THE I C R P: A HANDS-ON LEARNING EXPERIENCE

“We did our ICRPs in a village of our choice doing something we designed ourselves.

I commuted to a larger village one hour away about three times a week to teach a group of youth portrait painting.

They each painted an elder they admired in their community and wrote a biography of that person. My goal was to foster dialogue between the elders and the youth, a dynamic that is slowly being lost in this larger village.

We ended with an exhibition for all the community to see. My class had nearly perfect attendance, and my students both respected me and joked around with me. I still hear from some of them today.”

~ Britnei Clarke
Oaxaca, Mexico past participant

2015-2016/17 Student Handbook
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ICRP ................................................................. 3
ICRP REQUIREMENTS: THE BASICS .......................................................... 5
Prospectus ................................................................................................. 5
Field Experience ....................................................................................... 6
Reflective essay ......................................................................................... 6
The ICRP Coversheet ................................................................................. 6
GRADING AND EXPECTATIONS ................................................................. 7
Role of the Project Coordinator ............................................................... 7
Student Responsibilities ......................................................................... 8
Ethics and the ICRP ................................................................................. 9
GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AN ICRP ............................................. 9
1. Emphasis on “Hands On” Human Interaction .................................... 9
2. The Project Should Reflect Your Own Goals, Interests, and Skills .... 10
3. Methods for Collecting Project Data .................................................. 10
4. Systematic Observation ..................................................................... 11
5. Cultural Insight ................................................................................ 11
6. Advising and Mentoring ................................................................. 12
ICRP BEST PRACTICES ........................................................................... 14
WORDS OF WISDOM FROM YOUR PEERS ........................................... 16
Recommendations for Selecting an ICRP Topic ..................................... 16
Resources Used to Choose Topics and Placements .............................. 17
Suggestions for Completing Your Project ............................................. 18
CULTURAL GUIDELINES FOR THE ICRP ........................................... 20
Description, Analysis, Verification, and Interpretation ......................... 20
Reflection and Validation ..................................................................... 21
Tips for Gathering Cultural Data .......................................................... 21
SHARING YOUR PROJECT IN KALAMAZOO ......................................... 22
LIST OF APPENDICES ............................................................................. 23
Checklist For Meetings With Project Coordinators ............................... 24
Checklists for Introductions and Contacts .......................................... 25
DIEVA Model .......................................................................................... 26
**Description Or Interpretation?** ......................................................... 28
Transformative Learning through Structured Reflection ....................... 310
ICRP Coversheet – Blank Template ..................................................... 33
Sample ICRP Coversheet ...................................................................... 34
RESOURCES ............................................................................................. 346
Cover images: ‘Portraits of Elders’ from Oaxaca ICRP provided by Tere Morales, Resident Director
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ICRP

The ICRP is a component of the academic program of selected Kalamazoo-sponsored study abroad programs. The primary goal of the ICRP is the integration of students into local cultures, and the development of an ability to appreciate the cultural values around which local people organize their daily tasks. Other important goals of the project are:

- Improved target language use
- Increased understanding of the local culture
- First-hand experience with a facet of everyday life in the host culture
- Opportunities to interact in meaningful ways with local people
- Opportunities to apply knowledge of the host culture
- Encourage the application of intercultural skills

The ICRP should also encourage students to move from comparing their host culture to their home culture to a perspective that will allow them to understand the “rightness” of the behaviors and activities of local people within their cultural contexts and function appropriately within those contexts.

Students and local project coordinators develop structured, hands-on learning experiences that reflect academic, career, or extracurricular interests. Occasionally students complete apprenticeships, develop visual exhibits or arrange and give performances. All of these are suitable options if resources at the program site can support them.

The ICRP gives students the opportunity to earn 1 K-unit of academic credit while abroad. Students submit reflective essays before the end of the academic program to the Resident Director or Project Coordinator in the host country, who in turn evaluate the essays and submit project grades to the Center for International Programs. The following Long and/or Extended Term study abroad programs include an ICRP:

- Australia – Perth
- China – Beijing
- Costa Rica – San Jose
- Ecuador – Quito (Liberal Arts only)
- France – Clermont-Ferrand and Strasbourg
- Germany – Bonn and Erlangen
- Japan – Hikone (Long-term only)
Kenya – Nairobi
Mexico - Oaxaca
Senegal – Dakar
Spain – Caceres and Madrid
Thailand - Chiang Mai

The Center for International Programs seeks to provide a structure that will support students and our colleagues abroad in the development of projects that are academically viable. The purpose of this handbook is to outline the minimum requirements for all projects regardless of location. It will also offer a few tools students may use to maximize their intercultural and academic experience abroad. At the same time, we hope the established framework will accommodate the unique conditions and practices at each of the study abroad sites. Each study abroad site has practices particular to the community, and specific limitations. For example, in Ecuador, placements in medical services or hospital settings are typically not possible. For this reason students should not expect ICRPs to be handled in the same way at every site.

Remember, the ICRP handbook, as well as a Compilation of Past ICRPs, are posted on the CIP website at: https://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/ICRP/.
ICRP REQUIREMENTS: THE BASICS

The ICRP is an experiential learning opportunity with two major components—the field experience and the reflective essay. In order to be eligible for academic credit for the projects, students must:

- Prepare and submit a written prospectus to the Project Coordinator by the given due date
- Meet with the Project Coordinator to develop and conduct the project
- Complete a minimum of 45 contact hours of documented field experience
- Submit the reflective essay—a typewritten paper 10-15 pages in length—to the Project Coordinator by the given due date
- Prepare and submit an ICRP coversheet to the Project Coordinator

Keep in mind that each study abroad site has unique conditions, practices particular to the community, and specific limitations. For example, in most countries, placements sites outside the host city are not offered. Limitations, as well as examples of ICRPs are posted on the CIP website at: https://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/k_students/icrp/.

