

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

A focus group, two interviews, and a questionnaire were used to collect data from students preparing to study abroad, providers of orientation programs other than at the University of Alberta, and past participants of the University's study abroad program respectively. Data were gathered to a) determine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by those three sources and b) validate perceptions of importance as indicated in the literature and University of Alberta documents.

This chapter presents the findings of this research with specific reference to the focus group, interviews, and questionnaire. Findings for each of these will be presented through a brief introduction and summary of data analysis methodology, followed by a report of the research results and a summary.

Purpose of the Study

Study abroad programs have potential to benefit the participants as well as serve larger institutional interests. Yet without adequate orientation prior to students' departure, the effectiveness of study abroad programming can be greatly affected (Tonkin & Edwards, 1981). The University of Alberta currently offers a predeparture orientation for those who participate in its approximately 80 arrangements for students in 17 countries each year. Yet the question remains: How are students, in particular Canadian students, most effectively prepared to study abroad? Goals of the sponsoring institution must be taken into account, but the needs of participants and the voices of practitioners in the field must also be heard if we are to fully understand what is important as students prepare for their experience abroad. This study answers that question

by taking into account the literature around sojourner preparation for the abroad experience, the perspectives of the sponsoring institution, other providers of predeparture preparation programs, participants who are preparing to go abroad, and returned participants who have completed a study abroad program.

The purpose of the study was to determine the importance of components of predeparture preparation for study abroad as perceived by participants, providers and experts. Four questions guided this study.

1. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners who are associated with international/intercultural education?
2. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad in light of recent University of Alberta documents?
3. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who are planning to study abroad?
4. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad?

Data from academics and practitioners were accessed through document analysis and through two interviews with people who provide predeparture orientation for sojourners. University of Alberta documents were analyzed to determine implications of recent University initiatives for predeparture orientation for study abroad. A focus group was conducted with seven study abroad participants preparing to go abroad. Finally, using the data collected from the other data sources, a questionnaire was developed and mailed to 130

past participants of the University of Alberta's study abroad program. 65% of respondents who were able to return completed questionnaires did so.

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted to determine what was important in predeparture orientation, and how important those things were, as perceived by students who were preparing to study abroad. The seven focus group participants were preparing to study abroad through a University of Alberta formal exchange. All 7 participants had attended an orientation program for study abroad two weeks before the focus group was conducted. The group members were asked, through a series of questions, what they believed to be important components of predeparture orientation for study abroad. The data were sorted inductively according to broad themes which emerged from the transcript of the focus group. Themes were then roughly ranked by the strength of support each received from the focus group participants. In turn, these broad themes seemed to fall easily into two types or categories: components to be included in predeparture orientation for study abroad, and sources of information participants might access in preparing to go abroad. An analysis of each theme is outlined below.

Components to be Included in Predeparture Orientation

Friends and family (home) was one of the first themes raised by the students and was reintroduced by students three times. Six of the seven participants commented on the difficulty of leaving family and friends behind. One student said she was "not ready mentally to be just ripped away from everybody". Another stated it was "folly" to leave without taking his family's feelings into account. Another commented, "It's important to remember ... you're probably an integral part of somebody's life and ... your leaving probably

affects them very much." The part of the previous orientation which dealt with whom you leave behind was "new information" and "a really important thing to talk about." Students made strong statements about the importance of this component of predeparture orientation. In particular, they felt it was important to be aware of whom they would be leaving behind and the impact that the sojourn might have on those relationships. They also stressed the value of addressing these issues with friends and family members before leaving to study abroad, in order not to be caught off guard by tensions with people back home during the sojourn and after it is over.

It should be said that the discussion grew out of a similar discussion which was held at the orientation the participants had attended two weeks previous. However, the focus group discussion achieved a depth which far exceeded that of the comments made at the orientation. Clearly, the question of how most effectively to prepare for the changes in those relationships as a result of the sojourn struck a cord with the participants that day.

Re-entry, that is, references to the students' return after studying abroad, was also strongly espoused as a topic of importance. The discussion of returning home grew out of the discussion of family and friends (home) and was discussed at length by five of the seven participants, four of whom spoke of the importance of understanding the re-entry process before leaving home. One student testified to his inability to integrate upon a previous return to Edmonton; he says, "when I came back, I had the worst time integrating myself back into life here in Edmonton [...] I ended up leaving again just because I couldn't, couldn't integrate." Another student pointed out that "you can go abroad and have a great time and whatnot, but this is where your life is, and you're going to come back here and you're going to have to adjust." Another noted the value of "clearing all the apprehension with the people that you

want to and [saying] wow, I can't wait to talk and see how things have been after that time."

Money was an important component for the group. Money was one of the first themes to be raised and was reintroduced on three occasions. Students expressed concern about several areas of financial affairs, including credit cards, bank cards and bank machines, exchange rates, transfer of money, how to get money overseas, and work abroad. Several people related horror stories of their own or their friends' financial catastrophes overseas. For one student, money was the "biggest concern" and has "wreaked havoc" with his preparations. He stated, "I need to have that sense of security with the money and then begin to plan otherwise."

Living arrangements were also a significant theme with the group, receiving four mentions by three students. Two people indicated that living arrangements were top priorities in their preparations. University-run housing (residence) was mentioned as an example of basic campus services about which several felt information was lacking. In describing a twenty minute video of town and campus being proposed by the group, one student mentioned that it should include shots of "res."

Appropriate attitudes were discussed by five students for some time, but as this was at my prompting and was not reintroduced, it does not appear this is a topic of great interest to the students in the focus group. Ideal attitudes for study abroad participants included: openness to change, willingness to look ignorant and ask for help, willingness to shrug off "jerks" and not take things personally, and having a holistic attitude toward the good and bad things to come. However, in terms of predeparture orientation, one student concluded "it's just something you, once you get caught in that situation, you realize there was nothing you could do to prepare for it."

Other. Several component themes emerged during the focus group session but were mentioned less often, were discussed with less enthusiasm, were mentioned by fewer students and received less verbal affirmation than the aforementioned themes. These less important component themes included: health, paperwork and work permits, safety, practical cultural tips (e.g., how to operate pay telephones in the exchange country), language, student expectations (e.g., whether they intend to confirm a career choice or just have a good time abroad), culture and religion, social life abroad, race/class/gender issues abroad, credit transfer, and cultural adjustment. With regard to language, it should be noted that the apparent lack of interest in language learning among the group may be explained by the fact that only two students were going to study in countries where they did not speak the language, and those two did verbalize their intent to learn some of the language prior to departure.

Sources of Information Participants Might Access

Interaction with past participants or visiting exchange students. By far the most enthusiasm in the focus group discussion centered around personal contact with people who had visited or who were from the exchange country and specifically the exchange institution in question. This unique source of information was introduced into the discussion on thirteen separate occasions and is the only identified theme which received hearty affirmation from each of the seven participants as something they valued or of which they would like to have seen more. Talking with people who have been there or are from there helps students get "a realistic sense of what [they are] getting into", is "really helpful," and for some was one of the best parts of the study abroad orientation they had attended two weeks prior. One student wished she had more time for that part of the orientation. She lamented, "We only had, what, was it two

hours, or one? I wish there was more time." When asked what they would include in an orientation program if they were designing it, the unequivocal answer came back: "Interaction with people that've been there. A huge thing."

Other sources of information for preparing to study abroad included books and personal research, but only one person mentioned having bought a book; language tapes were suggested but discarded in favor of face to face instruction; three separate probes regarding text or audio instruction resulted in a preference for personal contact with an information source.

Specialized information. A third emphasis with regard to information was a consensus by six students that information for study abroad participants should be more specialized to the geographic region or even to the exchange institution itself. The general opinion--all but one student spoke out--was that country- and campus-specific information was lacking and is important. It is not enough to have "glossy" photos of blue skies and happy people. The desire for "something more realistic" led the group to spin off ideas for a 20 minute, homemade video which student could produce and take with them to the exchange institution.

Summary of Focus Group Data

Focus group participants felt it was very important to talk with people who had studied abroad at or were from the host country or institution. They felt it was important to address issues related to leaving and returning to friends and family. They wanted to learn more about the logistics of living abroad in terms of money matters and living arrangements. They wanted to go abroad with appropriate attitudes, they wanted to learn from a person rather than a book, and they wanted more specific, realistic information about the place they were going. Their honorable mention list of components for study

abroad preparation included a bevy of practical themes (health, paperwork and permits, and cultural tips), academic concerns (credit transfer), self-awareness issues (student expectations and social life abroad), cultural adjustment, and national or cultural topics (language, culture and religion, and race/class/gender issues abroad).

Interviews

Introduction

Two interviews were held in early 1995 with women who were involved with predeparture orientation for organizations which send young people overseas from four months to a year. Sarah and Becky (pseudonyms) were asked in a variety of ways what they believed to be important in predeparture orientation for people going overseas. Key points are outlined below in order of decreasing importance as determined by the length of time devoted to a topic and the emphasis placed on it by the interviewee as determined by word choice, facial expression, and so forth.

Interview #1

Nature of abroad experience. Sarah stressed that the experience abroad involves "the sense that you can be anything you want to be," yet "on the other side of that is this incredible weight of ... loss of identity." She felt that sojourners are in an "act of defining" themselves and that "culture shock throws people for a loop that they can take years to recover from."

Experiential approach. In response to this re-invention of self undertaken by sojourners, Sarah had "a very, very strong bias towards the... taking care of people through personal confrontation, through personal enabling" in the form of experiential activities. She said,

...I think the best orientations that I've seen or been involved in have had to do with providing an experiential kind of way for a person to understand and begin to prepare for the ways that they might be changed and ways that they might change.

Further, she stressed that orientations be "...experiential because... we have to be a little in the face about these things." She went on to say that non-experiential orientation "has some impact but it doesn't have a convincing impact of: Ah ha, now I really know what you're talking about. Now I really understand."

Myth of individuality. Sarah repeatedly disparaged less holistic approaches to orientation, pointing out that orientation leaders "often...end up with a lot of intellectual stuff", based on the "myth of individuality," which is the belief that ~~we go overseas~~ as individuals and come back "fairly unimpacted by what is around...unaffected in a sense." She went on to say, "In fact, I'm quite sure that those orientations are worse than not having done any orientation.... I would much rather have someone go unprepared...because at least they arrive with all the confusion that allows them to get an inner decision making process in place...."

Concrete components. Sarah posited a hierarchy of learning in the orientation setting in which physical needs such as "what pair of boots to buy" or "what kind of food is available" form the base and more ephemeral concepts related to identity and cultural adjustment form the top. "...If those [concrete issues] aren't addressed, then you sabotage the whole orientation." The challenge to the orientation leader then becomes "how to get those [concrete issues] in there without taking over the agenda." Yet, she stressed, "when push comes to shove, it is not how to ride from this side of the border to the next.

We can figure that out. But we have a hard time figuring the other stuff out, the stuff that's impacting us."

The need for reorientation. Sarah pointed out that the process of the sojourn begins "sometime before you decided to sign up and it ends some nebulous place in the future, as yet to be defined." She stressed the necessity of reorientation training, pointing out that "reorientation can be a lot more brutal than the going over." Returnees often get "about a week of glory" and then are expected and expect themselves to instantly readjust. In fact, she considers a reorientation program "a privilege and a right."

Realistic expectations. Sarah pointed out the need for orientation programs to create realistic expectations for sojourners, given that "upwards of 90% of the people come back feeling like they've failed." Speaking as an orientation leader as to participants, she said, "...all we can do is give you a road map. What...the bumps on the road actually look like I have no idea."

Institutional agenda. Sarah threw out a challenge to institutions which offer overseas opportunities to "balance their task oriented institution and this very personal experience they're sending this student on." Warning against a lack of administrative support, she observed that returnees "may be incapable of going to classes when they come back...Is there some kind of counseling in place for that person?.... Is there some kind of format for ongoing student contact?" She concluded, "People send people overseas for all sorts of reasons. How true are we administratively to the goals that we set for the participants? If we say this is a big learning experience, then how do we value all the aspects of the learning experience?"

Interview #2

Culture shock. Becky specified that the following topics related to culture shock should be addressed in predeparture orientation:

an awareness of what culture shock is...what those things [are] that you might be facing, how to prevent them as well as...how to [number] one, recognize them in oneself and in others, and...strategies for coping with them.

She felt that presenting theories about culture shock "doesn't hurt" but that participants who are interested in a less theoretical approach may prefer to hear personal stories and coping strategies. She stated,

...They're not going to be going into an experience where they're always dealing with it intellectually. That's not the stuff that's probably going to be most challenging. It's going to be all the others things that are more challenging.

Experiential components. Becky called herself a "strong proponent of experiential education" and spoke at length about two activities which were effective in "taking a look at some of the cultural norms we have and sort of pushing the limits on some of those." "I think doing something experientially is essential", she said. She advocated "any kind of experiential activity, because it touches so much of the whole person and not just the intellectual." She summarized, "If they [the sojourners] know how stressed they get out, it gives them a little bit more of an understanding of themselves, but those are all parts of themselves that are all going to be really taxed when they enter into another culture."

Value/role of debriefing. Becky made it clear that proper debriefing was an essential part of the experiential equation. She said that experiential education "becomes really rich learning ground... because then you have all those areas to debrief from." During debriefing as she explained it, participants are encouraged to describe the situation, identify the assumptions behind the descriptions, talk about feelings they have about the experience, and plan for similar experiences should they arise in the future.

Area- and culture-specific information. Becky talked about "an understanding of culture aspects, country aspects of wherever [the sojourners are] going." She mentioned that in her programs, generalities about the host culture are communicated "right at the beginning" in order to give participants "a kind of framework" within which to understand the host culture including history, politics, and geography. She felt participants should learn about "day to day realities" such as typical meal times and menus, "any cultural customs or mores or norms that they'd have to respect", and "what kind of dress is appropriate."

Stereotyping. Becky advocated activities heightening awareness of stereotyping and helping participants recognize some of the culture-bound assumptions they make (and of which they may be unaware), "be hopefully more open-minded when they're walking into [the new culture]...", and be "more open to not making assumptions about another culture."

Preparation. Becky admitted that it was "impossible to completely prep somebody, but...somebody who's really ready will have as much [preparation] as possible." She advocated advance individual preparation in addition to an

orientation meeting, provided that the participants could clearly see the value of the individual tasks. She said,

...it's going to make your experience better the more work you've done beforehand... [some] probably coast through the program but they don't get as much out of it as somebody who's done more, looked into it more.

How people access information. This woman was quick to point out that not all participants access information in the same way and that presentation of information must vary accordingly. She observed that people who have been through a more formalized education system might respond more positively to a strongly theoretical presentation, whereas young people might "rather hear stories or someone else's experience to give them insight into what they might be going through."

Safety. Becky raised the issue of safety as one to which she has given considerable thought. She highlighted sexual harassment as a concern, particularly for women, and talked about finding the boundary between personal integrity ("I will not be hit") and cultural sensitivity. She also advocated training participants to deliberately cultivate a support network abroad so that there is always someone to turn to should an unsafe situation arise. She concluded, "...those whole issues of personal integrity and cultural sensitivity and where the boundary is on that, I think people should think about that."

Understanding themselves. Introspection and an understanding of one's own expectations and fears were also important to Becky. "If they [the participants] know how stressed out they get," she suggested, "it gives them a

little bit more of an understanding of themselves." Sojourners should also determine what they expect of themselves and of the host country, she said, or they will not get as much out of their time abroad as they could. She acknowledged that some people fear becoming too structured but she felt that "the clearer you are in your own [mind]...in your own objectives and expectations... the clearer you can be when you get there."

Information about Canada/community. Including information about Canada as part of the orientation received the following comments: "I certainly bring it up and say, be able to [answer questions about Canada], you know. Now, I leave it up to people to decide how much they want to be able to do." Becky mentioned the importance of learning about Canada and one's own community as a way of preparing not only for the sojourn but for one's eventual return home.

Summary of Interview Data

Becky and Sarah had similar ideas about those topics which were most important to them. Both of them stressed the emotional challenges posed by the abroad experience and felt it vital that predeparture orientation address the personal and cultural adjustment needs of sojourners. Both women were strong advocates for an experiential approach to predeparture training, suggesting that an orientation would be incomplete without an activity which takes the trainee out of his or her cultural comfort zone. The women differed only by degree on the issue of concrete information and day to day realities of life abroad; Sarah felt those components were basic necessities in the orientation process but should never dominate over personal confrontation activities, where Becky spoke in favor of presenting culture and

country aspects as one of the first tasks of the orientation. Both felt that trainees must understand themselves and have realistic expectations of what they will be able to accomplish abroad.

