

Compulsory Stay Abroad for Students of English - General Criteria¹

Guidelines revised for the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and the related travel restrictions

General Guidelines

It is strongly recommended that all students of English complement their studies with a stay abroad in an English-speaking country, where possible for a year. You will profit from this period on many different levels – an improvement in your language skills is only one of the benefits.

Students intending to qualify as English teachers for all types of government schools in the state of Lower Saxony **must** spend a period of at least three months (twelve weeks) abroad in an English-speaking country during their studies.² This must be completed before registering for the submission of a master's thesis. However, students aiming to graduate with the degree Master of Education (Grund-, Haupt- und Realschule) are advised to complete this stay abroad during their **bachelor** degree wherever possible. The official degree guidelines describe the stay abroad as follows:

*“Studierende mit dem Studienziel Master of Education (Lehramt an Grundschulen und Lehramt an Haupt-/Realschulen, Lehramt an Gymnasien, Lehramt für Sonderpädagogik und Lehramt an Berufsbildenden Schulen) müssen **bis zur Anmeldung der Masterarbeit** einen dreimonatigen studienrelevanten Aufenthalt im Ausland nachweisen. Besonders Studierenden mit dem Studienziel Master of Education (Lehramt an Grundschulen und Lehramt an Haupt-/Realschulen) wird empfohlen, diesen Auslandsaufenthalt **bereits im Bachelorstudium** zu absolvieren.”³*

Exception 1: Students who are studying two modern languages as potential teaching subjects only need to complete a stay abroad for one of the languages.

Exception 2: In response to the current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic situation, students who have registered their Master's thesis by 31.03.2022 can also complete their stay abroad either after registering their thesis or even after submitting the thesis.⁵

NOTE: Native speakers of English *who grew up in a country with English as an official language* **should contact the Fachstudienberatung** directly. Students *who grew up speaking English in Germany* (eg. with a parent who is a native speaker of English) are expected to complete the standard stay abroad.

¹ Further information is available at: <https://uol.de/en/english-american/student-guide/working-and-studying-abroad/>

² This regulation is laid out in the *Verordnung über Masterabschlüsse für Lehrämter in Niedersachsen (Nds.MasterVO-Lehr)*.

³ BPO der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, (4) *Fachspezifische Anlage für das Fach Anglistik*, 08.09.2017, #3 - Empfehlungen und Hinweise.

⁴ Criteria introduced as a result of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic are **printed in blue** and are valid for the duration of the travel restrictions

⁵ Students who take advantage of this regulation should be aware of the need to make sure they are still registered as students for insurance purposes.

Information for students whose stay abroad was completed and credited while enrolled in another German university

- If a stay abroad from an earlier course of studies does not meet the Oldenburg criteria described in this document (in terms of **length, timing, activities** or **location**), then you will usually need to go abroad again (or complete an equivalent activity) to make up the missing time period. Please see a departmental advisor as soon as possible after commencing studies in Oldenburg if this applies to you!
 - **HOWEVER:** work experience, other internships and periods of study abroad completed and credited while studying at another university **in Lower Saxony** will be credited in full.

Destinations

The stay abroad has to take place in an English-speaking country. **An English-speaking country is a country in which English is an official language or the main language spoken.** If you are unsure whether a particular country is appropriate (this may be the case for certain destinations in Asia and Africa), then please check the [website](#) and consult an advisor in advance.

NOTE: Under normal circumstances a period of study or a job in a non-English speaking country such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland or Norway would **not** count as the compulsory stay abroad. This is the case even if you want to attend a university where all courses are in English or work for a company operating in English. **HOWEVER**, for the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 travel restrictions, students **can** also receive credit for all English-language activities in **non**-English-speaking countries that otherwise fulfill the stay abroad criteria.⁶

General Criteria, Duration, Timing, Activities and Restrictions

(a) Studienrelevanz

The setting abroad should enable you to have extensive contact with adult native speakers, which fosters the development of communicative competence. The following settings and activities generally ensure sufficient interaction with the target culture:

- educational institutions⁷
 - public, private and language schools, including pre-schools and formal childcare centres: teaching assistantships, internships, German language teaching, paid employment, formal language study
 - universities: studying (as an enrolled student), teaching assistantships, team-based research projects
- private sector firms, NGOs, government agencies, social organizations
 - team-based work (paid or otherwise), internships, volunteering

⁶ Stays abroad in a non-English-speaking country need to be approved by the Fachstudienberatung via a **Learning Agreement**.

