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Scaffolded Fieldwork Research Projects: An Australian Approach to Study Abroad

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Abstract

Research into university study abroad programs suggests that while students may have some experience of local culture(s) and practices, they may be achieving no more than a superficial understanding of the host society. Alternatives to the standard study abroad models are thus essential to encourage students to engage more deeply with the host society. Research on study abroad programs argues for additional interventions and the provision of close supervision and mentoring to students. Given these arguments, this paper examines a scaffolded assessment model, designed for students at an Australian university in an international studies program established 26 years ago, and intended to enhance their learning during their compulsory year of study abroad. Through ongoing academic supervision and the design of a scaffolded fieldwork research project on aspects of the host society, we argue, the students have the potential to develop key skills such as transcultural awareness, engagement and capacity for working with diversity.

Keywords:

Study abroad, scaffolded assessments, Australia, engagement, transculturation, transcultural awareness

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Introduction

As internationalization has become an integral part of tertiary education across the world, study abroad programs have become a common feature of the international strategy among most higher education institutions. As a consequence, numerous study abroad models exist within university curricula, ranging from short term visits of a few weeks to longer-term periods of six to twelve months. Irrespective of the length or details of these programs, a common objective of many study abroad programs is to enhance students' international experiences and to foster intercultural understandings. Indeed, there seems to be a consensus around the principles of international education, which entails 'a shift in thinking and attitudes to appreciate the complexities of the world' and support to students to develop intercultural skills (Killick, 2015, p. 25).

That said, assessment of the international aspects of educational programs is not straightforward. A considerable body of research has explored aspects of teaching and evaluating student learning while on study abroad (Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1996; Deardorff, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Fantini, 2009; Williams, 2009; Witte & Harden, 2011; Jackson, 2019), with many studies concluding that such learning requires more than just a period of time spent being abroad. This literature argues that while students may experience local cultures during their time of study abroad, the potential for deeper understanding is often limited (Paige et al., 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009). According to Jane Jackson (2019, p. 1), for example, "immersion in the host environment and the positive transformation of student sojourners are not guaranteed". Furthermore, Jackson argues that without pedagogical interventions in study abroad programs, some students do not experience cultural awareness and engagement in the host city and may even return home with "a more ethnocentric mindset and little interest in intercultural interactions" (2019, p. 1). Likewise, Forsey et al. (2012, p. 137) suggest that it is "imperative that universities do more than create the opportunity for study abroad." Literature on study abroad programs argues specifically for pedagogical interventions and closer supervision and mentoring of students by their home universities during the study abroad period (Vande Berg, 2007; Jackson, 2011; Forsey et al., 2012).

In order to extend study abroad research advocating for pedagogical interventions to optimise the international learning of students on study abroad programs (Forsey et al., 2012; Jackson, 2019), this paper presents and argues for the merits of a scaffolded research assessment model, which is supported by academic mentoring, as designed by an Australian home university for a twelve-month undergraduate study abroad program. This model is implemented

alongside host university coursework to optimise key learning such as cultural awareness, engagement and diversity of perspectives. First this paper will begin by explaining the context of this study, then it will refer to the transcultural theoretical underpinnings of the assessment design and finally it will discuss the pedagogical intervention that is modelled on a series of scaffolded research tasks that lead to a final, on-the-ground research project.

Context of Study

The research assessment model that is the focus of this paper takes place at the University of Technology, Sydney in Australia, to facilitate the internationalization of students during the study abroad year of the Bachelor of Arts in International Studies (BAIS) degree. This degree was established in 1994 and is not a stand-alone degree; rather, it is offered in combination with a majority of the professional degrees delivered by all faculties of the university, including Communication, Business, Engineering and IT, Education, Design, Science and Law. The resulting combination means that students can graduate with two degree qualifications. The students in this combined degree may come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds although all have English as a common language. The structure of the degree is choreographed tightly to prepare students for one academic year of exchange study at a partner university as part of bilateral exchange agreements in one of the fourteen countries of specialisation that the BAIS offers: China; Japan; France; Germany; Spain; Italy; Switzerland; Canada (Quebec); USA (Latino USA); Mexico; Costa Rica; Colombia; Chile; Argentina. The two semesters of exchange study are referred to as 'In-country Study and Fieldwork Project' (ICSFP) and normally take place in the students' fourth year of a five or six-year degree program. Prior to the exchange year, all students study the relevant language (four semesters of Language and Culture subjects), and they undertake two other preparatory subjects that focus on international education (the core subject for all students, Foundations in International Studies) and a country specialisation (Contemporary Society subjects, relevant to the country or region in which the students will spend one year in-country).