The women differed on topics which were not as important to them. Becky stressed personal safety, group preparation, and the importance of learning about Canada and one's community before going abroad. She emphasized the need to consider different ways trainees access information and felt that the more prepared trainees will get the most out of their abroad experience. Sarah challenged institutions which send student overseas to consider how true they are administratively to the goals which are set for participants. She stressed the difficulty of returning home and declared reorientation for returnees a privilege and a right.

Questionnaire

Methodology and Data Analyses

To determine what past participants of study abroad perceived to be important components in predeparture orientation and how important they considered those components to be, a survey questionnaire was mailed to 130 past participants of the University of Alberta's academic exchange program for the years 1990-95 inclusive. Forty-two of those 130 respondents proved to be unreachable by mail, bringing the sample size to 88; of those, 65% mailed in completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire was developed from predeparture orientation components compiled from the literature and from focus group and interview data collected as part of this study. The questionnaire was divided into several sections pertaining to demographic data; participants' experiences with preparation; practical arrangements; academic life abroad; self-awareness;

adjustment and readjustment; national, institutional, or regional components, cultural components; resources; the purpose of study abroad; and other information the respondents wished to provide. Open-ended questions were used at the beginning and end of the questionnaire; in the middle sections, respondents were asked to *rate* items on a four-point scale, *rank* them within each section, or both.

Data from the closed-form questions were analyzed using SPSSX for Macintosh using descriptive statistics. The 90 items from the practical; academic; self-awareness; adjustment and readjustment; national, institutional, and regional; and cultural sections were compared in an aggregate list by rating. Open-ended questions were analyzed using open coding procedures. Responses were categorized into broad themes which emerged from the data.

The results should be interpreted carefully. Respondents were not asked how important it was to include the issues in *predeparture orientation* but rather how important it was to know something about the issues before studying abroad. The latter question asks what gaps respondents feel exist between students' knowledge and the knowledge they should have before they leave. The former, which guided the survey, asks what knowledge students should have before they leave. In other words, the responses define the desired outcome of preparation related to these issues. Measuring the gap between students' knowledge and the desired outcomes is a step in the curriculum planning process which will need to be addressed outside the scope of the study.

A further consideration is the difficulty some participants may have in recalling in what ways they were well prepared before they studied abroad. In answering the questions, participants are asked to record not only what they

themselves had to do or learn in preparation but also what they inherently or through experience already knew or had done. Some of these factors may be out of consciousness. Ask an experienced driver, for instance, what is important to know before driving a car. He or she may comment on the importance of knowing the gas from the brake pedal but is not likely to point out the importance of not stepping on both at the same time. It is hoped, however, that when presented with such an item on a questionnaire, an experienced driver would recognize that this otherwise out of consciousness principle nevertheless would be important for first-time drivers to know.

The open-ended questions were designed in part to access people's emotional experiences with preparing to study abroad. Asking about people's successes or regrets can be a powerful way to tap into their deepest struggles. For the purposes of this study, the identification of regrets served two functions. First, it allowed respondents a cathartic opportunity to air any nagging frustrations over details which proved disastrous to their study abroad experience. Second, it allowed for the identification of gaps between participants' level of preparedness and their actual experiences, that is, between what they knew and what they needed to know. This identification of gaps is a key step in assessing the importance of curricular components.

The following section of this chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire data. It should be noted that figures may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Quantitative Data

Demographic data. Demographic data were collected about the participants. Table 2 indicates the frequency and valid percent of respondents in

Table 2

Information About Respondents

<u>Variable</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Gender		
Female	35	61
Male	22	39
Age at start		
17 - 24	55	97
25 or older	2	4
U of A Faculty		
Business	24	42
Arts	19	33
Science	9	16
Ag/ For/Home Ec. ^a	2	4
Physical Ed. & Rec. ^b	1	2
Law	1	2
Education	1	2
Student Status		
Undergraduate	57	100

(table continues)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Host country		
U.K.	22	39
Sweden	12	21
Australia	7	13
Mexico	5	9
Austria	4	7
Korea	2	4
Japan	2	4
U.S.A.	2	4
No. of months		
9 or more	38	67
less than 9 months	19	33
Attended orientation^c	43	75

Note. Figures may not equal 100% due to rounding. Questions refer to the study abroad experience (e.g., student's age at start of study abroad experience).

^aAgriculture, Forestry and Home Economics

^bPhysical Education and Recreation

^cPredeparture orientation for study abroad

each of the demographic categories. Two-third of respondents were female (67%). The majority of respondents (97%) were between 17 and 24 years old when they began their study abroad experience, the traditional age for postsecondary students. Most respondents were registered in the Faculty of Business (42%) or Arts (33%) at the University of Alberta while studying

abroad. Six other Faculties were represented, each with less than 20%. Each respondent studied abroad as an undergraduate.

Data were also collected about the parameters of the exchange (see Table 2). Respondents were asked to refer to their first exchange with the home institution in question, recognizing that respondents may have studied abroad more than once. Nearly 40% reported having studied in the U.K. while approximately one-fifth reported study in Sweden (21%). Smaller numbers reported study in Australia (13%), Mexico (9%), Austria (7%), Korea (4%), Japan (4%), and the United States (4%). Overall, the majority of students reported experiences in English speaking countries (56%). The length of time studied abroad varied from 3.5 to 12 months but the average was a full academic year, or 10 months. Sixty-six percent studied abroad for 9 months or more. Most (75%) attended an orientation session before they left to study abroad, although it was not clear whether the session was offered by the University of Alberta or by another agency.

In order to reduce the volume of data presented in this chapter, findings for the next six questions on the survey, Questions 11 through 16, are presented in Appendix K in table form by question. These findings are also presented in aggregate form in the section which follows (Table 3). When analyzing the data, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the *rating* scores and the *ranking* scores as outlined below:

rating	ranking
don't know	most important
not important/helpful	2nd most important
somewhat important/helpful	3rd most important
very important/helpful	

Each item was *rated* on the four point scale but was also assigned a *weighted rank* in a follow up question at the end of that question. Weighted rank for each item was calculated as the mean of the following weightings for each response to the ranking questions: most important (1.0), 2nd most important (2.0), 3rd most important (3.0). The lower the mean, the higher the rank of the item is taken to be.

Rating frequencies and percentages are reported in the tables for responses of somewhat important/helpful and very important/helpful. In order to consider the components from a single variable perspective, a weighted rating was calculated as follows: responses (%) for each item were multiplied by factors of 5 (somewhat important) and 10 (very important) and summed. For example, the weighted rating for housing (19% somewhat important, 81% very important) would be $(.19 \times 5) + (.81 \times 10) = 9.050$. Factors 5 and 10 were randomly chosen to make clearer the distinction between items with similar scores. Unless otherwise noted, items are arranged in the tables in order of weighted rating.

Aggregate list of components by rating. In order to summarize and clarify the results of Questions 11 through 16 (see Appendix K for findings for each question), Table 3 was compiled. Items in Table 3 are ordered by weighted rating. While it is useful to examine the rating components received by its question of the instrument (see Appendix K for percentage breakdowns), it is also vital to consider the components from a single variable perspective.

Table 3

Aggregate List of Components of Preparation for Study Abroad by Weighted Rating
(Questions 11-16)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
1	Academic	Getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	9.300
2	Culture/HC	How to dress appropriately for culture and climate in HC	9.295
3	Practical	Financial matters	9.200
4	Practical	Housing	9.050
5	Practical	Travel documents	9.000
6	Academic	Host university administrative procedures	8.700
7	Culture/HC	Physical safety in HC	8.685
8	Academic	Home university administrative procedures	8.500
9	NationalHC	Religious and racial tolerance in HC	8.425
10	NationalHC	Climate in HC	8.335
11	Self-Awareness	Personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	8.220
12	Adjustment	How to cope with adjusting to a new culture	8.200
13	Adjustment	Other peoples' experiences adjusting to a new culture	8.150
14	Self-Awareness	Personal concerns about going abroad	8.095
15	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward authority, class and status in HC	8.035
16	NationalHC	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.) in HC	7.895

(table continues)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
17	Culture/HC	Nonverbal communication in HC	7.855
18	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward work and study in HC	7.855
19	Adjustment	What it is like to adjust to a new culture	7.850
20	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward sex and dating in HC	7.810
21	Culture/HC	Customs, rituals and superstitions in HC	7.630
22	Self-Awareness	Interaction with new people while abroad	7.545
23	NationalHC	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities in HC	7.505
24	Adjustment	How to apply experience after it's over	7.500
25	National/C	Current topics of national or regional interest in Canada	7.495
26	NationalHC	Gender issues in HC	7.460
27	Self-Awareness	Personal reactions to positive and negative stress	7.415
28	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward personal relationships in HC	7.415
29	Adjustment	Adjustment to life after study abroad	7.300
30	Practical	Health concerns	7.250
31	NationalHC	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment) in HC	7.190
32	Culture/HC	Stereotypes in HC	7.190
33	Culture/HC	Value of the individual vs. the group in HC	7.175

(table continues)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
34	Practical	What to pack	7.150
35	Practical	Insurance	7.150
36	NationalHC	Current topics of national or regional interest in HC	7.050
37	NationalHC	Human rights issues in HC	7.050
38	National/C	Geography in Canada	7.020
39	Culture/HC	Personal hygiene issues in HC	7.015
40	Culture/C	Stereotypes in Canada	6.960
41	Culture/HC	Outlets for personal interests (hobbies, sports) in HC	6.930
42	Academic	Selecting courses	6.900
43	NationalHC	Geography in HC	6.670
44	National/C	Political structures in Canada	6.670
45	NationalHC	History of international conflict in HC	6.630
46	Practical	Extracurricular travel abroad	6.600
47	National/C	Religious and racial tolerance in Canada	6.585
48	Culture/HC	Food in HC	6.585
49	National/C	Human rights issues in Canada	6.520
50	National/C	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators) in Canada	6.485
51	National/C	History of international conflict in Canada	6.405

(table continues)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
52	NationalHC	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators) in HC	6.225
53	Culture/C	Attitudes toward work and study in Canada	6.160
54	Culture/C	Attitudes toward sex and dating in Canada	6.140
55	Culture/HC	Religion(s) in HC	6.140
56	National/C	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities in Canada	6.075
57	NationalHC	Political structures in HC	5.985
58	Self-Awareness	Personal strengths and weaknesses	5.860
59	Academic	Guidance concerning academic program while abroad	5.850
60	National/C	Environmental issues in Canada	5.815
61	Culture/C	Attitudes toward personal relationships in Canada	5.805
62	NationalHC	Environmental issues in HC	5.725
63	National/C	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.) in Canada	5.720
64	Culture/C	Nonverbal communication in Canada	5.720
65	National/C	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.) in Canada	5.715
66	NationalHC	Literacy and basic education in HC	5.700
67	Culture/C	Customs, rituals and superstitions in Canada	5.635
68	National/C	Gender issues in Canada	5.620

(table continues)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
69	National/C	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.) in Canada	5.610
70	Self-Awareness	Communication with friends and family while abroad	5.540
71	Culture/C	Attitudes toward authority, class and status in Canada	5.535
72	Culture/HC	Business practices in HC	5.351
73	Culture/C	Value of the individual vs. the group in Canada	5.275
74	NationalHC	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.) in HC	5.260
75	National/C	Literacy and basic education in Canada	5.176
76	National/C	Arts and literature in Canada	5.000
77	Academic	Study patterns and teaching methods	5.000
78	National/C	Climate in Canada	4.915
79	Culture/C	Business practices in Canada	4.905
80	Practical	Work abroad opportunities	4.900
81	Practical	Telephone systems	4.550
82	NationalHC	Arts and literature in HC	4.375
83	National/C	University of Alberta's goals to become more international	4.265
84	Practical	Local transportation	4.250
85	Culture/C	Food in Canada	4.210

(table continues)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
86	Culture/C	Religion(s) in Canada	4.210
87	Adjustment	Theories about adjusting to a new culture	3.900
88	National/C	University of Alberta's teaching and research goals	3.555
89	National/C	The province's foreign trade initiatives	2.930
90	National/C	The province's goals for human resource development	2.455

Note. HC=host country. C=Canada. Themes identify items from questionnaire questions as follows: Practical (Q. 11); Academic (Q. 12); Self-Awareness (Q. 13); Adjustment (Q. 14); NationalHC and National/C (Q. 15); and Culture/HC and Culture/C (Q. 16). See Appendix K for findings by question.

^aBy weighted rating

Several observations can be made about the data presented in Table 3. Most of the ten highest rated components of preparing to study abroad are predictably pragmatic: (1st) getting home university credit for courses taken abroad, (2nd) how to dress appropriately for culture and climate in host country, (3rd) financial matters, (4th) housing, (5th) travel documents, (6th) host university administrative procedures, (7th) physical safety in host country, (8th) home university administrative procedures, and (9th) climate in the host country. These findings are in keeping with Maslow's (1954) hierarchy and Grove's (1989) concentric circles of sojourner needs; until they are met, the immediate or survival concerns are the most important from the perspective of the individuals "in need." Respondents clearly indicated that the most important components for them in preparing to study abroad are pragmatic.

Intuitively, most of the items in the top ten make sense, insofar as one would expect credit transfer, finances, housing, and administrative hurdles,

which are all immediate sorts of concerns, to be of primary interest to people preparing to study abroad. However, religious and racial tolerance in the host country, which also rated in the top ten, is an anomaly, particularly as the majority of respondents did not study in a country where one would expect an unusual amount of religious or racial intolerance. The high rating of this item seems to reflect more of an interest in social justice than in personal preparation.

After the above pragmatic concerns, respondents indicate the importance of a cluster of self-awareness and adjustment items, including personal expectations and concerns (hopes and fears), how to cope with adjusting to a new culture, and other people's experiences adjusting to a new culture (11th through 14th). It is perhaps surprising that such ephemeral concerns would rate so highly with participants, but these items do appear in numerous practitioner materials and are the topic of much discussion in the literature.

Attitudes toward sex and dating in the host country also ranked surprisingly high at 20th, given that it is normally not even mentioned in the cross-cultural training literature. Respondents were either glad they knew or wished they had known about sex and dating practices abroad, and they would advocate other students knowing about it before they go abroad in the future.

Physical safety in the host country was among the top ten most important items overall, yet health concerns lagged behind in 30th place. It would seem that safety is a more important or immediate concern for respondents than health. This is notable in that many orientation programs

address health and safety as a single issue, without recognizing that for participants, health concerns may not be as immediate or "real" as are safety issues. This may affect students' ability to process health-related information in an orientation, if instrumental value is a factor in students' attention and retention.

Interestingly enough, four of the lowest rated components of study abroad preparation were those relating to the University's or the province's goals and interests. These items include the province's goals for human resource development, the province's foreign trade initiatives, the University of Alberta's teaching and research goals, and the University of Alberta's goals to become more international. This is a strong vote of disinterest from respondents in knowing about these key institutional and regional agendas before preparing to study abroad.

Despite valiant attempts by many a music teacher, I am sure, arts and literature in the host country are rated quite unimportant. Religion(s) in Canada is considered even less important for preparation, which is surprising given the current interest in North America in spirituality and alternate realities (TV's "X-Files" and "Touched by an Angel" come to mind). Also low were local transportation, about which students can presumably learn once they arrive; theories about adjusting, which students decline over the possibility of hearing other people's experiences; and food and climate in Canada, which apparently respondents did not find relevant to their time abroad or which they found too self-evident to mention.

Other surprises were business practices in Canada and business practices in the host country. Given that 42% of respondents were registered in the Faculty of Business while they were on exchange, it seems strange that

business practices' ratings placed them in the bottom 1/5 of the components listed in the survey. Perhaps, again, the similarity in cultures between Canada and the host countries of the majority of respondents accounts for this apparent lack of interest.

Taken by thematic section, these data indicate some interesting trends. Items related to academic life abroad were rated high overall (3 in the top 7), with getting home university credit for courses taken abroad rating highest of all the components. Ranked and rated least important by far were selecting courses, guidance concerning academic program while abroad, and study patterns and teaching methods. The former finding is surprising given that changes to courses once the student is abroad are a frequent source of stress for study abroad advisors at the institution where the study was conducted. The low ranking of study patterns and teaching method in the host country may perhaps be explained by the relative similarity of teaching methods in the host countries of respondents to those in Canada. Alternately, it is possible that the subtle differences between academic systems were not noticed by respondents during their one or two term sojourn.

