

# **HANDBOOK FOR OFF-CAMPUS STUDY**

## **Policies and Guidelines**

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## **Introduction and Mission**

At Macalester College, off-campus study is not a hiatus from liberal arts education; it is an integral piece of each participant's course of study toward a degree. Macalester emphasizes the integration of off-campus study with other curricular choices and the reinforcement of on-campus learning through carefully chosen, creditworthy off-campus study opportunities.

You will find considerable emphasis throughout this Handbook and the advising provided by the International Center and Macalester faculty emphasize sound academic planning and the ways that off-campus programs relate to the intellectual and cross-cultural trajectory of your liberal arts education and, specifically, your major(s). The International Center strives to help every student combine sound academic work with meaningful cultural immersion to build an experience that will make a solid contribution to his or her Macalester degree program, maximize the intellectual return on investment in off-campus study, and contribute to enhancing the transnational and intercultural dimensions of a Macalester education.

## **Mission Statement on Study Abroad**

Study abroad at Macalester College means both high academic performance and an acute awareness of diversity that is uniquely fostered by international experience. It enhances education in the liberal arts by engaging well-prepared students in rigorous and stimulating learning experiences in a variety of countries outside the United States. Study abroad enables students to encounter foreign cultures through contact with faculty, students, and the general public of the host country, and, in societies where the native language is not English, provides them with useful and consciousness-expanding proficiency in a second language. Through study abroad and, upon returning home, participation in international courses and out-of-class forums, Macalester students are expected to reflect on and evaluate their learning about foreign countries. They are encouraged to develop a sense of global citizenship and to gain knowledge required for transnational understanding and leadership.

The College can realize these purposes of study abroad through thoughtful program development, active monitoring of programs, careful preparation of student participants, able management of financial resources, and purposeful integration of academic experiences abroad with courses and programs on the home campus.

## **General Eligibility Requirements**

### **To be eligible for off-campus study a student must:**

\* Not be on academic or social probation during the semester in which he or she applies for off-campus study.

\* Complete two full semesters at Macalester *prior* to applying for off-campus study. First year students, first-semester sophomores, and transfer students who enter as juniors may not participate in off-campus programs (except January, summer, and special Macalester-organized programs).

\* Declare a major by the study away proposal deadline date. Students with an Individually Designed Interdepartmental Major (IDIM), which is not already formally declared and approved, must submit the full IDIM plan with their study away proposal.

\* Be enrolled on campus during the semester in which the proposal is reviewed.

\* Meet the minimum requirements of the proposed program and, prior to registering at Macalester for off-campus study, have submitted an application to the program sponsor.

\* Be current in his or her Macalester Student Account.

\* Participate in a Macalester pre-departure orientation program.

### **Special Eligibility Requirements**

#### **Students who Defer Study Abroad Participation**

If you were approved for a prior semester, and deferred your plans to study away for whatever reason, you must have submitted the proper updated documents to IC staff no later than the regular study away deadline date for the semester following your original approval. These include a letter requesting your reinstatement to active approved status, and updated departmental approval forms from the appropriate department chairperson(s). *Please note that this applies only if you intend to participate in the same program for which you were originally approved by SARC; if switching programs you must submit an entirely new study away proposal for their review.*

#### **Nonimmigrant Visa and Asylee Status Students (F-1 and J-1)**

For international students in the above two categories, Macalester financial aid cannot be applied to study away costs, domestic or overseas, unless study abroad is required for a formally declared major, or the student has been approved to study on the Macalester Maastricht Program. (Students who have permanent residence status or dual citizenship are eligible for Macalester aid when studying away.) In some cases international students may be eligible for merit scholarships from the program provider.

Majors at Macalester requiring study abroad: Asian Studies, Japanese, Latin American Studies, Hispanic Studies, French and Francophone Studies, Classics, Anthropology, German Studies, International Studies and Biology (International Track only).

Note: Study at Macalester fulfills the study abroad requirement for international students majoring in International Studies. As a consequence, international students may not apply financial aid to study abroad for that major.

