Background

In the summer of 2013, members of UWEC’s Council on Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) and Center for International Education (CIE) developed a reporting tool to help the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire (UWEC) evaluate and track study abroad experiences of UWEC students (see Appendix I). The initial intent of this tool was to help document, evaluate and track study abroad programs. The Council for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) had identified a need to measure global competencies from the study abroad program for purposes of accountability, value to of the experience to encouraging student participation, and to collect data to support assertions made to the value of the study abroad experience.

CIGE members Eric Torres (Education Studies) and Paul Kaldjian (Geography & Anthropology) drew from their experiences in developing and applying the new LE core Responsibility 2 (R2, Global Learning) rubric and partnered with Cheryl Lochner-Wright (Study Abroad Coordinator, CIE) to develop a reflective prompt designed to help us understand the degree to which students were meeting the benchmarks set for the three elements of the R2 outcome. Shevaun Watson and Carmen Manning of English reviewed a draft of the prompt to improve the potential of the prompt to elicit the intended student responses. The final version of this prompt (Critical Reflective Assignment, see Appendix 1) was first administered to students completing study abroad programs in Fall 2013, and then again to students studying abroad in Winterim, Spring, and Summer 2014. Specifically, the prompt was intended to encourage students to identify and reflect on what they learned during their study abroad experience.

Because there did not seem to be a mechanism to require all students studying abroad to provide this self-assessment, we decided to make it an expectation of those receiving a study abroad grant. That is, all students who received UWEC or UWEC Foundation scholarship support commit to writing this reflective essay as a service to the university community and with the knowledge that they would be publicly shared. Thus, these essays would have the added benefit of helping the Foundation track the use of their monies and serving as guidance for prospective study abroad candidates. By the end of summer 2014, we had 56 essays representing 17 different international programs, mostly study abroad but some faculty-led. The response rate was nearly 100% from those who received scholarship support.

In August 2014, Academic Affairs’ support, CIGE and CIE partnered with Laurel Kieffer, the Title III-Grant Activity Director, to establish a committee to assess the study abroad essays against the R2 rubric. In this way, the study abroad artifact reads became part of the larger project to evaluate assessment in R1, R2, and Integrated learning. The timing also coincided with Department of Language’s interest in how to include study abroad in the LE Core.
On 14 October 2014, Laurel Kieffer convened nine experienced faculty and staff (see Table I) for an orientation, training and practice session on how to assess the study abroad artifacts. At this session, we were broken into teams and assigned artifacts to evaluate against the three elements of the R2 Outcome. An important part of the training and practice was geared toward inter-rater reliability to help with consistency among the assessors and between programs.

### Results

On 23 October 2014, we reconvened to compile and analyze the results from this initial pilot round and found the following: Only 2 students (4%) met the benchmark for all three outcomes, and 20 students (36%) met none of them. While over half (55%) of the students met the benchmark for the knowledge element (Element A), only 21% of them met the benchmark for Element B (global systems, institutions, or relationships of power) and less than 13% met the benchmark for Element C (global implications of individual and collective decisions).

Initially, such results appear disappointing. Student essays focused largely on themselves and their personal rather than their cognitive growth; students were earnest in their reflections, but their expressions of independence, empowerment and feelings of personal accomplishment dwarfed the intellectual experience and what they actually learned about people, places, culture, history, power, transnational relationships and so on. However, after group analysis and discussion of the entire process and the overall results, our group of artifact readers felt that such low learning outcome would be inconsistent with our collective experience and understanding of the study abroad experience. Rather than blaming the students or their programs, we turned our attention to the prompt and realized that the prompt did not clearly guide students toward thinking about the intended outcomes. After discussion, we determined that the prompt did not align adequately with the R2 Rubric, nor did it adequately reflect the value of the study abroad experience for our students. With more intentionality in the design of the reflection prompts, study abroad students should more effectively be able to articulate gains in global competencies.

On 12 December 2014, the artifact readers met again to improve the prompt in time to pilot it with the cohort of students studying abroad in Fall 2014. We also decided to invite international immersion and course-based field experience abroad to pilot this assessment tool. Appendix II is the second iteration of the prompt.

