

ISSUES AND BEST PRACTICES IN RECOGNIZING LEARNING ABROAD TRANSFER CREDIT FOR COLLEGES

Colleges have particular challenges when it comes to providing transfer credit for learning abroad experiences. Programs tend to be shorter in length, very prescribed with few electives, and often must adhere to professional association requirements. They can also be pathway programs with specific requirements to ladder into university level degrees. These conditions make recognizing transfer credit, especially core or program transfer credit, especially difficult.

Canadian colleges have responded with innovative alternative approaches. Some of these offer recognition which is alternative to transfer credit, instead embedding a course offering into an in-house faculty-led student experience, or taking the form of a field school or work integrated learning experience. The focus of this guide is to highlight transfer credit approaches that are successfully working within the college sector.

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. ENSURE FACULTY AND PROGRAM AREAS HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE LEARNING ABROAD OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The transfer credit process must be managed collaboratively between academic areas and the international office. It is important to be able to provide clear and easily accessible information to all faculty members about which international partnerships will align with their program area so that faculty can highlight the opportunities available directly to their students.

II. BEGIN OUTREACH IN TANDEM WITH COURSEWORK

Sharing pathway options for learning abroad with students should occur no later than upon arrival to the institution, allowing maximum time for consideration as well as academic and financial planning. Several colleges incorporate learning abroad into orientation events and hold international opportunity fairs early in the academic term.

III. EMBED AN INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITY DIRECTLY INTO THE DESIGN OF AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Including learning abroad options and transfer credit information in program design will increase awareness and student engagement with the topic. The number of opportunities need not be many, but quality and clarity around relevance for the students will help garner interest.

IV. CONSIDER HYBRID STUDENT LEARNING OPTIONS THAT COMBINE FACULTY-LED AND PARTNER-LED PROGRAMMING

Co-developing or partnering with an overseas institution for one or several courses can ensure that critical course requirements are met and that students still have pathways that facilitate international learning opportunities. These can also facilitate faculty exchange and deeper partnership relationships at the program level.



V. CONSIDER EMBEDDING AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE INTO A REGULAR COURSE OFFERING

A core program course can be offered on campus but completing the course can have the option of either being completed on campus or overseas. These are short term opportunities that can be coordinated with a partner institution or faculty-led.

VI. ENSURE LEARNING ABROAD CREDIT TRANSFER WORKS WITHIN UNIVERSITY TRANSFER FRAMEWORKS

Students seeking transfer to university programs will want assurances that the course work taken at a partner institution will count towards desired university credentials. Opening a dialogue with local universities about how to best facilitate a learning abroad experience within the larger goal of a student's post-secondary education can make a significant impact on student participation.

VII. BE CREATIVE WITH GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES AND HOW THEY ARE RECOGNIZED

Faculty-led field schools, internships and summer schools provide excellent alternatives to semester long initiatives. Some colleges offer special programs including 1-2 week service learning and global citizenship experiences, or opportunities to do applied research as opposed to courses. Faculties should be encouraged to create a range of learning abroad options specific to their program areas and highlight them on their own web pages in addition to the main international opportunities page.

Notations on transcripts for international activities shows that the institution values these experiences; a certificate indicating successful participation, either from the home or host organization is also helpful.

IN PRACTICE: Douglas College has partnered with Simon Fraser University's Hellenic Studies Program to deliver a field school in Greece. Faculty from both institutions teach in the field school and course credits are recognized by both institutions. This makes course planning for transferring students very transparent and simple.



SUMMARY

Given the applied nature of many college programs, the shorter duration of many programs and existing pathway arrangements with other higher education institutions, colleges often have greater challenges in recognizing transfer credit. While flexibility and creativity are key, maintaining a program-focused approach with clear, recognized pathways is also foundational to increasing participation in learning abroad.

