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Building A Bridge: Customized Programs And First-Year Undergraduate Students

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Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

By Deborah M. Lake
PIM 69

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in International Education at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

July, 2011

Advisor: Richard Rodman
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Abstract

Vermont-based SIT Study Abroad is a service provider in over 40 countries offering study abroad programs to undergraduate students. New trends in the study abroad field have driven some of the focus of study abroad participation from the junior year abroad to first-year undergraduate students. While higher education institutions push for more students to study abroad, limited resources and the desire for a wider variety of program types lead them to third-party providers such as SIT Study Abroad. This capstone paper examines the new focus on first-year undergraduates and the necessity for SIT Study Abroad to offer customized programs to meet partner needs.

The designed program offers first-year undergraduate students an international structure on which to construct their intercultural, linguistic, and academic skills. The program aims to build a bridge between the high school experience and entrance into the undergraduate classroom. SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis University are partnering to offer a program in David, Panama to increase student recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of academics and problem solving in today’s world.

The collaboration with Brandeis University allows SIT Study Abroad to expand its current portfolio of programming and increase services available to partner institutions. In order to meet the needs of partner institutions and continue to increase new program development, SIT Study Abroad is focusing on customized program development. New resources and attention have been given to processes and systems that are necessary in order to successfully implement customized programs. The development of the first-year undergraduate program and the customized program model positions SIT Study Abroad to meet the needs of the current study abroad environment.
World Learning is shaping the frontiers of internationalization efforts...by creating more bridges to and from the undergraduate experience. Our work has been focused on the undergraduate experience, especially juniors who want to study abroad. But, more emphasis is being put on helping students transition into higher education through gap/bridge year programs...our work with Princeton University is just one example...We have now been approached by a range of universities asking us to develop similar kinds of programs.

- Adam Weinberg, President and CEO of World Learning (2011)

Introduction

Vermont-based SIT Study Abroad has been a pioneer in experiential, field-based study abroad for over 50 years. During this time more than 25,000 students have participated in over 70 programs provided in over 40 countries (World Learning, 2011). SIT Study Abroad is a unique third-party provider due to its accreditation through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC) and the non-traditional locations of programs (outside of Europe). The focus is on serving undergraduates in their third or fourth year of study. The standard program model is a semester program with a language course, a thematic seminar focusing on a critical issue, a field study (ethics) seminar, and an independent study project (field research).

This program design is an example of the expansion of SIT Study Abroad’s capacity to provide customized programs using different models and changes necessary within the organization’s systems to make them possible. Customized programs are designed particularly for clients, either specific higher education institutions or organizations with which SIT wishes to work (e.g. Smithsonian Institute). The incentive for SIT Study Abroad to venture into customized programs came from several sources such as financial motivation and as a relationship builder. This capstone addresses the creation of a program in Panama focused on first-year undergraduate students admitted to Brandeis University and the development of a replicable first-year program for partner institutions. The desire to grow SIT Study Abroad’s
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market, expand program availability and depth, and influence the internationalization of higher education led to this type of new program development.

Internationalization of higher education, including the internationalization of undergraduates, has become an important factor for student success in academia and beyond. According to Zha Qiang, “Academic and professional requirements for graduates increasingly reflect the demands of the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets and thus higher education must provide…not only academic and professional knowledge, but also multilingualism, and social and intercultural skills and attitudes” (Qiang, 2003). With the increased focus of students, parents and educators on the international experience, higher education institutions have had to find ways to deliver international programs.

Studying abroad is not a new concept, “even very young persons in search of academic education have traveled from one center of learning to another” (Hess, 1982, p. 1). After World War II, the numbers of students participating in formal academic exchanges grew exponentially (NAFSA, 2010). However, there is a change in how higher education institutions are approaching study abroad services. In a recent survey by the Institute of International Education, nearly 30 percent of the colleges said they had developed new international partnerships to help more students go abroad (Fischer, 2010). These partnerships included working with outside providers, joining consortia with other institutions, finding direct exchange partners, and offering more options to first-year undergraduate students.

The current study abroad landscape shows that many institutions lack the capability, capacity and often the capital to grow and support programs on their own - which is where outside providers come in to play (Fischer, 2009). With students studying abroad for shorter terms and in more remote locations, it is often a better business choice for higher education
institutions to use an outside provider. The economic trends of the last few years have seen an increase in the interest of less traditional and thus frequently less expensive destinations. According to Ryan Lorenz, “...[we] have local expertise and can contract services more cost-effectively…it may not make financial sense for colleges to hire full-time staff members at every overseas location” (Fischer, 2009). The success of programs can depend on local partners, especially since students traveling to remote locations and doing service work increases the complexity of health and safety issues and appropriate responses to these specific needs (Fischer, 2007). By engaging with third-party providers, the colleges are able to gain local expertise and safety networks without adding to their own infrastructure. Future success requires providers and higher education institutions alike to develop new models and approaches to study abroad.

**Context**

*World Learning*

World Learning’s mission is to “unlock the potential of people to address critical global issues through international education, exchange, and development programs” (World Learning, 2011). World Learning is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides education, exchange, and development programs through four main program units. The motto of World Learning is “bridging cultures, transforming lives.” Since its inception in 1932, one of the main ways in which this goal has been met is through people-to-people exchanges. World Learning started with a small group of high school students traveling to Germany in 1932 to learn how to live in another culture with different norms, language and worldview (World Learning, 2011). As an international organization World Learning is exceptional in that it serves high school, undergraduate, and graduate students as well as professionals; provides both inbound and
outbound exchange programs; and teaches about sustainable development combined with operating projects out in the field (World Learning, 2011).

World Learning’s original program, The Experiment in International Living (EIL), provides summer programs to high school students in over 30 countries. Students are immersed in the local community through homestays, service projects, and cultural excursions. The International Development and Exchange Programs (IDEP) run by World Learning impacts thousands of communities each year. International exchanges bring emerging world leaders from over 140 countries to the United States for professional and academic programs while international development personnel work with local leaders to effectively address critical issues such as HIV/AIDS, marginalized communities, access to education, and strengthening civil society. SIT (formerly the School for International Training) is the fully accredited branch of World Learning, comprised of the SIT Graduate Institute and SIT Study Abroad. SIT Graduate Institute offers master’s degrees and professional development programs in teaching English as a second/foreign language, international education, sustainable development, and conflict transformation. SIT Study Abroad offers experiential, field-based study abroad programs to more than 2,000 undergraduate students from over 200 different institutions each year (World Learning, 2011).

The campus of World Learning and SIT is located in Brattleboro, Vermont. The centralized location, along with access to other World Learning resources, supports the ability of SIT Study Abroad to provide quality programs for students. Programs are developed and coordinated through the Academic Deans, Associate Academic Deans, program coordinators, and admissions counselors located in this office. Additionally, Student Affairs and the Donald Watt library are located in Vermont, but accessible throughout the 41 countries in which
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programs run. Locally, staff generally includes Academic Directors, program assistants, homestay coordinators and families, and language instructors.

*SIT Study Abroad*

SIT Study Abroad provides undergraduate students with the opportunity to engage in challenging semester or summer academic programs in Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East. Each program uses a combination of academic courses and field based research to challenge students to develop a deep appreciation for local cultures, increase language skills, and become immersed in critical issues. SIT Study Abroad programs are built on themes that address “Critical Global Issues” such as health, sustainable development, natural resource management, environmental issues, identity and globalization, post-conflict transformation, education, human rights, cultural expression and social change (SIT Study Abroad, 2011).

The mission of SIT Study Abroad is “to prepare students to be interculturally effective leaders, professionals, and citizens. In so doing, SIT fosters a worldwide network of individuals and organizations committed to responsible engagement in a changing world” (World Learning, 2011). In addition to being committed to the development of students in a new context, SIT Study Abroad gives back to the local communities in which the programs are run. Students engage in research and present their findings to the local community. Students who do community service projects work alongside locals to engage in projects that the community expresses as a need (painting schools, building water containers, etc.). These programs provide interdisciplinary academic curriculum while emphasizing reciprocity with and engagement in the host community. Because of SIT Study Abroad’s accreditation, students are not directly enrolled in the local university. Programs are run by local Academic Directors, who live full-time on location and are practicing academics in their fields; the Academic Director draws additional
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resources from local professors, leaders of NGOs and other organizations (SIT Study Abroad, 2011).

The foundation for SIT Study Abroad’s portfolio of programs is the experiential learning cycle, a nontraditional education model where knowledge is gained through field-based experiences and practice rather than simply transmitted from teacher to learner (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning focuses on the student’s ability to participate in an event, analyze what the event signifies and then apply their learning to future events. Other characteristics of SIT Study Abroad programs are that they are mostly located in non-traditional locations, open to any student who has completed at least one year of undergraduate work and is in good academic standing (2.5 GPA) at any of the sending schools. Historically, SIT Study Abroad has not entertained requests for customized programs or specialized programming that does not fit within the standard model and standard time-frame (semester or summer) of the regular programs. As a result of the economic downturn of recent years, SIT Study Abroad has had to develop new strategies to compete in the expanding global market, and increasing student enrollment became a focus of senior management. Customized programs have thus been considered and attempted in an effort to expand program offerings, increase student enrollment, and cultivate university relations.

**Needs Assessment**

*SIT and customized programs*

Customized, tailored programs represent an expressed need from SIT Study Abroad’s institutional partners. As an organization, SIT Study Abroad recognizes that more and more higher education institutions are looking to third party providers to implement customized
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programs, ranging from week-long faculty-led programs to an entire year of independent study by a student with minimal in-country support. SIT Study Abroad traditionally has declined to accept customized program requests. Over the last few years, as leadership of World Learning has changed, new priorities and goals have been set for the various branches of the organization. After an internal and informal needs assessment by senior management, SIT Study Abroad began to entertain certain requests from important institutional partners and looked at customized programs as an innovative and different way to develop new programs and build relationships.

Since starting my position in late 2010, I have been keeping track of customized program requests and inquiries. By tracking the requests of the last six months, I have been able to conclude that we received approximately five requests per month from various sources. SIT Study Abroad is not actively pursuing or marketing such partnerships. The requests come from sources that specifically seek out SIT Study Abroad as a potential partner either through University Relations, the Academic Deans or by making a general inquiry. Most requests are focused on Latin America and the Middle East/North Africa regions, focusing on either language programs or culture and the arts. If SIT Study Abroad is going to continue doing customized programs and expanding its offerings, then a strategic plan must be made in order to ensure the correct match of program theme, duration, and location. This type of planning is in progress but has not been formalized at the time of this paper. University Relations has been working with me to create a system in which to track customized program requests and develop a template in order to vet initial requests (Appendix A).

**World Learning Fellowship**

My interest and involvement in this work came as an answer to the informal needs assessment and a perceived difficulty in project management. According to SIT Study Abroad’s
Dean for External Relations and Strategic Enrollment Management, the difficulty with customized programs was that they while they were called for, they there was no one designated to work with them, thus they suffered because they were not part of the core business of SIT Study Abroad (personal communication, 2010). The last two years have shown a sharp increase in the number of requests for customized programs of varying length and design; several had been attempted and failed due to the lack of focused management. I was hired to manage the new situation SIT Study Abroad found itself in and determine the best way to move forward in the development of customized programs and appropriate systems to handle the requests.