Adjustment and readjustment items were clustered high in the ratings, with 5 items in the top 30 and only theories about adjusting to a new culture lagging behind at 87th. How to cope with adjusting and other people's experiences adjusting to a new culture rated highest of the adjustment issues. By far the lowest rated adjustment item was theories about adjusting to a new culture. Apparently past participants would rather hear personal stories about adjustment than listen to theories.

National, institutional or regional items were spread throughout the ratings, with items related to the host country rating generally much higher

than items about Canada. With respect to Canada, respondents thought it most important to know something about current topics (25th), geography (38th), political structures (44th), religious and racial tolerance (47th), and human rights (49th). The first three are "cocktail party" items which might come in handy in conversation with host nationals—an altogether pragmatic consideration. The other two reflect more of a concern for social issues, echoing the high overall importance accorded religious and racial tolerance in the host country. Speaking of social issues, it is interesting that the environment, which is very much *en vogue* with young people in Canada today, received a significantly lower rating than religious and racial tolerance. Further examination of generational studies with Canadian young people and the effect of mass media on socialization might shed light on these findings. Of the five most important national concerns regarding the host country, climate (10th) and civil laws (16th) qualify as pragmatic or instrumental interests, but religious and racial tolerance (9th), treatment of minorities (23rd), and gender issues (26th) speak of larger social interests on the part of respondents. In addition, the national components regarding the host country most often cited in the literature are not most important to respondents. These include geography, current topics, and political structures.

Cultural items appeared throughout the list; cultural items dealing with the host country were mostly in the top half of the list, while items about Canada were mostly in the bottom half. The most important cultural item regarding Canada was stereotypes. This is notable as stereotypes in the host country were rated far lower (9th of cultural issues in the host country); respondents were concerned with how they were perceived by host nationals more than how they perceived their hosts. Other highly important cultural

issues in Canada included attitudes toward work and study and towards sex and dating. The former is advocated in the literature but rarely addressed in orientation materials; the latter is virtually never mentioned. Rated highest in the host country were appropriate dress, physical safety, and attitudes toward authority and status. The three lowest rated cultural items are the same regarding Canada and the host country: business practices, religion(s), and food (see discussion above).

Overall, self-awareness items were rated as moderately important, being strewn throughout the aggregate list with none in the top 10 or bottom 20 items. The most important self-awareness items were expectations and objectives, concerns, and interaction with new people, which is often both an expectation and a concern for preparing sojourners. Perhaps the old standby orientation session addressing "fears and expectations" has some grounding in what participants think is important.

Practical items were clustered in the findings, with 3 in the top 5 rated items, 4 in the middle, and 3 in the bottom 11. While some practical components were seen as particularly important, others such as what to pack, health concerns and food in the host country received only moderate endorsement. In fact, knowing about human rights issues in the host country rated higher than knowing about food in the host country. Of course, the similarities between food in Canada and in the host countries of the majority of respondents (73% went to the Sweden, the U.K., or Australia) may account in part for that result. Students might feel less need to know about cultural items in the host country in general if in their experience they perceive few radical differences between Canadian culture and their host culture.

A further explanation for the low rating of food in the host country and other items is that participants may already have been familiar with it and so did not think of it as important to know something about. In other words, their familiarity may have clouded their ability to answer the question objectively. This limitation is an inevitable corollary to asking the question, "What do you think is important in preparing to study abroad?" To a certain extent, people will answer with what they wish they had known and underrepresent what they already know (and thereby take for granted).

The following sections report the findings for the final two closed-response questions in the questionnaire.

Helpfulness of resources. Data from the literature and from the focus group and interviews conducted in this study suggest that it is important not only what students learn in predeparture orientation, but also how they learn. In question 17 (see Table 4), respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of each of 14 possible resources for predeparture orientation and then to rank the items according to most important, 2nd most important, and 3rd most important. Weighted *rank* for each item was calculated as the mean of the following weightings for each response to the ranking questions: most important (1.0), 2nd most important (2.0), 3rd most important (3.0). The lower the mean, the higher the rank of the item is taken to be. In order to consider the components from a single variable perspective, a weighted *rating* was also calculated as follows: responses (%) for each item were multiplied by factors of 5 (somewhat important) and 10 (very important) and summed.

Respondents rated people who have studied abroad at the host university, i.e., past study abroad participants, as the most helpful resource in preparing to study overseas. People from the host university and written

Table 4

Reported Helpfulness of Resources by Weighted Rating (Question 17)

Rating^a	Variable	<u>Somewhat Important</u>		<u>Very Important</u>		<u>Rank^b</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	People who have studied abroad at the host university	7	13	47	87	4	9.35
2	People from the host university	11	20	44	80	7	9.00
3	Written materials about the host university	20	35	37	65	2	8.25
4	Other students going to the same university of country	17	32	34	64	3	8.00
5	Written materials about the host country or region	24	42	33	58	1	7.90
6	People who have visited the host country or region	23	43	31	57	6	7.85
7	Predeparture orientation meetings	20	42	27	56	5	7.70
8	Videos about the host university	26	54	18	38	8	6.50
9	Videos about the host country or region	34	68	13	26	9	6.00
10	Language instructors	13	36	14	39	11	5.70
11	Written materials about travel in general	38	69	9	16	10	5.05
12	Cultural simulation activities	25	60	5	12	12	4.20
13	Language tapes	16	47	4	12	14	3.55
14	Videos about travel in general	29	59	2	4	13	3.35

^aBy weighted rating^bBy weighted rank

materials about the host university placed second and third. Cultural simulation activities, language tapes, and videos about travel in general were

ranked least helpful. Noteworthy in fourth place is other students going to the same university of country, which is an often underutilized tool for learning. In fact, almost no mention is made of fellow sojourners as a resource in the orientation literature, except for the value of group process training for groups going abroad together. Fellow sojourners can serve as a support network in preparation and abroad.

It should be noted that not all respondents were necessarily familiar with all of the resources listed in the instrument. For example, cultural simulation activities were offered at some predeparture orientations over the past five years but not at all of them, and only 75% of respondents had attended predeparture meetings. In addition, a student may have recalled an activity from a predeparture meeting or elsewhere but not have identified it as a cultural simulation activity. Even if participants did participate in such an activity, it may not have been effectively facilitated, thereby doing injustice to the resource. This issue of familiarity with the items is a limitation throughout the questionnaire but is particularly pronounced in the resources question.

Philosophy of study abroad. Although the research questions for this study focus on the content of study abroad orientation, it is important to consider how study abroad participants view the purpose or philosophy of study abroad, just as the university's philosophy related to internationalization was examined in the first chapter of this thesis. To discover that students do or do not agree with the institution's reasons for sending them abroad has implications for the way programs are marketed, participants selected, and departing sojourners trained. Accordingly, in Question 18, respondents were asked to rank 11 statements about the philosophy of study abroad with 1 being

the most important and 11 the least important (see Table 5). Mean scores were used to rank the statements, where the lowest mean (i.e., closest to 1) indicated the strongest endorsement. Responses were drawn from University of Alberta documents, literature around paradigms or models of internationalization, and International Centre staff (student-centered goals).

Table 5

Reported Importance of Statements About Study Abroad

<u>Rank^a</u>	<u>Study abroad should:</u>	<u>Mean</u>
1	allow students to pursue their personal goals.	3.036
2	prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society.	3.393
3	promote global cooperation and understanding.	3.407
4	allow students to pursue their academic goals.	4.873
5	promote world peace through personal friendships.	5.717
6	enhance students' ability to compete in the global marketplace.	5.981
7	allow students to pursue their professional goals.	6.151
8	give students tools to work for social justice.	7.135
9	enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world.	7.294
10	help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries.	8.460
11	enhance the University's reputation abroad.	8.750

^aBy mean score

Respondents clearly indicated that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals (3.036), prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society (3.393), and promote

global cooperation and understanding (3.407). Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to identify groupings of statements according to individual responses. However, the following paragraph compares rankings of responses by grouping them by philosophy or paradigm.

Those statements about study abroad which were adapted from University of Alberta documents (study abroad should enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world and enhance the university's reputation abroad) received two of the lowest rankings (ninth and eleventh of eleven respectively). Participants apparently did not agree with the University about what was important for study abroad. Similarly, statements which most accurately reflected the transformative model/paradigm as outlined by Toh (1993) and by Warner (1993) (study abroad should give students tools to work for social justice and help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries) received low rankings (eighth and tenth of eleven respectively). Judging by these responses, participants apparently did not/do not endorse the social justice model or paradigm. With both liberal statements in the top five, the closest thing to a thematic consensus among participants is that the liberal paradigm or model--pursuing goodwill and mutual understanding around the world--reflects what is important for study abroad.

Open-Ended Questions

The first and last sections of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions which were strategically placed to give participants a chance to refresh their memories about their study abroad experience as well as bring closure to the questionnaire completion exercise. Question 20, the

penultimate question, asked respondents to identify the one most important part of preparing to study abroad. The very last question, Question 21, solicited comments about the questionnaire itself; findings are not included in the text as they do not pertain to the topic of the study (see Appendix J for these comments).

During analysis, I wrote the responses on paper and then grouped similar responses until broad themes emerged. The themes from the literature were also considered (see chapter two). Responses to some questions fell into the same themes as were used in constructing the questionnaire (practical, academic, and so forth) while others did not. The following section presents the responses to each of the open-ended questions by theme. Emphasis is placed on what was said rather than who said it.

Most helpful thing in preparing to study abroad. The results of the first open-ended question, Question 7, were varied but predictable. The conceptual correlation between responses to this first question and the items which were identified in the creation of the survey serves as a validation of those pre-identified items.

Responses ranged from getting an immigration visa to learning the language, but most referred to items which were included in the closed questions of the survey. A number of participants identified a personal connection to people who had been to or were from the host country or university as one of the most helpful things they did or learned in preparing to study abroad. Some respondents also noted that attending the International Centre's predeparture orientation was one of the most helpful things they did to prepare. A few students mentioned how helpful it had been to find out

historical or cultural information about the host country. Academic topics included arranging for credit transfer and gathering information about the host university prior to departure. Practical arrangements found most helpful were housing, transportation from the airport, transportation in general, the cost of living, an immigration visa, and packing only the essentials. In terms of their own self-awareness, a few respondents indicated that being prepared for homesickness and being prepared to make the exchange "an incredible experience" were most helpful for them.

Two responses to this first question had not been included in the closed-response sections of the survey. One respondent stated that previous experience studying abroad had been one of the most helpful preparatory activities. Yet another indicated that establishing contacts in the host country was one of the most helpful things for him.

Wish had learned or done in preparing to study abroad. The second open-ended question, Question 8, asked respondents what they wish they had learned or done in preparing to study abroad. This question served as a corollary to the first and, more importantly, was designed to access regrets I have heard expressed repeatedly by sojourners. Again, regrets can be a powerful tool for identifying and working around potential problem areas for students while they are abroad.

As with the first question, the majority of responses reflected items which were already included in the survey. Comments included academic concerns such as information about the host university and receiving credit for coursework done overseas. Practical concerns included housing, finances, packing, and paperwork in general. Several respondents wished they had

communicated with past exchange participants, students currently on exchange from the host university, or fellow exchange students going to the same university or country (or just other people embarking on a similar experience). One respondent wished to have learned or done more before departure about communicating with friends and family. Another felt it would have been wise to learn more about the host country before studying abroad.

A few novel items were introduced in the respondents' wish lists. Travel arrangements to the host country and university were a concern which was not specifically addressed in the closed questions. Two people would have liked to prepare themselves better through cross-cultural training and a computer course respectively.

Most helpful part of orientation. Respondents were directed to answer Question 9a only if they had participated in an orientation session before they left to study abroad. The question did not specify that the orientation session be one offered by the home institution. The sessions offered at the University of Alberta have varied so greatly over the years that each respondent's experience of the sessions can be interpreted as unique. What matters is not what was offered at the orientation, but rather, what was so memorable, helpful, or otherwise significant to the participant that they would later recall it as the most helpful part of the session for them.

There was strong endorsement for personal communication with past participants, fellow exchange students, and students currently at the home institution on exchange. Practical arrangements also received frequent mention, in particular money matters, health care, packing, and a checklist of

things to do before leaving. A few students found the cultural adjustment cycle the most helpful part of the orientation. Some highlighted the academic information which was presented. Voicing fears was helpful for some, while communication games ranked highest with others. A few indicated that nothing in the orientation was particularly helpful, indeed, that the orientation as a whole was not helpful.

Missing from orientation. Question 9b asked what participants wish had been included in the orientation. Respondents once again had an opportunity to identify regrets, that is, gaps between their own preparedness and their experience with studying abroad. The assumption is, again, that students' frustrations with their ability to function in the task for which they have been prepared are key clues to the ways the preparation program can be changed for the better. This is particularly true if one of the goals of the preparation program is to decrease learner frustration with the task they are undertaking. This stress-reduction approach is seen widely throughout the literature of crossing cultures (Barna, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983).

Similar components were mentioned on the wish list as were lauded in the previous question, leaving one to wonder whether the information was actually missing from the orientations or whether the participants for whatever reason did not retain the information when it was presented. Interaction with fellow exchange students and with past participants was missed in the orientations. Several respondents wished there had been more attention to practical considerations such as housing, getting a work visa, and financial information. One respondent indicated she wished the orientation had been more practical in general. Academic concerns such as arranging for

credit transfer and obtaining information about the host university were mentioned by some. One respondent wished the orientation had dealt with transportation to the host country, while another brought up the adjustment of returning home as a topic to be covered in the orientation.

What else to include. This question allowed respondents to identify components of preparing for study abroad that had not already been mentioned in the survey. In addition, I expected that some people would refer to an item which did in fact appear in the survey, indicating either that respondents did not notice it or that they thought it was so important that it merited special mention. In either case, responses to this question provide another indication of items to which respondents attach importance.

Most suggestions were variations on themes previously touched on in the instrument. Practical issues ranged from contacting embassies overseas for jobs, searching for scholarships and bursaries to obtaining details of housing and full information on housing options. Academic matters included administrative paperwork, study patterns at the host university, finding out about courses and professors abroad, understanding marks and marks conversions, and obtaining approval for credit transfer in advance and in writing. On the topic of adjustment and self-awareness, respondents suggested making contacts with Canadians abroad before departing, talking with family before leaving, planning how to get Canadian news abroad, bringing a photo album for self and hosts, cultivating open-mindedness, and not going on the exchange if prone to home-sickness. In terms of national, institutional, or regional issues, a few participants advocated getting the "real scoop" on the host community before studying abroad. Others suggested getting as realistic a picture of the host university as possible. Potential

resources emphasized by respondents included more contact with past participants, students currently on exchange at the home institution, and fellow exchange students (particularly unstructured time in a social setting); and some contact from the home institution's exchange office during the sojourn.

Most important part of preparing to study abroad. Question 20, the penultimate question in the instrument, is perhaps the key question for the questionnaire; what do past participants believe is the most important part of preparing to study abroad? Responses varied greatly; it was not possible to

Figure 2. Most important part of preparing to study abroad.

Practical Considerations

estimate financial costs, realistic budgeting
 medical insurance
 bank accounts
 passport, visa
 making money before you go
 travel plans
 housing

Academic Considerations

making a contact at the host university
 arranging for credit transfer
 information about the host university

Self-Awareness

having the right mindset, having an open mind
 enthusiasm
 personal preparation
 preparing for a major change in lifestyle
 knowing goals and expectations
 knowing no one else is responsible for your happiness
 having realistic expectations, having no expectations
 knowing your limitations and hopes
 knowing yourself
 being prepared to learn as much as possible
 saying good-bye to friends

(figure continues)

Adjustment

knowing about culture shock
getting ready for culture shock

National/Regional Considerations

history, religion, and current affairs of host country
language and culture of host country

Resources

past participants
students currently on exchange at the home institution
fellow exchange students
talking to people, voicing concerns
support from home institution's exchange office

Getting Organized

good planning
avoiding last minute stress
covering all possibilities
remaining calm
learning to relax

identify one answer as definitive. Instead, components from nearly every section of the instrument were mentioned, along with a few which did not appear elsewhere in the survey or in responses to other questions. There were almost as many different ideas about what is most important as there were participants in the survey. These responses are presented in Figure 2 by thematic groupings which resulted from the open coding process and take into account the themes from the literature.

Summary of Questionnaire Data

In summary, respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly female (67%), between 17 and 24 years old (97%), undergraduates (100%), and registered in Business (42%) or Arts (33%). Most studied abroad in the U.K. (39%) or Sweden (21%) for a full academic year (10 months on average) and attended a predeparture orientation program. Overall, components of

predeparture orientation which were rated as most important were credit transfer, appropriate dress, financial matters, housing, host university administrative procedures, physical safety, home university administrative procedures, religious and racial tolerance, and climate in the host country. Rated lowest were institutional and provincial initiatives and interests. Resources *rating* most helpful for preparing to study abroad were people who have studied abroad at the host university and people from the host university.

