

# Designing Faculty-Led Study Abroad Programs with Internships to Enhance Interdisciplinary Curricula

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**Abstract:** Study abroad and for-credit internships are both high-impact educational practices. Yet even before the downturn in students studying abroad in the COVID-19 era, the Institute for International Education’s *Open Doors* reports indicated that in recent pre-pandemic years only about 7% of study abroad programs included for-credit internships, despite evidence that faculty-led international internship experiences present a transformational learning opportunity that offers insights into understanding complex issues on a more global scale. Expanding study abroad models to include international internship experience may be especially effective for introducing or expanding interdisciplinary learning and integrative thinking. Such programming should have a place in interdisciplinary curricula and program development. This article, based on the authors’ years of experience of leading over 350 students through 14 internship-based study abroad programs in five countries, highlights reasons why a faculty-led study abroad program with internships is valuable for students and assists faculty in envisioning the possibilities and overcoming the initial hesitations that might exist when considering mounting such an ambitious endeavor.

**Keywords:** curriculum development, experiential learning, integrative cross-cultural learning, interdisciplinary pedagogy, international education, internships, study abroad internships

Two decades ago, Klein (2002) pointed out that “International education has several interdisciplinary dimensions” (p. 203). More recently Carmichael (2018) ably explained how study abroad programs can enhance growth in student perspective-taking abilities as they explore both intellectual and physical spaces in stepping across the border from where they usually reside to appreciate different social and cultural perspectives. Carmichael laid out three effective interdisciplinary study abroad experiences in a range of different

kinds of courses in connection with the American College of Norway that serve as potential models for others. Similarly, at the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) 2020 conference, the AIS membership was again reminded of the importance of travel for students of interdisciplinarity (Cheas et al., 2020). These interdisciplinary scholars reminded the membership of some of the reasons studying abroad itself is considered by many to be a necessary part of a well-rounded education if not the *pièce de résistance*. Especially in regard to character-building development of life skills, study abroad offers something beyond the opportunities found in traditional classroom instruction and campus experiences. Dealing productively with the unfamiliarity and discomfort associated with being abroad can improve autonomy, cultural sensitivity, and flexibility, as well as personal and cultural openness (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Brindley et al., 2009; Knutson Miller & Gonzalez, 2016). These effects resonate with lists of the important traits and characteristics for an interdisciplinarian planning to pursue work in an increasingly complex and ever-globalizing world (Augsburg, 2016). Even if students never travel again or don't ultimately work in a country other than their own, they are still likely to interact with an increasing number of individuals with diverse perspectives (Murphy et al., 2014). Thus, the opportunity to broaden one's exposure as well as to learn about one's self from coping with the challenges associated with study abroad can help build a readiness for dealing with such future opportunities. While some authors conclude that the value of studying abroad is more on a personal development level, others note the value on a professional development level (van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2015).

Despite the many advantages (Hubbard et al., 2018), relatively few students get, or at least take, the opportunity to engage in study abroad. Dr. Allan E. Goodman, the president of the Institute for International Education (IIE), stated that "Studying abroad is one of the best ways to prepare to enter and succeed in the interconnected, globalized workforce, yet 90 percent of American college students do not study or intern outside of the United States" (IIE, 2016). To help increase the percentage of students who go abroad, organizations like the IIE and "NAFSA: Association of International Educators" have launched participation initiatives due to their firm belief that engaging abroad helps prepare "students for the competitive global environment into which they will graduate" (NAFSA, n.d.-a., para. 2) and develop "the cross-cultural skills necessary in the 21st century economy and a generation of leaders who can reach across borders" (NAFSA, n.d.-b., para 1). Even larger entities, who are not in the specific business of study abroad themselves, echo the concern and hope. For instance, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) values global competency so highly they set an objective of increasing that competency in *all* U.S. students by offering a framework to start building such from early childhood through postsecondary education, emphasizing that,

Today, more than ever, our students need to be equipped with the critical thinking, communications, socio-emotional and language skills to work collaboratively with their counterparts in the United States and all over the world. Understanding and appreciating other parts of the world, different religions, cultures, and points of view are essential elements of global and cultural competence. (USDE, n.d., para. 1)

The need is great—and perhaps greatest among students who intend to pursue work as interdisciplinarians who, inspired by their major education, may be more inclined to go boldly into more challenging positions. Thus, it is worth considering if one’s interdisciplinary program facilitates some form of global and cultural education, if not an actual study abroad program. Further, as noted above in comments about the “globalized workforce” and 21st century economy, it is worth considering introducing a component beyond studying abroad by including an internship as a learning activity in which students “are confronted with new perspectives and are challenged to integrate insights from divergent perspectives” (Newell, 2010, para. 4).

### The Appeal of Adding the Internship Component to Study Abroad

Since relatively few students pursue the opportunity to study abroad—in 2018–2019 only 347,099 US students and only 1,095,299 non-US students (IIE, n.d.)—despite the learning value of doing so, including an internship might encourage still more students to take the time and pay the fees associated with such rich experiences. Internships *alone* (before adding the value of “international”) are viewed by employers as the most effective way for college students to gain transferable work skills, even more effectively than senior projects or portfolios (Hart Research Associates, 2008, 2013, 2015; Schneider, 2015). The Association of American Colleges and Universities concurs, reporting that employers are more likely to consider hiring recent graduates if they have had applied experience in college, and internships top the list of such desired experiences (Finley, 2021). Newell (1999, 2010) argues that adding in the international component to a student’s education can offer insights into understanding complex issues on a more global scale. Other researchers have noted that “internship/field placement experience for academic credit while studying abroad has a significant impact on students’ career development” (Dwyer, 2004, p.18), enhancing their “intercultural skills, curiosity, flexibility and adaptability, confidence, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, communication, problem solving, language, tolerance for ambiguity, and course or major-related knowledge” as well as their work ethic, teamwork, and leadership (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017, p. 5). Thus, evidence continues to mount confirming Dwyer and Peters’ (2004) conclusion that “for students who hope

to gain the most career impact from study abroad, results indicate that they should choose an internship as part of their curriculum” (p. 57). Understandably, employers report preferring to hire those who have studied abroad in a program *with* an internship or service-learning component (Trooboff et al., 2008; van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2015) even while, as one might expect, there is “significant variability across countries” in how much an employer considers international internship experience when making hiring decisions (Van Mol, 2017).