## **Guidelines for Semester or Year-long Study**

Generally speaking, Macalester approves participation in one off-campus study program of a single semester in duration. This is to allow a greater number of students the opportunity to pursue off-campus study; one student pursuing study abroad for the entire academic year replaces the opportunity two students may have for a single semester.

Due to off-campus enrollment limits, Macalester students may apply for a single semester abroad (or away in the United States) during their tenure at Macalester. Only in very exceptional cases will students be considered for an academic year abroad, and in these cases only on special Macalester programs or in extraordinary cases where a full year of study is essential to the student's educational program. Please refer to the evaluation criteria the Off-Campus Study Proposal on page five of the Off-Campus Study Handbook.

Proposals for **year-long** study abroad must show clear evidence that:

- A full year is critically important for the completion of the individual student's major(s) and broader curriculum;
- Coursework would include classes at a world-class institution recognized for its particular strengths in the student's area(s) of focus;
- The student is well prepared academically, culturally, and (if applicable) linguistically for the proposed program.

If students do not make a compelling case for full-year study, they are instead approved for a semester in their host country. The Study Away Review Committee (SARC) requires that each student who is considering full-year study meet with a Study Abroad Advisor or Coordinator well in advance of submitting such a proposal. In many cases, a student's desire for longer immersion in the culture and language may be met by arranging to participate in a summer program either before or after a semester of study abroad.

## **Appropriate Programs**

Macalester College does not allow students to study abroad in countries or areas within countries that are under a State Department Travel Warning.

Not all study abroad and domestic off-campus study programs meet Macalester standards for credit. Generally speaking, Macalester approves participation only in programs which:

- Are offered by a U.S. or foreign accredited, degree-granting institution of higher education;
- Issue transcripts through a U.S. or foreign accredited degree-granting institution, or have a special credit-granting relationship with Macalester (e.g. ACTC, ACM, CIEE, DIS, HECUA and IES).

Macalester also highlights specific recommended programs that meet the standards of high-quality liberal arts education and support particular Macalester majors. The guidelines listed under Evaluation Criteria for the Off-Campus Study Proposal (below), in addition to other factors, are used by Macalester faculty and International Center staff in determining recommended programs, and should serve as a model for students considering programs beyond the recommended list.

### **Evaluation criteria for the "Off-Campus Study Proposal"**

- The student meets all Macalester eligibility requirements for off-campus study.
- The student's record shows evidence of college-level preparation and academic achievement (e.g. GPA, relevant coursework) appropriate to the proposed program.
- The program is a relevant extension of a student's on-campus curriculum, particularly within a declared major.
- The proposed program represents a well-defined continuation of a Macalester education for the particular student, not a hiatus from it.
- The program or university is accredited or otherwise approved for study away credit transfer by the Macalester Registrar.
- And the proposed program offers students the following:
  - An active cross-cultural experience and specific instruction (i.e., not just general exposure) which extends cross-cultural or international perspectives, promotes greater appreciation and tolerance of difference, inspires general self-confidence, and offers students different options of participation in a global environment;
  - Significant opportunities to apply specific disciplinary skills to another context;
  - Significant opportunities to develop discipline-specific skills of an international or cross-cultural nature;
  - Significant opportunities to apply or expand other kinds of on-campus learning in an international context;
  - Significant opportunities to meet or satisfy other Macalester distribution requirements with an international perspective;
  - Opportunity for reflective learning and intellectual inquiry in understanding the world community and leading to global citizenship;
  - Opportunity for intellectual engagement through primary research, internship, service-learning and/or hands-on field study.
  - Unless based in an English-speaking country, the program provides significant opportunities to advance discipline-specific knowledge through the use of a foreign language, and to learn or extend the foreign language itself.
  - A balance of activities appropriate to the overall goals of the program and to the student's own academic goals.
  - A reflection or utilization of the resources of the area to a significant degree, in the curriculum.

When considering applications for study away programs, the Study Away Review Committee will take into serious consideration the judgment of the major department or interdisciplinary program of whether the program demonstrates advancement in the student's academic trajectory.

