

# **TEFL International Courses for College Credit**

## **Why College Credit for Studying at TEFL International Is Justified**

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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 of 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 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.

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 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 students with new and uniquely acquired knowledge content, but also provides a way of learning that cannot be duplicated on campus. Students cannot get to know the world from their TVs

or computers. People have to go see it for themselves and meet people in foreign lands in order to develop an understanding of their lives, views, and ideas.

The kinds of interactions that TEFL International provides and prepares students for allows them to meet people and interact in ways that can truly further their education. At a TI site and in related travels and activities, students are likely to learn more and more useful skills than through many other terms in their college career. Such learning deserves college level credit – whether through transfers of credit or through independent study organized through the student’s home campus. With the independent study option, the home campus can further insure learning by requiring students to produce a paper or other product in which they reflect on and describe what they have experienced and learned. ***Students need to learn to be the masters of their own educations and to be responsible for what and how they learn.***

### ***Why TEFL International courses are easy to justify as learning and credit-worthy activities***

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, we 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. Their courses are independently accredited by an independent Board of Academic Advisors, several of whom are noteworthy academics in the field of ELT, thus certifying that they meet or exceed the basic British criteria of 100+ hours of classroom time and 6+ hours of Observed Teaching Practice. TI offers a range of certificates for beginning and advanced study in the field of English teaching and works with numerous colleges and universities on six continents to help their students augment their studies through its courses. Its global contacts in the field that have employed TEFL International graduates attest to the quality of its teachers and programs.

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 direct engagement is the best. TI’s program is not 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 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. The TI curriculum (attached and further described on its website: [www.teflinternational.com](http://www.teflinternational.com)) is substantive and exceeds international qualifying criteria. Professors and advisors can help students navigate the local university bureaucracies to get credit for studying at a TI site. The TI staff can answer questions they or students might have. I am also available to discuss the program.

*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 students will generally have to pay tuition in addition to course fees abroad, but even so, the path is still relatively cheap and direct.

## **Some Hurdles Students Face and Some Suggestions**

As students seek to get credit for studying abroad, they encounter some questions from professors, administrators, financial aid folks and even friends and parents. Here are some common ones and some suggestions to pass along or help implement.

### **1. *Can students keep and use financial aid?***

Yes. The key is to make sure that their studies will earn the minimum number of credits needed for them to be considered a full-time student. This varies by school and the ways they count credits. If students 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 the current institution. Some schools will not let students keep their financial aid if they are enrolled in a study abroad program through another university (another reason to consider the independent study route).

### **2. *How many credits should a student get for taking a TI course?***

Universities typically recognize that 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 students plan to take an advanced

course on the same trip, they should be able to earn 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 a student 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 a student 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 term (generally the minimum to be considered a full-time undergraduate student at a U.S. university for financial aid purposes), a student 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.)

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