It seems, then, that it is indeed worth considering if one’s interdisciplinary studies program might see fit to offer a for-credit internship abroad enhanced by thoughtful coursework designed by the faculty who undertake leading the program. Combining the benefits of the high-impact experience of study abroad with the high-impact experience of an internship can offer more “bang for the buck.” While motivated students can arrange for their own internships abroad, the enhancements offered in a “faculty-led” program add value because without explicit guidance students often observe at a surface-level (van den Hoven & Walenkamp, 2015). Yet mounting a faculty-led study abroad program with internships is a time-consuming, multi-faceted endeavor that in itself is an interdisciplinary-style challenge for the faculty member who seeks to create it. This article offers some insights on how one might do it and expands on why it is of value to the interdisciplinary student.

## Integrating Two High-Impact Learning Opportunities

Given the value of study abroad alone and the value of internships alone, it follows that an optimal learning experience combines the two high-impact practices. Experienced scholars have explained well that mounting any study abroad program comes with challenges in program barriers, development, marketing, and recruiting (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Salisbury et al., 2009; Tillman, 2010a; Vernon et al., 2017; Wanger et al., 2020). And, understandably, designing such a program *with internships* adds additional layers of organizational, governmental, and cultural issues for consideration. It can be hard to know where to begin and what tips to use, which might explain why the majority of study abroad programs led by faculty include only *study*—one or more classes associated with traveling through one or more countries—but do *not* include for-credit non-scholastic *work* abroad. For instance, the number of U.S. Study abroad programs that included a for-credit internship has generally hovered around 7% pre-pandemic (Chow & Bhandari, 2009; Farrugia & Bhandari, 2014). International “service learning” is also an experiential learning opportunity that might, for example, involve the students collaborating on a project to help in a specific underserved group, perhaps a village in a developing nation, wherein the learning goals

could include enhancing civic-mindedness, increasing awareness of social justice issues, and of how one can use one's privilege to be an ally (Crabtree, 2013).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, this article offers insights into incorporating *traditional internships* in a range of work places and organizations sought out explicitly for the students' interests to optimize the multi-faceted integrative learning activity for the students while reducing uncertainty and stress for the faculty member. The considerations offered are based on the authors' experiences at Arizona State University in the U.S. and abroad. For example, they have stewarded students on study abroad programs *without* internships and have taught courses connected with internships *without* the study abroad component—both experiences offering a point of comparison in contrast to faculty-led *study abroad programs with internships*, in which their combined experience amounts to leading over 350 students from their university's interdisciplinary studies unit through 14 internship-based study abroad programs in five countries (England, Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic, and New Zealand). Again, this experience has been with non-service-learning internships—although some aspect of “service” might exist in the mission or culture of some of the organizations—and students are placed in a variety of workplaces ranging from, for example, prestigious and politics-related placements (like the British Parliament) to artsy or tech-savvy progressive start-ups to large corporations to small publishing houses to noteworthy museums to social justice organizations and so on. While faculty goals, student majors with whom one might work, and institutional contexts will vary, our hope is that this article will inspire other interdisciplinarians to mount such programs for the benefit of their students, and, as an added benefit of doing so, it may add challenge and texture to one's own career.

## The Value to Students and Ideas on Coursework

A key benefit to students of combining an internship and study abroad is that a committed professional is arranging a more or less tailored experience in a way that the student likely cannot, or will not, do themselves. Whether the faculty leading the program work with personal contacts or with a service provider (discussed below) to set up the internships, people will have spent some time thinking about each student's major (and minors and certificates), as well as their other skills and interests, in an effort to find them an internship that is a reasonably good fit while managing their expectations (which sometimes can be grandiose). Seeing through a student's eyes in the following scenario—featuring a real student's major, areas, and placement—helps demonstrate

1 Crabtree (2008) and many others offer considerations regarding how to integrate service learning into study abroad programs (Daly et al., 2013; Wessel, 2007; Lupi et al., 2012).

the practical value of completing a study abroad with internship and echoes what students routinely share.

Imagine you are an Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) major with your two “concentration areas” in International Political Science and Geography, in addition to a series of core IDS classes. You know you’d like to integrate those areas in your way of seeing the world and hopefully in a job when you graduate. You are still wrapping your head around your disciplines/areas and the concepts of interdisciplinarity. You sometimes struggle when trying to describe your major to your family and friends and worry it might be harder to convey it to potential employers too. You love the idea of “being interdisciplinary,” and you’ve enjoyed some academic learning and projects around it, but you know you’d benefit from some out-of-class experience that would allow you to watch for interdisciplinarity in action both for your own good and to help you speak more fluently about the approach and skills you can bring to a project or organization.

Then your professor tells you about an opportunity where you can study abroad at the same time you work at an internship—two things you’ve always wanted to do anyway, but hadn’t yet imagined doing them together! You are happy to hear that the people finding the internships will do their best to find something that would allow you to see, or apply, your two concentration areas in the workplace. You are excited about this integrated experience and feel a sense of relief that it’ll be the next step in your meaningful educational journey.

You apply, go through the interview process with the professor and then someone overseas, and the internship placement is in a fairtrade non-profit that works with licensing the use of the “fairtrade” mark on products in accordance with international standards. You are thrilled! You aren’t sure exactly what you’ll be doing when you get there but you know you’ll learn some worthwhile skills and make some connections at the internship site, and you know the required classes will help you connect what you are learning in your degree at the site and to being abroad.

