

# Criteria for a Learning Abroad Experience

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The University of Minnesota has an institutional goal that fifty percent of its graduating seniors should have completed a significant educational experience abroad during their undergraduate years. Although most such experiences consist of credit-bearing study abroad, it is clear that other types of experiences are also educational. To date, however, the University has lacked a set of agreed-upon criteria for determining whether another type of experience abroad (work, internships, volunteering, or travel) qualify as significantly educational to qualify. Clear definitions are essential before the University can begin systematically tracking progress toward the fifty-percent goal. This proposal attempts to fill the gap.

Experiences will be counted only if they occurred while the student was a degree candidate at the University of Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> The following qualify:

- Any documented activity abroad that results in University of Minnesota credit.<sup>2</sup> This may be through either:
  - a study abroad program, or
  - research abroad validated through a directed study registration, or
  - a non-credit work, intern, or volunteer program for which the student obtains credit through an individual directed study or internship contract with a faculty member.
- Any documented non-credit activity abroad that meets one of the following criteria:
  - An activity that fulfills a University of Minnesota academic degree requirement, such as research for a senior project.
  - A work, intern, or volunteer experience of at least three weeks in duration.
  - A work, intern, or volunteer program that includes systematic reflection/processing<sup>3</sup> and is at least one week in duration.
  - Travel of at least a week's duration within the context of an educational program that includes systematic reflection/processing.<sup>4</sup> Individual travel (unless linked to credit) does not qualify.
  - Sponsored research abroad (e.g., UROP-funded).<sup>5</sup>
  - Other experiences abroad that the student's parent college has defined as educational and related to collegiate internationalization.

<sup>1</sup> This means that high school exchanges, study abroad by transfer students prior to their enrollment at the University of Minnesota, etc., will not count. The reasons are practical more than philosophical: Attempting to include prior education abroad systematically would compound an already daunting task of documentation.

<sup>2</sup> Credits may be either resident or transfer. Minimum number of credits is one. Credits may be based on a combination of overseas and on-campus study, such as an on-campus course with an overseas component during spring break.

<sup>3</sup> Systematic reflection/processing includes journaling, reflective writing, reading and discussion sessions, etc. To determine whether a program includes enough of these kinds of activities, the responsible education abroad office will refer to the program's website or catalog, or contact the program provider directly for more information.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of qualifying educational travel programs include Y Immersion or Augsburg Center for Global Education travel seminars.

<sup>5</sup> The sponsor may be a University of Minnesota faculty member, a faculty member at another accredited institution of higher education, or a staff member at an in-country organization.

## Learning Abroad Center

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