Supervision of the ICRP may occur on one or two levels, depending on the site. At the very least a member of the local program staff will be designated as the Project Coordinator. This is the person who will provide the project requirements, guidelines and due dates for the program site, review prospectuses and meet with students to guide project development. The Project Coordinator may also assist with placement of students interested in project activities within non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civic agencies or commercial enterprises. On some programs the Resident Director is also the Project Coordinator.

In addition, students may have a supervisor or mentor at their project placement as well as the Project Coordinator. These supervisors or mentors are the people to whom students report in order to complete project activities. In most cases they are not members of the local study abroad program staff, but work closely with them to provide opportunities for Kalamazoo students to participate in hands-on learning experiences.

Prospectus

The prospectus indicates to the Project Coordinator the topic and nature of the preferred project. It is typically a written plan, about 2-3 pages, that includes:

- What will be studied
- Plans and objectives for the project
- Possible and appropriate methods of information gathering
- Any special considerations that have been anticipated
Field Experience

Field experience is at the heart of the ICRP and allows students the chance to learn in-depth about their host cultures by actively participating in them. In other words this is the “doing” aspect of the project. Most projects will be conducted in the host city. Whether assisting a teacher at a local school, preparing brochures for a social service agency, apprenticing with an artisan, or interviewing local health care providers, students document their field experiences with field notes—detailed records of the project activities and related events and processes. These notes should focus on clear and accurate descriptions of significant encounters during the field experience. To be productive, field notes should be a daily activity and should avoid interpretations, evaluations, stereotypes and comparisons with students’ home cultures.

Reflective Essay

The reflective essay is the capstone of the ICRP. Because of its length, it is a major paper with project goals and objectives, appropriately cited sources, a definition of the project, a methods review and a bibliography. Assistance from the Project Coordinator or site supervisors must be recognized formally. Depending on the site, the essay may be written in the local language or in English.

As a reflective document, the essay is expected to demonstrate the development of appropriate insights and interpretations based on students’ knowledge of their host cultures and their field experiences. It is with the reflective essay that students illustrate what they have learned from their activities, their abilities to recognize which cultural values are at work in a given environment and function appropriately according to the operating values.

Essays must be submitted to the Project Coordinator or Resident Director before the end of the academic program. No credit will be given for late essays and no essay will be accepted after a student leaves her/his host country. The CIP recommends submitting the essay to the Project Coordinator or Resident Director directly rather than sending it through campus or office mail or leaving it with another individual. Students are fully responsible for the timely submission of their essays.

The ICRP Coversheet

The ICRP coversheet is used by the CIP to document the kinds of projects undertaken on each program, and to record important resource people. It is submitted to the Project Coordinator along with the reflective essay and signals the completion of the project. For a sample coversheet, please see Appendix 6. The coversheet must include:
THE I C R P: A Hands-On Learning Experience

- Student name
- Student’s Kalamazoo College identification number
- Study abroad program
- Month(s) and year of participation
- Project placement (organization/business name)
- Supervisor’s name (at placement site)
- Project title *(in English)*

**Summary*(in English)*-One or two paragraphs that articulate:

1) The connection(s) between project goals, personal objectives and the project activities
2) Method(s) used to collect information
3) Any new knowledge or deeper understanding of the host culture gained as a result of the project activities
4) Any unexpected outcomes, benefits or challenges
5) Ideas about the way(s) new knowledge, abilities or awareness might be applied to further integrate in the larger host culture

**GRADING AND EXPECTATIONS**

ICRPs are evaluated and graded by the Project Coordinator or Resident Director. Although grading criteria and formulas vary according to the program site, all project grades are based on:

- Prospectus
- Field experience and field notes
- Reflective essay
- Coversheet

Your Project Coordinator or Resident Director will provide the specific criteria and grading scale used to evaluate ICRPs at your program site.

**Role of the Project Coordinator**

Project supervision will be provided by the local Project Coordinator. Each coordinator is responsible for reiterating the CIP’s basic ICRP requirements, reviewing and approving project prospectuses and guiding project development. The Project Coordinator will also make sure that students are informed of the project features, resources and conditions that are unique to their particular site, including:
Evaluation and grading criteria for the prospectus and reflective essay
Format for the essay and the language in which it will be written
Field notes format
Required meetings or seminars
Due dates for the prospectus and essay
Due dates for any steps or phases leading to the reflective essay
Project limitations on the study abroad site

The Project Coordinator will assess each prospectus for safety, security and legal concerns. She/he will determine whether program participants have the linguistic skill and academic preparation necessary to carry out the proposed activities. It is also the Project Coordinator who will approve a change in placement or project activities for students who experience significant barriers to the successful implementation of their projects.

The Project Coordinator is familiar with and sensitive to the host culture and may be able to assist students with the selection of project topics, project placement and implementation. Project Coordinator’s may also be available to help students identify the interpretations and insights that emerge from their reflection.

**Student Responsibilities**

The CIP expects students to demonstrate a serious commitment to their ICRP by carefully reviewing this handbook, internalizing the information from their Project Coordinators, planning appropriately for the given due dates, implementing their project activities in a culturally appropriate manner and completing the project according to the guidelines and requirements set by the Project Coordinator.

Topic selection can be difficult, especially in a new and stimulating environment. A full understanding of the project options on site and opportunities to explore various interests and possible placements are certainly ideal. However, it is crucial that students select their topics with the field experience requirement and all project due dates in mind.