I have been working as the Customized Program Manager since fall of 2010 as a World Learning Fellow. I provide operational and administrative guidance by coordinating short-term and semester-long international programs developed in conjunction with external partners. I am directly responsible for the documentation and tracking of all incoming requests for customized programs. My responsibilities include developing templates, procedures, processes, and timelines for customized program execution. Additionally, I identify needs and serve as a liaison between SIT and outside program partners while ensuring appropriate and timely development of program information, marketing and admissions materials and processes, budgets, and customer service protocols. I am working to assess market viability and the potential to replicate program models. The replication of such program models led to my development of the first-year undergraduate program as an important asset to SIT Study Abroad.

The customization of study abroad programs for SIT Study Abroad signifies several major adjustments. The first is an attempt to meet President Adam Weinberg’s agenda of bridging the high school experience with the undergraduate educational experience, as well as his desire that World Learning show itself to be a nimble and flexible organization (Weinberg,
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memo to organization, 2010). The second is that SIT Study Abroad must be able to alter its core model to fit client needs and desires. This means the ability to adjust for various audiences and to do short-term and/or faculty led programs. The third is that SIT Study Abroad must re-evaluate the systems (IT, data tracking, marketing, etc.) that it uses in order to run programs, because customized programs often do not fit into the standard molds that are utilized for regular programs. Through this project, I demonstrate many of the important factors SIT Study Abroad must take into consideration when designing and implementing customized programs for various institutions. I have managed the creation of a semester long program for first-year undergraduate students accepted to Brandeis University. These students represent a new demographic for SIT Study Abroad, as they have yet to step foot in their home institution as a matriculated student.

Background

SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis University

For the better part of the last two decades, SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis University, located in Waltham, Massachusetts, have worked together to send students overseas. In the last five years alone, over 200 Brandeis students have studied with SIT in places such as Mongolia, Argentina, Kenya and Ecuador (SIT Study Abroad, 2010). Brandeis University and SIT share many of the same core values around social justice, experiential learning, and undergraduate research. Founded in 1948, Brandeis University “emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and the solution of real-life problems” (Brandeis University, 2011). SIT Study Abroad’s programs are each designed around a “Critical Global Issue” which is then “examined in an interdisciplinary manner” (SIT Study Abroad, 2011). Another example of Brandeis’s
commitment to many of the same ideals as SIT Study Abroad is shown through their undergraduate education:

Global studies and experiential learning have become important aspects of the undergraduate experience. A new major in international and global studies is among the most popular on campus, and study abroad attracts increasing numbers of students.

(Brandeis University, 2011)

The similar views on undergraduate education make SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis natural partners for study abroad programs and opportunities.

Due to an increase in applications for admissions, Brandeis University created a Midyear enrollment strategy. Being accepted as a Midyear at Brandeis means that students start coursework in January instead of starting in August (Brandeis University, 2011). The Midyear students represent approximately 150 students who “display the kind of maturity and creativity that demonstrate they can take advantage of the opportunity the Midyear program represents” (Undergraduate Admissions, 2011). Brandeis University encourages students to take advantage of this “time off” in order to explore their interests and develop new skills. This strategy has been in place for a number of years and it continues to grow and develop as Midyear students become a norm at Brandeis University.

**Midyear Semester Abroad Programs**

The opportunity of being a Midyear student represents a full semester away from school. Brandeis encourages students to use the time to be productive, but to also explore interests and activities that they may not have had the opportunity to do during high school. For the 2010 fall term, Brandeis University’s Admissions department and the Office of Study Abroad decided to try new programs in order to encourage them to take advantage of this time away, while still being productive. They started offering semester abroad programs designed specifically for
Midyear students with a full semester’s worth of credit available to transfer. According to a former study abroad advisor at Brandeis, a majority of first-year students enter Brandeis University on the pre-med track (personal communication, 2011); couple that with starting in the spring semester instead of the fall, and many students worry about the sequencing of science courses. The Midyear semester abroad programs provide an opportunity to study abroad, gain a full semester of credits, and explore interests in a new setting. Using “…the approach of offering first-year students with a rich cultural experience is particularly successful at enhancing the student’s level of maturity and sense of responsibility for his or her own education” (Heuser, 2006).

In order to further Brandeis University’s offering to Midyear students, they reached out to SIT to provide a program specifically designed for them. The program for Brandeis is in Latin America for the fall 2011 term. The close relationship between SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis led to SIT Study Abroad’s acceptance of the request for a customized program and the development of the program. Brandeis University’s Office of Study Abroad specifically requested the support of SIT due to our expertise in the area of experiential learning and non-traditional locations, such as Panama. Brandeis University’s request to SIT Study Abroad for a program in Latin America is allowing the development of customized programs in a location with strong in-country staff support, appropriate themes and program duration.

**Brandeis University and Midyear Students**

One may question the factors that led to Brandeis University starting a Midyear study abroad program. As with their enrollment strategy, Brandeis University is working to create and maintain the right combination of factors to attract the best undergraduates to the school. Higher education today offers students many choices and competitive alternatives. Students today act
much more like consumers and potential clients, which motivates institutions to offer certain “incentives” to these shoppers. Merrill and Rodman (2010) point out that the success of education abroad is related to responding to needs in the local context. Brandeis University created a new context for their study abroad programs when they decided to start admitting students mid-year. This program responds to their needs while developing a new model on which to build future programs.

Through conversations with administrators at Brandeis, I came to understand that Midyear students have been asking for a more official way in which to spend their fall semester prior to commencing school in January. Brandeis then used feedback from the initial program in 2009 to determine if it was viable to start additional study abroad programs in other locations. One piece of feedback that they received was that students were looking for a Spanish language option. Thanks to Brandeis’s close ties to SIT Study Abroad, they approached the appropriate people to see if a Spanish language program in Latin America could be offered.

The needs assessment for this program is limited. It was based on the articulated needs of Brandeis leaders responsible for the welfare of their community. Other than informal discussions with Brandeis administrators, there is no evidence to suggest that future Midyear students will be looking for Spanish study abroad options. It is also limited due to the fact that SIT Study Abroad has no access to the student population for which this program is being designed. SIT Study Abroad must trust that the information coming from Brandeis in terms of student needs, interests, and potential is accurate. The evaluation and assessment of the initial program will be very influential on future changes made in order to better meet the needs of first-year students. While SIT Study Abroad will never be able to access incoming Brandeis students prior to their acceptance as a Midyear, the evaluations will provide valuable information for future programs.
**Theoretical Foundations**

**Literature Review**

The freshman abroad model, expressed through various manifestations, seems to be garnering greater interest on campuses and in the popular higher education media. However, the review of formal academic literature yielded no specific body of research that addressed first-year undergraduate study abroad programs along with models, methods or outcomes associated with such programs. Most information regarding programs can only be found in journal articles with anecdotal stories and limited information on outcomes or official research. Sources, such as The Chronicle for Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed have published pieces on semester- or year-long study abroad programs specifically for freshmen, yet their discussion on the topic is generally descriptive and sometimes speculative on the impact these programs are having.

Despite limited formal information on the topic, by examining literature on similar phenomena, such as the gap year, along with information on student development and study abroad in general, one can understand the rationale for first-year programs and the collaboration between higher education institutions and providers. In this case, a first-year program is defined as a semester- or year-long credit-bearing program, designed by a specific university for students who have graduate high school but have yet to start their on-campus undergraduate studies. While there is no comprehensive study of first-year study abroad programs, there are many factors that have led to the development of such opportunities.

The number of students studying abroad is growing. U.S. student participation in study abroad has more than doubled in the last decade (Institute of International Education, 2010) and the number of students who study outside their home countries is projected to grow from three million to eight million by 2025 worldwide (Fischer, 2009). With the increased numbers of
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students studying abroad, there are many ways in which higher education institutions may provide for the internationalization of the educational experience. Hess (1982) points out though, that while very young pre college aged students and junior, senior, and graduate college-age groups are afforded a wealth of international opportunities, very little of substance has been done to focus on freshman and sophomore college students. Freshman students over the last ten years have only, on average, made up 3.2% of U.S. study abroad students compared to 37% of the population being juniors (Institute of International Education, 2010).

The gap year is one area in which one may look to see if there is any particular research on which to base first-year undergraduate programs. The gap year, while fairly standard in Australia and the UK is still a new, but rapidly growing trend in the US (Hulstrand, 2010). The gap year is a break of a year or more between completing high school and entering university (Birch & Miller, 2007). According to Kristin White, author of The Complete Guide to the Gap Year, “Colleges are reporting a doubling or tripling of the number of accepted students who are asking for a deferral in order to pursue a gap year” (Hulstrand, 2010). Harvard University is now putting language in their letter of admission that strongly recommends that students consider taking a year off and that their admission may be deferred (Schwarz, 2006). At Reed College almost 7% of the admitted cohort elects to defer entrance for one year after submitting a plan for their time away (Smith, 2009).

According to many education abroad professionals that work with gap year students, it’s a great way for them to expand their own individual interests and clarify what they are looking for from their university education. Students often seem better prepared for the university classroom, they are prepared to think critically, to see the world through another lens, and have an intercultural perspective (Haigler & Nelson, 2005, p. 29). The gap year, while growing in the
United States, is still something that is ambiguous and unknown. There are a growing number of providers that specialize in gap year programs, and there are a growing number of colleges and universities that are encouraging freshman to leave before they even get there.

Similar to first-year undergraduate programs, there appears to be little empirical or longitudinal research that addresses whether a gap year improves retention and academic performance or not (Stehlik, 2010). This is repeated by Birch and Miller (2007), who only found two studies that compared academic outcomes of students who did a gap year and those who did not for the USA. The results of these studies found mixed results and did not conclusively show that gap year students performed better than their colleagues. However, the reasons for students taking a gap year are varied and usually personal. Stehlik (2010) found that students took the time off for economic reasons, to gain “life experiences”, and simply have a break.

Within the past decade there have been an increasing number of colleges offering semester- or year-long study abroad programs specifically for freshman. It is argued that “international/intercultural experiences are powerful vehicles for first-year college students to learn the perspectives and skills necessary to function interdependently in a rapidly changing, increasingly complicated world” (Bachner, Malone, & Snider, 2001, p. v). Hess (1982) also states, “If exposure to a different culture is beneficial to third year students participating in overseas academic programs, such exposure should be just as beneficial, or perhaps more so, to freshmen” (p. 35). Hartwick College started the “First-Year Intercultural Experience” with the intention to provide students with tools to prepare for the future and learn interdependence with the world. This program involved an on-campus course followed by a short-term faculty led overseas experience. It was found that despite the great numbers of students and faculty going
overseas, no systematic research in the domain of first-year intercultural experiences is available (Bachner, Malone, & Snider, 2001). Bachner, Malone, and Snider (2001) suggest,

We are not advocating the First-Year Intercultural Experience for all first-year students or all institutions…we suggest that this can be applied in meaningful ways to other colleges and universities facing first-year student challenges with respect to preparation, adjustment, performance, satisfaction, the integrity of the curriculum…and retention. (p. 17)

Through their case study of the “First-Year Intercultural Experience” and looking at pedagogical methods, they found that using learner-centered teaching approaches, such as experiential learning, provides the greatest potential for impacting first-year undergraduates (Bachner, Malone, & Snider, 2001).

