

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs, Advising Directors, and Global Affairs Staff

**FROM:** Heather Shipley, Ph.D., Senior Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Dean of University College



**SUBJECT:** Study Abroad Course Equivalencies

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The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the process for determining course equivalencies for coursework taken through “Exchange” and “Third-party” study abroad programs. These updates do not apply to UTSA courses included in a UTSA faculty-led study abroad program.

The following practices will better align processes related to study abroad coursework with those of domestic transfer coursework. They will also allow staff to determine which courses are degree applicable and eligible for financial aid prior to a student’s participation in a study abroad program.

### **INITIAL COURSE EQUIVALENCIES**

When available, Education Abroad staff will use catalogs, transcripts, and other resources provided by international institutions to determine the equivalent credit hours and course level for study abroad coursework. If enough information is not available to determine course level, courses will automatically be designated as lower-division credit.

### **DETERMINING COURSE EQUIVALENCIES**

In some cases, study abroad coursework will be awarded as general elective credit using the AFS (Affiliated International Studies) subject code. Academic departments will be asked to review courses in the following situations:

- When enough information is not available for Education Abroad staff to determine the equivalent credit hours or course level.
- When a student wishes to dispute the credit hours or course level from the initial equivalency review (e.g. when the student is seeking upper-division rather than lower-division credit).
- When a student wishes to apply a course toward their core, major, or minor requirements.

Academic departments will not need to review courses in the following situations:

- When a prior course equivalency is already on file and is no more than 3 years old.
- When a course will be applied to a student’s free elective requirements.
- When a course will not be applied to a student’s degree requirements (including free electives).

When reviewing coursework, academic departments should determine if each course is:

1. Equivalent to an existing UTSA course,
2. Not equivalent to an existing UTSA course, but should be awarded as general departmental credit, or
3. Not an equivalent within their department

For example, when reviewing the study abroad course in the table below (CLCE 324 – History of Spain), the History department might first consider whether it is equivalent to an existing UTSA course (such as HIS 3293 – Imperial Spain). If the content of the study abroad course is not comparable to an existing UTSA course, the department may instead decide that general departmental credit (HIS 3XX3) should be awarded. If the content of a course does not fit within the scope of the department’s course offerings, general elective credit will be awarded using the AFS (Affiliated International Studies) subject code.

Study Abroad Course	Potential UTSA Equivalency						
CLCE 324 History of Spain	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;">Equivalent to an existing UTSA course</td> <td style="width: 67%; vertical-align: top;">HIS 3293 – Imperial Spain</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;">General departmental credit</td> <td style="width: 67%; vertical-align: top;">HIS 3XX3 – Upper-division HIS elective</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; vertical-align: top;">No departmental equivalent</td> <td style="width: 67%; vertical-align: top;">AFS 3XX3 – Upper-division free elective</td> </tr> </table>	Equivalent to an existing UTSA course	HIS 3293 – Imperial Spain	General departmental credit	HIS 3XX3 – Upper-division HIS elective	No departmental equivalent	AFS 3XX3 – Upper-division free elective
Equivalent to an existing UTSA course	HIS 3293 – Imperial Spain						
General departmental credit	HIS 3XX3 – Upper-division HIS elective						
No departmental equivalent	AFS 3XX3 – Upper-division free elective						

Courses taught in languages other than English may also qualify for foreign language credit. Students wishing to count a course as foreign language credit should petition the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.

Course equivalency **decisions will be considered blanket approvals**. As such, course equivalency **decisions should be based on course content, not on the needs of individual students**. This will ensure that students are awarded the same credit when taking the same courses. Course equivalency decisions will be valid for three years.

When a course needs to be reviewed, a student’s academic advisor will submit a petition to the appropriate academic department. Departments can indicate their decision for a course equivalency in the comments area of the petition form (see the image below). Records will be created in the system for all course equivalencies to prevent faculty from needing to review the same courses for multiple students.

**This Section To Be Completed By Department Chair or Designee of Course Discipline**

<input checked="" type="radio"/> Approve	<input type="radio"/> Disapprove	Department Chair or Designee (print name)	Signature: <span style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 80px;"></span>
For approvals, indicate if exception is: <input type="radio"/> case specific only or <input checked="" type="radio"/> acceptable for all students and a blanket waiver is authorized			
Comments or Conditions: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Not equivalent to a UTSA course. Award upper-level history credit (HIS 3XX3). Students may apply this credit toward the European History requirement of the History major.</span>			

Faculty and staff should keep in mind that **the course equivalency decision is not the final determination of whether a course may apply to a student's degree requirements.** For instance, in the above example, the department may decide that general departmental credit (HIS 3XX3) should be awarded to all students who take CLCE 324 – History of Spain. Even though it is not equivalent to a specific UTSA course, the department might indicate that the course can apply to the upper-division European History requirement of the History major. An individual student can also submit a request through the normal petition process between the student's academic advisor and the academic department if they wish to apply the credit toward a specific degree requirement.