

# Study Abroad Academic Planning & Policies

Information for GVSU Partnerships & Non-GVSU Programs

## Academic Planning Involves:

- **Communicating with the host institution** regarding the course options available the semester you will be abroad.
- **Meeting with your academic advisor** to determine what degree requirements you have left to fulfill and which of those courses could be taken abroad.
- **Securing departmental approval for each course** you complete at the host university.
- **Adhering to procedures for securing approval** for different degree requirements.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Academic planning is an important part of your study abroad pre-departure preparations. With good planning, GVSU students can earn credit towards degree requirements including:

- ♦ Major requirements
- ♦ Minor requirements
- ♦ General Education requirements (Foundations, Cultures, and Theme or Issues)
- ♦ University requirements (SWS, B.A. Degree Cognate, B.S. Degree Cognate)

We help students access courses that will complement and enhance their academic interests without setting them behind for graduation.



Dr. Ingrid Johnson, Dept. of Movement Sciences, advising SeoulTech students interested in studying abroad at GVSU.

Students often have varying circumstances, so academic advising is best when coordinated with the academic advisor.

Students and advisors should document all approvals and identify contingency plans if changes occur during final registration at the host university.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### Padnos International Center

130 Lake Ontario Hall,  
1 Campus Drive  
Grand Valley State  
University  
Allendale, MI 49401  
USA

Phone: 616-331-3898  
Fax: 616-331-3899  
studyabroad@gvsu.edu

[www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad](http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad)

**Last 30 Credits.** Students approved by PIC to study abroad will be required to register at GVSU during the semester they are abroad. Since students maintain their registration status at GVSU, they meet the residency requirement for completing the last 30 credits at GVSU.

**GPA.** Each program

has different eligibility requirements. In general, GVSU undergraduate students must have a minimum of a 2.5 GPA for semester/year programs, or a 2.0 for summer programs. Graduate students must have a 3.0 GPA.

**Credit/No Credit.** Study abroad courses will transfer back as credit (CR) or no credit (NC). Credit will

be granted for those courses in which the student earns a grade equivalent to a C or better. These courses will not count towards the maximum number of CR/NC courses a student is allowed to take at GVSU. Courses completed abroad will not impact a student's GPA at GVSU.

## THE BASICS EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

- **GVSU cannot guarantee that you will have access to specific courses abroad that you need to fulfill degree requirements at GVSU.** Education systems around the world operate very different from what you are accustomed to at GVSU. Many host universities provide information on courses they expect to offer in a given semester; however, most universities cannot guarantee those courses will be available to you during the semester you are at that institution. There are some programs that can guarantee courses, but this not the norm. Students are encouraged to exercise maximum flexibility and understanding as it relates to the course selection/registration process.
- Course registration may not be confirmed until students arrive at the host university. Students often learn once they are on-site what courses they will actually be registered for during that semester. It is up to each student to ensure all courses have the appropriate approvals prior to finalizing course registration at the host university.
- **Students in their last semester at GVSU**, or students who have a tightly prescribed academic plan with very specific degree requirements, should carefully weigh the value and importance of a study abroad experience with their priority to finish their degree on schedule. There have been instances in the past where students were not able to take the courses needed to finish degree requirements at GVSU. While this is not the norm, it can be a risk students must accept. Past participants have most often agreed that the benefits of study abroad far outweigh any setbacks. Students are encouraged to work closely with their primary academic advisor to establish a back-up plan in the event that courses needed are not available once on-site.
- All courses completed abroad must be evaluated by the appropriate academic department. It is up to each student to obtain the departmental approval for the courses completed abroad. Some courses have already been evaluated and are listed on a course equivalency list. If a course has already been evaluated at GVSU, it does not require any further approval.
- Students must meet prerequisite requirements in order to register for courses at the host institution. Many universities require prerequisites to be met in order to register for that course.



### Course Availability

It is not uncommon for a host university to make course options available two to four weeks prior to the start of the semester. In some cases, students will not know the courses available until they arrive to the host university. This is not the most typical experience, but it is a common issue some students face. This can result in very late planning and can be frustrating, especially when PIC strongly recommends planning well in advance. We do understand this dilemma and are happy to work with students on a one-on-one basis to address concerns.

**Please keep in mind, you are studying abroad to get an experience different from what you will have here at GVSU.**

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

**No Audit.** Any course taken abroad as “audit” will not transfer to GVSU. **A grade must be earned in order for a course to appear on the GVSU transcript.** Pass/fail grades are not allowed unless the host university does not offer students an option to earn a grade for a specific course. Written documentation from the host university may be required to verify that the course was only offered on a pass/fail basis.

**Repeat/Replacing a GVSU Course.** Study Abroad courses cannot be used to repeat or replace the grade of a course previously taken on-campus.

