

Vassar College

Office of International Programs (OIP)

Education Abroad Policies

*Vassar College considers education abroad to be an important component of a Liberal Arts education. These policies govern all study abroad during the academic year and contain criteria against which all applications will be evaluated by the Committee on Leaves and Privileges (hereinafter referred to as CLP). Students should also refer to the document “**Planning for Education Abroad**” online at <http://internationalprograms.vassar.edu> for more information about participation in study abroad.*

APPLICATION POLICIES

1. Sophomores, juniors and first semester seniors are eligible to apply for permission to study abroad as long as the conditions for approval outlined below are met.
2. To apply for permission to study abroad, students should have a recommended minimum GPA of 3.2.
3. The college has no official preference for fall, spring or full-year academic leaves. However, some universities overseas are on a trimester system that usually consists of three 8-10 week terms. In such a case, you must opt to study either for the full academic year or for the two terms in the spring in order to receive credit.
4. Ordinarily, CLP will not consider requests for sequential a/b semester leaves in two different countries. Any application for full-year study abroad should address plans for one country. If you and your advisor feel that specific academic needs require study in two countries, you must address your rationale for such a plan in your Proposal for Study Abroad.
5. If you have a grade of IN on your academic record, are under disciplinary censure, or on academic probation you will not be allowed to study abroad.
6. Double majors must have the support of the major advisor of both major departments.
7. All conditions for provisional approvals for study abroad must be met by the end of the sophomore year or the leave will not be granted. If necessary, individual cases will be reviewed by CLP.
8. Vassar students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents may study abroad in any location other than their home country.
9. Vassar College’s policy is that students who study abroad and students or alumni traveling with college funds are prohibited from traveling to countries with a current U.S. Department of State general travel advisory at level 3 or 4 or a CDC travel advisory at level 3. This policy also applies to travel to regions designated as level 3 or 4 within a country with a general designation of level 1 or 2. A petition to request an exception for travel to areas under a level 3 advisory may be submitted for consideration; students should contact OIP for details. There are no exceptions for travel to areas under a level 4 advisory.

POST-APPROVAL POLICIES

10. Once your study abroad term has been approved it cannot be changed without approval from CLP and your major advisor(s). Contact the Office of International Programs to discuss any requests to change your study abroad plan.
11. If CLP has approved your plan to study abroad and you then obtain an IN on your academic record, or are under academic or disciplinary probation, your study abroad status will be revoked. You do, however, have the option of reapplying provided all the requirements stated in the guidelines are met.
12. If you desire to extend your study abroad beyond your approved term you must contact the Office of International Programs as soon as possible, in order to request that CLP consider approving an extension. You will also need your advisor’s approval.

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13. Once you have been approved or provisionally approved for study abroad, you may not register for courses at Vassar for the term(s) applied for, nor will you be assigned housing. If you choose to withdraw your study abroad status during the semester prior to your planned semester away, it is recommended that you do so before the end of pre-registration in order to be assigned a draw number and housing for the following term.
14. Students who wish to cancel their plans to study abroad may return to campus up to the first day of classes each semester. Such a decision should be made with care, however, and will require consultation with your family, the program director, the Dean of Studies Office, the Office of International Programs and your major advisor at Vassar. Please be aware that late cancellations could affect your course registration, financial aid and your housing assignment. The Office of International Programs, the Dean of Studies Office and the Office of Residential Life will do their best to assist you as much as they are able to make your return to campus as smooth as possible. There is also no guarantee that the programs themselves will make full refunds, nor that credit will be awarded for partially completed coursework. Students will be responsible for any costs incurred by the program prior to withdrawal. Before you make the decision to withdraw, you should make sure that you understand the financial consequences by contacting your program directly. (Withdrawal from a program must be submitted in writing to the director of the Office of International Programs).
15. Most countries where students study abroad require that you obtain the appropriate visa for studying in their country. In most cases, it is your responsibility to obtain the necessary visa. You must have a valid passport before you can begin the visa application process. The requirements for student visas vary from country to country so it is suggested that you allow sufficient time for processing your visa application. This cannot be a last-minute procedure. Please note that the cost of the student visa is the student's responsibility.
16. All students studying abroad must attend a mandatory general pre-departure orientation meeting with the Office of International Programs the semester prior to their departure, in addition to participating in program specific pre-departure meetings or other required events.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

