

ALIGNMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION ABROAD: THE EFFECTIVE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

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Designing Qualitative Assessment Questionnaires

by Lilli Engle

INTRODUCTION

In the interest of encouraging varied and complementary assessment efforts, this handbook offers strategies for the development of meaningful qualitative assessment questionnaires to be completed by students during and/or after their term of study abroad.

Written in-house and inexpensive to implement, student-based questionnaires have already affirmed their place as the most widely used form of outcomes assessment in the field. Too often the *only* form of assessment deployed by the home university, qualitative questionnaires offer a potentially valuable *complement* to the quantitative scoring of measurable learning outcomes. Academic grades, language acquisition testing, intercultural sensitivity development inventories and/or other independent quantitative measures are all enhanced by the contextual grounding provided by qualitative accounts of the students' lived experience abroad.

If well designed, qualitative questionnaires can provide valuable insights into the depth and dynamic of student-learning and personal growth within the context of a particular program or program type. If, on the other hand, such questionnaires are conceived to evaluate a wide variety of programs, they can do little more than repose on one-size-fits-all, common-denominator questions, based inevitably on student satisfaction and/or the subjective comparison of the academic experience abroad with that of the home university campus. Such widely-used questionnaires essentially empower students to respond as designated agents of quality control. In so doing, they advance evaluative criteria rooted in American ethnocentric consumer norms instead of echoing the mission of international education and giving value to the integration of wider perspectives.

For better or worse, the questions asked of students in qualitative assessment questionnaires illustrate the priorities of administrative concerns as much as they *gather and influence* student response. Offering a valuable moment of reflection, qualitative questions determine by what criteria the students evaluate their experience; in so doing, they guide the selective process of memory and fix in words and thought and feeling the students' interpretation of the abroad experience itself.

Questionnaires which acknowledge the importance of guided self-reflection in the experiential learning process offer more than a dutiful administrative closure to a term abroad. Such questionnaires encourage students to recognize the challenges and rewards of an educational experience inherently different from that of the home campus and to take responsibility for their own level of engagement and subsequent achievements.

Holding both program administration and student engagement responsible for learning outcomes in a cross-cultural context, the methodology offered in this handbook traces a route which steers away from the **three common traps** that too often diminish the educational and intercultural value of student-based qualitative questionnaires:

Indulgence of coldly judgemental consumerism, reflected in questions such as

- How would you rank your host family? (scale from 1 to 10)
- Was the on-site staff available to meet my needs?
- Rate the value of home campus pre-departure? (poor / below average / average / good / excellent)
- Are there any particular courses that you would recommend that students take or avoid in the future?
- Rate your satisfaction with the program? (Scale from 1 to 5, low to high)

Reliance on **qualitative terms** that, if unframed in an intercultural context, refer inevitably back to home university standards of reference, reflected in questions such as

- I received *timely* feedback on my academic progress.
- The program was *well-organized*.
- Course material was *clearly presented*.
- Were your living arrangements *adequate*?
- How would you rate the overall teaching *effectiveness* of the instructor?

Overt solicitation of **negative judgements** that serve inadvertently to fix the student's memories of the abroad experience in unproductive ways, reflected in questions such as

- What do you consider to be the least desirable aspect of the program?
- What did you like best/least about your housing?
- What were the weak points of the program?
- What suggestions do you have for improvements of the program?
- Which field trip did you like best/least and why?

Applicable to a wide range of program types, such questions do succeed in recording levels of student/client satisfaction. They do not, however, respond to the higher mission of international education, i.e., the students' discovery of ways of being and doing different from their own AND the trials and rewards of that adaptation process.

In the hope of guiding the profession away from the easy consumerist route which essentially short-circuits the development of an intercultural perspective, this handbook proposes a series of considerations which will allow study abroad professionals to contribute to the achievement of that educational mission.

The following handbook exercises provide opportunities to define learning objectives and place the responsibility of their achievement on all the actors involved. They allow program administrators to record and examine more precisely the effectiveness of their efforts to implement a mission and achieve established goals. The exercises also call attention to the student's own level of motivation and engagement as inherent to the realization of targeted learning outcomes.

Are programs conceived in keeping with their declared goals? Is the level of student preparedness appropriate to the program-type? Is the program implementing a balance of challenge and support conducive to intercultural learning? The following handbook exercises will bring such fundamental questions and their answers to light as those who undertake the process of formulating meaningful qualitative questionnaires focus their attention on the elements that comprise a specific program dynamic and place their students at the center of that orchestrated learning environment. Examining lines of coherence and responsibility, the qualitative questionnaires that result from this thoughtful process can do nothing less than perpetuate a cycle of alignment and accountability rooted in the profession's highest ground.

HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

This Handbook offers a Three-Part Process of guided investigation to establish question-content and formulation. The series of exercises are best undertaken by a small committee of administrators who have considerable first hand knowledge of the program under review.

Part I – Program Mission and Design

Using the **Component-Based Inventory**, home university and on-site program personnel are asked to question and refine the educational mission of the program, its goals, its challenges and their alignment with student admission pre-requisites and motivation.

Part II - Program Components: Their Intended Learning Goals & Inherent Challenges

Using the prepared worksheets, study abroad professionals are asked to determine the goal, or goals of each program component, by responding to the simple question: *What ideally do you want this program component to do?* They are then invited to list and validate the underlying cross-cultural challenges specific to each program component. Once the component-level goals and challengers are targeted, the handbook guides their transformation into evaluative question form.

Part III – Implicating Student Responsibility

Using the prepared worksheets, international educators are asked to consider behavior that reflects ideal student engagement. They are then asked to list observable student habits by responding to the simple question: *What would the ideal student do (in light of a given learning objective)?* Once ideal student behavior has been targeted, the handbook guides the transformation of these lists into evaluative question form.

SAMPLE QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Using the homestay option of the housing component as an example, here is a “before and after” illustration of the way in which questionnaires can be transformed by way of this handbook’s methodology.

Before:

Students are asked to comment freely on the following questions:

- Were your living arrangements satisfactory?
- What were the positive and negative aspects of your stay with this host family?
- If you could start over, would you live in the same type of accommodation?
- Should we continue to use this housing situation?
- Would you recommend that we retain this family in the future?

After:

Students respond to statements that recall the mission and goals of the program, validate the sometimes difficult adaptation to difference, and acknowledge their own actions as contributing to the quality of their experience. The statements are followed by likert scale responses or other such scales (see the section on Implementing the Assessment Process) easily adaptable to on-line questionnaires and their tabulation. Responses to such targeted statements can be enriched and nuanced by the student’s personal comments solicited by the simple invitation to *Please Explain*

The living environment in my homestay was considerably different from what I am used to at home.
Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

My host family environment provided me with the opportunity to:

(*Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree* options to be provided after each statement followed by the invitation to *Please Explain*)

- Challenge my adaptational skills
- Improve my mastery of the host language
- Overcome my timidity or reserve
- Discover new foods and dining habits
- Enjoy a safe and clean “home base” for my time abroad
- Balance my time between class work, friends, and family relations
- Develop privileged insights into host culture habits and concerns
- Develop lasting ties of friendship with host nationals
- Experiences places and people out of general tourist reach
- Clarify my own values and priorities in my relationship with others
- Feel “at home” in the host culture

Instead of feeling like a child again in a new family structure, I was able to integrate my host family as a responsible and considerate adult.