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1 Participants received a modest stipend for their work between October 2014 and the end of May 2015. A stipend of $500 from the Title III grant compensated each faculty and staff for their participation in training and evaluation meetings, artifact assessments of, prompt evaluations and revisions, progress report reviews, and for consultations to guide the assessment process.
By May 2015, we again had 56 student essays: 38 students in 3 faculty led immersions, 8 students form a course-based field experience from Geography, and 10 students representing 6 semester-long study abroad programs. These were distributed among the three review teams and evaluated as in the first round. We met on 20 May to analyze the results and again assess the process. The results were vastly different this second round: Over half, 29 students (52%) met or exceeded the benchmark for all three elements of R2 and only 10 students (18%) did not meet the benchmark for any of them. Further, 70% of the students met or exceeded the benchmark for Elements A and C, and 64% met or exceeded them for Element B. We believe that this vast improvement is in large part associated with the improved prompt\(^2\). See Table II for a comparison of the two rounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Meets or exceeds benchmark</th>
<th>Percentage of students achieving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Element A</td>
<td>Element B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2014, N=56</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2015, N=56</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

Based on the experiences of this group of nine artifact readers, it is clear that study abroad and immersion assessment – from development of the prompt to its application and uses – is a complex and involved process. Our experience highlights the importance of the prompt and how it is administered.

In fact, based on analysis and discussions in the May 2015 round of artifact reviews, the artifact readers developed further refinements to the prompt. These are captured in yet another iteration of the prompt – see Appendix III. The artifact readers recommend that this newest version be used for subsequent study abroad experiences and immersion experiences. And subsequent artifact reviews will have to determine whether further refinements to the prompt are in order.

While artifact readers did detect some differences between programs, it is far too early to make any conclusions between immersions, course based experiences and conventional study abroad programs. Sample sizes need to be much greater to make any supportable inferences about types of experiences and programs. Variations between and within each type were inconsistent. There appears to be, however, some sense among the assessors that how students are prepared for their experiences and programs, how they are monitored and guided during the experience, when and how the prompt is administered are also factors that need to be considered. In fact, CIE staff are now presenting an overview of the LE Core’s R2 global learning outcome as part of the study abroad orientation. Consideration also needs to be given to the goals of the program and the academic backgrounds and interests of the students in the programs. For example, undeclared sophomores may begin with a

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\(^2\) To be clear, the evidence does not support a contention that the improvement is because immersion experiences are a bigger portion of the sample. Much more work needs to be done, with statistically significant sample sizes, to be able to determine programmatic differences.
different set of personal backgrounds and professional skills than a senior language major with a well-developed understanding of the host culture language.

The committee of artifact readers believes that this process of evaluating study abroad and immersion artifacts and assessing student learning has been invaluable. Beyond highlighting needs and opportunities for program development and improvement, it serves as a meaningful professional development opportunity. As artifact readers, we increased our understanding of study abroad and immersions in ways that improve our effectiveness as teachers, program leaders and program administrators. Toward that end, it may be worthwhile to find ways of including prospective faculty and staff leaders in future rounds of study abroad and immersion assessments as a way of helping them develop and improve programs for which they will be responsible. Finally, this assessment project provides the basis for helping UWEC incorporate studies abroad and immersions into the LE Core.

In conclusion, we wish to thank Laurel Kieffer, as Title III-Grant Activity Director, for including study abroad and immersion assessment as part of the overall Title III project and for effectively organizing this assessment project. We also wish to thank Academic Affairs for supporting the assessment project with stipends and staff support. Given the conclusion of the Title III grant, we would like to encourage Academic Affairs to find a way for study abroad and immersion assessment to continue, especially now that the prompt can be considered a calibrated assessment tool. Specifically, we suggest future rounds of assessment in January and May of 2016, to which additional participants would be invited as a form of professional development. One option is for the Council on Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) to take over responsibility for this activity. Further, based on these experiences and with some additional work, CIGE may soon be able to make recommendations for how to include study abroad and immersions into the LE Core.

pk, 8 June 2015
Critical Reflective Essay
The meaningfulness of my learning abroad experience

Being part of a learning community means participating and sharing. We grow together and learn from the experiences, contributions and perspectives of each other. The university community – e.g., through the Blugold Commitment and the UW-Eau Claire Foundation – has helped make your learning abroad opportunity possible, and we want to know what you have learned and gained.

Therefore, we want you to write a 2-3 page, well-crafted essay in which you critically reflect on and evaluate your experience and its contribution to your cognitive and personal growth. Draw on specific examples, provide rich details, and take time to develop your thoughts and revise your essay. Remember, the Center for Writing Excellence can help you with any aspect of your essay, from getting started to the final proof-reads.

Your essay will be added to a collection of publicly accessible essays. They will be available to students who are thinking about studying abroad, to benefactors looking for ways of supporting students, and to faculty and administrators looking for ways to provide high quality learning abroad programs for our students. As this collection of essays grows, UW-Eau Claire will have a good record of the wide range of experiences our students have had around the world.

Below, we provide you with numerous prompts to help you get started. Use them to help you craft a well-organized essay with 1-2 main points or controlling ideas.

