



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies

A Guide to Course Selection and Learning Agreements

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How many credits should I take at the Host University?

BA Global Experience and **BA International:**

The University of Galway's usual credit requirement for **non-language BA students** on the Year Abroad is **40 ECTS** or, if you are going to study outside of the EU, it's the equivalent number of credits at your particular host university (see next page). You should try to balance your course load evenly between the two semesters.

The University of Galway's usual Year Abroad credit requirement for **BA students of continental languages** is 45 ECTS, as agreed between the student and the Year Abroad Coordinator(s) in the relevant language discipline(s).

BA Government students only spend one single semester (Semester 2) abroad, and the requirement is 20 ECTS in total in pre-approved modules: 10 ECTS in their major subject and 5 ECTS in each of their two minor subjects.

BA Global Languages students will need to obtain 45 ECTS over their year abroad. See next section.

BSc Psychology, **BA English & Creative Writing**, and **BA Journalism or Global Media** students must identify suitable modules to fulfil the "study abroad" academic requirements of their programmes. This will usually mean 20 ECTS per semester (or equivalent) in pre-approved modules: students should consult their Year Abroad Coordinators.

All other programmes: consult your Study Abroad Coordinator (see page 10).

Single semester abroad: For programmes where students can take just one semester abroad, the requirement is usually 20 - 25 ECTS (or equivalent), but do check this with your Programme Director or Year Abroad Coordinator.

Please note that some partner universities will insist that exchange students register for up to 30 ECTS per semester, regardless of University of Galway credit requirements. Your host university will advise on any special requirements that may apply, so please read carefully all the information that is sent to you.

Where several subjects are involved, how should those credits be broken down?

If you are a **BA Joint Honours** student who is **not studying a continental language**, you will need to secure 40 ECTS in total. That means you must take, and pass, 20 ECTS' worth (or equivalent) of pre-approved modules in **each of your two degree subjects**. **Language students** will generally need 45 ECTS in total and should consult the academic coordinator(s) in their language discipline(s) about the breakdown of credits that applies to them.

If you are a **BA Global Experience** student who is **not studying a continental language**, you will need to secure **40 ECTS**. You must take, and pass, pre-approved modules related to **at least one, and ideally both, of your two degree subjects**, adding up to 40 ECTS in total. BA Global Experience **language students** will need 45 ECTS and should consult the academic coordinator(s) in their language disciplines about the breakdown of credits that applies to them. Where two languages are involved, students will normally be expected to obtain at least 20 ECTS in each language, and 45 ECTS in total.

BA Global Languages students need 45 ECTS from the year abroad; they must secure at least 20 ECTS in their major language and the remaining 25 ECTS are to be broken down between their two minor subjects. Where continental languages are among a student's minor subjects, then 15 of these 25 credits will be expected to be in French or German or Italian or Spanish, and the remaining 10 ECTS will be in a second minor language or general language studies. Other arrangements will be made for Gaeilge. All modules must be pre-approved by the relevant language coordinators.

BA Government students will need to secure a total of 20 ECTS (or equivalent) from pre-approved modules on their semester abroad. They must take modules in each of their three subjects: 10 ECTS credits must be in their major subject, with 5 ECTS in each of their two minor subjects.

Universities outside of the EU and their credit systems

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), is used very widely in European Higher Education and is one way of measuring the learning outcomes and the associated workload of a particular course (module). At the University of Galway, and some of our Erasmus partner universities, most courses carry 5 ECTS. At partner universities outside of Europe, different systems apply.

For instance, 3 **North American credits** are considered approximately equivalent to 5 ECTS. Students going to institutions in the USA and Canada are expected to register for 12 North American credits per semester, and in many cases this will mean 4 modules per semester.

At **Hong Kong Baptist University**, courses are worth either 3 units or 2 units. In general, a single unit corresponds to 45 notional learning hours, and 1 HKBU unit equates to 2 ECTS approximately. In order to be considered a full-time student at HKBU and therefore comply with Hong Kong's immigration laws, students going there must register for at least 12 HKBU credits (4 courses) per semester; however incoming exchange students are encouraged to enrol on 5 or 6 courses per semester.

How should I choose modules, and how do I get them approved?

