

# “Involve Me and I Will Understand”: Academic Quality in Experiential Programs Abroad

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## Introduction

In this essay, my aim is to demonstrate that experiential education is a laudable and creditworthy endeavor in study abroad, and to discuss some approaches designed to reinforce the academic side of experiential study. To set a framework, the first section is devoted to a description of the place of experiential programming at the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), where I am Director of Academic Programs. IES is “traditional” in the sense that the core of our instruction is classroom-based in university courses and courses taught by IES faculty. We are not “traditional” in our commitment to a holistic model of international education and our willingness to experiment with different academic approaches to achieve our mission of student intercultural competence. After a discussion of some of the theoretical background of experiential education in the second section, the third and fourth sections will review some of IES’s recent research on credit acceptance and on student learning in experiential programming. The final section of this paper discusses assessment and the nature of academic programming for students in field placements, internships and service-learning.

## Experiential Programming in a “Traditional” Study Abroad Program

IES has been offering study abroad programs since 1950.<sup>1</sup> The core

of our academic programs is classroom-based instruction at our study centers and in host universities at the sites where we are located. A Membership group of colleges and universities sets IES's academic policy. Member representatives, usually the Directors of Study Abroad, elect an Academic Council. Faculty representatives from our Members serve on our Curriculum Committee and vet all of our curricular offerings. Over the years, the Curriculum Committee has seen itself as the guardian of academic purity and has examined the details of our syllabi more closely than many college curriculum committees.

In the late Seventies, IES offered a small number of internships for students studying in Vienna, Paris, and London. No service-learning opportunities were offered, although students were active as volunteers. Classes were primarily rooted in the classroom although some language instructors were experimenting with language study in such locations as markets. Since I had arrived in study abroad from classroom teaching, I accepted this approach as providing the appropriate quality and rigor. However, as I grew in experience, I came increasingly to recognize the important role that experiential education can play even in more traditional study abroad programs. Admittedly, when we first began to offer internships, for example, meeting student interest was our primary goal and our programs emphasized career development. Over the years, I have come to appreciate how much the experiential dimension in study abroad programs fosters students' development both academically and in terms of inter-cultural competence. I have therefore encouraged the development of experiential components in all of our programs. The IES MAP,<sup>2</sup> our blueprint for quality in study abroad, envisions some field experience as an important part of our students' academic work overseas.

Early in my years at IES, a number of our Member representatives approached us about developing guidelines for all of our internships. I worked with a committee of these representatives to develop the IES guidelines for internships, which have remained essentially the same since that time.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, we have developed supplementary guidelines that go into more detail about the academic work that is expected of students in association with the internships, such as a journal, a term paper and collateral readings. We have also introduced a service-learning option at one location that will be expanded to others in the coming year. Our service-learning model permits students to elect a service-learning com-

ponent for one additional credit in association with any course in the program. All students who elect service-learning participate together in a service-learning seminar.

IES strongly encourages some “field experience” in all IES courses at every site. Our Tokyo program requires every student to participate in a field placement. Some of our programs also offer courses that require field research. One of the newer IES programs, in Dublin, designates some of its courses as courses with a significant “field study component.” These courses involve such activities as interviews, oral histories, walking tours, behind-the-scenes tours, and other forms of primary research. For example, an anthropology course on the Irish urban landscape emphasizes ethnographic fieldwork. Students keep a journal and work on group and individual projects that involve analyzing the environment and interviewing local people. One representative project on the invisible Celtic tiger involves interviews with:

*people representing business, government, academic, and local community viewpoints with regard to disadvantaged neighborhoods and areas. From these interviews, students are encouraged to think about exclusion/inclusion, and the effects of re-imagining places for those places not re-imagined.*<sup>4</sup>

When it reviewed this course, the Curriculum Committee had no problem with the concept of field research. However, significantly, it requested several modifications in the assessment percentages, which had originally been proposed as: active class participation (10%); Journal (20%); essays (35%); mid-term assessment (15%); and group projects (20%). The Curriculum Committee asked the instructors to include a final examination and reduce the amount of credit for essays and for the journal. The Curriculum Committee thereby asserted its view of the appropriate academic balance that insured the course’s acceptability for credit to students’ home colleges. The academic validity of the experiential component in IES’s program generally lies in the continuing surveillance of these programs by the curriculum committee, and of ad hoc faculty committees that periodically visit Centers to review all aspects of these programs.

Good study abroad programs foster learning in activities that are not, strictly speaking, “for credit,” but relate to the academic mission of

the program. Recently, for example, I participated in an all-day event in which students on the IES Beijing program visited a privately-owned farm. The chief activity was a work detail planting trees in which the students learned something about the state of Chinese agriculture, on a small scale. We also had the opportunity to interview the farmer at length about all aspects of his enterprise including financing, employment of farm workers, marketing and sales, and other aspects of the enterprise. This information, like that garnered on other field visits, supplemented what students were learning in related courses, and reinforced their knowledge of Chinese society. It gave their book learning a human face that was likely to remain central in their memories.

IES also runs a number of simulation events for students that are another form of experiential education. A model EU offered twice a year for students studying the EU at our European Centers gives students the opportunity to play governmental roles at the Council of Europe and debate the development of EU policies from the points of view of the different EU countries. In a simulation exercise on investing in Central Europe developed in collaboration with institutions in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, the “American” students act as representatives of multinational corporations while the “Central European” students play the roles of local trade and commercial representatives. The IES students chosen to participate in these simulations are graded on their mastery of their roles and the knowledge base they demonstrate in connection with courses they are taking at their Centers. Students who have had the chance to participate in these simulations often comment that they have learned more in a relatively short time than in the rest of the course they are taking on the EU. This is because the simulation exercise involves a public performance that requires depth of knowledge and understanding. The student is working for peer approval as well as grades.

## **The Theoretical Background of Experiential Education in Study Abroad**

One of the core values of international education today, and certainly for me as an academic leader in study abroad, is the examination of academic programs against a holistic framework. Learning is not isolated in a classroom, but involves a total experience. Learning takes place

outside of the study abroad classroom in the student's living situation, associations with peers, and participation in extracurricular activities. Some things have not changed since 1858, when Henry Adams went to Berlin to study. "Within a day or two he was running about with the rest to beer-cellars and music-halls and dance-rooms, smoking bad tobacco, drinking poor beer, and eating sauerkraut and sausages as though he knew no better."<sup>5</sup> He found the academic side far less interesting: "The professor mumbled his comments; the students made, or seemed to make, notes; they could have learned from books or discussion in a day more than they could learn from him in a month, but they must pay his fees, follow his course, and be his scholars, if they wanted a degree."<sup>6</sup> Study at the Humboldt University of Berlin today may be less dull than Henry Adams found it to be in 1858. Certainly, the boundaries between classroom learning and experiential learning are less rigid than they were in the past. As part of their study experience, more and more students go beyond traditional classroom work and participate in experiential educational activities such as field study and research, internships, and service-learning.

The experiential aspects of international education reflect John Dewey's view that experiential education is not an add-on, but an intrinsic part of education. Humanity involves interrelationships, cooperation, and groups. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey suggested that thinking has a dynamic, creative relationship with doing. He summed it up by saying that "interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest."<sup>7</sup> Dewey equated experiential learning with research: "We sometimes talk as if 'original research' were a peculiar prerogative of scientists or at least of advanced students. But all thinking is research, and all research is native, original, with him who carries it on, even if everybody else in the world already is sure of what he is still looking for."<sup>8</sup>

Like John Dewey, advocates of experiential education often argue that learning by doing is more effective than classroom learning. A December 1997 paper on the Foundations of Experiential Education, from the National Society for Experiential Education, cites Arthur Chickering's neurological research on learning as a demonstration that experiential education is effective because it connects "new learning to the existing neurological networks."<sup>9</sup> Experiential educators often quote a Chinese proverb, sometimes attributed to Confucius: "Tell me, and I will forget; show me, and I may remember; involve me, and I will understand." Laura

Joplin, a researcher on experiential education argues, “All learning is experiential. This means that any time a person learns, he must ‘experience’ the subject—significantly identify with, form a personal relationship with, etc.”<sup>10</sup>

While experiential education has late nineteenth-century origins, it is not fully assimilated in contemporary U.S. educational institutions.<sup>11</sup> In recent years many institutions have decided to offer academic credit for internships, but the rationale for doing so may have little to do with the intrinsic educational value of the educational experience. A college of arts and sciences at a major midwestern research university, for example, justified the decision to offer credit for internships, solely on the basis of career preparation for students.<sup>12</sup> Faculties are resistant to experiential programs for credit for a variety of reasons. Laura Joplin suggests that the critics’ central concern is that experiential learning is rooted in perception rather than theory. In this light, if students are challenged, in their experiential programs, “to articulate and argue {their} position in the light of conflicting theories, facts and firsthand encounters,” then the experience is effectively assimilated with academic goals.<sup>13</sup> Since internships are often justified for non-educational reasons, the “academic component” of the internship program becomes the major justification for credit and is frequently the focus of assessment.

Internships, service-learning, and field placements, in the context of a study abroad program, have an added international dimension not present in domestic programs. The student’s placement within an organization provides a window on a host society. In these placements, students have direct encounters with different work cultures, social attitudes, gender relationships, organizational structures, legal arrangements, moral norms and many other unfamiliar patterns of behavior, communication, and organization. Effective academic supervision will assist the students to understand what he or she is learning within a broader context. The academic component is necessarily interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional and the effective academic supervisor will need to have some knowledge of anthropology, sociology, social psychology, political science, and history in order to assist the student in comprehending the placement environment.

## **How U.S. Colleges Look upon Experiential Programs in Study Abroad**

In April and May 2002, we surveyed IES Members and Associate Member Colleges with respect to their treatment of experiential programs such as internship, service-learning and field study.<sup>14</sup> Forty of 146 member colleges returned the survey. Ninety-five percent of the colleges that replied award academic credit for internships, including internships in study abroad programs, 53% for service-learning, and 42% for other field placements. Clearly, internships are the most commonly accepted form of experiential learning, perhaps as the result of student pressures. However, even if a college awards credit for internships, it doesn't always follow that departmental credit is available.

Students interested in other types of programming often have to petition in order to have their plans approved. With respect to internships, only 13% award credit for the practicum alone. The rest require some additional work, whether a related independent study, an internship workshop or seminar, a related course, or in association with a term paper or project. Those colleges that award credit for other experiential activities also require a similar additional academic component. The college expectations for study abroad programs are similar to the expectations on their own campuses. Forty-two percent of the colleges reported that their interns are required to give presentations, 62% to keep journals, 77% to write term papers, and 77% to attend a seminar. Ninety-two percent of those responding said that the placement supervisor's report influenced students' grades.

The amount of credit that students can earn varies from institution to institution, and even within institutions. Some colleges permit only two semester credits; others allow students to register for up to eight or nine in a semester. The usual permitted amount is 3 to 6 semester credits.

Credit for experiential study is often not automatic. Credit, according to survey respondents, must be "determined by supervising faculty"; "must be approved prior by academic advisor"; must demonstrate "close supervision on site and significant academic component"; must have "prior approval"; "must have an additional sponsor on our campus"; "must petition for credit in advance"; or "usually [require] approval of our own related department(s)."<sup>15</sup> These qualifications demonstrate that experien-

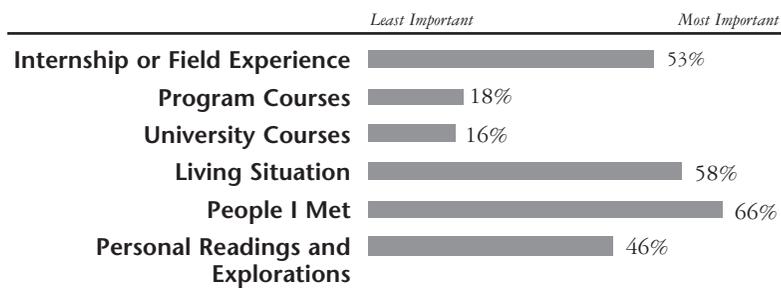
tial components of programs are subject to greater scrutiny than traditional course components and that they are not readily viewed as having the equivalent rigor and academic content. The study abroad coordinators who replied to the survey, however, are generally positive about internships in study abroad. They report “students have found them rigorous and valuable” and “attractive components of study abroad programs.” However, they also express concern about the rigor of academic components.

## **Research Findings on the Impact of Experiential Education on Students**

While college faculty and staff retain a certain uneasiness about experiential components of study abroad programs, students find them to be a valuable part of their learning experience. A survey of IES students who participated in internships and field placements offered testimony about the academic value of experiential programs overseas.<sup>16</sup> Seventy-nine of 301 students polled returned the survey. Of these, 71% participated in placements where a language other than English was employed, and 29% where English was spoken. Ninety-eight percent, that is all but one, of the participants in placements where the language spoken was other than English, reported that the placement reinforced their language learning. This finding is supported by a 1999-2000 IES study in which 145 students at programs in Germany, France, Spain, and Austria were given standardized oral proficiency examinations at the beginning and the end of their programs. The study indicated a significant correlation between participation in an internship and progress in the target language. While mastery of a language is not a factor in the evaluation of the student’s success in a field placement, it is central to the academic goals of these programs.

In addition to gaining linguistic skills, and knowledge about the specific area in which they are working, students grow in a variety of other ways. All but one of the students in the 2002 IES survey agreed that the placement reinforced their intercultural learning, again an important part of the programs’ missions. This in turn positively impacts their learning overall in the new context. Research on service-learning at institutions in the U.S. supports the view that experiential education has a positive, interactive relationship with academic growth. Students who have partic-

### Student Assessment of the Programs



*From 2002 IES Survey. Students rated importance of areas based on 5-point Likert scale.*

ipated in service-learning develop analytical and conceptual skills.<sup>17</sup>

One of the central ambiguities of assessment in study abroad programs is that success cannot always be measured with grades and credits and that students who may derive the greatest benefit from study abroad programs are not necessarily those whose grades are the highest, since their learning has taken place in less academically structured settings. The IES MAP for Study Abroad, IES's Model Assessment Practice, includes non-classroom specific aspects of intellectual and cognitive growth as well as the development of language and communication skills as guidelines for study abroad programs.<sup>18</sup> Good study abroad programs reinforce out-of-classroom learning by a variety of non-credit activities as well as by experiential approaches to learning for credit. The study abroad field needs to develop instruments to measure students' overall growth holistically. Effective assessment of students' development in experiential learning programs also requires a holistic approach. In the 2002 IES survey, students were also asked to comment on their overall learning, on a 5-point Likert scale, in which they compared their learning in internships or field placements and other parts of the program.<sup>19</sup> The survey suggested that these students who participated in field placements learned more in the experiential aspects of the programs generally than they did in either program or university courses.

It is interesting that overall, the students judged the placements as more important than their courses, although slightly less than their living situations and personal encounters. There is also a high correlation between

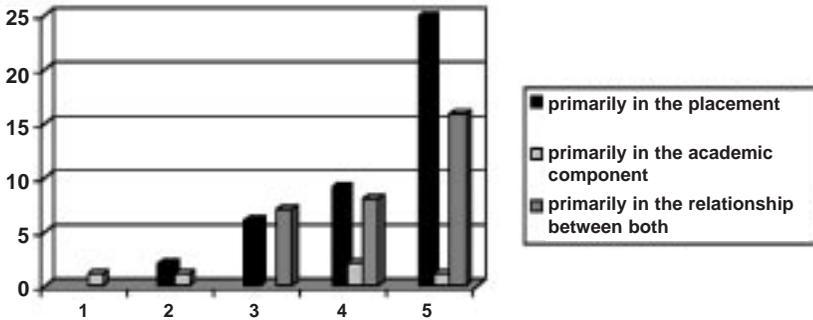
the student responses about internships and living situations, suggesting that some students may be better able to take advantage of experiential program components than others.<sup>20</sup> In this graph the vertical scale represents the responses with respect to their learning in their living situation, while the horizontal scale represents their learning in internships.

		<b>Internships</b>					
		1	2	3	4	5	Totals
<b>Living Situation</b>	1			1	2	1	<b>4</b>
	2			3	2	1	<b>6</b>
	3		1	1	4	1	<b>7</b>
	4	1	2	5		2	<b>10</b>
	5		2	3	11	31	<b>47</b>
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>74</b>

*From 2002 IES Survey. Students rated importance of areas based on 5-point Likert scale.*

We also asked students to tell us whether they learned more in their placements through work assignments, observation, or both. Thirty-two mentioned their work assignments, twenty mentioned observation, and twenty-three mentioned both. There is a significant correlation between a high rating for the internships as an important learning component of the program and designation of the placements as the most important component of learning within the internship program. In the following chart, the horizontal scale represents the rating that students gave the internship or field placement as a learning component of the program.<sup>21</sup>

This tends to corroborate other research. Eyler and Giles noted that the statement: “I have learned more in my service-learning than in all my four years of college,” was commonly expressed in their research study of 1100 students in a national study.<sup>22</sup> Fifty-eight percent of the students in the Eyler-Giles study said they learned more, 20 percent less, and 24% the same amount that they learned in the classroom. Fifty-five percent said they worked harder, 14% less, and 34% the same. Those students with positive experiences graded their learning as more and harder than students who were unhappy in their placements. Interestingly, only a third found their service-learning course to be more “intellectually stimulating.” This probably reflects students’ acceptance of the culture of classroom learning. The students in this study identified “deeper understand-



ing” as the essential learning that took place in service-learning. Thirty percent of the students in the survey agreed that “a deeper understanding of things I have already learned about in my classes” was the most important outcome of their experience and an additional 32% said it was very important.<sup>23</sup>

Eyler and Giles cite a study that illustrates the impact of experiential learning on students, in a political science course, who were asked to define a state problem and create a strategic plan to resolve it. Students who had interned in the state legislature went beyond creating a textbook plan, because of their knowledge of the intricacies and nuances of legislative behavior. They understood where the power lay and how groups in the legislature jockeyed to achieve their goals. The students who lacked this experience had a far more superficial understanding about how the legislature operated.<sup>24</sup>

Lauren Resnick, in his 1987 presidential address to the American Educational Research Association, effectively described how experiential learning differs from classroom learning:

*Real world as opposed to classroom learning tends to be more cooperative or communal than individualistic, involves using tools rather than pure thought, is accomplished by addressing genuine problems in complex settings rather than problems in isolation, and involves specific contextualized rather than abstract or generalized knowledge.<sup>25</sup>*

The students in the 2002 IES study were very articulate about the knowledge they gained in the placements. Their responses indicated several different kinds of learning—knowledge of the society and its organi-

zation, work related knowledge, cultural understanding, and personal knowledge.<sup>26</sup> Students also mentioned specific skills that they learned, such as language skills, database skills, computer skills, intercultural communication skills, general communication skills, film editing, scripting, and film shooting skills. The placements had an important impact on some students' career interests and on some students' academic interests. One student mentioned a new interest in learning additional languages, another discovered an honors thesis topic and possibly topics for M.A. and PhD theses through the internship, another an interest in economic development, another in contemporary Chinese painting, another encountered new perspectives on the third world.

An IES 2002 survey of 3,400 alumni and alumnae who attended programs before 2000 highlights the long-term resonance of internships and field placements. Students who participated in internships and field placements on IES programs were much more likely to say that study abroad ignited their interest in a career direction pursued after graduation. Sixty percent of the students who had participated in internships or field placements said that study abroad enabled them to acquire skills that influenced their career path, while 50% of those who had not participated agreed. Students who held internships or field placement were more likely than the others to suggest that study abroad enabled them to tolerate ambiguity, more likely to suggest that study abroad influenced their participation in community organizations, and more likely to agree that study abroad influenced them to explore other cultures. These former students were also significantly more likely to use languages other than English on a regular basis (38% of those who had internships or field placement vs. 24% who did not said that they still used foreign languages on a regular basis).<sup>27</sup> These findings suggest that experiential offerings have a significant and measurable long-term impact on those who have studied abroad.

## **Assessment of Experiential Learning**

How do we assess these varieties of learning? Experiential education is inductive by definition. "Learning," according to David Kolb in *Experiential Learning*, is the process whereby knowledge is created through the process of experience."<sup>28</sup> From that point of view, students should be

assessed primarily by what they have learned from their experience. It is inevitable that students will relate their experience to knowledge acquired in more traditional classroom-related forms. However, the instructor's role is not actively to seek to structure learning in connection with a pre-planned content. Rather, the instructor's chief role may be to assist the students in relating experience to context. Since each student's experience is individual, it follows that exercises that encourage a variety of creative expressions are most appropriate. At the same time, the philosophical position of experiential educational theory puts some stress upon dialogue and reflection within the community of learners. If reflection is an essential part of the field experience, it is important to encourage students to develop these reflections in discussions with each other. Active and reflective participation in a seminar situation and group research projects can be an important component of a field placement program and also one element in the faculty member's evaluation of the students. As Laura Joplin suggests, class discussions or group projects are the "publicly verifiable articulation, which makes experience and experiential learning capable of inclusion and acceptance by the educational institutions."<sup>29</sup> In addition, they provide an opportunity for students to learn from each other and thereby learn more about their host societies.

International educators frequently stress the obligation upon students to take responsibility for their own learning. Undergraduates from the U.S. system of higher education are used to faculty members telling them what to learn through regular and specific assignments and assessing what they learn by testing them on these assignments and their work in their classes. Study abroad students usually enter a less structured university environment where students are given more freedom in developing their learning programs. In addition, study abroad educators expect students to learn outside of the classroom in a broad variety of ways, independent of credit or grades. Internships, service-learning, and field placement require students to learn independently and reinforce this aspect of the study abroad mission. A learning contract is a key element in experiential learning. In the learning contract, the student defines objectives and strategies—i.e., what and how he or she seeks to learn in the placement and in activities related to the placement.

Learning contracts, ideally, are flexible and modifiable along the way by the student in interaction with the field placement. As students adjust

to a situation, responsibilities and tasks can change and increase. This author has talked to students who have developed original entrepreneurial projects within field placements as they acclimatize to their situations. For example, a student in an outreach program in an immigrant community in Paris inspired and planned a musical fundraiser for her agency. The variety in experience and students' exploitation of the experience suggests that the amount of credit could justifiably be determined at the end, rather than at the beginning, of the experience.<sup>30</sup> This would conform to the approach followed by institutions that award credit to non-traditional age students for their "life experience." However, this approach would not be acceptable to most institutions that accept credit from study abroad programs. The grade is therefore the logical place to incorporate an evaluation of the depth of the student's experience and learning.

One assignment that experiential educators commonly employ is the self-evaluation, where students are asked to assess themselves and then are judged on their ability to set objectives, use their analytical skills, demonstrate self-awareness, and show initiative.<sup>31</sup> Self-evaluation skills, in fact, are a common objective of experiential learning. The self-evaluation borrows a method from the employment sphere and measures personal abilities and attributes as well as academic learning. Just as employees draw up objectives and goals in some cultural settings, experiential learners develop learning contracts. The self-evaluation gives the student the opportunity to self-assess how well he or she has fulfilled the learning contract. The instructor's responsibility is to analyze the self-assessment. Peer assessment is also useful, especially in situations where students are working closely together. Students who have to assess their peers are better equipped to assess themselves. Peer assessment works well in other cultural traditions.<sup>32</sup> However, U.S. students are less accustomed to or comfortable with peer judgments and this approach has to be used with care.

A frequent assignment for interns and service learners is the diary, or journal. The journal gives the student an opportunity to record his or her experience and, ideally, to reflect upon it. It is essential that the journal go well beyond recording events. It offers a medium through which the student can find patterns and give shape to the experience. Students need to be encouraged to identify "deeper meanings."<sup>33</sup> Ideally, journal writing is a skill that should be one focus of instruction in a field experience program. It is important that the program supervisor or faculty

member helps the student design a framework for the reflective content of the journal. The University of Essex, in its guidelines for internships in Latin America, for example, informs the students in advance about the criteria for assessment of journals: “critical reflection on the social and cultural setting of the internship ... [and] relating the experiences to broader international events and processes ... [as well as] the overall quality of the reflections.”<sup>34</sup> The Essex grading criteria stress the quality of the observations.<sup>35</sup>

The Essex approach also suggests five topics that ought to be included in all journals: “cultural knowledge, race and ethnicity, gender, power, and work.”<sup>36</sup> This is helpful to the students because it provides a focus for them to recognize and articulate cultural differences. Boston University’s Dublin internship program requires a logbook in which students are asked to analyze their placements in context. The logbook is expected to start with an introduction to the company where the placement occurs and a concluding analytical section.<sup>37</sup>

The instructor can also provide guidance through weekly journal assignments. For example, Tony Ogden, in his field study seminar on Japanese social organization at IES Tokyo, gives the students specific assignments each week. One week, for example, he asks students to assess the role of women in the field placement, or to discuss their personal stereotypes and the organization stereotypes about them, and how this “play(s)” in the field placement.<sup>38</sup>

The faculty member should review the students’ journals on a continuing basis as well as at the end of the term. The best journals will reflect backwards as they go forward, altering and deepening their perception of experience.<sup>39</sup> The faculty member will observe and positively evaluate a student’s growth over the semester.

Another useful assignment is the personal portfolio. The portfolio offers students the opportunity to reflect on their placement in creative ways. Photographs, videos, collages, newspaper and magazine clippings, short stories, poems, essays, and tapes are some of the media that can be assembled in the portfolio.

Similarly, the evaluation of the placement supervisor is commonly used as an assessment tool and contributes to a student grade. While this is also not, strictly speaking, an academic measurement, it is a means of enforcing discipline on the student at the placement and making sure that

he or she makes a positive contribution. If the placement supervisor is aware of and preferably involved in the student's learning contract, he or she is also in a position to comment on the student's growth. In addition to the placement supervisor's report, a site visit by the academic supervisor is a useful tool in assessment and a means of making sure that the placement is fulfilling its side of the bargain.

Are assignments such as journals, portfolios, and self-evaluations sufficient? Because the instructor acts as a guide in supporting a student's self-learning, examinations are not an appropriate form of evaluation for experiential learning that is centered on field placement. Service-learning is most frequently embedded as an option in classroom-based courses. Students either earn an extra credit or substitute the service-learning experience for a term paper. Internships and other field placements are more likely to exist as separate courses. Most internship and field placement programs therefore require students to complete a term paper or other scholarly exercise. These assignments arise from the placement, but involve student research that may take place entirely outside of the placement. Ideally, they help the student understand and analyze the context of his or her placement. Assignments like this anchor the experiential program in traditional academic work and certainly facilitate the acceptance of credit to the home institution. The supervisory faculty member will make sure that the student begins the project early on in the semester, and assists the student in developing research approaches and locating appropriate materials.

## **Conclusion**

Experiential education, when properly arranged, organized, and supervised contributes an important dimension to an undergraduate education. Experiential opportunities are especially valuable in study abroad programs, because they foster growth in intercultural competence, reinforce and deepen classroom learning about host societies, and contribute to students' fluency in target languages. These goals are best served when the program has an appropriate plan for collateral work and evaluation. The phrase "academic component" is somewhat of a misnomer. In the best experiential programs the relationship between the field placement and the collateral work is seamless; learning is always taking place. The place-

ment is the equivalent of a laboratory in a natural science course. Learning contracts, journals, portfolios, and term projects should be designed to reinforce, not just supplement, the students' experience. Evaluation is a dialectic, term-long project in which the faculty member encourages and stimulates the students' independent learning and the student consciously assesses his or her own progress.

International education starts from the premise that learning is multidimensional. Study abroad programs foster intellectual growth, language and communication skills, as well as cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal growth.<sup>40</sup> Field experience, internships, and service-learning lie at the intersection of all of these objectives and, when well structured, reinforce a student's learning at least as much as any other aspect of an academic program. The key is to have an organizer who understands and effectively implements experiential education theory, who challenges students to reflect on their experience on a continuing basis, and who enables the students to link experience with context, thus achieving "deeper learning."

The experiential activities that are part of IES programs and of many others are not add-ons to meet student demand, but core activities that are at the heart of the study abroad experience. They provide a link between the classroom experience and the students' interaction with the environment and open up fresh opportunities for students to analyze their host cultures. In study abroad programs, the phrase "involve me and I will understand" highlights a core concept, and experiential programs are an important medium for involvement.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> IES is an independent, not-for-profit, educational corporation chartered in the State of Illinois. Our mission is "to provide premier study abroad programs for U.S. students that deliver the highest quality education while simultaneously promoting development of intercultural competence."

<sup>2</sup> *The IES MAP for Study Abroad: Charting a course for quality.* Chicago, 1999, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> IES internship guidelines:

- There shall normally be minimum language proficiency requirements for students in internships at Centers in countries

where English is not the common language. Such requirements may vary from Center to Center.

- The internship shall include an academic component in addition to the practical work.
- The Internship shall have an Institute faculty supervisor who is responsible for assigning the final grade. The grade will be based primarily on the academic component of the internship (such as a term paper or equivalent project or projects prepared by students and approved in advance by the faculty supervisor) and on a report from the supervisor(s) of the organization offering the internship. A summary of the student's activities during the internship should be included as an addendum to the student's report.
- An internship shall include meaningful involvement in the organization accepting an intern; the latter organization should be briefed on its responsibilities.
- Students shall be required to express interest in an internship in advance of departure from the U.S. through an internship application detailing the student's qualifications and learning objectives (exceptions may be made for full-year students applying for second semester internships). Prior approval for the internship by both the student's academic advisor and the home institution is necessary.
- The academic structure and organization of the internship program(s) at individual Centers will vary. Individual Center programs will be submitted for approval to the Curriculum Committee and the Academic Council.
- The normal Institute grading system is in effect for internships (see Academic Policy Guidelines).
- Three credits shall be granted for each 110 hours per semester (including work, advising, and class hours). The amount of credit involved shall be established at the time of registration.
- Interns should not expect to be remunerated for their services.
- The final decision for acceptance to an internship will be based on interviews with the program director, internship supervisor, and organization offering the internship. Placement in an internship cannot be guaranteed in advance.

<sup>4</sup> Syllabus by James Monagle and Kasey Treadwell Shine, IES Dublin instructors.

<sup>5</sup> Adams, Ch. 5, par. 7, <<http://www.bartleby.com/159/5.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, par. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Dewey, <[http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/Projects/digitexts/dewey/d\\_e/chapter26.htm](http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/Projects/digitexts/dewey/d_e/chapter26.htm)>.

<sup>8</sup> Dewey, <[http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/Projects/digitexts/dewey/d\\_e/chapter11.html](http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/Projects/digitexts/dewey/d_e/chapter11.html)>.

<sup>9</sup> <<http://www.nsee.org/found.html>>.

<sup>10</sup> Joplin, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Lampert, pp. 57-58. Lampert mentions that when he arrived at Stanford in the mid-eighties, “The students learned to say that they didn’t need any firsthand or empirical knowledge and that approved secondary sources, filtered through the approved observers, were enough.”

