

College Credit Guide

How to Get College Credit for Studying at TEFL International And for Other Study and Travel Abroad Activities

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Basic Questions and Issues

Why Study at TEFL International is Worthy of College Credit

The TEFL International courses are college level courses with sufficient theory, intensity, duration and practice built in to qualify for credit at most universities—if they were taught there. They are taught by credentialed and experienced teachers who either have taught in colleges and universities or who would be eligible. University professors at several institutions (including professors who teach courses on how to teach ESL) have approved them for credit.

But because the TI courses are taught through private institutions, they do not neatly fit the mold that some college administrators seek when approving credit for study abroad. Often the study abroad offices have established relations with foreign universities and rely on them to approve course content and professors. This is to be expected and is appropriate from their interest in assuring that students are well treated and get a worthwhile learning experience. Unfortunately it sometimes limits access by students to courses like those offered by TI and can sometimes create roadblocks for students seeking credit for legitimate, meaningful learning experiences in non-university settings. Even if you arrange to get credit from a foreign institution on your own, transferring the credit to your home school can be a big hassle. So working through your local bureaucracy makes a lot of sense.

College is a unique opportunity to learn new skills and to learn about the world in many ways. Most colleges and universities recognize that a well-rounded education incorporates learning in different fields. (Think about your course requirements across different areas like the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.) They also recognize that it is useful to learn in different ways (e.g., lab courses, seminars, service learning, and experiential learning).

Studying abroad is one of those ways of learning that not only provides you with new and uniquely acquired knowledge content, but also provides a way of learning that cannot be duplicated on campus. You cannot get to know the world from your TV or computer. You have to go see it for yourself and meet people in foreign lands in order to develop an understanding of their lives, views, and ideas.

“Traveling abroad” is not the same as “studying abroad” but both can be enriched by making contact with local citizens in meaningful ways and not just sight seeing, playing, or studying with classmates from your university or country in a foreign university. The kinds of interactions that TEFL International provides and prepares you for allow you to meet people and interact in ways that can truly further your education. At a TI site and in related travels and activities, you are likely to learn more and more useful skills than through any other term in your college career. Such learning deserves college level credit and we can show you how to arrange for it, keep your financial aid and work your way through your university bureaucracy with minimal hassle.

You are the master of your own education and you are responsible for what you learn.

Accept the burdens and freedom that come with this perspective and you will never need another teacher or someone to make you work at learning. For some great quotes on this truth (that may be helpful to you in gaining permission to do what you must do), go to <http://www.geoeducation.org/edphilosophy>. [Attached. I'll put them up soon.]

Why TEFL International courses are easy to justify as learning and credit-worthy activities to professors and college administrators

Above all, universities want to insure that students have quality learning experiences. To most, this means quality teaching, a well-designed curriculum and sufficient rigor to stimulate the effort that is required of students to succeed. With these elements and a motivated student, they know success is very likely. The TEFL International courses are designed around a standard set of skills that are expected by employers who hire its graduates to teach English. Our courses are independently accredited by IATQUO (the International Association of TESOL Qualifying Organizations), certifying that they meet or exceed the basic British criteria of 100+ hours of classroom time and 6+ hours of Observed Teaching Practice. We offer a range of certificates for beginning and advanced study in the field of English teaching and work with numerous colleges and universities on six continents to help their students augment their studies through our courses. Our global contacts in the field that have employed TEFL International graduates attest to the quality of our teachers and our programs.

Different kinds of travel and study

There are many ways that students can learn abroad. Many universities have their own programs to send or take students abroad or have relationships with foreign schools. These are usually more academic courses, similar in structure to ones offered at home

campuses but with the added benefit of a different setting and subject matter. These types of programs offer well-traveled paths for study and you can get information about them at your campus study abroad office.

We think any kind of study abroad is better than none. For some degree programs (e.g., foreign languages, regional geography, environmental studies, international affairs or business) studying or conducting research abroad is essential. But every student should learn about the world in some way and we think direct engagement is the best. Our program will not be as well known on most campuses, but this type of study abroad (TEFL or TESOL courses) is popular among students in Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia and is becoming increasingly popular in the U.S. It offers many of the same benefits as the university sponsored or sanctioned courses (certified teachers, good instruction, safe environments) plus additional benefits. These extras include:

- ◆ Living more in the local community but with western style comforts;
- ◆ Small, intimate learning communities with people from many different countries and backgrounds;
- ◆ Planned and (initially supervised) engagement with local citizens through service (teaching English);
- ◆ A CERTIFICATE THAT ALLOWS ONE TO TEACH ENGLISH ANYWHERE (and thus support one's travel and studies longer); and
- ◆ Connections to jobs or further service and travel opportunities to continue learning and engagement with people of other cultures in future travels or in working with immigrants back home that is FUN AND REWARDING.