Occasionally students experience serious difficulties at the placement site or with their project activity. In these situations it is the student’s responsibility to make the Project Coordinator aware of the circumstances and the impact on the implementation of the project. In most cases the Project Coordinator will offer suggestions or guidelines to eliminate or ease the barriers. On the rare occasion that the coordinator decides to arrange another placement or suggests an alternate activity, students are expected to follow the instructions of the Project Coordinator in order to make the change in a respectful manner.
Ethics and the ICRP

Last, a general comment about ethics in the completion of the ICRP. *It is very important that students honor agreements made with individuals, organizations or groups assisting with their projects.* It is the student’s responsibility to insure and verify that agreements are fulfilled as promised. Formal recognition for project assistance should also be included in the reflective essay. For example, a student may agree to develop a report based on the information gathered from a series of interviews with an agency’s clientele. Technically, that student’s project is not complete until the report is delivered to the agency and the agency’s support is recognized in the reflective essay. Because the ethical conduct of each student has the potential to create or eliminate opportunities for students who follow, the CIP takes this student responsibility seriously.

Your ICRP placement has extended a large measure of trust by taking you into their organization. It is crucial that you recognize this and show yourself worthy of their trust. Ethical behavior in an ICRP situation is covered by the K Honor System (Taking Responsibility for Personal Behavior, Respecting Others, Accepting Environmental Responsibility) and by what you have learned to date about being a guest in a host society (adopting an attitude of humility and listening more than you speak).

A few Kalamazoo students, in the past, have acted unethically and caused considerable harm to the program, at their ICRP placements and to the College. Remember, you are accountable to the CIP and the College for complying with the Honor System during your project activities. This means a violation of the trust of your project placement or the Honor System is cause for dismissal from the study abroad program, disciplinary action on campus or both.

If you have questions about what constitutes ethical behavior at your ICRP placement, concerns about the ethics of your project activities or the practices of your placement site, be sure to ask your project coordinator, resident director or contact us in the CIP in Kalamazoo.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AN ICRP

There are six distinctive features that characterize all ICRPs and should guide in project selection and implementation.

1. Emphasis on “Hands On” Human Interaction

Project activities should allow interaction with local people outside of the usual academic environment in a systematic, integrated way. *Experiential activity beyond the classroom or*
library is crucial. Whether through interviews, conversations, observations, or working alongside others, this “hands-on” human interaction is what facilitates mastery of the local language, firsthand experience with a facet of everyday life in the host culture, and the intercultural interaction necessary to discover the underlying values and beliefs of the host culture.

2. The Project Should Reflect Your Own Goals, Interests, and Skills

In light of the goals of the ICRP students are encouraged to choose projects that not only help them investigate a topic of interest, but also allow exposure to a local issue or need identified by the local community. Effective projects often align field experience with academic experience – for example, a student enrolled in a political science class may complete administrative tasks at a local government office. Below are some common project types:

- **Supportive roles with local organizations**—lending consistent support to a group, an agency or organization involved in providing a service to the local population can help students deepen their understanding of a relevant social issue. Students interested in studying local schools might offer to serve as an aide to an English language teacher, while those interested in studying immigrants might develop project activities in a refugee assistance center.

- **Organized cultural activities**—participation in some facet of the local culture, such as joining a local sports team, working in a library or in the market, singing in a choir, playing in a musical ensemble, participating in a religious or civic organization. These ICRP placements tend to help the student integrate very well, especially when students step out of their comfort zone and participate in achieving the group’s goals.

- **Apprenticeships**—involve training in a craft or art through a process that is usually traditional. Students who have selected this type of project have studied under silversmiths, traditional chefs, master drummers and guitar makers to name a few. Apprenticeships often facilitate in-depth knowledge of a particular aspect of the host culture and, simultaneously, related topics or areas.

3. Methods for Collecting Project Data

In consultation with the project coordinator, students are encouraged to employ more than one method for gathering information. The application of creativity is an advantage in this area. Several may lend themselves to particular project types, such as:

- Observation works well with most project activities *when field notes are complete and accurate.*
Formal interviews and/or questionnaires can enhance the documentation of significant observations.

Photographs can validate desired outcomes or accomplishments and chronicle project progress.

Background reading or library research to establish a foundation for the project

Skills in the local language and level of confidence with local residents are usually central factors when selecting appropriate project methods. The importance of exhibiting appropriate respect and diplomacy when studying people should not be taken lightly. This is particularly true when photographing individuals. Questions regarding appropriate methods should be brought to the attention of the Project Coordinator.

4. Systematic Observation
Although use of one or more of the methods listed above is encouraged; the information gathering and interpretation must be systematic. Pay particular attention to:

- **Consistent journaling**—rich, day-by-day descriptions of field experiences form the foundation for the interpretations expressed in the reflective essay. Journal entries will allow students to remember more of what is observed and experienced on a daily basis. It sets the stage for the illustrative detail that gives human interest and credibility to the interpretations. It is important to *avoid including opinions about something that just happened*. *Instead describe the interaction exactly as it happened.* The DIEVA model outlined in Appendix 3 and the exercise in Appendix 4 can help distinguish between descriptions, interpretations and evaluations.

- **Painstaking interpretation**—social life, noted one long-time researcher, is a “buzzing confusion,” and to identify the patterns that give meaning, order, and predictability to a particular cultural scene, and then link a particular scene to the larger surrounding culture, will require hours of careful thought on your part. *The challenge is to discern the meanings of observed behaviors, encounters and events based on the cultural values and norms of the host culture, when the natural tendency is to base interpretations on our home cultures.*

5. Cultural Insight
The reflective essay is the vehicle through which students formally examine and discuss the cultural insights gained during the implementation of their projects. Project Coordinators should look for insights on at least two levels-

- **Insight into the particular cultural activity or aspect selected**—whether that is greeting patients in a hospital lab, an apprenticeship with a guitar-maker, selling goods at an open air market, or conducting a survey for a local nongovernmental agency. What are
the regularly occurring patterns of interaction? What are the expectations that apply to different categories of participants? What are the perceptions or understandings that prove typical of participants? What are the recurrent patterns of what people like and dislike as they react to their experience? Addressing questions like these can help with the development of the insights (not judgments) about the particular cultural scene or environment being studied. These insights must be reinforced by referring to specific observations, statements, stories, and examples drawn from field notes. Remember it is an objective of the essay to move beyond the level of description to that of interpretation. However, it is important to keep in mind that the insights are of primary importance and supporting stories and examples do not have to be lengthy.