You are also relieved that you will have international work experience and skills to add to your resume. Because of that practical boost for employability, you think that your family will finally agree to help with the expenses of the trip—something they were hesitant to do for study abroad alone. In fact, you’ll maybe even start your own crowd-funding page to help pay the program fee and ask relatives to route holiday gift money to this.

Now imagine that scenario with student after student whose interdisciplinary interests naturally vary. For example, here’s a small selection of students’ concentration areas and their internship placements:

- Mass Communication and History, The National Archives of the host country
- Mass Communication and History, social history museum
- Tourism and Business, specialty holiday and festival travel provider

- Sociology and Education, 150-year-old college preparatory academy for young women
- International Business and Design, design firm for large commercial hotels and luxury domestic interiors
- Kinesiology and Business, rapidly expanding Pilates company
- Family Studies & Human Development and Business, charity that works with children, teens, and families living with AIDS
- International Business and Art History, art gallery that handles local and international emerging and mid-career artists
- Family Studies & Human Development and English, publishing house whose imprints include one for children's books
- Organizational Studies (in our institution, this is an IDS meta-area that incorporates several disciplines), law firm

Many other examples exist with a variety of combinations of areas, as well as for students outside the IDS program, with placements distributed across the “workplace map,” including, but not limited to, almost any sort of legal business one can imagine. These include, for instance, fashion, hospitality, marketing, sports-related organizations, real estate, retail, journalism, psychology, technology, event planning, arts and culture, sciences and engineering, and various non-profits relating to a wide array of disciplines or interdisciplinary interests. Each placement, for any major or IDS student, is sought with a specific person in mind and adds value to the students beyond developing the intercultural competencies and other transferable “soft” skills—skills that enhance interacting effectively with others—that are present in all of the placements. The examples provided also hopefully help readers imagine the possibilities for the students with whom they now work. Even if someone does not work exclusively with IDS students, or does work exclusively with *non*-IDS students yet prefers to take an interdisciplinary approach to their teaching, it is possible to find experiences for students of all sorts, especially in large cities with international populations. It is hard to imagine a student who wouldn't benefit from someone doing their best to find an internship that suits their professional goals while also factoring in academic background, knowledge, skills, competency with the language (when relevant), and overall work experience.

Despite the effort to find something on-point for each student, it is prudent to remind students not to jump to conclusions based on first impressions of the internship. Keeping an open-mind and having realistic expectations helps increase satisfaction while abroad, as it would with any internship placement. While bullet points for resumes and credits earned do matter, an emphasis by the faculty members on how living and working abroad provides an unparalleled opportunity for intercultural immersion is helpful. Regardless of the details of the specific internship, the deep and broad experiential

learning provides valuable personal and professional contemporary workplace skills like flexibility, intercultural collaboration and communication, assertiveness, adaptability, and personal leadership to name just a few.

Coursework can highlight or build on the challenging personal and professional development that automatically exists for a student who must simultaneously integrate the novelty of study abroad and the novelty of an internship. We emphasize that by the phrase “*faculty-led* study abroad programs with internships” we mean the students are engaged in thoughtfully designed coursework to accompany the experience, rather than the students simply earning credit for time on task at the internship site. While ambitious students might manage to arrange an internship abroad for themselves and garner value, learning is enhanced with dedicated faculty guiding them through purpose-built curricula. Indeed, Vande Berg and Paige (2009) point out that U.S. students abroad “clearly benefit when their learning is facilitated” (p. 432) versus the students being left on their own or with a “non-interventionist” study abroad paradigm (p. 433). What each reader sees as germane to incorporate for interdisciplinarity is largely dependent on the particular student population on which they focus or how broad a net they must cast when filling the program seats. *Issues* readers can imagine utilizing any of the interdisciplinary pedagogical theories or techniques they personally favor, and must select on their own what approaches work best with their students, class offerings, and location, to help the students synthesize and integrate in a way they most likely wouldn’t otherwise. Still, a few ideas are offered here to prime the pump (see also Klein, 2002; Hughes et al., 2015; Carmichael, 2018; MacDonald, 2020).

If recruitment can be limited only to IDS majors, one might presume such students would have had at least one IDS course wherein they were taught definitions of disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, integration, etc., as well as possibly introduced to specific “methods” of engaging in interdisciplinary work. If so, the study abroad with internship program could offer an elective or a subsequent required course in the IDS major sequence, perhaps with adaptations to capitalize on the location or internships. If the IDS students haven’t had at least an introductory IDS course, then the program could offer the first required course in the IDS major sequence. If the group is comprised of more advanced interdisciplinary students, then using any number of respected resources like Repko and Szostak’s (2021) textbook *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* is possible. Even a single good article (e.g., Arvidson, 2014, among many others) can serve as a base for developing a meaningful assignment or sequence of assignments or as a guide when considering one’s pedagogical techniques (e.g., McCormack, 2005). Also, just as the internships are unique to each student, all or part of the course(s) can be tailored. That is, semi- or fully-individualized instructional tracks are a possibility that can be a draw and benefit to students. “Semi-individualized” here means creating a



few different sets of assignment tracks to assign to students, or from which the students select, that require exploring different aspects of a topic or location. Or the tracks can be on the same topic but challenge students at different levels. If, for instance, rising sophomores are in the same program with rising or graduating seniors, the track for more advanced students can challenge them at the higher levels of Bloom's cognitive taxonomy (e.g., analyze, evaluate, and create) while allowing beginning students to start at the lower levels (e.g., remember, understand, and apply) and work their way up (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Fully-individualized tracks are possible if the cohort size is tractable, as here the teacher meets with each student to draw up a series of assignments customized to their career interests, their IDS interests, and/or to their concentration areas, if some sort of emphases are required to declare IDS as a major. These fully-individualized tracks can be incorporated as a single thread in an otherwise typical course where students also do the exact same assignments. Or, if the work is substantial enough to warrant it, the track can be a substitute for the standard group course, meaning each student does their own "stand alone" work only, without doing assignments that are assigned to a whole class *en masse*. In any case, it is always worth having class meetings to share learning as regular meetings with peers and faculty are important to the group dynamics, the overall experience, and as a time to check-in with students to be sure they are doing well. Finally, assuming the program and budget is designed such that two faculty members go abroad, exploring team-teaching is another way to potentially incorporate cross-disciplinarity or interdisciplinarity-in-action. Even if only one faculty member goes abroad, team teaching some unit(s) might be possible with host-country faculty colleagues or guest-speaker arrangements with experts from museums or other relevant sources.

