



SCHOOL CREDIT GUIDELINES



Youth For Understanding USA
6400 Goldsboro Rd., Suite 100
Bethesda, MD 20817

Youth For Understanding USA (YFU USA) exists to prepare young people for their responsibilities and opportunities in a changing, interdependent world.

OBTAINING CREDIT

FOR YOUR ACADEMIC YEAR OR SEMESTER ABROAD

As you prepare for your exchange experience, one important consideration is how to receive school credit at your US high school for your overseas classwork. Most guidance counselors encourage their students to participate in international exchange programs and are willing to help you obtain school credit, provided you present them with all the necessary information.

These School Credit Guidelines are designed to assist you before, during, and after you study abroad. Contained in this package are instructions and a checklist for your US guidance counselor, and useful forms for you, your US guidance counselor, and overseas school administrator to use in determining the transfer of credit.

The suggestions listed below are based on the



experiences of students, teachers, YFU staff, and volunteers over the past several years. We have found that the vast majority of US students who follow these guidelines have little or no problem obtaining school credit.

Before You Leave

As soon as you begin to consider participating in an exchange, make an appointment to visit with your US high school guidance counselor to inform him or her of your decision to participate in a YFU year or semester program and to make arrangements for obtaining credit for your school year abroad. Explain the school and grading system for your host country to your guidance counselor. To help you do this, enclosed is a fact sheet on the grading system for your host country.

Also enclosed is a form to help you gather necessary information. Please share it with your guidance counselor. Discuss which classes you must take in order to graduate from your US high school and make a list to bring overseas. Get a transcript of courses you have already taken with grades to bring to your host country. Bring a school catalog that describes these courses.

If your US high school requires a course that is probably not offered in your overseas school, talk to your guidance counselor about acceptable substitute courses. For example, if you must take a state history course, ask your guidance counselor if you can receive equivalent credit for a history course of your host country. If you are not allowed to substitute required courses, you still have several options. Ask to take your requirements in summer school before you leave or take them when you return instead of an elective course.

Whatever you and your counselor decide, be certain to get these agreements in writing. This will be especially important in case of any staff changes in the school while you are gone.

Also discuss with your guidance counselor, how and when you will sign up for next year's or next semester's classes, so there will not be any surprises when you return to your US high school. Finally, make a photo-

copy of these guidelines and give them to your guidance counselor to put in your school file in case you lose yours or your guidance counselor needs to refer to them while you are overseas.

Once You Are Overseas

Meet with your overseas school administrator to work out your course schedule. Depending on your host country's educational system and the school you will be attending, you may or may not be able to choose your subjects. It is possible that your choices may be limited to similar subjects; for example, you may be able to take chemistry, but not biology. Frequently, very specific vocational and professional courses that are common in US schools, such as computer science or accounting, are not available in overseas schools. Likewise, electives such as art or music or sports may be available through community clubs, instead of being taught in the schools. If you

“In admissions, we look for students who are mature, well rounded, and have a strong sense of where they are going. YFU can do that for you.”

— Amy Eisenhour, Assistant Director of Admissions, Georgetown University

do have a choice, it is helpful to your overseas school if you bring a description of the courses you have already taken and still need to take in order to graduate from your US high school. This will help with placement into appropriate courses.

As an exchange student, you may be placed in a grade below your current level. This is often done to facilitate a student’s adjustment to the language and school system. There is also a possibility that you may not be placed in a certain grade until your overseas teachers have met with you. While this may seem strange to you, it is an excellent way to begin your adjustment to a new school. Many times, YFU students will be bumped back up to the appropriate grade level after successful completion of initial coursework and having grasped the basics of the language.

Ask to be placed in the highest class of English offered in your overseas school, if possible, a literature course. If English is taught as a foreign language (and this will be the case in most YFU countries) your US high school may not consider this as fulfilling your English language requirement. You may be able to assist English teachers and earn special credit for doing so. Discuss this possibility with your counselor and teachers.

Explain to your overseas school counselor and teachers that you must be graded for your coursework: if you attend class regularly, do the required coursework, and take the tests and exams, your teachers should be willing to give you grades. Bringing back report cards with grades that can be interpreted by your US school is a very important step towards obtaining school credit.

Send your US guidance counselor a short letter after you have been overseas a few months. Tell him or her how seriously school is taken in your host country and how hard you are working in school. Describe your typical school day and each of your classes.

Before you return to the US, obtain your report card from your overseas school. Be sure there are letter or numerical grades given. Ask your overseas school for a grade description sheet if one is available. Ask your overseas teachers for letters of recommendation in addition to grades. Ask your overseas school teachers and counselor to write a short description (in English) of the subjects you studied. Don’t forget to bring home examples of the work you did, to show your US teachers and/or guidance counselor. It is very difficult to obtain this information once you have left your host country. Put all the papers in a safe place and bring them home with you!

After You Come Home

Meet with your guidance counselor. Briefly describe your overseas experience, especially what school was like and how you were able to handle the challenges of school in a foreign country. Present your report card. Review each class and determine exactly what courses you can and cannot get credit for and why. Remember to bring the written agreement you made prior to your departure.

It is important to have a description of your overseas courses in English to show your guidance counselor. Most YFU students attend very demanding schools overseas which



Checklist For Students

Before

- Meet with guidance counselor before exchange.
- Discuss school system and grading in your host country.
- Get a transcript/report card and description of classes you have taken (and school catalog, too).
- Determine what courses you will need in order to graduate.
- Discuss substitutes for requirements and alternative plans to complete coursework.
- Determine how and when to sign up for next year’s/semester’s classes.
- Call to make arrangements for taking PSAT or SAT test taking while overseas.

During

- Meet with overseas counselor to make a class schedule. Explain that you need to be in the highest level English class and that you need grades for all your courses.
- Meet with your teachers to explain that you need grades for their classes.
- Send your US guidance counselor a letter about what school is like in your host country.
- Obtain a report card with grades, a description of the grading system, letters of recommendation from teachers, and course descriptions in English. Bring them home with you.

After

- Meet with your US guidance counselor and explain academic life in your host country.
- Present your report card, the grading system, letters of recommendation, course descriptions, and samples of your work to your guidance counselor to determine credits for each class.
- If there are disagreements about credit to be received, see how courses can be renamed to give you credit.
- Get tested (ACTFL) by a local university to receive high school and possibly college language credits.

“International exchange lays a foundation of knowledge, skills, and maturity immediately recognized by university admissions and faculty: it enables a student to stand out in a crowd for the self-assurance and global approach gained through this experience.”

—Cynthia Felbeck Chalou, Assistant Director,
Office of Study Abroad, Michigan State University.

could be considered college preparatory. Students in these schools do not usually have a choice between advanced and intermediate courses for the same subject. Some subjects are taught for several years in a row.

For example, rather than studying algebra in 10th grade, geometry in 11th grade, and pre-calculus in 12th grade, a student overseas would most likely study mathematics for several years, with the subject matter encompassing different areas of mathematics each year.

It is possible that most or even all of the subjects you will take in your overseas school will be required or compulsory courses. Some of these courses, such as history of your host country, would not be offered in your US high school. Ask your guidance counselor to have the grades for these courses recorded on your report card or transcript as a subject that is offered at your US school. For example, rather than German history, this could be recorded as simply history. By doing this, your guidance counselor may be able to give you credit.

Request at least one year of credit for foreign language study, even if your new language is not offered at your high school. If this request is denied or if you want to get additional credit, contact the language department of your nearest university and ask them to test you. Be sure to get the results in writing. In addition to high school credit, you may be able to get credit for two years of college language study.

If your guidance counselor is unfamiliar with credit transfer for an exchange experience, please ask him or her to contact one of the counselors

or principals on the list at right. They have worked with YFU exchange students in the past and have offered to help.

Instructions For The Guidance Counselor

This material is designed to assist you and your student in arranging credit for courses taken while he or she is a Youth For Understanding USA (YFU USA) student overseas. Please read the instructions for students so you will know what to expect before, during, and after the exchange, and keep a copy of these guidelines in the student's file for reference. If you should have any questions about granting credit for coursework completed overseas, please contact one of the counselors or principals on the list provided at right.

These high school administrators have worked with US students to grant high school credit for classes taken overseas on a YFU program. They have offered to be listed as resource people to help you with any questions you may have from your students, teachers, principals, or school boards. If you have any questions about the YFU program, please call our admissions office at **1-800-TEENAGE**.



Checklist For Guidance Counselors

Before

- Meet with student before his/her exchange.
- Learn about school system and grading in student's host country.
- Prepare transcript of classes taken by student and description of each course.
- Discuss requirements for graduation.
- Discuss plans for substitutes for requirements, make-up work or independent study projects.
- Determine dates and mark calendar to mail registration forms early to student, so student can sign up for future classes.
- Place school credit guidelines in student's file for reference.

During

- Receive student's report on academic progress in host country and place in student file.

After

- Determine credits for each course taken overseas by examining proof obtained by student. If you have trouble determining the credit, call one of the guidance counselors on the list below for suggestions.

Educator Resource List

Maine

Susan Vafiades ~ (207) 288-5011

Massachusetts

Mr. Clair ~ (508) 468-5300

New Hampshire

Clem Schaffer ~ (603) 352-0640

New York

Diana Babington ~ (914) 236-5809

Ohio

John Spiesman ~ (216) 466-4831

Pennsylvania

Nora Torquato ~ (717) 242-1401

Vermont

Carolyn Friberg, Dorothy Canas
(802) 223-6368

West Virginia

Paul McCallister ~ (304) 586-0510

Additional courses required to graduate in US high school:

Lined area for writing additional courses required to graduate in US high school.

How and when to sign up for next year's/semester's classes:

Lined area for writing how and when to sign up for next year's/semester's classes.

How and when to report on academic progress in host country:

Lined area for writing how and when to report on academic progress in host country.

School Official's Signature

Date

Give one copy to your US guidance counselor, one copy to your overseas guidance counselor and keep one copy yourself!