Participants felt that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals; prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society; and promote global cooperation and understanding. Statements which speak to a liberal paradigm/model were the most heartily endorsed, with both statements ranking in the top five.

Responses to the open-ended questions validated the findings from the closed-response items. The question of what was the most important part of preparing to study abroad received a huge range of responses, most of which had been included in the closed-response items; however, a surprising result was that self-awareness issues, which had not received outstanding endorsement in the closed-response questions, were accorded the highest number of responses.

Summary

Focus group participants felt it was very important to talk with people who had studied abroad at or were from the host country or institution; address issues related to friends and family; learn more about the logistics of living abroad; go abroad with appropriate attitudes; learn from a person rather than a book; and access more specific, realistic information about the place they were going.

Interview participants felt it vital that predeparture orientation address the personal and cultural adjustment needs of sojourners. Both women were strong advocates for an experiential approach to predeparture training. The women felt day to day realities of life abroad were basic necessities in the orientation process, but not to the exclusion of personal confrontation activities. Both felt that trainees must understand themselves and have realistic expectations of what they will be able to accomplish abroad. They also raised issues related to the different ways trainees access information and the belief that the more prepared trainees will get the most out of their abroad experience. They challenged institutions to consider how true they are administratively to the goals which are set for participants and they declared reorientation for returnees a privilege and a right.

Respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly female (67%), between 17 and 24 years old (97%), undergraduates (100%), and registered in Business (42%) or Arts (33%). Most studied abroad in the U.K. (39%) or Sweden (21%) for a full academic year (10 months on average) and attended a predeparture orientation program. Overall, components of predeparture orientation which were rated as most important were credit transfer, appropriate dress, financial matters, housing, and travel documents. Rated lowest were institutional and provincial initiatives and interests. Resources *rating* most helpful for preparing to study abroad were people who have studied abroad at the host university and people from the host university. Participants felt that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals; prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society; and promote global cooperation and understanding. Self-awareness issues were accorded the highest number of responses to the open-ended questions.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, the significant findings from each data source are summarized, 12 common themes from across the data are discussed, and conclusions and implications of the findings are presented. In conclusion, recommendations for further research are identified.

Purpose of the Study

Study abroad is a powerful tool for serving student as well as institutional interests, yet without adequate student orientation prior to departure, the effectiveness of study abroad programming can be greatly affected (Tonkin & Edwards, 1981). Given the University of Alberta's commitment to expand and develop as an international university, and in light of its Education Abroad Program's expansion target of 2000 past participants by the year 2000, it is critical to determine what is important in preparing study abroad participants to fulfill their ambassadorial role and successfully achieve their goals abroad.

The purpose of this study was to examine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners who are associated with international/intercultural education; in light of recent University of Alberta documents; and as perceived by University of Alberta students who are planning to study abroad and University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad.

A focus group, two interviews, and a questionnaire were used to collect data respectively from students preparing to study abroad, providers of orientation programs other than at the University of Alberta, and past

participants of a study abroad program. Data were gathered to determine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by those three sources and to validate perceptions of importance as indicated in the literature and University of Alberta documents.

Findings By Source

Focus Group

Focus group participants felt it was very important to talk with people who had studied abroad at or were from the host country or institution. They felt it was important to address issues related to leaving and returning to friends and family. They wanted to learn more about the logistics of living abroad in terms of money matters and living arrangements. They wanted to go abroad with appropriate attitudes, they wanted to learn from a person rather than a book, and they wanted more specific, realistic information about the place they were going.

Interviews

The interview participants stressed the emotional challenges posed by the abroad experience and felt it vital that predeparture orientation address the personal and cultural adjustment needs of sojourners. Both women were strong advocates for an experiential approach to predeparture training. On the issue of concrete information and day to day realities of life abroad, the women felt those components were basic necessities in the orientation process but not to the exclusion of activities targeting personal awareness. Both respondents felt that trainees must understand themselves and have realistic expectations of what they will be able to accomplish abroad. Other

issues mentioned as important for sojourner preparation included personal safety and group preparation. Respondents also raised issues related to the planning of predeparture orientation, including the different ways trainees access information, the belief that the more prepared trainees will get the most out of their abroad experience, and a challenge to institutions to consider how true they are administratively to the goals which are set for participants. In addition, Sarah stressed the difficulty of returning home and declared reorientation for returnees a privilege and a right.

Questionnaire

Respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly female (67%), between 17 and 24 years old (97%), undergraduates (100%), and registered in Business (42%) or Arts (33%). Most studied abroad in the U.K. (39%) or Sweden (21%) for a full academic year (10 months on average) and attended a predeparture orientation program (75%).

Overall, components of predeparture orientation rated as most important were credit transfer, appropriate dress, financial matters, housing, and travel documents. Academic items rated highly, along with adjustment and readjustment items. Practical items with pragmatic appeal rated high but common sense or especially familiar items rated low. Self-awareness components were shown to be important. Respondents favored national items about Canada which one might expect to come up in casual conversation with host nationals, but their interests in terms of the host country showed a decided leaning toward social concerns. Rated lowest were institutional and provincial initiatives and interests.

Resources rating most helpful for preparing to study abroad were people who have studied abroad at the host university, people from the host university, and written materials about the host university.

Participants felt that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals (ranked highest); prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society (ranked 2nd); and promote global cooperation and understanding (ranked 3rd). There was no consensus regarding a particular philosophical model or paradigm, although statements taken from University of Alberta documents ranked particularly low. Statements which speak to a liberal paradigm/model were the most heartily endorsed.

Responses to the open-ended questions validated the findings from the closed-response items and included items from each of the theme areas (practical arrangements, academic life abroad, and so forth). The question of what was the most important part of preparing to study abroad received a huge range of responses, most of which had been included in the closed-response items; however, a surprising result was that self-awareness issues, which had not received outstanding endorsement in the closed-response questions, were accorded the highest number of responses.

Issues Particular to Focus Group

The focus group data agree with the literature around sojourner expectations in identifying homesickness (family and friends [home]), housing (living arrangements), language, money, health, interaction with new people (social life abroad), and political unrest (safety) (Koester, 1985, 1987); course work (credit transfer), adjustment to new customs (culture and religion), and local transportation (practical cultural tips) (Martin and Rohrllich, 1991).

Concerns expressed by the focus group but not found in the literature include re-entry, appropriate attitudes, paperwork and work permits, student expectations, and race/class/gender issues abroad. Due to the scarcity of research into Canadian sojourner expectations, it is possible that these unexpected data can be attributed to the fact that the focus group members live in Canada and the survey subjects were U.S. residents. However, simpler and perhaps more accurate explanations may suffice: re-entry, paperwork and work permits were discussed at the previous orientation; I raised appropriate attitudes and student expectations as issues; and race/class/gender were perhaps more openly discussed on university campuses in 1995 than they were in 1985, 1987, or 1991, when the previous research was conducted. This does not disparage the validity of the focus group data.

The focus group data yields even more information which is not evident in the literature, namely, the importance of personal contacts in conveying information. Again, this may be a function of national culture, of shifts in popular culture in the past few years, or of the nature of the research. In any case, this phenomenon bears further investigation.

Three matters remain troubling. The first is the focus group participants' numerous references to not having known a particular piece of information. In one part of the discussion, one woman commented, "I had no idea about that. I was really surprised to hear that, because I've never heard that before... Because I had no idea that something like this could happen... I'm glad she told me." Often the comments were made in connection with information gained from a personal contact. The implication seems to be that if the student had not been told, he or she might never have found out and that would be unfortunate, tragic, or simply unthinkable. In this way, the group openly

acknowledged their need to be told certain information and their inability on their own to know some of what they need to know. This phenomenon underscores the importance of looking beyond the felt needs and interests of the participants when conducting research into predeparture orientation for study abroad, as is reflected in the research design of this study.

A second area of concern is the extent to which the way information is presented impacted on the focus group's perceptions of what is and is not beneficial in helping students prepare to study abroad. As noted above, the group acknowledged their need to be told certain information regarding their overseas experience. At the same time, information which did not somehow resonate with the students was discounted, as with the previous orientation's presentation on cultural adjustment. That part of the presentation was conducted by a member of the International Centre staff in lecture format using small-print overheads and scholarly terms. Yet the student who was told by an exchange student assorted facts such as the drinking age in the exchange country felt that that had been very helpful for her as she prepared to go abroad. Another interesting angle would be to look at the generational studies which have been conducted looking at current twentysomethings in regards to their attitudes toward friends and authority figures. One argument might be that young people today place a higher emphasis on friendship than did the previous generation and are therefore more likely to respond well to information which is communicated through a member of their cohort group than from an older expert (Bibby and Posterski, 1992).

A third and related question is to what extent the recent orientation affected the results of the focus group. This is a double-edged question. On one hand, I had serious doubts about how cognizant participants would have been

about their own needs and interests for predeparture orientation had they not participated in such an orientation only two weeks prior. The previous orientation primed the pump. However, it may also have determined some of the participants' attitudes towards certain topics in ways which a different orientation would not. Some issues which were not raised in the previous orientation were raised in the focus group, whereas other issues were not even mentioned in the focus group. Again, the question of significance arises. If a topic from the previous orientation was not mentioned, does that mean it was so well covered that the students took it as self evident, found it irrelevant, or simply forgot? Clearly, however, the data must be seen for what they are: students' expressions of what they believe to be important in preparing to study abroad at a certain point in time.

Discussion of Broad Themes

Introduction

In this section, 12 themes are presented and discussed which are evidenced in more than one data source to be important for predeparture orientation for study abroad. In random order, the themes are: practical components, academic concerns, other exchange participants, culture shock/adjustment, national or cultural issues, re-entry/readjustment, self-awareness, global perspective/social justice, preparation process, experiential approach, pragmatism, and institutional or regional interests.

Open-ended survey questions are treated as a single data source, as each response indicates in some way the importance of the component named.

Practical Components

The importance of practical components in predeparture orientation resonates repeatedly in findings from the interviews, focus group and

questionnaire. For the purposes of the study, practical considerations are those items related to everyday living which would not necessarily be classified primarily as academic, adjustment, self-awareness, national, regional, institutional, or cultural concerns.

The strongest support for including practical items in predeparture orientation is found in the questionnaire data. Certain practical items are rated high as can be seen in the aggregate listing of the questionnaire items (see Table 3 in the previous chapter). Financial matters, housing, and travel documents emerged as the third, fourth, and fifth highest rated components overall. Each of the open-ended questions generated a bevy of responses related to practical issues. Of the practical concerns indicated in the open-ended questions, financial matters were mentioned the most often and included such concerns as the cost of living abroad, scholarships and bursaries, budgeting, bank accounts abroad, and making money prior to departure.

The focus group and interview findings support the importance of practical considerations in predeparture orientation. Focus group participants clearly felt that items such as money matters and living arrangements were very important, going so far as to say they could not properly begin to prepare until some of those matters were resolved. Participants also mentioned health, paperwork, and work visas as being important for the preparation process. To one interviewee, the topic of safety was a core component of predeparture training. The other interviewee initially had little use for concrete orientation styles, such as training participants how to hire servants, but later in the interview concluded that practical matters had a place at the bottom of a hierarchy of orientation topics (see Brislin and Yoshida's [1994] application of Maslow [1954]; Grove's [1989] concentric circles of sojourner needs). According

to one interviewee, practical matters must be included, but their treatment must be followed by an experiential, ephemeral approach.

Some practical concerns, however, were not particularly well received by respondents. For example, local transportation abroad, telephone systems abroad, and work abroad opportunities were rated quite low overall on the survey. The less important components would seem to be those which the participants do not expect to cause difficulty if they remain unknown until arriving abroad, which may be readily dealt with upon arrival, or which are so entirely familiar as to not be worth mention.

Practical components, then, are perceived by providers, preparing students and past participants to be an important part of predeparture for orientation in general and as such should be factored into the curriculum planning process. These findings are consistent with the literature on cross-cultural training (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994b; Grove, 1989; Koester, 1985, 1987; Martin and Rohrlich, 1991; and Summerfield, 1993), which also stresses the importance of practical matters. Special attention should be paid to practical components with pragmatic or instrumental value as perceived by participants.

Academic Concerns

In the literature and in the data from this study, academic concerns are high on the list of what people who are preparing to study abroad or have studied abroad think is important in predeparture preparation (Barnes, 1991; Summerfield, 1993). In the focus group and survey data, academic matters are consistently indicated to be among the most important concerns to address prior to study abroad. Academic issues did not come up in the interviews but this was expected as neither orientation provider (interviewee) works with a formal academic program.

In the overall rating of survey items, credit transfer (getting home university credit for courses taken abroad) topped the list. The importance of credit transfer issues was also strongly emphasized by members of the focus group. These findings are in keeping with Klineberg's (1981) contention that credit equivalencies can affect students' degree of satisfaction with their experience abroad and inhibit their function as cultural ambassadors. Host university administrative procedures followed credit transfer at fifth in the aggregate rating, while the home university administrative procedures item came in at eighth. Obtaining credit transfer, finding out about marks and marks conversions, and arranging for credit transfer in advance and in writing were mentioned several times in response to the open-ended survey questions. Also warranting frequent mention were contacts at the host university, information about courses and professors at the host university, and information about the host university in general. The home university received infrequent mention on such items as registering upon return and arranging academic contacts at the home university for purposes of communication while abroad.

Study patterns and teaching methods in the host country were not important to participants but were mentioned in the literature to be very important to students' ability to successfully complete academic pursuits abroad (Klineberg, 1981; Lieberman, 1994; Moore, 1987; Powell and Andersen, 1994).

Other Exchange Participants

One of the most prevalent themes in the data is the importance of communication with other exchange participants. This category includes people from the home institution who have studied abroad at the host institution (past participants), people who are currently studying abroad at the home institution from the host institution (current exchange students), and

other people from the home institution who are preparing to study abroad at the host institution (fellow exchange students); these three were rated the top resources by past participants.

Focus group participants were unanimous in their support for communication with other exchange participants as an important component of study abroad preparation; this topic was the only item to receive universal support. When addressing culture shock, one interviewee said that other people's experiences with culture shock were a key component in her presentation. Past participants and fellow exchange students would be prime candidates for the sharing of such experiences. Other exchange participants were mentioned in response to every open-ended question in the survey, including the question of what is most important in preparing to study abroad.

The interest in personal testimony can also be seen in the questionnaire rating of adjustment and readjustment items: The item theories about adjusting to a new culture was rated fourth least important overall of components in the survey, while other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture rated in the top 10. The data clearly show that contact with other exchange participants is perceived by providers, past participants and preparing participants to be one of the most important components of predeparture orientation for study abroad. This concurs with the literature related to interaction approach in cross-cultural training (Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Pedersen, 1976; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991) and in numerous practitioner materials (Oppen, Teichler, and Carlson, 1990; World Within Reach, 1995).

Cultural Shock/Adjustment

The data around culture shock and adjustment appear to be contradictory. Culture shock and adjustment are perceived by the interviewees and to a certain extent by questionnaire respondents as being very important, yet some adjustment issues fared poorly on the survey. Five of the six adjustment and readjustment items in the survey were rated in the top 30 overall; clearly, respondents feel adjustment is a significant issue. However, theories about adjusting to a new culture is one of the lowest rated items overall. Adjustment receives only honorable mention in the open-ended sections of the survey, with only one student indicating she found the cycle of adjustment to be the most helpful part of predeparture orientation. The focus group had little use for the topic.

Four observations will help explain this apparent contradiction. First, there is a problem in communicating with respondents about culture shock given that they have differing levels of experience with the subject. Second, the particular difficulty with culture shock as a topic is that it is highly experiential, yet not everyone who has experienced it would recognize their experience as such. Similarly, those with an intellectual grasp of the subject may lack a certain corporeal understanding unless they have experienced it firsthand. Third, the focus group participants had just been privy to a particularly theoretical presentation on culture shock in their orientation two weeks prior. One cannot blame them for finding the topic itself inaccessible when the presentation made it appear so. Fourth, the adjustment items which were most accessible to students rated highest of the six, while the most theoretical fell by the wayside.

This contradiction in the data is intriguing in that cross-cultural training literature and practitioner materials clearly endorse cultural adjustment training as sine qua non for sojourner preparation (Anderson, 1994; Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994b; Grove, 1989; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991; Kohls, 1984; Mead, 1994; Summerfield, 1993).