⁷ You can get credit for working as an assistant teacher or completing an internship at all types of schools, even if it is not the same school type you are studying in Oldenburg (ie. MEd Gym students can work in primary/elementary schools).

(b) Duration

(b1) In order to qualify, the stay abroad should be a minimum of **three months** (12 weeks), encompassing the equivalent of **sixty full-time** days at work. One working day = a full workday for the environment in which students are working.⁸

- **NOTE:** For the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 travel restrictions, students can also receive for a stay abroad as long as it is a minimum of 10 weeks (the equivalent of **fifty full-time** days at work). This is particularly the case for anyone completing a school internship in a country with ten-week-terms – it is no longer necessary for these students to stay for an additional two weeks. Students completing other activities are *strongly encouraged* to stay for the full 12 weeks if it is safe.

(b2) For administrative purposes, a full-time work day on site is considered to be at least as long as a British/American/Australian school day – approximately 9am-3pm (six hours). This may or may not include lunch/coffee breaks.

- Minor deviations in the number of working days due to school/public holidays are acceptable, as is uninterrupted part-time work completed over a longer period. The total workload should be approx. **360 working hours** or more.

(c) Timing

(c1) The following restrictions apply to the **timing** of the compulsory stay abroad:

- The stay abroad needs to be completed **during** your studies – either during the BA or MEd degree.
 - (Due to the structure of the GHR300 programme, we strongly recommend that these students go abroad as undergraduates.)
- As noted in **EXCEPTION 2** above, it is *temporarily* possible for students to complete the stay abroad after registering or even after submitting their Master's thesis.

(c2) Time spent in an English-speaking country **before** you started university does not generally count; nor does a completed degree or period of study or work experience in English from a country where English is not the main language spoken.

- **HOWEVER**, it *is* possible to receive credit for a stay of this type for the duration of the Covid-19 travel restrictions, assuming that the activities:
 - are documented in full (or there is documentation for a period of at least three months)
 - would otherwise meet the criteria described under point (a), such as attending college, university or language courses, working as an au pair, an assistant teacher, or another professional job.
- If this is the case, then you are able to submit an application for special consideration to gain credit for your previous stay abroad.⁹
 - This regulation also applies to students who worked or studied in an English-language environment in non-English speaking countries before starting their degree in Oldenburg.

⁸ Due to visa limits in certain countries, the period of **three months/12 weeks** will be considered complete as long as it is **81 days** (plus arrival and departure days) or more in length.

⁹ All applications for special consideration should be submitted via the Stud.IP course "**3.02.086: Organisation and Supervision of Compulsory Stay Abroad** [Anglistik/Amerikanistik]" using the special consideration form.

- Students who previously spent *fewer than 12 weeks abroad* may be able to receive **partial credit** for this time.
 - Such students can then apply to make up the remaining time via another period abroad or a local/virtual/online option. [See the separate document “Compulsory Stay Abroad for Students of English - Exemptions and Alternatives” in [Stud.IP](#) for further details about this option.]

(c3) As a general rule, the stay abroad must be completed in one block and cannot be split.

- **HOWEVER**, it is possible to complete the stay abroad in multiple blocks for the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 travel restrictions.
 - Blocks of **either 2 x 6 weeks or 3 x 4 weeks** are eligible for credit assuming all the other criteria in terms of activity, length and number of working days etc. have been met. Blocks of **4 x 3 weeks** may also be considered.
 - Students in this category should attempt to complete as close to **12 weeks abroad in total** as possible.¹⁰
- It is also possible to **combine** one or more blocks of time in an English-speaking country or environment with a virtual / online *Ersatzleistung* to complete the equivalent of 12 weeks. [See the separate document in [Stud.IP](#) for further information about stay abroad alternatives.]