Selection of modules

You should aim to take modules (courses) that will complement, and enhance your understanding of, your degree subjects. Avoid duplicating what you've already studied, and avoid significant overlap with material you'll cover in Final Year back in Galway. Try to pick courses involving subject matter or perspectives that you wouldn't otherwise be exposed to here at the University of Galway, and ideally try to find topics that relate in some way to the society or culture of your host country.

Self-study modules, where there is no class attendance or interaction, are not a good idea for exchange students, because integration into a class group is a valuable part of the overall learning experience.

In cases where a university has multiple campuses, make sure you take account of the location of teaching when considering modules and timetabling.

Approval of modules by the University of Galway

In all cases, the modules to be taken abroad must be agreed with the relevant subject coordinators (“Year Abroad Coordinators”) at the University of Galway in advance of travelling abroad to study. For Erasmus students, this approval will be recorded formally by means of the Erasmus Learning Agreement; for students going to other destinations, there is a similar document, the International Exchange Learning Agreement.

If an actual learning agreement is not required by the host university as part of your application, you can simply send your Galway coordinator(s) a list of your proposed courses in the interim and ask for their approval, and complete a learning agreement later when you know that you can be admitted to those courses.

Approval of modules by the host university

If you are going to an Erasmus destination, you may be required to complete a **Learning Agreement** at the time of application to the host university, OR you may simply be required to complete a form where you list your desired modules. Your module selection is then reviewed by the host university, whose staff will contact you in due course to advise whether you are accepted into these modules or whether you need to amend your choices.

Who is/are my Study Abroad Academic Coordinator(s)?

For each subject or programme, there is a designated member of academic staff at the University of Galway whose role is to guide and advise students on their course selection in that subject at the host university abroad, and to provide academic support, should they need it, during their studies abroad. This person will also evaluate students’ performance in that subject during the period of study abroad, based on the results shown in the final transcript of records from the host university.

Students taking two “joint honours” subjects while abroad will have two academic coordinators, but often only one of them will need to sign the learning agreement. However, it is really important that you obtain written approval from both coordinators for your chosen courses: if only one signs the learning agreement, then you must get an e-mail from the other approving your course selection in that subject.

You will find a list of all [Year Abroad coordinators](#) at the end of this document.

The Learning Agreement

This very important document is a core requirement for study abroad, and if you are an Erasmus student, *it should be completed in full and signed by all parties by the time you start your studies abroad*, unless your host university specifically indicates that it will be signed there during the two- or three-week course registration period at the start of the semester. Students going to non-EU destinations have 3 weeks from the start of teaching to return their signed learning agreement to the College Mobility Officer. If a learning agreement is not signed off by all parties at the start of the relevant study period, this may jeopardise the recognition of your study abroad.

The learning agreement will set out the courses that you'll take at the host university and, when fully signed, it will indicate that both the University of Galway and the host university have approved these courses. As such, it provides a guarantee that as long as you complete those courses successfully, you will receive full recognition from the University of Galway for your studies abroad. For instance, for 40 ECTS' worth of pre-approved courses as described on page 1, and a pass in all these courses, the University of Galway will award you 60 ECTS, or a Pass in the Year Abroad.

It's important to remember that if you make any changes to the courses originally approved (i.e. if you add or drop courses during the study abroad period), you *must* record these in the relevant section of the same learning agreement and obtain the relevant coordinator signatures as soon as possible after you've made those changes. In some cases, the course catalogue for the second semester may not be available at the start of the academic year, so you can add your second semester courses in this way as soon as the relevant course list is published later.

Keep in mind that the transcript of records you receive from your host university at the end of your studies there (i.e. your official examination/assessment results) must reflect the modules that were approved in your learning agreement. Recognition cannot be guaranteed for modules that were not approved in advance by the University of Galway, regardless of the results you might obtain in them.

Various learning agreement options

- If your host university has sent you a document entitled "Learning Agreement" then you are free to continue using this template and there will be no need for an additional document as long as this one is completed and signed in full.
- If your host university only sent you a form where you list your courses, then you will need to complete a formal Learning Agreement *later on*, but you should only do this after your courses have been approved first by the host university; otherwise you may end up having to amend the learning agreement and have it signed a number of times.

