

Report of the CLAS C&C Subcommittee on Study Abroad

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The CLAS CC&C formed this subcommittee in fall 2012 to address problems that had been reported with regard both to its own students studying abroad and to incoming students seeking to study at UConn. For outgoing students the problems mainly concerned the accreditation of courses taken abroad by appropriate departments at home; for incoming students they concerned finding spaces in available classes and circumventing obstacles to enrollment based on uncertainty whether they had met pre-requisites.

To prepare its recommendations, the Subcommittee reviewed the four kinds of institutional arrangements entered into by students studying abroad:

- a) UConn programs such as those in Paris and London, either taught by UConn faculty or where UConn hires the faculty and staff and selects the courses to be offered, which then carry UConn numbers. Resident credits are sometimes involved for the Paris Program students: French courses taken by students are vetted by members of the UCONN French Department; courses taken by students outside of the French department are vetted by the appropriate faculty evaluators of the appropriate UCONN departments
- b) Exchange programs with specific schools such as Warwick. Courses at these schools must be individually vetted by UConn faculty members who have appropriate backgrounds and expertise, even though the schools are generally of an international ranking higher than UConn's.
- c) UConn-approved third-party programs entered through Study Abroad, where individual UConn faculty evaluators are required to vet courses for credit in their own department, either as a course equivalency or as a generic Foreign Study course. Depending on when the student has access to a detailed course description, the vetting process occurs before, during, or after a student has already completed the course, or a large portion of the course.
- d) Individual student matriculations where the student withdraws temporarily from UConn, except for summer programs, risks losing financial support, and losing the catalogue year s/he was originally admitted under, thus possibly coming under a different set of major requirements. In this case, courses taken abroad may be evaluated as transfer courses through Transfer Admissions when applying for re-admission.

Based on information gathered from all sources, the Subcommittee recognized, when it reconvened with some change of membership in the fall of 2013, that some of the problems prompting its formation were already being addressed both by the Study Abroad Advisory Committee (SAAC) chaired by Subcommittee member Richard Langlois, and by the CLAS Student Advisory Center, headed by another Subcommittee member, Katrina Higgins. However, the Subcommittee concluded that some problems remain and offers the following recommendations to address them:

1. Regarding the evaluation of courses taken abroad for which the student seeks accreditation from CLAS departments and programs, the Subcommittee makes the following recommendations:
 - a) All CLAS departments and programs should have a designated faculty member (rather than staff member) to evaluate courses taken abroad by outgoing students for possible accreditation either as specific departmental courses or as generic foreign study courses.
 - b) This faculty evaluator should assume that any institution sanctioned by Study Abroad is properly accredited but in evaluating individual courses should consider the course description, syllabus, level, and appropriate credits to be awarded.
 - c) The designated SA evaluator, should be aware that SA courses accredited at UConn carry grades as well as credits, that SA publishes a chart showing how credits at institutions abroad convert into credits at UConn, and that the appropriate level of a UConn equivalency may require the evaluator to check the numbering system of the host institution by reviewing its catalog on line.
 - d) Departments should acknowledge the added workload for its SA evaluator and, for departments with a large burden of such evaluations, should arrange support in the form of release from some other professional obligations such as committee assignments. In some departments this role is fulfilled by the Undergraduate Coordinator who receives a course release for this and comparable other duties.
 - e) A list of CLAS departmental evaluators is maintained and updated by the CLAS Academic Services Center and supplied to SA, who in turn publishes it for the benefit of students.
 - f) The Study Abroad office will maintain a list of previously approved courses for evaluators in each department.
2. CLAS departments will be made aware that at the beginning of each semester, Study Abroad will provide the CLAS Academic Services Center with the following information pertaining to incoming student exchange (ISE) students:
 - a) Student's biographical information
 - b) Student's current transcript from home institution
 - c) UConn course selection listed in order of preference
 - d) UConn course descriptions
 - e) Course descriptions and/or syllabi from student's home institution for all course which might serve to fulfill prerequisite requirements for UConn courses requested
 - f) A representative from the CLAS Academic Services Center will work with each department to determine if ISE students have met the prerequisites for the courses for which they are requesting enrollment.
3. One sentence on the SA website, "Accredited courses taken on an approved Study Abroad program receive UConn course numbers, UConn credits, and UConn grades, which appear on your transcript," requires some qualification: Students should verify with their department's faculty evaluator or their advisors that courses they deem to be equivalents of courses taken abroad will not be denied credit at UConn because they duplicate work already taken or are taken out of sequence. Department evaluators should alert faculty advisors that in approving their advisees' plans to study abroad, they should review the students' transcripts to prevent these disqualifications.

4. Outgoing students must seek equivalencies before departure. If that is not possible, as soon as they can, they should contact Study Abroad, which will coordinate efforts to find equivalencies in the best interests of the student. If after a reasonable evaluation process to determine equivalency, no department is able to certify a Study Abroad course as a UCONN equivalent (whether a specific course offering or as Foreign Study credits), the course should be submitted to the Study Abroad Advisory Committee to decide whether it is worth transferring at all, and if so, refer it to the University Interdisciplinary Courses Committee (UICC).
5. Departments should consider provisions for advising both incoming and outgoing students, and Study Abroad should be granted more resources for coordinating incoming students. This committee also recommends that the Provost implements the following policies with regard to ISE enrollment:
 - a) That ISE students register alongside students with junior standing
 - b) That if ISE students meet the prerequisites of the courses that they wish to take, and if space is available, they will be registered for those courses. Instructors only have the authority to deny a student's enrollment request if a. the class is full and/or b. if enrollment in the course is by instructor consent only.
6. Given the University's promotion of the study abroad experience for all UCONN students as a way to learn about cultural and other forms of "diversity," coursework in some Study Abroad programs could be counted toward the Gen Ed diversity requirement. As designees of the dean, certain staff of the CLAS Academic Services Center have the authority to approve substitutions for general education requirements and have, after review of syllabi and course work, approved some study abroad courses as substitutions for general education diversity requirements. The subcommittee recommends that moving forward, the process for approving such substitutions includes consultation with C&C, as well as relevant programs and departments.
7. Departmental evaluators should be aware that the SAAC is available as a resource.
8. The Subcommittee recommends regular communication between the SAAC and the CLAS CC&C regarding future changes and additions to policies and procedures that regard the curriculum to assure that the CLAS C&C remains well informed of these changes and has the opportunity to raise concerns and contribute to solutions wherever appropriate.