**Insight into the larger culture and/or social structure of the host country**—every culture has what sociologists call a certain degree of “integration,” which is to say that no matter what particular scene or environment selected for the project, the imprint of the larger culture of which it is a part will be evident. Every particular manifestation of a culture thus represents a window into the larger culture. To generalize about a whole culture can be daunting, but it can also be one of the most exciting undertakings of a study abroad experience. The reflective essay should address probing questions that help students gain an insight into the larger culture and environment. For example: What is the host country’s world view? What cultural values are reflected in the observations? Which fundamental beliefs are at the root of these encounters?

**6. Advising and Mentoring**

On a number of the program sites the Project Coordinator assists students with the following stages of the project:

- **Introductions and first contacts**—Project Coordinators are often well-positioned to advise students during the initiation of their ICRPs. This assistance may include advice on making a culturally sensitive entrée, or identifying local experts willing to be placement supervisors or mentors. *It is the STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY, however, to make the first connection, not that of the Project Coordinator.*

- **Review of journal notes**—either by working with individuals or through group discussions, many Project Coordinators will help students learn to capture rich, relevant descriptive details of the activities in which they participate; to identify observations of special significance; and to discern possible patterns within the social life being studied.

- **Interpretation**—local Project Coordinators may help students discern the meaning of events and behavior in the cultural scene chosen for study. Exploration of those insights and their relevance to the larger culture is an indication that student reflection has been thorough and in-depth. Project Coordinators are available to support students’ efforts
to identify cultural patterns and develop interpretations, while pointing out interpretations that may not have occur to someone outside the host culture.

“Start looking for an ICRP early (like October), because it can take ages to find one. Even if all you end up doing something that doesn’t feel like much, you’ll probably be surprised at the insight you can gain from it.” – Dakar, Sénégal past participant

One of my favorite memories was working in the bakery for my ICRP. I would highly suggest putting a lot of thought into picking a good placement because it is a great way to both challenge yourself and become a part of the community. I miss the people, having the opportunity to walk everywhere, and of course the food!

~ Strasbourg, France past participant
ICRP BEST PRACTICES

Many returned students report that their ICRP experiences were among the most engaging, challenging and rewarding aspects of their study abroad experiences. The quality of project experiences and essays typically depend on the time, thought and planning students commit to this portion of the academic program. Below are several recommendations to consider for planning a successful project.

- Meet with Project Coordinator shortly after arrival in the host country to discuss project ideas.
- Add all due dates to your planning calendar and organize accordingly.
- Conduct sufficient background reading or research on the selected topic before or during the project activity.
- Take the time to prepare for the preliminary contact with the placement site by practicing a script in the local language. See Appendix 2 for recommendations.
- Finalize your project placement at least 6 to 8 weeks before your reflective essay has to be submitted for evaluation if the Project Coordinator does not provide a deadline.
- Approach your project placement as if it were a place of employment—observe the cultural norms, dress appropriately, keep supervisors informed of your schedule and any changes.
- Take field notes in an unobtrusive manner. This may mean waiting after a conversation or experience to record what occurred.
- Confirm with the Project Coordinator the appropriate method for citing sources, interviews, field notes etc.
- Review and organize field notes and journal entries according to the interpretations and insights that emerge from reflection.
- Maintain a schedule of regular meetings with the Project Coordinator to review progress on the project and begin organizing reflections. See Appendix 1 for recommendations.
- Acquire sufficient skill with the DIEVA model (Appendix 3).
- Initiate conversations or meetings with the Project Coordinator to discuss observations, analysis and interpretation.
- Allow at least two weeks to prepare the rough draft and reflective essay.
- Include any background sources in the bibliography.
Make sure the coversheet abstract includes the project objectives and activities, primary insights and documentation methods. Keep a copy of the final reflective essay for personal records.

Having reasonable expectations is important. When people think of going to Africa they think adventure or an encounter with the wild. The novelty of living in Africa goes away quickly—you have to be prepared to become a part of the community and actually be productive in the culture. The ICRP helps and so does making Kenyan friends.

~ Nairobi, Kenya past participant
WORDS OF WISDOM FROM YOUR PEERS

Students recently back from Australia, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Japan, Kenya, Senegal, Spain and Thailand shared some feedback with the CIP that we think could be helpful to students getting ready to organize their ICRPs. Here are their suggestions. **Be sure to keep in mind that some of these ideas will not be appropriate at every program site.**

**Recommendations for Selecting an ICRP Topic**

- A topic might not seem appealing at first (like mine), but it will usually turn out to be a very rewarding experience.
- Choose the kind of people/organization you’d like to work with, not just the type of work.
- I would suggest that the students explore other options [other than a list of past projects] for their ICRPs, because it is a great way to work on presentation skills as well as practicing the native language.
- Pick whatever’s available and don’t be afraid to email and call people/organizations that seem interesting.
- Don’t be afraid to try to push the limits of typical ICRPs because sometimes it’s the slightly atypical options that are the most intriguing.
- Start looking and thinking about an ICRP about one or two months into the program.
- Do something that has something to do with the indigenous community or indigenous issues.
- Go with an organization that is easy and safe to travel to and that can offer you many hours.
- Don’t stress out about it. You will figure something out; the school will help you find something you will enjoy.
- Remember to be flexible. Things won’t always work out ideally, but you can still make the most of your experience, and learn a lot.
- Do what interests you the most but simultaneously is something you’d never be able to do anywhere else, especially at home.
- Do something that will benefit you later in life.
- Don’t be afraid to venture out in to the community and ask questions about things that interest you or what opportunities might be available to you.
- Go for one that lets you be really involved.
- It can be a life-changing experience. Make it your own.
Don’t pick something that allows you to interact only with tourists or ex-pats unless that is really what you want.