National or Cultural Issues

In general, respondents perceived knowing something about certain national or cultural issues to be important. Although national issues were treated separately from cultural issues in the survey, the distinction between them in the data is sufficiently blurred to warrant treating them as a unified theme. One interviewee felt it was important for sojourners to know something about day to day life, meals, food, history, politics, geography, and health issues in the host country, for example. The focus group members were eager to gather "practical cultural tips"; to know more about the culture of the host country; and to deal with issues of race, class, and gender. Specifically, focus group participants felt it important to know more specific information about the city and country than they had been able to access thus far.

In the survey, national or cultural issues rated high overall, particularly "cocktail party" items, meaning those topics such as dress, climate, and geography which might be likely to come up in casual conversation with host nationals. There was a noticeable interest in societal concerns such as religious and racial tolerance, treatment of minorities, and gender issues. The vast majority of highly rated national or cultural items pertain to the host country. Overall, national and cultural issues in the host country were of far greater interest to respondents than issues in Canada.

However, particular issues in those categories did not fare so well, such as food, religion(s), climate and arts and literature (all in Canada). Business practices in both Canada and the host country are rated particularly low as well. Perhaps respondents did not think it important to know something about these topics because they believed the topics to be self-evident or common knowledge.

Area- and culture-specific information was much more strongly advocated in cross-cultural literature and trainer materials than in these findings (Barnes, 1991; Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994b; Grove, 1989; Harris and Moran, 1991; Kohls, 1984; Summerfield, 1993; World Within Reach, 1995).

Re-entry/Readjustment

Readjustment to life after study abroad, sometimes called re-entry, was a recurrent theme in the survey, focus group, and interview findings. On the survey, how to apply the abroad experience after it is over was rated in the top 25 overall. One respondent expressed a wish that the predeparture orientation she attended had addressed adjusting to life after study abroad. Readjustment was one of the most strongly endorsed topics in the focus group discussion. Participants indicated that it is important to understand the re-entry process before leaving to study abroad in order to clear apprehensions with friends and family before departure and plan how to communicate with them. One interviewee seemed determined to talk about the re-entry experience although it was not on the list of components to be discussed in the interview. She called reorientation programming "a privilege and a right" of returning sojourners and challenged institutions to consider their administrative response to the highly personal and sometimes troubled experience of returnees.

These findings are supported by the copious literature which addresses the importance of re-entry issues in programming for sojourners (predeparture or post-return) (Brislin, 1981; Chinn, 1992; Denney, 1986; Grove, 1989; Greenwood, 1991; Kauffman, Martin, Weaver, and Weaver, 1992; Kenney and von Klemperer, 1992; Kohls, 1984; Martin, 1986; Milenko, 1983; Pusch, 1994; Summerfield, 1993).

Self-Awareness

To the theme of self-awareness belong those components of predeparture preparation which relate to the participants' awareness of themselves and their significant relationships, aside from academic, cultural adjustment, and practical issues. Strong endorsement of this theme is found throughout the data.

Defining the sojourn as a personal re-identification process, one interviewee emphasized the need for orientation to provide a forum in which participants can become aware of their own responses to difficult situations. Likewise, the second interviewee contends that participants must identify their own expectations of themselves and of the country prior to departure. She felt strongly that those lacking direction will not fare as well as those who go abroad with some ideas of what they want to accomplish, even though these ideas are likely to change during the sojourn.

For focus group participants, friends and family was one of the topics which emerged as particularly important. This component is significant for predeparture orientation, as the focus group made clear, because many students will not be able to anticipate the impact of the sojourn on their relationships unless they are made aware of it.

The focus group data also show the importance of fostering appropriate attitudes in participants before they depart, such as openness to change, willingness to look ignorant and ask for help, the capacity not to take things personally, and a holistic attitude to see good and bad things that happen on the sojourn as contributing equally to the experience. Mention was also made of the value of learning about and planning for social life abroad, such as identifying in advance university clubs one might like to join.

A cluster of self-awareness and adjustment issues rated high (11th through 14th) on the aggregate list of most important components, right after the pragmatic top ten, indicating that respondents value self-awareness issues in preparing effectively for study abroad.

Perhaps the most telling endorsement for self-awareness components is the large number of respondents to the open-ended survey questions who indicated that the most important part of preparing for study abroad was to be aware of issues related to oneself and one's relationships. In fact, it became clear in the process of coding the responses to this question that the theme of self-awareness was the most universally endorsed.

In general, cross-cultural training literature concurs with these findings; it is advantageous to help sojourners develop a basic awareness of themselves and their significant relationships prior to departure (Barna, 1983; Downs, 1969; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991; Kealey, 1990; Kohls, 1984; Ladd, 1990; Pusch, 1994; Storti, 1989; Triandis, 1977).

Global Perspective/Social Justice

In the data several factors related to global perspective or social justice appear to be important for predeparture orientation, yet numerous others do not. The focus group, for instance, did not touch on any topics which reflected a

social conscience or social justice perspective. The first interviewee mentioned that the sojourn is about enacting change and being changed, which relates more to a social justice perspective than to, say, a market-driven model of international educational exchange. One interviewee directed her participants to study development education materials prior to departure, but this is understandable given that her program is explicitly focused on development education.

The survey data show high ratings for social issues such as racial and religious tolerance in the host country (in top 10 overall), treatment of the elderly, minorities and children in the host country (23rd), and gender issues in the host country (26th). Three of the top five national items in the host country and two of the top five national items in Canada reflect a concern with social issues. However, most social issues rated quite low, such as literacy and basic education in Canada (in bottom half of the national items) and the host country's participation in international alliances. In open-ended sections, the only response which demonstrated interest in social issues was the comment that the most important thing in preparing to study abroad is to avoid ethnocentrism.

In the philosophies section of the survey, the social cause did not fare well. The statements study abroad should promote global cooperation and understanding and study abroad should promote world peace through personal friendships were ranked third and fifth respectively, demonstrating some interest in the liberal perspective as defined by Warner (1993) and (Toh 1993). However, faring worse were the statements reflecting more of a transformative model (Toh, 1993; Warner, 1993) (study abroad should give students tools to work for social justice and study abroad should help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries), ranking eighth and

tenth respectively. Perhaps a comment which one respondent scribbled on the margin of the survey next to the statement on reducing inequalities will shed some light on this apparent lack of interest in social justice issues. She writes, "But how?"

This limited interest in social justice on the part of respondents is partly in keeping with the cross-cultural training literature, which makes hardly any mention of it (Summerfield, 1993) but is much more interested in facilitating personal (and occasionally institutional) goals. In addition, it is in keeping with the University of Alberta's passing nod to social transformation and global responsibility as outlined in University documents (see Chapter 1 of this thesis; Senate Task Force, 1994). However, past participants indicate a greater interest in social justice issues than is supported by the cross-cultural training literature or the University of Alberta documents. The challenge will be to strike a balance between the laudable interest of students and the limited interest of the institution in equipping students with a more global perspective as part of their study abroad experience.

Preparation Process

Another theme evident in the data is the preparation process itself. Participants in all parts of the study commented on the nature of the way students prepare and the best methods and resources to use as they prepare.

The interview data yield rich insights into the preparation process. One interviewee contended that no one can be completely prepared to go abroad but that it is advisable for people to be as prepared as possible, as those who make individual efforts to be prepared will derive the maximum benefit from the program, while those who make no effort beforehand will probably "coast" through their time abroad. She advocated assigning tasks outside of the

orientation to encourage students to take an active role in their own preparation. The second interviewee also emphasized the need to take into account how different participants access information and tailor the orientation accordingly. She pointed out that orientation programs can be counterproductive if they purport to be the final word in preparation. Such programs can lead participants to believe that they should be able to take their new knowledge and move through the sojourn with more grace and greater success than may be realistic.

The focus group data indicate the importance of accessing more information in predeparture orientation which is specific to the host country or institution. Although the focus group participants talked about the need to have the right attitude before going abroad, one participant felt that it was not possible to prepare for an attitude, but that one finds oneself in a situation and realizes there would have been no way to prepare for it. This opinion is in stark contrast to the perspective held by the interviewees, who held that attitudinal preparation is not only possible, it is an essential part of predeparture preparation.

In the open-ended sections of the survey, a number of respondents indicated that the most important part of preparation for study abroad was the way in which one prepares. They advised good planning, avoiding last minute stress, covering all possibilities, remaining calm, and learning to relax.

In the survey data, other exchange students (preparing, current, and returned) were rated in the top most helpful resources, underscoring the focus group and interview findings that using other exchange participants in the preparation process is invaluable from the perspective of the one preparing. Students seem to far prefer hearing from people who have recently been in their situation than from the "experts" who write travel logs or make videos

about the host country or about travel in general. Interestingly enough, written information about the host country did not rank nearly as high as written material about the host university, which suggests that students in general are more interested in their host university than in the host country. This finding is echoed in the focus group data indicating the importance of more specific information, including amateur videos made by the students themselves, about the host institution.

Experiential Approach

Although not identified in the survey instrument, interview schedule, or focus group questions, an experiential component nonetheless was found in the data. As discussed earlier, the interviewees accorded great importance to the use of experiential activities as a way of accessing cultural and personal adjustment issues with the participants. These orientation providers found that the more participants are aware of what they will face and their own capacity to face it, the better prepared the participants are. Debriefing was described as an essential component in an effective experiential activity. The debriefing allows students to describe their experience and their feelings about it, interpret the situation, identify their (often) incorrect assumptions around it, and prepare to respond differently when they are in the situation again.

Not surprisingly, the experiential components did not appear in the focus group discussion, which followed a recent orientation that had not had an experiential component, nor was it well supported in the quantitative survey data. However, experiential activities were mentioned in some responses to open-ended questions on the survey. A few students indicated it was important to address particularly ephemeral issues in predeparture orientation as follows: preparing for homesickness, preparing to make the

sojourn an incredible experience, having an open mind, avoiding ethnocentrism, and getting ready for culture shock. These topics could potentially be accessed through the use of experiential activities.

Pragmatism

Small inconsistencies in the data, when taken together, indicate that the pragmatic value of an item is positively related to its importance in sojourner preparation. Focus group members wanted information which was more specific to the host university and immediate surroundings: "something more realistic," such as a homemade video of the campus and on-campus housing. They wanted to learn this specific information from other exchange participants, who could give the most realistic perspective. Interviewees were concerned that concrete information related to daily living be expressed early in the orientation program lest dissatisfied participants "sabotage the whole orientation." Interviewees also observed that their participants seem to be more receptive to other people's experiences with cultural adjustment than to theories and charts depicting the adjustment process.

The survey data confirm the importance of pragmatism. Adjustment theories rated incredibly low but other people's experiences with adjustment rated near the top of the aggregate list. Credit transfer, finances, housing, and travel documents emerged as some of the top rated items. All of these can cost time, money, or effort if not properly managed. Yet other "practical" items like climate and telephones were rated low overall, as they are more self-evident issues and therefore less likely to have adverse effects on the respondents (who were by and large traveling to countries employing Western dress about whose climate Canadian schoolchildren learn as a matter of course). The resources respondents found most helpful were other people who could give firsthand information, not videos, and definitely nothing dealing with travel in general. Sex and dating in the host country was an important issue for respondents; it is pragmatic because it has specific implications for their everyday lives abroad, in

contrast to arts and literature, which rated very low related in the host country and in Canada. Climate and civil laws in the host country were among the highest ranking national components; students want to know what they have to do to survive--and not freeze or get arrested. Other national and cultural items with high ratings are likely to come up in everyday living, especially in interactions with host nationals, for example, current topics, geography, and politics in Canada. Strengths and weaknesses rated low relative to other self-awareness concerns because on the surface they do not seem to have as much impact on the sojourn as how to meet new friends in a place one has never been before. Nearly all the responses to open-ended question were pragmatic, from packing a camera to inside information about what professors and courses are the best. The university's and the province's goals and interests were definitely not pragmatic enough to warrant anything but the lowest ratings. Personal goals, not social agendas or institutional needs, ranked as being the most important purpose for study abroad. Is an item important? It is if it is pragmatic.

Institutional or Regional Interests

Institutional and regional (i.e., provincial) interests were among the least important components in the survey, were briefly mentioned in the interviews, and did not even come up in the focus group. The University and Province of Alberta's goals and interests rated among the lowest of the 90 survey items to be included in predeparture orientation; they ranked least and third least important of eleven statements about the purpose of study abroad. In five different open-ended questions, the 57 respondents indicated in essence what they thought was important in preparing to study abroad, and not one of them mentioned institutional or regional interests. Clearly, the goals of the

sponsoring institution and the regional government--as agenda items for predeparture preparation--were the least important components in the study as far as respondents were concerned.

There are several possible explanations for this. Respondents to the survey may not have understood phrases like "the province's goals for human resource development" but thought it sounded uninteresting and, being reluctant to admit they did not know what the items meant, marked down not important rather than don't know. It is also possible that respondents understood exactly what was meant, felt it had nothing to do with them, and concluded that it was not important for anyone else to know in preparing to study abroad. The question then becomes, if students don't think the University's and province's interests are important to know something about before they study abroad, are the institutional and provincial agendas being met? The following section should shed some light on this question.

The University of Alberta's Interests

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the University of Alberta's stated goals and interests with regard to internationalization have implications for predeparture orientation. Although it is not necessary that study abroad participants share these goals and interests for them to be presented in predeparture orientation, it is interesting to note the extent to which respondents share the University's perspectives on what is important in preparing to study abroad.

A basic institutional interest is supported in the findings, namely, that in supporting the competitive goals of the University, students should be prepared for an academically rigorous and personally challenging experience. Respondents concur: they think it is important to be prepared with pragmatic

information which will help them succeed academically (credit transfer was rated number one concern on the survey) and personally (i.e., as related to practical, self-awareness, adjustment, national and cultural issues).

Preparation for ambassadorship, the fourth pillar of the University of Alberta Senate Task Force's (1994) vision for internationalization of the campus, entails adequate academic preparation, familiarity with the host university, understanding of the culture of the host country to reduce the effects of culture shock, enough awareness of one's own culture to serve as an ambassador, and an awareness of the institutional expectation that one be an ambassador (Klineberg, 1981; see Chapter 2 of this thesis). Respondents in this study expressed interest in pragmatic academic information but not in some of the subtleties of academic life abroad which the literature indicates will be advantageous, such as study patterns and teaching methods. Familiarity with the host culture is, for most respondents, of greatest interest when the items have some pragmatic or possibly social value. Cultural values such as individuality (versus valuing the group) rated low in the survey: only one, attitudes toward authority, class, and status, rated in the top 20 of 90 items. National and cultural issues in Canada fared far worse than in the host country; participants were far less interested in learning about their own country than about their destination. Without an understanding of the cultural values which underlie one's own covert behavior and that of host nationals, effective communication abroad easily becomes a stumbling block to effective ambassadorship. Lastly, although ambassadorship was not mentioned per se in the research findings (nor were participants asked to comment on it), it is interesting to note that it also traditionally has not been mentioned in the University of Alberta's predeparture orientations.

In terms of supporting the University's albeit limited interest in development or global justice issues, some interest was shown on the part of past and present participants. They value learning about racial and religious tolerance, human rights, and treatment of minorities, but not about literacy or environmental issues. They thought it was more important to accomplish almost anything else with study abroad than to work for social justice—except, of course, support the university's stated key interests (enhance the University's reputation internationally and compete with graduates worldwide), which they ranked last of all.

Conclusions and Implications

In the light of the findings as articulated in this and the previous chapter, and given the context which was set in chapters one and two, the following conclusions and implications can be drawn.

1. Students want specific, "real," personalized information in preparing to study abroad. They want to meet with past participants, current exchange students, and fellow exchange participants rather than learn from a book; they prefer to learn about the host university rather than the host country; they want to hear other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture rather than listen to theories about adjustment. They want to learn about attitudes toward sex and dating in the host country; in short, they want real-life, first-hand information before they go abroad.

Implication: Predeparture orientation should be specific, "real," and personalized. Where possible, people from or who have been to the host university should interact with students preparing to go abroad. Anecdotal and visual information sources which provide a realistic picture of the abroad

experience should be used as much as possible. More realistic information about daily life at the host university should be gathered and made available to students preparing to go abroad.

2. Study abroad participants perceive "immediate" components such as credit transfer, appropriate dress, finances, and housing to be the most important items to include in predeparture orientation. The items they find most important are items which are most likely to directly impact their day to day lives, as students and as people. This is in keeping with the literature which suggests that immediate concerns must be addressed before trainees can focus on higher level or more peripheral needs. In addition, it is in the institution's best interest to address these needs with preparing students as they may impact the students' ability to successfully fulfill their ambassadorial role, socially or academically. Other day to day items such as using the telephone or local transportation are not as important to participants because they are not immediate concerns for those preparing to go abroad.