### **Non-Recommended Programs**

A student who proposes a program not on Macalester's recommended list must submit the Non-Recommended Program Essay (Essay C). This essay must show clear evidence that:

1. The proposed program includes accredited coursework at a world-class institution or well-established field-based program that is recognized for its particular strengths in the student's area of focus;
2. The student is well prepared academically, culturally, and (if applicable) linguistically for the proposed program;
3. The proposed program differs in substantial academic ways from similar programs on the recommended list; and
4. The program offers adequate on-site orientation, administrative and financial oversight, well-arranged student housing, and adherence to best practices regarding student health and safety.

### **Selecting A Program**

Students may propose to SARC participation in any ONE appropriate program, subject to the eligibility requirements and program guidelines described in the preceding sections. (PLEASE NOTE that students may apply to more than one program, and this may be wise for programs that are competitive or fill early, but the formal Proposal to SARC must specify just one program.) Students should pay special attention to programs that Macalester itself runs, and to those offered by the recommended sponsoring organizations. Each of the organizations represented in the recommended programs list has high-quality off-campus study programs and has historically had a close affiliation with Macalester.

A subset of the programs offered by these sponsors has been highlighted on the basis of Macalester's international education goals and relevance to the Macalester curriculum. Finally, the recommended programs have been selected to include, to the best of Macalester's ability, only those sponsoring institutions which abide by the NAFSA: Association of International Educators "Guidelines for Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad."

## **Program Fit**

In granting its approval for participation in a particular program, Macalester warrants that, to the best of its judgment, the program is an appropriate curricular option and is worthy of Macalester credit. Except for those programs it organizes and runs, however, Macalester does not directly control how off-campus study programs operate. The International Center will provide advice and guidance on recommended programs, but the ultimate responsibility for the "proper fit" of the program and a successful learning experience rests with the student. All students, regardless of program choice, are **STRONGLY ADVISED** to meet at least once with the Study Abroad Coordinator or Advisor before submitting a proposal for off-campus study.

## **The Advising System**

The majority of Macalester students participate in an off-campus study program offered by the Recommended Sponsors. However, students may also consider programs offered by other sponsors. This reflects the central goals of the off-campus study advising system, which are:

- To help students focus their intellectual and cultural interests so that they dovetail with Macalester's goals for off-campus study;
- To provide students with the tools for comparing different program options on the basis of academic content and structure, cultural immersion, and cost; and
- To provide students with concrete suggestions for program search from the standpoint both of program quality and of educational "fit".

Note: Students should contact the Study Abroad Advisor or Coordinator at any point in the process to help clarify issues or to answer specific questions. It is recommended that students seek guidance well in advance of the proposal deadline, usually at least one semester in advance of applying, to make certain that they are able to make informed choices and complete all materials on time.

## **Proposal Review**

Students must complete an "Off Campus Study Proposal" and submit four copies of it to the Study Away Review Committee (SARC) the semester preceding participation in a program. All students applying for Macalester's program in Maastricht, even if only for the spring segment of the program, must submit their program proposal by the March deadline. Semester or academic year off-campus study that is not approved by SARC is not eligible for credit or financial aid from Macalester. If a student decides to take a leave of absence from Macalester to study abroad independently, the student cannot receive Macalester credit or financial aid for the experience.

Composed of two faculty members, the Registrar, and the Director or Assistant Director of the International Center, SARC reviews the academic merit of the proposals on behalf of the Educational Policy and Governance Committee (EPAG). Assuming the student meets all eligibility requirements, SARC evaluates the proposal according to the

Evaluation Criteria outlined previously. Approval by SARC means that the student may earn Macalester credit for successfully completed coursework from the study away program and may apply towards program costs any financial aid he or she is eligible to receive.

There is a single proposal deadline each semester, usually early October and mid- March. Contact the International Center for specific deadlines. The deadline is firm; no late or incomplete applications will be accepted. SARC reviews the student's application and provides them with a written response regarding the proposal usually within 30 days.