If an IDS major is not available at an institution, or if all of the students are recruited from only one or two non-IDS majors, then the faculty member might design a course that builds upon a specific disciplinary perspective; it certainly is common to see courses associated with study abroad programs that focus on one area, like the literature, economy, culture, or politics of the region. Thoughtful selection of texts in such courses can incorporate general interdisciplinarity as demonstrated by collections of readings that focus on great interdisciplinary ideas and thinkers (Vesterman, 2008). And any disciplinary course can introduce interdisciplinary concepts or methods, even if the "interdisciplinarity" is limited to considering the insights from subfields within that discipline or boundary disciplines that might be relevant to the complex issue, to allow students to better define problems or opportunities. Better yet, and especially if the program is open to *all* majors in the college or university—which might include students from the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities, and the applied professions—offering an "introduction to interdisciplinarity" course is a possibility. Doing so can allow the

diverse students to view their own major in a fresh light and learn from other participants' majors through the readings, assignments, and discussions. One could also assign students to work together on one or more projects or case studies selected to suit the composition of the class, related to the location and one or more of the internships.

Regardless of the background of the students, research methods—whether as an assignment, unit, or entire course—can work well when thinking about curriculum. Such coursework can focus on details and methods that allow one to go deeper into a single field or one can highlight insights and skills that build breadth and facilitate cross-disciplinary exploration. While using Repko and Szostak's (2021) interdisciplinary research text might be too advanced for most study abroad cohorts, the decision of what resource to use must wait until one is clear on the student constituency. Other options for using research skills as a foundation include focusing on place-based learning (Montgomery, 2020) and less formally introducing sociocultural research, both of which can still draw on or highlight disciplines. Developing research questions and learning about different approaches to research—and possibly even piloting one or more qualitative and/or quantitative methods (e.g., observation, content analysis, interviews, surveys, etc.)—introduce skills that can serve students aiming for any academic field or profession. Helping students think of their internships as a kind of “working laboratory” to collect information can be a powerful addition to program curriculum. In fact, if there are students whose major requires an honors thesis or capstone project—and if the students alert the program faculty sufficiently in advance to sort out the proper permissions and lay necessary foundations—it can be possible to include such work as an individualized add-on for them.

Aside from disciplinary or interdisciplinary course content, a productive re-entry to the home country is predicated on building in some reflection along the way and/or at least at the end, allowing a pause to process the overall experience (Malleus & Micari, 2018). Additionally, given the inclusion of internships, students benefit from explicit career development-related assignments and these often are incorporated in the internship-related class. Even if one's courses do not allow for much time for such professional development topics, at least faculty can make sure that students are made aware of career development resources like those available through the American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) (Tillman, 2010b, 2014) to aid them in thinking through how to glean the most from their international internship experience and ways to present the knowledge and abilities in resumes and interviews.

In the end, as with any teaching endeavor, there is much to consider regarding global education, study abroad, and curriculum (Gordon, 2014; Long, 2013; West, 2012) that is outside the scope of this article. Here, though, consider that there is a fine line between “too little” and “too much” in regard

to course workload. A well-designed, jam-packed curriculum can dramatically enhance student learning throughout the program, but students are working at least part-time (and in some cases nearly full-time), and they need some personal time to explore their new environment or just to process living in a new place and perhaps having a job for the first time. In seeking the right balance, the oft-quoted “less is more” has merit while abroad, and that can be achieved without sacrificing too much content if some assignments are completed before leaving the home country and/or certain assignments are planned to be finished in some specific timeframe after the program ends.

Given the possibilities just discussed, clearly there is no single “right” way to incorporate interdisciplinary thinking into one or more classes offered in a study abroad program with internships. Similarly, there is no one-size-fits-all configuration of the overall program. Still, to help envision possibilities and begin to address practical matters in mounting a program, here are a few examples of program configurations.

An 8-week program to London, England with a 7-week internship with a three-day per week (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) internship, with students recruited only from IDS majors who all take 6 upper-division credits (based on a semester system) in Applied Studies (the internship-related course) and a “special topics” Senior Seminar designed specifically for the trip, for example “London as Text” drawing on multiple disciplines. In this case, the Senior Seminar can be offered as an all-day in-person Monday course (which offers sufficient time to incorporate field trips), and the Applied Studies class offered as a hybrid course (part asynchronous online and part in-person) or completely online, leaving Fridays for exploration or long-weekend trips led by the faculty (when attendance is required) or for students to arrange on their own.

A 9-week program to Dublin, Ireland with an 8-week, four-day per week internship, with students recruited from all majors who take 3 or 6 upper-division credits. For instance, an IDS student would take “Applied Studies” (the internship-related class) and “Interdisciplinary Inquiry” as major requirements while a non-IDS major can count both courses as electives, or perhaps cross-listing could be arranged in advance for certain majors, like fulfilling a major requirement for a “Global Studies” student to complete an international internship. The classes can be offered in-person at night, or one of the classes could be a hybrid course or completely online. (We do recommend at least one required class be in-person to optimize learning opportunities, comradery, and as a way to check-in with students who might be experiencing culture shock, etc.).

A semester-long program to Wellington, New Zealand where, in addition to internships of greater length, the students are recruited from multiple majors, including IDS, who take the classes needed to complete all the credits necessary for a certificate, like in Organizational Leadership.

A 7-week program to Prague, Czech Republic. The first week is cultural orientation, internship orientation, activities, and course introductions, followed by a 6-week English-speaking internship that is typically Monday through Thursday, allowing for Friday faculty-led day-trips or 3-day weekends for the students to explore on their own. Classes can be held on weeknights, how many per week depending on what, if any, portion of one or more courses are started online in the home country or continue in part online in the host country.