Arcadia University was one of the first to start a first-year undergraduate program in 2003. Since then, Arcadia’s “First Year Study Abroad Experience” has been joined by Plymouth State University, University of New Haven, Florida State University, New York University, University of Mississippi, and Syracuse University (Redden, 2007). While each program utilizes different models, the common theme remains the same. What are some of the advantages that these universities are gaining by having incoming freshman cohorts start their college careers overseas? Some providers emphasize the benefits of using these programs for enrollment management and retention efforts. While most programs are less than five years old their retention rates generally mirror or exceed those of the general university population (Redden, 2007). Another advantage of having first year students study abroad is that they are looking for general education courses versus third and fourth year students that are looking for specialized courses (Heuser, 2006). Universities are also benefiting from having students back on campus
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for six or more semesters following their overseas experience; they will be different when they arrive on campus, they will approach things with a different perspective, and they will ask different questions in the classroom (Redden, 2007).

Key motivating factors for first year students to go abroad are: to learn about another country, to have an opportunity for fun/excitement, and an opportunity for growth/challenge (Chieffo, 2010). Students then report back that their learning centers around general international travel, how to navigate in a foreign country, how Americans are perceived abroad, and how the U.S is perceived (Chieffo, 2010). Additionally, it’s been found that once they are back on campus, students have fewer problems adapting to dorm living, feel that they do as well academically as if they had stayed on campus for their first semester, and that overall the experience made them more mature and resilient than the average student (Heuser, 2006).

According to Debra Regan, at Plymouth State University, “…We find it’s a pretty self-selecting group. Students know immediately: this is for me or this is not for me” (Redden, 2007).

**Theoretical Framework**

SIT Study Abroad’s programs are all based on the experiential learning model. Each SIT program naturally progresses from a more structured learning environment to a more independent one (SIT Study Abroad, 2011). Experiential learning is rooted in the educational theories of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. While each had their own approach to learning and knowledge all three showed that active participation, followed by reflection, and finally application to a real life situation leads to greater development (Kolb, 1984). David Kolb further developed the experiential learning model to show that there are different learning styles and learning methods that feed into the process of developing knowledge.
The experiential learning cycle is made up of five stages. Each stage has its own characteristics which influences the type of questions one must ask in order to process an event and develop new knowledge. These stages are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiencing</th>
<th>Publishing</th>
<th>Processing</th>
<th>Generalizing</th>
<th>Applying</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The beginning of the experience when the event is occurring</td>
<td>After the experience the data is created through the sharing of the cognitive, affective and behavioral information</td>
<td>Data from the experience is examined and patterns are interpreted, systematic examination of experiences</td>
<td>The abstract ideas are discussed and theories pass from a specific event to general observations</td>
<td>The last stage examines how the patterns and theories are able to be tested and applied in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “doing” part of the activity</td>
<td>I felt, saw, thought, etc.</td>
<td>What patterns were observed?</td>
<td>What does this tell me about the real world?</td>
<td>How might I do this again differently?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Pfeiffer, 1994; White, 2010)

Each stage suggests questions that may be used to process an experiential learning activity or an event. These questions serve the purpose of examining the personal relevance an event has to the participant and reflecting on the meaning of the learning acquired. The experiential learning theory shows that “when learning is conceived as a holistic adaptive process, it provides conceptual bridges across life situations such as school and work, portraying learning as a continuous, lifelong process” (Kolb, 1984, p. 33).

The use of the experiential learning model by SIT Study Abroad is well suited for first-year undergraduate programs. Janice Finn, Associate Dean for International Affairs at Arcadia, points out, “You can’t just send students overseas…all the same issues that you have to think about when sending students abroad, A-Z, you have all those, but you also have to think about what are the developmental issues when you have freshmen overseas?” (Redden, 2007).

Development and learning are intrinsically linked. Learning is the process by which development
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occurs (Kolb, 1984, p. 132). There are many developmental theorists that discuss the needs of young adults, such as Chickering, Sanford, and Super, each with a linear progression from one stage to the next (Evans, 2003). The experiential learning theory of development differs through its emphasis on a multi-linear process. There are four learning modes, behavioral complexity, symbolic complexity, affective complexity, and perceptual complexity, which are integrated and the development in one mode precipitates development in the others. There are three broad development stages: acquisition, specialization, and integration (Kolb, 1984, p. 141). The interaction and integration of knowledge gained from experiences in the environment lead to higher maturation. As a person develops their personal characteristics tend to fit more closely with their environment, people self-select themselves into environments that are consistent with their skills and preferences (Kolb, 1984).

The pre-university student participating in an international study abroad program, whether on a gap year by independent choice or nudged by a Midyear acceptance, is a student self-selecting to take part in such a program. As mentioned by administrators at Plymouth State University and Middlebury College, these students tend to show that they have a different level of maturity, and self-select to go overseas early in their higher education careers (Redden, 2007; Haigler & Nelson, 2005). As Kolb (1984) shows, learning is a process, development and learning cannot be separated and knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. SIT Study Abroad students are “encouraged to observe objectively, analyze the experience and the context, and incorporate those ideas moving forward” (SIT Study Abroad, 2011). Even though students only study with SIT for approximately 15 weeks, it is an opportunity for students to gain very practical skills, knowledge, and credits to help them make the most of the career at Brandeis University.
Goals and Objectives

The goal and objectives for this program focus on targeted outcomes and targeted areas that are to be examined. This is often determined by looking from a “macro” level to a “micro” level. The main areas of examination in this situation are: SIT Study Abroad, Brandeis University, customized programs, and students.

SIT Study Abroad Goals

SIT Study Abroad’s goal is to develop new, replicable, and responsive program models and designs to meet the needs of 21st century institutions and clients, and to enhance its competitiveness in the study abroad marketplace. Customized programs are just one aspect of this with the focus on responsive, tailored, and relationship driven partnerships with various institutions. By building our relationships with sending schools, responding to their needs, and providing customized services, we are encouraging overall goodwill and building awareness of our regular programs. The goal of the SIT/Brandeis Midyear Program is to provide a model customized study abroad program in the fall semester for Brandeis University Midyear students.

This program is designed to give first-year students an international context and framework in which to base their future academic career. The program aims to provide a vehicle for first-year university students to internationalize their university experience, and to become exposed early in their college education to cultural diversity, new forms of thought, and life experiences unique from their own.

Student goals

The goal of the new SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program is to provide students with an international structure on which to build their intercultural, linguistic, and academic skills for their return to Brandeis as freshman and to further their desire in continued intercultural learning.
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Experiences. Students will have the opportunity to study abroad strictly with a cohort of other Brandeis Midyear students. Following successful completion of SIT Study Abroad’s program, students will be able to transfer 16 credits, of which three courses meet general education requirements for Brandeis. Universally, all students who participate in SIT Study Abroad programs are offered intensive language study, intercultural competencies and an understanding of a critical global issue within a regional context. The Panama program’s interdisciplinary coursework is designed to provide students with an introduction to perspectives on health, development, culture, globalization, sustainability, Spanish language and community service. Student learning outcomes are measured through evaluations administered on-site and written into a comprehensive report by the program director.

By the end of the semester, the objectives of the program will be to increase the knowledge, skills, and awareness of the students:

In relation to academic growth:
- Educate and guide students to help them gain understanding of culture and development within an international framework from a multinational perspective
- Increase student recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of academics and problem solving in the 21st century
- Increase student acquisition of the Spanish language

In relation to personal development:
- Students will have analytical skills and capacity to examine complex issues related to globalization
- Students will increase their world view particularly in terms of space and time
- Students will gain awareness of cultural assumptions and biases including strengthened self-confidence and self-awareness

The thematic seminar for the Brandeis program is Globalization and Sustainability: A Latin American Perspective. The course objectives and learning outcomes, taken from the syllabus are:

Course objectives include:
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- Deepen student knowledge and awareness of globalization and sustainability
- Make available to students firsthand experiences with the outcomes of globalization in its diverse forms
- Construct with and within each student a solid, informed foundation for forming views and opinions on sustainability and its relevance

Learning Outcomes, students should be able to:
- Develop cogent, informed arguments regarding sustainability and globalization
- Understand the effects of globalization in the developing world, particularly in Latin America
- Craft integral proposals for the promotion of sustainability within diverse fields of study

In addition to the thematic seminar students are involved in an intercultural communications course and a Service Learning Practicum. For the Service Learning Practicum students should accomplish the following:

Course objectives include:
- Provide students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience with an entity geared toward the student’s academic interest particularly in fields associated with sustainability and/or globalization
- Create an environment in which students become engaged in the local community
- Aid entities in need of assistance to effectively achieve their goals in the fields of sustainability and globalization

Learning Outcomes, students should be able to:
- Describe their service learning experience and how their efforts and achievements lent to the forwarding of the mission of the organization with which they worked.
- Address the differences in the workplace in Panama and in the United States or in another country.
- Discuss the issues surrounding sustainability and globalization based on their firsthand experience.

The syllabi for each course on this program were developed in direct collaboration with Brandeis University faculty and staff. The syllabi for these two courses may be found in Appendices B and C of this paper. SIT Study Abroad staff in Panama will be responsible to evaluating student learning outcomes and success for each specific course. General evaluation of the courses by the students is required in the program evaluation form. SIT Study Abroad will review the success of the program through a program review and use of the standard evaluation
form. Data pertaining to customized programs is being continuously gathered and tracked for future analysis. The evaluation for this program is discussed in the Evaluation and Assessment section of this paper.

**Brandeis University goals**

The purpose of providing Brandeis Midyear students with the opportunity to study abroad is to create a greater affinity towards their cohort and Brandeis as a whole, ultimately leading to matriculation at Brandeis and student retention over time. Brandeis University provides Midyear students with a positive experience studying abroad and a productive use of the fall semester. The study abroad option also gives an added incentive to students as they make their admissions decisions. The opportunity to gain a full semester’s worth of credit, in addition to international experience, builds students’ knowledge and skills, but also gives them new language to work with in the academic setting. Brandeis success is measured by how many students accept Brandeis’s Midyear offer and then matriculate for the spring semester. The Office of Study Abroad wanted to give students the option to study a foreign language in a non-traditional location while still meeting general education requirements.

**Customized Programs**

The goal of this program design is to determine and evaluate all of the necessary components of a customized long-term study abroad program and create the necessary templates to replicate such a program for SIT Study Abroad. Customized program development examines each aspect of standard SIT Study Abroad programs in order to determine what changes or additions should be made to serve the customized needs. New program elements and processes discussed in this capstone will be presented to SIT Study Abroad senior management and academic deans in order to evaluate the merit and viability of future programs and necessary adjustments to current systems.
Program Description

SIT Study Abroad, in partnership with Brandeis University, is providing a semester-long program for newly accepted students. Based on study abroad trends regarding first-year undergraduate students and an increased focus on the use of third-party providers for customized programs, SIT Study Abroad added this program to their portfolio. The program’s strong rationale and theoretical foundations create an opportunity to expand upon each aspect of the program design. While SIT Study Abroad already has working standards in place, changes in processes and templates specific to customized programs have needed to be developed. Special focus should be given to the changes made in marketing; student recruitment and admissions; program budget and financial considerations; and the evaluation and assessment of the program.

Location

The program will be based in the city of David in the province of Chiriquí. David is the third largest city in Panama with a population of approximately 150,000 inhabitants (David, 2011). It is located on the Pacific coast and is adjacent to the La Amistad UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, an international ecological protected zone, and the Ngöbe-Buglé Autonomous Indigenous Territory. Neighboring Costa Rica, David is home to diverse populations. Proximity to rural areas and urban zones provides excellent opportunities for students to examine issues of public health, business, language, communications, education, social justice, the environment, and history.

