Guidelines for Student-Initiated Semester Study Abroad

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Introduction

In addition to the semester study abroad opportunities established by the Law School with specific overseas law schools, Michigan Law permits law students to apply for permission from the Law School to study abroad for one semester at overseas law schools to which they seek admission independently. The foreign law school proposed by the student must be one that offers an academic program toward the first degree in law within that country, although masters-level course work may be more appropriate for transfer credit. The foreign law school should be one that is generally viewed as offering one of the top law programs in its country or geographic region. It is the student’s responsibility to establish that the educational program of the overseas university is of high quality and that the particular coursework for which the student seeks approval is at a level of sophistication, rigor, and intensity equivalent to that at Michigan and appropriate for receipt of transfer credit toward the J.D. The student must also demonstrate how the proposed program is important to the student’s academic and professional development. If the foreign university is in an English-speaking country, the student has a higher burden of demonstrating the importance of the overseas educational experience to his or her academic and professional development than in a non-English speaking country. Further, the student proposing a student-initiated opportunity must demonstrate that the academic and professional goals sought through the student-initiated program cannot be met through the specific overseas semester study opportunities offered by Michigan Law.

Student-initiated semester study abroad is not generally permitted in countries in which Michigan Law has established semester study abroad opportunities at foreign universities. Nor is it generally permitted in programs of US law schools offered abroad for semester study or programs designed for American students or for those from countries other than where the foreign institution is located.

Students intending to seek approval for a student-initiated semester study abroad program are urged to initially make sure that the academic calendar of the foreign school (including orientation, classes, and exam period) does not conflict with the academic calendar at Michigan or with the student’s summer employment plans.

Tuition and Financial Aid

Michigan law students, whose proposals are approved by this Law School to spend a semester at a student-initiated program at a foreign university, must pay the same full tuition to Michigan Law for their overseas semester that they would pay if they remained in residence at Michigan Law. They remain eligible for Michigan Law financial aid for the semester abroad as if they had remained at Michigan Law for the semester. If the foreign law school charges tuition to the Michigan law student, Michigan Law will pay the foreign law school’s tuition in an amount not to exceed half of Michigan Law’s tuition for the semester. Any excess tuition owed to the foreign law school will be the student’s responsibility and will not be covered by Michigan Law financial aid.
All interested students must consult the General Guidelines for Semester Legal Studies Abroad, available in the Center for International & Comparative Law, Room 212 Hutchins Hall, or on the Law School website at:  http://www.law.umich.edu/curriculum/studyabroad/Pages/default.aspx.  Students are responsible for abiding by all the requirements outlined in the General Guidelines, which contain important additional information.

How to Locate Information about Foreign Law Faculties

Among the resources students can consult to help them locate information about foreign law faculties are:

1. Assistant Dean for International Affairs, Theresa Kaiser-Jarvis (tkjlaw@umich.edu; tel: 764-5269), Center for International and Comparative Law.
2. University of Michigan Law School faculty members.
3. The Web.
4. Ask current LL.M. students and non-degree Michigan Grotius Research Scholars at the University of Michigan Law School about universities in their countries. (The Center for International and Comparative Law has a list of current LL.M. students and Michigan Grotius Research Scholars and their e-mail addresses.)
5. University of Michigan Area Centers.

If students are interested in a particular foreign law school, they should contact the school directly to learn more about it both substantively and procedurally, including information about faculty and curriculum and application processes, and to learn whether the foreign law school is willing to consider applications for non-degree semester study.

Student’s Proposal to the Graduate Programs and Foreign Affiliations Committee of the University of Michigan Law School

Students seeking permission for a student-initiated semester study abroad opportunity must submit a proposal to the Law School’s Graduate Programs and Foreign Affiliations Committee (the “Committee”) as described in the General Guidelines for Semester Legal Studies Abroad. In addition to the information described in the General Guidelines, students should address the issues described herein above and must simultaneously provide additional information to establish to the satisfaction of the Committee that the student’s proposed program of study and the student’s proposed foreign university is of sufficient quality to be suitable for academic credit toward the JD. To this end, the student must include in his or her proposal:

1) Statement of purpose
2) Information about the foreign university’s law school, its national and international reputation and the degree programs offered.
3) Name and level of each course to be taken.
4) Description of the course content.
5) If possible, name of the professor for each proposed class with an abbreviated curriculum vitae.
6) Number of weeks each class meets, number of class meeting hours per week, and the start and end dates.
7) Teaching methodology (e.g., lecture, small seminar.)
8) University's grading system.
9) Evaluation method (i.e., written examinations, oral examinations, papers, etc.)
10) Name and resume of the full-time faculty member at the host institution who has agreed to supervise the student’s program of study, and a letter from him or her committing to supervise the student’s course of study.
11) Statement from a law faculty member at the foreign law school that Michigan Law School’s and the student’s proposed educational objectives can be achieved at the foreign law school.
12) Statement from a law faculty member at the foreign law school describing a full course load for one semester.
13) Any other supporting descriptive material from the host university that would be helpful.

It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the information required from the foreign university and to arrange for a faculty supervisor at the foreign law school.

If the language of instruction at the foreign university is other than English, the student will need to demonstrate sufficient fluency to pursue legal studies, including, in most cases, a language proficiency test.

With respect to all student-initiated study abroad program proposals, the student should keep in mind that the requirements at this Law School, for example, for a three-credit course, typically include approximately 37 hours of class sessions spread over 13 weeks, exclusive of vacation, exam and reading period, with a requirement of a paper or examination or other evidence of satisfactory performance, and the ABA requires that the granting of residency credit for study overseas shall comply with the same standards for residency study for domestic study.

Students are strongly encouraged to read the Student Study Abroad Reports currently available in the Center for International and Comparative Law (Room 212 Hutchins Hall). The reports contain invaluable information about courses, professors, library, computers, housing and so on. They identify the pluses and minuses of the students’ study abroad experiences and what aspects they enjoyed and what they found problematic while studying abroad.

Please see Assistant Dean for International Affairs, Theresa Kaiser-Jarvis, (tkjlaw@umich.edu; tel: 764-5269; 212 Hutchins Hall), for questions and advice.

Updated January 2017