An 8-week program to Florence and Milan, Italy. The first two weeks in home-stays with Italian families in Florence for initial cultural immersion with learning in the history, politics, and economics of the area plus some conversational Italian, supplemented with site-seeing and field trips to innovative local businesses. Then re-settle the cohort in Milan for the English-speaking 6-week internships with the students staying in modern student housing (with 24-hour security, a gym, and café). As in all the examples, two upper-division classes are generally required, one always being the internship/applied studies class (for elective or major requirements) and a special topics course (or in some cases an “inquiry” or “research methods” course, or whatever is in keeping with what would benefit the kind of students on the trip, faculty expertise, etc.).

The last two of the five examples raise the topic of language skills, which some might assume is an obstacle to mounting a faculty-led study abroad program with internships. While few would deny the benefits of learning another language, experts disagree on how necessary a language fluency requirement is to a successful study abroad experience (Savicki, 2011), unless one’s objectives specifically include language learning (see also Savicki et al., 2013). But traveling through an area is different than living and working there for several weeks as is required in an internship program. It is possible to arrange for English-speaking internships in cosmopolitan cities because so many organizations in such cities are multi-lingual. On balance, it is good practice to challenge students to learn some basic phrases to show respect for the people they will meet. Even if the organizations that accept interns might prefer the interns be conversational or fluent in a host-country language, that does *not* mean the faculty members on the program need to be, however counterintuitive that might seem. Especially when working with local partners who are bi- or multi-lingual who serve as, or provide, translators, faculty fluency is not necessary. Any faculty member will likely learn as much or more of the language as a tourist to the area, and that generally is sufficient, though learning some additional phrases that might help in regard to safety on excursions can be wise. Language translations “apps” and devices also provide a safety net.

## Commencing Program Design

Once convinced of the merits of mounting a program, the hard work begins and extends well beyond putting one's personal interdisciplinary stamp on the courses. The work falls loosely into three categories: planning, pre-departure implementation, and post-departure implementation, as laid out in the following sections.

### *Planning*

Planning involves collecting information on the initial ideas and then refining the program design until final decisions are made and detailed time-lines and different budget models are produced. With those in hand, one can seek the approval of the appropriate authority at one's institution, if any. Most of this work is done by the faculty member who pulls everything together, often called the "director." The planning process might appear linear but it is also recursive, as one change in a puzzle piece can shift all of the others. The myriad variables to consider can be loosely organized into categories, as in the Appendix, but in practice they overlap. The considerations include learning and curricular goals, institutional policies, location opportunities and logistics, as well as health and safety concerns. After forming some initial ideas, it is wise to talk with faculty experienced with study abroad in one's academic department, if any, to learn from their successes and failures, and it is reasonable to chat with potential collaborators. Those are good places to start but are rarely enough. This section discusses how planning relates to potentially working with an international service provider and an institutional Study Abroad Office, as well as highlights some budgetary matters including faculty expenses.

### *Service Provider Considerations*

Even if one is very familiar with a country and has many personal or professional contacts, partnering with an international service provider can be much more efficient since they are generally capable of arranging for all that is needed, including the internships, student and faculty housing, classrooms, transportation, field trips, emergency support protocols, and more. Selecting a good partner is a crucial decision as running an effective internship-based program requires different services and oversight compared to a standard study abroad program. Some of the larger names in the field as of this writing include American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS), Council of International Educational Exchange (CIEE), EUSA (focusing on European-US programs),

TEAN (The Education Abroad Network), and others. Some providers may have very little experience partnering with faculty. That fact creates both opportunities and potential pitfalls for program success. Once introduced to the idea of a “faculty directed” model of study abroad, these organizations may embrace it because collaborating with faculty offers them a marketing advantage resulting in more students for them to serve.

When contacting potential service providers based on the location(s) one is considering for the program, ask questions that elucidate the quality and reliability of the company itself and other questions that explore the likelihood of placements being available in the fields that the students are likely to want. Request a list of organizations with which they have placed students, yet it is not necessarily a bad sign if they decline to provide it, as they might keep it confidential to deter circumvention of their services. Either way, ask for references of other faculty or universities with whom they have worked, and follow up. Questions to ask include:

- How long has the service provider been in this country?
- What services do they offer?
- How many people regularly staff the local office?
- How many interns do they host in that country annually?
- How long have they been placing students in internships?
- Is that number growing or shrinking?
- How do they assess the quality of the internship experience?
- Are the internships paid or unpaid? (They are generally unpaid due to visa restrictions.)
- Do they have experience with other faculty-led programs?
- What sort of pre-departure and on-site training do they provide interns?
- In what industries have they successfully placed students? (For instance, marketing and advertising, healthcare, education, research, technology and data analytics, etc.)
- With what industries are they working on developing relationships and placements?
- What are the biggest challenges for interns?
- What are the application processes, the placement processes, and timelines?
- What is their contingency plan if a student isn’t “happy” with the initial placement?
- What is their policy if an intern is “fired?”

If possible, actually visiting the offices of the provider in the host country to meet the people and visit some clients or worksites is desirable. Some universities will fund faculty to go on “scouting trips” to sort out the best resources to plan a program, while some faculty do so while visiting a region for personal reasons. If neither is possible, then laying the groundwork and exploring the provider’s ability to meet your needs, or their willingness to build the capacity

to do so, can also be accomplished through thoughtful questions asked via email, phone, and online meeting platforms and virtual tours of facilities.

What providers charge for support varies significantly depending on a number of variables, including geographic location, number of students participating, program duration, and types of services required. In general, if one is planning to work with an organization that will organize housing, student internships, internship and location orientations, and other basic on-the-ground support initiatives, one would expect that more than half of the program fee that students pay to participate in the program will go to the provider for these services. Once the services are determined, the provider will supply a proposal broken down by program parameters and the fee per student. When requesting a provider proposal, confirm that they break out the fixed costs as well as the variable costs to get a better sense of how varying the number of students recruited will affect the program fee per student. Negotiating fees may not be possible, so if one needs to get the costs down it usually means recruiting more students or changing some of the options like excursions or other add-ons.

