Assessing and Implementing Credit Transfer in Student Mobility Partnerships: A How-To Guide for Post-Secondary

Wednesday, March 14, 2018
Presented by: Sandra Schinnerl & Catherine Vertesi
Things we assume to be true

- Students who go abroad have an enhanced learning experience
- Students who go abroad should contribute to the internationalization of your institution at home
- Students should be recognized for the academic work they complete while abroad
- Institutions should be working to increase the number of students having learning abroad experiences
- All international learning experiences offered are given credit
In a perfect world,....

- Every institution would have a commitment to internationalization through goals, resource allocation and hiring practice.
- Every discipline area would have a knowledgeable faculty advisor who would work with the international office to develop transfer credit guidelines.
- Academic units allot time and resources to predetermine transfer credit.
- Every institutional partnership would have similar levels of academic status and rigour, and courses would have similar credit value and learning outcomes or have clear adjustments for differences.
Barriers to student participation

- Perceived (and real) costs
- Reticence to travel abroad (leaving Canada)
- Leaving jobs, partners, family
- Lack of parental support
- Delay in graduation (linked to credit recognition)
- TRANSFER CREDIT
  - Extra time, planning and uncertainty
Focus of today’s workshop

- Setting student expectations
- Mechanics of transfer credit
- Development of pathways
- Quality assurance as a tool for better practice

Emphasizing the *academically focused* learning abroad experience
Setting expectations

There is a lot that we are getting right. There is often a great deal of choice and flexibility.

BUT...

If transfer credit is seen as a significant barrier then we need to be creative about ways we communicate learning abroad options to students that directly address these concerns.
Setting expectations

- **Cultural**
  - Receives transfer credit for their study abroad
  - Course offerings provide extended breadth outside of discipline
  - Develops knowledge outside of their discipline or is complimentary to their program area
  - May prolong their degree completion

- **Academic**
  - Receives transfer credit at the appropriate level that propels in a timely way to graduation
  - Study in their discipline
  - Course offerings could provide extended breadth both inside and outside of discipline
  - Strong content match or consistent with the home program of study
## B.A. History students learning abroad opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Recommend scheduling</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Transfer Credit</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Exchange to Japan 14 weeks          | First term of Year 3                  | Academic & Cultural      | • Elective credit for language and culture courses  
• Some program credit  
• Possible delay in program completion depending on what electives student has already completed |
| Field school to Greece (History/Hellenic Studies) 6 weeks on home campus 8 weeks abroad | Summer semester after completing Year 1 or Year 2 | Academic                  | • Articulated pathway  
• Discipline credit granted  
• No program completion delay  
• All credit transferable except: capstone course |
| Summer School in France 3 weeks     | Summer Open                           | Cultural                 | • Elective credit  
• No program completion delay if attending home institutions during Fall and Spring semesters |
Building program pathways

- Communicate a learning abroad plan that includes both what courses a student should take before, during and on return from a learning abroad experience
- Requires close consultation with academic units
- Requires close coordination with international partners
- Need not be done with all learning abroad opportunities, but ones that are academically focused and can ensure a pathway which does not delay time to graduation
- Can also streamline the application and approval process
# FOUR YEAR GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES MAJOR in CONSERVATION PROGRAM MAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Term 2</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept - Dec</td>
<td>Jan - April</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Basic Sciences, English, Math, Soil Science, Economics, Intro to Conservation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Conservation Biology and Biodiversity, Aquatic Resources, Agriculture/Food Systems, Forestry and Energy Resources, Resources and Economics, General Electives, Resource System Electives, Global Resource Capstone Course</td>
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*International experience can include: study abroad, international internship, field school or volunteer experience. Students should obtain their international experience during their NRC degree prior to entering 4th year (or 5th year for the co-op option). International experiences obtained within 1 year prior to entering the NRC degree may be considered at the discretion of the program director. Experience must be gained outside of Canada, and for international students, it must also be in a different country from which they most recently lived. Some exceptions may be granted at the discretion of the program director.*


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Term 1 Sep – Dec</th>
<th>Term 2 Jan – Apr</th>
<th>Summer May – Aug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Basic Sciences, English, Math, Introduction to Conservation, Soil Science, Economics, Sociology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Conservation Foundations, Forest biology and Ecology, Introduction to Biometrics and Computer Applications, Introduction to Physical Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3, 4 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Geomatics, Conservation Biology and Biodiversity, Resources and Economics, Resources and Society, International Policy/Governance and Resources, Indigenous Perspectives, Globalization, Aquatic Resources, Agriculture/Food Systems, Forestry and Energy Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-op 5</td>
<td>Global Resources capstone course, Resource Systems electives, language, general electives</td>
<td>Co-op 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transfer credit … the mechanics and a bit more

The role of the International office is to
1. collect information relating to academic formats, structures, grading systems and frameworks.
2. de-code and explain other educational practices and systems for faculty and sometimes the registrar’s office too
3. develop a clearly articulated, discipline specific, record of transfer credit assessment
4. Collect data for quality assurance
Parity of Esteem: avoid arrogance when dealing with partner (or any other) institutions

- "the ideal goal in a diverse galaxy of post-secondary institutions."
- In practice, parity involves such actions as a full exchange of information, communicating diplomatically, offering constructive suggestions to assist with transferability, avoiding dictating terms of transfer agreements, and providing justification for an award of 'no credit.'

Always negotiate before any students travel
Equivalency

- Equivalent means "equal in value, amount, function, [or] meaning". A course in a particular topic will never be completely identical to the corresponding course at the home institution.
  - Part of the goal in student exchange is to experience one’s discipline thru another’s point of view.