The proposal consists of an application form, a Major(s) Coursework Approval Form signed by the Department Chair, their Advisor's signature, and an Educational Goals Essay. Additional essays are required for students applying for academic year study, independent projects or internships, and those proposing a program not on Macalester's list of Recommended programs. Proposal forms are available from the International Center website, and students are urged to review these with the Study Abroad Coordinator or Advisor well in advance of applying.

### **Study Away Enrollment Limits**

There are limits on study away enrollments. In semesters when the number of qualified proposals exceeds what the budget allows, students who meet the evaluation criteria outlined previously will be ranked for acceptance based on the following hierarchy:

1. Proposals by Seniors:
  - a. Required by their declared major to study abroad;
  - b. Participating in a study-abroad program in partial fulfillment of a minor or concentration;
  - c. Not required to study abroad.
2. Proposals by Juniors required by their declared major to study abroad.
3. Proposals by sophomores participating in Macalester's own program when such participation allows the program to be conducted by meeting minimum enrollment requirements.
4. Proposals by Juniors:
  - a. Participating in a study-abroad program in partial fulfillment of a minor or concentration;
  - b. Not required to study abroad.
5. Proposals by Sophomores:
  - a. Participating in Macalester's own programs;
  - b. Required by their declared major to study abroad;
  - c. Participating in a study abroad program in partial fulfillment of a minor or concentration;

d. Not required to study abroad.

Application of these criteria may mean that some proposals cannot be accepted.

### **Appeals**

The Macalester Educational Policy and Governance Committee serves as the grievance committee for study away review procedures, and will consider appeals from students who allege that there has been malfeasance, discrimination, or procedural error in the Review Committee's deliberations. It does not, however, consider appeals that seek to waive or suspend the guidelines, or to call into question the professional judgments of the Study Away Review Committee. The student may contact the Director or the Assistant Director of the International Center to discuss the appeals process or they may write directly to the Chair of the Educational Policy and Governance Committee (EPAG).

### **Application and Acceptance to the Study Abroad Program**

With a few exceptions, SARC does not determine admission to the off-campus programs themselves. Admissions decisions usually rest with the program sponsor or foreign university. Thus, even though Macalester may endorse the student's proposed participation, it cannot guarantee their admission to a program. It is the student's responsibility to see that all required program materials reach the program sponsor by its own deadline. The student need not and should not wait for SARC's decision before applying to a program. The student should be aware that the level of competition varies greatly among programs. Furthermore, some programs work on a rolling-admission basis, which can mean that they will fill well in advance of the program's application deadline. It is to the student's advantage to contact the program sponsor as early as possible to determine his or her competitiveness as an applicant and to decide on an appropriate application strategy.

Students must complete their Macalester Off-Campus Study Abroad Proposal for a single program. However, if that program is competitive or has limited participation, students are advised to apply to both their first and second choice programs, but to complete the Macalester Proposal for their first-choice program. If approved by Macalester for study abroad, but denied acceptance from the first-choice program, the student can participate in the second-choice program by working with the Study Abroad Coordinator or Advisor.

A program sponsor will occasionally ask the student to accept an offer of admission before SARC has completed its evaluation of the student's Off-Campus Study Proposal. Should this situation arise, the Study Abroad Coordinator or Advisor can contact the sponsor to try to make alternate arrangements. This is usually sufficient to hold the student's place until SARC reaches a decision regarding their proposal. The student should not, under any circumstances, place a nonrefundable deposit or payment for airfare before they gain formal written approval from SARC.

## **Registration and Course load**

When SARC approves an Off-Campus Study Proposal, it approves the specific course of study outlined in that proposal. This means that once the student is abroad, he or she is expected to follow that the course of study. If courses must be changed for valid reasons (e.g. scheduling conflicts or course availability issues), the student should contact both the Registrar's Office (and copy the International Center) to ensure that their new courses will be approved.

The student is required to carry a full-time load of coursework (i.e. 12 to 18 semester hours) on their off-campus study program. Participation in an off-campus study program precludes simultaneous registration for Macalester coursework (e.g. independent study, internships, etc.). The off-campus study program must report all credit earned.

Note: Course loads greater than 18 credits must have the prior approval of the Registrar and are subject to Macalester tuition charges in addition to your program costs. No more than 20 hours of credit may be earned in any semester-length study away program.