Do interviews/hands on stuff. Don’t be nervous not to have a host organization, or to do your own independent idea.

Your topic does not have to be conventional, make it your own.

Start looking online before you leave, email places with start and end dates along with info about yourself and the type of project/topic you’re interested in, and utilize your resources like your study abroad advisor.

Don’t let yourself be bullied into doing something another student has already done.

Follow your passion!

**Resources Used to Choose Topics and Placements**

I tried to do something new, but the places I contacted were not interested in my help as a volunteer, so I chose a place that people had worked at before.

A list of locations previous participants had done ICRPs.

I was initially encouraged to think of a setting in which I would explore Spanish culture to its best. I was inspired by a participant from the year before, who took guitar lessons. Being a creative person, I wanted to do a creative project.

Our Resident Director made the connection for me.

A list of organizations and the one I chose was the first one that was close to my house and could give me the hours I needed.

Other students with me on study abroad

Program Coordinators

My personal interests and knowledge given to me by past participants

Host family, community resources, personal research/ internet

I like science and wanted to repay the institute that saved my life after being bitten by a venomous snake.

My interest in dentistry

Course leaders, teachers and their connections

We visited an ecotourism resort and I found it fascinating. I was wondering how well ecotourism fit with the ideals in practice, since it is a big industry in Thailand and we were learning about the sustainability ideals in class.

Fellow students (American and Japanese)
THE ICRP: A Hands-On Learning Experience

- It’s a lot easier to get an in if you can work through personal relationships. Especially in South America, knowing people and making personal connections is the way things are done.
- Emphasize going to a place where you will have real participation working alongside peers and have low expectations.

Suggestions for Completing Your Project

- Start early and keep track of what you do and what you’re thinking throughout the whole project, and what interactions you have with people. Detailed field notes REALLY help with the final paper.
- Keep up with all of the journal entries and start the paper early, so that you don’t feel overwhelmed at the end of your program.
- Be assertive.
- Choose something that will allow you to really use the language. It sounds daunting, but it will be so helpful in the long run.
- Get involved, ask questions, speak the language, and go as often as you can.
- Don’t wait until the last minute to do your write up since it will only result in you being more stressed than you have to be about the project.
- Don’t expect too much; I had to change my plans about what I wanted to accomplish because I was too specific and the organizations were too unorganized. Remember that the idea of ICRP is to learn about the ways your host culture operates! Don’t try to impose too many ideas, and be flexible.
- Make sure your project site has work for you to do.
- Just stay on top of your work and make sure you give proper time and thanks to those people that you work with or interview.
- Immerse yourself in the experience.
- Be timely at your ICRP site, keep track that you will finish your hours.
- Do it yourself. Take the initiative early especially if there’s no placement or help in place.
- Be self-reliant and enthusiastic. Don’t procrastinate on writing the final paper.
- Commit time to immerse yourself - this may be the only chance you get to do something like it. You get what you put in - you can make a meaningful project but only if you make it that way.
- I found it best to complete my ICRP after school was out and write my ICRP following the project.
- Make sure the institution you are going into actually understands what you need to complete the project.
- Make sure it gives you a chance to delve more into the culture.
- Pick a small topic! Don’t try to do too big of a project, better to do a well done smaller/more specific one.
- Leave a lot of time for writing and editing your final paper!
- Things take forever to get rolling in Senegal, so even if you have a solid idea and an organization, you may not get started doing what you actually want until about a month or so after you would have thought you could start. Things just move slowly.
CULTURAL GUIDELINES FOR THE ICRP

The ICRP goals are rooted in the ethnography methodology which emphasizes experiential learning and involvement of local people in analysis and interpretation. Ethnographies are cultural descriptions that include analysis of visual and material culture. The methods for collecting and documenting information most commonly employed with this methodology are interviewing and participant observation. Most students do not have much experience with ethnographies before study abroad. The information in this section may provide the background information that will assist students as they take the steps to complete their projects.

Description, Analysis, Verification, and Interpretation

The fundamental processes of the ICRP are description, analysis and interpretation. However, for a successful project that meets the goals and objectives it will be important to employ the appropriate process at a particular stage of the project.

Description, in terms of cultural learning, is the record of the physical elements of a given act or set of acts without assigning meaning (Storti, 1999). The ability to describe behavior without venturing into interpretation is an important skill in any intercultural environment, but it is especially key for a successful ICRP. Again, emotional reactions, opinions, assumptions and stereotypes are to be avoided in the description process (see Appendixes 3 and 4). As mentioned earlier, this process is crucial during the field experience when taking field notes and gathering information.

Analysis is the process of organizing the information that has been gathered. This includes finding patterns in behavior, looking at interactions from a fresh perspective and asking broader and deeper questions. Observations and decisions about the effectiveness of the selected information collection methods are a part of the analysis process and should be recorded, but should not be confused with information gathering. Analysis takes place during the field experience and reflection stages of the project.

Very often, with intercultural encounters, analysis takes place on another level. Students will often become aware that their reactions to encounters and observations abroad are more closely connected with the culture they come from rather than the culture that is hosting them. At this point they begin to examine and organize their thoughts about their home culture in ways that are significant to their personal development and, sometimes, their project.