Strongly agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

In order to contribute to the success of my homestay, I: (*check all that apply*)

- .. Learned and accepted my host family’s customs
- .. Participated regularly in their activities even outside of mealtimes
- .. Regularly shared stories and anecdotes of my day
- .. Helped around the house as I could
- .. Kept my room clean to their satisfaction
- .. Asked for their help and advice
- .. Accepted their invitations for activities and outings

DEFINING TERMS AND USAGE

Assessment

The collection of statistical data on individual performance or from individual activities. The data collected can be qualitative or quantitative in nature.

Evaluation

The interpretation or analysis of scores and statistics, along with other types of information, in order to formulate a **judgment** or conclusion about the value, quality, merit, etc. of whatever is being evaluated.

Ethnocentric

The natural tendency to look at the world primarily from the **perspective of one's own culture** and to evaluate all other groups from that viewpoint.

Ethnorelative

The opposite of ethnocentric. The developed ability to adapt one's behaviour and judgments to a variety of standards and customs, to perceive and experience other cultures empathetically, on their own terms.

Goal

Broad concept to strive for. *Examples:* language proficiency, cultural integration

Outcomes

Specific abilities, knowledge, values, attitudes developed through study abroad.

Examples: listening comprehension, the number and richness of friendships formed abroad

Qualitative Assessment or Evaluation

The collection and use of subjective personal judgment to rate the characteristics of something.

Quantitative Assessment or Evaluation

The collection and use of objective data in order to determine the numerically measurable aspects of something - how many, how much, how long and so on.

PART I: USING THE COMPONENT-BASED PROGRAM INVENTORY

The first step of the methodology encourages program administrators at home and abroad to collaborate jointly in order to examine the program under review. The field of study abroad encompasses a wide range of program types, each with varying objectives, means, and challenges. The Component-Based Inventory (CBI) offers a schematic breakdown of the elements that combine to create a large variety of programs or program types.

The exercise of completing the CBI offers a series of considerations to help a small committee, comprised ideally of both home university and on-site personnel, to:

- Formulate, revise, or confirm the program's **mission** statement;
- Consider and list learning **goals**;
- Define and consider appropriate program **components**;
- Evaluate the cross-cultural **challenge** inherent in each component choice;
- Consider and establish appropriate criteria of **student preparedness** in view of the projected adaptational challenge.

Creating appropriate qualitative assessment questionnaires begins with an understanding of program mission, goals, and corresponding program design. As a descriptive and diagnostic tool, the following Component Based Inventory of Study Abroad Program Types presents a succinct overview

of the key elements that constitute a study abroad program and a valuable opportunity to examine the continuity and purpose of most programs' inter-locking parts.

As such, the CBI can be an effective tool to use in conjunction with the queries found in the Forum's *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*. The CBI provides a supplemental way to assess the effectiveness of an organization's mission for education abroad. The relevant section of the Forum Standards appears below.

1. Mission: The organization, with respect to education abroad, has a formally-adopted mission statement for its overall operations and for its individual programs that is known to and accepted by its faculty and staff.

a. Mission and Commitment: The organization has mission statements appropriate for each program.

i. Does the organization have a mission statement for its programs? If so, what is it?

ii. Does each program have clear objectives?

iii. Does the organization define expected outcomes?

<http://www.forumea.org/documents/ForumEAStandardsGoodPrctMarch2008.pdf>

CBI Sample 1

Sample 1 below has been filled out as an example of a "Cultural Immersion" program type. The form, however, is conceived to be suitable for most all program types. As you examine the form and the answers provided, look for logic in program design in terms of continuity of purpose. Do the components and their objectives combine to create a total synergy which affirms and supports the mission and goals as stated by the program itself in the introductory sections?

CBI Sample 2

Sample 2 is simply a synopsis of the first form, filled out as an example of a "Cultural Immersion Program." This "At a Glance" consolidation of program objectives and corresponding components not only shows program coherence, but also may prove to be useful in student advising. In support of the effort to find a good student/program match, it is recommended that all offered programs be obliged to supply such a concise cover-form to the sending institution along with their promotional materials.

CBI Sample 3

The blank form can be employed for any program or program type. It is suggested that, if a program offers both semester-long and short-term programs of study - a form be filled out for each type of program, assuming that the component of "duration of stay" will have an impact on corresponding goals and their level of ambition. Ideally, the form should be completed by the resident director in a small committee of stateside and/or on-site professionals with firsthand knowledge of the program's mission and corresponding design. The exercise can amount to putting into words what is most commonly taken for granted and rarely detailed in clear terms. This is likely the case in regard to program and component-related goals and most certainly the case regarding the projected level of adaptational challenge and transformative learning the program hopes to provide.

Determining Levels of Adaptational Challenge

Those engaged in program design know that, in order to be effective, a program's goals must be gauged according to the student's level of preparedness. Overly challenged students will "drop out" of the adaptation process, form a "clan" with other like students, and complain. Students who go unchallenged, who find a learning environment abroad too much in keeping with their habits and expectations at home, will be lulled by the familiarity and fall into old patterns. As a result, instead of transforming themselves, they, too often, transform their host environment into an overseas playground.

The level of adaptational challenge, i.e. to what extent the host culture and/or the learning environment differs from what is already comfortably acceptable to the student, is an important factor in a successful student/program match. The Component-Based Inventory provides a scale for evaluative judgment:

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

There is no formula to determine this quotient however. The evaluative judgment is formulated from insider knowledge of

- the specific program content (What happens in the host classrooms in terms of teaching style, organization, materials, and assignments? What happens in the host families in terms of rules, expectations, interpersonal dynamic? What is the male/female dynamic in the host culture? etc.), and
- the expected average level of preparedness of the targeted student group.

For example, despite the degree of cultural immersion offered by the component, most U.S. students today flee the individual homestay placement. This comes as no surprise considering that, for students used to considerable independence and liberty of movement first at home then on campus, a structured family setting with its relationships, subsequent obligations, and potentially more collectivist customs can be a high-level adaptational challenge indeed.

A close look at the level of adaptational challenge offered by study abroad programs is essential to an accurate cross-section of what is truly happening in the field. As seen earlier, customer-satisfaction based end-of-program questionnaires inadvertently discourage programs from implementing high levels of challenge; taking students out of their comfort zone increases the chance of ending up with “unhappy” students, and, with student-based popular support being the key to survival, few programs can afford to run that risk. This unfortunate yet predictable reluctance and its related issues (such as the need for skilled on-site mentoring and the need for higher levels of student preparedness) will become the pressing considerations of the years to come.

For the moment, we hope that the following exercise of examining and detailing the guiding motivations and structural components of programs abroad will help bring to light certain strengths and shortcomings in the field and inspire a guiding ambition based not on numbers of students and their consumer satisfaction but on the true content and effectiveness of the abroad experience itself.

