I. What is Independent Study Abroad?

Independent study abroad programs are those in which you enroll through a university or program that is not Drexel-sponsored for your study abroad term. Either the university offering the program or the accredited institution, in the U.S. or abroad, issues the transcript.

For independent study abroad, you select your program, clear your choice and your course selection with your academic advisor and the Study Abroad Office, and make your own arrangements for your absence from Drexel during the period of study abroad. Your academic advisor will help you understand how the courses taken abroad will be transferred to your Drexel transcript and how they will count towards your plan of study.

Students are required to pay an independent study abroad administrative fee of $100 for 11 DU credits or less; or $200 for 12 DU credits or more.

All study abroad transcripts should be submitted to the Study Abroad Office directly from the host institution or program provider.

A. Why do an Independent Study Abroad?

- Independent Study Abroad is best suited for students whose academic, professional or personal goals are not met by the study abroad programs that are currently part of the Drexel portfolio. Doing an Independent Study Abroad allow you to study in a location that Drexel does not currently offer, or on a program that is not part of the Drexel portfolio.
- If the programs that are offered by Drexel do not fit in your plan of study/do not meet your academic needs, doing an Independent Study Abroad will provide you with the same advantages of a Drexel-sponsored program: the opportunity to enhance your personal, professional and academic goals, expand your worldview and become more marketable.
- You can take intensive language courses in a country in which the language is spoken or live and travel in another country for an extended period.
- You can take courses that enrich or supplement your discipline or in which you have a special interest outside of your regular course of study.

B. What are The Disadvantages of Independent Study Abroad?

- You earn transfer credits, not letter grades. Transfer credits count toward graduation but do not change your grade point average. Please note the following rules concerning transfer credit:
At least half the professional courses required for the student’s specific program or major must be completed at Drexel. Students should check with their specific major to see if other rules apply. A minimum of 45 credits must be completed at Drexel.

- To earn transfer credit, you must earn the equivalent of a C or above.
- The rule for your specific college may be different, so check with your academic advisor.
- If you later apply to graduate school, you may be required to provide an official transcript of the grades earned abroad, since the grades will not be reflected on your Drexel transcript.

- If you study abroad during your academic cycle and take a full course load, the appropriate portion of your federal aid and of your student loans may be applied to the expense, but this portion is deducted from the funds available to you at Drexel when you return. Drexel grants and tuition scholarships (A.J. Drexel, Dean’s Awards, etc.) DO NOT apply to independent study abroad programs. You lose the percentage of these grants that would have been applied to the term(s) of your absence.
- The cost of tuition at your host institution may be more than the cost of tuition at Drexel. Many schools operate on a semester basis which could result in a higher cost of attendance for your time overseas.
- Many majors at Drexel have strict course sequences. Make sure that your time overseas does not result in your having to spend more terms at Drexel.

Doing an independent study abroad requires you to be well organized and on top of the rules and regulations of both your host institution and Drexel.

C. Can I Use a Co-op Cycle for Independent Study Abroad?

- Independent Study Abroad is academic in nature and will not fulfill co-op credit. Thus if you study abroad during a co-op term, you will risk not receiving required co-op credit, which can have negative repercussions on your plan of study. It is strongly suggested to study abroad during an academic or vacation term.

II. Choosing an Independent Study Program

A. What Kind of Program Should I Choose?

Study abroad programs include a wide variety of options nine-month (academic year) programs, semester programs, quarter (ten week) programs, summer semester programs, and intensive summer programs.

For some programs, you enroll directly with the university abroad; for others, the universities and/or sponsoring organizations have special directors and curricular offerings for U.S. based students or for all international students. Some special programs are offered only in summer, while other programs are for one or more semesters or terms in the regular academic year.
1. Direct enrollment in a university abroad

If you enroll directly in a foreign university, you will study alongside local students, rather than with other students from the U.S. Your coursework will be evaluated as if you were a degree student at that institution. Teaching methods may be very different from those at Drexel or at other U.S. institutions. For example, in Germany, you will have less interaction with faculty and fewer assignments than at Drexel, whereas in England, you will write more and study in a system that includes tutorials. Because students at many institutions abroad specialize in one or two fields from the time they enter college, direct enrollment is usually restricted to juniors or seniors with a strong academic record in their major. If you are in a country where English is not the language of instruction, you must be proficient in that country’s language unless coursework is taught in English. Furthermore, many other countries have less grade inflation than in the U.S., making A grades much rarer and C, D, and F grades much more common. Make sure that you understand how you will be assessed and how your work will be evaluated before you commit to your independent study program.