17. When studying abroad, all students pay Vassar tuition in order to receive Vassar credit. Vassar considers charges for expenses that are required as part of the academic program (i.e. cultural events or field work that the program considers necessary to the academic program) as part of tuition. Program tuition is billed to Vassar, not to the student. Students are responsible for room and board fees and any other unique program charges. All fees to both Vassar and the program must be paid in full in order for the transfer credit to be applied to a student's Vassar transcript. Some programs require students to pay application fees and non-refundable advance deposits directly to the program. Vassar credits students with the amount of any advance tuition deposit when the program does not on their Vassar account.
18. Financial Aid, including Vassar scholarships, may generally be applied to study abroad program costs. Students who are using any form of financial aid are required to submit an online budget worksheet to the Financial Aid Office in the semester prior to their departure. These budgets are used to determine the total cost of attendance for your program and must be accompanied by appropriate documentation, i.e., airfare, program costs, etc.
19. Vassar financial aid for study abroad is awarded on the understanding that you will return to Vassar to complete your degree. If you choose to transfer after a semester or year abroad and decide not to return to Vassar to complete your degree, any Vassar scholarship that you received as part of your study abroad financial aid package will revert to payable fees and you will be responsible for any balance due to Vassar College.
20. In any case where a student must withdraw from a program after committing to participate, students will be responsible for any unrecoverable costs incurred prior to withdrawal. Refund policies vary by program.

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GRADING/CREDIT POLICIES

21. All courses taken abroad must be letter graded. An exception to this is the Vassar Teaching Internship in Ireland Program.
22. Letter grades from non-Vassar programs will not be factored into your Vassar GPA. These courses are considered as transfer credits and therefore will appear with an asterisk preceding the grade. Only grades of C or better will transfer for credit.
23. Courses taken on Vassar directed programs, such as Bologna, Ireland, London, Madrid, Paris and St. Petersburg are considered to be Vassar credits and therefore all grades will be factored into the Vassar GPA.
24. For any program that offers an internship, participants may receive credits only for internships which are an integral part of a graded, credit-bearing course.
25. Students are able to receive a maximum of 4.5 transfer units per semester.
26. While abroad, students must take the required amount of credits required to be full time per their specific program.

LANGUAGE POLICIES

27. For program whereas Vassar offers language coursework relevant to the program location, study abroad participants must have taken the equivalent of two years of study in the appropriate foreign language or two semesters of a foreign language at the second-year level before participating in the program abroad. And, all coursework abroad must be taken in the language of the host country in order for the student to receive credit. Exceptions are for Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Russian where students still need the required two years but content classes are taught in English.
28. For non-English speaking countries where Vassar does not offer formal language instruction or requires less than two years of language study before study abroad, participants attending programs in English are required to study the language of the host country while abroad. One semester of language study does not satisfy the College's language requirement. Only 0.5 unit of credit will be awarded for one term of language work at the introductory level.
29. Students studying a language that is taught on the Vassar campus at the introductory level while abroad (such as Hindi or Arabic) must take a second semester of the language upon their return to campus in order to receive a full unit of credit for the language course taken abroad. Otherwise you will only receive a 0.5 unit of credit.
30. One year of SILP language courses regularly offered at Vassar - Hindi, Portuguese and Swedish - is most often required for study abroad in India, Brazil, Portugal, and Sweden respectively. Please note: as introductory SILP courses are full-year, students interested in study in these countries must begin language instruction in September of either the freshman or the sophomore year.
31. Scientific field study programs taught in English, such as the School for Field Studies, are exempt from the on-site language requirement, though Vassar may require pre-participation language coursework in some cases. Please check with the OIP to see if your program falls into one of the exempt categories.