Interpretation is the ability to assign meaning to the behaviors and events observed and the information gathered. The primary challenge here will be interpreting the project encounters from the perspective of the host culture, when, for most people, it is second
nature to assign meaning based on their home culture. Because the ICRP is an intercultural experience, the interpretation process should include ideas about the relationships between the observations and gathered information and the values, beliefs and norms of the host culture (see Appendixes 3 and 4). Ideally interpretation should take place during the reflection stage and the insights gained from this process will form the foundation for the reflective essay.

**Reflection and Validation**

The reflection and validation processes are necessary to insure appropriate interpretations and insights for the reflective essay. There are as many methods to exercise these processes as there are people practicing them. However, for the purposes of the ICRP, reflection and validation should be systematic.

**Reflection**, as the DIEVA model suggests, is a systematic approach by which events and encounters are deconstructed so that deeper and multiple understandings might be considered and the most appropriate action taken. Journaling and de-briefing discussions are common reflection practices. It is at the reflection stage that discovery of assumptions or pre-conceived ideas about the host culture, placement site or project activities should be carefully examined. Regardless of practice used, reflection must involve a set of procedures that are always completed and topics/questions that are always addressed.

**Validation** is the process that is most likely to be overlooked when implementing the project. Confirming the analysis or interpretations may seem redundant or unnecessary. Try not to minimize the value of sharing one view of an encounter with someone (preferably your project coordinator or resident director) and gaining additional perspectives that may lead to a better understanding of the host culture, its belief systems, fundamental values and the ways they can be expressed.

**Tips for Gathering Cultural Data**

Below are a few tips that anthropologists and sociologist use to study new cultures.

- **Humility** – assume the people you talk to know more about the subject than you do, or that they have a unique knowledge set different than your own. Rather than thinking “they do this wrong,” think “they do this differently” or “what makes ‘my way’ the right way?”

- **Flexibility** – allow your initial assumptions to be challenged and changed as you continue your field work. Also, be flexible if things do not work out the way you planned – sometimes change or the lack of it are features of the culture that can be explored.
Bias – Remember that the person doing the interpretation (student or participant!) affects the interpretation. Keeping an open mind and willingness to see things differently can help. Define your scope e.g. “culture within low SES group” and variables e.g. “not representative of whole.” If bias may affect your results (which will be true for most of you), be sure to note it in the paper.

Listen – Understanding is more important than prediction and control. Often, when you listen closely, there are things being said that you might not have initially realized. Consider tape-recording interviews or taking quick yet detailed notes. Quote verbatim; try not to paraphrase.

SHARING YOUR PROJECT IN KALAMAZOO

Experiential and intercultural learning have a host of challenges as well as some very unique rewards. We hope that the introduction material from pre-departure, information in this handbook, and on-site supervision provide some of the tools students need to deepen the exploration that can take place overseas and enhance their understanding of their host cultures. The CIP staff encourages all program participants to share their ICRP experiences with the College community.

One way to share your ICRP is via the CIP website at http://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/. If you are interested in submitting photos, journal entries, or YouTube films of your ICRP, email them to the CIP Operations Assistant.

Look for upcoming invitations to contribute to opportunities to present your ICRP.

Working together to build a school
~ Saskia Boggs K’11
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Checklist for Meetings with Project Coordinators

Appendix 2: Checklist for Introductions and First Contacts (with Project Placements)

Appendix 3: DIEVA Model (developed by Kalamazoo faculty Carol Anderson, Kiran Cunningham, Alison Geist and Bob Grossman)

Appendix 4: Description and Interpretation Exercise (from Chapter 5 of Craig Storti’s *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide*)

Appendix 5: Transformative Learning through Structured Reflection: Some Thoughts for ICRP Participants and Project Coordinators (Adapted from presentations and research by Dr. Kiran Cunningham and Dr. Robert Grossman)

Appendix 6: ICRP Coversheet – Blank Template

Appendix 7: ICRP Coversheet – Completed Example
APPENDIX 1

Checklist for Meetings with Project Coordinators

Many study abroad programs do not include project workshops or seminars. As a result, meetings with the Project Coordinators will be crucial for project development and implementation. Below are several recommendations that should facilitate effective meetings.

To prepare for the first meeting with the Project Coordinator, students should:

- Be familiar with the basic ICRP requirements (see pages 2 and 3 of this handbook).
- Be aware of the practices for assigning ICRP topics and placement for the study abroad program site.
- Identify a few possible topics and determine why each of them is interesting.
- Consider the pros and cons of likely methods of data collection for each topic.
- Be ready to discuss special considerations for each topic.
- Outline tentative project plans and objectives.
- Be ready to consider the limitations and difficulties with the topics being considered.
- Make sure project ideas and activities meet criteria and due dates for the prospectus.
- Understand how to finalize their project placement.

For meetings following the submission of the prospectus, students should:

- Be ready to discuss any difficulties at the placement or with the field experience.
- Make sure their systems for field notes meet Project Coordinators’ criteria.
- Prepare initial insights and interpretations for review.
- Point out any special circumstances that have occurred since earlier meetings.
- Raise any concerns or questions about the remaining stages of the project.
- Confirm the format for the reflective essay and its components.
- Check on the evaluation and grading criteria.
- Verify the due dates for the essay and any steps leading to it.
- Be clear on the best way to submit the reflective essay.
- Make sure they know how to schedule additional meetings if needed.
APPENDIX 2

Checklists for Introductions and Contacts

Students often make the initial contact with a placement site or follow-up to schedule a time to visit. Below are recommendations to prepare for the first contact with a possible placement site. It will be important to review this checklist with the Project Coordinator or Resident Director to be sure your conduct is culturally appropriate.

To prepare to make the initial contact, a student should:

☐ Learn the complete name of the organization, school, agency or business and its correct spelling and pronunciation.

☐ Confirm the name, title and contact information of the person to be contacted. The correct spelling and pronunciation for each piece of information may be useful after the initial meeting.

☐ Determine the kind of work done or services provided by the organization.

