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INTRODUCTION

Education abroad programs pursued by U.S. college and university students are often organized by independent education abroad organizations, or program providers. Most independent education abroad organizations are not eligible for accreditation by regional higher education accrediting bodies. Still, to award credit for work completed off campus, students' home institutions often require an official transcript from an accredited institution. To bridge this gap, education abroad organizations can partner with accredited institutions to establish a School of Record relationship.

A School of Record relationship is when an accredited institution of higher learning documents and awards credit for programs or institutions that are not accredited. The motive for establishing such a relationship is to document the academic richness and rigor of education abroad experiences and to help students receive credit for academic work completed abroad which they can apply towards their degree, if desired. Because serving as a School of Record requires considerable administrative and academic oversight, the accredited institution in a partnership may choose to attach a fee commensurate with its services.

This document identifies the substantial services and benefits that School of Record relationships provide to education abroad organizations and students seeking academic credit for education abroad and identifies core responsibilities in the relationships between schools of record, education abroad organizations, and students and their home institutions. Readers are also encouraged to reference the [Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad](#) and the [Code of Ethics for Education Abroad](#) for additional guidance on transparency and collaboration between partner organizations and quality indicators for student learning and development through education abroad.

DEFINITION OF TERMS*

Credit (Academic Credit): unit that colleges and universities use to record the successful completion of courses

Credit Conversion: process by which credit earned during education abroad is transferred, approved, accepted, or otherwise validated by the institution from which a student is seeking a degree

Education Abroad: education, including, but not limited to, enrollment in courses, experiential learning, internships, service learning, and other learning activities, which occurs outside the participant's home country, the country in which they are enrolled as a student, or the country in which they are employed as personnel. *Note:* Education abroad does not, in itself, result in a degree.

Program: specific education abroad experience, including, but not limited to: regular offering of a faculty-led or instructor-led experience; ongoing direct exchange opportunity; regular offering of a host institution abroad; internship opportunity; service learning experience

Home Institution (or Home School): the educational institution in the U.S. where an education abroad student is a continuing student, usually working toward the completion of a degree

Host Institution (or Host School): the institution that the education abroad student attends while abroad

Program Provider, referred to in this document as Education Abroad Organization: an institution or organization that offers education abroad program services to students from a variety of institutions. An education abroad organization may be a college or university, a nonprofit organization, a for-profit business, or a consortium.

Partner: party involved in the processes of sending students abroad or receiving students abroad (when at least two parties are involved).

School of Record: an accredited institution of higher learning that documents and awards credit for programs or institutions that are not accredited

**Definitions adapted from The Forum's Glossary, available at www.forumea.org/resources/glossary.*

1. RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS

Organizations engaging in education abroad program administration that involves a School of Record relationship have the responsibility to provide students with complete, accessible information about the relationship between their home institution, the education abroad organization, and the school of record. Students shall be made aware of the implications of this relationship for their enrollment status, financial aid eligibility, and academic record, including policies, procedures, and student responsibilities for verifying enrollment, accessing financial aid, requesting their academic records and sharing information with their home institution, and any fees associated with these procedures.

	Education Abroad Organization	School of Record	Home Institution
Enrollment Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students and prospective students with information about your School of Record and the benefits and services afforded to them by this relationship. • Share information about your relationship with your School of Record openly and transparently with partners, students, and prospective students. • Submit necessary information to School of Record about students enrolling through your programs in accordance with previously established timelines. • Facilitate official verification of the enrollment status of all students at the School of Record to student and home institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify student enrollment to Education Abroad Organization. • Include in verification clear language about the specific enrollment status of each student during the program (e.g., full-time, ¾-time, half-time, visiting, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform students when a School of Record transcript is required for academic credit for education abroad programs and that there may be a fee to acquire the transcript. • Clearly explain the role of the School of Record. • Inform students of the enrollment status required to ensure their return to the home institution after the education program. • Make this information available to students as early in the advising and recruitment process as possible.

	Education Abroad Organization	School of Record	Home Institution
Enrollment Status (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to have conversations with representatives on their campus to ensure continuity between your program and their degree program at the home institution. (See <i>Home Institutions column</i> for more guidance.) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to students about the entity on campus responsible for determining students' official enrollment status while abroad (e.g., registrar, academic advisor, department chair). Establish procedures for helping students ensure that home institution enrollment requirements are met while abroad.
Financial Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with partner/home institution, agree upon a reasonable timeline and procedure for providing enrollment information and receiving payment. Allow time for financial aid processing. Provide necessary enrollment verification to student/home institution in order to facilitate financial aid and payment processing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow procedures outlined in School of Record agreement with education abroad organization to verify student enrollment status in a timely manner and provide necessary documentation to education abroad organization and/or directly to students/home institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with comprehensive information about the regulations and procedures related to financial aid eligibility. Establish policies and procedures to ensure registration of students as full-time students at the home institution while abroad so that students' loans do not go into repayment.