Study Abroad Program Types Component-Based Inventory*

Program location: Western Europe, provincial France

Host Institution: Locally staffed, independent program provider

Program Type: Cultural Immersion Program
(see Annex 2 for suggested terms or supply other)

Academic Focus:

French and European Studies; Literature and the Arts; Cross-cultural Communication

Terms available/Term in Question:

.. Fall	Enrollment Limit __45__	Enrollment average _30__
P Spring	Enrollment Limit __45__	Enrollment average _40__
.. Full-Year	Enrollment Limit as above	
.. Summer	Enrollment Limit __45__	Enrollment average _40__
.. Other _____	Enrollment Limit _____	Enrollment average _____

Program mission statement (50 words or fewer)

Provide motivated students with opportunities and strategies for cross-cultural learning both inside and outside the classroom in order to lay the foundation for transformative self-discovery and promising international careers.

The primary (5-10) educational goals of the program:

What does this program intend to do?

- Assure academic rigor by way of courses taught by host faculty, adapted to non-native speakers and dependent-learning style;
- Accompany the adaptation process by way of a core course which combines intercultural communication theory and a clear methodology on deciphering cultural patterns and discerning meaning in context;
- Provide independent housing placements in host families to maximize opportunity for cultural exchange and interpersonal bonding;
- Facilitate the formation of local friendships by way of obligatory community service work, local-student conversation exchange, local club membership;
- Emphasize target language acquisition with language pledge and all French-speaking academic environment;
- Engage in pre and post-semester outcomes assessment in both language acquisition and intercultural sensitivity development.

Program components:

Length of student sojourn

Number of weeks **15** considered as

- Summer term
- Inter term or J-term or mid-semester break
- One quarter

P One semester

- Two quarters
- Full academic year
- Summer plus semester, as a continuum
- Summer plus academic year, as a continuum
- Other _____

Language of the study abroad host culture

- Predominantly or entirely English

P Predominantly or entirely another language

- Predominantly English as academic language, predominantly other(s) for everyday interactions
- Various locations with different languages

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Overcome initial feelings of disorientation
- Overcome initial frustrations of limited eloquence and comprehension
- Learn to communicate non-verbally
- Build new vocabulary and communication skills
- Deal with ambiguity

Language used in coursework

- English exclusively
- English predominantly
- Target language predominantly

P Target language exclusively

P Pledge requiring exclusive use of target language both inside and outside of class

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Overcome initial frustrations of limited eloquence and comprehension
- Develop new strategies for note-taking
- Deal with ambiguity

Context of academic work

Instructors

- Entirely home-institution faculty
- Predominately home-institution or US faculty

P Predominately host-country faculty

- Entirely host-country faculty

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- High-context, lecture-based teaching style
- Hierarchical student-teacher rapport
- Fewer support materials

US student classmates

- Entirely home-university student group

P Students from a number of North American institutions

- A mix of North American and other visiting foreign students
- Predominately US students, complemented by one or two integrated university course(s) with host nationals
- Predominately host nationals

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Tendency to compare knowledge and level of preparedness;
- Tendency to clan to the detriment of seeking out friendships among host nationals;
- Tendency to “sympathize” and collectively amplify complaints.

Predominant academic model and pedagogy

- US classroom pedagogy
- Experiential model/pedagogy

P Host country pedagogy adapted to US student group

- Host country pedagogy adapted to a range of visiting foreign students
- Host country curriculum and pedagogy

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Dominant use of lecture format for transmission of knowledge
- Dominant use of essay-questions to demonstrate knowledge

Academic Setting

Check all that apply

- In-country branch campus of a US university
- US-patterned and/or US-accredited institution based in the host country
- Travel-based program (relatively continuous travel to multiple sites)
- Field study program (built around internships, service learning, research, archeological dig, etc.)
- US institution -sponsored study abroad center or home institution faculty-led classroom program
- Non-accredited US agency-sponsored study abroad center
- P Non-accredited host country study abroad center**
- Special program for international students in a host university
- US university- or agency-facilitated enrollment a host country university
- Direct independent US student enrollment in host country university

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Adapt to institutional rules foreign to the American system: no eating or drinking in class, no coming and going during class sessions, etc.

Type of student housing

- Hotel, hostel, or pension
- Insular apartments: Alone or with American housemate(s)
- Insular dormitories: Alone or with American roommate(s)
- International apartments: Shared with international, non-American housemate(s)
- International dormitories: Shared with international, non-American roommate(s)
- Integrated apartments: Shared with host national housemate(s)
- Integrated dormitories: Shared with host national roommate(s)

- Homestay rental: Semi-independent lodging, i.e. some or no meals, limited participation in host family life; *with* American housemate
- Homestay rental: Semi-independent lodging, i.e. some or no meals, limited participation in host family life; *without* American housemate
- Integration homestay: Most meals and ample participation in host family life; *with* American housemate
- P Integration homestay: Most meals and ample participation** in host family life; **without American housemate**
- Other (describe):

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Adapt to a structured family environment after years of independence
- Establish a relationship of complicity and exchange with the host family
- Find a balance between family-related activities and outings with friends
- Adapt to new meal times and menus
- Accept rules and obligations related to family expectations.

Structured cultural interaction

Check all that apply

- Homestay Visit: A sample experience for students staying predominantly in another type of housing.
- P Guided tours:** Visit to local sites unrelated or loosely related to academic coursework
- P Field trips:** Classroom extended to local sites
- P Social/cultural events:** Regularly organized extracurricular contact with host nationals
- P Conversation exchange:** Regularly organized extra-curricular meetings with host nationals for target language conversation practice
- P Field assignments:** Part of on-site coursework, individual or small-group effort
- Individual field research projects
- Service learning or internships: Credit-related
- P Regular volunteer work:** Non credit-related

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Take independent initiative beyond the structured cross-cultural encounter

Guided reflection on cultural experience

Check all that apply

- P Pre-arrival orientation materials provided**
- P Arrival orientation**
- On-going, on-site activities to accompany adaptation process
- P On-going coursework in cross-cultural communication**
- P Formal program of cross-cultural facilitation or mentoring**
- Individualized cultural research projects
- P Re-entry preparation on-site**

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

- Accept generalizations about cultural patterns and tendencies
- See themselves as the product of cultural conditioning
- Develop an ability to attribute meaning within an appropriate cultural context
- Attempt to see people and events through the perspective of the host culture.

Admission Pre-requisites

Required entry-level target language competence

Prerequisite of ___4-5___ **semesters** quarters of college-level foreign language instruction, considered as: (descriptive terms taken from the widely accessible ACTFL scale)

Advanced

Intermediate High

Intermediate Mid

Intermediate Low

Novice High

Novice Mid

Novice Low or no prior knowledge

Academic standing

Overall GPA: 3.0

Major GPA: 3.0

Current class: predominantly junior year

Ideal Entry-Level of Student Motivation and Preparedness

Check all that apply

High tolerance for ambiguity

Desire for meaningful engagement in the host culture

Intellectually curious, capable of independent initiative

Reactive and forthcoming in structured academic environment

Reliable and productive in structured academic environment

Dependent on structured academic environment for academic performance and emotional well-being

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Sample 2: At a Glance Profile based on Sample 1 (Cultural Immersion Program).