☐ Learn as much as possible about students’ opportunities to get involved.

☐ Practice in the local language a possible script for the early stages of the conversation. Topics might include-
  ▪ Confirmation that you have reached the correct organization
  ▪ Confirmation that you are speaking to the appropriate person
  ▪ Indicating who referred you to that contact person and agency
  ▪ What brought you to the host country
  ▪ Any positive impressions you have had regarding the host country, city, university, family, etc.
  ▪ Your studies at the host university and/or Kalamazoo College
  ▪ Your interest in the organization
    ▪ Descriptions of possible tasks or projects to be completed or initiated
    ▪ Questions you would like to ask
    ▪ The skills and strengths you have to offer
    ▪ The answers to questions you anticipate will be asked of you
    ▪ Appropriate greetings and goodbyes

☐ Find out what kind of follow-up will be expected, such as thank-you notes, resume, schedule of availability, etc.

☐ Learn the best time-frame for the type of follow-up to be done.

☐ Determine whether there are any special connections or relationships between the resident director, project coordinator, the College and the possible placement site that are important.
## APPENDIX 3

**DIEVA Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Validation</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Your thoughts about the event or situation. These often occur as things we tell ourselves about an event (“self-talk”) or mental pictures we have.</td>
<td>Your feelings (often involve bodily sensations) and value judgment about your experience.</td>
<td>“Check out” your view of the situation with others. Ask to see if they can give you another way to interpret your situation.</td>
<td>In this column it is important to plan what action you will take in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example –**

You attend a party and meet some local students, John and Shelia. When you arrive in class neither one says hello. They just continue their conversations with others. In fact they don’t talk to you at all in class. When you say, “Hello,” they barely respond and quickly look away.

**Example –**

“They are acting like they don’t know me. They are rude!! This is not the only time this has happened. Rudeness or unfriendliness must be typical for this culture. They are just not as friendly as Americans. I wonder if I will ever be able to make friends here. Six months of loneliness will be impossible to stand.”

**Example –**

“I am feeling very uncomfortable here. I miss my friends back home (mental pictures come to mind of my friends having a great time partying without me). I feel homesick-actually sick to my stomach. I feel so bad I don’t want to try to interact with anyone.”

**Example –**

You talked about this experience at a party with your teacher. She lived in the U.S. She explains that in the local culture, social behavior is different; you need to meet people on a steadier basis to make friends. She suggests instead of assuming you will make friends quickly in a social environment that you engage in an extracurricular activity, such as playing on a sports team, music ensemble, or drama club where more time is involved.

**Example –**

Based on this conversation with a cultural informant, you decide to join a tennis club. By playing tennis at a designated time every week, you eventually meet local tennis enthusiasts and you begin to socialize with this group. You realize that your first description and interpretations of “friendliness” were based on a quicker but more superficial American concept and this culture is slower to “make friends” but when they do it is deeper.
Key Features of the **DIEVA** Model

The first thing this approach does is it encourages you to ask another person for their view of your situation. This often results in a new interpretation of the event, which provides some relief from the culture shock, and a constructive plan of action. A second thing you can do with this system is to look for exaggerations in your Interpretations column. In this case the student makes a “fortune teller error.” She predicts that she will “[n]ever be able to make friends here” and “six months of loneliness will be impossible to stand.” Both of these are exaggerated in the sense that she is treating the worst possibility as if it were the main or only possibility.

Learning to spot and correct these cognitive distortions often reduces the intensity of the bad feeling. If she could have challenged these exaggerations by saying something like, “It’s true - I did not make friends with these people as quickly as I wished but that doesn’t mean I am doomed to six months of loneliness. It is likely that there will be other opportunities. I am a good friend-maker in my own culture and it is likely that I will figure this out.” Once you have challenged your exaggerations, you often calm down and begin to work more rationally on the problem. For example, this student might think, “Getting help from someone who knows the culture is likely to help. In fact, I remember Dr. Cunningham saying, ‘Always check your interpretations out with an informant - someone who knows the culture better than you do.’ My teacher might be a good person to talk to. She was in the U.S. so she might understand where I am coming from. The Program Director might also be good to talk to. I might even email Margaret back at the CIP.”
APPENDIX 4

Description or Interpretation?

It is second nature for most people to intertwine their interpretation of an event or behavior with its description. Taking the time to practice separating the two can help keep descriptions of ICRP experiences free of interpretations and assumptions. This exercise is simple and should not take much time, but it might help develop skills with description. Before beginning, review the definitions of description and interpretation in Appendix 3.

Below are 10 pairs of statements—one being a description and the other is an interpretation. Read each statement and place a D in front of the descriptions and an I in front of the interpretations.

___ 1 a) That man is angry.
     ___ 1 b) That man is talking quite loudly

___ 2 a) My boss doesn’t trust his subordinates.
     ___ 2 b) My boss doesn’t delegate responsibility.

___ 3 a) That woman stands 3 feet away when she speaks.
     ___ 3 b) That woman is cold and reserved.

___ 4 a) That man is afraid of his boss.
     ___ 4 b) That man never contradicts his boss in public.

___ 5 a) She doesn’t have strong opinions.
     ___ 5 b) She never speaks in meetings.

___ 6 a) That worker never does anything until he is told.
     ___ 6 b) That worker is lazy.

___ 7 a) He lied to me.
     ___ 7 b) He said yes when the answer to my question was no.

___ 8 a) She wasn’t listening to me.
     ___ 8 b) She didn’t look me in the eye when I was talking to her.
9 a) He stood very close and gestured a lot when talking to me.
9 b) He’s very aggressive.

10 a) She’s insecure and power hungry.
10 b) She doesn’t share information with her subordinates.