	Education Abroad Organization	School of Record	Home Institution
Financial Aid (continued)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and consistently apply policies and procedures for distributing financial aid for a student who will be receiving a School of Record transcript. In conjunction with program provider, agree upon a reasonable timeline and procedure for processing financial aid and payment to the provider.
Academic Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform home institutions and students of how credits, grades, and class designations/titles will be transcribed. Establish and consistently implement policies and procedures that determine the time period required for processing and releasing official grades and the transcript to the student and the home institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with partners what information and paperwork are necessary for validating a student's academic work overseas. Work with partners to establish a timeline for gathering information from students and partners and issuing the transcript in a timely manner following the completion of the education abroad program. Maintain a permanent record of student's coursework and transcript. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform students of any fees or costs associated with processing a School of Record transcript for inclusion on home institution transcripts or academic records. Work with partner organizations to make grade and credit conversion tables accessible to students and faculty.

Education Abroad Organization**School of Record****Home Institution****Academic Record (continued)**

- Provide students with a clear explanation of the purpose of a School of Record transcript, the protocols involved, and any associated fees necessary to request a transcript.
 - Set clear deadlines for students to complete required paperwork for the School of Record to validate the students' academic work overseas.
 - Provide students with information about how to request their School of Record transcripts in the future.
 - Inform students of any fees or other costs to them for the School of Record's services.
 - Make grade and credit conversion tables accessible to students and home institution personnel.
- Establish clear guidelines regarding what aspects of a student's record can be discussed with home institution officials and abide by those.
 - Establish and communicate a policy for how students can request a transcript in the future.
 - Make grade and credit conversion tables accessible to students and personnel at education abroad organization/home institution.

2. ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW OF EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAMS

In any School of Record relationship, clear criteria for how the School of Record will evaluate coursework and award academic credit are essential. From the outset, partners should work together to put a timeline and procedures in place for the regular review of all new and existing curricula, faculty, and academic policies by specially-designated staff and faculty at the School of Record. These procedures shall include provision for site visits to and reviews of education abroad programs by staff and faculty trained for evaluating education abroad programs. Policies and procedures for course evaluation should be reviewed regularly by both partners in a School of Record relationship and updated as needed.

Education Abroad Organization	School of Record
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supply School of Record with the following information for assessment and evaluation of course level and credit value:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ course outline and syllabus○ contact hours○ objectives○ credit hours○ assignments○ outcomes○ faculty qualifications○ student course evaluations○ cultural context and academic differences, where possible <p>Provide as much detail as possible and in accordance with the timeline agreed upon with School of Record.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure adequate funding is in place for thorough reviews and site visits to be regularly conducted on a schedule agreed upon by School of Record.• Establish a protocol for grade and credit conversion scales. If courses are offered by a host institution or study center, ensure that the organization offering the course and School of Record are aware of the conversion scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a protocol for reviewing courses based on information provided by the education abroad organization.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Be mindful of cultural differences that may exist across locations, institutions, and disciplines around the world.○ Include site visits as a part of the regular review schedule.○ Consider the unique characteristics resulting from the course taking place abroad.○ Allow provisions for considering internship or service-learning experiences as a part of academic coursework, which may differ from how these experiences are treated for on-campus coursework.• Remember that educational systems and opportunities operate differently in different countries. Avoid imposing home institution norms on institutions and personnel in other parts of the world.• Designate individual(s) or entity responsible for evaluating courses and making final determinations about course level and credit.• Evaluate each course offering when it is new or significantly revised and review regularly thereafter.

Education Abroad Organization

- If the academic courses are offered by an overseas degree-granting, accredited institution, verify accreditation by the local government or local accreditation body.

School of Record

- Ensure that personnel who review academic offerings are trained in the *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* and have credentials in the relevant discipline(s).
- Establish assessment measures for academic and advising services and facilities (e.g. classrooms, library, technology, etc.) to determine that they support student learning and the academic goals of the program in culturally relevant ways.
- Have a plan for evaluating and transcribing coursework in an academic discipline not offered by the School of Record.
- Ensure that personnel traveling on site visits for course evaluation respect the expectations for financial arrangements as outlined by the Code of Ethics for Education Abroad.
- Include codes on transcript that identify relevant details about the course and education abroad program, e.g., course code and number, physical location, and department.
- Determine what the reporting requirements are for informing relevant accrediting bodies of any School of Record Relationships and courses approved through such relationships.