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM TYPES

Component-Based Inventory*

PROGRAM PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Program location: Western Europe, provincial France

Host Institution: Locally staffed, independent program provider

Program Type: Cultural Immersion Program

Academic Focus:

French and European Studies; Literature and the Arts; Cross-cultural Communication

Terms available/Term in Question:

.. Fall	Enrollment Limit <u>45</u>	Enrollment average <u>30</u>
P Spring	Enrollment Limit <u>45</u>	Enrollment average <u>40</u>
.. Full-Year		
.. Summer	Enrollment Limit <u>45</u>	Enrollment average <u>(new program)</u>

Mission statement:

Provide motivated students with opportunities and strategies for cross-cultural learning both inside and outside the classroom in order to lay the foundation for transformative self-discovery and promising international careers.

Educational goals:

- Assure academic rigor by way of courses taught by host faculty, adapted to non-native speakers and dependent-learning style;
- Accompany the adaptation process by way of a core course which combines intercultural communication theory and a clear methodology on deciphering cultural patterns and discerning meaning in context;
- Provide independent housing placements in host families to maximize opportunity for cultural exchange and interpersonal bonding;
- Facilitate the formation of local friendships by way of obligatory community service work, local-student conversation exchange, local club membership;
- Emphasize target language acquisition with language pledge and all French speaking academic environment;
- Engage in pre and post semester outcomes assessment in both language acquisition and intercultural sensitivity development.

Length of student sojourn

One semester (15 weeks)

Language of the study abroad host culture

Entirely French

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 5 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students:

- Overcome initial feelings of disorientation
- Overcome initial frustrations of limited eloquence and comprehension
- Learn to communicate non-verbally
- Build new vocabulary and communication skills
- Deal with ambiguity

Language used in coursework

Exclusively French

Pledge requiring exclusive use of French both inside and outside of class

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 5 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students:

- Overcome initial frustrations of limited eloquence and comprehension
- Develop new strategies for note-taking
- Deal with ambiguity

Context of academic work

Instructors

Predominately host-country faculty

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 4 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students deal with:

- High-context, lecture-based teaching style
- Hierarchical student-teacher rapport
- Fewer support materials

Classmates

Students from a number of North American institutions

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 2 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students deal with:

- Tendency to compare knowledge and level of preparedness;
- Tendency to clan to the detriment of seeking out friendships among host nationals;
- Tendency to “sympathize” and collectively amplify complaints.

Predominant academic model and pedagogy

Host country pedagogy adapted to US student group

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 4 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students deal with:

- Dominant use of lecture format for transmission of knowledge
- Dominant use of essay-questions to demonstrate knowledge

Academic Setting

Non-accredited host country study abroad center

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 2 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students:

- Adapt to institutional rules foreign to the American system: no eating or drinking in class, no coming and going during class sessions, etc.

Type of student housing

Integration homestay

Most meals and ample participation in host family life; without American housemate

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 5 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students:

- Adapt to a structured family environment after years of independence
- Establish a relationship of complicity and exchange with the host family
- Find a balance between family-related activities and outings with friends
- Adapt to new meal times and menus
- Accept rules and obligations related to family expectations.

Structured cultural interaction

- **Guided tours:** Visit to local sites unrelated or loosely related to academic coursework
- **Field trips:** Classroom extended to local sites
- **Social/cultural events:** Regularly organized extracurricular contact with host nationals
- **Conversation exchange:** Regularly organized extra-curricular meetings with host nationals for target language conversation practice
- **Field assignments:** Part of on-site coursework, individual or small-group effort
- **Regular volunteer work:** Non credit-related

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 4 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students:

- Take independent initiative beyond the structured cross-cultural encounter

Guided reflection on cultural experience

- Pre-arrival orientation materials provided
- Arrival orientation
- On-going coursework in cross-cultural communication
- Formal program of cross-cultural facilitation or mentoring
- Re-entry preparation on-site

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: 4 (scale of low to high 1-5)

The program intervenes to help students:

- Accept generalizations about cultural patterns and tendencies
- See themselves as the product of cultural conditioning
- Develop an ability to attribute meaning within an appropriate cultural context
- Attempt to see people and events through the perspective of the host culture.

Admission Pre-requisites

Required entry-level target-language competence

Prerequisite of four semesters of college-level instruction: **Intermediate High**

Academic standing

Overall GPA 3.0

Major GPA 3.0

Current class: predominantly junior year

Ideal Entry-Level of Student Motivation and Preparedness

Desire for meaningful engagement in the host culture

Intellectually curious, capable of independent initiative

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM TYPES Component-Based Inventory*

Program location:

Host Institution:

Program Type:

(see Annex 2 for suggested terms or supply other)

Academic Focus:

Terms available/ Term in Question:

Fall	Enrollment Limit _____	Enrollment average _____
Spring	Enrollment Limit _____	Enrollment average _____
Full Year	Enrollment Limit _____	Enrollment average _____
Summer	Enrollment Limit _____	Enrollment average _____
Other _____	Enrollment Limit _____	Enrollment average _____

Program mission statement and/or program description (as published in promotional materials)

50 words or fewer

The primary (5-10) educational goals of the program:

What does this program intend to do?

-
-
-
-
-

Program components:

Length of student sojourn

- Number of weeks _____, considered as
- Summer term
 - Inter term or J-term or mid-semester break
 - One quarter
 - One semester
 - Two quarters
 - Full academic year
 - Summer plus semester, as a continuum
 - Summer plus academic year, as a continuum
 - Other _____

Language of the study abroad host culture

- Predominantly or entirely English
- Predominantly or entirely another language
- Predominantly English as academic language, predominantly other(s) for everyday interactions
- Various locations with different languages

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Language used in coursework

- English exclusively
- English predominantly
- Target language predominantly
- Target language exclusively
- Pledge requiring exclusive use of target language both inside and outside of class

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Context of academic work

Instructors

- Entirely home-institution faculty
- Predominately home-institution or US faculty
- Predominately host-country faculty
- Entirely host-country faculty

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Classmates

- Entirely home-university student group
- Students from a number of North American institutions
- A mix of North American and other visiting foreign students
- Predominately US students, complemented by one or two integrated university course(s) with host nationals
- Predominately host nationals

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Predominant academic model and pedagogy

- US classroom pedagogy
- Experiential model/pedagogy
- Host country pedagogy adapted to US student group
- Host country pedagogy adapted to a range of visiting foreign students
- Host country curriculum and pedagogy

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Academic Setting

Check all that apply

- In-country branch campus of a US university
- US-patterned and/or US-accredited institution based in the host country
- Travel-based program (relatively continuous travel to multiple sites)
- Field study program (built around internships, service learning, research, archeological dig, etc.)
- US institution -sponsored study abroad center or home institution faculty-led classroom program
- Non-accredited US agency-sponsored study abroad center
- Non-accredited host country study abroad center
- Special program for international students in a host university
- US university- or agency-facilitated enrollment a host country university
- Direct independent US student enrollment in host country university

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Type of student housing

- Hotel, hostel, or pension
- Insular apartments: Alone or with American housemate(s)
- Insular dormitories: Alone or with American roommate(s)
- International apartments: Shared with international, non-American housemate(s)