For all direct enrollments abroad, and particularly if your intention is to spend a full academic year overseas, you should consult your academic advisor well in advance in order to make sure that you do not miss any required courses while overseas. If you are studying in program in which the language of instruction is not English, you will need a formal language evaluation indicating proficiency, and a letter of recommendation from the Department of Global Studies & Modern Languages.

Make sure you understand who will issue your transcript and if Drexel will accept the transcript from the foreign institution. Make sure that you have a clear understanding of how you will be graded. In order to earn transfer credit you must earn a C (not a C-) or above. To better understand conversions to U.S. grades, refer to www.wes.org. Sometimes transcripts from a non-U.S. university or institution need to be evaluated by a translation evaluation service. You are responsible for the cost of this service.

2. Enrollment in special programs for U.S. based students

Most of these programs are liberal arts study programs, but some offer intermediate or advanced level courses in business, design, and engineering. Some U.S. institution-sponsored programs directly enroll you in a foreign institution, but provide academic advising and student services. For example, they will locate housing for you and process your credits. Still other programs use a combination of their own courses and direct enrollment in the foreign university. With some programs, you take all coursework with other students in the program in specially arranged classes. Remember that not all learning will take place in the classroom; you will learn a lot through interactions with the host culture and the people, and their institutions.

Some of the courses offered in these programs are taught in English. Other courses, however, may be taught in the local language. If you are in a country where English is not the language of instruction, you must be proficient in the local language.

3. Summer Semester Programs

Most summer programs are specifically designed for students from other countries. Many are intensive—that is, they cover a semester of work in a 6-10 week period. In intensive programs, you
usually take only three courses and receive a total of 9 semester credits which equal up to 13.5 quarter credits.

Programs that run for a longer period of time usually offer four courses, for a total of 12 semester or 18 quarter credits.

4. **Intensive Language Programs**

Information on these programs and on language "studies" programs (Italian Studies, Japanese Studies, etc.) is maintained in the Department of Global Studies & Modern Languages, and in the Study Abroad Office. Students should consult these offices for advice and recommendations on the selection of a program and for validation of language skills.

"Refresher" courses for two to four more weeks have no academic accreditation and are not eligible for transfer credit, but may allow you to place into a higher language level. Contact the Modern Language Office for a placement exam upon your return.

In non-English speaking countries, the Department of Global Studies & Modern Languages usually recommends completion of level 310 and will not recommend students who have not fulfilled the “survival skills” requirement (completion of level 103).

Only intensive language programs that are sponsored by an accredited institution or that issue transcripts from an accredited institution will receive transfer credit at Drexel University. Students will be required to take a pre and post-program language test as required by Drexel’s Modern Languages Program. For more information, visit the Department of Global Studies & Modern Languages at 3031 MacAlister Hall.

**B. What Are the Academic Requirements?**

- Academic requirements vary. Most programs require a 3.0 GPA although some require only a 2.75. If your GPA is below the required level, you will need the authorization of your academic advisor to apply.
- When you plan your independent study abroad, please be mindful of when transcripts might arrive at the Drexel Study Abroad Office. Some schools send transcripts only once a year, so even if you study abroad during the fall term, your transcript may not arrive until June of the following calendar year.

**Curriculum**

The kind of program you choose will depend on factors such as your foreign language competency, your major, and your year in school. Drexel University asks that you study on programs equivalent in academic quality to its own. It encourages you to study on a program that maximizes contact with the host culture. And if you are studying in a non-English speaking country, you are encouraged to take at least one course per semester in the relevant language. When examining a program’s curriculum, you should, therefore, consider the following questions:

1. **Do I want to take courses in my major? Can I take my major courses abroad?**
Study abroad can be an excellent way to learn how another educational system approaches your field. However, some majors—particularly professional programs—cannot accept credits earned at any place other than Drexel towards major requirements. An alternative would be to take courses that count towards you minor, or electives. Of course, it may be worth taking a course even if you don’t receive any credit. You will have learned something new!