Implication: Practical concerns should be addressed in predeparture orientation to address the felt needs of students and to prepare them to have a successful experience abroad. In addition, components which are believed to facilitate student success abroad, such as an understanding of study and teaching methods at the host university, should also be included. Because practical needs may vary across time and institutions, providers should regularly conduct some sort of needs assessment to verify specific needs.

In addition, the University should work to identify and remove programmatic barriers to student success abroad. Such barriers typically exist in the areas of credit transfer and program advising. The institutional and personal benefits of study abroad will be seriously undermined to the extent

that students experience difficulties determining a program of study for their time abroad and arranging for commensurate recognition upon their return. Students will be far less likely to study abroad if they cannot get credit for doing so. The Education Abroad Program is currently working to remove these barriers and as such should be supported in its efforts.

3. Interaction with past participants and visiting exchange students is a very important and helpful component of predeparture preparation, particularly as perceived by study abroad participants. The personal approach was the single most important part of the focus group members' preparation to go abroad; the qualitative and quantitative questionnaire findings indicate a strong interest in personal testimony related to cultural adjustment in particular and as a resource in general.

Implication: This valuable component should be an integral part of predeparture preparation, not only as an agenda item in itself, but as an approach to working toward other goals of the orientation, such as presentation of content and re-entry programming for returnees. Careful consideration should be given to integrate this component with the larger interest of the orientation.

4. Study abroad participants have different perceptions than practitioners and academics about the importance of culture-general and adjustment issues in predeparture orientation. General cultural issues are of little interest to participants but practitioners and academics indicate that they are vital components of sojourner preparation. Adjustment issues are more favorably viewed by respondents but theoretical approaches are to adjustment are at the bottom of respondents' list. The literature indicates that training sojourners about adjustment issues is a necessity. The failure to prepare students to

encounter a culture different from their own is ethically questionable and administratively risky at best.

Implication: General culture and adjustment issues should be addressed in predeparture orientation. Providers of predeparture orientation programs should not be swayed by the disinterest of participants, who may not be fully aware of the potential impact of culture on their abroad experience, but should ensure that participants are equipped with sufficient awareness and skills related to culture to fulfill the mandate of the particular study abroad program (e.g., personal growth, institutional ambassadorship). These issues are significant for predeparture orientation because many students will not be able to anticipate the impact the sojourn may have unless someone makes them aware of it.

As a further consideration, providers should seriously consider the merits of the "learning how to learn" approach to cultural understanding as an alternative to the formal, lecture-style presentation of culture-specific information.

5. Participants want to learn about themselves and their relationships in the context of the study abroad experience before they depart. Academics and practitioners concur that a preparation program should help sojourners develop awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses, reactions to stress, and other competencies and attitudes related to crossing cultures.

Implication: Study abroad participants should have opportunities to become more aware of themselves as individuals and of their relationships in the context of the abroad experience. Orientation activities should be offered which facilitate this kind of focused self-discovery in a safe and ethical manner. At the same time, it should be recognized that participants find most important

those aspects of self-awareness which they deem to be most applicable to their sojourn. Experiential activities should be considered as an effective tool for facilitating self-awareness and other goals.

6. Area-specific issues related to the home and host areas are important for predeparture orientation, although practitioners and academics are far stronger advocates than are study abroad participants. Knowing about host country or regional issues prior to departure is important in that it shows respect for and facilitates good relations with host nationals, heightens awareness of one's own country, and provides a framework for further learning about the host area. Knowledge of one's own country or region is vital in that it allows students to represent well the home country and institution. Participants are interested in "cocktail party" area-specific information, i.e., that which might come up in casual conversation with host nationals, but they also feel it is important to know about some social issues as well.

Implication: Curriculum planners should be aware of participants' predisposition toward readily applicable information and devise strategies for helping students move beyond a functionalist mindset to develop a more thorough understanding of issues related to the host country or region. At the same time, respondents' interest in social justice issues should be accommodated within the context of institutional objectives. Preparatory programming should recognize participants' perceptions but ultimately must address area-specific information, related both to the host area and to the home country, in the context of institutional interests and in particular ambassadorial functions expected of participants while abroad.

7. Re-entry issues form a crucial component in study abroad programming. Copious literature supports addressing the readjustment process with sojourners before and after their time abroad. Participants want to know about

the challenges of returning so they can prepare themselves and their loved ones even before they depart. This study shows that readjustment is as important to discuss in predeparture orientation as is cultural adjustment.

Implication: Providers of study abroad programs should address re-entry in predeparture programming, including cultural readjustment and the students' role as campus ambassadors of an international perspective and of the study abroad program. Programmers should determine their role in facilitating the return of study abroad participants and consider the feasibility of offering post-return reorientation programming.

8. Internationalization is important to the University of Alberta, but the philosophy of and policies around internationalization have been insufficiently articulated across the campus and to external stakeholders thus far. Measures are currently being taken to communicate the University's vision for internationalization; however, the particular focus and implications for policy have not yet been clarified.

Moreover, the interests of the University of Alberta are only partly in agreement with the perspectives of its study abroad participants. In particular, the University's goals to be recognized as a world-class institution are best served by study abroad participants who are well equipped ambassadors, ready for an academically and personally challenging experience, with at least a passing awareness of global issues.

Implication: The University of Alberta should carefully consider its philosophical position related to internationalization, recognizing that different philosophical approaches will lead to dramatically different outcomes for the institution and its constituents. This issue is particularly important now

as critical awareness of the University's international vision is building on campus and a course of action has not yet been clearly articulated.

In addition, program providers at the University must seriously consider how programs can more closely represent the interests of the providing institution. Specifically, an increased focus on ambassadorship and the components which undergird it must be introduced, as well as an awareness of basic global issues.

Orienting students to institutional and regional interests was disavowed by providers and study abroad participants alike. Program planners should consider the integrity of their programming in light of larger institutional and program interests, particularly in times of economic restraint and an increased emphasis on quality assessment. If participants are not accomplishing what the program intends to accomplish, what is the price to them as individuals and to the viability of the program?

9. An experiential approach to preparatory programming was shown to be important to program providers but was not acknowledged by participants, who may be unfamiliar with the approach and so would not necessarily be able to accurately assess its importance to them. However, the literature indicates that a number of components identified by participants as important have been successfully addressed using an experiential approach. These components include culture-general issues, area- and culture-specific information, adjustment, and self-awareness.

Implication: An experiential approach should be included in predeparture orientation to accomplish some of the more personal goals of training, particularly in rendering cultural, adjustment, and self-awareness components more accessible to pragmatically minded participants.

10. A global perspective is lacking in predeparture programming literature and is marginally important to University of Alberta participants. University of Alberta policy documents mention a transformative model of internationalization and past participants indicate a moderate interest in social justice issues such as religious and racial tolerance in the host country. However, overall, survey participants do not believe this perspective is an important goal of study abroad.

Implication: A global perspective should be introduced into predeparture orientation insofar as it addresses an institutional interest and appeals to students. In addition, the ethics of sending students abroad with little or no awareness of larger global issues such as environmental care and social/structural justice are questionable. Conscience must not be absent from the curriculum planning process.

11. The Education Abroad Program should consider restructuring its predeparture orientation programs for study abroad participants to ensure quality. Only a well-designed, carefully planned program will ensure that students are equipped to fulfill the ambassadorial role and to represent the interest of the study abroad program and the University.

Implication: The Education Abroad Program at the University of Alberta should establish a mechanism to address the recommendations of this report and develop a strategy for implementation. In particular, a standardized curriculum for predeparture programming should be developed and routinely evaluated. In addition, orientations should be facilitated by personnel with knowledge and experience in the areas of group facilitation, cross-cultural training, and adult education. When such persons are not available, assistance should be sought from qualified members of the campus or local community.

12. A great deal of information, awareness, and skills is important in a variety of areas in preparing for study abroad. Traditional face-to-face instruction in a one or two day orientation will be insufficient to address all of the relevant issues.

Implication: Providers should consider alternate delivery methods such as: self-directed study; country-specific sessions; multimedia programs; computer assisted instruction; sessions with past participants and visiting exchange students; and independent study such as reports and personal journals. Orientation sessions should form only a part of the curriculum for student preparation.

Recommendations for Practice

It is clear from this study that effective predeparture orientation is a necessary part of optimal study abroad programming. At the same time, optimal programming can only be defined in the context of institutional priorities. The ethos on campus with regard to internationalization must be reflected in student mobility programs or they will be counterproductive and ultimately marginalized. For a coordinated effort to be possible, there must be a clear vision for the nature of internationalization on campus.

Picture if you will a first year student at the University of Alberta. She heard about the university's student exchanges in her high school and enrolled at the university intending to go on an exchange. She takes language courses in her first two years because she wants to be prepared for her experience abroad. In her other classes, she gains a global perspective from her internationally aware professors and she mingles with foreign students and scholars and returned exchange students on a daily basis. Before her exchange, she participates in a credit course designed especially for students preparing to go

abroad. During the course, she learns how to access the pragmatic information she really wants, grasps what it means to be an ambassador for the university, and also comes to value the cultural and personal preparation the course encourages. While abroad, the student actively advocates international exchange and the University of Alberta's world class standing in teaching, research, and service. When she returns from her exchange, the student joins other returnees in a reorientation program which includes personal debriefing, evaluation of the exchange program, and a key role in predeparture orientation for outgoing exchange students. On campus and in her community, the returnee is an advocate for international exchange and a more global perspective.

The vision articulated above is not currently the reality at the University of Alberta nor at any other Canadian university. This integrated approach to student mobility and predeparture orientation requires significant coordination across the campus and cannot be achieved overnight. If we take this vision as an ideal, realizing that we have not yet arrived, how do we reconcile this ideal with the current situation, and how can this study help us come closer to realizing this vision?

Obviously not every study abroad program will be able to develop an optimal predeparture orientation program instantly, but the best place to start is in assessing the nature and strength of the institution's commitment to internationalization. How committed is the institution to creating an international ethos on campus? Is the university expecting students to be facilitators of larger institutional exchanges or is it enough for them to have an enjoyable experience on a purely personal level? The larger goals of the institution will determine the focus of predeparture programming.

In this light, study abroad professionals have a role in advocating greater internationalization across the campus. Where possible, study abroad should be positioned as a part--and a key part-- of a wider thrust to internationalize the curriculum, the student and faculty, and the goals and interests of the institution.

Another consideration is blending the pragmatic information students want to learn with the ambassadorial or process-oriented learning advocated by academics, practitioners, and perhaps indirectly by the institution. Such learning may pertain to culture and cultural adjustment, the host country and

students' schedules? What schedule will best serve the needs of your students: a weekend retreat, a series of evening sessions, or a ten week course? What funding is available for staffing and materials? What alternate methods of delivery can be used to encourage independent investigation and maximize learning potential? What materials would really create the link for participants between what they know and what they want--and need--to know? All of these issues will play a part in curriculum development.

The future of higher education is undeniably international. Study abroad plays a vital role in the continued internationalization of higher education. Offering an orientation for study abroad participants is one way to

understanding of students' needs and interests related to resources for study abroad preparation will inform program planners and expand the possibilities for alternate delivery of predeparture training.

3. This study considered paradigms of international educational exchange but more research is needed into the philosophical orientations supported by participants, program planners, and providing institutions, particularly with reference to the orientation needs of proponents of differing philosophical perspectives. Discrepancies between participants' and providers' philosophies about the nature of the study abroad experience might indicate a need to

to address the specific needs and interests of Canadian study abroad participants. The information gathered in this study will provide study abroad practitioners, particularly in Canada, with qualitative and quantitative data which to base program decisions.

Study abroad is a powerful tool for self-discovery, personal growth, international ambassadorship, and the realization of institutional and regional interests, but only with optimal student preparation. Effective predeparture orientation programming can accomplish these goals and more.

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Appendices

- A Responses to Internet Request for Predeparture Materials**
- B Questionnaire**
- C Focus Group Questions**
- D Focus Group Introductory Handout**
- E Focus Group Consent and Confidentiality Form**
- F Interview Questions**
- G Interview Consent Form**
- H Cover Letter for Questionnaire**
- I Questionnaire Code Book and Instructions**
- J Questionnaire Data for Question 21**
- K Questionnaire Data for Questions 11 Through 16**

**Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad
University of Alberta
Researcher: Michelle Szabo**

**Summary of Predeparture Orientation Materials
Provided by Other Institutions**

20 April 1995

Materials were provided by:

University of Victoria
University of Wisconsin
University of Pittsburgh
Lehigh University
Queen's University
Trent University
The University of Texas at Arlington
Texas A&M University
California State University, Sacramento
Wesleyan University
Auburn University
The Pennsylvania State University
Binghamton University
James Madison University
The University of Tulsa
University of Rochester

Note: not every institution provided all of the information or materials used in their orientation programs. This summary is descriptive but not conclusive.

Components of Predeparture Orientation

Academic/Home Institution Concerns

Almost every institution mentioned academic concerns in its orientation materials. Academic and other home institution concerns include:

- financial aid/fees/scholarships/assistantships
- student status and registration
- course approval/credit transfer/transcripts/grade transfer
- academic advising/faculty relations
- housing upon return
- coops/directed studies/independent study
- role of International Office
- career advising

Nuts and Bolts

Every institution included logistical concerns in its orientation materials, such as:

- insurance
- money/credit cards/ATMs/exchange
- communication/change of address/phones and phone cards
- discounts/International Student Identity Cards
- passports/visas/official documents
- drivers' licenses
- flights/travel agencies/travel arrangements
- work abroad
- measurement conversions
- packing/what to take/voltage
- jet lag/jet wear
- power of attorney
- backpacking tips
- disabled students' concerns

Cultural Adjustment/Culture Shock

Many programs deal specifically with culture shock or cultural adjustment.

Variations on this theme include:

- personal adjustment
- being happy with yourself and carrying that overseas
- tips on adjusting abroad
- how to succeed while abroad
- coping strategies
- cross cultural awareness
- participation in new culture
- stages of adjustment
- body language

- keeping an open mind
- re-entry/reverse culture shock/returning home
- stereotypes of Americans

Past Participants/Exchange Students

Many orientation programs make use of past participants as well as exchange students from the host countries. One program also uses expatriates from the host country or other "experts". Involvement includes:

- meeting in small group by program/country
- discussing do's and don'ts for study abroad
- presenting nuts and bolts information
- providing reports and photos

One person writes, "Past participants are an excellent source of information.[...] I think these are usually the best sessions and new participants feel like this is the most helpful."

Host Institution/Country Information

Several programs provide information about the host institution or the host country. Information may include:

- academic practices/teaching methods/how things are done
- granting credit/registration
- housing
- orientation/support services/student services/recreational activities
- details of individual placement
- culture of country and region/knowledge of host country
- sources of information/things to find out about host country
- gifts

Health Issues

Several programs deal specifically with health concerns abroad. Topics include:

accessing emergency medical care
immunization/vaccines
health insurance
special conditions/allergies
what to take/medical supplies
prescriptions/extra medication, glasses, etc.

Fellow Exchange Participants

- A few institutions specifically mention the importance of helping people going on the same exchange meet one another during the orientation process. Many other programs include small group time which groups the students

together with those going on the same exchange or to the same region. One orientation program provides a blank address sheet for the participants to fill in as they meet people at the orientation. Another lists this as a main goal for the orientation session.

Safety

A few universities specifically address safety issues in their orientation.

Parents

A few universities offer special sessions and/or materials for family and friends. One office provides the parents with the same materials it gives to the students.

Embassies

A few programs include information about the role of American/Canadian embassies abroad and list their addresses.

Ambassadors

For a few institutions, it is important to discuss the rights and responsibilities of participants as ambassadors of their school and of their country.

Approaches to Predeparture Orientation

Structure

Each program offers a different structure, including:

- mandatory courses lasting a semester
- mandatory two day sessions
- two mandatory evening sessions with an optional lunch hour presentation
- one optional evening session
- no orientation requirement for students attending branch campuses.