- International dormitories: Shared with international, non-American roommate(s)
- Integrated apartments: Shared with host national housemate(s)
- Integrated dormitories: Shared with host national roommate(s)
- Homestay rental: Semi-independent lodging, i.e. some or no meals, limited participation in host family life; *with* American housemate
- Homestay rental: Semi-independent lodging, i.e. some or no meals, limited participation in host family life; *without* American housemate
- Integration homestay: Most meals and ample participation in host family life; *with* American housemate
- Integration homestay: Most meals and ample participation in host family life; *without* American housemate
- Other (describe):

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-

Structured cultural interaction

Check all that apply

- Homestay Visit: A sample experience for students staying predominantly in another type of housing.
- Guided tours: Visit to local sites unrelated or loosely related to academic coursework
- Field trips: Classroom extended to local sites
- Social/cultural events: Regularly organized extracurricular contact with host nationals
- Conversation exchange: Regularly organized extra-curricular meetings with host nationals for target language conversation practice
- Field assignments: Part of on-site coursework, individual or small-group effort
- Individual field research projects
- Service learning or internships: Credit-related
- Regular volunteer work: Non credit-related

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-
-

Guided reflection on cultural experience

Check all that apply

- Pre-arrival orientation materials provided
- Arrival orientation
- On-going, on-site activities to accompany adaptation process
- On-going coursework in cross-cultural communication
- Formal program of cross-cultural facilitation or mentoring
- Individualized cultural research projects
- Re-entry preparation on-site
- Re-entry facilitation on home campus

Projected adaptational challenge and transformative learning: low to high 1 2 3 4 5

List the elements of the challenge:

-
-
-
-

Admission Pre-requisites

Required entry-level target language competence

Prerequisite of _____ semesters quarters of college-level foreign language instruction, considered as: (descriptive terms taken from the widely accessible ACTFL scale)

- Advanced
- Intermediate High
- Intermediate Mid
- Intermediate Low
- Novice High
- Novice Mid
- Novice Low or no prior knowledge

Academic standing

Overall GPA

Major GPA

Current class:

Ideal Entry-Level of Student Preparedness and Motivation

Check all that apply

- High tolerance for ambiguity
- Desire for meaningful engagement in the host culture
- Curious, gregarious, capable of independent initiative
- Reactive and forthcoming in structured academic environment
- Reliable and productive in structured academic environment
- Dependent on structured academic environment for academic performance and emotional well-being

PART II: THE PROGRAM

ALIGNING COMPONENTS, INTENDED GOALS, INTENDED CHALLENGES AND QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Introduction

Now that components, goals, and challenges have been defined, the process of writing qualitative questions that are grounded in the programs stated mission can begin.

The following pages require a component-by-component analysis of program design with the guiding question being, “By implementing this component, what did the program hope to achieve?” Ideally, what will appear on the left hand pages that follow is a list of action verbs that relate the intended student-learning objectives of the component in question. This listing of objectives is a thoughtful process that represents the greater part of the effort involved. Once the specific learning goals have been clearly stated, the related questions essentially write themselves.

Remember, the questions serve to reveal

- to what extent the program succeeded in implementing a learning environment supportive of its stated student-learning objectives;
- to what extent the students engaged in, and feel that they benefitted from, the process.

Under “Logistics” later in this manual, you will find a selection of question types to choose from. Most are easily adaptable to on-line forms.

As we have seen earlier, qualitative questions appropriate to cross-cultural considerations avoid undefined qualitative words. Example:

- *The teachers communicated clearly and in an engaging manner*
strongly agree / agree / neutral / disagree / strongly disagree

Conditioned by old habits, you may initially find this question normal and acceptable to qualitative assessment. Delving further, the issue at hand becomes what can “clearly” or “engaging manner” mean to a student used to American low-context styles of communication, which rely on lists, and short, to-the-point answers or explanations? How can he/she evaluate the quality of a high context style of lecturing, common to many of the world’s classrooms, without formulating a negative judgment?

Offering an appropriate cross cultural shift in perspective, questions related to intercultural learning goals will place emphasis on what the program hoped *to do* by its very efforts to place students in such a “foreign” classroom environment.

Assessment questions that affirm and support the desirable and challenging process of cultural adaptation serve to validate the educational relevance and importance of the massive logistic and geographical mobilization which is study abroad. Such an evaluation process raises the level of accountability and awareness which will ultimately serve to honor both the program’s ambition and the students’ achievement. What more can we ask?

PART II: THE PROGRAM
ALIGNING COMPONENTS, INTENDED GOALS, AND QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

PROGRAM COMPONENT	SAMPLE GOAL <i>Ideally, what do you want this program component to do ?</i>	EXAMPLE QUESTION <i>Put each goal into an evaluative question form.</i>
Home campus pre-departure orientation	Prepare the student psychologically for the cross-cultural challenge ahead.	The pre-departure orientation program prepared me psychologically for the cross-cultural challenge ahead. <i>Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree</i>
On-site orientation	Provide the language and concepts to understand and explain cultural differences.	To what extent did the on-site orientation provide you with the language and concepts to understand and explain cultural differences? <i>Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all</i>
Academic program / Course work	Establish a link between the course content and the study abroad location.	To what extent did the academic program establish a link between the course content and the study abroad location? Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all
Student services / Program staffing	Show resourcefulness in providing pragmatic solutions to logistical needs.	The staff showed resourcefulness in providing pragmatic solutions to my logistical needs. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Housing	Offer a forum of communication and personal bonding.	To what extent did the housing arrangements offer a forum of communication and personal bonding? Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all
Integration activities	Offer opportunities for connectedness and sharing outside the student/learner framework.	The program's integration activities offered opportunities for connectedness and sharing outside the student/learner framework. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Overall program	Provoke in students: § A greater understanding of themselves as Americans and of the US in world affairs. § Clarification of their future educational and/or career goals § Re-consideration of their future educational and/or career goals.	In which of the following ways has your study abroad experience impacted your life? <i>(check all that apply)</i> .. Acquisition of a greater understanding of myself as an American and of the US in world affairs. .. Clarification of my future educational and/or career goals .. Re-consideration of my future educational and/or career goals.
Re-entry facilitation	Provide advice and guidance as to how to build on skills acquired abroad.	To what extent did re-entry facilitation provide you with advice and guidance as to how to build on skills acquired abroad? Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all

ALIGNING PROJECTED CHALLENGES WITH QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

PROGRAM COMPONENT	SAMPLE CHALLENGE <i>Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.</i>	EXAMPLE QUESTION <i>Put each challenge into an evaluative question form.</i>
On-site orientation Facilitation or Mentoring	Develop an ability to attribute meaning within an appropriate cultural context.	The orientation program helped me develop an ability to attribute meaning within an appropriate cultural context. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Academic program / Course work	Adapt to a different teaching style.	To what extent were you able to adapt to the more lecture-based, high-context teaching style of your host national professors? Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A
Student services / Program staffing	Limited staff accessibility due to local labor laws.	I accepted as culturally “normal” the pre-defined and limited availability of the on-site staff and relied, when necessary, on my own resourcefulness. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Housing	Adapt to a structured family environment after years of independence.	To what extent were you able to integrate a structured family environment without feeling like a dependent child, but as an interdependent adult? Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A
Integration activities	Take on independent initiative beyond the structured cross-cultural encounter.	To what degree were you able to take initiative outside program-structured activities to meet and meaningfully interact with host nationals? Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A
Overall program	Attempt to see people and events through the perspective of the host culture.	To what extent were you able to begin to experience people and events from the perspective of the host culture? Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A

ON-SITE ORIENTATION

Establishing Goals

Ideally, what do you want on-site orientation **to do**?