### *Study Abroad or Global Learning Office*

After having done at least some initial provider research, and having done enough homework to be able to offer a brief description of the kind of program one hopes to offer, it is a good time to explore what institutional gatekeepers exist. A “Global Learning Office” or “Global Education Office,” or “Study Abroad Office” (SAO) might exist depending on the size of one’s institution and how much emphasis is put on study abroad. (If there is no such office, explore if there is anyone on campus charged with approving study abroad programs.) The primary reason SAOs exist is to preventively manage safety for the students and faculty abroad. They help minimize risk and limit liability concerns through seminars for program directors and support faculty, by arranging for insurance of different kinds for participants, and by coordinating home-country response to host-country emergencies when needed (like helping to calm parents during subway bombings or helping to arrange for evacuation of all program participants during the initial height of the pandemic). A larger office might offer other services, like collecting the program fees from students and/or being involved in the applicant approval process, initially screening for minimum grade point average and class standing and checking off that students have read certain policies or waivers. In all these ways, SAO assistance is valuable and explains why these offices usually have a sample budget sheet prepared that shows the overhead costs program directors are expected to add to help pay for the SAO’s existence. If such a sheet exists, requesting it as part of the early planning steps is helpful.

Beyond the safety and application processing assistance, SAOs might be a source of information or advice that, frankly, can be either a help or a hurdle depending on their approach, and in regard to their budget opinions and any required add-ons (discussed shortly). For example, eager to help, an SAO staff member might deem a program is “too expensive” and suggest any number of cuts that might not be worth the cost-savings and might make the program undesirable for faculty or students to continue considering. For instance, a less experienced SAO person might suggest that faculty stay in hostels or in the same apartment building with students, which tends to make everyone involved unhappy. Or they might suggest using public transportation to move a group across the city or countryside for a field trip, when hiring private transportation is typically more reliable, more efficient, ensures all students can be kept together, and is safer, especially given how often certain countries experience worker strikes or infrastructure challenges. Unlike shorter-term programs where the students travel from city to city every few days wherein most can endure any hotel or hostel with grace, programs *with internships* stay in one place for weeks or months. Thus, housing decisions matter more and it is harder to assuage dissatisfaction. Satisfactory housing for students and the added cost for better separate housing for faculty and private transportation for the group is truly worth the relatively small increases in per-student fee that occur once the costs are divided amongst participants. Sometimes a staff member suggests cutting a field trip that the faculty member believes to be important for pedagogical reasons. It is up to the instructor to decide if this is acceptable. In the end, the faculty member must decide if it is worth the risk of putting in substantial effort to plan a program that might cancel due to lack of enrollment because perhaps the program is either too expensive or under-featured.

If the home institution doesn't have such an SAO—if one is truly a study abroad pioneer in one's institution or aiming to mount a program “alone”—then it is even more important to read the scholarship on study abroad and to seek out who, if anyone, is involved in approving such programs at the institution. Use available resources for current information from organizations that are invested in promoting successful education abroad programs, such as the Forum on Education Abroad and the Institute of International Education. Balance these resources by consulting older, but still useful, sources such as Heitmann (2007).

### *Creating a Budget*

While service provider costs and SAO overhead have been briefly discussed, budgets for faculty-directed study abroad programs generally share a number of other common elements, that are worth mentioning briefly.



*Add-Ons.* Many times, in addition to scheduling the internships during weekdays, faculty will want to take advantage of the location to plan specific cultural tours or site-visits to key local organizations that might connect to class work or the students' majors, or to plan field trips to the countryside or areas of natural beauty to balance out the time in the city. While some of these might be possible and appropriate as part of normally scheduled class time if the locations are in the city, many occur on Fridays or long weekends and typically the students know about them before departing for the host country so that they don't double-book the weekend(s) for the required excursion. While these excursions can be arranged independently of the primary service provider, it often makes sense to work with the provider for reliability as they have on-going relationships with vendors that might also result in better options or pricing. Generally, student program fees on long-format internship-based programs do *not* include airfare, meals, or other student-specific travel and entertainment beyond any required receptions and group excursions, or other specifically-planned student experiences.

*Faculty Expenses.* With respect to faculty members who will accompany students on the program, the following items are typically included in the budget: faculty compensation, faculty housing, *per diem*, faculty airfare and other travel-related expenses, local transportation, phone-related costs, the cost of shipping materials back and forth, and purchasing other local supplies that may be needed on-site. Just as planning and implementing a program involves hard work, so does accompanying the students—it is not a vacation and often involves being on-call 24 hours a day. An institution rightly acknowledges that added work, and the value it brings to the students, by finding a way to pay the faculty from the tuition associated with the program or from other institutional funds. Arrangements can shift over time but, ideally, the faculty member's wage is a fixed percentage of the faculty member's non-summer salary regardless of program size or class sizes. While some funding models base pay on a sliding scale of how many students are included, that model ignores the labor leading up to leaving the country resulting in under-compensation overall. Such a model that expects faculty to be happy with being paid less than expected can backfire, resulting in cancelled programs or fewer programs being developed in the future.

Relatedly, if additional faculty members are part of the program as teachers then they get paid as a teacher, while one that goes primarily for support (and perhaps to lay the groundwork for their own directorship in the future) as a safety measure may be paid an *honorarium* along with all expenses, including *per diem*. Even if a program director can teach all the classes themselves or prefers to go alone, some institutions require the program include at least two people. (Sometimes a staff member or graduate student can substitute for a faculty member.) Requiring two responsible adults is seen as a safety measure and is considered a "best practice" by organizations such as The

Forum on Education Abroad. These authors concur that there is wisdom in this approach, even though some institutions—we think unwisely—are currently experimenting with having faculty only accompany the students briefly to help them get settled, then return to their home country to teach and supervise over Zoom, or other distance-based platforms.