There are a few different types of learning agreement:

- Online Learning Agreement (OLA) (Erasmus students only)
- Erasmus learning agreement – Word document, for cases where the OLA cannot be used
- International exchange learning agreement (if you are going to a non-EU destination)

The Online Learning Agreement (Erasmus students only)

If you are going on Erasmus, you *may* be able to use the Online Learning Agreement (OLA), which will simplify the process somewhat and make it easier to make any subsequent changes. Please refer to the documents [Online learning agreement - Creating your Account](#) and [Online Learning Agreement – How to complete](#). Each person who signs the OLA will be able to access a copy online, so there is never any need to print out the document.

Please do not create multiple versions of your OLA, as this causes confusion for everyone. You only need one version, but remember that once you've submitted it, you can only make changes to it if

- the home or host university coordinator declines it, in which case it's returned to you, OR
- both coordinators accept it, in which case it's regarded as complete and becomes editable again.

Can't find your host university in the drop-down list?

A few of our Erasmus partners are not using the OLA. If, when you begin to complete an OLA, you do not find your host university in the dropdown list, then this is a possible reason. Bear in mind, though, that the university names in the dropdown list come from the European Commission's Erasmus database and are the official titles, often in the national language. If you're having trouble locating the name of your host university, you should check its website to find its official title on the home page. If you still can't find it in the dropdown list, then you won't be able to use the OLA and you will need to use either a Word version of the learning agreement or some alternative online system specific to your host university.

"Responsible persons" / Academic Coordinators and the OLA

Accuracy is very important when completing this document, in particular where e-mail addresses are concerned. It's crucial that you (i) identify the correct academic coordinators, also known as "responsible persons", both at University of Galway and the host university, and (ii) provide the correct e-mail address for each of these coordinators. Errors in e-mail addresses will mean that your OLA won't reach the people who are meant to sign it.

Link to course catalogue

You'll notice that the fields in the OLA marked with an asterisk are mandatory, and there are some details that can be omitted. The link to the host university's course catalogue is not marked as mandatory, but it's strongly recommended that you fill this in.

Who should sign my Learning Agreement?

In the majority of cases, this will be the Year Abroad coordinator for the particular exchange link you are travelling under. If you are unsure about this, please consult the CASSCS Mobility Officer. If you are using the Word version of the learning agreement, it's possible (but not compulsory) to obtain

both academic coordinator signatures on the document. The OLA, on the other hand, only allows for one signature.

Some of our exchanges are College-wide links, i.e. not “owned” by any particular Discipline or School. These include **Linköping, Lund, IE Madrid, Malta*, LMU Munich, Radboud University, Utrecht and Uppsala***, as well as some of our exchanges with ENLIGHT partners* in Bratislava, the Basque Country and Tartu. If you are a BA Global Experience student or a BA Joint Honours student going to one of these universities, you should obtain your two academic coordinators’ written approval (by e-mail) for your course choices and forward these e-mails to Mary Lyons, the College Mobility Officer, who will then sign your learning agreement on behalf of the University of Galway.

**Some exceptions to this are the Classics link with Malta and the Gaelic/Celtic Civilisation exchange with Uppsala, where the relevant academic coordinators should sign the learning agreement. Some of our ENLIGHT links are also College-wide; if in any doubt, consult the CASSCS Mobility Officer.*

Learning Agreement - General Tips and Troubleshooting

Completing Table B (Erasmus only)

Table B refers to how the courses that you take abroad will fit into your University of Galway degree programme. In your case, the period abroad will be an integral but independent element of your degree programme, with no equivalent courses at the University of Galway. This means that you can simply write “Mobility Window” for the “component title”, and put down the number of credits that the University of Galway will award for a Pass in the Year Abroad, i.e. 60 ECTS (or 30 ECTS for a single semester). You don’t need to provide a course code in Table B.

Never fill Table B with the same list of courses you entered in Table A!

Storing and accessing the learning agreement

The learning agreement is an extremely important document and must be kept safe. The OLA has the advantage that there is only ever one version which you can log into at any time, and each person who signs it is able to access it online. If you’re using the Word template instead, you should keep just one version (with all signatures) and ensure you know where you’ve saved it, as well as making sure your University of Galway academic coordinator has a copy. Don’t ever split the Word version into multiple documents or use screenshots of it to obtain signatures: the final version must be one continuous document clearly showing that your courses were approved and by whom.