- Assessment of equivalence involves identifying the degree to which the courses match in content or outcomes.
The ‘Golden Guideline’ of Articulation
From BCCAT - more than 120,000 courses articulated

Treat all courses as you would want your own courses to be treated.

The Golden Rule:
Treat others the way you want to be treated.
Institutional Configurations

- The “comprehensive” university or college is rare
  - i.e. medical, business, applied science topics are not found in the general university but in specialized institutions such as HEC Paris, Technical University of Berlin, Medical University of Lubeck. Universities tend to have law, humanities, social sciences and sometimes science.
The type of school influences what is possible for the student

For example:

If a business student wishes to go to the Sorbonne it is unlikely that they will find business credits there, only broad electives but if they go to the Normandy Business School they will have trouble getting general elective courses.

Therefore The Sorbonne is more of a cultural exchange.

And it is essential that business credit be granted from the NBS.
Remember, all faculties can prohibit transfer credit for key capstone-type courses but the numbers should be small!
Student Centered
A transparent articulation process assures students that their learning will be appropriately recognized

- Students should not have to repeat course content if they have already demonstrated mastery of it.
- Students should not be denied transfer credit because of technicalities e.g. a 10 week semester instead of a 13 week one. – it’s the content that counts.
Student Centered Cont’d...

- Classmates should not be disadvantages because returning study abroad participants have covered much of the course material while abroad but not given credit for it and are therefore taking it a second time – at home.

- Students should not be credited with learning that they have not acquired – therefore time and effort should go into the assessment of credit.

- As much as possible shortcomings in transferred credit should be communicated to the students so they can “catch up”.
Other questions

- Is the student sufficiently prepared to study at the next level?
- Will the articulation processes operate as quickly and simply? Delays in processing transfer credit may affect students' ability to move on to the next stage of their education. (Remember release forms)
- Will the method you use to transfer credit affect on-going scholarships or financial aid the student may be receiving?

What processes can mitigate these difficulties?
My magic numbers…

65-70%

But what if it’s 55%?
Courses come in all shapes and sizes: be prepared

For example in EU countries

- Use ECTS – in general 2 credits for every 1 Canada/USA credit
- Courses can be 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 credits
Course credit assessment

- Contact hours – faculty/student face time in class. Used in Canada, USA
- Contact hours – expected hours of study to complete the learning goals. Used in Austria, The Netherlands
- No hours listed – left up to the student e.g. some Danish and German schools
A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World

Edited by Shelley Feagles
Creative transfers: some suggestions

- Combine credits to create equivalencies
e.g. UK University courses (ECTS credits)
  History 311 *The Enclosure Act of 1750* 2 cr
  History 314 *The Industrial Revolution* 2 cr
  Geog 304 *Railways and Industrialization of Britain* 2 cr

- Credit granted in Canada
  History 319 *Britain in the 18th Century* 3 credits
  or
  History 300 level  or Humanities 300 level
  (No credit for History 319 or exempt History 319)
The “full load” rule

Students take a full load as defined by the host school. In Canada and USA, 5 courses.
Australia – 4 courses a semester, more hours per course. Students still get 15 credits at home – credits for each course plus

- 3 cr Directed Study ...or
- 3 cr Business 300 level ...or
- 3 cr General elective
Special home based online course
On line concurrent course focused on reflection of learning experiences, some specific topic, some preparation for presentation of learning upon return

Foreign Language bonus

Rigor equivalency – partnership is not academically as rigorous but provides other benefits – location, practicum, other students, affordability

DON’T BE AFRAID TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS
Specifically to colleges and short programs

- Full terms abroad are more difficult but short programs are great.
- Work with any transfer partners to accept the credit that you accept.
- Work with transfer partners to allow your students to apply for exchange opportunities available shortly after transfer.
Quality assurance as a tool for increasing credit recognition and building participation

- Be mindful of the students you attract
  - Are you getting the brightest?
  - Are you getting the most outgoing and socially connected?

- Pay attention to their preparation pre-departure
  - Not just safety
  - Emphasis must be on the academic system they are entering and academic expectations

- Connect with them while they are away
  - Force some reflection on what they are learning
  - Develop a relationship so you get the “real” story on return
Track

Your students going abroad

- Their GPA before
- Their GPA from the partner course by course
- Their GPA on return
- Their time to graduation

- And if you can ..their employment
Track

Your in-coming students

- Their GPA before
- Their GPA while with you – course by course
- Their feedback to your partner

Any halo effects: faculty connections, new applicants to your school from their institution
Frequently....

- Use information to adjust selection, advising and matching students to programs
- Help your partner with their selections and advising by identifying the courses at your school where their students excel.
Yearly …

Compile information yearly complete with the data you have gathered and present formally to Deans, Department heads, VP Academic etc.

- Reminds them that IE is functioning well
- Reminds them that IE is important
- Reminds them that you are not just running a travel agency

Use data to suggest credit transfer or partner changes. Develop “automatic” credit granting for particular courses or entire semesters.

- Gives students info in a timely manner
- Lightens everyone’s workload
Partner Reviews

New Partners – 3 years. Then, if problem free, 5 years

- Macro review of student performance
- Interview past students at least one year after return
- Check for any new programs*, facilities, work opportunities, changes to immigration*

** Of course you should informally check and notify your partners of these types of changes
Be transparent and honest

- Share review documents widely
- If you do not report to Senate or Education Council – suggest preparing something for these bodies.
- Raise profile of visiting and returning students: the students are your best allies at winning faculty support and credit generosity!
Whether you are just starting out or frustrated with years of practice that continues to leave the student shouldering risk and unknown credit results.

Bring the faculty on board with facts, data and transformed young people.
Guarantee credit and more students will go!
Questions and Comments

contact us

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