2. **Do I have the language skills necessary to study in another language?**

Do you want to improve your foreign language skills? Or start to learn another language? Research on students’ experiences abroad strongly suggests that some knowledge of the language of the host country is essential, and the better your foreign language skills are, the more you’ll benefit from the study abroad experience.

3. **Who will be my fellow students?**

Students from the sponsoring institution? Students from across the U.S.? Other international students? Local students?

4. **What are the program’s academic requirements?**

Does it admit students with a 3.0 GPA? A 2.75? Students with a foreign language background? Students from a specific major? Sophomores? Juniors? Seniors?

C. **What are the Language Requirements?**

- **Direct enrollment in universities abroad***

  Formal validation of language skills at proficiency level (Level 310+) in the local language, plus a letter of recommendation from Drexel’s Modern Languages Program.

- **Enrollment in special programs for U.S. based students**

  For most programs, completion of Level 310 in the local language, plus formal validation of language skills, and a letter of recommendation from Drexel’s Modern Languages Program. Some programs will require a telephone interview with you in the language of the host country.

- **Summer Semester and Intensive Language Programs***

  Usually "survival skills" or successful completion of Level 103 and frequently completion of Level 203 in the national language, plus formal validation of your language skills and a letter of recommendation.

* The Modern Languages Program at Drexel reserves the right to withhold recommendation if your preparation falls below specified levels.

**III. Questions**

A. **When Should I Plan to Study Abroad?**
It is recommended that you plan on going abroad during an academic term.

It is best to go abroad in your junior year or at the end of your pre-junior year. By this time you should have sufficient background in your discipline and/or language study to adjust to the demands of a different program. For four-year students, the end of your sophomore year may be an appropriate time to go abroad.

For intensive language study, the summer of your freshman year or thereafter may be best, depending on your language competency. Students have even taken advantage of the break between summer and fall terms to go abroad.

Transfer students should be aware of the following university requirement: At least half the professional courses required for the student’s specific program or major must be completed at Drexel. A minimum of 45 credits must be completed at Drexel.

Drexel requires academic residence on campus during your senior year. In some disciplines, however, you may petition your college for a waiver of this requirement but remember that students must be matriculated in their college during the last term in which coursework is taken.

### B. Which is the Best Term to Go Abroad?

- It is recommended that you plan on going abroad during an academic term.
- Fall semester programs: these programs usually begin in late August or early September and end before Christmas. For these programs, you will miss only the fall quarter at Drexel; you may have to end your Co-op early.
- Spring semester programs: These programs usually begin in late January and end in mid-May. For these programs, you will be away from Drexel during winter and spring quarters and will likely have to shorten your co-op (note that students must complete a minimum of four months co-op in order to earn co-op credit).
- Summer semester programs: Many, but not all, of these programs have dates that are compatible with the academic schedule at Drexel.
- For term or quarter programs, the choice is up to you, but you need to find a program whose dates are compatible with the Drexel term schedule.

*For semester programs, the best choices will be fall or summer.*

### IV. What Are the Steps I Need to Take?

#### A. Select a Program


The Modern Languages Programs Office, located in Macalister Hall is a great resource, especially if you are primarily interested in language programs.

Be sure to check dates and the provisions of the program carefully. Decide where you want to go, what you hope to accomplish and whether you can meet the language requirements, if any. Does the program have an advisor in residence? Does it offer home-stay or dormitory accommodations?

Be sure that you know the actual cost of the program. Does the cost include living accommodations and food? What is the cost of air fare? Is it included? How much money do you need for incidental costs?
B. **Consult your Academic Advisor**

- Will you receive only elective credit or will the courses you take fulfill requirements in your major?
- Will your absence from campus mean that you will not be able to take required courses that are offered only in the term and/or year of your study abroad?
- Do you have the adequate background for the courses you plan to take?
- Does the program you have selected have the approval of your department and of your college?
- If you are going on a co-op cycle, has your academic advisor approved the use of a co-op cycle for this study abroad experience? Your academic advisor needs to provide the co-op coordinator with written authorization to do this.