Example

Provide the language and concepts to understand and explain cultural differences.

Underlying Adaptational Challenges

Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.

Example

Develop an ability to attribute meaning within an appropriate cultural context.

ON-SITE ORIENTATION

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed goal into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what extent did the on-site orientation provide you with the language and concepts to understand and explain cultural differences?

Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed challenge into an evaluative question form.

Example

The orientation program helped me develop an ability to attribute meaning within an appropriate cultural context.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

ACADEMIC PROGRAM / COURSE WORK

Establishing Goals

Ideally, what do you want your courses and instructors **to do**?

Example

Establish a link between the course content and the study abroad location.

Underlying Adaptational Challenges

Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.

Example

Adapt to a different teaching style.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM / COURSE WORK

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed goal into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what extent did the academic program establish a link between the course content and the study abroad location?

Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed challenge into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what extent were you able to adapt to the more lecture-based, high-context teaching style of your host national professors?

Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A

STUDENT SERVICES / PROGRAM STAFFING

Establishing Goals

Ideally, what do you want student services / program staffing to do?

Example

Show resourcefulness in providing pragmatic solutions to logistical needs.

Underlying Adaptational Challenges

Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.

Example

Limited staff accessibility due to local labor laws.

STUDENT SERVICES / PROGRAM STAFFING

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed goal into an evaluative question form.

Example

The staff showed resourcefulness in providing pragmatic solutions to my logistical needs.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed challenge into an evaluative question form.

Example

I accepted as culturally “normal” the pre-defined and limited availability of the on-site staff and relied, when necessary, on my own resourcefulness.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

HOUSING

Establishing Goals

Ideally, what do you want housing arrangements **to provide**?

Example

Offer a forum of communication and personal bonding.

Underlying Adaptational Challenges

Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.

Example

Adapt to a structured family environment after years of independence.

HOUSING

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed goal into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what extent did the housing arrangements offer a forum of communication and personal bonding?

Well / Very Well / Fairly Well / Not at all

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed challenge into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what extent were you able to integrate a structured family environment without feeling like a dependent child, but as an interdependent adult?

Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A

INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

Establishing Goals

Ideally, what do you want integration activities to do?

Example

Offer opportunities for connectedness and sharing outside the student/learner framework.

Underlying Adaptational Challenges

Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.

Example

Take on independent initiative beyond the structured cross-cultural encounter.

INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed goal into an evaluative question form.

Example

The program's integration activities offered opportunities for connectedness and sharing outside the student/learner framework.

Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed challenge into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what degree were you able to take initiative outside program-structured activities to meet and meaningfully interact with host nationals?.

Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY OR IMPACT

Establishing Goals

Ideally, what do you want your program to do?

Example

Provoke in students:

- § A greater understanding of themselves as Americans and of the US in world affairs.
- § Clarification of their future educational and/or career goals.
- § Re-consideration of their future educational and/or career goals.

Underlying Adaptational Challenges

Identify and validate the major cross-cultural challenges specific to this program component.

Example

Attempt to see people and events through the perspective of the host culture.

OVERALL PROGRAM QUALITY OR IMPACT

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed goal into an evaluative question form.

Example

In which of the following ways has your study abroad experience impacted your life?

- .. Acquisition of a greater understanding of myself as an American and of the US in world affairs.
- .. Clarification of my future educational and/or career goals
- .. Re-consideration of my future educational and/or career goals.

Formulating Evaluative Questions

Put each listed challenge into an evaluative question form.

Example

To what extent were you able to begin to experience people and events from the perspective of the host culture?

Easily / Fairly easily / With difficulty / Never got used to it / Rejected this way of being / N/A

PART III: THE IDEAL STUDENT COMPONENT

COMPOSING QUESTIONS BASED ON IDEAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

The following section guides the formulation of questions that allow students to evaluate their own motivation, attitude, personal investment, academic performance, and personal growth within the context of a suggested behavioural ideal.

The exercise below works with the elements (motivation, attitude, personal investment, etc.) that the student contributes to his/her experience abroad. In the column on the left, you will produce a list of action verbs relative to, for example, what a motivated student **would ideally do** in preparation for or during their experience abroad. As you engage the process, imagine the ideal student at work. *Enjoy* setting expectations. If study abroad professionals have no expectations in mind, how can students live up to them?

In the right-hand column, you will formulate questions that simply reflect or recall the terms of the pre-defined ideal behavior - terms that will have been expressed and sustained in a variety of ways throughout the program itself.

Example:

In order to maximize my learning of the host language, I (*check all that apply*)

- .. Engaged host nationals in conversation whenever possible
- .. Spoke the language with my American classmates
- .. Kept a notebook of new phrases and expressions that I would attempt to use
- .. Read "for fun" in the host language outside of class assignments
- .. Watched local television
- .. Read local newspapers and magazines
- .. Rehearsed anecdotes to tell to local family and friends
- .. Embraced local music and learned the lyrics of songs

Instead of being called upon to consumeristically judge the "quality" of services rendered, students benefit fully if they are guided to assume responsibility for their learning and for their experience as a whole. Again, a program provider cannot promise or provide a study abroad **experience**. A program provider can and should conscientiously structure and implement a **learning environment** geared to an appropriate level of adaptational challenge relative to the preparedness of the student group. The subsequent experience is the result of the student's encounter with the new environment and the choices he/she makes every day to seize or to recoil from the opportunities at hand.

Qualitative assessment questionnaires can all too easily reinforce the popular belief that an experience is provided for the ethnocentric student/client. Assessment questions along those lines indulge and encourage passive and demanding consumers.

In contrast, questions which place emphasis on behavioural ideals guide students to see themselves as the creators of their own experience, thus empowering them in an insightful and constructive way. By taking responsibility for their learning and even for their own happiness, students learn the invaluable life lessons that study abroad is particularly well suited to provide.

We hope that the following rubric of ideals and their question forms will trace the first steps of this higher path.

PART III: THE IDEAL STUDENT COMPONENT
COMPOSING QUESTIONS BASED ON IDEAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

IDEAL-STUDENT COMPONENT	EXAMPLE GOAL <i>What do you want the ideal student to do ?</i>	EXAMPLE QUESTION <i>Put each goal into an evaluative question form.</i>
Motivation	Study host language prior to arrival.	How many years or semesters of prior study had you devoted to the host language prior to arrival? High School _____ College _____ Other _____
Attitude	Accept the way things are, despite cultural differences.	I learned to accept ways of behaving and organizing activities different from my own. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree/Not Applicable
Investment	Seek out personal integration activities.	I sought out opportunities to engage with host nationals beyond the structured program offerings. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Academic Performance	Progress in language learning.	During my time abroad, my language skills progressed substantially in the following domains : .. Listening comprehension .. Speaking .. Writing .. Vocabulary and idioms
Personal Growth	Acquire greater tolerance for ambiguity.	I didn't always understand what was going on, but I learned to relax with that. Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

