

IMPORTANT

Please note
that completing the
education requirement
is mandatory for
all au pairs!

EDUCATION REQUIREMENT FACT SHEET

The U.S. Department of State regulations governing the au pair program require that “during their initial period of program participation, all au pair participants complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs in accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic course work in an amount not to exceed \$500 for au pair participants.”

What is a post-secondary institution?

It is a school offering classes following the completion of a secondary school, such as a high school. Higher education normally includes undergraduate and postgraduate education, while vocational education and training beyond secondary education is known as continuing higher education in the United States. Colleges, universities, institutes of technology and polytechnic schools are the main institutions that provide tertiary education and are all acceptable options for au pairs to fulfill their education requirement.

How can you make sure a school is a post-secondary accredited institution?

To make sure the school you are considering is a post-secondary accredited institution, please check if it is listed on either of the following websites: U.S. Department of Education Office of Post-Secondary Education at: ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx or Council for Higher Education Accreditation at: chea.org/search/default.asp

These websites, in addition to your Cultural Care Online account, are also useful to find appropriate schools in your area. Any course offered by institutions found on the above websites is acceptable provided that it is not an online/distance-learning course, hybrid course, study tour, internship or volunteering program.

What types of courses can au pairs take?

Au pairs are able to take credit courses, non-credit courses, or credit courses not for credit. Only if a course is a non-credit course are we able to count the classroom hours.

Credit Course: Generally any course that is offered to a full-time student for which a school has assigned a set credit value that the student will receive upon completion. Cultural Care will count the credits that the school assigned to the course.

Non-Credit Course: A non-credit course is a course that a school has not assigned a set credit value to. These are usually offered through the community or continuing education departments of colleges and universities. Cultural Care will count the classroom hours of the course since no credits are assigned to the course and go by the educational standard that 12 hours = 1 credit.¹ A noncredit

course might also be offered for continuing education units (CEU¹) and Cultural Care will count 1 CEU = 1 credit as long as it is offered through a post-secondary accredited institution.

Some colleges offer classes that issue professional CEUs but these are intended for professionals such as nurses or teachers who are required to earn a minimum number of professional CEUs over a specific period of time to maintain their license/status. For a professional CEU, you will find that there's typically a one hour to one CEU ratio which is not the same as an academic CEU that the au pairs can count. They usually host professional seminars and offer a high number of CEUs and the fine print will clarify that these are issued to professionals holding a license in specific areas only. These are professional CEUs and not academic CEUs. If an au pair elects to take a class that assigns less than 10 clock hours to 1 CEU Cultural Care will only count hours, not CEUs and au pairs should use the 72 hour guide for such classes.

Audited Courses: Some schools allow students to take a credit course, but the student can elect not to receive a grade or be awarded transferable credits. This is usually referred to as auditing a course and some schools allow auditing for discounted rates. Not all schools allow students to audit courses and it is often at the discretion of the teacher and based on availability. If an au pair chooses to audit a course, Cultural Care will count the credits that the school assigns the class (even though the au pair neither receives a grade nor actually receives transferable credit.) Please note that au pairs cannot count hours for an audited class that has credits assigned by the school.

Extension Program Educational Requirements

Au pairs must complete their education requirement in the first year by the end of the 11th month² to be eligible to participate in the extension program. Au pairs who are extending do not have the full 12 months to complete their courses, as Cultural Care must submit the extension request to the Department of State 30 days before the end of their first year and must confirm that the education requirement has been completed. The Department of State will not accept an extension request if the program sponsor has not received proof that the au pair has completed the education requirement prior to submission. Any courses au pairs take must end prior to the last day of the 11th month² and cannot take place at any point in their 12th month or extension term.

²Subject to change per U.S. Department of State regulations. If an au pair's 11th month date falls on Saturday or Sunday, the education requirement must be completed by the previous Thursday. If a class ends very close to the 30 day mark, au pairs should contact the Au Pair Services department at 800-333-6056 or extend@culturalcare.com to ensure that the class ends on time and it is still possible to extend.

The education requirement for the extension program varies depending on the length of time an au pair extends for:

12 and 9-month extension au pairs must complete 6 semester hours (or their equivalent) and the host family is responsible for paying up to \$500.

6-month extension au pairs must complete 3 semester hours (or their equivalent) and the host family is responsible for paying up to \$250.

Courses to be counted towards the education requirement in an au pair's extension program term must begin after her/his extension program has begun and must end prior to the completion of her/his extension program. Au pairs are allowed to carry over extra credits that they might have earned in their first year into their extension program, however they cannot make up for missed credits in their first year by taking extra credits during the extension term.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the consequences if an au pair does not complete his/her education requirement?

- She/he will not be able to extend her/his program year
- She/he will not be an au pair in good standing with the program
- She/he will not have successfully completed the program
- She/he may be terminated from the program early
- She/he will not be eligible to participate in the repeat au pair program³

³The repeat program allows au pairs who successfully complete their program to return again to the U.S. after 2 years and repeat the program as long as they are less than 27 years of age at time of return travel. (See home office for further details)

What proof does Cultural Care require to show that an au pair finished her/his course(s)?

Confirmation from the school that proves an au pair completed the course and clearly references how many credits or hours the course(s) is (are) assigned. This can be in the form of a certificate, a transcript from the school or a letter from the instructor/school on official school letterhead (showing the school logo).

If an au pair would like to extend he/she must submit certificates through the extension application found in their online account. If an au pair is not extending, certificates should be submitted through the Program Completion Form. (this link will appear in your account towards the end of your first year).

How many courses are au pairs allowed to take?

Au pairs can take as many courses as they like in so long as they add up to at least 6 credits. Remember that it is critical that au pairs work with their host families to make sure that any class schedule is mutually agreed upon.

Can au pairs choose to count a course in classroom hours or credits?

No. Cultural Care must count the course in the same way that the school does. Only if it is a non-credit course is Cultural Care able to count the classroom hours.

There is a class that is partially taught online. Will this count?

Unfortunately hybrid or blended courses are not allowed. Anytime portion of the lecture is taught online the class does not meet the educational requirements. Au pairs must select classes that are taught exclusively in the classroom.

If an au pair took a class and the certificate says 4 CEU and 40 hours, should I count this as 4 credits or 40 hours?

Cultural Care Au Pair will count 1 CEU = 1 credit as long as the ratio is no less than 10 clock hours to 1 CEU and the class is offered through a post-secondary accredited institution. In this case if an au pair earned 4 CEU she would need to complete another 2 credits, 2 CEUs or 24 hours if she is taking a non-credit class.

Can 2nd year au pairs carry extra credits earned during their 1st year?

Au pairs who have completed more than the required 6 credits or equivalent during the initial year of program participation may carry-over the excess amount of credits towards their extension term.