*Summary.* What does all of this translate into in terms of a program fee that students will pay to participate in a program? So much depends on program size, location, length, and the currency exchange rate. Size relates to everything, including but not limited to student fees, safety, program and institutional costs, teacher-to-student ratio and related learning opportunities and group dynamics, and all of that can impact recruiting. For example, a small group can use smaller spaces that are possibly less expensive or free, but once a certain threshold is crossed sometimes it makes sense to take more students to defer the costs of the larger spaces or conveyances required if doing so doesn't simultaneously increase costs in other program components too much. Size of the program is a balancing act. Each program director must start with what their curricular goals are—in league with the availability of internships for groups of different sizes (and majors)—to determine a size for planning purposes, but be ready to scale up or down to some degree as information is gathered or, perhaps, to change some plans in order to retain the desired group size. While a program with as few as eight students might work in one situation and over 50 in another, a group of around 20 students is often a good size to optimize both group dynamics and money matters without sacrificing safety or quality in tangible or intangible ways. But, again, that is not a magic number since many factors can affect the best program size.

Program length is up to the faculty members to a large degree but rarely exclusively, as they have to deal with layers of policy, for example, the originating institution's credit-earning policies and the host nation's student or non-citizen work policies. The former is usually straightforward. The national work policies of a host country, however, can vary greatly and can change from one year to the next. For instance, one summer London interns were allowed to work more days per week and no visas were required, but by the next summer national policy had shifted such that students had to apply for visas and were limited to fewer hours to encourage employers to hire resident citizens for non-internship jobs. Similarly, if one partners with a service provider who helps arrange the internships or with a company (for instance, a multi-national corporation or other local organizations with whom one cultivates ties), they might have a preferred or required minimum and maximum hours student interns can work. All of this affects design of the overall program—including work, course, and side-trip scheduling—as well as affects marketing and recruitment.

## Pre-Departure Implementation

Once the timelines and budgets are approved, pre-departure implementation begins. This involves recruiting potential participants, screening applicants, then preparing those selected in various ways via pre-departure orientations, a great deal of paperwork, and perhaps starting some of the readings and assignments for the courses to both prepare the students better and reduce some of their homework while abroad.

### *Recruiting*

Recruiting involves creating an application process and producing the marketing and recruiting materials to alert people about the program. This often involves working with others on campus to create and disseminate the materials as needed. Simply asking faculty and staff to tell students about the trip can be enough to fill a small trip but adequate marketing usually includes posting flyers around and listing the opportunity on websites and any available social media. Sometimes asking to go to certain classes to “pitch” the trip to a particular group of students is useful, as is hosting information sessions where information is shared and questions are answered about the program and application process, or setting up a table at certain campus events to do the same and further spread the word. The marketing and recruiting choices often depend on how many programs are competing for the same students for the same general time frame.

### *Selection*

While some might prefer a “first-come, first-served” approach where students who meet the minimum qualifications are accepted in the order in which they apply and the application is made unavailable once a waitlist has been constructed, in our experience it is wise to build an interview component into the selection process. Conducting one-on-one interviews allows for something better than chance or speed to guide participant selection, as the interaction offers both the student and the faculty member a chance to sort out if the program is a good fit for that student and allows for some expectancy management. If a student indicates they are going solely for “fun” rather than realizing a good deal of the program involves “work,” then that can be a potential misalignment unless during the interview the student begins to fully realize what is on offer and at stake. Indeed, it bears repeating to applicants in information sessions and interviews to remember they aren’t just representing themselves on the trip as their actions and work ethic can reflect on

the service provider, the home university, and even their country's reputation. Just as the program director is not obligated to accept all students who apply, the students who apply may not "confirm" (submit the deposit money to secure their place) until the very last minute before the deadline. So, postponing distribution of rejection notices and wait-list notices is wise until there are sufficient confirmations to ensure the program will proceed. Further, an interview can also involve encouraging uncertain students and, when money is an issue, reminding them of potential sources of institutional funding to help them go or helping them find other ways to go abroad by applying for certain scholarships. Finally, for some students this selection interview might be their first actual interview, so it is good practice for them in general and for other interviews that are part of the program process.

Once the students are selected, each student then interviews with the service provider's placement representative. In our experience pre-pandemic, the service provider would fly over to conduct the interviews in person, but now online meeting platforms have opened up new possibilities to facilitate interaction and/or control costs. On rare occasions, an organization in the host country will also want to interview the student in advance, but most trust the service provider enough to wait to interview the student just before or on the first day of their placement in the host country.

### *Pre-Departure Orientation Meetings and Assignments*

In accord with the advice of the international education professional organizations we've mentioned earlier, we agree that preparing the students well means working with them before leaving the home country in pre-departure meetings. Thus, while in the home country, students should complete assignments to prepare for their experience abroad, usually in some combination of online activities and in-person meetings. Common tasks might include having them set goals for their experiences abroad, learning about the history, current events, and other characteristics of the country in which they will be interning, learning about culture shock and coping strategies while abroad, researching their internship organizations, and dealing productively with ambiguity.

### **Post-Departure Implementation**

Finally, all of the fees are paid, all of the passports have arrived, all of the visas are secured (if needed), and the students board a group flight (in some programs) or arrange their own flights to arrive by a certain day so all can convene at a host-country orientation—a wise component of any program.

It is important to realize that as wonderful as the experience is, sometimes it is not all sunshine and roses. Problems can arise from medical and mental health issues to roommate issues to a student showing up at the internship with a hangover to a student breaking the law and other students initially trying to cover it up, and so on. Each situation must be sorted out separately, by the faculty member(s) alone or with the help of the service provider, and perhaps with the help of the home university.

