Academic Policies & Procedures

Specialty Programs

USAC SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

The academic procedures below apply to all USAC Specialty programs. Students participating on USAC Partnership programs are bound by the academic policies of the Partnership university.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply for most USAC programs, a student must be in good academic, disciplinary, and community standing, be at least 18 years old at the time of application, and have an overall GPA of 2.5 or better in a 4.0 system. We strongly recommend that students have at least one college semester completed prior to departure. Some programs may have higher GPA and/or class standing requirements. Students who do not meet the stated GPA eligibility may apply, but will be asked to submit additional information in order to be considered.

USAC Specialty Programs are based on a U.S. academic model. Program elements, such as orientation, social activities, and staff support are conducted in English. Courses are taught either in English or in the language of the host country. Although TOEFL/IELTS scores are not required, students must have advanced English-language proficiency for all programs located outside of the USA in order to be able to take part successfully in the overall program and complete college-level course work in English.

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance to a USAC program will be granted to a student who meets eligibility requirements and has submitted the required documents and fees by the stated deadlines, subject to program capacity.

Acceptance to or participation in any USAC program may be rescinded if a student’s eligibility status changes, if any information provided in the application is discovered to be incorrect, or if program fees are not paid when due.

MINIMUM / MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT

Full-time enrollment is required. It is the student’s responsibility to maintain full-time status. Only credit-bearing courses taken for a grade, including P/F, are counted toward minimum and maximum enrollment limits.

Undergraduate students:

Fall or Spring semester: minimum 12 credits/maximum 18 credits. 12-credit minimum must be met through enrollment in 3-credit courses or higher.

January terms: minimum 3 credits/maximum 4 credits. One 3-credit course required.

Summer terms: minimum 3 or 4 credits (varies by program). One 3-credit or 4-credit course required.

3 week term – maximum 4 credits

4 week term – maximum 5 credits
5 week term - maximum 6 credits
6 week term - maximum 7 credits

Graduate students taking classes numbered 600 or above:

Fall or Spring semester: minimum 9 graduate credits/ maximum 12 graduate credits
January terms: minimum 3 credits/ maximum 3 credits. One 3-credit course required.
Summer terms: minimum 3 or 4 credits (varies by program). One 3-credit or 4-credit course required.
3 or 4 week term – maximum 3 credits
5 or 6 week term - maximum 6 credits

Requests to take greater or fewer than the minimum/maximum number of credits in a term may be made by contacting the USAC Enrollment Department, or the Resident Director once the program has begun. Only requests for which there is a compelling academic rationale will be considered and home university approval may be required.

COURSE REGISTRATION

Students register for courses by submitting the Course and Tour Registration Form to the Enrollment Department by the stated deadline.

All changes to a student’s initial registration must be submitted in writing to be confirmed. Prior to departure, changes to registration are made via email communication between the student and the USAC Enrollment Department. Once a program begins, changes are made between the student and the Resident Director during the Add/Drop/Withdraw/Change period.

Students are responsible for assuring that their requested course changes have been confirmed in writing on the Registration Confirmation Form.

A student who attends a course without written confirmation of registration will not receive credit.

ADD/DROP/CHANGE/WITHDRAW DEADLINES

Once a program begins, permission is required from the Resident Director and the instructor to add a course or to change the grading option for a course. Resident Director permission is required to drop or withdraw from a course.

Add/Drop/Change/Withdraw deadlines are specific to each program and term; exact dates will be made available to students during orientation.

Typical add/drop/change periods:
- Spring and Fall semester – 2 weeks, or 10 class days, after the beginning of courses.
- Summer and January session – 3 class days after the beginning of courses.
- Multi-course language track courses – 3 class days after the beginning of each course in the track.
- Short courses within a term or those with late start dates – 3 class days after the beginning of the course.

Last day to withdraw from a course (all terms) – at 60% of class days.
If a student abandons a class without officially withdrawing from it, the grade will be reported as an F. A course is considered to be abandoned once the student has missed 25% of the total course hours.