Different ways to get credit

Many students need to arrange for university credit in order to study abroad. In most cases, it is justified. For university developed and sanctioned courses, the credit granting and transferring agreements are usually in place. For courses at other institutions like TI, universities find it difficult to evaluate the credibility of courses offered. Students can ask if they will be able to receive credit earned at these institutions and should do so well before traveling. But you need to be prepared for a journey through the institutional bureaucracy.

A simpler way is to apply for independent study credit from a professor or a program that offers it (and most departments at most universities offer the option). The downside is that you will generally have to pay tuition in addition to course fees abroad, but even so, the path is still relatively cheap and direct. If you are paying out of state tuition at your campus of enrollment, it might be advantageous to try enrolling at a campus (with cheap tuition) in your home state, getting the independent study credits there and then transferring them to your primary institution. Again, check out the details first with both institutions. Finding a professor to grade you will be more complex, so weigh the time vs. cost issues carefully.

Some Hurdles and Ways to Jump Them

As you seek to get credit for your planned studying abroad, you will likely encounter some questions from professors, administrators, financial aid folks and even friends and parents. Here are some to anticipate and some appropriate answers as examples.

1. Can I keep and use my financial aid?

Yes. The key is to make sure that your studies will earn you the minimum number of credits needed to be considered a full-time student. This varies by school and the ways they count credits. Ask your financial aid office or student advising office or check their websites. If you are getting independent study credit, this should count the same as any other credit. That is why this is a great method for getting credit. It keeps all accounting within your current bureaucracy. Some schools will not let you keep your financial aid if you are enrolled in a study abroad program through another university (another reason to consider the independent study route).

2. How many credits should I get for taking a TI course?

You can probably justify enough time and effort spent on a basic TI course to earn credit for two courses or--with extra practice afterwards--for more credits. See the calculations below. If you plan to take an advanced course on the same trip, you may be able to justify another course worth of credit. This will vary by university requirements and expectations of professors and departments. Other credits can be earned on the same trip in other ways discussed below.

3. Is there a formula for determining how much credit I should get for taking a TI course or doing a research project?

Yes, but it is not cast in stone. Here is how many institutions think about it. In a typical quarter-long, 5-credit, undergraduate course in the United States, there is an expectation that you will be in class around 35 hours over 10 weeks. (A check of the class schedule will show the norm on your campus.) In addition, institutions expect students to learn by studying, researching, and writing outside of class or perhaps by practicing in some way (e.g., in lab settings, in music or language practice or in service learning). There is an unwritten expectation that the studying, research, writing, practicing will equal 2 hours outside of class for every hour inside of class in a quarter system. This equates to around 105 hours of total learning per semester for a 5-credit course or around 21 hours per credit. This means that a student taking a full load of 15 quarter credits will work around 315 hours or close to 32 hours per week on all school-related activities.

For a semester system course, the math is similar but the credits earned are fewer per course, the time in class is less per week, and the terms are longer. So, for a 3-credit course that meets around 2.2 hours per week for 15 weeks (a typical semester length after subtracting holidays and exam periods), class time will equal roughly 33 hours during the semester. With learning hours outside of class figured at 2 for every hour in class, total learning hours will equal around 99 hours or 33 hours per semester credit hour. For a student taking the normal load of 15 semester credit hours, he or she will work an average of 495 hours or 32 hours per week over the semester.

In summary, these equivalent calculations lead to estimated commitments of around **21 hours total learning for every credit earned in a quarter system or 33 hours in a semester system.** *Thus, to earn 12 credits in a term (generally the minimum to be considered a full-time undergraduate student at a U.S. university for financial aid purposes), you should try to have quality learning experiences totaling 252 hours if you are on a quarter system and 396 hours if you are on a semester system.* This would be different for graduate students and could vary somewhat for students at different universities and in different countries, but it provides a way to roughly estimate the equivalent learning effort experienced by students at a TEFL International course. (See table below.)