**Full-Time Status.** During Fall and Winter semesters, students **MUST** maintain full-time status (12-15 US credits) while studying abroad. Students not planning on registering abroad as a full-time student must get written approval from Rebecca Hambleton in PIC. Students may not transfer back more than 21 credits in one semester.

**Spring/Summer participants.** Spring/Summer participants are not required to take a minimum number of credits, however, students in need of financial aid must complete a minimum of 6 GVSU credits in order to maintain eligibility for federal student aid.

**Maximum number of semesters abroad.** Students may study abroad through GVSU for up to 4 full-time semesters, including spring/summer terms.

**Conducting Research Abroad.** If you are conducting research abroad that involves humans or animals, you must receive approval from GVSU prior to starting your research even if the research is coordinated through another university or organization. Visit the following link for guidelines:

<http://gvsu.edu/rpp/>

## PLANNING AND TROUBLESHOOTING

### Course Availability

If you find the course options for the semester you plan to be abroad are not available far in advance, we recommend you look at the courses that were offered the year prior during the same semester. While this does not guarantee course availability, you may find that certain courses are offered the same semester each year. It is always a good idea to have multiple alternate courses pre-approved in the event that the course options available to you are different from what you originally planned.



### Gathering Course Information

Gathering specific course information may be challenging. Each institution has a different way of presenting course information. **You may have to communicate with your host university multiple times to get the necessary information.** You will need the following information for each course you take abroad:

- ☐ Course description or syllabi
- ☐ Contact hours (number of hours the class meets during the semester)
- ☐ How many courses or credits make up a full-time credit load at the host university?

**Remember:** If your courses change once you are at your host university, contact the relevant department for an updated course approval. This should be done as soon as possible so you know how these courses will be recognized at GVSU. All course approvals obtained while abroad should be forwarded to: [hambletr@gvsu.edu](mailto:hambletr@gvsu.edu)

## COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS

### STEP 1 Research Courses at the host university.

**Research courses offered at the host university.** Pay close attention to whether or not the course you wish to take is offered the semester you plan to be abroad. Also, check to make sure the courses you want to take are open to international students. Make a list of your desired study abroad courses, and several alternative courses.

### STEP 2 Review Existing Course Equivalencies

Some students will benefit from courses that have already been pre-approved. Visit the Study Abroad website for a list of institutions that have a GVSU Course Equivalency Chart. Check to see if the courses you want to take are already approved at GVSU. If a course you wish to take abroad is listed on the GVSU course equivalency chart, you do not need to secure departmental approval for that course. However, please complete the Departmental Course Approval Form listing the course you will take abroad and the GVSU course equivalency you want reflected on your GVSU record upon completion of your program. Some courses may have been reviewed by multiple departments, so you may have options on which course you will receive credit for. The GVSU Course Equivalency Charts can be found at: [www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad](http://www.gvsu.edu/studyabroad), select "Academics," and then select "Academic Guide."

### STEP 3 Request Approval For A Course You Will Take Abroad

**Courses that have not been pre-approved must be reviewed by the relevant academic department to determine how the course will be recognized at GVSU.** Be prepared to present the following information to the contact in the relevant academic department:

- ☐ Detailed course description (syllabus preferred)
- ☐ Contact hours—confirm the number of weeks in the semester (excluding exam period) and the number of hours per week you meet for class.

The PIC website has a list of department contacts. Students can secure approval via email or by using the *Study Abroad Departmental Course Approval Form*. PIC has a sample email on our website for students needing extra guidance on making this request.

### STEP 4 Send All Course Approvals To The Padnos International Center.

Whether you secure course approvals via email or by using the *Study Abroad Departmental Course Approval Form*, please make sure this information is sent to Rebecca Hambleton in the Padnos International Center. Email: [hambletr@gvsu.edu](mailto:hambletr@gvsu.edu). **KEEP A COPY OF ALL APPROVALS FOR YOUR RECORDS!**

### STEP 5 General Education Approval

Courses taken abroad can be used to fulfill General Education requirements including: issues, foundations, and Cultures (excluding US Diversity). If you are interested in securing approval for a course to meet a General Education requirement, visit the PIC website for information and the required forms.

## Please Note

GVSU Academic Departments are responsible for reviewing all study abroad courses, and assigning a GVSU course equivalency, where appropriate. The Department is approving the content of a course as similar to or equal to the content of a GVSU course. The number of credits and the number of hours a course meets may not be equivalent to the course offered at GVSU. Departments must use their discretion when reviewing a course and assigning a GVSU equivalency.



## PLANNING AND TROUBLESHOOTING

### IS 380 Registration

All students participating in a study abroad program where the credits are transferred to GVSU from another institution will be required to register at GVSU for a placeholder course called International Studies 380 or 680 (IS 380/IS 680). IS 680 is used for graduate students studying abroad.

Students who register for IS 380/680 will maintain their enrollment at GVSU which allows access to GVSU financial aid and all of the services of the university while participating in study abroad.