ACADEMIC REASONS FOR DISMISSAL

A student may be dismissed for:

- a. Failing to complete full-time academic coursework unless approved by the Director of Academic Affairs.
- b. Reasons involving academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, plagiarism and cheating.
- c. Failing to prepare for and/or attend class.
- d. Being disruptive or otherwise interfering with the ability of the instructor or other students to participate in the course as expected.
- e. Failing to achieve a minimum GPA of 2.0. (yearlong students)

SYLLABI

USAC course content and requirements will be described in syllabi, which will be made available to affiliate universities and to students prior to the beginning of a term. A course syllabus will be given to students on the first day of class.

Course Numbers in the USAC Catalog:

Consortium students are registered through different U.S. universities, using course titles and numbers appropriate to each institution. The USAC catalog utilizes generic course titles and numbers. Courses numbered 100 and 200 are lower-division. The 300-400 numbers are upper-division courses. A 600 number refers to upper-division courses that may be taken for graduate credit with prior approval from USAC and the student's home university.

PREREQUISITES

Students are responsible for noting and adhering to course prerequisites. Taking a course without the required preparation is likely to result in unsatisfactory grades and may render the course unacceptable for degree purposes.

Students are urged to review all course selections in advance with their home university academic advisors.

In USAC programs where placement tests are used to determine readiness for various language levels on-site faculty will consider both test results and completed prerequisites. A student who is technically eligible for a certain language level may enroll in the course, but is urged to consider the placement test indicators and may be asked to sign a waiver when taking a course against the advice of the Resident Director.

CONTACT HOURS

Each course meets or exceeds the national accrediting standard of 15, fifty-minute contact hours per credit for a traditional lecture, discussion or seminar course.
Internships, service learning courses and certain field or lab studies require a greater number of contact hours as described in the specific syllabi. They typically adhere to a standard of 45 hours for one credit, 90 hours for two credits, 135-150 hours for 3 credits.

Contact hours do not include long distance or inter-site travel time, tours outside the focus of a specific course, meals, recreational activities, receptions or local travel. Contact hours may include course-specific tours, guest lectures or other activities furthering the specific objectives of the course and designated in the course syllabus as a course component.

**CLASS ATTENDANCE**

**Class attendance is mandatory.** Professors will record class attendance and notify the Resident Director when a student is not in attendance.

**Rationale:** A successful course relies not only upon the expertise of the professor, but also on the active participation of the students. Student absences are disruptive to the learning experience.

**Academic penalty for unexcused absences:**

The final participation grade will be reduced as follows for every unexcused absence:

- Classes of 1.5 hours or less: 3-point deduction per class missed
- Classes longer than 1.5 hours: 5-point deduction per class missed
- Every tardy counts as .5 of an absence

A student who misses 25% of total course hours will be considered as having abandoned the course and the final course grade will be reported as an “F”.

Only the RD has the authority to allow for policy exceptions based on a documented necessity for the absence (e.g., hospitalization, religious holiday). Requests for policy exceptions due to family visits or for personal travel, including delays outside a student’s control, will not be considered. Students are advised to schedule personal travel before or after the program, or during breaks when classes are not in session. When making travel plans, students are expected to allow ample time for the inevitable cancellation or delay.

**EXAMINATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Normally, each course requires a mid-term evaluation and a written final examination. The nature of a particular course may dictate a form of assessment other than a written exam.

**Examinations must be taken as scheduled** and students should be informed of the results of the exams and other assignments in a timely fashion.

Students are responsible for confirming that all assignments have been received by their professors. This includes assignments submitted electronically or left on the professor’s desk or mailbox when the professor is not present.

Students are responsible for monitoring their progress in courses and for maintaining contact with professors regarding assignments and grades.

Students are responsible for the material covered in class, and are expected to arrange for the completion of all missed class assignments and homework. Students who are arranging make-up work should do so in advance whenever possible and be prompt in the completion of missed work. Students
should recognize that requests to professors regarding missed work should be timely and reasonable and may or may not be granted in cases of unexcused absences.

USAC recognizes the religious obligations of its students. Any student who misses class, quizzes, examinations or any other class or lab work in order to observe religious holy days shall, whenever possible, be given an opportunity during that semester or session to make up the missed assignments. The make-up opportunity must be arranged in advance and will apply only to the specific religious holy day absence.

COURSE CANCELLATIONS

The list of Consortium courses is subject to change. USAC reserves the right to cancel a course due to insufficient enrollment or other contingencies.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Independent study may be permitted under certain conditions. Students shall be limited to no more than three credits of independent study per term.

