

Transfer Credit Policy
Credit for Work Done Elsewhere

Technically, Swarthmore doesn't transfer credit. We award credit for work done elsewhere, and we casually call this transfer credit.

Swarthmore does not establish articulation agreements (automatic transfer credit agreements) with any school. Credit for work done elsewhere is always awarded on a course by course basis.

Prospective students:

- Prospective [first-year students](#).
- Prospective [transfer student transfer credit policies](#).

Matriculated students:

- Non-transferability of [work done during the High-School years](#)
- **Study Abroad during our academic year:**
 - To receive Swarthmore credit for study abroad during the academic year, students must participate in the College's Semester/Year Abroad Program and comply with its payment plan. See the [Off-Campus Study Office](#)
- **Summer School in the U.S.** see numbered points below
- **Summer School Abroad**, see numbered points below
- **Study Away in the U.S. during a Personal Leave of Absence**, see [special instructions](#) and follow the numbered points below
 - Note that taking a personal leave of absence to study abroad without going through the [Off-Campus Study Office](#) and its payment plan means credit earned elsewhere cannot be transferred to the Swarthmore degree.
- [Swarthmore's Six Limited Domestic Exchange Programs](#)
- [Remote degree finishers special instructions](#)

To earn Swarthmore credit for...

[Summer School in the U.S.](#)

[Summer School Abroad](#)

[Study in the U.S. during a semester leave of absence](#)

1) Advising: Students should discuss with their academic adviser all plans to earn credit for work done elsewhere. There is no specific form for the adviser to sign, but students should always discuss degree planning with their adviser.

2) Prior approval required:

- [Preliminary, Tentative, Pre-approval Form \(PDF\)](#)

After matriculation, Swarthmore students desiring to receive degree credit for work at another school must obtain **preliminary tentative approval** from the Swarthmore department or program concerned, as well as **after-the-fact credit validation**. Preliminary tentative approval ensures the likelihood of the work's applicability toward the Swarthmore degree, as well as clarifies the amount of Swarthmore credit likely. Many departments have limits on or conditions for approvability, often with pre-requisites that must be taken at Swarthmore.

The departmental approving signature (typically from the Chair) is required on the Preliminary Approval Form - if you are not on campus, use the form (one per department) and a fax machine to get the signature, or collect and be prepared to include email from the chair indicating approval.

Preliminary approval depends upon adequate information about the content and instruction of the work to be undertaken. Preliminary approval is tentative. For information about fulfilling the NSEP requirement elsewhere, see below.

3) Regarding study abroad during the summer: Summer study abroad follows the same transfer credit rules as are numbered on this page, and is not supported by Swarthmore's Off-Campus Study Office, nor is it directly supported in any way by the College. For more information about foreign travel, see:

[The U.S. Department of State Travel website](#)

[The Swarthmore Off-Campus Study website, as a reference tool](#)

4) Anticipating Swarthmore credit: At Swarthmore the "semester course credit" is the unit of credit. One semester course credit is normally equivalent to 4 semester hours elsewhere, or 6 quarter hours elsewhere. Most other schools offer 3 hour courses, in either the semester hour or quarter hour system, so your Swarthmore credit award might be fractional. The Swarthmore departmental credit award is based on the work submitted for credit validation. Technically it is the work that earns the credit, not the semester or quarter hours completed.

5) Applicability to the Major: When obtaining preliminary approval, students who might want to major at Swarthmore in the field of study of the transfer course should ask the chair (or department representative) about whether the transfer course might be applicable to the major in that field. Some departments have limits to the number of transfer credits that can apply to the major.

6) Departmental credit validation (final approval) required: To receive Swarthmore degree credit, a Swarthmore department or program must evaluate the work done elsewhere, and award subject credit. This evaluation of work done elsewhere normally includes reviewing the syllabus, transcript, text books, written work, exams or your notes made in preparation for exams, class notes, indication of class hours, etc.

Swarthmore department or program validation may include an examination, written or oral, administered at Swarthmore, or may depend on fulfilling a condition, such as taking a course at Swarthmore, or writing another paper for review at Swarthmore. Swarthmore College does not approve or deny credit for work done elsewhere based solely on the accreditation of the sending

institution. Work at other schools, especially summer school programs, may sometimes be given less credit than course work at Swarthmore, but this will depend upon the nature of the program and the work involved. All credit validations are made on a case-by-case basis, by the Swarthmore College department(s) or program(s) concerned.

7) An official transcript from the other school must be received by the Office of the Registrar before validated work can be recorded for credit. By College policy, in order for work done elsewhere to be granted Swarthmore College credit, the grade for that work must be the equivalent of a straight C or better, but a better than C grade does not in itself constitute Swarthmore accreditability.

Have official transcripts sent to:
Swarthmore College
Office of the Registrar
500 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA 19081

Credit originating from elsewhere is recorded toward the Swarthmore degree as follows: The course subject, number, and credit are Swarthmore's, reflecting the approval of the department validating the credit. The course title and U.S. equivalent grade are recorded from the other school's transcript, although the other school's grade does not factor in to Swarthmore's [graduation grade average requirement](#).

8) Requests for credit must be made within the semester following the term in which the work was done. Credit is lost if a student takes a course at Swarthmore that essentially repeats the work covered by the credit.

9) Although you cannot replace a course with transfer credit, as a part of the approval process described above, you might "**repeat**" a course by taking an equivalent one elsewhere and getting credit for it here, following the [repeat course rule](#).

10) NSEPs elsewhere: Students who wish to receive NSEP credit for courses taken elsewhere must get preliminary approval for the course from the department involved. The department chair should be consulted as part of the process. For example, if the student wants to take a Chemistry course as an NSEP at another university, he or she must get it pre-approved as an NSEP with the support of the chair of the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department.

Official approval for NSEP credit occurs only during the usual follow-up process, after the student has taken the class. NSEP credit can be approved by the department chair if the chair determines that the course is comparable to a Swarthmore course that has already been designated as an NSEP. As a general rule, courses taken elsewhere that are not comparable to a Swarthmore NSEP will not receive NSEP credit, but, in exceptional cases in which he or she believes that the NSEP criteria are satisfied, the department chair may recommend to the Division of Natural Sciences and Engineering that NSEP credit be awarded. In such cases the Division will review the recommendation and make the final decision. Even if the request is

declined, the course may still be eligible for normal transfer credit according to usual departmental procedures.

Natural sciences and engineering practicums (NSEPs) have at least 18 hours per semester of scheduled meeting time for laboratory, separate from the scheduled lecture hours. How the laboratory hours are scheduled varies with the nature of the course and the types of laboratories involved. Such meetings may entail weekly or biweekly 3-hour sessions in a laboratory, several all-day field trips, or several observation trips.

11) Writing Courses elsewhere. Writing courses are normally not available through transfer of credit, because all Writing-requirement approved courses go through a specific committee approval process not amenable to application to courses elsewhere.

12) Senior deadline: The deadline for receiving the required documentation - the departmental credit validation and the official transcript - and for recording transfer of credit for graduating seniors is May 15 of the year of graduation.

If you have any question about credit you were expecting but do not yet see recorded on your [Student Records](#), please contact [Stacey Hogge](#) of the Registrar's Office.