



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs



SCHOOL CREDIT GUIDELINES

OBTAINING CREDIT

School Credit Guidelines for your Academic Semester or Year Abroad

As you prepare for your exchange experience, one important consideration is how to receive credit at your US high school for overseas class work. These guidelines are designed to assist in conversations with your school administrators before, during, and after you study abroad. Contained in this package are instructions, a checklist, and useful forms for you and your US guidance counselor to use in determining the transfer of credit.

The suggestions listed below are based on the experiences of students, teachers, YFU staff, and volunteers over the past several years.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

As soon as you consider an exchange, it is important to make an appointment with your US high school guidance counselor. Inform them of your decision to participate in a YFU study abroad program and make arrangements for obtaining credit for your time away. Be prepared to explain the school and grading system for your host country to your guidance counselor.

Enclosed is a form to help you gather the necessary information, to share with your guidance counselor. Discuss which classes you must take in order to graduate and make a list to bring overseas. Bring a transcript along with a catalogue that describes your coursework to school in your host country.

If your US high school requires a course that is likely not offered at your exchange school, talk to your guidance counselor about acceptable substitute courses. For example, if you must take a state history course, ask your

guidance counselor if you can receive equivalent credit for a history course of your host country. If you are not allowed to substitute required courses, you still have several options. Ask to take your requirements in summer school before you leave or take them when you return instead of an elective course.

Whatever you and your counselor decide, be certain to get these agreements in writing. This will be especially important in case of any staff changes in the school while you are gone.

Also discuss with your guidance counselor how and when you will sign up for next year's or next semester's classes. Finally, make a photocopy of these guidelines and give them to your guidance counselor to put in your school file in case you lose yours or your guidance counselor needs to refer to them while you are overseas.



WHILE ABROAD

Meet with your international school's administrator to work out your course schedule. Be prepared to talk about classes you've already taken and bring descriptions for any classes your U.S. high school requires you to complete while on program. This will help with placement into appropriate courses. Some schools overseas may already assign you courses based on your transcript and course descriptions. Depending on your host country's educational system and the school you will be attending, you may or may not be able to choose your subjects.

Frequently, very specific vocational and professional courses that are common in US schools, such as computer science or accounting, are not available in overseas schools. Likewise, electives such as art or music or sports may only be available through community clubs.

As an exchange student, you may be placed in a grade below your current level. This is often done to facilitate a student's adjustment to the language and school system. There is also a possibility that you may not be placed in a certain grade until your overseas teachers have met with you. While this may seem strange at first, it is an excellent way to begin your adjustment to a new school.

Ask to be placed in the highest class of English offered in your overseas school, and if possible, a literature course. You may be able to assist English teachers and earn credit for doing so. Discuss this possibility with your counselor and teachers at both schools.

Explain to your international school counselor and teachers that you would like to be assessed and evaluated for your coursework. Bring back these evaluations, course descriptions or syllabuses of the classes you take so that your U.S. school can review for credit.

Send your US guidance counselor a short letter after you have been overseas a few months. Explain how seriously school is taken in your host country and how hard you are working. Describe your typical school day and each of your classes.

Before you return to the US, ask your overseas school for a grade description sheet if one is available. **YFU does not guarantee that students will be able to take home report cards or transcripts from your school abroad.** Ask your teachers for letters of recommendation in addition to grades, and a short description (in English) of the subjects you studied. Don't forget to bring home examples of the work you did, to show your US teachers and/or guidance counselor. It is very difficult to obtain this information once you have left your host country. Put all the papers in a safe place and bring them home with you! YFU will not assist with obtaining these documents after completion of your program.



RETURNING HOME

Meet with your guidance counselor. Briefly describe your overseas experience, especially what school was like and how you were able to handle the challenges of school in a foreign country. Present your report card (if available) and the syllabuses that you collected. Review each class and determine exactly what courses you can and cannot get credit for and why. Remember to bring the written agreement you made prior to your departure.

It is important to have a description of your overseas courses in English to show your guidance counselor – this is why we recommend that you bring back a syllabus for each course you took. Most YFU students abroad attend academically demanding schools, which could be considered college preparatory. Students in these schools do not usually have a choice between advanced and intermediate courses for the same subject. Some subjects are taught for several years in a row.

For example, rather than studying algebra in 10th grade, geometry in 11th grade, and pre-calculus in 12th grade, a student overseas would most likely study mathematics for several years, with the subject matter encompassing different areas of mathematics each year.

It is possible that most or even all of the subjects you will take in your overseas school will be compulsory courses. Some of these courses, such as the history of your host country, would not be offered in your US high school. Ask your guidance counselor to have the grades for these courses recorded on your report card or transcript as a subject that is offered at your US school. For example, rather than German history, this could be recorded as simply history. By doing this, your guidance counselor may be able to give you credit. Even if your high school will not accept certain classes for credit, be sure to keep a copy of your transcript and course descriptions, because your college may give you credit for those studies.

Request credit for foreign language study, even if your new language is not offered at your high school. If this request is denied or if you want to get additional credit, contact the language department of your nearest university and ask them to test you. Be sure to get the results in writing. In addition to high school credit, you may be able to get credit for multiple years of college language study.



CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

Before

- Meet with guidance counselor before exchange.
- Discuss school system and grading in your host country.
- Get a transcript/report card and description of classes you have taken (and school catalog, too).
- Determine what courses you will need in order to graduate.
- Discuss substitutes for requirements and alternative plans to complete coursework.
- Determine how and when to sign up for next year's/semester's classes.
- Research online how to make arrangements for taking PSAT or SAT test if needed while overseas.

During

- Meet with overseas counselor to make a class schedule. Explain that you need to be in the highest level English class and that you need grades for all your courses.
- Meet with your teachers to explain that you need grades for their classes.
- Send your US guidance counselor a letter about what school is like in your host country.
- Obtain a report card with grades, a description of the grading system, letters of recommendation from teachers, and course descriptions in English. Bring them home with you.

After

- Meet with your US guidance counselor and explain academic life in your host country.
- Present your report card, the grading system, letters of recommendation, course descriptions, and samples of your work to your guidance counselor to determine credits for each class.
- If there are disagreements about credit to be received, see how courses can be renamed to give you credit.
- Get tested (ACTFL) by a local university to receive high school and possibly college language credits.

CHECKLIST FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

Before

- Meet with student before his/her exchange.
- Learn about school system and grading in student's host country.
- Prepare transcript of classes taken by student and description of each course.
- Discuss requirements for graduation.
- Discuss plans for substitution of requirements, make-up work or independent study projects.
- Determine dates and mark calendar to mail registration forms early to student, so student can sign up for future classes.
- Place school credit guidelines in student's file for reference.

During

- Receive student's report on academic progress in host country and place in student file.

After

- Determine credits for each course taken overseas by examining proof obtained by student.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

This material is designed to assist you and your student in arranging credit for courses taken while he or she is a YFU USA student overseas.

Please read the instructions for students so you will know what to expect before, during, and after the exchange. Keep a copy of these guidelines in the student's file for your reference.

If you should have any questions about granting credit for coursework completed overseas, please contact the admissions office at **1.800.TEENAGE** (800.833.6243) or **info@yfu.org**.