The pre-sojourn subjects begin the students' international education experience by working with a model of international studies place-based enquiry that asks students to reflect on the 'local,' where the students are now. By this we mean that well before students embark on their year of study abroad, they are encouraged to reflect on the Indigenous bed rock of the country they are studying in, which in the case of the university's city campus is the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. For some students, this is their country. Most students, and their teachers, are guests on that country. Acknowledging that context, the core subject *Foundations in International Studies*, for example,

includes short research tasks that reflect how the scaffolding of research in the BAIS actually begins two years before the year of in-country study.

Following this preparation, the sojourn or ICSFP year requires all students to be undertaking studies at a host university, while completing reflective pieces about studying abroad and on-the-ground research projects for the home university. The academic requirements of the In-country Study year thus differ from the approach taken in many study abroad programs requiring students to undertake subjects at the host university that are credited back to the 'home' university's degree. The model used in the International Studies degree program combines this model (that is, students take subjects at the host university and in the language of their host society), while also completing a series of assessment tasks in English throughout the two semesters abroad. These assessments are supervised and assessed by an academic at the home university in an approach similar to distance education. The students' work is graded with results contributing to the students' marks for their International Studies degree. The assessment tasks include two reflective pieces of writing known as 'First Impressions' completed in the first month of exchange and 'First Impressions Revisited' completed at the end of the year. These reflective pieces are intended to encourage students to reflect on what it means to be an Australian student abroad; their framing also gestures back in the degree program to the reflective pieces that students undertook in their pre-study abroad subjects. In addition to these two reflective pieces, students also work independently towards a major research project exploring an aspect of the host society chosen for investigation by the students. This project is scaffolded throughout the year and comprises a series of four social sciences research tasks: a literature review, a methodology module, a project proposal and a final research project. Broadly speaking, students present assessments to the home university on both reflective and research-based tasks.

There exists literature on the design of assessments based on reflection (Dausendschön-Gay, & Krafft, 1998; Council of Europe, 2009; Jackson, 2019) and ethnography (Roberts et al., 2001; Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004). This literature highlights the significance of these assessments with regard to optimising learning for study abroad. However, the design of scaffolded research assessments supported by academic mentoring is underexplored and is, for this reason, the focus of this paper.

Theoretical Underpinnings Informing Assessment Design

Research on study abroad suggests that ‘internal and external factors can influence the development trajectories of student sojourners and result in divergent sojourn outcomes (Jackson, 2019, p. 3) and numerous studies have been conducted to highlight these variations (Bensen et al., 2013; Coleman, 2013; Vande Berg et al., 2012; Jackson, 2019).

As noted earlier, the core subject Foundations in International Studies represents a first stage in the BAIS journey, alongside Language and Culture subjects. Foundations in International Studies carefully introduces students to a range of key concepts that are useful for grappling with the broader world and its historical entanglements, and that will be of use to students down the line in their year abroad: worldviews and identities; transculturation and contact zones (Ortiz, 1940, 1995; Pratt, 1992); migration; imperialism and colonisation; nations and imagined communities (Anderson, 2006); borders and borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1999). The foregrounding of transculturation (Allatson, 2007) in particular, as a theoretical and conceptual frame for understanding the students’ own senses of place and location is significant. It reflects a desire to work with critical genealogies that can add additional nuance to the field of study abroad education. Transculturation was pioneered by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1930s and 1940s, notably in his study of racial and cultural inter-relationships on the island, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y azúcar* (1940; *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, 1995). Taking a contrapuntal approach that moved beyond dominant paradigms from North American anthropology such as assimilation and acculturation, both of which implied a powerful culture overwhelming and/or subsuming clearly differentiated weaker cultures, transculturation for Ortiz assumed that all sides of the transcultural encounter were somehow marked and changed by that encounter. Ortiz was interested in understanding how, in the wake of the Spanish empire, the rapid decline of Cuba’s Indigenous peoples, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of African slaves, and later of Asian indentured labour, African, European and Asian peoples and cultures on the island were transformed in the process. Ortiz proposed a tripartite nomenclature to work through those transformations: acculturation (cultural adoption), deculturation (cultural loss) and neoculturation (cultural invention). A hugely influential discourse in the Spanish-speaking Americas, the work of such scholars as Mary Louise Pratt (1992) brought transculturation to the Anglophone world, along with her take on transculturation as the governing logic of contact zones. For Pratt, drawing on the notion of a contact language from linguistics, a contact zone is the space of colonial encounters. This means to recognize that in the

colonial encounter, for example, or in slavery, or indeed in the global transcultural entanglements of our era, relations are constituted via processes of 'copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power' (1992, p. 4). Contact zones, she says, are 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other' (1992, p. 4). This understanding of transcultural complexities is rendered both explicitly and implicitly in the preparatory subjects that students undertake before their year abroad.

To illustrate this approach informed by transcultural discourse the students in the pre-sojourn subject, Foundations in International Studies, complete a small research component that asks students to make a digital map of their suburb by plotting six sites of local-international connection, and then to reflect on their personal relation to the sites. These sites can include street names, places of worship, statues, colonial-era buildings, Indigenous rock carvings, migrant centres, community meeting places, and even suburban gardens. This assignment also enables teaching staff to discuss the ethical implications of talking about and studying ourselves and 'our' cultures in relation to 'other' cultures. A second group work exercise asks students to provide a critical reflection on the worldviews of the students in the group, and then research and present a case study aimed at developing a critical analysis of the historical, present and emerging Aboriginal cultures in Sydney.

With these aspects of transcultural learning in mind, the aim of the scaffolded research assessments that are the focus of this paper is to expose students to diverse socio-cultural aspects of their host society in order to encourage them to look beyond essentialist notions of nations, cultures and identities. In order to move beyond essentialism and the assumption that cultural groups can be delineated easily and meaningfully, the scaffolded research model was designed to encourage students to explore the multiple and diverse identities of individuals, groups and places, and to effect transcultural understandings of their own relations to the worlds in which they were now living and studying. In the home university component, the sequencing of assessment tasks and the identification of fieldwork processes shaped the design of the student work. Transcultural recognitions were the underlying threads running through these assessments to facilitate student understanding of diversity in cultural perspectives.

Drawing on study abroad research findings, and informed by transcultural discourse, the scaffolded research assessments were designed to align with specific student outcomes, namely cultural awareness, engagement and diversity of perspectives. Conscious of the importance of agency and self-direction, students were encouraged to put forward their own topic of

investigation to explore throughout the year. In this approach, learners assume ownership of their ideas, develop critical thinking and learn from their social interactions.

To support students' learning, students are mentored throughout their sojourn year by a university academic from their home university who provides feedback on student pre-assessment design and final assessment tasks with the aim of encouraging students to experiment with new ideas and understandings of their host society. Advances in communication technology have made it possible for educators to mentor students online. This approach is based on the belief that study abroad learning can be deepened through scaffolded and guided critical assessments in a pastoral online environment (Giovanangeli et al., 2018). In addition to this mentoring, online social science related resources were provided to help students develop critical thinking and research design skills the following way:

Subject learning objectives:

- a. Demonstrate a broad and coherent understanding of the historical, political, cultural, social and/or economic situations of the host society,
- b. Develop oral and written communication skills in both English and the language(s) of the host society,
- c. Develop cultural understanding by critically reflecting upon the behaviours and values in host and home cultures,
- d. Design and conduct independent, small-scale research in an international setting.

E-learning platforms: Blackboard/Canvas, Email, Zoom, Skype

Assessment scheme of research-based assessments:

- a. Literature review (semester 1, 2500 words)
- b. Methodology module (semester 1, 2500 words)
- c. Project proposal (semester 2, 2000 words)
- d. Final research project (semester 2, 5000 words)

In order to illustrate practically how assessments are designed and implemented so that other educators can adapt and use them in their programs, we have summarised below aspects from each of the ICS research assessments.

Pedagogical Interventions

The individual research tasks are designed to enable students to explore in depth an aspect of the local society which they have chosen, and to facilitate their engagement and interaction beyond opportunities provided through the regular courses of study taken at the host university.

During their first semester, students are required to choose a topic for investigation and submit a background paper of relevant literature to help them identify the specific aspect of the host society they will investigate further throughout the year. Following feedback from academic staff at the home university, the students then design and conduct a small-scale pilot collection of data on their topic using one of the following prescribed methods: Media Analysis, Observation, Survey, Visual Analysis, Interviews (individual, focus group, oral histories) or a Virtual Landscape Tour. As with the review of literature, support and feedback are provided by home university academic staff remotely. In the students' second semester of study abroad, they continue taking subjects at the host university but concurrently extend the work conducted in semester 1 by presenting a project proposal summarising key aspects of their literature review and methodology and how they plan on extending this work by adding a second methodology. For the final task, the final research project, students investigate their topic using at least two methods of data collection. These project methods are chosen from those offered by the pilot study, the methodology module, in their first semester. Moreover, the scaffolding of assessment tasks over two semesters also allows for some flexibility, most notably for students who decide to change their research topic in their second semester abroad. The research fundamentals embedded in the first semester's literature review and methodology module are easily transferred to a new research topic, noting that the students' assigned academic mentors provide specific feedback and advice on new topic areas in such situations.

By way of illustration, past student project topics include:

- veganism as a way of exploring climate change concerns,
- homelessness and the measures local authorities take to support people living on the street,
- anti-racism campaigns,
- action taken to defend minority languages,
- gender equality and female sexuality,
- LGBTQ rights,
- local independence movements,
- wildlife protection programs,

- immigration laws and policies,
- borderlands cultures,
- political street art; and
- local musical forms and developments.

Regarding the topics above, students usually begin with the broader context for their literature review and then narrow this down to a case study of this topic that is present in their local community.

Student Mentoring

In order to scaffold these four research tasks, students are provided with extensive learning materials on Blackboard/Canvas. These online materials include specific assessment briefs with graded rubrics, learning guides, readings on research methodologies, academic writing and referencing resources, and exemplar projects. Orientation to the use of these materials and the purpose of the tasks is conducted in the semester leading up to the students' study abroad period.

Each student is assigned an academic mentor to work with for the year they are abroad. Each academic has a research background and expertise related to the particular host society and culture(s) where their allocated students are living, including proficiency in the local language(s). The students' work is graded by their assigned academic at the home university and the marks are recorded on their academic transcripts.

During the sojourn, communication between the academic and student is primarily conducted using email, Zoom or Skype communication. The use of communication technologies offers the academics the means to guide and facilitate the students' intercultural learning while they are in the home country. Researchers in the field of study abroad have acknowledged the value of communication technologies as they allow educators to remain connected to their students while abroad and as they enable the implementation of online learner-centred interventions during the sojourn (Lou & Bosley, 2012; Savicki & Brewer, 2015; Deardorff, 2015).

The mentoring provided to the students during their study abroad year includes support and advice which aims to refine and challenge their ideas as they carry out the reflective and research-based assessment tasks. These interventions are intentional, with each mentor regularly guiding their assigned students through the purposes, nature and process of conducting each of the six research assessment tasks throughout the year. The amount of contact with each student varies according to individual needs and circumstances, and it may range from around three emails per semester to weekly contact. The focus of

the assessment tasks and the style of supervision provided by the academic is highly learner-focused to encourage students to individually engage with the host society and reflect on their transcultural encounters. This approach aligns with the recommendation of Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige (2009) for a learner-centred intervention, as well as Felten et al.'s (2013) notion of mentoring as the creation of a space for discussion that builds on the experiences of each student.

Two Project Examples

The approach of learning to communicate appropriately and developing an understanding of systems of cultural and social practices is the goal of the study abroad research project. Here we want to provide two particularly interesting examples that illustrate this mix.

Example 1

The first example comes from a student on study abroad in France who was interested in examining how urbanisation has shaped policies affecting homeless people in the city of Marseille. Following the scaffolded project model and building on feedback from the home university, the student identified that there was an outward projection of urban policies attempting to address the physical needs of homeless persons and therefore improve the health of the city's population. The student's analysis revealed, however, that these efforts are superficial or marred by deliberate detachment by policy makers from the problem. The student was able to conclude that although policies of social inclusion and development of the city had enabled homelessness to be addressed through minimum funding and longstanding authorisation in the local, these policies failed to substantially improve the condition of homelessness in the city.

Through the literature review, the student outlined some of the key literature on homelessness in France, including statistical analyses, definitions of the term homelessness in the French context, recent measures put in place by the French government to address homelessness and studies on geographical variations on the state of homelessness across France. A key observation made by the student through the literature was that existing studies failed to adequately explore homelessness as a lived experience shaped by social processes and played out in the local sphere.

The following assessment, the methodology, allowed the student to trial a research method relevant to the topic. In this case, the student selected a case study of a foundation in Marseille which provided emergency housing to the homeless. Through an interview with the foundation director, the student

discussed how local urban processes made by actors and institutions were instrumental in supporting the homeless in Marseille.

Building on the literature review and methodology, the student then undertook the project proposal. The proposal allowed the student to consolidate the feedback received on the previous assessment with the aim of refining the final topic, the literature gathered on the topic and the initial methodology and then to introduce a second methodology that would extend the study. In the proposal on homelessness, the student added a non-participant observation of the foundation for the homeless that would complement the data the student had already gathered through the interview with the director. This observation was enabled through a series of supervised and unsupervised tours of the foundation that were organised by the foundation's vice-director. The final project provided the student with the opportunity to consider the ethics and limitations of the research process as well as develop a critical analysis of the data gathered through both the interview and the observations.

This approach allowed the student to gain access into a local institution and to observe the interactions and facilities taking place within the foundation. This project is typical of what a student can achieve during their study abroad period, particularly with regard to strengthening research skills while developing cultural awareness and engaging with the host society. The critical knowledge acquired was specifically local and engaged with social and cultural practices relevant to the host city. The study of homelessness in Marseille led to critical knowledge about social relations between local institutions, policy makers and the inhabitants of the city while the scaffolded approach leading up to the research project required that the student consider the appropriate language skills to set up the project and carry out the interviews and the observation. Key to this was the independent learning developed over the year in terms of the student identifying a relevant topic and appropriate research processes.

Example 2

The second example comes from a student who spent his year abroad in Austin, Texas, as part of the Latino USA major in the BAIS that requires students to continue their Spanish language and culture studies while also specialising in subjects of relevance to the major itself, for instance Chicanx Studies, border studies, and immigration studies. In his first semester of ICSFP, the student was interested in exploring the political affiliations of the state's Latino communities and the question of whether or not Texas would shift from a Republican to a Democrat state in the foreseeable future. For the student, this research area was at once fascinating and topical given that as he was researching Latinx political

affiliations the combined Latinx communities made up just under 40 percent of the state's population.

Accordingly, the student's literature review focused on academic studies of Texas and voting patterns to date, and it homed in on how some 35 percent of Texan Latinos voted Republican. The student's readings of extant commentary drawn from media reportage also allowed him to identify a number of assumptions made without 'substantial empirical evidence; firstly, that Latinos are naturally conservative, and, secondly, that this conservativeness will result in them naturally aligning with the Republican Party.' Finally, the student referenced a range of academic studies that argued that a clear majority of Texan Latinos leaned toward the Democratic Party, and that the move to a Blue State based on those demographic realities and future increases was inevitable. The student then concluded that researching Latino youth and their political allegiances and aspirations represented a viable topic for further investigation.

For the methodology module, the student opted for interviews over surveys given that interviews allowed for more flexibility and more in-depth answers to a range of open-ended questions. The student also felt that interviews, as a method, respected his interviewees and their individual situations and opinions. He subsequently conducted interviews with five Latinos in their early twenties, four of whom had at least one Mexican parent, the fifth being of El Salvadorean heritage. The interviews lasted about one hour. Aspects covered were voting intentions, self-identifications as Latinos, sociocultural values, the political situation in Texas, and factors that mattered to each interviewee, from the economy to education to immigration policy and reform, and health.

In this student's second semester abroad, however, he made the decision to change his research topic due to a new interest in the transborder economy of the imported clothing industry, an economy that linked many local Austin Latino apparel vendors to garment manufacturing in Mexico and Central America. Reflecting the flexibility of the scaffolded model, the fundamental research skills in the literature review and methodology module, in this case interviews, were easily transferable to the new topic. Indeed, the trial methodology module from the first semester abroad allows all students to reflect on and assess their work and, if appropriate, to refine and transfer to a new topic as they build their knowledge of the critical literature on their new topic and begin their on-the-ground research.

The student's final research project thus implicitly drew on the skills acquired in the first semester, and it revealed a confidence in embarking on a

new topic and completing a new literature review. The project itself explored the manufacturing origin of garments sold in Austin, in particular garments originating from maquiladoras (manufacturing plants) in Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua (alongside the plethora of clothing from China). The literature review, moreover, also explored research into working conditions in those countries. The student's interest as a researcher here was in finding out what young Latino consumers of such clothing understood about the transnational economy of garment manufacture and its impacts on communities south of the USA as well as inside that country. To this end, the student elected to interview local Latinos about their knowledge of that economy and of the clothes they were purchasing; the interviews were complemented by observation of consumers in clothing shops. The final project demonstrated that the student had developed a nuanced understanding of the complexities of the international clothing industry as locally manifested in Texas, and of the transborder features of that industry that implicated consumer patterns in the USA with structures of labor exploitation in manufacturing plants in countries to Texas's south.

Scaffolded Research Assessments

The following descriptions outline in detail the instructions students receive with regard to the suite of research assessments.

Assessment: Literature Review

The literature review will underpin the remaining three research assessments. The topic selected will function as a guiding concept (your research objective, the problem or issue you are discussing or your argumentative thesis). One of the major aims of the Final Research Project is to demonstrate engagement with the host society; therefore, you should avoid conducting a literature review that will not facilitate future engagement with the host society.

Step 1: Select a topic or question to organise your literature review. Your topic should facilitate later engagement with the host society. Ensure that your topic is neither too broad nor too narrow, and that there are sufficient resources available both locally and remotely. These considerations may not become apparent until after you have begun researching or even writing so be prepared to adjust along the way.

Step 2: Read broadly (likely more than the number of sources you ultimately need) to gain a sense of what has been written and what is known about your topic. Try to include at least one local source written in the language of your host society.

Step 3: Identify patterns in your research. Are there a few key considerations that come up in several sources? Are there competing viewpoints? Majority and minority? Differences of opinion reflective of a particular culture or era? Are some works more convincing than others? Why? The answers to these questions are important; they will help you to structure your literature review into sections that talk about different elements of a pattern – ideas relevant to your chosen topic as reflected in the literature.

Step 4: Write up your findings in a complete and concise manner.

Assessment: Methodology Module

The purpose of the methodology assessment is to practice applying one data-gathering method for your research topic and evaluate the outcome of that exercise. It is work that you can refine and expand upon for your final research project.

Step 1: Select a topic and formulate a research question based on existing research. Your topic and research question should flow from your earlier literature review and new scholarly information gathered as you have continued to read about your topic. You will need to include a very succinct literature review (based on four or more scholarly sources) as part of this assessment task to establish the validity of your research question and locate it in relation to what is already known.

Step 2: Choose an appropriate data-gathering or data-analysis method from those available to answer your research question. Typically, students choose from interviews, discourse analysis, observation, case study, oral history, survey, focus group, visual analysis or virtual landscape tour.

You will have to explain why you think the method you have chosen is suitably matched to your research question by drawing upon the scholarly resources about the different methods, referencing the kinds of questions they can answer or the information they can yield, and linking that general information to your specific objectives.

It may be that you collect data in one way (interviews, focus group, observation), but that you analyse it in ways that draw upon another method such as discourse or visual analysis. In such cases, you might want to also consult the readings relevant to that other method.

Step 3: Devise how you will gather your data in an ethical way and how you will analyse the information you collect. You will need to note in your assignment how you adhered to the relevant ethical guidelines and justify your choices about data collection and analysis based on the advice from the required

methodology readings, your research topic and the practicalities of your research context.

You should discuss the appropriateness and scope of your data collection instrument (survey, interview questions, observation protocol etc.) with your supervisor before you begin data collection.

Step 4: Gather your data by engaging with your host society.

Step 5: Analyse your data and coherently present your findings. This comprises both the evidence and argument that answer your research question.

Step 6: Assess and analyse your research process with particular attention to the suitability and application of the research method you chose in relation to the research task you set for yourself. The following questions can be helpful to your evaluation:

- Was the method you chose appropriate to your question? Why or why not?
- Did you get the kind of data you needed to answer your question? Enough data? Why or why not?
- Would you change something next time to make the process easier or more productive?
- Which other method(s) would complement future research on the topic? (You will have to use two research methods to complete your final research project).

Step 7: Write up your findings in a complete and concise manner.

Assessment: Project Proposal

The Project Proposal is designed to help you prepare to conduct a major inquiry-based project on a topic of interest relating to the host society using at least two humanities or social science approaches consistent with the subject matter of your project. Unlike your other research assessments, in which you present research you have already done, the proposal is forward looking and anticipates what you will do. One of the major aims of the Final Research Project is to demonstrate engagement with the host society; therefore, you should avoid designing a project that could be conducted and written from your home society.