ANNEX I

EXAMPLES OF CONSUMER-BASED QUESTIONS

Housing

- *Please give an overall rating of your living accommodations (outstanding/very good/ok/fair/poor)*
- *If you could start over, would you live in the same type of accommodation?*
- *Was the housing option you chose successful?*
- *Were your living arrangements satisfactory?*
- *Should we continue to use this housing situation?*
- *Would you recommend that we retain this family in the future?*

Computers and E-mail

- *Please comment on your access to computers, the internet, and email this year. What was the average waiting time to get into the computer lab?*

Staff/Teachers

- *The instructors were effective.*
- *Rate the professor (1-5, exceptional to poor)*
Quality of instruction/attitude towards students/accessibility to students)
- *The teachers communicated clearly and in an engaging manner*
- *Course assignments and/or exams were fair and in keeping with course objectives*
- *What was your perception of your on site director (program assistant, resident director) overseas? (very helpful/ helpful /not helpful enough / did not seek help)*

Program organization/services

- *Overall, would you say your program seemed to be (well-organized/adequately organized/poorly organized)*
- *The academic facilities were adequate for the amount and type of work expected of me. (strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/neutral/somewhat agree/strongly agree)*
- *The orientation provided by the program upon my arrival was useful*

Academic Program

- *Rate the course (1-5, exceptional to poor)*
Quality of course / appropriateness of exams / assignments / level of difficulty as compared to home university)
- *Grading was adequately explained at the beginning*
- *The courses demonstrated the importance and/or relevance of the information transmitted*
- *The subject matter was intellectually stimulating*

Overall program

- *How do you rate the program?*
- *Any suggestions for improvement?*
- *Did your stay live up to your expectations?*
- *What was the least satisfying part?*
- *I accomplished the academic goals I had set for my study abroad experience.*
- *I am satisfied with my study abroad experience.*
- *The program offered an adequate number of activities and excursions.*
- *Overall, how worthwhile was your study abroad experience?*
(1 very worthwhile – 5 not very worthwhile)
- *Would you recommend this program to other students?*

ANNEX 2

STUDY ABROAD CLASSIFICATION OF PROGRAM TYPES¹

Program Components	Level One: Study Tour	Level Two: Short-Term Study	Level Three: Cross-Cultural Contact Program	Level Four: Cross-Cultural Encounter Program	Level Five: Cross-Cultural Immersion Program
Duration	Several days to a few weeks	3 to 8 weeks, summer programs	Semester	Semester to academic year	Semester to academic year
Entry target-language competence	Elementary to intermediate	Elementary to intermediate	Elementary to intermediate	Pre-advanced to advanced	Advanced
Language used in course work	English	English and target-language	English and target-language	Predominantly target-language	Target-language in all curricular and extracurricular activities
Academic work context	Home institution faculty	In-house or institute for foreign students	Student group or with other international students	In-house student group	Local norms, partial or complete direct enrollment
Housing	Collective	Collective and/or home stay	Collective, home stay visit, home stay rental	Home stay rental or integration home stay	Individual integration home stay
Provisions for cultural interaction, experiential learning	None	None	None or limited	Optional participation in occasional integration activities	Required regular participation in cultural integration program, extensive direct cultural contact via service learning, work internship
Guided reflection on cultural experience	None	Orientation program	Orientation program	Orientation program, initial and on-going	Orientation program, mentoring, on-going orientation or course in cross-cultural perspectives, reflective writing and research

¹ Engle, L. & Engle J. (2003) Study abroad levels: Toward a classification of program types. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad IX*, (Fall), 1-20.

Implementing the Student Assessment Process

by Patricia C. Martin

INTRODUCTION

Building the student assessment process into the work-flow of the study abroad office at the sending institution as well as at the host program or university abroad requires a solid recognition of the value of the information gained to the participating institutions as well as the value of the process itself to student learning. Education abroad professionals are required to have expert knowledge in so many facets of international education. Having expertise in the qualitative assessment of an abroad program by student participants may seem overwhelming, and therefore may not be a priority. However, investing in the development of an instrument for qualitative assessment will bring clarity and focus to the mission of the sending and receiving institutions, and will subsequently allow for a better alignment of the goals and objectives of the program to the student experience.

The scope of the program being assessed will dictate many facets of the implementation. If a sending institution designs one instrument that will be used by all students who go abroad on a variety of program types throughout the world, it will need to align questions to a set of broad goals and objectives that have been established for any student participant, no matter the location. An assessment instrument that seeks information on one particular program may be able to focus on questions that relate to very specific program goals. Additionally, the choice of timing of the assessment, the means of delivery, and incentives may vary significantly due to these variations in scope and program type.

Dates should be set taking into consideration the various elements that are part of the process such as developing the assessment tool; sending it to participants; receiving submissions; tabulating the data; sharing with stakeholders; reviewing the alignment of the program with the institutional mission, and the program goals and objectives; and instituting changes to the program.

LOGISTICS

TYPE OF INSTRUMENTS

The number of education abroad programs and participants that are involved may determine whether you choose to develop a paper instrument that is either administered on-site or at the home campus, or an electronic instrument that the students access on-line. A paper instrument limits the likelihood of a high return rate unless it is administered and retrieved in one sitting. If not, the risk is high that students lose the form or fail to return it in a timely fashion. A paper form does not require the technical expertise needed to develop an electronic instrument. The financial and human resources that are made available to develop an electronic form are likely to correlate with the priority given to obtaining a high completion rate.

The evaluation should be accompanied by a summary of the goals and objectives of the program, as a clear reminder to the participants of what was initially communicated to them about what the program intended to accomplish. The goals and objectives should be as explicit as possible, and should be evident in the written materials that advertise the program, and should be conveyed verbally to the students through the advising process.

QUESTION TYPES

The following is a selection of question types most adapted to both paper and on-line qualitative assessment. The nature of the questions affects the ease with which results can be obtained.

Likert Scale

Example:

*Classes and assignments were less structured and required more independent learning.
(strongly disagree / somewhat agree / neutral / somewhat agree / strongly agree)*

A number can be assigned to each answer (i.e., strongly disagree = 1, somewhat agree = 2, etc.) so that the average response can be calculated. A second way to represent the data would be to compile the total number of “strongly disagree” responses, and the number of the “somewhat agree,” etc., to give a better idea of the range of student response. Choosing to offer the choice of four responses instead of five can prevent a student from routinely taking the middle ground.

Dichotomous

This question type asks for a yes or no response and is best used when gaining factual information.

Example:

Did you read the program handbook: Yes ___ No ___

Multiple Choice

Multiple choice questions allow for a variety of responses. Tabulating this data requires adding up how many responses there are to each option.

Example:

I found it very difficult to adapt to (check all that apply):

Language of instruction

Class size

Lack of structured assignments

Lack of assigned readings

Lack of classroom debate

Relative inaccessibility of the professor

Importance

These questions give students the opportunity to indicate the relative importance of something to them (e.g., 1 = not important, 5 = very important).

Bipolar

A response can be given along a scale that represents two extremes (e.g., 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

Rating Scale

Rating scales allow the student to give a rating generally from 1-4 or 1-5 along a Likert scale. Ratings are commonly used and are consumeristic by nature. Common scales are “like” to “dislike,” “poor quality” to “good quality,” etc. Rating scales are generally not appropriate when doing qualitative assessment because of the implicit ethnocentric judgment.