Panama provides an excellent setting to introduce first-year students to international experiences as it offers an excellent platform for academic growth and enrichment. Panama was chosen for this program not only because of its academic strengths but because it is regarded as one of the safest countries in Central America, is close in location to the United States, and offers
high quality medical services. SIT will draw on the resources of the local community through their extensive network of collaborators with whom SIT has worked during the last nine years.

**Program Scope**

The SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program is an academic study abroad program. This program is open to any student admitted to Brandeis University as a Midyear student. Students will study during the fall semester in Panama with the intention to matriculate at Brandeis University in January of the following year. The program maximum is 25 students.

**Timetable for Delivery**

The SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program will run for a full semester, 15 weeks, starting in late August and running until mid-December of each year. Once students at Brandeis University are accepted as a Midyear student they will start to receive information about the study abroad options. Each student is invited to visit campus during an Admitted Students’ Day in mid-April where they may find out more information about becoming a Midyear student and the details of the fall study abroad programs. After students make their final admissions decision by May 1st to become a Midyear student, they will have approximately one month to register for the Panama program. The application process takes between one and three weeks. Following acceptance to the program the student will receive pre-departure materials and a pre-departure orientation. When the student arrives in-country there will be an on-site orientation for the first week. Throughout the semester there will be informal evaluations culminating in final evaluations and pre-departure programming. Finally students will be supported through SIT Study Abroad’s re-entry documentation and program in order to ensure a smoother transition to on-campus life (for sample schedule, see *Appendix B*).
Potential Participants

Participants for the SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program will be drawn from each new class of incoming Midyear undergraduate students. Brandeis University has its’ own admittance criteria and practices. Once admissions decisions are made, approximately 150 students are offered admissions as a Midyear freshman. SIT Study Abroad’s program is open to any of these students, all of whom have a least a high school diploma. Students will come from a variety of backgrounds and an array of experience with foreign language and international travel.

Curriculum and Program Components

The Panama Midyear curriculum is founded on SIT’s experiential learning and field based methods. Students will combine academic exercises in the classroom with direct experience in the community. At each stage students will be given the opportunity to analyze the experience, reflect on its impact and incorporate their learning into future studies and projects. The curriculum was developed in conjunction with Brandeis University and their general education requirements, and all credits will be transferable to Brandeis University. The program focus will be a general outlook on development, culture, globalization, and sustainability. Courses will be structured in the traditional SIT format which places particular emphasis on field learning coupled with classroom instruction. They syllabi developed for this program was a collaboration between SIT Study Abroad’s Associate Dean for Latin America and Brandeis University’s faculty members. Because Brandeis University is granting credit and course fulfillment, it was important to guarantee that the course content met the same standards and learning outcomes as any course found on the Brandeis campus.
There will be four courses offered during the program; these include Intensive Spanish Language, Globalization and Sustainability: A Latin American Perspective, Intercultural Communications, and Service Learning Practicum. It is very important to SIT Study Abroad that students are given the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the local culture in addition to their academics. During the approximately four month long program, the following components will be a part of the curriculum (also found online in the Key Features section):

**Pre-departure.** Pre-departure information will be discussed in the logistics section.

**Orientation.** The ability to acclimate to the local community is very important for students. Students spend the first week meeting the local staff and being briefed on all aspects of the program including health and safety information, academics, and tools for cross-cultural adaptation.

**Homestay.** Following orientation, students will live with a host family in the city of David and be immersed in the daily rhythm of life in their host community. Homestays are critical in boosting student safety and creating a caring community. A homestay coordinator works to match students with families where there is a “good fit” and can talk to students about any problems they experience.

**Coursework.** Students will have four courses that run throughout the entire semester.

**Intensive Spanish I (Begins or continues progress towards fulfilling the Foreign Language requirement at Brandeis) (4 credits, 60 class hours)**

The curriculum of Intensive Spanish I has been specifically designed to integrate with the Spanish courses at Brandeis. Thus, students will be on track to continue their Spanish studies when they begin courses on campus. The course is intended for students who have had at least two semesters of Spanish in high school. The course is directly related to the curricula of the
other three courses, as well as the excursion and homestay experiences in Panama. This holistic approach to language learning greatly improves students’ success in all program components and their overall experience in the program. Classes focus on oral comprehension and communication, immediate practice of new grammatical concepts, and cultural appropriateness. In order to enhance the students’ program experience, language classes emphasize vocabulary used in the academic fields of globalization and sustainability.

**Intercultural Communications (Fulfills the Oral Communications general requirements)**
(4 credits, 60 class hours)

The Intercultural Communications course offers students a comprehensive examination of the principles of communication and their expression among various cultures. Students use self-analysis and appraisal to assess their own cultural identity and its bearing on the formation of their values and worldview. Through classroom and field teaching, students are given the opportunity to develop skills to navigate intercultural interactions, and to understand verbal and nonverbal exchanges.

**Globalization and Sustainability: A Latin American Perspective (Fulfills the School of Social Science as well as the Non-Western and Comparative Cultures requirements)**
(4 credits, 60 class hours)

*(Syllabus available Appendix C)*

This course introduces students to globalization and sustainability and deepens their knowledge of these topics from a multidimensional, pluralistic perspective. The course is set up in modules that draw on the founding concepts of globalization and sustainability, as they are the lenses through which each subject is examined. Modules include health, environment, history, law, economics, and the arts.
Service Learning Practicum  
(4 credits, 60 class hours)  

(Syllabus available Appendix D)  

The Service Learning Practicum opens doors for students, enabling them to interact with their Panamanian counterparts and to share experiences with organizations and people involved in activities of mutual interest. Students will have the opportunity to work on a project, practice their language skills, and gain on-the-ground work experience in a country other than their own. Service learning practicum options include, but are not limited to, assisting at a rural health clinic, carrying out field research for a local law firm, or conducting surveys for environmental organizations. Students will work between eight and ten hours per week and will complete academic assignments during the practicum. A program advisor will supervise each student.  

Excursions. All excursions are integrated into the curriculum. While traveling, students will be accompanied by staff and engaged in multifaceted learning activities both in and outside the classroom. During the semester students will have the opportunity to go to Panama City, the Naso-Teribe area of La Amistad, Bocas del Toro, and Costa Rica. The excursion to Costa Rica, as well as the rural homestay, allows students the opportunity to do a comparison between each community and country.  

Service learning practicum. The service learning practicum gives students the chance to apply the tools, knowledge, and skills learned during Spanish lessons, lectures, discussions, and readings while working side by side with the local community.  

Program reflection and evaluation. During the program’s final days, students will have a chance to provide feedback on the semester and to reflect on how to take the experience back with them to Brandeis and into the future. Students will also be introduced to SIT Study
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Abroad’s Re-Entry program. This will be especially important as these students return to the US, matriculate into courses, and start their academic careers at Brandeis.

Staffing

Due to the large number of programs that SIT Study Abroad runs, they are divided up into various geographic regions in order to make the management of each program more realistic. The Latin America regional staff is located in Brattleboro and throughout the world. The Academic Dean of Latin America and Europe is responsible for the overall academic content and implementation of all SIT Study Abroad programs in this region. He works on program development and is an important decision maker in terms of customized program development. The Associate Academic Dean, due to her presence in Panama, is also extremely important for the success of this customized program. She assists the Academic Dean with program development, budgets, creating and reviewing syllabi, and local staff management. The Program Coordinator, located in Brattleboro, works with in country staff to prepare pre-departure documents, and collects and analyzes semester program reporting. The Manager of Administration works with the Deans to ensure that programs are compliant in each location and works on specific program budgets. The Customized Program Manager acts as the hub of communication between Brandeis University, the Academic Dean and Associate Dean, and the in country staff. The development of web content and print materials, marketing strategies, and student advising are all also under the Customized Program Manager’s purview.

SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program will be run following the general practices of all SIT Study Abroad sites. Panama is an ideal location for such a program due to the fact that one of the Associate Academic Deans is also located in the country. While the Academic Dean and
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Associate Academic Dean generally do not deal with the day-to-day management of the study abroad programs, having the Associate Dean on location will provide extra support to a newly developed customized program. One of SIT’s main strengths is the local connections and the networks in the community. All staff members will be local nationals with roots in the local community, or long-term international residents. In addition to ensuring the health and safety of program participants, this ensures beneficial reciprocity with the local community. Some staff members, including language instructors, will be hired as contractors.

The program will be managed by a Program Director who is responsible for the management and daily implementation of the program. The detailed job description for the Program Director is located in Appendix E. In addition to the Program Director, there will be a Program Coordinator (in country) who will assist in the logistics of program execution and final program reporting. The Homestay Coordinator will find host families in David for each student and is responsible for the homestay family orientation and the host stipend disbursement. The language instructors and locally hired faculty and lecturers will be responsible for the bulk of the academic courses. The students will have an opportunity to interact with many members of the local community from various NGOs and University of Chiriquí. The management of the local staff, in addition to local wages, will all be done by the Associate Dean and Academic Dean.

Program Marketing

SIT Study Abroad manages the marketing of the customized program using a different approach than the normal marketing process for new programs. Normally, when SIT has a new program the team works to build awareness through the website, printed publications, study abroad fairs and strategic directory postings. Additionally, the University Relations Managers
and Academic Deans make contacts with appropriate study abroad offices and faculty members in order to recruit students. The customized program has a very targeted and specific audience, which meant that most of these approaches were not appropriate or needed.

Marketing, from the SIT Study Abroad point of view, consists of a website built specifically for the Brandeis program and a flyer used at an Admitted Students’ Day. The website contains pages with a general overview, key features of the program, excursion information, homestay description, coursework material, and faculty bios. From the website students are able to access the contact information for their admissions counselor, dates of the program, costs and the online application. The content for the website was written by the Customized Program Manager and the Associate Academic Dean. The focus of the information is not only on the academic content of the program, but the health and safety of the younger students. Parents have access to student affairs information as well. The Customized Program Manager and the marketing department created the flyer. It is simple and to the point with information on the courses, credits, and contact information (Appendix F).

Brandeis began marketing the Midyear study abroad programs along with the acceptance letter sent to admitted students. Within the students’ packet was a Brandeis produced brochure describing the study abroad options for Midyear students. Shortly thereafter the “Admitted Students” section of the Brandeis website linked to the Midyear study abroad programs, and the Brandeis Office of Study Abroad created a special section on their website (Appendix G). In addition to the virtual marketing, Brandeis invited SIT Study Abroad representatives to share the new program during an Admitted Students Day on campus. The day consisted of an information session specifically for Midyear students about the study abroad options and a general academic
fair where students could get more information. The pool of potential applicants for the Panama program is very specific so getting in front of them and sharing the information is important.

**Student Recruitment and Admissions**

Closely related to the marketing plan for the Brandeis Midyear program are student recruitment and admissions. The recruitment effort began with the initial letter about the study abroad program sent with the Midyear acceptance letter. Following the letter was the information session about the program at Admitted Students’ Day. The Associate Academic Dean from Panama came to discuss the program with students and parents. Other staff members, such as the Customized Program Manager and Admissions Counselor, were available to discuss the program during the academic fair. The Admissions Counselor is also able to see who has started an online application and reach out to them to see if they have questions or need assistance with any part of the application.

