

# Lessons Learned From Determining Credit and Grade Translations

**RAMSEY G. JABAJI**

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND INSTRUCTOR OF  
ENGINEERING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**



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SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

# Background Information

Here's what I noticed when first working with study abroad students:

- Inconsistent credit and grade translations from one year to the next for same host university programs
- No clear information given to students about credit and grade translations prior to studying abroad
- Two students would take exact same course abroad, one attends as an exchange student and the other through a study abroad provider, but would receive different number of credits
- It was taking far too long to evaluate an international transcript because no clear guidelines existed



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# Our Solution: International Transfer Credit Committee

We established a campus-wide committee to evaluate credit and grade translations which included the following offices:

- Education Abroad
- Registrar
- Engineering School
- Business School
- International Admissions (not a full committee member)



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# The Art and Science of Determining Credit and Grade Translations

## Data points collected for each institution include:

- Grading scale/standards provided by host university (often what is listed on the back of a transcript)
- Contact MINUTES (not hours) per term
- Expected work/study hours
- Standard host university credits for most courses/modules
- Standard credit load for one term for native students
- Minimum, recommended, and maximum credit load for exchange students
- Credits needed to earn degree at host university
- Minimum passing grade at host university, minimum GPA to be awarded degree at host university
- Benchmark decisions from peer universities (Michigan, Georgia Tech, Illinois)
- Credit determinations from agency and ministry of education for host country (Aacrao, WES, etc.)
- Sample transcript



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## Study Abroad Transfer Credit Evaluation

### Institutional Review Form

Institution	
Institution name	
Institution code	
Country	
Name of Adviser/Reviewer	
Date of review	
Credit	
Unit of credit	
Standard value for most Courses (i.e. 12 credit points or 5 ECTS)	
Contact hours for standard course	Minutes per contact hour: 50 Minutes ▼
Minimum full-time semester enrollment	
Standard full-time semester enrollment	
Maximum full-time semester enrollment	
Benchmark credit/grade conversion decisions from peer universities (Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois)	
Credit Determinations from Agency (if available)	
Recommendation for credit conversion Formula	
Notes (Include URLs for any source documenting above information)	
Grading	
Grading Scale at Host University	
Recommendation for Minimum Passing Grade	
Notes (Include URLs for any source documenting above information)	

# Documentation to Support Decision Making



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# Lessons Learned

- U.S. institutions are obsessed with IN-CLASS contact hours
  - Maryland Higher Education Commission mandates 45 contact hours of instruction (50 minutes hours) = 3 US credits
- Contact hours can range from 45 – 60 minutes depending on the institution
- Registrar's office hoped everything would be clean, neat, and consistent across grading schemes/countries
- There is no one size fits all approach to making credit and grade translations
- U.S. institutions generally determine credits solely based on in- class contact hours, regardless of discipline course is housed within



# When Was it Easy? (Rare)

- Institution determines credits based on contact hours and is consistent across disciplines (i.e. 45 hour language course awarded same number of credits as 45 hour engineering course)
  - Not the case in Germany or Japan for example
- Minimum, recommended, and maximum credit load for exchange students fell nicely into a 12 US credit, 15 US credit, 18 US credit framework





# Recommendations

- Develop a framework and core list of data points to support decision making efforts
- Develop a partnership with registrar's office on this task and recognize there will be differences in how to approach this task. International colleagues likely approach this process with a global lens and need to do some educating of the different educational models that exist. Registrar staff will likely approach this process from a consistency perspective and a need to ensure a successful accreditation review.
- Do not rely on only one dimension when determining credit and grade translations. Too many nuances and differences exists among institutions. This process should be done on an institution by institution basis.
- Determine if credit and grade translations for study abroad students should mirror that of degree seeking international transfer students or if it's okay if they are different