It is the student's responsibility when preparing their study away proposal to determine a correct and accurate U.S. credit weight for each course they plan to take. In the case of study at a foreign institution, it is essential that the student keep in mind that the Macalester four-course per semester model likely does not indicate the appropriate full-time load abroad. If the program issues a U.S. transcript, have the program provider help convert the foreign credit system into U.S. semester credits and determine a correct course load. If the student is working directly with a foreign institution, the student should consult with the Study Abroad Coordinator or Advisor to ascertain the best plan of action.

## **Language Study**

When studying in non-Anglophone societies, if the student has not completed the equivalent of two years of college-level study in the language of the country or region in which they will be studying, Macalester strongly recommends that the student register for at least one course of language study per semester. Such study cannot be redundant with previous language coursework unless special arrangements are made with the Macalester Registrar and the appropriate language department prior to departure.

## **Examinations**

A student enrolled at a foreign university must sit at the regularly scheduled times for all required examinations, including those given at the end of individual academic terms and, if the student is on an academic year program, any comprehensive exams that are given at the end of the academic year. Failure to do so will in most cases result in a failing grade.

## **Credits and Grades**

All coursework from a semester or academic year off-campus study program, including failed courses, will be reflected as Macalester credit on the student's Macalester transcript. All grades are factored into the student's Macalester cumulative grade point average.

The student is subject to the same pass/fail grading policies as on-campus students: one course per semester. The declaration of this grading option is usually made according to the rules of your off-campus study program. If the program has no provision for pass/fail grading, the student may declare it in writing or by e-mail directly to the Macalester Registrar (with copy to the International Center). Such intention must be declared within the first three weeks of the start of the study away program.

Credit for January and summer programs are added to the student's Macalester transcript as transfer credit and grades are not factored into the Macalester cumulative grade point average. Note: The exceptions to this rule are Macalester-operated programs and those that have a special credit-granting relationship with Macalester (e.g. ACM, CIEE, DIS, HECUA, and IES). In these cases the credits and grades are handled in the same manner as those for semester and academic year programs.

### **Applying Credits to Degree Requirements**

Credit earned through off-campus study meets general education requirements for graduation, but this does not guarantee that it may be applied towards distribution and/or departmental requirements. As part of the approval process, including that for January and summer programs, the student is required to consult with the appropriate academic offices to ascertain how off-campus study credit will apply towards his or her degree program.

It is the prerogative of each department or program at Macalester to determine whether to apply credit from off-campus study towards its requirements. Note: Not all coursework is necessarily approved in advance; departments can require evaluation of certain courses upon the student's return from the program. It is always a good idea for the student to return to Macalester with copies of the course syllabi, reading lists, papers, and exams from off-campus study.

### **January and Summer Programs**

Macalester handles January and summer study in a different manner than semester or academic year study. The student may choose to participate in a January and/or summer programs at any point in their Macalester career. However, a maximum of two credits may be earned in January. For information on financial aid restrictions for January programs, please see Macalester's cost and billing information.

January and summer program proposals are not formally reviewed by SARC. A semester before January or summer study abroad, students are **STRONGLY ADVISED** to

complete the "January/Summer Off-Campus Study Approval Form," which will allow them to know in advance if and how credits earned will count towards their Macalester degree. Please contact the Study Abroad Coordinator or Advisor or the Registrar for approval forms.

### **The Cost of Off-Campus Study**

For most students, participating in a semester or year long off-campus program includes paying Macalester or program tuition (whichever is higher), individual program costs for room and board, international airfare and local transportation, visa costs, and related fees. An exception to this general cost outline is a student with a DTAP benefit who pays program tuition rather than Macalester tuition. The college extends financial aid allowances to all eligible students to support the cost of approved study away. However, for programs whose charges (including tuition and/or room and board) exceed those of Macalester, the student and his or her family will be responsible for the additional costs.