Admissions for the Midyear Panama program follow general SIT guidelines fairly closely. Only admitted Brandeis Midyear Students have information on this program, so the applicant pool is very specific. Students must submit an online application, which includes an essay about why they chose the Panama program and how they see it fitting into their educational goals, as well as relevant courses, letters of recommendation, an approval of participation form and official transcripts. Since these students have recently gone through the college application process, it was decided that students are able to reuse the same letters of recommendation that they used for their Brandeis application. It is important that students have a strong academic background and are able to show the ability to study abroad.
The online application had to be completely re-developed in order to make it work for the SIT/Brandeis Midyear Program. Due to the fact that the website and other program information is not open to the general public, the Customized Program Manager and web team had to develop a new system to ensure that only Brandeis students were allowed to apply for this program. The students applying are just finishing high school, which also means that it is important for SIT Study Abroad to capture high school information in addition to university or college enrollment. The logic in the online application had to be changed so that if a student did not mark their university as Brandeis, then they would not be able to continue with the application. I worked with multiple team members to write a new application essay and ensure that the language throughout the application was appropriate for a first-year student. Several other forms, such as our Approval of Participation had to be adjusted in order to compensate for the first-year standing of the students and potential for students not yet 18 years of age. An example of our standard Approval of Participation and the Brandeis Approval form can be found in Appendix H.

**Logistics**

**Pre-departure**

The pre-departure logistics for this program are coordinated between the Associate Academic Dean and the Program Coordinator. Pre-departure information is available to students as soon as they have been accepted to the program. The documentation and information open to students on this program are the same as all other SIT Study Abroad programs. In addition to pre-departure documents, there will be two virtual pre-departure sessions held over the summer. The pre-departure session will be facilitated by the University Relation Manager responsible for
Brandeis University. All of the documents, as well as the pre-departure orientation cover basic information about the program, arrival, in-country logistics, and academics. Students are responsible for their own flights, obtaining a passport, immunizations, and visas. The documentation includes international travel; passport and visa documents; a country overview; safety, security and health; packing guidelines; readings, assignments and resources; health guidelines and requirements; the student handbook; and information on contacting former students.

**In-country**

The SIT Study Abroad staff in Panama will pick students up at the airport and transport them to their orientation accommodations. Students will have about a week-long orientation during which they will stay at a hotel and topics such as health, safety, security, cultural norms and other team building exercises will be covered. Following orientation students will move into their homestay family. Each student is individually placed in a family in order to encourage language practice and cultural immersion. Homestay families are carefully vetted and receive their own orientation about expectations and considerations with American students. The local Program Director and Program Coordinator will take care of scheduling all local transportation and logistical needs. Due to SIT Study Abroad’s decade long presence in Panama most logistical considerations are already established.

**Organizational**

As the Customized Program Manager it has been important to learn the internal logistics of SIT Study Abroad in order to make this program viable. While much of the Brandeis Midyear program mimics the regular SIT Study Abroad programs, there are certain aspects that require extra attention and examination. Customized programs require the same amount of effort and
work, occasionally more, as other programs. The greatest way in which a customized program requires extra work is that it does not always follow the established workflow process. The first major hurdle from the administrative point of view was that the website for the program was hidden so that only Brandeis Midyear students would be able to access the information. This required extra work and time from the Web team who could not simply plug the new content into existing templates. New logic had to be built into the online application so that only Brandeis students would be able to choose the Panama Midyear program. Similarly, certain forms had to be altered in order to accommodate students who had yet to attend an undergraduate institution or who may be under the age of 18. While none of these changes were time-consuming within themselves, each small change added up to a great deal of personnel time and effort. In Appendix I there is a very simple flowchart to signify the many different departments a customized program touches and must consider each and every time a new request is made.

**Health and Safety Plan**

SIT Study Abroad’s website affirms that student health and safety is of utmost importance. “Building on a long history of running high quality programs, we are experienced in orientation, risk assessment, emergency preparedness, and crisis management, and we are able to adapt quickly to challenges” (SIT Study Abroad, 2011). The local environment, socioeconomic and political situations, and medical conditions are constantly changing at each site. The professional Student Affairs staff tailors health and safety guidelines, with the assistance of the local staff, to each program, location, and context. SIT Study Abroad is available to students around the clock through the international emergency line and the local staff. Students have access to mental health professionals as well.
SIT Study Abroad stresses that student safety starts with each individual student. It is up to the students to utilize the pre-departure documents and other resources available to make the best decisions for their own safety. Each student is also required to pass a medical review, which helps to ensure that they are fit for the strenuous conditions of studying abroad. SIT Study Abroad is often in remote locations and it is important that students understand their own physical and mental needs. The medical review covers important immunizations and medications, as well as mental health questions. Every student who participates on an SIT Study Abroad program receives international health insurance. This insurance provides protection for accidents and illness as well as evacuation and repatriation. The medical review happens at the end of the admissions process, and student health guidelines are available any time after a student applies to a program.

Additional health and safety measures are taken by SIT Study Abroad through the local staff and use of homestay families. The local staff is vital to the success of each program and SIT Study Abroad infuses safety and security throughout the program. Key elements of the SIT model help to maximize in-country safety, including a regular and ongoing orientation. During the initial orientation period, the Program Director and other staff will educate students about potential safety risks and strategies to keep themselves safe within their new location. Staff provides further safety and security briefings at key junctures throughout the semester. Homestays provide students with grounding in the local culture that allows them to build realistic perceptions of risk. Host families help students navigate their new surroundings by providing firsthand exposure to local norms, modeling culturally appropriate behavior, and giving precautionary advice about the local environment.
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Crisis Management Plan

The safety and security of SIT Students, especially considering first-year undergraduates, it at the forefront of program staff’s concerns. First-year students are naturally younger than the typical SIT Study Abroad participant and may have less previous experience with traveling away from home for extended periods. SIT Study Abroad is committed to taking the reasonable steps necessary to maximize student safety, though it cannot be guaranteed abroad, just as it cannot be guaranteed in the United States. In the event of an emergency or crisis, SIT Study Abroad is fully prepared to provide the appropriate support necessary.

Crisis management depends on the severity of the crisis reported. For non-emergency situations and everyday use, students and parents are given the SIT Study Abroad international emergency phone number, which is available at all times. Students are also given a card that has their local emergency contact’s information on it as well as the program’s address; they are also encouraged to carry their homestay family’s information with them. If a call comes in that is deemed to have no risk to student health, security or safety, then the local staff take care of the incident and report it back to Student Affairs. When there is a crisis that either has some risk or high risk to student health, security or safety, an appropriate crisis communications manager (the on call staff member) is appointed. From there SIT Study Abroad establishes a primary liaison with the field or field point person, a Senior Management point person, a SIT Study Abroad office point person, and an external relations point person. Due to the tailored nature of the health and safety plans, crisis contingencies are established for each program and site based on the local context. There are a myriad of policies regarding different types of crises and appropriate measures to take in each situation.
Program Budget and Financial Considerations

The program budget and finances are often the most important aspects of a customized program. Depending on the type of customized program and the responsible party for the bill, it can often mean the difference between successfully running a customized program or not. Institutions struggle with the “business” of international education. While educators believe it’s important for students to learn other languages and study overseas, it costs more and more to provide the services students wants, which is a challenge during today’s tight fiscal environment (Williamson, 2010). The costs associated with running customized programs match or exceed the costs of running regular programs. Custom programs require that all aspects of the program are created from scratch each time and often contain start-up costs. As the Customized Program Manager, I have been creating templates and regular processes in order to ease the re-creation of programs from scratch, but it is still a work in progress.

The budget for the Panama Midyear program was developed by the Associate Academic Dean, located in Panama, and the Manager of Administration in Vermont. They worked together to use information from other programs already established in Panama in order to create an appropriate program budget. The official budget takes all of the important aspects of starting a new program into consideration. Due to the client agreement and other legal limitations, the budget is a confidential document; an example budget and official student costs may be seen in Appendix J. Student fees cover all tuition, room, board, excursions, and group expenses. Students are responsible for international airfare, immunizations, passport and visas, and miscellaneous personal expenses.

The SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program poses a unique challenge in that students are responsible for their tuition, room and board, and other expenses. This is not unique for study
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abroad programs, yet when one considers that these students are not yet matriculated at Brandeis, the lack of access to federal financial aid brings financial considerations to light. Most SIT Study Abroad students have access to their home school financial aid packages and matching Pell Grants in addition to SIT Study Abroad scholarships. The Brandeis Midyear students must pay for this program through their own finances, SIT Study Abroad scholarships, and other outside resources. In the future this may be an important issue to take into account when developing customized programs and trying to expand access to study abroad.

**Program Evaluation and Assessment**

"Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence," stated Abigail Adams in 1780 (The Quotations Page, 2010). In order to attend to the learning of SIT Study Abroad students and ensure the highest quality programs, there are several ways in which evaluation and assessment are utilized. While every program must evaluate student performance and learning outcomes, there are also evaluations that look at program and regional level goals. There are two main types of assessment, *formative* and *summative*.

*Formative* assessment obtains information that can be used as feedback to improve or fine-tune a program while *summative* assessment focuses on a program’s overall value or impact (Scriven, 1967). The SIT Brandeis Program will require both types of assessment in order to determine the success of student learning, analysis of the needs of first-year students, and the success of the program within the SIT Study Abroad portfolio.

**Student Evaluation**

Student learning and quality assurance is of highest importance to SIT Study Abroad. The goals of student evaluation practices are to gauge progress by trying to measure not just numbers
but the impact of programs. SIT Study Abroad holds itself accountable to achieving goals, and ensuring that goals and objectives are appropriately linked to courses. Each program has syllabi that state course objectives and intended learning outcomes. Student success in the courses is measured through evaluations administered by the Program Director. Evaluations of the program provide immediate feedback to faculty and staff for ongoing program improvement.

Since 2009, SIT has made student evaluations mandatory in order to receive transcripts. There are a few optional demographic questions at the beginning of the form and then some questions in matrix format, followed by open-ended questions. These are anonymous evaluations that include sections on pre-departure, orientation, homestays, the thematic seminar, educational excursions, language instruction, overall academics, and the overall program. For the Panama Midyear program, there is an additional section on the intercultural communications course and service learning practicum (please see Appendix K for a blank example). The evaluation is sent to the students electronically and they have three weeks for its completion. Based on Kirkpatrick’s (1975) four levels of evaluation, SIT Study Abroad focuses on the first two levels of “reaction” and “learning.” It is important not only to gauge the reactions to the program content and program delivery (did they like it), but also to what extent the student learned and met the goals of the course (did they learn).

First-year undergraduate programs in general, the Brandeis Midyear program specifically, must take into consideration the participants for which the program is designed. As Larry Malone (2001) points out while discussing his experience leading a first-year undergraduate program, “It’s like being a parent as well as a teacher, having a Ph.D. in economics in no way prepared me for this, we’re helping them to bridge the gap between their daily lives and their lives in the classroom” (p. vi). SIT Study Abroad must expand the student
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

evaluation in order to understand if the program and program staff are appropriately challenging and supporting the first-year students. As noted in the literature review, the needs of first-year students are different than third-year students. If SIT Study Abroad is successful at providing first-year programs, then these alumni will create a potential pipeline for other SIT programs. Students who study abroad freshman year express greater intent to study abroad again (Chieffo, 2010). In order to understand the impact of studying abroad as a Midyear student and gauge potential interest in future study abroad, I propose an additional section for the student evaluation specifically for Midyear students (see Appendix L).