Typically, you will work on the topic you focused on for your previous literature review and methodology assessments, but you develop, add to and refine the work you have done previously to demonstrate new research efforts. When building on previous work, you must expand on and develop that research, including by providing an updated and refined literature review.

Your project proposal consists of:

Introduction: This section provides a brief justification or reason for choosing the topic, a tentative research question and a hypothesis about the answer (i.e., a proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation). You should identify any key concepts or themes related to your topic and make a case for why this topic is important to understanding an aspect of the host society.

Literature review: This section draws upon your review (and condensed review from your methodology), but it must show evidence of revision and updating in light of the academic supervisor's comments. You are expected to have added new, relevant sources.

As in the Literature Review assignment, you should explain the relevance of the available sources for the intended project, identify key critical issues, and provide evidence that you are taking a position on those issues. It should not be a list of individual readings and the general content; it should integrate the readings to provide a general discussion of the key themes, arguments and related problems that are associated with your research topic. The literature review should also build a case for using the research methods to be proposed.

Methodology: Explain how you will answer your research question using two research methods. One of the major aims of the ICS Project is to demonstrate engagement with the host society; therefore, you should avoid designing a project that could have been written wholly in your home society.

This section should address or include:

- A detailed description of how each method will be carried out. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? How many / much? are questions that will help you to include sufficient relevant detail.
- The value of each method and the value of the combination. What do they yield separately? Together? How does this allow you to answer your research question? How will they contribute to or align with the themes emerging from your literature review?
- How do your choices, in light of your particular research context and circumstances, align with good scholarly and ethical research practice, as outlined in the methodology readings and the ethical guidelines?
- Methods for gathering data and analysing it.

- What challenges or limitations might complicate the timely and successful completion of the final project? Explain what strategies you will put in place to limit or resolve such problems.
- If you are working with the same topic and method from ICS 1, how you will expand upon or learn from your pilot study in the methodology assessment?
- You may want to append a draft of your research instrument or protocol (survey, interview questions, etc.) in order to receive feedback from your academic supervisor before you begin data collection. A timeline can also be a helpful way of conceptualising your project and budgeting your time.

Conclusion: Sum up your plan and reiterate why this research is important for understanding the host society.

Assessment: Final Research Project

The Project is a piece of independent and sustained research on a topic of interest about an aspect of the host society and culture.

The process for completing your project draws upon many of the steps covered in earlier assessments, such as reviewing relevant literature, presenting a considered overview of one's methodology, etc.

Step 1: Finalise your research question(s), attending to the comments you received from your academic supervisor on your project proposal. You should continue to read scholarly sources relevant to your topic so that your questions and literature review reflect a thorough understanding of your topic and host society as informed by secondary research, as well as what you know about your host society and what you learned through the methodology assignment.

Step 2: Following the advice you received from your academic supervisor on your project proposal, finalise your research design and protocols and collect your data (evidence). Begin this process early, as you may encounter difficulties in lining up participants, planning around events, etc.

Step 3: Analyse your data and coherently present your findings. This comprises both the evidence and argument that answer your research question(s).

Step 4: Write up your findings in a complete and concise manner.

Conclusion

The diversity and creativity in the types of enquiry selected by students suggest that when provided the opportunity and the relevant mentoring, students explore aspects of the host society that fascinate them and allow them

to move away from essentialist representations of cultural and social practices. Furthermore, through methodologies such as interviews, surveys, oral histories and virtual landscape tours, students are motivated to engage with local communities in ways that may not have been possible had they only undertaken subjects at their host university. Finally, in cases where students had to engage with interviews and surveys, ethical considerations were negotiated by the students and access to relevant participants were often obtained from the students' social networks.

The scaffolded enquiry-based approach for study abroad supported by academic mentoring develops and enhances the study abroad learner. It does this by prompting learners to interact with people of another language and society and subsequently to heighten awareness of cross-cultural and transcultural relationships through direct and conscious engagement with local communities. As a result, learners develop both communicative and transcultural knowledge through the experience of enquiry as both verbal and non-verbal and embedded within a 'context of situation' (Firth, 1968). More specifically, this study abroad experience reflects the speakers that Phipps and Gonzalez describe as 'people meeting in human encounter and in ways which may change the way they see the world' (2004, p. 125). By doing so, study abroad learners explore places and people where they are positioned to live out new trajectories and networks, curiosity and knowledge building, critical thinking and a diversity of perspectives.

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