C. **Consult your Co-op Advisor**

- How will the fulfillment of my co-op be impacted by the calendar of my selected independent study abroad program?
- Since I will be abroad for one or more terms, how will this affect my ability to apply for and accept co-op positions?
- Are there any co-op obligations that I might need to fulfill while I am abroad?
- I would like to incorporate my international experience in my resume, are there any resources that will help me see how to do that?

D. **If English is not the local language, consult the Modern Languages Program Office**

- Do you have the required language competency or proficiency for the program you have selected?
- What course(s) do you need to take before you go?
- Do you need a formal language evaluation?
- Do you need a letter of recommendation from a language instructor?

E. **Consult Drexel Central**

Remember that you have selected an independent study abroad program, not a Drexel-sponsored Study Abroad program. (See page 1).

- What will your tuition costs be for the balance of the year if you study abroad?
- What financial aid loans will apply to an independent study abroad program and what will not?
- What percentage of your Drexel Grant and/or Drexel merit awards will you lose for the corresponding year?

F. **Consult your family**

- Do you have adequate funds to cover tuition, travel and living expenses?
- Will your family underwrite the additional expense or do you need to earn or borrow additional funds?
V. The Application Process

1. Contact the host institution for the application well before the deadline. Deadlines vary per program, but are normally at least two months before the start of a program.
2. Contact the Study Abroad Office to make an appointment with the Study Abroad Advisor responsible for Independent Study Abroad to discuss your plans and to open an online application.
3. Plan to submit your application well in advance of the deadline. If the program has rolling admissions, complete and return the application as soon as possible. If a home school nomination is required, the Drexel Study Abroad Office will provide the approval signature on your application after you have completed the online Independent Study Abroad application.
4. For letters of recommendation and language evaluations, talk with your professors at least one month before you plan to submit the application.
5. Request an official Drexel transcript if required (there is a fee for this service).
6. If you are studying abroad during a co-op cycle, meet again with your co-op advisor after you have received approval for the program from your academic advisor. If you will be gone during the first round of co-op applications, you should make sure you understand the possible consequences. It is your responsibility to keep in touch with your co-op advisor.
7. Complete your online Independent Study Abroad application, which includes submitting all materials (pre-approval form, fee, course descriptions, acceptance letter and, if applicable, the consortium agreement) and all questionnaires and signature documents.

Your study abroad experience cannot be recorded on your Drexel University Transcript unless an official transcript is received unopened by Drexel’s Study Abroad Office. You should make arrangements with your host institution to send the official transcript directly to the Study Abroad Office. DO NOT SEND YOUR TRANSCRIPT TO THE REGISTRARS OFFICE.

VI. Other Study Abroad Planning Considerations

- Apply for a passport if you don’t already have one. Upload a copy of your passport to your online application (in the post-decision phase).
- Determine whether a visa is required for study in the host country. While some provider programs may assist you with this process, if you choose to direct enroll you will likely not receive assistance. In either case, you are responsible for obtaining the visa and the supporting documentation.
- Plan ahead with making travel arrangements. Is your flight included in the program cost? If not, do they arrange an optional group flight?
- Bring a sufficient supply of any medication for your entire stay. It should be in its original packaging with the prescription and clearly labeled with your name. Also bring your favorite over-the-counter medicines; you may not find equivalents in your host country. There is nothing worse than searching for the right medication when you don’t feel well.
- Check on your health insurance. If you carry Drexel’s health insurance, it will travel with you. If you have other insurance, you must find out whether you are covered internationally. Be sure you have claim forms if your insurance requires you to pay for services up front and then be
reimbursed. Be sure to complete the emergency contact / medical history questionnaire on your online application (post-decision phase).

- All Drexel students are covered by On Call Emergency Assistance, 24/7: +1-603-952-2038. Emergency assistance is also available through the Drexel International Emergency Contact Number, 24/7: +1-267-571-5911.
- Be sure you have completed all the necessary paperwork on campus and that you have contact information for Drexel Central, your Co-op Advisor, and the Study Abroad Office.
- The host institution may provide you with more extensive material to assist you in preparing for your term abroad based upon the location and specifications of the program. Please read through this information carefully so that you are prepared to make the most of your time overseas.
- Review the Drexel Pre-departure Handbook in your independent study abroad application.