**Customized Program assessment**

In order to assess the SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear Program and other customized programs in the future, program reviews will be done. Program reviews are something that SIT Study Abroad has done in the past, but is not currently practicing as a whole. A program review will allow the Program Director, Academic Dean, Dean of Students, Director of Enrollment, Director of University Relations, Financial Analyst, and Customized Program Manager the ability to review all aspects of the program and analyze the final outcomes. The program review is data driven and will be used to refine and enhance the program, in addition to determining the longevity of the program. Aspects of the review cover:

- The program design and organization of courses supports the learning outcomes
- Program readings and other materials reflect up-to-date academic and other resources
- The program complements and contributes to students' pursuit of an undergraduate degree
- Incidents involving student safety have been handled efficiently and appropriately.
- Homestay families are appropriately vetted, trained, and monitored.
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

- SIT's Human Subjects policy and local ethical standards are followed in this program
- Program's return on investment was sufficient to warrant continuation

By examining student evaluations and completing a program review, SIT Study Abroad will be able to determine whether or not the goals and objectives outlined have been met and if it is a positive decision to continue this specific customized program.

**SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis**

The goals of SIT Study Abroad and Brandeis will take more than a single semester’s data to evaluate their success or failure. While Brandeis’s enrollment strategy is to offer more places to incoming freshman, it may take several years to know if the ability to study abroad is influencing student enrollment and leading to greater retention. It is outside the parameters of this paper to know what sort of evaluation or assessment methods Brandeis has in place to measure the success of the study abroad programs in relation to Midyear students. SIT Study Abroad’s goal to increase the competitiveness of new programs in the current market will be evaluated through the program review and future requests for first-year undergraduate programs. As the Customized Program Manager, I will continue to monitor the types of requests SIT Study Abroad receives and develop the model to present to other institutions.

**Conclusions/Implications**

Based on the current environment in study abroad, one may notice two major trends towards programs targeting younger students and programs being managed by third-party providers. The needs assessment done by SIT Study Abroad showed that partner institutions are looking for customized programs to meet their requirements in regards to enrollment management and new program development. SIT Study Abroad is meeting this growing need by
developing its capacity to create customized programs. The benefit to SIT Study Abroad is through an increased awareness of our programs, stronger institutional relationships, and innovative programs.

SIT and World Learning are well poised to develop programs that build the bridge between the high school experience and the undergraduate experience. SIT Study Abroad is well respected and well known as a top study abroad provider. It is because of this reputation that sending institutions, such as Brandeis University, are looking to SIT Study Abroad to provide customized programs, including those that serve first-year undergraduate students. The SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear program is a good way to start expanding SIT Study Abroad’s capabilities to do customized programs. Senior management is committed to supporting the internal system developments to support such programs. At the current rate of growth regarding customized requests, this is an area that will provide positive advantages to SIT Study Abroad’s portfolio and financial positions.

Despite many indicators of success for customized programs and programs designed for first-year undergraduates, there are limitations. The greatest limiting factor to this research was the lack of current or previous participants. I was not able to uncover much in terms of primary information from the perspective of a first-year student and we are currently in the admissions process for the future cohort. In the future, we will need to conduct our own needs assessment of Midyear students and what they need and want in a program. There are still questions that need to be addressed. What information should we be collecting from these Midyear students if Brandeis, or any other client, is not asking for it? What is appropriate when they do ask for it?

There is a gap in current research, so more research should be done to understand what long-term effect study abroad has on first-year undergraduates. If first-year students are more
likely to study abroad, SIT Study Abroad will need to think about ways in which to keep students connected and interested in other programs. This will truly expand the ability to maximize the growth potential of customized programs. Due to the lack of official research, there is not a lot of information regarding the needs and special considerations for first-year undergraduate students on programs such as this.

SIT Study Abroad will need to think about customized programs in general in the near future. Is this what SIT should be doing and will it diversify the portfolio enough to make these efforts worthwhile? There are both tangible and intangible benefits of customized programs. Customized programs equal more students, new students, better awareness of SIT Study Abroad in general, and goodwill. Brandeis and SIT Study Abroad already have an established relationship, but customized programs are a way to build new and better relationships with other sending institutions.

From the administrative point of view customized programs will need to be evaluated in terms of system needs. They require creativity and flexibility of the organization’s systems, which can be difficult to do without expending a lot of energy. Each part of the system is impacted by a customized program: web, IT, billing, data entry, admissions, registrar, marketing, alumni communications, etc. A cost-benefit analysis should be done, as part of the program review, in order to decide if this type of program should be expanded and advertised.

First-year undergraduate programs are timely in that a growing number of high school graduates are looking to delay entrance into traditional undergraduate programs and a growing number of higher education institutions are offering a delayed entrance. Customized programs are also timely when considering that budget concerns effect resource allocation, and higher education institutions will be looking to provide more of their programs overseas through third-
party providers. When combined there is great potential for a very successful endeavor by SIT Study Abroad. Not only will SIT Study Abroad provide more opportunities for students to experience living and learning overseas, but there will be a stronger connection between the programs and sending institutions for which they are designed. The benefits of semester study abroad programs are well established in regards to language acquisition, development of cross-cultural skills, and transformational experiences (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). This is a great opportunity for SIT Study Abroad to provide the academic and social knowledge and skills to succeed in today’s internationalized world.
Bibliography


Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students


Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students


Appendices:

Appendix A: Customized Programs survey and report

Customized Programs Survey

1. What is the name of your organization? Who should we contact?

2. What type/model of customized program are you looking for?

3. In which countries would you like customized programs?

4. Why this particular region or country? What is the theme of the program?

5. In which of these countries have you run successful programs previously? What was the model of the program?

6. What Academic areas do you specialize in for customized programs?

7. What housing options do you want for students on customized programs?

8. What course options would you like available? Language, lectures, excursions, content courses, etc.? 

Example Report: (will be located in a database, this report is currently under development)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Contact person(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Example Report: (will be located in a database, this report is currently under development)
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

Follow-up
Appendix B: Sample itinerary

This itinerary is subject to change due to curricular or programmatic needs. The general outline will stay the same each semester, but students will receive a more detailed itinerary when they arrive in Panama.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Program orientation: Academics, safety, culture, logistics, rules, and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Spanish Language (SL), Globalization and Sustainability (GS), Intercultural Communications (ICC), and Service Learning Practicum courses in David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Educational Excursions to Panama City and Kuna Yala – coursework continues while on excursion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Spanish Language (SL), Globalization and Sustainability (GS), Intercultural Communications (ICC), and Service Learning Practicum courses in David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Educational Excursions to Bocas del Toro and Costa Rica – coursework continues while on excursion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Spanish Language (SL), Globalization and Sustainability (GS), Intercultural Communications (ICC), and Service Learning Practicum courses in David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Reflection and Evaluation, Re-entry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Thematic Seminar syllabus

Thematic Seminar
Globalization and Sustainability

LACB-1000 (4 Credits / 60 class hours)

Brandeis University - SIT Study Abroad
SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear Program

Course Description
The Thematic Seminar course aims to introduce and deepen student knowledge of globalization and sustainability from a multidimensional, pluralistic perspective which can often be found only outside of the United States. Each module draws on the founding concepts of globalization and sustainability as they are the looking glasses through which each subject is examined. Modules include health, environment, history, law, economics, and the arts. Students earn four credits for this course. The Thematic Seminar course is taught in English.

Course Objectives
Course objectives include:
- Deepen student knowledge and awareness of globalization and sustainability
- Make available to students firsthand experiences with the outcomes of globalization in its diverse forms
- Construct with and within each student a solid, informed foundation for forming views and opinions on sustainability and its relevance

Expected Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
- Develop cogent, informed arguments regarding sustainability and globalization
- Understand the effects of globalization in the developing world, particularly in Latin America
- Craft integral proposals for the promotion of sustainability within diverse fields of study

Course Requirements

Readings
Students are responsible for all required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear during class discussions. The readings will help students place the classes in context, to engage lecturers, to generate questions during discussions, and to deepen their knowledge of particular issues.

Required texts include:
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

Worldwatch Institute, 2010 State of the World: Transforming Cultures from Consumerism to Sustainability, Norton and Company, USA.

Class and Activities Attendance
Attendance of all formal class activities is mandatory. Participation is crucial to student success in this course and will be gauged based on student contribution to discussions, involvement during excursions, respect for the host culture, punctuality, cooperation, and flexibility.

Assignments
Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, and depth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection and assignment journal</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation

Grading Criteria
All grades assigned will take into account students’ special circumstances and challenges they face as students outside of their home countries. An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) work regarding structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation, and consistency. An “A” grade in class participation refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening, cultural sensitivity, and active engagement in all program activities.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for the course is as follows:
- 94-100% A
- 90-93% A-
- 87-89% B+
- 84-86% B
- 80-83% B-
- 77-79% C+
- 74-76% C
- 70-73% C-
- 67-69% D+
- 64-66% D
- below 64 F
Program Calendar

Module I – Introduction to globalization and sustainability

Week 1
Introduction to culture, globalization, and sustainability - globalization David
Field experience: Visit to sustainable development community group
Assignment: Journal entry
Readings:

Week 2
Introduction to culture, globalization, and sustainability – culture David
Field experience: Visit to indigenous university students group
Assignment: Exchange with indigenous student
Reading:

Week 3
Introduction to culture, globalization, and sustainability – sustainability David
Field experience: Visit to organic agriculture groups
Assignment: Journal reflection
Reading:

Week 4
Introduction to culture, globalization, and sustainability – education David
Field experience: Visit to local school
Assignment: Interview with homestay siblings
Readings:

Module II – Introduction to Latin American history

Week 5
Pre-colonial history of Latin America – Kuna Yala
Field experience: Visit to Cerro Brujo archaeological site and visit to Comarca Kuna Yala community
Assignment: Indigenous populations journal assignment
Reading:

Week 6
Latin America in the 20th century – Panama City
Field experience: Visit to Panama Canal and Canal Museum
Assignment: Journal questions
Reading: TBD

Module III – Introduction to economics

Week 7
Introduction to economics and globalization – David
Field experience: Visit to David municipal market
Assignment: Photo journal of the David municipal market
Readings:

Week 8
Economics and sustainability – David
Field experience: Visit to the office of social responsibility in business
Assignment: Interviews with social entrepreneurs
Readings:
Module IV – Introduction to environmental conservation in the tropics

Week 9
Introduction to environmental conservation – David
Field experience: Visit to La Amistad International Park, UNESCO Biosphere
Assignment: Protected area study
Reading:

Week 10
Environmental conservation and international development – David
Field experience: Visit to Chiriqui Gulf National Marine Park
Assignment: Protected area study
Reading:

Module V – Introduction to global health

Week 11
Introduction to global health – BdT and CR
Field experience: Visit to rural clinic
Assignment: Journal
Reading:

Week 12
Health and international development – BdT and CR
Field visit: Visit to traditional healer
Assignment: Health worker interview
Reading:

Module VI – Introduction to the Arts in Panama

Week 13
The Arts in Panama - David
Field experience: Visit to artisan workshop and folklore studio
Assignment: Music in Panama
Reading:
Local publication on musical diversity of Panama

Module VII – Introduction to law and globalization

Week 14
Introduction to law and globalization - David
Field experience: Visit to civil society group involved in IACHR case
Assignment: Research on binding Panama treaties
Reading:

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook.