Open-ended

Questions that invite individual student responses about their experiences are often the most interesting to read, and the most difficult to collect and share with others. This provides a creative option and there are many interesting ways to formulate questions and responses to elicit information about what efforts the participant took to engage with their local environment.

Examples:

Additional Personal Comments or Please Explain

This may follow more structured questions and neutrally offers room for the creative expression of concerns, suggestions, or praise.

Or, more pointedly:

Complete this sentence: During the abroad program...

I volunteered _____

I traveled _____

I explored _____

The answers to these open-ended questions or statements help to provide more of a portrait of the activities and decisions of an individual and may put their responses to the other questions in a broader context for the reader. These responses may also provide information for students who are considering studying abroad in the future.

TIMING OF DELIVERY

Administering the assessment before the students leave the abroad site may result in a higher return rate if it is a small program and there is a resident director that has direct contact with the students. However an on-site assessment does not allow for a reflection period for the participants. A period of time during which the students have been able to think about their abroad experience, especially in contrast to their return to their home culture, is usually more desirable. Given that students return to their homes or their home campus at different times, the timing of the assessment can be tricky. If students are given too long a period of time to complete it (one month or more) they may fail to do so and their immediate excitement over commenting about their experiences may fade.

Sometimes the qualitative assessment can seek to evaluate too many program features at one time. If there are features that you would like to know about that pertain to home campus advising, orientation, and other pre-departure concerns that do not require the perspective of the abroad experience in order to be meaningful, consider asking about them prior to departure.

Example:

Did you attend any of the Know Before You Go Sessions?: Yes _____ No _____

INCENTIVES

Obtaining a high completion rate is extremely difficult unless the students are well motivated to complete the assessment. While ideally students would want to complete the assessment for their own learning and to provide feedback on their experience, many people will simply not complete one more task that they consider in some sense to be optional. Some students are motivated by the opportunity to win a prize (e.g., students who complete the assessment are entered into a lottery), others are motivated by the necessity of completing the assessment in order to progress in some way (e.g., the withholding of transcripts). The nature of the incentive may be a matter of trial and error and, again, will probably be correlated with the desire of the institution to have a high or one hundred percent return rate. It is likely for any assessment activity that there may be a difference in the nature of the responses by students who are eager and willing to complete the assessment and those who are not.

ASSESSMENT FATIGUE

Students may be called upon to complete surveys for their host program as well as for their home institution. Unless the abroad program is run by the home institution, there is little room to collaborate on an assessment process that complements the needs of each institution. Rather, it is likely that students will feel the redundancy of answering questions for both institutions and may tire of the process. Education abroad professionals should try to determine the number and nature of assessment practices of their partner institutions and third-party providers to see how to economize their efforts, to share relevant assessment results, and to reduce the possibility of assessment fatigue by the participants.

Another form of assessment fatigue relates to the length of the assessment itself. It is important to strike a balance between the amount of information that you would like to receive, and the learning process that you would like the students to go through, and the amount of time that a student is willing to spend answering questions. Trying the assessment instrument out with a small number of students will help you determine in advance if the instrument takes too long or if any questions are unclear or lead to unintended responses.

TABULATING DATA

One of the most time-consuming parts of the assessment process is tabulating the data and sharing it with stakeholders. The timeline of when the assessment is completed and the results tabulated should be considered in light of other workflow needs. It may be relatively easy to compile results in the summer months for students who have returned from a spring semester abroad, but it may be difficult to find the time to do this in January or February following the return of students from the fall semester. Therefore having a plan for the tabulation and distribution of the results that is compatible

with the resources of the abroad program or education abroad office is extremely important for the success of the assessment enterprise. Another option that may represent distinct cost savings for the education abroad office is a subscription to online survey software. This option provides a great deal of flexibility in terms of the preparation of questions, the ease of tabulation, and the sharing of the results.

USING THE DATA

Brief reports identifying a summary of responses and indicating how the program has or has not met its intended goals are needed to share with any decision-makers in the administration. Detailed responses, including to the open-ended questions, should be made available to prospective study abroad students. When only small numbers of students participate in a program, there should be a caveat about the validity of the responses¹. Program managers will need to review the full data to help understand the nature of the challenges and to help inform decisions about the program. Advisors in the education abroad office and throughout the institution as well as concerned faculty members will need the data to help them in counseling students about the opportunities and challenges represented by various program options. Results should also be shared with the host institutions.

Whether or not to make the information fully public by placing it on a website can be controversial. If the information is not presented with the details of the program, along with its stated goals, objectives, and challenges, the information can be misunderstood. Unless questions are carefully worded to avoid cultural bias and an ethnocentric judgment, overseas partners such as resident directors and faculty may take offense at the assessment exercise, particularly if questions such as the following are used:

- *Rate the professor or Resident Director*
Quality of instruction
Attitude towards students
Accessible to students
(sliding scale: exceptional to poor)

Ultimately, the data obtained should be used to review the alignment of the program with the mission of the home institution and the stated goals and objectives of the abroad program. This information also fuels decisions about the program design and implementation, as well as written program information, advising, orientation, etc. This is an opportunity to look at unexpected outcomes of the program design, location, and other parameters. Qualitative student assessment should be used alongside other information that may be pertinent to a particular cohort, including local, regional and world events (e.g., security, economy, environmental, etc.) that may have an affect on the experience.

REVISING THE ASSESSMENT PLAN

Refreshing the evaluation instrument each year may be problematic because you cannot compare results from the same question year to year. Consider a multiyear plan for changing the evaluation instrument (e.g., every 3-5 years). Seek to share your questionnaire with a variety of colleagues within your institution and without to obtain their comments and reactions. Preparing questions that assess quality in a cross-cultural setting and that avoid the pitfalls described in the previous section, *Designing Qualitative Assessment Questionnaires*, takes practice and review. The consumeristic student satisfaction survey is so ingrained in the way that questions are typically written, that it is easy to fall back on them unless we remain thoughtful about the goals of our programs and remember to seek information that addresses how well the student experience is aligned with the stated goals and objectives of the program.

As program parameters change, along with goals and objectives of the program, questions will need to be revised accordingly. The information concerning the program mission, educational goals, logistics, and challenges, gleaned from completing the *Study Abroad Program Types Component-Based Profile* for your own program, or obtained from a host university or third-party provider, will aid not only the development of assessment questions, but also will inform the advising, selection, and orientation process as well.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Education abroad assessment by students should be conducted with knowledge about other assessment initiatives that might take place at your institution or organization. Does your organization study the long-term impact of the education abroad experience on alumni? Do other offices, such as career services or area studies centers, also do long-term impact studies? Do students answer a senior survey? Does your office of institutional research have surveys that include questions that pertain to international experiences? Knowing the full range of information that is gathered over time about students is helpful when determining what information you want and need to obtain, and may also lead to collaborations with other people on your campus or within your organization who have a need for similar information. Collaborating on studies with other institutions that send students to the same region or program may provide useful information as well.

References

- ¹ Zukroff, Stacia, Ferst, Stephen, and Jennifer Hirsch. (2005). "Program Assessment and Evaluation." *NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad*, Brockington, Joseph L., Hoffa, William W. and Patricia C. Martin eds. Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators