Am I Eligible for Financial Aid to Study Abroad?

BEST PRACTICES FOR FINANCIAL AID OFFICES TO HELP STUDENTS FUND THEIR STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

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Agenda

1. Study Abroad Program Guidelines
2. Slippery Rock University Background
3. SRU Study Abroad Programs
4. Messiah College Background
5. Messiah College Study Abroad Programs
6. NASFA Overcoming Obstacles for Financial Aid
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Types of Study Abroad Programs

Study abroad programs can be:

1. Home school sends students to a study abroad program at an eligible or ineligible foreign host school. The home school must have a contractual agreement with the foreign school.

2. A home school has, instead of a separate agreement with each foreign school, a written arrangement with a study abroad organization that represents one or more foreign schools.

3. A variant of study-abroad program occurs when a home school sends faculty and students to a foreign site. This is NOT a consortium or contractual program; rather, the foreign site is considered an additional location.

Study Abroad Programs

Does not have to be required part of home school program provided:

- Student is a regular student enrolled in an eligible program at the home school
- Home school accepts study abroad courses for credit
Home vs. Host Institution

HOME INSTITUTION

School granting student’s degree, certificate, or other recognized credential

HOST INSTITUTION

School where student takes part of the academic program requirements while “visiting” under consortium or contractual agreement
Consortium Agreement

- Can apply to all FSA Programs
- Agreement between two or more eligible institutions
- Can be a blanket agreement between two eligible schools or written for an individual student
- Home school is usually responsible for disbursing funds
- School that disburses funds is responsible for student eligibility checks, awarding and disbursement calculations
Contractual Agreement

A Contractual Agreement is a written agreement between an eligible institution and an ineligible institution, allowing a regular student to be considered “enrolled” at the eligible home institution while completing part of his or her academic program at the other ineligible (or host) institution in the U.S. or abroad.
Contractual Agreement

Home School may contract with:

- Single School
- Group of schools
- Organization other than traditional classroom provider (ex. hospital)
- Organization representing one or more foreign institutions to provide study abroad program and/or portion of student’s program of study
Written Agreement Requirements

- Must be in writing and signed by each school
- Effective with payment periods in which agreement is signed; may be retroactive to previous payment period in same award year
- Duration indefinite unless student-specific agreement or terms of agreement change
Required Elements of Written Agreements

- Identify Home school (school granting the degree or certificate)
- Identify Host school (school student is visiting)
- Student’s cost of attendance at host school (tuition, fees, room, board, misc. expenses)
- Student’s enrollment status at host school
Required Elements of Written Agreements

Procedures for:

- Calculation Title IV awards
- Disbursing Title IV funds
- Monitoring student eligibility, satisfactory academic progress
- Keeping records
- Returning Title IV funds should the student withdraw
Best Practice

Designate an employee to coordinate activities with all institutional offices with which students and their parents may interact, such as registrar, financial aid, bursar, etc.
Coursework

- Courses taken at host school must count towards student’s program at home school

- Home school must award academic credit for host school courses on same basis as it would award credit for its own courses

- Written agreement should include home school’s policy for accepting coursework, including official(s) responsible for approving courses and grades
Defining Enrollment Period/Status

Agreement should define:

- Period of enrollment (beginning and ending dates)
- Enrollment status for Title IV purposes (full-time, half-time, less-than-half time) for each category of student
Awarding Title IV Aid

- Enrollment period should reflect student’s program at home school
- If contractual agreement, only home school may award Title IV aid
- If consortium agreement, each school may award Title IV aid. Schools must coordinate to ensure no overawards or duplication of COA
Awarding Title IV Aid

- Schools cannot:
  - Reduce or deny Title IV funds to any student or category of student solely because studying under an agreement

- School can:
  - Limit its own institutional funds to students studying at the school
Disbursing Aid

School that disburses Title IV aid adhere to regulations and must maintain all records pertaining to:

- Student eligibility
- Award calculation
- Disbursement of funds
- Return of Title IV, refunds and overpayments
- Cash management
- Other program specific requirements
Enrollment Status

For students studying abroad under an agreement, home school must have a method to document enrollment.

Changes in enrollment status should be reported to home school in a timely manner so Title IV requirements can be met for:

• Recalculation of Federal Pell and TEACH Grants
• Cash management regulations for disbursing aid
• R2T4 regulations if student withdraws
• Enrollment reporting to NSLDS
Student Enrollment & Grades

Agreements should specify procedures for monitoring and communicating enrollment changes and grades such as:

- Failure to begin attendance in all courses
- Withdrawal from courses or complete withdrawal
- Substitutions of other courses for approved courses
- Receiving grades in a timely manner
Additional Considerations

- Ensuring students receive required Consumer Information
- Satisfactory Academic Progress
SRU is a 4-year, public institution; Fall 2018 enrollment: 7568 undergraduates, 1286 graduates

- **Office of Global Engagement** - Nine staff members work international students, study abroad, and faculty-led programs
- **Academic Records** - Responsible for review of transient clearance forms, enrollment reporting
- **Financial Aid Office** - Responsible for counseling students on options for study abroad, obtaining consortium/contractual agreements, monitoring enrollment for financial aid, awarding and disbursing aid, requesting R2T4 for withdrawals, satisfactory academic progress review.
- **Student Accounts** - Responsible for billing based on program type, refunds, R2T4 calculations
Slippery Rock University Study Abroad

Typical year:

60 students study abroad for a full semester in either:

- SRU Exchange program (21 SRU international exchange partners; blanket agreement; billed SRU tuition and fees)
- Direct Enrollment Program (9 SRU partners; blanket agreement, but NOT exchange)
- Third-party affiliates (Study Abroad Agencies such as CEA, CIS; requires contractual agreement)
- Non-SRU program (If approved for coursework, specialized contractual agreement required)
SRU Faculty-led Programs

Typical year 21 programs available:

300+ students participate in faculty-led winter and spring break trips

- Course related trip costs are included in COA – financial aid can be used to offset costs
- Non-course related trips are not included in COA
- Aid period budgeting can differentiate between the two types of programs for financial aid and billing purposes
Summer Programs

Currently 8 programs are available during the summer:

- Students earn 3 – 6 credits
- Must meet enrollment requirements and have remaining aid eligibility for summer programs; SRU is summer as a trailer for financial aid
- Generally, students use private loans to cover costs
Messiah College Background

4-year, private non-profit; 2018-19 enrollment; 2695 undergraduates, 845 graduates

- **Off Campus Programs Office** - Six staff members work with off-campus programs and international programs

- **Registrars’ Office** – Approves transferability of credits
  - We have a significant list of ‘approved off-campus programs’ to which students can take one semester of their institutional aid

- **Financial Aid Office** - Responsible for counseling students on options for study abroad, obtaining consortium/contractual agreements, monitoring enrollment for financial aid, awarding and disbursing aid, requesting R2T4 for withdrawals, satisfactory academic progress review.

- **Student Financial Services (Accounts-different than FA)** – Works with Off Campus Programs to set program fees, and does billing.
Messiah College Study Abroad

- Students can study abroad for a full semester in either:
  - Over 30 semester-long off-campus programs in over 20 countries.
  - Study abroad short-term - Choose from a variety of three-week, three-credit, faculty-led cross-cultural courses during J-Term or May-Term

- Semester long programs are capped at 100 students per year, and all are through third party providers: ISA/Veritas, BestSemester, CIEE, JUC, Temple U., Arcadia, etc.
Summer Programs

- Our only summer off-campus program is the International Business Institute.
- IBI is required for International Business majors, and is an option for other majors.
- 20 to 30 students per year.
- It is an approved program to which students can take one semester of their institutional aid.
According to NASFA there are common excuses that schools use for not allowing aid to be used for study abroad. Here are some that they cite:

- Federal and state regulations allow aid to be used only on this campus
- Our campus is tuition-driven so aid must be used to support this university
- We don’t have enough aid for students who are on campus, let alone for those who study abroad
- It is too hard to track students who leave campus. Giving them aid would cause problems during an audit
- It takes too much extra work to handle study abroad students

https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/publications/web-extra-common-policies-used-excuses-not-allowing-aid-be-used-abroad
Resources

Study abroad references:

Arrangements with a study-abroad organization 34 CFR 668.5

Student eligibility in study-abroad programs 34 CFR 668.39

FSEOG Maximum Awards 34 CFR 676.20 The maximum FSEOG for a full academic year is usually $4,000. However, a school may award as much as $4,400 to a student participating in a study-abroad program that is approved for credit by the home school.

2013-14 Consortium/Contractual Agreements NASFAA/EASFAA
https://www.easfaa.org/docs/conference/2014/presentations/ConsortiumContractualAgreements.pdf

DCL GEN-11-18 for more information about Title IV eligibility of programs offered through written arrangements between U.S. and foreign schools

NASFAA Consortium Agreement Samples – Login and search for Consortium Agreements
https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/publications/web-extra-common-policies-used-excuses-not-allowing-aid-be-used-abroad