This syllabus may be modified by the instructor. Considering conditions can change from semester to semester as well as during the semester, course content and scheduling can be adapted to take advantage of unique learning opportunities. Any changes will be promptly communicated to students.
Appendix D: Service Learning Practicum syllabus

**Service Learning Practicum**

PRAC-1500 (4 Credits / 60 class hours)

Brandeis University- SIT Study Abroad
SIT/Brandeis Panama Midyear Program

Course Description
The Service Learning Practicum opens the door for students to interact with Panamanian counterparts and to share experiences with organizations and people involved in activities of mutual interest. Students will have the opportunity to practice their language skills, and gain on-the-ground work experience in a country other than their own. Service learning practica include but are not limited to conducting surveys for environmental organizations, assisting at a rural health clinic, or carrying out field research for a local law firm. Students will work between eight and ten hours per week and will complete academic assignments during the practicum. An advisor will be assigned to each student for supervision.

Course Objectives
Course objectives include:
- Provide students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience with an entity geared toward the student’s academic interest particularly in fields associated with sustainability and/or globalization
- Create an environment in which students become engaged in the local community
- Aid entities in need of assistance to effectively achieve their goals in the fields of sustainability and globalization

Expected Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
- Describe their service learning experience and how their efforts and achievements lent to the forwarding of the mission of the organization with which they worked.
- Address the differences in the workplace in Panama and in the United States or in another country.
- Discuss the issues surrounding sustainability and globalization based on their firsthand experience.

Course Requirements
Readings
Required texts will be designated by the student. In the first week of the course, students will designate ten readings that the student considers to be most pertinent to their service learning experience. This list of readings is subject to approval by the student’s advisor. Students will be required to bring these readings to bear during meetings with their advisors and during group discussions.
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Attendance
Attendance of all practicum activities is mandatory. Participation is crucial to student success in this course and will be gauged based on student contribution to the practicum project, respect for the host culture, punctuality, cooperation, and flexibility.

Assignments
Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, and depth.

Assignment journal  40%
Thematic research paper  25%
Participation  35%

Evaluation
Grading Criteria
All grades assigned will take into account students’ special circumstances and the challenges they face living outside of their home country. An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) work regarding structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation, and consistency. An “A” grade in class participation refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening, cultural sensitivity, and active engagement in all program activities.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for the course is as follows:
94-100%  A
90-93% A-
87-89% B+
84-86% B
80-83% B-
77-79% C+
74-76% C
70-73% C-
67-69% D+
64-66% D
below 64  F

Program Calendar
Week 1
Introduction to the service learning practicum
Assignments:  1. Selection of service learning project
              2. Reading list
              3. Meet with your service learning advisor

Week 2
Goals of your service learning practicum
Assignments:  1. Articulation of your service learning goals
              2. Description of your role in your organization
3. Reflection on your first week
4. Meet with service learning advisor

Reading:
Reading 1

Week 3
*Communication and cross-cultural communication during your practicum*
Assignments: 1. Challenges, achievements, and misunderstandings while communicating in the work place
2. Reflecting on your second week
3. Email your advisor

Reading:
Reading 2

Week 4
*Workplace cultures in Panama*
Assignments: 1. Self-assessment of work place expectations
2. Reflect on your third week
3. Discussion of weeks 2 and 3 readings
4. Meet with your advisor

Readings: Reading 3

Week 5
*Your first month in your practicum*
Assignment: 1. What have you achieved after one month in your practicum?
2. Reflect on your first month in your practicum
3. Email your advisor

Reading:
Reading 4

Week 6
*Service learning: benefits and drawbacks*
Assignment: 1. Reflect on the benefits of service learning. What are the benefits from your point of view? Discuss the drawbacks.
2. Reflect on reading 5
3. Meet with your advisor

Reading:
Reading 5

Week 7
*Challenges and modifications in your practicum*
Assignment: 1. Discuss the challenges you have experienced in your practicum. What have you done to confront them and what have you modified to change them?
2. Reflect on reading 6
3. Email your advisor
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

Reading:
Reading 6

**Week 8**

*Service learning goals*

Assignments: 1. Discuss the goals of your organization. How do they or do they not concur with your personal goals and/or opinions?
2. What would you change in your organization and why?
3. Meet with your advisor

Reading:
Reading 7

**Week 9**

*Challenges of your organization*

Assignments: 1. What are the short-term and long-term challenges that your organization faces? Justify.
2. How should your organization prepare for these?
3. Reflect on readings 7 and 8
4. Email your advisor

Reading:
Reading 8

**Week 10**

*Ethics*

Assignment: 1. Discuss your personal ethics
2. Reflect on a situation you have experienced in your lifetime when your personal ethics were compromised.
3. Reflect on reading 9
4. Submit your topic and outline for your research paper
5. Meet with your advisor

Reading:
Reading 9

**Week 11**

*Research paper*

Assignments: 1. Provide a list of resources for your research paper.
2. Reflect on reading 10
3. Email your advisor

Reading:
Reading 10

**Week 12**

*Progress in your service learning practicum*

Assignments: 1. Discuss the progress you have made in your service learning practicum
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

Week 13
Research paper
Assignment: 1. Submit your research paper draft
2. Meet with your advisor

Week 14
Reflection
Assignment: 1. Submit the final draft of your research paper
2. Reflect on your service learning practicum. Discuss your experience and the knowledge and knowhow you have gained.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook.

This syllabus may be modified by the instructor. Considering conditions can change from semester to semester as well as during the semester, course content and scheduling can be adapted to take advantage of unique learning opportunities. Any changes will be promptly communicated to students.
Appendix E: Job Description

Description:
SIT Study Abroad, a program of World Learning, is recruiting for a Program Director for its study abroad program located in David, Chiriquí, Panama. The program’s theme is focused on social justice and community service.

This program follows the SIT semester model with its focus on experiential learning to complement traditional classroom instruction. Students undertake a service learning project in addition to academic coursework comprising a globalization and sustainability course, an intercultural communications class, and Spanish language instruction.

The Program Director is generally responsible for:
• General management, implementation, and delivery of the study abroad program;
• Organizing and delivering the students’ initial cross-cultural orientation teaching components of the academic coursework;
• Working with a Language Coordinator and language instructors to ensure the highest quality, field-based language instruction;
• Guiding and advising students in both their cross-cultural learning processes and academic experiences;
• Facilitating a constructive relationship between SIT students and host country nationals involved with the program;
• Managing program logistics and administration; Providing student support for medical, personal and security issues;
• Maintaining regular communication with the SIT Study Abroad office in Brattleboro and submitting detailed, timely reports, as required.

Required Experience:
Master’s degree or higher in a relevant field or a discipline related to the program theme, as well as academic and practical knowledge of the country and region. Bilingual English/Spanish

College teaching and experience with U.S. undergraduates desirable; familiarity with Panama and the Panamanian countryside; experience as a volunteer; leadership qualities required by the program such as cultural sensitivity and adaptability; organizational ability; budget management skills; computer literacy; energy; and a sense of humor.

Required Education:
Master’s degree or higher in relevant field

Compensation:
Salary commensurate with experience and academic qualifications.

Additional Comments:
Term: The position will begin July 1, 2011 through December 2011.
Application Deadline: Open until position is filled

Appendix F: Promotional One Sheet
SIT Study Abroad
A pioneer in experiential, field-based study abroad, SIT provides academically engaging semester and summer programs in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and The Middle East.

SIT Study Abroad
Brandeis University
Panama Midyear Program

Begin your Brandeis experience with a unique opportunity to study abroad in Panama. Experience the local culture and language firsthand, while forming meaningful relationships with other Brandeis students.

Four Courses – 16 Credits

• Service Learning Practicum
• Globalization and Sustainability
• Intercultural Communication
• Intensive Spanish language

Contact SIT Admissions Counselor
Deborah Lake
888-272-7881 x3288
deborah.lake@sit.edu
www.sit.edu/BrandeisPanama
Appendix G: Brandeis University Website

http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/abroad/midyear.html

Midyear Overseas Programs

For the adventurous, Brandeis sponsors fall programs in three distinct areas of the world that are tailored specifically to meet the academic and social interests of midyear students. In conjunction with three study abroad program partners, students can gain a full semester of credit transferred to Brandeis while being with a group of fellow Brandeis midyear students abroad.

Beijing, China: Asia
Brandeis and CET Academic Programs have developed a unique service-learning program in Beijing, China. Students enrolled in the program, which is based at Capital Normal University, will take intensive Chinese language classes, a service-learning course and a first-year seminar focusing on contemporary China. Designed to immerse students in Chinese culture, the program places students in dormitories with local Chinese roommates and requires them to complete volunteer projects that benefit area residents. Activities and trips will give students a fun way to engage with their Chinese roommates and broaden their understanding of China today.

The program includes a weeklong orientation for midyears. Students at all Chinese language levels are eligible. Language classes are designed to synchronize with Brandeis Chinese classes, so students can continue into spring 2012 Chinese classes on campus. The program runs from Aug. 23 to Dec. 19, 2011. Scholarships are available.

David, Panama: Latin America
In partnership with SIT Study Abroad, Brandeis offers an exciting opportunity to study and live in Panama. In this program, midyears study core subjects such as economics, political science, environmental studies, health, history, culture and arts from a global perspective.

Participants enroll in four courses designed specifically for Brandeis students, earning 16 credits toward their degree at the university. With community service and Spanish-language learning as the cornerstones of the curriculum, students work on service projects tailored to their abilities and live with Panamanian families throughout the semester. To complement classroom learning, students will undertake carefully designed academic excursions to the Caribbean coast to visit a mountain indigenous community and to Costa Rica for a comparative study. The program runs from Aug. 30 to Dec. 12, 2011. Scholarships are available.

London, England: Europe
In conjunction with the College of Global Studies at Arcadia University, Brandeis sponsors a fall program in London. You’ll enroll in five courses in areas such as history, art history, literature, environmental studies, and journalism; participate in research workshops and discussion groups; and tour renowned libraries.

In addition, you’ll take excursions in and around London; stay with a British host family for four days; and have the opportunity to participate in a service-learning program with an emphasis on social justice. The program runs from late August to mid-December 2011. Scholarships are available.

Contact Us
Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

concerns. For more information about the programs, contact Allyson Goose 781-736-3483.

Appendix H: Approval of Participation form

Standard form:

Student Disclosure and Approval of Participation

To be completed by applicant:

1. Please review the following statements very carefully, check the boxes to indicate your agreement, and sign at the bottom of this section.
   - I have spoken with my study abroad advisor academic advisor, and/or dean about my plan to participate in an SIT Study Abroad program.
   - I am aware of my home institution's policy on transferring credit for this study abroad program.
   - I understand that I am expected to participate fully in all program lectures and activities while enrolled in SIT Study Abroad regardless of whether my home institution will be transferring credit for the program. I understand that if I do not participate fully, I may be put on academic probation or be required to leave the program.
   - I authorize World Learning/SIT and my home institution to release my educational records to each other. Credits earned at World Learning/SIT are transferable only at the discretion of the receiving school.
   - I understand that World Learning/SIT will place a hold on the release of my transcript should I fail to complete and submit the Final Program Evaluation.

2. World Learning/SIT should send transcript and related materials to: [This is usually your college registrar or study abroad office. Each student receives a separate grade report at his or her permanent address.]

Name ____________________________________________ Title ____________________________
Address ___________________________________________ City/state/postal code __________

3. Have you ever been on academic or disciplinary probation?: [ ] Yes [ ] No

If yes, please explain and attach official documentation, including dates of probation and details of circumstances:

4. I certify that the information disclosed in this SIT Study Abroad application is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of student ___________________________________ Date __________________________
Name (please print) ___________________________________ Term [ ] Spring [ ] Fall [ ] Summer [ ]

Study Abroad Professional or Dean:

This student has applied to the SIT Study Abroad program indicated, offered by World Learning/SIT, a private college accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. SIT has a rolling admissions policy, and many programs fill before the deadlines. This candidate's application cannot be reviewed until we receive this form.