<sup>12</sup> <<http://career-3.wustl.edu/FacultyAndStaff/Internships.htm>>.

The 1996 report of the Curriculum Committee at Washington University in St. Louis outlines the Arts and Sciences rationale for awarding academic credit for internships:

*An objective of a modern, liberal arts education is to help students choose a career. Internships assist students in exploring options.*

*Professional experience during undergraduate education enhances students’ ability to find employment upon graduation, and improves on-the-job performance.*

*The possibility of earning credit for internships makes it more likely that students will take advantage of these opportunities.*

*Internships allow students to explore career possibilities in areas where the College does not have formal academic programs (i.e. journalism).*

*Federal labor laws prohibit companies from employing students in unpaid positions unless they receive academic credit. Failure to allow credit for internships might, therefore, exclude our students from beneficial opportunities.*

<sup>13</sup> Joplin, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> IES survey of study abroad coordinators, April 26, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> IES survey of study abroad coordinators, April 26, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> IES internship and field placement survey, May 3, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Wutzdorff and Giles, pp. 105-117.

<sup>18</sup> The IES MAP. For example, the IES MAP proposes that “Students are guided in developing their ability to understand and critique their own value system and ways of knowing that are culturally shaped through programmed contact with a variety of cultural perspectives in the host country” (p.20, A4); “on-going programmed opportunities for students to analyze their experiences contribute to their cultural learning, specifically, an increased ability to recognize cultural difference” (p.20, C1).

<sup>19</sup> IES internship and field placement survey, May 3, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> IES internship and field placement survey, May 3, 2002. Correlation between learning in field placements and learning in living situations.

<sup>21</sup> IES internship and field placement survey, May 3, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Eyler and Giles, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> Eyler and Giles, pp. 62-70.

<sup>24</sup> Eyler and Giles, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Eyler and Giles., p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Examples of student responses to a question of the knowledge that they gained: “different internal structures, increased appreciation of hierarchy and personal interactions”; “how the industry worked internationally”; “knowledge of the PR business, but also knowledge of the culture of London and its suburbs by interacting with so many natives”; “I gained experience with classroom teaching, and working with special types of students,”; “a greater understanding of economic processes and about European banking”; “knowledge of economics and business”; “software usage, business manners”; “seeing how business works in France”; “knowledge of dealing with handicapped children and the day-to-day running of a nonprofit NGO”; “multiple perspectives on third work issues such as AIDS/HIV and child labor”; “how to write press releases, edit texts and talk with foreign press agents”; “all about British government system and government in general”; “how not to run a business”; “how to interact with young people of a different culture, views of French youth on America and Americans, general pop culture exposure through the eyes of young French students”; “a lot about the social organization in Japan

[and] a lot about myself”; “knowledge of Argentine culture, history and social problems”; “a lot of information in my field of study, design”; “the manifestations of the socialized medical system in Japan and implications in care of the elderly . . . . and routes of non-verbal communication”; “how political parties function in Argentina.”

<sup>27</sup> 2002 IES Alumni Survey conducted by Monalco Market Research and Information Management.

<sup>28</sup> *Foundations of Experiential Education*.

<sup>29</sup> Joplin, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Chickering.

<sup>31</sup> <[www.essex.ac.uk/centres/lastud/internships.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/centres/lastud/internships.htm)>.

<sup>32</sup> see e.g., Cowan.

<sup>33</sup> Cell, pp. 221-222.

<sup>34</sup> <[www.essex.ac.uk/lastud/internships.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/lastud/internships.htm)>.

<sup>35</sup> <[www.essex.ac.uk/lastud/internships.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/lastud/internships.htm)>.

70 {A-/A+}: Excellent and sensitive observations which place the work experience in a broader context or shows exceptional insight into the work placement.

60-69{B+/A}: Regular and full entries which demonstrate insight and critical reflection.

50-59 {B-/B}: Regular entries with intelligent observations and comments. Some insight

40-49{C-/C+}: Irregular entries with superficial observations and comments. Demonstrating little insight.

40 {F/D}: Few entries with little evidence of serious observation or critical comment

<sup>36</sup> <[www.essex.ac.uk/lastud/internships.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/lastud/internships.htm)>.

<sup>37</sup> <[http://www.bu.edu/abroad/cities/dublin\\_int/courses.html](http://www.bu.edu/abroad/cities/dublin_int/courses.html)>.

<sup>38</sup> <[www.iesabroad.org/tokyo/tokyo.htm](http://www.iesabroad.org/tokyo/tokyo.htm)>.

<sup>39</sup> Cell, p. 226.

<sup>40</sup> IES MAP, pp. 20-21.

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