Activities

Activities include:

- large group presentations and discussion
- small group discussions by program or region
- Bafá Bafá with debriefing
- Barnga with debriefing

- videos ("Going International," "Cold Water," Canadian Orientation Video)
- ropes course

Materials

Materials distributed or used in orientation sessions include:

- orientation booklets
- checklists for financial aid, health, academic concerns, packing, self preparation
- tips from past participants
- list of important addresses and contacts
- personal information forms for International Office use
- calendar of events and deadlines
- information about specific program
- letter/packet for parents
- power of attorney form
- course approval form
- registration forms
- articles on backpacking, body language
- health brochure
- international calling brochure
- list of embassies
- independent study course proposal
- measurement conversions
- International Student Identity Card information and application
- State Department travel warning on drugs abroad
- fax to transmit to International Office upon arrival

Speak your Mind

This survey is part of a study being conducted by the International Centre at the University of Alberta in order to determine what is important in preparing to study abroad. The survey is designed to let you share your experiences about what you think is important for students preparing to study abroad. Your responses are confidential.

Please complete the survey and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by Friday July 14, 1995.

All questionnaires returned by Friday July 14, 1995 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

All questions relate to your experiences on a University of Alberta study abroad program. If you studied abroad more than once, please respond based on your first University of Alberta exchange. The rating scale is different for each question, so read the directions carefully. You may want to flip through old photographs or journals from your study abroad experience as a reminder - but then - don't forget to answer the questions!



University of Alberta
Student Services

Please return to:
PDOP Survey
International Centre
172 HUB International
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2E2 • 403-492-2692

Speak your Mind

I. Complete all questions with a check mark or write in the answer.

1. Are you female ☐ or male ☐?
2. In which country did you study abroad? _____
3. Were you 17 - 24 years old ☐ or 25 + years ☐ when you began your U of A study abroad program?
4. How long did you study abroad? _____ months
5. In what Faculty were you registered when you studied abroad?

6. Were you an undergraduate ☐ or a graduate ☐ when you studied abroad?
7. What was one of the most helpful things you learned or did in preparing to study abroad?

8. What is one thing you wish that you had learned or done in preparing to study abroad?

9. Did you participate in an orientation session before you left to study abroad? yes ☐ no ☐
 - a. If yes, what do you remember as being the most helpful part of the orientation for you?

 - b. If yes, what else do you wish had been included in the orientation?

Speak your Mind

II. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad? Place a check mark in the box according to the scale below.

II. Practical Arrangements

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. health concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. financial matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. telephone systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. local transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. what to pack (clothes, personal belongings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. work abroad opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. travel documents (passport and visas)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. extracurricular travel while abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

II. Academic Life Abroad

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. <u>home</u> university administrative procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. <u>host</u> university administrative procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. selecting courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. study patterns and teaching methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. guidance concerning academic program while abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

Speak your Mind

II. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad?

13. Self-Awareness

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. personal strengths and weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. personal concerns about going abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. communication with friends and family while abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. interaction with new people abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. personal reactions to positive and negative stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

14. Adjustment and Readjustment

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. what it is like to adjust to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. how to cope with adjusting to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. theories about adjusting to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. adjustment to life after study abroad (returning home)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. how to apply the abroad experience after it is over (on campus, in the community)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad). Place a check mark in the appropriate box.

15. National, Institutional or Regional Issues

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. climate				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. geography				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. political structures				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. literacy and basic education				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. arts and literature				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. environmental issues				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. history of international conflict				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. gender issues				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
n. religious and racial tolerance				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. human rights issues				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. current topics of national or regional interest				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. University of Alberta's teaching and research goals				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. University of Alberta's goals to become more international				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. the province's foreign trade initiatives				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. the province's goals for human resource development				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

Remember!
All questionnaires returned
by Friday, July 14 will be
entered in a draw to win a
dinner for two at the Earl's
Restaurant of your choice!

16. Cultural Issues

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. stereotypes about Canada				
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. nonverbal communication (gestures, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. religion(s)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. food				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
e. customs, rituals and superstitions				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. how to dress appropriately for culture and climate				
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. attitudes toward authority, class and status				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. attitudes toward work and study				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. attitudes toward personal relationships (family vs. acquaintances, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. value of the individual vs. the group (personal independence, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. business practices (negotiation, decision-making styles, etc.)				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. attitudes toward sex and dating				
in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. physical safety				
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. personal hygiene issues (showering, etc.)				
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. outlets for personal interests (hobbies and sports, etc.)				
in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

in Canada:

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

in host country:

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

Speak your Mind

IV. How helpful are the following resources in preparing to study overseas? Please circle the number of your response according to the scale below.

17. Helpfulness of Resources

	don't know	not helpful	somewhat helpful	very helpful
a. other students going to the same university or country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. written materials about the host country or region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. written materials about travel in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. written materials about the host university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. predeparture orientation meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. cultural simulation activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. people from the host university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. people who have visited the host country or region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. people who have studied abroad at the host university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. videos about the host country or region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. videos about the host university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. videos about travel in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. language tapes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. language instructors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐

All questionnaires returned by Friday, July 14 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

Speak your Mind

V. Rank the statements in order of importance.

18. Write "1" in the space beside the most important statement, "2" in the box beside the second most important, etc.

Study abroad should:

- enhance students' ability to compete in the global marketplace. ☐
- enhance the University's reputation abroad. ☐
- prepare students to cope with economic, social and political realities of an international society. ☐
- enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world. ☐
- promote world peace through personal friendships. ☐
- promote global cooperation and understanding. ☐
- give students tools to work for social justice. ☐
- help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries. ☐
- allow students to pursue their professional goals. ☐
- allow students to pursue their academic goals. ☐
- allow students to pursue their personal goals. ☐

VI. Summary

19. What else would you include in preparing to study abroad?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

20. What do you think is the most important part of preparing to study abroad?

21. Feel free to write any comments you have about the survey itself.

Thank you for sharing your experience with us.

Focus Group Questions

Components of Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad for the University of Alberta

1. Are you ready to go? Tomorrow?
What do you still have to do before you will be ready to go?
What are three key things that you feel you should know before you study abroad?
2. Thinking about the recent predeparture orientation program in which you participated, how beneficial was that program for you? What else should have been covered?
3. Before students go abroad to study, what do they need to know?
What do they need to be able to do?
What kind of attitudes should they have?
4. What is important in predeparture orientation programs for study abroad participants?



University of Alberta
Edmonton

International Centre

Canada T6G 2E2

172 HUB International, Telephone (403) 492-2692
Facsimile (403) 492-1134

You wouldn't write an exam without studying first, right?

You wouldn't go overseas to study without preparing, either. Predeparture training is pretty important. But how important is it? What should students know before they go overseas? What does it mean to be really ready to go? What's important in predeparture training?

You can help answer those questions. Right now there's a project which is looking at what's important in predeparture training. The project is looking to three major sources for information:

- study abroad participants such as yourself
- the institutions which offer the programs, and
- other professionals in the field.

The project is not an evaluation of a particular program. It's a broader look at how all three groups view predeparture training for study abroad.

So how can you help? You can volunteer to share your ideas and opinions in an interview later this month. Your involvement in the project is totally voluntary and won't affect your standing with the University, the International Centre, or the study abroad program. Your participation will be confidential and your anonymity will be respected. You will not be identified in any parts of the project report. To ensure confidentiality, all data will be kept in a secure place and will be available only to the researchers. The results of the project will be made available to the International Centre.

The design of this study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Alberta Department of Educational Policy Studies Ethics Review Committee.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please feel free to contact any of the following:

Michelle Szabo	Dept. of Educational Policy Studies	435-0277
Dr. Paula Brook	Dept. of Educational Policy Studies	492-7949
Barry Tonge	International Centre	492-5960

Sign Me Up!

The interviews take place at the International Centre on one of the following dates, depending on volunteer availability. **Volunteering does not commit you to the project.** If you are interested in volunteering and sharing your ideas, please rank your preference of the possible interview times below in order (1st, 2nd, and 3rd).

Friday, March 24 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. _____

Saturday, March 25 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. _____

Monday, March 26/27 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. _____

In each case, a light meal would be provided.

The interviews will take place in a group format of not more than twelve students. If more people volunteer than are needed, a random selection process will be used to identify those who will participate. All of you who volunteer will be contacted by phone to confirm arrangements.

Please check off:

_____ I can't make it for an interview.

_____ I 'd like to volunteer to be part of the group interview.

If you agree to volunteer for the interview, please complete the section below:

Name _____

Foreign institution at which you intend to study _____

Phone number (days) _____ (evenings) _____

Comments: _____

Student Agreement to Participate in Focus Group Interview

**Components of Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad
for the
University of Alberta**

The study of predeparture orientation components for study abroad for the University of Alberta and the focus group arrangements have been explained to me. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I have read the description, understand it, and voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I also understand that I have the right to opt out of this study at any time.

I hereby affirm that I will not communicate or in any manner disclose publicly information discussed during the course of this interview. I agree not to talk about material related to this study or interview with anyone outside of my fellow focus group members and the researcher.

Signature of Participant

Interview Schedule

[As the interviewer and subject are personally acquainted, the first 15 minutes are designated for general conversation not related to the topic. Before initiating the interview, the interviewer will go over the attached consent form.]

Introduction

When I phoned, I mentioned that I was interested in hearing from you what you personally think is important in a predeparture orientation program for people preparing to go abroad.
[not a question]

Essential questions

- Thinking about the predeparture programs you've been a part of or have heard about, what would you say were the most important components of those programs?

Probe
- Thinking about people you know who've gone abroad, what do you think people should know before they go overseas?

Probe
- Thinking about your own experiences going abroad, what kind of skills or abilities do you think people should have before they go abroad?

Probe
- What kinds of attitudes do you think people should have before they go abroad?

Probe
- Is there anything else you'd like to say about what you think is important in a predeparture program for people going overseas?

Probing questions to be used as needed

- Tell me more about _____.
- Can you describe for me what _____ would look like?
- When you say that _____ is an important component/attitude/skill, what kinds of things would you include in that?
- What do you mean by _____?
- Can you talk more about _____?

Interview Consent Form

Nature of the study

This interview is part of a study being conducted by a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. The goal of the study is to determine how best to prepare study abroad participants for their experience overseas. The study will look at the perceptions of student participants, program providers and other experts such as yourself. To verify the authenticity of the research/researcher, contact Dr. Paula Brook in Educational Policy Studies at the University.

Your participation

It is essential to the study that we hear from experts such as yourself what they perceive to be the most important components of predeparture orientation. Your input is important and your participation is appreciated. In fact, the researcher would be happy to share with you the executive summary and recommendations of the study once they are available. Just include your e-mail or office address below. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

The interview

During the interview, you will be asked a few questions about *your perception* of what is important in a predeparture orientation program. You will not be asked to describe specific programs already in existence. The focus will be on *your opinions*. The interview will be tape recorded and will last about 30 minutes.

Confidentiality

The contents of this interview will be strictly confidential. Your name will not appear on the transcript, in the study, or in any subsequent publications related to the study. Similarly, your agency/institutional affiliation will not be mentioned in conjunction with any information you might provide during the interview.

I hereby declare that I have read the above and agree to participate in the study as outlined above. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

e-mail or office address: _____



University of Alberta
Edmonton

International Centre

Canada T6G 2E2

172 HUB International, Telephone (403) 492-2692
Facsimile (403) 492-1134

Monday, 26 June 1995

Dear Friend,

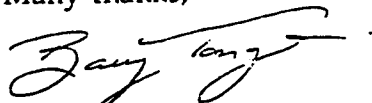
Greetings from the University of Alberta! As you know, the International Centre is constantly working to improve its programs and services for students. Our latest project is to rethink how we prepare students for study abroad. Who better to ask than the students themselves? After all, you're the experts – you've taken part in a University of Alberta study abroad program. You know what it's like to plan your trip, figure out how to get credit for the work you did, and convince your family and friends that you're not going to be gone forever (though it probably felt like forever sometimes). You know what helped you make the most of your study abroad experience, what you were glad you knew beforehand and what you wish you had known before you left. We would like to give you an opportunity to share what you have learned and to have an impact on the study abroad program for years to come.


The enclosed questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by the International Centre in order to redesign the predeparture orientation program for study abroad. We will be sharing the results with other institutions as well. Your responses will be anonymous and completely confidential.


As an added incentive, we will be holding a draw and giving away a gift certificate for a **DINNER FOR TWO AT ANY EARL'S RESTAURANT**. To enter the draw, just complete the questionnaire and return it to the International Centre by Friday, July 14. The winner will be notified by mail. We appreciate you returning the completed questionnaire as quickly as possible. We have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope to make it easier for you. If for some reason you do not receive this questionnaire until after July 14, please fill it out and return it as quickly as you can. We value your input.

It takes only 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire, so go ahead and fill it out right now. If you have any questions about the study or the questionnaire, or if you would like to see the results of the study once it is complete, feel free to contact us. We welcome your comments.

Many thanks,


Barry Tonge
Coordinator
Education Abroad Program


Dr. Paula Brook
Associate Professor
Adult and Higher Education


Michelle Szabo
Graduate Researcher

PDOP Survey Coding Directions

The results from the green questionnaires need to be entered into a special database (see disc under PDOP Questionnaire Data). The first 25 have already been done. Every question that can be coded numerically has been assigned a number from V1 to V150 (see ~~green~~ codebook). Each possible response is represented by a number. For example, V1 asks the person's gender, so there are four possible answers:

male = 1
 female = 2
 no response = 9 -9
 both male and female = 8 -9

The codebook explains what code to give for each possible response.

If there is no answer to a question, give it a 9. The exceptions are questions where 9 is a possible answer, as in "how many months did you study abroad?" In those cases, V4 and V140-V150, give no response a negative 9 (-9).

If a person marks down several answers and they're not supposed to, mark as follows:

~~1 + 2 gets a 5~~
~~1 + 3 gets a 6~~
~~1 + 4 gets a 7~~
~~2 + 3 gets an 8~~
~~2 + 4 gets a 10~~
~~3 + 4 gets an 11~~

-9

~~If anyone marks more than two, make a note of it and I'll figure something out.~~

For the countries people studied in and the faculties they were registered in, see the list in the codebook. If anyone comes up with one that's not listed, add it to the list and give it a number (not 9).

Survey information is confidential and should be put away when not in use.

Thanks!

Code book

Speak your Mind

This survey is part of a study being conducted by the International Centre at the University of Alberta in order to determine what is important in preparing to study abroad. The survey is designed to let you share your experiences about what you think is important for students preparing to study abroad. Your responses are confidential.

Please complete the survey and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by Friday July 14, 1995.

All questionnaires returned by Friday July 14, 1995 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

All questions relate to your experiences on a University of Alberta study abroad program. If you studied abroad more than once, please respond based on your first University of Alberta exchange. The rating scale is different for each question, so read the directions carefully. You may want to flip through old photographs or journals from your study abroad experience as a reminder - but then - don't forget to answer the questions!

Missing value: -9
Multiple responses: -9



University of Alberta
Student Services

Please return to:
PDOP Survey
International Centre
172 HUB International
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2E2 • 403-492-2692

speak your Mind

1. Complete all questions with a check ^v mark or write in the answer.
1. Are you female ¹ ☐ or male ² ☐?

Countries

1. England
2. Scotland
3. Wales
4. U.K.
5. Australia
6. U.S.A.
7. Mexico
8. Sweden
10. Austria
11. Korea
12. Japan

Faculties

1. Arts
2. Science
3. Business
4. Education
5. PE. + Rec.
6. Law
7. Ag/For/Home Ec.

2. In which country did you study abroad? _____

3. Were you 17 - 24 years old ¹ ☐ or 25 + years ² ☐ when you began your U of A study abroad program?

4. How long did you study abroad? _____ months indicate #

5. In what Faculty were you registered when you studied abroad?

6. Were you an undergraduate ¹ ☐ or a graduate ² ☐ when you studied abroad?

7. What was one of the most helpful things you learned or did in preparing to study abroad?

no column for this

8. What is one thing you wish that you had learned or done in preparing to study abroad?

no column for this

9. Did you participate in an orientation session before you left to study abroad? yes ☐ no ☐

a. If yes, what do you remember as being the most helpful part of the orientation for you?

no column for this

b. If yes, what else do you wish had been included in the orientation?

no column for this

speak your Mind

II. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad? Place a check mark in the box according to the scale below.

11. Practical Arrangements	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
V8 a. health concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V9 b. financial matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V10 c. telephone systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V11 d. local transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V12 e. what to pack (clothes, personal belongings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V13 f. work abroad opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V14 g. housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V15 h. insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V16 i. travel documents (passport and visas)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V17 j. extracurricular travel while abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

← most important ☐ V18 2nd most important ☐ V19 3rd most important ☐ V20

12. Academic Life Abroad	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
V21 a. <u>home</u> university administrative procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V22 b. <u>host</u> university administrative procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V23 c. selecting courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V24 d. getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V25 e. study patterns and teaching methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V26 f. guidance concerning academic program while abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

← most important ☐ V27 2nd most important ☐ V28 3rd most important ☐ V29

1 = a
2 = b
3 = c
4 = d
5 = e
6 = f
7 = g
8 = h

10 = i
11 = j

speak your Mind

II. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad?