Suggested Answers

1 a) That man is angry.
1 b) That man is talking quite loudly

2 a) My boss doesn’t trust his subordinates.
2 b) My boss doesn’t delegate responsibility.

3 a) That woman stands 3 feet away when she speaks.
3 b) That woman is cold and reserved.

4 a) That man is afraid of his boss.
4 b) That man never contradicts his boss in public.

5 a) She doesn’t have strong opinions.
5 b) She never speaks in meetings.

6 a) That worker never does anything until he is told.
6 b) That worker is lazy.

7 a) He lied to me.
7 b) He said yes when the answer to my question was no.

8 a) She wasn’t listening to me.
8 b) She didn’t look me in the eye when I was talking to her.

9 a) He stood very close and gestured a lot when talking to me.
9 b) He’s very aggressive.

10 a) She’s insecure and power hungry.
10 b) She doesn’t share information with her subordinates.
APPENDIX 5

Transformative Learning through Structured Reflection

Following are some thoughts for ICRP participants and Project Coordinators (Adapted from presentations and research by Dr. Kiran Cunningham and Dr. Robert Grossman)

Definitions

- Transformative learning is a fundamental change in one’s habit of mind (a.k.a. frame of reference or system of meaning or set of interpretations or evaluations taken for granted).
- Self authorship is the capability to generate and author meaning that is informed by one’s own values and beliefs.

Key findings from Cunningham/Grossman Research

- We need to understand the process of transformative learning as a continuum through which students move in a spiral sort of way over the entire four years of learning.
- Six key points along the continuum are:
  1. Knowledge gains
  2. Attitude changes
  3. Changes in perspective
  4. Deepening self understanding (becoming aware of one’s assumptions and ultimately critiquing them)
  5. Deepening structural understanding (understanding the structural/theoretical context of the issue/problem/experience)
  6. Change in habit of mind
- Transformative learning requires self authorship
  - An ability to critically assess one’s assumptions is fundamental to begin moving into self-authorship.
  - Obtaining a structural/theoretical level understanding of the context of one’s experience is key to moving fully into self-authorship.
- Central to transformative learning is being able to connect a) one’s experience with b) a critical understanding of one’s assumptions and c) a structural/theoretical understanding of the context of the experience.
Structured Reflection

- A working definition for our purposes: Structured reflection catalyzes movement along the transformative learning continuum by employing intentionally designed exercises, activities, or assignments that help students make connections between assumptions held, experiences encountered, and theories/concepts known.

- Reflections, then, involve making connections between these things and structured reflection involves the use of assignments specifically designed to help participants make these connections.

- Making these kinds of connections through structured reflection catalyzes self authorship because a) students’ experiences and assumptions are central to what is being examined and b) they have to do the meaning-making work.

As you can see from the diagram above, Structured Reflection is the way to bridge the gaps between Assumptions Held, Theories and Concepts Known, and Experiences Encountered. Structured Reflection becomes the “glue” that holds these three areas together and leads you to deep, transformative learning.

For the ICRP, transformative learning through structured reflection can come about through the following:

- A comparison of journal notes early in the project, mid-way through and at the end
- The review of a critical incident;
  1. Identify an upsetting or unsettling experience
  2. Consider various possible meanings (interpretations and evaluations)
  3. Consider knowledge gained from the incident
- The use of reflective questions for review of observations and incidents
  1. *I used to think... because...*
  2. *When I experienced... I realized...*
  3. *Now I think... because...*

Remember when you are confronted with an experience or situation that you don’t understand to use the DIEVA model described in Appendix 3 in the ICRP handbook for program participants:

- **DESCRIPTION**
- **INTERPRETATION**
- **EVALUATION**
- **VALIDATION**
- **ACTION**

The techniques above will help you reflect on what you have learned from both the experience and your efforts to understand it in the local context.
APPENDIX 6

ICRP Coversheet Template

Student Name: _____________________________________________________________

K Student ID #: __________________________________________________________

Study Abroad Site: _________________________________________________________

ICRP Placement (Organization/Business Name): ______________________________

Project Supervisor(s) at ICRP Placement: _____________________________________

Dates of Placement (Month(s) and Year): _________________________________

Project Title (in English): _________________________________________________

Summary (in English) One or two paragraphs that articulate:
1) The connection(s) between project goals, personal objectives and the project activities
2) Method(s) used to collect information
3) Any new knowledge or deeper understanding of the host culture gained as a result of the project activities
4) Any unexpected outcomes, benefits or challenges
5) Ideas about the way(s) new knowledge, abilities or awareness might be applied to further integrate in the larger host culture

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Page 33
APPENDIX 7

SAMPLE ICRP COVERSHEET

Student Name: Jaime Doe
Student K ID # 123456
Study Abroad Site: Beijing, China
Location of Placement: Capital Normal University
Project Supervisor: Vannina Pomonti
Dates of Placement: August 27, 2013—January 26, 2014
Project Title: Being A Band In Beijing

Summary (in English):

My project involved observing Beijing’s local band scene, and looking at the Chinese music culture through the lens of the local rock band, The Bad Apples. I used a few methods to gather information for this project, because there were several aspects of the music scene about which I was curious. Some of my interests included understanding rehearsal and performance logistics better and finding out about the income potential of musicians in Beijing. I shadowed the Bad Apples in all parts of their band interactions: at meetings, rehearsals, and performances. I also took notes of information learned from band members during informal conversations, either between themselves or with me. I did further research through formal interviews, where I met with each member of the Bad Apples individually and asked them a series of open-ended questions.

The goal of this project was to learn more about the rock culture in China and how a band functions within the Beijing music scene, and I did exactly that. I learned where to rehearse and that it is feasible to survive in Beijing with a musician’s income. I also learned that local and Chinese cultural values seem to influence rehearsal methods and communication with venues. However, I did not find any significant differences in reasons to play music and perform.
RESOURCES


