

# The Exploring Diversity Initiative

## Petition for EDI Credit for Study Abroad

When the Faculty implemented the Exploring Diversity Initiative, which requires every student at Williams to complete at least one course designated as an exploring diversity course (designated with the letter “D” in the *College Bulletin*) by the time of graduation, it also adopted the following language with respect to an approved study abroad program:

*“By immersing students in foreign cultures, and often by furthering language acquisition, study abroad programs can offer a robust way to study cultural diversity. Students wishing to fulfill the EDI requirement via the completion of a study abroad program must submit a petition before their departure proposing EDI credit for a particular course on their program, for particular experiences (such as independent research or a homestay), or for a specific language training program they will undertake while abroad. The petition will require students to describe how they believe their proposed study abroad experience will meet one or more of the goals of the Exploring Diversity Initiative; it will be considered by the Director of the Exploring Diversity Initiative working in concert with the Committee on Academic Standing.”*

Should you wish to meet the Exploring Diversity Initiative requirement through the completion of a study abroad program, please read carefully the full description of the EDI requirement in the *College Bulletin* (page 2) and complete the following questions, attaching to this form your essay about how you believe your study abroad program will allow you to fulfill the EDI requirement (see below).

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Your class: \_\_\_\_\_

The name of your study abroad program: \_\_\_\_\_

The university site and location of your program: \_\_\_\_\_

The semester & year of the program for which you are seeking EDI credit: \_\_\_\_\_

The courses in which you intend to enroll in your program:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

On a separate sheet of paper, please attach to this completed form an essay of at least 250 words explaining, according to the criteria listed on page 2, *why* you believe that your particular study abroad program and the experience you will have meet the various criteria elaborated in the Exploring Diversity Initiative.

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To be eligible to receive EDI credit for your study abroad program, please submit this form and your essay with your Study Away Petition to the Dean’s Office. Decisions will be made by the Director of the Exploring Diversity Initiative and the Committee on Academic Standing.

## **The Exploring Diversity Initiative** (Description)

**THE EXPLORING DIVERSITY INITIATIVE REQUIREMENT.** Williams College is committed to creating and maintaining a curriculum, faculty, and student body that reflects and explores a diverse, globalized world and the multi-cultural character of the United States. Courses designated “(D)” in the College Bulletin are a part of the College’s Exploring Diversity Initiative (EDI); they represent our dedication to study groups, cultures, and societies as they interact with, and challenge, each other. Through such courses, students and faculty also consider the multiple approaches that engage these issues. Rather than simply focus on the study of specific peoples, cultures, or regions of the world, in the past or present, however, courses fulfilling the requirement actively promote a self-conscious and critical engagement with diversity. They urge students to consider the operations of difference in the world and provide them with the tools to do so. The ultimate aim of the requirement is to lay the groundwork for a life-long engagement with the diverse cultures, societies, and histories of the United States and the rest of the world.

Courses that comprise the Exploring Diversity Initiative may fall under a variety of categories, including (but not limited to) the following:

- 1. Comparative Study of Cultures and Societies.** These courses focus on the differences and similarities between cultures and societies, and/or on the ways in which cultures, peoples, and societies have interacted and responded to one another in the past.
- 2. Empathetic Understanding.** These courses explore diverse human feelings, thoughts, and actions by recreating the social, political, cultural, and historical context of a group in order to imagine why within that context, those beliefs, experiences, and actions of the group emerged.
- 3. Power and Privilege.** These courses link issues of diversity to economic and political power relations, investigating how cultural interaction is influenced by various structures, institutions, or practices that enable, maintain, or mitigate inequality among different groups.
- 4. Critical Theorization.** These courses focus on ways scholars theorize the possibilities of cross-cultural understanding and interaction; they investigate the ways that disciplines and paradigms of knowledge both constitute “difference” and are reconfigured by the study of diversity-related questions.
- 5. Cultural Immersion.** In various ways these courses immerse students in another culture and give them the tools with which to understand that culture from the inside. They include those foreign language courses that explicitly engage in the self-conscious awareness of cultural and societal differences, traditions, and customs as an integral aspect of language study.
- 6. Study Abroad Program.** By immersing students in foreign cultures, and often by furthering language acquisition, **study abroad programs** can offer a robust way to study cultural diversity. Students wishing to fulfill the EDI requirement via the completion of a study abroad program must submit an essay **with their study away petition** by the deadline in March (**this is before departure to the program**) proposing EDI credit for a particular course on their program, for particular experiences (such as independent research or a home-stay), or for a specific language training program they will undertake while abroad. The essay will require students to describe how they believe their proposed study abroad experience will meet one or more of the goals of the Exploring Diversity Initiative; it will be considered by the Director of the Exploring Diversity Initiative working in concert with the Committee on Academic Standing.

All students are required to complete ONE course that is part of the Exploring Diversity Initiative. Although this course, which may be counted toward the divisional distribution requirement, may be completed any semester before graduation, students are urged to complete the course by the end of the sophomore year.