13. Self-Awareness

	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
V30 a. personal strengths and weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V31 b. personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V32 c. personal concerns about going abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V33 d. communication with friends and family while abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V34 e. interaction with new people abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V35 f. personal reactions to positive and negative stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V36 2nd most important ☐ V37 3rd most important ☐ V38

14. Adjustment and Readjustment

	don't know 1	not important 2	somewhat important 3	very important 4
V39 a. what it is like to adjust to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V40 b. how to cope with adjusting to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V41 c. theories about adjusting to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V42 d. other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V43 e. adjustment to life after study abroad (returning home)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V44 f. how to apply the abroad experience after it is over (on campus, in the community)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V45 2nd most important ☐ V46 3rd most important ☐ V47

1 = a
2 = b
3 = c
4 = d
5 = e
6 = f

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad. Place a check mark in the appropriate box.

15. National, Institutional or Regional Issues	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
a. climate				
V48 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V49 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. geography				
V50 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V51 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)				
V52 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V53 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. political structures				
V54 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V55 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)				
V56 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V57 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)				
V58 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V59 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. literacy and basic education				
V60 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V61 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. arts and literature				
V62 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V63 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. environmental issues				
V64 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V65 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. history of international conflict				
V66 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V67 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)				
V68 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V69 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. gender issues				
V70 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V71 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities				
V72 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V73 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

1 a
2 b
3 c
4 d
5 e
6 f
7 g
8 h
9 i
10 j
11 k
12 l
13 m
14 n
15 o
16 p
17 q
18 r
19 s
20 t
21 u

Remember!
All questionnaires returned by Friday, July 14 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
n. religious and racial tolerance				
✓74 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓75 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. human rights issues				
✓76 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓77 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. current topics of national or regional interest				
✓78 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓79 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. University of Alberta's teaching and research goals				
✓80 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓81 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. University of Alberta's goals to become more international				
✓82 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓83 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. the province's foreign trade initiatives				
✓84 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓85 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. the province's goals for human resource development				
✓86 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓87 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ 2nd most important ☐ 3rd most important ☐
✓89 ✓89 ✓90

16. Cultural Issues	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
a. stereotypes				
✓91 about Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓92 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. nonverbal communication (gestures, etc.)				
✓93 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓94 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. religion(s)				
✓95 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓96 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. food				
✓97 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓98 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

1 a
2 b
3 c
4 d
5 e
6 f
7 g
8 h
9 i
10 j
11 k
12 l
13 m
14 n
15 o
16 o

	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
e. customs, rituals and superstitions				
V99 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V100 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. how to dress appropriately for culture and climate				
V101 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. attitudes toward authority, class and status				
V102 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V103 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. attitudes toward work and study				
V104 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V105 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. attitudes toward personal relationships (family vs. acquaintances, etc.)				
V106 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V107 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. value of the individual vs. the group (personal independence, etc.)				
V108 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V109 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. business practices (negotiation, decision-making styles, etc.)				
V110 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V111 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. attitudes toward sex and dating				
V112 in Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V113 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. physical safety				
V114 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. personal hygiene issues (showering, etc.)				
V115 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. outlets for personal interests (hobbies and sports, etc.)				
V116 in host country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

in Canada:

most important ☐ V117 2nd most important ☐ V118 3rd most important ☐ V119

in host country:

most important ☐ V120 2nd most important ☐ V121 3rd most important ☐ V122

Speak your Mind

IV. How helpful are the following resources in preparing to study overseas? Please circle the number of your response according to the scale below.

- 1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15

17. Helpfulness of Resources

	1 don't know	2 not helpful	3 somewhat helpful	4 very helpful
a. other students going to the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V123 same university or country				
V124 b. written materials about the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
host country or region				
V125 c. written materials about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
travel in general				
V126 d. written materials about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
the host university				
V127 e. predeparture orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
meetings				
V128 f. cultural simulation activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V129 g. people from the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
host university				
V130 h. people who have visited the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
host country or region				
V131 i. people who have studied	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
abroad at the host university				
V132 j. videos about the host	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
country or region				
V133 k. videos about the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
host university				
V134 l. videos about travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in general				
V135 m. language tapes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
V136 n. language instructors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V137 2nd most important ☐ V138 3rd most important ☐ V139

All questionnaires returned
by Friday, July 14 will be
entered in a draw to win a
dinner for two at the Earl's
Restaurant of your choice!

Speak your Mind

V. Rank the statements in order of importance.

Indicate actual number.

18. Write "1" in the space beside the most important statement, "2" in the box beside the second most important, etc.

Study abroad should:

- v140 enhance students' ability to compete in the global marketplace.
- v141 enhance the University's reputation abroad.
- v142 prepare students to cope with economic, social and political realities of an international society.
- v143 enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world.
- v144 promote world peace through personal friendships.
- v145 promote global cooperation and understanding.
- v146 give students tools to work for social justice.
- v147 help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries.
- v148 allow students to pursue their professional goals.
- v149 allow students to pursue their academic goals.
- v150 allow students to pursue their personal goals.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

VI. Summary

19. What else would you include in preparing to study abroad?

1. no column for this
2. _____
3. _____

20. What do you think is the most important part of preparing to study abroad?

- no column for this
- _____
- _____

21. Feel free to write any comments you have about the survey itself.

- no column for this
- _____
- _____

Thank you for sharing your experience with us.

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FOR QUESTION 21
(verbatim, in no particular order)

- Glad to see that you're trying to improve, it really needs it.
- I got it after the draw date!
- I'm glad you're trying to make an excellent exchange program.
- This is the second questionnaire I've done and the experience is no longer fresh in my mind. it may be better to survey recent students returning from study abroad.
- Section V - I only ranked those I felt were relevant to my experience - those I left blank I felt were not important to me.
- I hope this helps future students studying abroad.
- Very thorough!
- Don't make orientations too detailed or cumbersome.
- Good!
- Question 18 should have included: general personal enrichment through travel and living in a foreign country.
- Great--covered every aspect of studying abroad I could think of-- hope you get some useful responses!
- Ranking items is difficult when you have many items--TOO LONG! This exchange has been the best experience of my life thus far!
- I assumed parts III and IV are based on my past experience.
- Brings back good memories. I hope I was helpful.
- I think it's great that you're doing this. I would like to make a recommendation if I could. The best part of my exchange was figuring most of this out on my own. I do think people should prepare themselves to a degree, but the excitement lies in the realization of many of these issues while you're actually there. I think you should proceed with this as you are and keep the underlying message in line with the attempt to tell people that they don't need to study "everything" before they go. Ignorance can be embarrassing, but it also has its personal awards [sic] too. The self-realization is overwhelming and I think this needs to be preserved. If one tries too hard or over-study before he/she leaves, I think it dulls the experience. Thanx.
- A great idea although it is difficult to rate some of the categories.

- Both host and home universities need to organize the program better in order to help students more efficiently, especially when they first arrive. Hopefully this survey can help achieve this.
- I found that the way in which the survey was structured restricted my responses such that I'm not sure they truly reflect my opinion. Open-ended questions as this one would have been more appropriate.
- Needs a space for general comments! I have so much to say...
- There should be more room to write problems encountered during the exchange, so that these problems can be grouped and looked into.
- Thorough except it would be helpful to be able to qualify some of the answers. E.g., Question 17j--videos helpful only if they are careful to avoid stereotypes, and even if they are, it is impossible to fit the experience of a country on a tape.
- Should have been sent as soon as we got back.
- Good idea!!
- Well thought out. Good points to think about. I think it would be great if the exchangees received letters from the International Centre while abroad in the host country. Just one or two letters during the year to let them know what's going on at the U of A so that they don't feel so isolated. News of Canada or Alberta is seldom, if ever, available. I heard that this was done in the past, the letters, and I think it's a wonderful idea. Along the lines of the letter or support ideas, another suggestion is for future exchangees to meet with the ones from the previous year during the summer, before leaving (if possible). If not, then at the orientation. The past exchangees could give practical advice from a Canadian student/"been there" perspective. U of A exchangees could, if they chose, be on an int. mailing list to be circulated among the exchangees, or have a "buddy system" where tow exchangees in different countries swap addresses through the International Centre, to drop postcards to each other once in a while. There's nothing worse when abroad than an empty mailbox. Thanks.
- The ranking questions were difficult because there were too many options. If the survey is confidential or anonymous, how do you draw for the Earl's certificate: Just curious. I think I figured it out: by the wee # in a corner. Never mind! I am fortunate that U of A puts a lot of effort into the Study Abroad program. Some university exchange students that I spoke to had

little or no prior orientation. Thank you for taking your role as seriously as you do.

- Nice to have someone to reminisce with--someone who really understands.
- Questions 15 and 16 have too many subpoints and are too complex to process.
- The survey made me think and I thought that was not allowed in the summer.
- Some questions seemed irrelevant in relation to studying in Australia, however in a third world country or some Eastern European or Asian countries these concerns are of utmost importance.

Table 6
Reported Importance of Practical Components by Weighted Rating (Question 11)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Important</u>		<u>Very</u> <u>Important</u>		<u>Rank^b</u>	<u>Weighted</u> <u>Rating</u>
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	Financial matters	10	18	47	83	1	9.200
2	Housing	11	19	46	81	3	9.050
3	Travel documents	7	12	48	84	2	9.000
4	Health concerns	25	45	28	50	9	7.250
5	Insurance	28	51	25	46	4	7.150
6	What to pack	28	49	27	47	5	7.150
7	Extracurricular travel abroad	30	54	22	39	6	6.600
8	Work abroad opportunities	32	58	11	20	8	4.900
9	Telephone systems	40	73	5	9	10	4.550
10	Local transportation	32	57	8	14	7	4.250

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank

Table 7
Reported Importance of Academic Components by Weighted Rating (Question 12)

Rating^a	Variable	<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very</u>		<u>Rank^b</u>	<u>Weighted</u>
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	Getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	8	14	49	86	1	9.300
2	Host university administrative procedures	11	20	43	77	3	8.700
3	Home university administrative procedures	17	30	40	70	2	8.500
4	Selecting courses	25	44	27	47	5	6.900
5	Guidance concerning academic program while abroad	26	47	19	35	4	5.850
6	Study patterns and teaching methods	30	54	13	23	6	5.000

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank

Table 8
Reported Importance of Self-Awareness Components by Weighted Rating (Question 13)

<u>Rating^aVariable</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>		<u>Very Important</u>		<u>Rank^b</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1 Personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	16	29	38	68	1	8.220
2 Personal concerns about going abroad	15	27	37	67	4	8.095
3 Interaction with new people while abroad	24	42	31	54	2	7.545
4 Personal reactions to positive and negative stress	21	38	31	55	3	7.415
5 Personal strengths and weaknesses	31	60	15	29	5	5.860
6 Communication with friends and family while abroad	42	75	10	18	6	5.540

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank

Table 9
Reported Importance of Adjustment Components by Weighted Rating (Question 14)

<u>Rating^aVariable</u>		<u>Somewhat Important</u>		<u>Very Important</u>		<u>Rank^b</u>	<u>Weighted Rating</u>
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	How to cope with adjusting ^c	18	32	37	66	1	8.200
2	Other peoples' experiences adjusting ^c	19	33	37	65	2	8.150
3	What it is like to adjust ^c	22	39	33	59	5	7.850
4	How to apply experience after it's over	24	42	31	54	4	7.500
5	Adjustment to life after study abroad	18	32	32	57	3	7.300
6	Theories about adjusting ^c	35	64	4	7	6	3.900

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank

^cto a new culture

Table 10
Reported Importance of National, Institutional, and Regional Issues in Canada by Weighted Rating (Question 15)

Rating ^a	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%	
1	Current topics of national or regional interest	20	36	32	57	7.495
2	Geography	30	53	25	44	7.020
3	Political structures	30	53	23	40	6.670
4	Religious and racial tolerance	29	51	23	40	6.585
5	Human rights issues	31	55	21	38	6.520
6	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)	32	56	21	37	6.485
7	History of international conflict	29	51	22	39	6.405
8	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities	34	61	17	30	6.075
9	Environmental issues	27	51	18	33	5.815
10	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)	30	54	17	30	5.720
11	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)	34	61	15	27	5.715
12	Gender issues	36	63	14	25	5.620
13	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)	34	53	17	30	5.610
14	Literacy and basic education	35	64	11	20	5.176
15	Arts and literature	31	56	12	22	5.000
16	Climate	28	49	14	25	4.915
17	University of Alberta's goals to become more international	28	52	9	17	4.265
18	University of Alberta's teaching and research goals	27	52	5	10	3.555
19	The province's foreign trade initiatives	25	47	3	6	2.930
20	The province's goals for human resource development	19	37	3	6	2.455

^aBy weighted rating

Table 11
Reported Importance of National, Institutional, and Regional Issues in Host Country by Weighted Rating (Question 15)

Rating ^a	Variable	<u>Somewhat Important</u>		<u>Very Important</u>		Rank ^b	Weighted Rating
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	Religious and racial tolerance	16	28	40	70	3	8.425
2	Climate	19	33	38	67	2	8.335
3	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)	20	35	35	61	1	7.895
4	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities	24	43	30	54	12	7.505
5	Gender issues	23	40	31	54	9	7.460
6	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)	26	46	28	49	6	7.190
7	Current topics of national or regional interest	25	45	27	48	4	7.050
8	Human rights issues	25	45	27	48	7	7.050
9	Geography	36	63	20	35	8	6.670
10	History of international conflict	35	64	19	35	11	6.630
11	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)	33	58	19	33	10	6.225
12	Political structures	33	59	17	30	5	5.985
13	Environmental issues	27	49	18	33	14	5.725
14	Literacy and basic education	35	61	15	26	13	5.700
15	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)	34	60	13	23	16	5.260
16	Arts and literature	35	63	7	13	15	4.375

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank

The *ranking* of items in this section of the questionnaire was somewhat distorted in that the *ranking* questions did not ask respondents to differentiate between items with respect to Canada and with respect to the host country. In general, the overall ranking was more similar to the ratings for the host country, region, or institution than to the ratings for Canada, which suggests that respondents may have assumed the ranking question was only in regard to the host country. For this reason, Table 11 omits all mention of ranking and is sorted by weighted rating.

Table 12
Reported Importance of Cultural Issues in Canada by Weighted Rating (Question 16)

Rating^a	Variable	<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very</u>		Rank^b	Weighted Rating
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	Stereotypes	28	50	25	45	2	6.960
2	Attitudes toward work and study	31	55	19	34	3	6.160
3	Attitudes toward sex and dating	32	56	19	33	7	6.140
4	Attitudes toward personal relationships	35	63	15	27	5	5.805
5	Nonverbal communication	30	54	17	30	8	5.720
6	Customs, rituals and superstitions	38	69	12	22	1	5.635
7	Attitudes toward authority, class and status	32	57	15	27	4	5.535
8	Value of the individual vs. the group	30	55	14	26	6	5.275
9	Business practices	30	55	12	22	9	4.905
10	Religion(s)	36	63	6	11	10	4.210
11	Food	34	60	7	12	11	4.210

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank

Table 13
Reported Importance of Cultural Issues in Host Country by Weighted Rating (Question 16)

<u>Rating^a</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Important</u>		<u>Very</u> <u>Important</u>		<u>Rank^b</u>	<u>Weighted</u> <u>Rating</u>
		<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>		
1	How to dress appropriately for culture and climate	6	11	50	88	1	9.295
2	Physical safety	11	19	44	77	2	8.685
3	Attitudes toward authority, class and status	18	32	36	64	8	8.035
4	Nonverbal communication	20	36	34	61	4	7.855
5	Attitudes toward work and study	18	32	35	63	5	7.855
6	Attitudes toward sex and dating	23	40	33	58	10	7.810
7	Customs, rituals and superstitions	23	40	32	56	3	7.630
8	Attitudes toward personal relationships	21	38	31	55	12	7.415
9	Stereotypes	26	46	28	49	7	7.190
10	Value of the individual vs. the group	19	35	30	55	11	7.175
11	Personal hygiene issues	24	42	28	49	14	7.015
12	Outlets for personal interests (hobbies, sports, etc.)	27	47	26	46	6	6.930
13	Food	29	51	23	40	9	6.585
14	Religion(s)	30	53	20	35	15	6.140
15	Business practices	25	44	18	32	13	5.351

^aBy weighted rating

^bBy weighted rank