Students register for IS 380/680 for the minimum number of credits they expect to transfer back to GVSU. If a student registers for 12 credits of IS 380/680, GVSU expects the student to register at the host university for the equivalent of at least 12 US credits.

**Due to different academic systems, students may have to do extensive research to determine the number of credits they will earn abroad.**

If you fail to register for enough credits at the host

institution, your GVSU transcript will show (NC) for the difference between the IS 380/680 credits you registered for and the credits you earned at the host institution. Financial aid will be awarded based on the number of IS 380/680 credits you register for here at GVSU. It is acceptable for students to transfer back more credits than the original IS 380/680 registration, but it will be a problem if a student transfers back less than the registered number of IS 380/680 credits.

If you are unsure of the number of credits you will earn, contact the Padnos International Center for assistance.

**All students who register for IS 380/680 will pay a \$25 per credit course fee.**

### Departmental Approval Concerns

If the relevant academic department at GVSU does not approve a study abroad course, or does not offer a GVSU course equivalency for a course you want to complete abroad, you will receive IS 380/680 credit for the course.

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## Grading and Credit Systems

### Grading System

Grading systems vary from country to country and even by institution. GVSU utilizes the International Grade Conversion scales published by World Education Services (WES) and Foreign Credits, Inc. when converting grades from the host university to the GVSU grading system.

World Education Services     [www.wes.org](http://www.wes.org)  
Foreign Credits, Inc.         [www.foreigncredits.com](http://www.foreigncredits.com)

### Credit Systems

The system for awarding credit for a course varies throughout the world. At GVSU, 1 credit hour is typically earned for 15 in class contact hours during the course of a 15 week semester. A typical 3 credit course would consist of 45 contact hours during a semester. Credit is determined using different variables at most overseas institutions.

It is very important that a student understand how the credit system at the host university relates to the credit system at GVSU. It is the student's responsibility to register full-time at the host university and to verify that they will earn a minimum of 12 US credits for the courses taken abroad. Fall, Winter, or Academic Year students must be registered full-time at the host university. All exceptions must be approved in writing by the Director of Study Abroad and International Partnerships in the Padnos International Center.

**Students who do not maintain full-time status while abroad may not be entitled to certain financial aid and may have to repay funds upon their return.**

Summer study abroad is much more flexible and does not require full-time enrollment.

## TRANSFER OF CREDIT DELAYS

It will take several weeks to several months for PIC to receive an official transcript after you have completed your study abroad. **The placeholder course, IS 380, will stay in MyBanner as a deferred grade of (X) until we have your official transcript and ALL course approvals.**

The deferred grade (X) on the GVSU system can affect students in many ways.

- ⇒ This may impact your class standing, which may impact the timing of when you can register for upcoming semesters. If you are concerned about not getting into a GVSU course for a future semester, contact the relevant academic department to ask if there is a process for requesting a closed class permit or if there are any contingencies in place for students who are abroad who have not yet transferred credits back to GVSU.
- ⇒ Graduating seniors will not earn their degree until the study abroad credits are transferred back to GVSU and the deferred grade is removed from the system. GVSU has a grace period of several weeks after the conclusion of the GVSU semester for the institution to finalize study abroad transfer credits. If we are unable to finalize the transfer of credit within the grace period, your graduation date

will reflect the following semester.

- ⇒ Graduating seniors can walk in the commencement ceremony as long as they applied for graduation one semester prior. Students can email the Dean of Students Office to secure permission to walk in the commencement ceremonies even though the study abroad credit transfer may still be pending.
- ⇒ In a few cases, students have had complications with financial aid for not showing academic progress for the semester they were abroad. These issues are usually resolved once the transfer of credit takes place, however, the transfer of credit process will can take several months after you return. If you experience difficulties because of the (X) grade for IS 380, please contact the Padnos International Center.
- ⇒ If you do not receive a grade of a "C" or better in your course and receive (NC) for that course, you are allowed to re-take the course back at GVSU. The (NC) can be replaced by the course you complete on-campus. Contact the Director of Study Abroad if you would like to make this request.

## Transcripts

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the host university transcript is sent to the Padnos International Center. A deferred grade (X) will be posted on the GVSU system until the transcript and course approvals have been received. Once the transcript and course approvals are received by the Padnos International Center, the deferred grade will be removed from the GVSU system and replaced with the GVSU course equivalencies for the courses completed abroad.

**If a transcript is not received, the incomplete grade will automatically be changed to a (NC) after 180 days.**

Upon completion of your program, **Official Tran-**

**scripts from the host university should be sent to:**

Attn: Rebecca Hambleton  
Padnos International Center  
130 LOH, 1 Campus Drive  
Grand Valley State University  
Allendale, MI 49401  
USA

## Thinking ahead

Future employers, graduate schools, and scholarship committees may request transcripts from all institutions you have earned credit from. Find out the process for securing **additional transcripts** from your overseas host institution should this be necessary in the future.