During the last week, and if built into one of the program classes, students can do final presentations and engage in closing debriefs or group discussions as one last chance to learn from each other. A helpful practice is to require attendance at some sort of farewell reception—that should be written into the budget—on or near the last evening of the program where students cement intentions for long-term friendships, or at least casual networking circles, that can serve them into the future. It is also an excellent time to celebrate their successful completion of the program while reminding them exactly when the program is over and, unless they are returning to the country of origin on a group flight for which the faculty member might also be responsible, the students will be “on their own.”

Faculty can develop a formal assessment plan for their program if they are so inclined, but an SAO, if any, will typically survey students about the experience and routine course evaluations are usually part of the process. For those who wish to do more on assessment, excellent resources exist to support that endeavor, such as The Forum on Education Abroad’s Outcomes Assessment Toolbox, among other examples in study-abroad related literature (Roy et al., 2014; Rubin & Matthews, 2013; West, 2015). For those who wish to focus on interdisciplinary assessment, interdisciplinary scholars have offered much in recent years (Schijf et al., 2022; Boor et al., 2021; Almond, 2020; Olcese et al., 2014), but three foundational contributions are Stowe and Eder’s (2002) “Interdisciplinary Program Assessment,” Wolfe and Haynes’ (2003) “Interdisciplinary Writing Assessment Profiles,” and Repko’s (2008) “Assessing Interdisciplinary Learning Outcomes.”

## Conclusion

As both study abroad and internships are separately “high impact” learning experiences (Kuh, 2008), it stands to reason that thoughtfully combining them could prove to be even more beneficial to the student. From a faculty perspective, combining the two experiences presents complexities that can suppress pursuing this combination, despite knowing that such programs, coupled with thoughtful curricula, are incredible opportunities for students to build a range of skills and traits that are worthwhile in themselves and in high demand in the contemporary workplace. By describing how interdisciplinary faculty

members can develop faculty-led study abroad programs with internships, this article offers insights to reduce the perceived complexity in all components of program design, from planning through pre-departure and post-departure implementation, as well as considerations when working with service providers and Study Abroad Offices and budgets. A key determinant in program and curriculum design is the intended composition of the student groups invited to join the program, as the kind and number of majors influences the selection of courses offered and the assignments included. But whether one takes only IDS students, only non-IDS majors, or a mix of majors, there are many productive ways to introduce or deepen interdisciplinary awareness, traits, and skills. While approaches will differ from program to program, what the students learn as they prepare for, engage in, and reflect on the multi-faceted experience can be intentionally interdisciplinary with the help of committed faculty who are willing to take on the extra challenge of mounting this double-layered high-impact opportunity for their students. Beyond the benefit to the students, offering such programs can be a recruitment tool to entice new majors and can assist in development efforts with alumni (Hubbard et al., 2018), and the work involved is an ambitious professional development experience for the faculty members who can put into applied practice their interdisciplinary skills as they aim to integrate the myriad perspectives, wants, needs, and available resources necessary to create the program.

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## Appendix

### Design Aspirations—Program Goals and Preliminary Planning

#### Learning/Curricular Considerations

What are the primary goals for wanting to offer an international internship experience for your students abroad?

What overall learning outcomes do you have in mind? Or, more specifically, how do you imagine students will think and act differently as a result of the experience? Can you put that in both disciplinary and non-disciplinary terms? In both academic and “work world” terms?

What is the most appropriate curriculum (the course work they will do abroad in addition to the internship) based on your goals for student learning?

How do pedagogical choices relate to how many students you consider the optimal size group?

In addition to the internships, how else might you engage students culturally (field trips, language classes, site visits to different types of organizations, etc.)?

Is there support from one or more academic units that can award credit for the internship placements, or cross-list one of the study-abroad

courses so students can choose in which unit to earn credit? What coursework component, if any, might they require you add or will they accept your assignments as sufficient alone?

How many weeks, and how many hours per week, will the students be interning? How does this relate to how much coursework to assign and when classes will meet? Will any components be “virtual”?

## Location/Logistic Considerations

What international locations might be most suitable, and which locations are more workable for students in different disciplines, or for a group of students from multiple disciplines or interdisciplinary majors?

Where will the program be located in the country and are there organizations in that location that can provide on-the-ground support (with finding internships and arranging housing, excursions, events, classroom space, etc.)?

What are the local options for transportation? How available and reliable is internet or phone service in the area?

What are the visa rules for the location(s) you are considering? Do they currently limit how many hours a week a student or intern can work (e.g., due to severe unemployment in the host country)? Will any students be “foreign nationals” that aren’t permitted into certain countries at the given time?

Are there campus policies or state or national regulations to consider?

## Originating Institution Considerations

What level of support can you expect from your home university?

What are your primary budget considerations, and how much might students be willing to pay for the experience? (Some countries are considerably more expensive than others to live in as students complete their internships and coursework.) What is the currency exchange rate?

What is the optimal group size, especially in terms of how many quality internships can be found?

How many hours must a student earn at the internship, aside from coursework, to earn internship course credit?

How likely is it that a sufficient number of students can be recruited to meet your optimal group size?

Are there cost thresholds for you or the university to consider? What is the smallest group you can afford to take (at sometimes a greater cost) versus the largest group you can realistically manage (perhaps at a lower-per-head price but maybe creating a different dynamic). Are there limits to how many students can participate?

Are there minimum desired student qualifications for participation, such as GPA, upper-division standing, or language requirement? Will students need to have a major or minor in a certain discipline? If so, under what circumstances, if any, can exceptions be made?

## Health/Safety Considerations

What are the relevant risk management and safety considerations for your proposed location, like civil unrest, crime rates, etc.? What are the protocols for emergencies?

Have you checked travel advisories and checked with any local residents you might know, like other academics or the potential service providers, to corroborate if any travel advisories are over- or under-stated or if the concerns are limited to a specific region in the country?

What, if any, COVID-19 requirements or issues relate to your host country? Are there any other public health issues afoot at the time?

What is the availability of health facilities and treatments in the area?

While internship-based programs are based in one country, have you considered the situation in nearby countries to which students might take weekend trips with or without faculty supervision?

