

Draft MSACS policy on study abroad opportunities:

10/1/07, revised 11/27/07 – K.H.

The MSACS can support relevant study-abroad opportunities under specific circumstances.

Students may participate in three ways:

1. MSACS students may pay to participate in a study-abroad opportunity as any other student would, by paying their own expenses for the experience. Note that MSACS students who would like to then substitute graduate study-abroad credit for a required or elective CS course in the MSACS program may petition the program director for approval to substitute, and should do so prior to participating in the study-abroad experience. The MSACS program does NOT have a slot for free electives; all 36 graduate hours are either required courses, directed electives, or applied-research in computing. So counting other graduate study-abroad hours toward the CS degree requires a substitution by the program director and also requires a signature from the program director on the student's Petition to Graduate.
2. An MSACS student may include a study-abroad opportunity in their applied studies plan, for funding by the MSACS, if it is an integral part of the student's MSACS applied studies research plan that meets approval of the faculty and program director (see Article I below).
3. An MSACS student may receive partial funding (50%) of the cost of their international travel if their study-abroad experience is part of an approved special-topics course that meets the approval of the faculty and program director (see Article II below).

Overview

The MSACS cannot fund and give graduate credit for a study-abroad opportunity that is not integrated and integral to the student's applied computer science study. Our accreditation agency (SACS) requires that all graduate students complete a research project as a program capstone experience. To support student research, the MSACS allocates funding to support each student's research activities, which can be very diverse, allowing a great deal of individualization. That pool of premium-tuition funding can only be used to support student learning and research, so a study-abroad opportunity must have a strong and clear connection to the student's research project and plan of study.

Article I. Study Abroad and MSACS Applied Studies

The MSACS program requires that each MSACS student submit for the program director's approval an applied studies plan in their first semester of study. That plan can support a wide variety of activities which must be clearly delineated and described, and must be in support of a research and/or career objective, with an accompanying timeline and budget projections and deliverables (as described on the MSACS web site).

The study-abroad experience must support the overall research plan, rather than BE the project.

That plan can include an appropriate and justified study-abroad opportunity under the following stipulations:

1. The study-abroad must be an integral part of the student's applied-studies plan, and is subject to the approval of the MSACS ad-hoc program working-group and the MSACS program director.
2. The study-abroad project must go through all levels of KSU approval.
3. The goals and graduate educational objectives of the MSACS graduate study-abroad project must be clearly delineated and justifies graduate credit hours. A detailed schedule of activities for the graduate student under the directions of the faculty member must be included that justifies awarding

- graduate credit for the experience. The research experience and activities must clearly be graduate-level activities in applied computer science.
4. The student's total applied studies project request does not exceed MSACS funding limitations.
 5. A MSACS graduate faculty member with expertise in the applied-study project's research area will participate in the study-abroad experience as the graduate instructor, AND that faculty member will also serve as the student's advisor and research mentor for the MSACS applied-studies project. *In this way, a faculty member could build a research-group of students who will work with that faculty-member (serving as their advisor and mentor) on their research projects.*
 6. The study-abroad project counts as the student's applied-studies graduate credit hours (CS 8940).
 7. The MSACS can NOT pay for tuition to enroll students in undergraduate courses designed to support the faculty member in undergraduate study-abroad activities.
 - *MSACS students are already paying tuition directly to KSU for their 36 graduate credit hours, and the program may not double-pay for tuition by paying again into a special course in order to pay the faculty member.*
 - *Some of this discussion gets into a fuzzy area. Graduate faculty are expected to supervise graduate research projects as part of our 3-3 teaching load with higher scholarship expectations, and we already supervise research projects and student publications without expecting extra salary. You can see where this line of thinking could lead. Some might argue that an all-expense-paid trip to an exotic location with three students researching in your area of research is a good deal.*
 - *MSACS students may not count undergraduate credits toward their degree.*
 - *Alternative funding sources could be used to pay a student's study-abroad course tuition.*
 - *As is often the case, we are breaking new ground in a way that is unique at KSU to the MSACS program, which is itself unique.*
 8. A minimum of **three** MSACS students must agree to do research in the same area as the study-abroad opportunity (creating a small research-group, covered under existing policy) to justify the MSACS providing funding for the faculty member to travel (*note that this is more generous than KSU policy in general which requires 8-10 students*).
 9. The faculty member may optionally travel at their own expense with fewer than three MSACS students, or be funded by other means (including grants and undergraduate study-abroad students).
 10. Study-abroad applied-studies projects should be planned and approval sought in the fall, prior to advertising for students for a Maymester or summer trip.

PROCESS FOR CREATING A MSACS APPLIED PROJECT THAT INCLUDES A STUDY-ABROAD EXPERIENCE

1. The sponsoring faculty member will discuss the project with the program director at the beginning of the Fall semester prior to the Maymester study abroad.
2. The sponsoring faculty member will then draw up a formal proposal to include specific educational objectives, budget (<\$3K per student), travel itinerary, project activity timeline with deliverables.
3. The MSACS director will review the proposal for tentative approval.
4. Upon approval by the program director, the proposal will then be submitted to the MSACS curriculum committee for formal approval and validation of graduate hours to be awarded as the student's applied study research project.

Article II. Study Abroad and MSACS Special Topics Courses

Rational:

1. KSU is supporting travel abroad programs and experiences.
2. The MSACS program supports travel to scientific conferences.
3. Appropriately designed graduate MSACS courses can include optional study-abroad experiences if they meet legitimate graduate computer science learning objectives.

Process for MSACS funding travel abroad in connection with a special topics course:

1. Faculty member submits to the MSACS director a special topics course proposal with an optional integrated study-abroad option. The proposal must include a course syllabus, a detailed description of the study abroad experience, its educational objectives and purpose. The course syllabus must include alternative options and clear grading and expectations for both groups of students (those who do and do not choose the study-abroad option). The proposal must be strong enough to justify the awarding of graduate credit and allocation of premium tuition funds.
2. The MSACS ad-hoc program working group will evaluate the proposal.
3. The MSACS program will fund 50% of the cost of the study-abroad experience thus approved.

Student process:

1. Students may choose to take an approved elective that includes a study-abroad optional experience.
2. Students must submit a revised MSACS Plan-of-Study/Applied-Project-Plan that includes the study-abroad experience as one or their program premium experiences.
3. A revised budget must be included in the revised plan.
4. Approval for the MSACS program to pay 50% of the cost of the study-abroad trip is contingent upon available funding and depends on monies already paid out on the student's behalf. [i.e. A student who has already expended their funds for their applied studies project.]