Academics Abroad
Preparing for Your New Academic Environment

The academic environment abroad is different than the environment at Penn and can vary by study abroad program. It is important to plan for your experience in order to take full advantage of the opportunity to study abroad and earn credit for your coursework.

At a Glance

Registration & Course Credit
☐ All courses taken abroad need to come back to Penn for Penn credit.
☐ When registering for courses abroad, you should refer to the registration policies of the institution where you will be studying.
☐ In order to earn Penn credit, your courses must be approved using Penn’s External Course Approval Tool (XCAT). See page two of this guide for details on the approval process and earning credit.

Pass/Fail
☐ You are permitted to take a course Pass/Fail while abroad based on the policies of your home school.
☐ You must write to your home school’s Academic Advisor for Study Abroad to request permission.
☐ For full-term courses, this request must be made by the ninth full week of the term abroad.
☐ If you would like to take a short course Pass/Fail, the deadline is sooner and will be determined by the Academic Advisor for Study Abroad of your home school.

Review Full Academic Information & Policies

global.upenn.edu/pennabroad/academicinformation

Penn Support While You Are Abroad

You remain registered as a Penn student and have access to the same Penn resources while you are studying abroad. The Penn Libraries, Student Health Services, other Penn resources are all available for your use. Connect specific Penn resource centers as you plan your time abroad.

Office of Student Disabilities Services
Accommodations abroad may be different from those that you receive at Penn. If you will be seeking learning or physical accommodations abroad, contact Penn’s Student Disability Office early to discuss support and what may be possible at institutions abroad.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
CAPS can support you as you are adjusting to a new country and learning environment. They can connect you with several on-the-ground resources that can be helpful to you in your host country.

Learn More and Access Services

global.upenn.edu/pennabroad/pennresources
Getting Credit Abroad
The XCAT How-to Guide

The External Course Approval Tool (XCAT) is used to determine how your academic credit from abroad can be transferred back to Penn as Penn Credit.

XCAT Step by Step

1. Login to XCAT with your PennKey: apps.sas.upenn.edu/sso/xcat/
2. Select “Request a New Course Equivalency” on the left-hand side of your screen
3. Credit Type: Select “Study Abroad”
4. External Program: Enter your study abroad program name, it will then populate in the list
5. External Course: Start typing the name of your course into the “select course” box. If the name of the course you are seeking credit for does not appear, then you need to “input information for a new external course”
   i. Enter the external course title, subject, and course identification number
   ii. If you don’t know the course identification number, enter “000”
   iii. Indicate if you are seeking approval for a language course
   iv. If you have not yet gone abroad, select “seeking pre-approval”
6. If the course is a precedent, meaning that it is pre-approved for Penn credit:
   a. Enter the term you will take the course
   b. Enter the Penn subject area that you are seeking credit for
7. If the course is not currently a precedent:
   a. Enter the term you will take the course
   b. Enter the Penn subject area that you are seeking credit for
   c. Upload the course syllabus or provide a link to an online course syllabus
   d. Enter any additional comments for the approver that you think are important for credit assessment
8. As your requests are reviewed, the status of your request may change to: Request More Information, Approve as Precedent, Approved, or Denied
9. All courses that you take abroad must be approved in order to receive Penn Credit
10. Once all of your courses are approved and you are registered for your courses abroad, remove any unused courses from XCAT

Plan Ahead, it may take up to two weeks for your department to grant you credit

Important Notes & Tips

☐ If you need assistance obtaining a syllabus or other course information, contact Penn Abroad.
☐ If you change any courses while abroad, you must obtain immediate approval for newly enrolled courses. At the latest, all of your courses must be approved in XCAT by the end of the add/drop period abroad.
☐ If your syllabus is not in English, you may need to translate it depending on the department approving the credit.
☐ While abroad, keep all of your course materials including assignments, homework, and exams. Bring them with you on your return to Penn. Some departments review work completed abroad before approving credit.
☐ Departmental contacts for credit equivalency are listed on the left-hand side of the screen in XCAT, and can also be found here: https://www.college.upenn.edu/node/252.