Some universities offer courses that allow students to earn credit for work experience off campus. At the University of Washington, for example, students can earn 1 quarter credit for each 30 hours on the job (if the work experience is approved for credit). This work/credit equivalent has a slightly different rationale and requires more hours per credit hour. When compared to coursework, however, keep in mind that any on-the-job work/learning is going to involve a lot of repetition and will not likely have the same quality of learning as one gets in a TEFL International course. Thus, it is more appropriate to compare the TI courses to normal, on-campus courses.

In a TI course, which lasts 4 weeks, students will have 120 hours of instruction, will likely study outside of class and perform 12 hours of practice teaching (most of which is observed). They will also have to study for and pass proficiency tests in both English grammar, phonology, write several journals and reports and complete a great deal of additional documentation. To do all this, they will likely spend a total of 240 hours combined learning how to teach ESL. Thus universities could easily justify granting 11 quarter credits or 7 semester credits to students for taking a course at TI. This could be even more if additional reflection activities (e.g., journaling, writing a paper summarizing what was learned) are undertaken. In this case, 12-15 quarter credits or 8-10 semester credits would be justified. (The normal conversion rate is 1 semester credit = 1.5 quarter credits, so these are roughly equivalent.)

Credits earned in and time spent in various learning structures								
Term type	Typical class credits	Class time in hrs / wk	Weeks in term (minus holidays)	Total class hrs in term	Other hrs of learning / class hr	Total learning hrs	Total learning hrs / credit	Number of credits for a TI course
Quarter	5	3.5	10	35	2	105	21	11.4
Semester	3	2.2	15	33	2	99	33	7.3
TEFL International		30.0	4	120	1	240		

4. *What should I count as learning time when planning an independent study project or TI course?*

Learning while abroad goes on during all waking hours, which is, in part, what makes it such a valuable educational experience. You can make a better case for earning credit while traveling by developing research tasks that will take place during your time spent moving, eating, and visiting interesting places. One key is structuring data collection efforts to be recording your observations with camera, video, audio, journaling, collecting certain items that can be brought back to your home country (avoid plants and insects – especially live ones). Don't try to justify every minute as academically valuable, but decide which activities can reasonably be expected to contribute to you learning.

5. *What other ways can I earn credit for study and travel abroad or activities before and after traveling?*

Learning can and does take place everywhere.

Learning, not teaching, is the goal. Learning happens when an individual is motivated (usually internally) to absorb information and to create or alter patterns of thinking to accommodate or reject the new input. You know best how you learn and what you want to learn. With a little creativity, you can design your own meaningful and effective learning experiences and propose them in coherent ways to professors and advisors so you can earn (deserved) credit. Here are a few tips.

- A. Make a list of the things you really want to learn (a good idea anyway).
- B. Pick ones that can be learned abroad and through some activity or in some place that interests you (or pick a set that you and some friends want to visit together).
- C. Do some research on the topics and places to determine how the places offer you the opportunities to study what you are interested in.
- D. Find one, focused aspect of the topic and one or a few places to focus your learning adventure.

- E. Write a proposal that describes how traveling abroad will benefit your education (whether or not it fits with your degree program). Share this with friends and educators outside of your university to get their critiques and suggestions. Include planned study on the topics and places before you go. This will prepare you academically, for your research and for your traveling.
- F. Type it as a formal proposal to give to professors who might support the idea of you doing this and may be willing to grade your work so you can get credit (see below for more details on this process and study ideas).

A Step-By-Step Guide to Getting Independent Study Credit for TEFL Courses and Other Travel and Learning Experiences

Most universities offer opportunities for students to develop their own project, readings and writing assignments or set of activities *for credit*. They do this because they understand that they cannot offer all the kinds of courses or experiences that all students want. These independent study options are sometimes managed by a central office but most often, each department has an independent study course number in their catalog of offerings each term. Usually the independent study options are offered at the junior level or higher, but some universities offer them for students of any grade level, and you can always ask for approval with a good reason. We will show you how.

Using this method of getting credit usually requires no special approval by administrators. Most often, it is a faculty member who authorizes it. Using this avenue, it is easy to get credit for your studies at a TEFL International course or to put together a full-term set of learning experiences that will satisfy your university's need for accountability and help insure that your time studying abroad truly is educational. Like planning any project, you need to think ahead and make sure you get the right approvals as you go. Following these steps will help you achieve your goals. They are arranged around getting credit for a TI course but can be applied to many other kinds of courses abroad and many more kinds of learning activities including what could appear to some to be recreational travel.