SIT will grant credit upon successful completion of the program. Please see the SIT Study Abroad catalog or web site for credit distribution by course. The above-named student's application has the approval of this institution. Following his or her return, and upon receipt of the SIT transcript, the credits earned will be evaluated and considered for transfer credit and/or toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements at this institution in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Possible no. of credits</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Seminar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Field Study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To the best of your knowledge, has this student ever been on academic or disciplinary probation?: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Signature __________________________ Name and title __________________________
Name of institution __________________________ Department __________________________
Email __________________________ Phone __________________________ Fax __________________________

In the event of a student/program emergency, please specify the name and contact information of the most appropriate institutional contact.

Name and title __________________________ Department __________________________
Email __________________________ Phone __________________________ Fax __________________________

World Learning/SIT will provide your institution with a transcript with letter grades and a narrative evaluation for the Independent Study Project, if applicable.

This form should be returned to the student to be submitted with the rest of the completed application.

If you need to send it separately, please mail or fax it to the following address:
SIT Study Abroad, 1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676, Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-0676 USA, Fax 802 258-3239
Customized Form

Student Disclosure and Approval of Participation

To be completed by applicant:

1. Please review the following statements very carefully, initial each box to indicate your agreement, and sign at the bottom of this section.

☐ I spoke with my study abroad advisor, academic advisor and/or dean about my plan to participate in an SIT Study Abroad program.

☐ I am aware of Brandeis's policy on transferring credit for this study abroad program.

☐ I understand that I am expected to participate fully in all program lectures and activities while enrolled in SIT Study Abroad, regardless of whether Brandeis will be transferring credit for the program. I understand that if I do not participate fully, I may be put on academic probation or be required to leave the program.

☐ I authorize World Learning/SIT and Brandeis University to release my educational records to each other. Credits earned at World Learning/SIT are transferable at the discretion of the receiving school.

☐ I authorize World Learning/SIT to notify Brandeis University in cases of medical emergencies, if there is a violation of disciplinary policies or procedures, and/or if there are academic issues including probation, withdrawal or dismissal, (as allowed under the FERPA and HIPPA guidelines).

☐ I understand that World Learning/SIT will place a hold on release of my transcript, should I fail to complete and submit the Final Program Evaluation.

2. World Learning/SIT should send transcripts and related materials to: [This is usually your college registrar or study abroad office. Each student receives a separate grade report at his or her permanent address.]

Name: Scott Van Der Meid  Title: Assistant Dean of Academic Services/ Director of Study Abroad

School: Brandeis University

Address: 415 South Street, Uscen 127, MS 072  City/state/postal code: Waltham, MA 02454-9110

Email: svandermei@brandeis.edu

3. Have you ever been on academic or disciplinary probation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain and attach official documentation, including dates of probation and details of circumstances:

4. I certify that the information disclosed in this SIT Study Abroad application is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of Student____________________________________ Date________________________

Participant’s Name (please print)________________________________________

Parent’s or Guardian’s Name (please print)_______________________________

Country/program____________________________________________________ Term: Fall 20____

*If the student is under the age of 18, all forms must be signed by a parent or guardian

Please email, fax, or a-mail it to:
SIT Study Abroad, 1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676, Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-0676 USA; Fax 802 258-3296; studyabroad@sit.edu
Appendix I: Customized Program Flowchart
Example of all departments involved in a customized program
### Appendix J: Example Program Budget and Student Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO OF NIGHTS</th>
<th>PER DEM COST</th>
<th>PER AD COSTS</th>
<th>PER STUDENT COSTS</th>
<th>PER GROUP COSTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Instruction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Costs</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,570</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Instructors</td>
<td>415</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Practice Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Practice Advisors</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Materials</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestay Accommodation Costs</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excursion Accommodation Costs</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Stay Accommodation Costs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation Accommodation costs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost Per Excursion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Diem Students from home to campus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student travel to service practice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Base Group Transport</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Travel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Travel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>725</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone, AD &amp; Program Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,385</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Wireless</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Personal Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House/Coordinator</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Director</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compliance Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory benefits for local staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Visa renewal fees &amp; Visa renewal costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL: Program Budget</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>810</td>
<td>5,268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Costs

SIT Study Abroad program fees include all courses, educational excursions, health insurance, and full room and board (all meals and accommodation) for the entire program period. Fees and additional expenses are based on all known circumstances at the time of calculation. Due to the unique nature of our programs and the economics of host countries, SIT reserves the right to change its fees or additional expenses without notice.

Tuition: $13,943

The tuition fee covers the following program components:

- Cost of all lecturers who provide instruction to students
- Intensive language instruction in Spanish
- All educational excursions to locations such as Bocas del Toro, Naso Territory, Costa Rica, Panama City, including all related travel cost
- Service Learning project and advising
- Health insurance throughout the entire program period

Room & Board: $2,582

The room and board fee covers the following program components:

- All accommodations during the entire program period. This includes during orientation, time in the program base (David), on all excursions, and during the final evaluation period.
- Accommodation is covered either by SIT Study Abroad directly or through the homestay.
- All homestays.
- All meals for the entire program period. Meals are covered either by SIT Study Abroad directly or through the homestay.

Estimated Additional Costs:

International Airfare
International airfares vary greatly due to the volatility of airline industry pricing, flight availability, and specific flexibility/restrictions on the type of ticket purchased. Students may choose to take advantage of frequent flyer or other airline awards available to them, which could significantly lower their travel costs.

Visa Expenses $0

Immunizations varies

Books & Supplies $125

Discretionary Expenses
Personal expenses during a semester abroad vary based on individual spending habits and budgets. While all meals and accommodations are covered in the room and board fee, incidentals and personal transportation costs differ depending on the non-program-
related interests and pursuits of each student.  

*(Costs, 2011)*

**Appendix K: Student Evaluation template**

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**SIT Study Abroad**

*a program of World Learning*

Kipling Road, P.O. Box 676, Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA
Tel (860) 272-7681 Fax (802) 258-3256
Email studentevaluation@sit.edu  www.sit.edu

Dear SIT Study Abroad student,

Thank you for taking part in this program evaluation. Your survey answers will be handled anonymously. Your responses will be compiled with those from the other students on the program and then shared with SIT Study Abroad Academic Deans as part of our program assessment process. Anonymous responses also may be made available to other interested parties, such as university study abroad offices.

Your survey answers will not appear with your name in any compilation of the results. Your Academic Director will not see any individual student responses with names attached. If you choose to provide identifying information on the optional questions (your major and your home college/university) that is your prerogative. ADs and Academic Deans do see a summary of all evaluations for this program in order to fully consider how the program can be improved. The SIT Registrar’s Office has access to your completed survey status (not specific answers to the survey) because this is tied to the release of your transcript.

We do require all students to complete a program evaluation. If you are not able to complete the survey within three weeks of your program end date, please contact us at studentevaluation@sit.edu to make other arrangements. As a reminder, our letter to you containing your grade report will have a special message from the Registrar explaining the requirement to complete the survey prior to the release of your transcript to your home school. The letter will also contain instructions for completing the survey, in case you have not yet done it. Your college or university will receive a similar message in place of your transcript if you have not completed the program evaluation.

Any questions or comments about this process should be sent to studentevaluation@sit.edu.

We at SIT Study Abroad thank you very much for attentively and thoughtfully filling out this survey.
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

Program Name: ____________________________ Term and year: __________________

Demographic information: (optional)

Year of studies: ___ Other ___ Freshman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior ___ Graduating/Graduated

Major: _________________________________

Home University: _______________________

Part I Please tell us about your experience on this program.

What were the primary strengths of the program?

What suggestions can you make to improve the program?

Please describe the major sources of learning for you during the program.

Part II Please mark the box that best represents your response to the following statements. If a section of the evaluation does not apply to your program, please leave it blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Departure</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SIT Study Abroad website is user friendly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The web pages clearly explained SIT Study Abroad opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SIT Study Abroad electronic and web-based communication system overall was effective in facilitating the application process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The admissions staff of SIT Study Abroad provided me with exemplary service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The print material about SIT Study Abroad clearly explained the content of the program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The orientation was effective in providing an</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building a bridge: Customized programs and first-year undergraduate students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding of the country context.</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The orientation was effective in helping me understand the program’s academic objectives, expectations, and grading policies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The orientation was effective in helping me understand SIT student health &amp; safety policies, program regulations, and disciplinary rules.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The orientation was effective in helping me understand the roles and responsibilities of program staff.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The orientation was effective in helping me understand the roles and responsibilities of program lecturers and advisors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homestay</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The homestay experience increased my understanding of the culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The homestay experience helped me integrate with the daily life of a local family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The homestay experience helped me improve my use of the local language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt safe with my host family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Seminar</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The thematic seminar provided high quality academic content related to the program theme.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The thematic seminar successfully integrated the diverse aspects of the program content.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The thematic seminar provided a strong foundation for successful field-based learning in the country.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reading assignments complemented the field-based components of the program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Intercultural Communications and Service Learning Practicum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Intercultural Communications course introduced useful tools that helped me better understand the local culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions helped me better adjust to the norms of the host culture and feel connected to partners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used methods learned in the course to do assignments and field projects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt reasonably prepared for my Service Learning Practicum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use my practicum as a base for future studies (for example, a senior thesis).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

---

### Educational Excursions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The excursions complemented the other educational activities of the program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We reviewed and discussed the educational outcomes of the excursions in relevant debriefing and reflection sessions during the term.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The educational excursions helped me better understand the culture of the host country and the program theme.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number and duration of the educational excursions were appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

---
## Language Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The language teaching was effective in strengthening my conversational competence.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal language training in the classroom was enhanced by field-based, out-of-classroom activities in which I could practice my language skills.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I gained enough skill and confidence from the language instruction to participate productively in the culture.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

---

## Overall Academic Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The assignments during the term effectively advanced my knowledge of the theme of the program.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic assignments enhanced my knowledge and understanding of the host culture.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received timely feedback on my assignments and on my academic performance.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The feedback I received on assignments helped improve my academic performance.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussions guided by program staff helped consolidate my understanding of the various components of the program.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied that I took full advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the program that would not have been available on my home campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

---
### Overall Program Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I found the classroom seminars and activities of high academic quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The content and flow of the various program components facilitated my adjustment to the host culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program staff effectively communicated necessary information regarding program activities and logistics.</td>
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<td>Program staff overall were accessible to students on the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When needed, program staff provided an appropriate level of support for student participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The program was designed to enhance engagement with host country communities.</td>
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<td>I made optimal use of the resources provided by the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from the other students on the program was a significant feature of my study abroad experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate attention was given to the re-entry process at the end of the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would recommend this program to prospective students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall, this program met my expectations.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

**What would you like us to know about your experience that you have not had the opportunity to tell us?**
Appendix L: Sample section for Midyear Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Re-Entry and future plans</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The re-entry and evaluation sessions made me feel prepared to return home.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SIT’s re-entry toolkit will be useful as I map out my academic interests and meet new people at school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like studying abroad was a positive and productive use of my fall semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studying abroad with other Midyear students has prepared me for on-campus courses and campus life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I plan to study abroad in the future or continue traveling as part of my academic career.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>