A. Substitution for a Cancelled Course

If a student enrolled in a cancelled course can demonstrate, in writing, that the specific course is required for graduation and there will be no other opportunity to take it, USAC will offer the course on an independent study basis and the student will not be charged any additional fees.

B. Special Request

Students willing to pay for the cost of arranging for an independent study course may request such a course. With advance notice, the student may propose a project in detail and in writing. The supervising faculty member contracted by USAC, as well as the Resident Director and the home university, must approve the course proposal. The granting of a Special Request course is subject to various considerations such as availability of faculty, schedules, and approval of the student’s home university and the USAC university, if applicable.

GRADING

A. USAC grades will be reported in the following way:

(A) Excellent Performance
(B) Good
(C) Average
(D) Poor
(F) Failure

Ranges between the letters are represented by plus or minus signs:
A-, B+, B-, C+, C-, D+, D-

B. Pass/Fail

Students may request to take one graded course on a Pass/Fail basis. Enrollment on a P/F or S/U basis is limited to three credits per term and must be requested in advance and approved before the end of the add/drop/change period.
Each home university has its own policy regarding the transfer of P/F credits and whether courses taken on this basis may be counted toward major, minor, or other degree requirements. It is the student’s responsibility to consult with his or her home university to determine the appropriateness of P/F courses.

C. Audits (AD):

Students who meet the 12-credit minimum enrollment requirement may elect to audit eligible courses beyond the 12-credit minimum, if requested and approved prior to the end of the add/drop/change period. Internships, service learning, and field study courses may not be taken as an audit.

Language track students who have already taken the first course in a track rack do not have to take the course for credit, but are required to audit it in preparation for success at the next level.

Courses taken as an audit do not count towards the minimum or maximum full-time enrollment requirement. No credit is earned or grade received for an audited course.

Students auditing a course must follow the attendance policy and complete all assignments, but are exempt from the midterm and final examinations. Individual professors may establish additional requirements in consultation with the Resident Director depending on the circumstances of the course.

Students who audit a course and do not attend class or complete assignments will be withdrawn at the recommendation of the instructor and the Resident Director, and will receive a grade of "W" on the USAC grade report.

D. Incompletes (I):

Requests for incomplete grades are granted only in truly exceptional circumstances when the student is unable to complete the coursework for reasons beyond the student's control. The student must be performing passing work when the Incomplete is requested. Non-attendance, poor performance, or a plan to repeat the course, are not acceptable reasons for issuing an “I”.

For cases in which an incomplete is unavoidable, the student and the Resident Director will sign a contract for the "I" grade that stipulates how much work has already been completed (including % of work completed and grade level attained at the time the contract is signed), how much work is needed for completion, and a deadline date for the completion of assignments. The deadline may not extend beyond the end of the next regular semester.

An Incomplete is not an appropriate method for making up a significant amount of coursework. The work to be completed for a grade should be limited to a small percentage of the course requirements. The contract must be signed before the end of the term in which the student is enrolled, and it must be attached to the final grade report for the term affected. The “I” grade may not be entered without this signed contract.

If the incomplete has not been replaced with a letter grade by the deadline shown on the contract; the incomplete (I) will automatically revert to a failing grade (F).

E. Host university courses.

Subject to permission of the Resident Director and the professor, it is sometimes possible for students to audit or enroll in courses at the host university. These courses may or may not result in an official
transcript from the host university and will not be recorded on the Grade Report unless specific arrangements are made in advance with the Resident Director and the home institution.

**TRANSCRIPTS**

Grades are reported to students’ home universities according to the agreement in place between USAC and the student’s home university as follows:

A. USAC will send a Grade Report to the student’s home university when the home university has indicated that it accepts the USAC Grade Report;

B. Students whose home university requires enrollment through a USAC Affiliate University will be issued an official transcript from the enrolling university. It is the responsibility of the student to request that an official transcript be sent to their home university.

Grade Reports and/or transcripts of students with outstanding financial obligations to USAC will be withheld until that obligation has been resolved.

**GRADE APPEALS**

Students who wish to appeal a final grade may initiate a grade appeal process by contacting the USAC Enrollment Department in writing no later than 10 business days after the start of classes in the next term. USAC Grade Appeal Policy may be found in the *Student Gateway* portal.