

GUIDELINES FOR NON-AFFILIATED STUDY ABROAD

Cal Poly students going abroad have a wide variety of programs to choose from including the following:

- Enrolling in a Cal Poly sponsored program, including academic year, faculty-led quarter abroad, departmental exchanges, and affiliated programs
- Enrolling in another CSU sponsored program via the Intrasystem Visitor Application
- Enrolling in a program sponsored by another accredited U.S. university, college, or consortium
- Enrolling in a program sponsored by an organization other than a college or university
- Enrolling directly in a foreign university as an occasional or special student
- Enrolling in a U.S. or international college abroad

Although the majority of students choose to study abroad with a Cal Poly group for the ability to receive resident credit, pay Cal Poly fees and access financial aid, others prefer to go the more independent route. There are many options and opportunities for the independent student traveler.

STEPS INVOLVED IN PLANNING AN INDEPENDENT STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

1. Students interested in exploring independent study abroad options should plan to attend the workshop titled **"Study Abroad 101 Workshop,"** which includes information on: the planning process, financing, receiving academic credit, and resources (schedule available at <http://studyabroad.calpoly.edu/getting-started/index.html>).
2. After attending the study abroad workshop, visit the Study Abroad Office, 52-E32, to speak with an advisor about your next step.
3. Do some research! There are virtually thousands of programs to choose from, but finding the right one will take some time and effort on your part. We recommend that you do a self-assessment of your individual needs and goals. Ask yourself the fundamental question, "Why do I want to study abroad, and what do I hope to gain from such an experience?" You may want to consider the following items in this assessment concerning the features of the program and your personal preferences: accreditation, location (major city vs. rural), course offerings, language program, services provided, housing arrangements, field experiences/cultural excursions, whether you want to be with an organized U.S. student group or directly enroll in an overseas university, opportunities for immersion, safety and security issues, and certainly the cost of the program. You may also want to consider whether financial aid can be used to assist with the cost of the program. **Only Cal Poly affiliated study programs are approved for Cal Poly financial aid, so it's important to take this into consideration if you will need aid. In order to have the courses considered by Cal Poly for transfer credit the transcript must be issued from a U.S. accredited university, or the overseas university must be recognized by the Ministry of Education in the host country.**

If your program is located in a country where there is a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning, Cal Poly will NOT provide the approval for the student to participate in the program, nor provide approval for the transfer of credits. Travel warnings are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid a certain country. You can check the current travel warnings at the following State Department website: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html?css=print

4. **Advising and Course Pre-approval:** Some students may prefer to get accepted to their study abroad program prior to seeking approval for courses they plan to take overseas. Students who may not want to risk applying to programs that charge non-refundable application fees or deposits may want to seek academic advising prior to sending off their study abroad application. If you are registering for courses once you arrive at the host university (i.e. direct enrollment programs in the UK or Australia), you will need to have flexibility with your course schedule. There are no guarantees that you will be enrolled in all the courses you may need for graduation requirements. Inquire about the course offerings from the program sponsors and seek out the course descriptions in order to discuss the course equivalencies with your academic advisor. Once you have narrowed down your choices of programs and have reviewed the course offerings, meet with your academic advisor in your major department to discuss how courses will transfer for your major (or minor) and the course equivalencies at Cal Poly. It is recommended that you bring the course descriptions (or catalog) to the meeting with your advisor. Also, complete Substitutions for *Major/Support Courses* forms at this meeting so you can request your advisor's signature.
 - a. **Language Courses:** Students who are taking language courses and are intending to transfer credit for the Modern Language and Literature Major or Minor should get pre-approval from the Modern Language and Literature Department (47-28). The language credit **must** be on a U.S. transcript in order to transfer to Cal Poly. Students will receive written approval on their major or minor form only if they have already applied for a major or minor. GE credit for language classes taken abroad is given when the class taken abroad is similar in content to the GE course at Cal Poly.
 - b. For **General Education (GE) advising**, begin by looking at the General Education Program website <http://ge.calpoly.edu> to initiate the process of determining the course equivalencies at Cal Poly. It is recommended that GE courses be pre-approved prior to departure. Students should use the "GE Course Substitution for Study Abroad" form available in the Study Abroad Office, 52-E32. Students can review a sample GE form on the web at <http://ge.calpoly.edu/content/petitions>
5. **Applying:** Complete the study abroad program application. You may need a signature from the Study Abroad Coordinator (52-E32), as well as your academic advisor. If the application asks for clearance on disciplinary or student conduct, you should also see the Study Abroad Coordinator.
6. **Academic Leave:** Students who are leaving Cal Poly for more than two consecutive quarters (including Summer) must complete a *Planned Educational Leave* form in the Academic Records Office. The application for Educational Leave must be initiated and approved before the leave begins and will not be granted retroactively. Students who are participating in a program sponsored by another CSU campus should complete the "*Intrasystem Visitor Application*" form. Both of these leave forms are available at http://registrar.calpoly.edu/content/stu_info/leaves_absence and should be turned into the Academic Records Office (1-222).
7. **Study Abroad Credit:** When participating in an accredited non-affiliated (independent) study abroad program, all grades will be considered for transfer credit towards elective units (unless approved for substitution for Major, Minor, or GE) and will be calculated into the higher education GPA. Students are discouraged from taking study abroad courses credit/no credit grading. Students should keep all course syllabi to assist with the substitution of courses when you return to Cal Poly. It is the student's responsibility to request that an official transcript be sent to the Cal Poly Admission's Office at the end of your program.
8. **Graduation Requirements:** The units you earn will be transfer units, not units in residence. Transfer credit

may not be automatic, though reasonable courses from accredited universities are most likely acceptable. Consult with your academic advisor and the Evaluations Office. **CAUTION SENIORS – we don't recommend that you do an independent study abroad program the last two quarters prior to graduation, since the last 30 of 40 units need to be in residence at Cal Poly. Also beware that transcripts from overseas universities can be delayed and may prevent graduating seniors from meeting their graduation requirements for the intended graduation term.**

- 9. Financial Aid:** Financial aid is available to eligible students participating in a Cal Poly sponsored program, or to those participating in the Intrasystem Visitor Program. Financial aid cannot be applied towards independent (non-affiliated with Cal Poly) study abroad programs. See the study abroad website for a list of Cal Poly affiliated programs <http://studyabroad.calpoly.edu/programs/index.html>. Also, you may want to consult with the Cal Poly Financial Aid Office (Bldg. 01-212 or 756-2927) to confirm your eligibility for study programs. If you are participating in a non-affiliated study abroad program and receiving financial aid, be sure to defer your financial aid disbursement to the term you plan on returning to Cal Poly. Students may be eligible for alternative loans (outside commercial loans for which you need a co-signer) through a bank or private lender.
- 10. Official Transcript:** The final step in the process of successfully completing an independent study abroad program is to request that an official transcript be sent to Cal Poly's Admissions Office. NOTE: The courses are NOT guaranteed to transfer to Cal Poly and may not automatically apply to your Major, Minor, GE, or Elective areas. To assist with more accurate evaluation of courses we suggest that you keep records of course syllabi and catalogs for the host institution.
- 11. Voluntary Participation:** Participation in an independent (non-Cal Poly) study abroad program is VOLUNTARY. Cal Poly does not endorse study abroad programs not affiliated with the university. Students are encouraged to use prudent judgment before enrolling in any kind of independent program abroad. It is the students' responsibility to do thorough research on their study abroad program, to verify whether the credits will transfer, and to confirm that they will be maintaining their continuing student status at Cal Poly.