1. Research the process for getting independent study credit at your school

- a. Be mindful of the dates for decisions and be well ahead of them so you don't have to buy tickets before knowing you can get credit. It may take more time than you think to negotiate what you will do for the credit and to get approvals.
- b. Be aware that most universities limit the number of credits that can be earned via independent study, but it will usually be more than one term's worth of credit.

2. **Decide where you want to go and what you want to study and how you want to learn and prove your learning (yes, evidence will be required).**
 - a. If picking a TI course, pick one where you are interested in learning more about the local culture or from where you can easily travel to some place else you want to visit and study.
 - b. Print out the description of the TI course from the TEFL International web page for your study plan portfolio.
 - c. Look at the list of other activities that can be arranged through the TI school and determine if they can be substantiated as a credit worthy activity (see step 3 below).
 - d. Decide where you want to travel (in addition to your TI site), what you are most interested in about those places (e.g., the art, architecture, food, customs and culture, physical landscape, flora, fauna, climate, language, literature, politics, social service practices, music, history, technology, agriculture, forestry, environmental issues). Think of a topic that interests you in your hometown, region or country, and think about how it might be different in another place. This can form the basis for a comparative study that can be exciting and engaging both at home and abroad.
 - e. You may even want to start your independent study work a term or two before you travel to develop a foundation (i.e., an understanding of the topic in relation to your own place and/or culture) for you comparative work. This could include a lot of studying about the places you plan to visit using novels, poetry, researched studies, films, music, cooking classes, interviews with emigrants from the country, or taking a geography, history, or other class that focuses on the region.

3. **Develop your study plan and plan to present it in a brief document** that outlines several key factors.
 - a. ***Define what you want to study.*** Be as specific as possible (e.g., proven techniques for teaching English; changes in populations of tropical fish species near coastal tourist towns in Costa Rica; types of indigenous and modern building techniques used in rural home construction in China; traditional Indian dance; techniques for making traditional Korean musical instruments; or French wine making).
 - b. ***State why you want to study it and why you want to study it abroad.*** For example, consider how it fits with your degree program; your future professional interests; your desire to serve others; or your long-held curiosity about a place, culture, or phenomenon. Wanting to learn something just to know it is a legitimate reason for studying something. You do, however, need to convince someone that it is important for you to learn this and that you can't learn it on campus or anywhere nearby.

- c. ***Describe how you plan to study and learn.*** Link your interests with activities that will lead to greater learning. It should include some background readings of articles or books on the region, culture and topic of your focus. It is a good idea to read something about the topic before you produce your proposal and to reference things you have read or plan to read. It can also include activities normally considered recreational but, when done with adequate intellectual rigor, are legitimate research and learning techniques as well. For example, if you were proposing one of the topics listed above, appropriate activities might include: taking a TI course and practicing your teaching in a neighborhood school; snorkeling or scuba diving plus interviewing local fishermen, tourist guides, environmental activists or government officials; making a photo or video documentary of homes on a tour through different parts of China; studying Indian dance; visiting instrument makers, attending concerts and talking with musicians in Seoul; or tasting wines in different regions of France.
 - d. ***Think creatively—but also academically.*** No one will give you credit for getting drunk in France but it is a legitimate academic endeavor to study the complex interplay of soil, climate, grape vines, viticultural techniques, chemistry, customs, management, labor and markets that yield a great Bordeaux. There are some geographers who teach whole courses on this and books you can get that tell you what to read and observe.
 - e. ***State how you plan to reflect on and document your learning.*** This is a critical piece, so think carefully about what you want to produce. If you complete a TI course, you will have a certificate to document your learning and a portfolio to aid you in your teaching. Typically it should also include at least a short paper in which you reflect on what you have learned. If you keep a diary during your travels and are somewhat introspective, you will gain a lot from the writing experience and have more than enough material to synthesize for the paper. You might also produce a research paper, creative writing product, sketchbook, video, PowerPoint slide show, photo exhibit, concert or tape of your performance. Typically, some descriptive text would accompany any visual or auditory products to describe what was learned or illustrated.
 - f. ***Propose an appropriate timing, amount of effort, schedule, and itinerary for your studying.*** Try to meet expectations similar to what would be expected of students on campus.
- 4. Find a professor or two who will be open to approving your plan and giving you credit when you are finished.**
- a. **Likely candidates** to help you are professors you know. You don't need to ask one in the discipline you are focusing on, but if there is a connection between their interests and what you want to study, they will be more likely to help. But if you get turned down, look around and ask for referrals from professors or department secretaries (they know everyone