(d) Activities

(d1) The following restrictions apply to your **activities** during your stay abroad:

- It *is* possible to combine the compulsory stay abroad with a compulsory school internship such as the ASP / FP as long as you make up the extra time.
- Time spent in an English-speaking country with a ‘working holiday’ or ‘work and travel’ visa will only count as the compulsory stay abroad if it includes at least **ten to twelve weeks** working at an appropriate job (or several), uninterrupted by any travel to a non-English speaking country. You must provide documentation for all your jobs.
- Time working as an au pair will only count if you **also** take a (part-time) language or other training course at the same time **or** if a period of time as an au pair is preceded or directly followed by a full-time language or other training course. The language course should be the equivalent of roughly **two weeks full time study**.¹¹
 - **NOTE:** For the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic travel restrictions, students working as an au pair will have their stay abroad recognised in full *without* a language course. These students should complete a stay as close to twelve weeks as possible (or ten weeks with an additional online language course, especially during the lecture-free period). There is no need to complete a language or educational course in-person.
- Language courses will only count if they are at an appropriate level (C1+) and are **either** the equivalent of full-time study **or** in addition to a part-time job with substantial contact to native speakers (eg. working in a German-language call centre or German restaurant would not apply).

¹⁰ The potential reduction in length from 12 to 10 weeks has been implemented to ensure that students are able to complete a full stay abroad during the (summer) semester break. As this limitation does not apply to shorter periods abroad, students who choose this option are *strongly discouraged* from reducing their time any further!

¹¹ Full-time study at a language school is defined according to the *school’s* definition of full-time or **25 hours** - whichever is higher.

- Other types of non-language training courses **may** count as long as they are **ten to twelve weeks** full time and involve substantial contact with native speakers in a semi-formal environment. Please talk to an advisor in advance.
- It is possible to combine different options (language course; internship) as long as they take place consecutively, without a break in between involving travel to a non-English speaking country.
- Visiting friends and relatives and taking an extended holiday **cannot** be recognized as the compulsory stay abroad.
- Farm work or jobs where there is little contact with native speakers will **not** be accepted – you are supposed to spend your time in an English-speaking environment where a certain level of language competence is required.

(d2) If you have work experience from employment during your studies where the **majority of your tasks were completed in English in a non-English speaking country**, and where your activities would otherwise be acceptable according to the criteria in **(d1)**, then – for the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic travel restrictions *only* – you are able to submit an application for special consideration to gain credit for your time.¹²

- If your total work experience is less than the equivalent of *12 weeks full time*, then you may be able to receive **partial credit** for this time.
 - You can then apply to make up the remaining time via another period abroad or a local/virtual/online option [See the separate document in [Stud.IP](#) for further details.]

The Stay Abroad: Exemptions and Alternatives

It is **not** possible to receive a complete exemption from the stay abroad unless you fall into one of the two categories described on page 1. At a minimum, students will have to complete an equivalent local or online alternative. For the duration of the Covid-19 restrictions, it will be possible for students who do not feel comfortable travelling – and who do not have any eligible prior work or study experience in English in either an English or non-English-speaking country for which they could get credit – **to undertake a variety of alternative activities instead of going abroad**.¹³

- As of December 2020, all applications for special consideration – whether SARS-CoV-2 related or not – should be submitted via the Stud.IP course “**3.02.086: Organisation and Supervision of Compulsory Stay Abroad** [Anglistik/Amerikanistik]” using the special consideration form.
 - You are of course welcome to discuss your situation with a departmental advisor (Auguscik / Freede) prior to a formal application being made!

Note: these alternative arrangements are available to **current Oldenburg students only**, and are limited to the duration of the SARS-CoV-2-related travel restrictions. For further information about your options, please sign up for the course “**3.02.086: Organisation and Supervision of Compulsory Stay Abroad**” on [Stud.IP](#).

¹² As with applications for special consideration under points **(c2)** and **(c3)**, your application should be submitted [online](#) using the appropriate form.

¹³ Note that under normal circumstances, such alternatives to the stay abroad are only available to students who meet the *standard* special consideration requirements - for example due to **chronic illness, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, their family situation, severe financial hardship, visa issues for non-EU students, or native speakers of English who grew up / have spent an extended period in an English-speaking country**. These options have been extended to *all* students for the duration of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic travel restrictions only.