

Guidelines for Designing College-Credit Study Abroad Program at CMC

Background:

Some things cannot be learned on a college or university campus. It is widely known that many students can greatly enhance their academic careers and understanding of global issues by participating in “Study Abroad” programs overseas.

The rise of the global economy, coupled with the increased interdependence among nations, has created the need for citizens to develop an awareness and understanding of cultures other than their own. In learning about other cultures, there is no substitute for direct exposure to the people, environment, politics, language, ideas, and customs of other nations. For these and other reasons, CMC offers students international education opportunities, referred to as “Study Abroad” or “Experience Abroad” programs.

Study abroad programs provide students with extraordinary opportunities for experiential learning and personal growth. Much of this learning and growth takes place outside the classroom. Site visits, weekend excursions and home-stays are vital components of many study abroad programs. Even “hanging out” in a foreign city can be an important part of the life-changing experience our students often have on study abroad programs. All involved in study abroad recognize the value of this informal, experiential learning. At the same time, everybody realizes that we cannot give students academic credit for walking around the streets of Madrid. The issue is one of striking an appropriate balance. Easing of requirements for formal classroom contact hours is obviously appropriate. Likewise, innovative assessment methods that encourage informal learning are valuable. However, study abroad courses must maintain sufficient academic rigor to justify the issuance of CMC credits. The aim of the standards defined below is to provide a framework

that will guide faculty proposing study abroad courses in striking that balance.

Classroom contact hours:

For an on campus three credit course, depending on course type, 45 hours of formal classroom contact hours are normally required. For a study abroad course the meaning of contact hours should be expanded to mean not only classroom type instruction but also field trips and excursions which vary widely from program to program. In this regard, many institutions subscribe to the standards of the School for International Training (SIT): Every two hours spent on site visits, field trips and excursions may be counted as one hour of classroom contact. With this criteria most programs more than cover the required contact hours.

Assignments:

We encourage students to study abroad so that they may experience a different culture first hand. Faculty is therefore encouraged to adjust their syllabi when teaching abroad. It is counterproductive to force students to spend most of their time abroad reading long assignments or writing extensive papers. Reading assignments before departure are very useful. Faculty should note, however, that pre-departure assignments for May programs should take into account that students have spring semester coursework to complete. Post-travel assignments like journals and papers that encourage students to reflect on their international experience are also very effective. Time spent on site visits and excursions can substitute for some standard assignments, but such assignments must not disappear altogether. The weight of formal assignments should be no less than 50% of the expectations for an equivalent course in the same discipline on campus.

Assessment:

Innovative assessment strategies that encourage and assess experiential learning are appropriate on study abroad programs. "Participation" grades are typically weighted more heavily than in a comparable campus course. But these strategies must not be so informal that students have little sense of how they are performing or of how to improve their performance. The type of written work expected may well shift from formal exams to less formal papers and journals. The study abroad course should require at least 50% as much written work as the equivalent course in the same discipline on campus.

Program length and credit hours:

Study abroad programs represent a big investment for students in terms of money and time. One way to encourage such an investment is to offer the maximum number of credit hours in a short, relatively inexpensive program. CMC's Study Abroad programs typically range from two to six weeks and make study abroad accessible for busy, over-committed students at CMC. However, there must be limits on how many credits can be awarded for a brief period of study if CMC is to retain academic credibility.

The following list assumes a course, or courses, in which some work is assigned prior to departure and some after students have returned from abroad; but it also assumes that the vast majority of the credit earning experience occurs during the period of foreign study/travel. Given these circumstances, the minimum program length to offer a specified number of credits are as follows:

- ← 3 semester hours – 1 1/2 - 2 weeks
- ← 6 semester hours – 3 - 4 weeks
- ← 9 semester hours – 4 1/2 - 6 weeks
- ← 12 semesters hours – 6 - 8 weeks

While some free time might be built into the timetable, Study

Abroad courses are meant for uninterrupted, intensive learning experiences and the time away from our campuses should be used wisely.

Pre-Departure Meetings:

Class meetings before the expedition should prepare participants by giving them a conceptual framework and any skills they may need, as well as a sense of what to expect. Field assignments should be announced before the trip and clearly stated on the course syllabi so their work is focused and productive.

New Study Abroad Course Proposals:

Proposals for new study abroad courses should contain the following information:

- ← Course objectives/goals
- ← Course plan including pre-departure activities
- ← Detailed Syllabus
- ← Daily schedule including daily teaching/learning activities
- ← Faculty qualifications for this course
- ← Detailed cost analysis
- ← State Department Travel Advisory Analysis
- ← CDC Traveler's Health Summaries

The **IPC-Study Abroad Application and Procedure** document is required for Study Abroad Proposals and will help you in program planning.