### **Financial Aid**

In the vast majority of cases, students may use their financial aid eligibility towards the cost of an approved semester or academic year off-campus study. Exceptions to this rule concern non-immigrant visa and asylee status students, and DTAP students, who should consult the Special Eligibility Requirements. You should also keep in mind that Work/Study aid is, for obvious reasons, not available for off-campus study.

Note: Need-based financial aid is not available for summer programs. Students who qualify for financial aid may be eligible for up to \$500 to support the cost of study on Macalester programs. Students should consult the Financial Aid Office for more information about Macalester aid; and should consult with the individual study away program directly with questions about availability of merit-based aid. Students wishing to use their Macalester financial aid award towards an off-campus course in January will still be eligible for support on a semester study away program or for one more January course, but participation in a second January course with any Macalester financial aid ends their eligibility for financial aid for any other study away programs.

Eligibility for financial aid does not mean that the content and amount of the student's financial aid award for off-campus study is exactly the same as that for on-campus study. If a student is approved for off-campus study, the Macalester Financial Aid Office automatically reevaluates their aid award on the basis of a comprehensive cost estimate provided by the program sponsor and the International Center. This estimate includes such items as roundtrip airfare, program tuition, room and board and associated academic fees, required excursions (but not optional ones), ground transportation (if the student needs to commute between homestay and campus), student visa, and books. It does not include allowances for immunizations (which should be covered under the student's health insurance plan), passport, supplemental travel, or personal expenses.

Depending on the estimated comprehensive cost, the Financial Aid Office may maintain, increase, or decrease your aid award. Students should be aware that choosing a program whose fees and/or travel costs result in a comprehensive estimate which is significantly higher than the cost of a semester at Macalester will require a correspondingly higher family contribution.

Note: Even if a student is not eligible to receive need-based or scholarship financial aid, the student may be eligible for special supplementary loans. Students should contact the Macalester Financial Aid office for more information.

### **Dependent Tuition Assistance Program (DTAP)**

If a student is on the Dependent Tuition Assistance Program, they will not receive the same discount in tuition for a study away semester as they would for a semester on-campus. However, instead of being assessed Macalester tuition for the study away semester as all other student are, they will be charged the actual program tuition.

## **Out-of-Pocket Expenses**

While your financial aid award is based on a comprehensive cost estimate, your program sponsor usually does not bill all of these items directly to Macalester. This means that some of your off-campus study costs may have to be paid to the sponsor and/or a vendor well before any financial aid credit is disbursed. These expenses can include, among others: the program deposit, airfare, local transportation, meals, books, security deposits, and personal purchases. Students direct-enrolling in an overseas institution (e.g. King's College, London School of Economics or University of Edinburgh) will also need to pay their housing costs directly rather than have them billed through Macalester.

While this situation rarely causes serious cash flow problems, it can do so in cases where the student's financial aid is covering the majority of the program costs. If this is the student's situation, the best approach is to plan well ahead or make use of a credit card. Program deposits, for example, usually run \$400-\$700 and are due as soon as the student is accepted into their program. Since the expected family contribution for each semester of education is usually no lower than \$3000 even for families with very moderate income, the Financial Aid office expects most students to pay program deposits, airfare and visa costs from their own resources.

## **The Billing Process**

For all Macalester students studying abroad, the tuition and academic fees for study abroad will be billed to and paid by Macalester. For students studying abroad with a program sponsor (eg. DIS, CIEE, SIT HECUA, etc.), housing and meal costs will also be billed to and paid by Macalester. For students studying abroad with no sponsor at a foreign university (e.g. King's College, University College Cork, University of Otago, etc.), students pay for housing and meals directly rather than have these costs billed and paid for by Macalester. In all cases, program deposits and airfare costs must be paid directly by the students and their families.

On rare occasions a sponsoring organization may err and send the bill directly to the student, or the parents. Unless the student is absolutely certain that the invoice is for fees they are supposed to pay directly to the sponsor, the student should consult the International Center before making any payments. This enables the International Center to ascertain precisely which fees should be billed through the College and which the student must pay directly in order to prevent administrative delays involving financial arrangements.

## **Contact Information**

Please contact the International Center at 651.696.6310 for any questions or concerns.