and analysing 70 students' academic performance after returning from a study abroad semester only one student recorded a slightly lower GPA. In fact, we found that returning students had higher GPAs and the improvement was greater than in the cohort who stayed home. This signalled that some factor... was at play. It could be the increased maturity in the returnees or, as some new research (Maddux and Leung) has reported, students who have been abroad and developed detailed knowledge of another culture are better able to solve complex problems. In general, if student marks are the same or improved for the next higher course level when they return to their home institution then it is a good indication of quality commensurate with what is expected at their home institution." Capilano University