and can help you find someone who will help). For TI courses, likely helpful professors may be found in the English Department. But also look in Geography where professors are very supportive of foreign travel and study. Others can be found in History, Language Programs, Anthropology, Sociology, or any discipline related to what you want to study (e.g., the fisheries or biology professors will be more likely to support your snorkeling learning adventure)

- b. **To ask a professor** to help you be prepared (preferably with a proposal) and try to discuss it in person. Set up a meeting first. Ask her or him if you can come by and discuss some research you are interested in pursuing, and say you want their help in reviewing your ideas. If they want to see it in writing first, you have that already to give them or email to them.

- c. **Anticipate what they might think, say or want from you.** Be serious about what you want to learn. Don't appear to want only to travel. Be able to talk or write about how this will be important to you for your degree program (if it is) or for your broader education and satisfaction of a deep desire for the learning that will occur. Have a reasonable and academically appropriate study plan and reporting proposal (or some way to provide evidence of your learning). Link the learning to some common topics or research in the professor's discipline (or better yet, his or her specific research interests). Don't feel that you have to propose something he or she would propose. Strive for professionalism, but professors know you are learning and will cut you some slack. Ask their advice on your topic, sites, or approach. Respond to any suggestions or requests of more information as soon as possible, in order to demonstrate your seriousness.

5. Get all the necessary approvals.

- a. Plan ahead...way ahead. It takes time to work your way through any bureaucracy and there may be several levels of approval (e.g., professor, department, financial aid office, registrar).
- b. Try to find out all the approvals that you will need and keep a packet of your proposal and approvals so you can get the next one more easily.
- c. If you are traveling the whole term, set up the expectation of an incomplete. It will be hard to complete all products by the end of the term.

6. Make all your travel arrangements and identify what you need to read or prepare.

- a. Plan your travels. Contacts at TEFL International schools may have some suggestions. Remember that visas may be necessary and sometimes can take weeks or months to get.
- b. Identify helpful informants on your topics locally, nationally and internationally.
- c. Refine your research or study plans into a presentable format for people who may help you abroad. Here, if you are contacting non-academic folks, you may need to change the language of your proposal.
- d. Contact people you will want to meet well ahead of time and send them information about what you are doing.

7. Go. Do. Learn. Enjoy. Reflect. Evaluate. Come back. Tell others.

- a. While away, send emails to your professors regularly to update them or ask for advice.
- b. Gather information all the way and document what you do.
- c. Keep a journal and write every day if you can.
- d. If you are more adventurous, set up a website that you can send reports and pictures to while traveling. Many email services offer this option. Your friends and family will appreciate it also.

8. Writing your results

- a. Even before you leave, have an outline for what you will present and define the formats for presentation. Naturally, data or results of investigations will not be there until you go, gather and analyze. But doing this ahead of time will shorten the time you will need to prepare your reporting.
- b. You may need weeks or months after your trip to completely edit or analyze your data or develop your presentation so plan for that too (that could be another independent study course). But be able to present something soon, so that you can get feedback and maintain some momentum. This is where the journaling will really help.
- c. A major part of the learning that you will experience will come from your reflection and analysis. The more you write or review your experiences and data, the more you will learn.

9. Sharing your findings and learning

- a. Share drafts, pictures, writings, PowerPoints and data with friends and family.

- b. Solicit their questions about what you are presenting as a way to help you dig deeper into your experiences or information.
- c. Turn in your final products for grading in time to meet whatever term deadlines and regulations are in place. Much too often, procrastination leads to incompletes that waste time and energy or can turn into lower grades. Remember that upon your return you will have much else to do. Have a plan for when you will complete all tasks before you leave and stick to it.

10. For next time

- a. Evaluate your experience and products. Write some notes to yourself about how you will improve the planning, the trip, the learning, and the products next time.
- b. Repeat the process (you will want to).