Signing and editing of the OLA

If you are using the OLA, remember that once you’ve submitted it, it goes straightaway by e-mail to the University of Galway coordinator that you’ve named in it as “responsible person”. If they decline it, it goes back to you for editing. If they approve it, it’s automatically forwarded to the host university coordinator or “responsible person”. From the moment you’ve hit “submit”, you will only be able to view a pdf version until either both coordinators have approved or one has declined it: you won’t be able to edit it again until it has been seen and dealt with by at least one of the coordinators.

If you provided an invalid coordinator address, the OLA will be effectively lost, and you may have to recreate the entire document from scratch. It's therefore very important that you enter the correct coordinator details.

List of Study Abroad Academic Coordinators at the University of Galway

(i) Joint Honours Subjects (Denominated Programmes are on the next page)

SUBJECT	UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY ACADEMIC COORDINATOR	Coordinator e-mail address
Archaeology	Dr Michelle Comber	michelle.comber@universityofgalway.ie
Celtic Civilisation	Dr Liam Ó hAisibéil	liam.ohaisibeil@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie
Classics	Dr Grace Attwood	grace.attwood@universityofgalway.ie
Economics	Dr Aidan Kane	aidan.kane@universityofgalway.ie
English	Ms Dearbhla Mooney	dearbhla.mooney@universityofgalway.ie
French	Dr Marie Blom	erasmusfrench@universityofgalway.ie
Gaeilge	Dr Liam Ó hAisibéil	liam.ohaisibeil@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie
Geography	Professor Ulf Strohmayer	ulf.strohmayer@universityofgalway.ie
German	Dr Conor Brennan	conor.brennan@universityofgalway.ie
Global Media	Mr Tom Felle	tom.felle@universityofgalway.ie
History	Dr Anita Rupprecht	anita.rupprecht@universityofgalway.ie
Information Technology	Dr Matthias Nickles	matthias.nickles@universityofgalway.ie
Italian	Dr Lindsay Myers	lindsay.myers@universityofgalway.ie
Law	Ms Nicola Murphy (Erasmus) Dr Anita Ferrara (non-EU)	nicola.murphy@universityofgalway.ie anita.ferrara@universityofgalway.ie
Léann an Aistriúcháin	Dr Áine Nic Niallais	aine.nicniallais@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie
Maths	Dr Emil Sköldbberg	emil.skoldberg@universityofgalway.ie
Modern Irish Culture Studies	Dr Méabh Ní Fhuartháin	meabh.nifhuarthain@universityofgalway.ie
Performance & Screen Studies	Dr Charlotte McIvor	charlotte.mcivor@universityofgalway.ie
Philosophy	Dr Tsarina Doyle	tsarina.doyle@universityofgalway.ie
Political Science & Sociology	Dr Evans Fanoulis	evans.fanoulis@universityofgalway.ie
Psychology	Dr Mike Hogan	michael.hogan@universityofgalway.ie
Spanish	Dr Pilar Alderete-Diez	pilar.alderete@universityofgalway.ie
College-wide exchanges	Mary Lyons (Mobility Officer)	mary.lyons@universityofgalway.ie

(ii) Denominated Programmes

SUBJECT	UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY ACADEMIC COORDINATOR FOR STUDY ABROAD	Coordinator e-mail address
Children's Studies	Dr Kate Harvey	kate.harvey@universityofgalway.ie
Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies	Professor Patrick Lonergan	patrick.longergan@universityofgalway.ie
English & Creative Writing	Dr John Kenny/Ms Elaine Feeney	john.kenny@universityofgalway.ie elaine.feeney@universityofgalway.ie
Film & Digital Media	Dr Máiréad Casey	mairead.casey@universityofgalway.ie
Geography & Geosystems	Dr Audrey Morley	audrey.morley@universityofgalway.ie
Global Media/Journalism	Mr Tom Felle	tom.felle@universityofgalway.ie
Government, BA	Soc. & Pol. major: Dr Evans Fanoulis Law major: Ms Nicola Murphy (Erasmus) or Dr Anita Ferrara (non-EU) Economics major: Dr Aidan Kane	evans.fanoulis@universityofgalway.ie nicola.murphy@universityofgalway.ie aidan.kane@universityofgalway.ie
History	Dr Anita Rupprecht	anita.rupprecht@universityofgalway.ie
Music	Dr Ann-Marie Hanlon	ann-marie.hanlon@universityofgalway.ie
Psychology	Dr Jane Conway	jane.conway@universityofgalway.ie