1. I learned two very important things from the people and places in which I had this experience.
2. What I learned over the course of this experience has influenced my life in three important ways.
3. This experience – and the knowledge that comes from it – has made me think differently about myself, my assumptions, and my place in the world.
4. My own home community or society would benefit from some of the practices of the society in which I lived.

In addition, please attach two pictures, with captions, that illustrate the points you make in your essay, and what was important and meaningful about your experience.

1 This project to collect essays begins in Fall 2013.
Feel free to include links to any other resources (images, videos, presentations) you wish to share. If not publicly available on-line, please submit the materials themselves. If you wish to explore any of the above questions in further detail, please feel free to include an addendum. Finally, feel free to make recommendations for how students can best prepare for a study/learning abroad experience like yours?

Finally, in a cover sheet, please provide the following background information:

Name:
Major(s)/Minor(s):
Site(s) of Experience:
Dates of Experience:
(Expected) Graduation Date:
Support received from UW-Eau Claire:
Critical Reflective Assignment
What I learned in my study abroad experience
2014-15 Academic Year

Background:

As the world becomes ever more complex and inter-connected, it becomes increasingly important to recognize, analyze, and evaluate those complexities and connections between systems, institutions, and issues in local and global contexts, and across cultures. Global Learning also explores the personal and social responsibility required for ethical global citizenship and develops the skills necessary to thrive in a pluralistic and globally interdependent world.

UW-Eau Claire has defined three elements to Global Learning. Study abroad experiences foster opportunities for global learning in significant and transformative ways. Students will:

A. **Demonstrate knowledge of the world's diverse cultures, environments, practices, or values.**
   While abroad, you may have encountered and engaged with a range of differences between your host country and the U.S. The experience of difference may have prompted you to reflect upon the nature of difference and how and why these differences exist and what they mean. Your return to the U.S. may have prompted further reflection upon difference.

B. **Learn to evaluate global systems, institutions and relationships of power in a historical or geographical context.**
   You may have also encountered and engaged with global, transnational forces and power (forces that shape societal and individual experiences in your host country, other countries you visited while abroad, and/or in the U.S.) You might have begun to ask questions about global forces and global dynamics and the way that they shape societal and individual experiences.

C. **Develop an understanding of the global implications of individual and collective actions.**
   Finally, as you study abroad, you may begin to question where you and your experiences, values, and actions fit within an increasingly globalized world. You may recognize that the choices that individuals and groups make have wide-reaching, transnational, even global effects.

To assist you in processing your study abroad experience, please respond to the questions on the next page. You are expected to critically reflect on and evaluate your study abroad experience and its contribution to your intellectual understanding, personal growth, and professional/career aspirations. Draw on specific examples, provide a level of detail that distinguishes this experience from all others. You should include the contributions of your coursework – as well as out-of-class experiences – in your answers.

Please take time to collect and develop your thoughts. Avoid broad generalizations regarding the culture as well as your experience such as “it was great” or “It changed my life”. Support your statements with specific examples for a reader who has never been to this country.

Students who provide exceptional answers to the questions will be invited to participate in the Provost’s Honor Symposium in the spring following the study abroad experience. Student work will be publicly available to faculty and administrators as evidence of the quality of learning study abroad programs provide our students, as well as to other students who are thinking about studying abroad, and to benefactors looking for ways of supporting high-impact programs for students. Submitted work will also be used as a component in assessing the merits of UW-Eau Claire’s study abroad programming.
Critical Reflective Assignment
What I learned in my study abroad experience

2014-15 Academic Year

Reflecting on your study abroad experience, please answer the following questions, using concrete examples to support any observations made. You may choose to answer each question individually, or to write an essay that addresses all of the questions. If answering individually, please allot at least three-four paragraphs to each question. If writing an essay, a minimum of 3 pages is expected. Be sure to include concrete examples to support any observations made.

Provide written responses to the following:

1. Provide an introduction and overview of your study abroad experience.

2. Using one to two examples, explain how your study abroad experience advanced your knowledge and understanding of the world’s diverse cultures, environments, practices and/or values.

3. Describe how your study abroad experience has impacted your knowledge and understanding of global systems, institutions, and relationships of power?

4. Identify and describe how a decision (or lack of a decision) made by people in your home community or country has impacted your host community or country. Or, if you prefer, identify and describe how a decision/lack of a decision made by people in your host community/country has impacted your home community/country.

5. Explore how your study abroad experience has impacted your professional or career goals or aspirations. What skills did you develop or enhance during your study abroad experience that might be transferable or beneficial in your future workplace?

6. Study abroad can be a transformative learning experience, in which students learn more about themselves and the world in which they live.
   a. Describe a disorienting dilemma you experienced while abroad and why you found it disorienting.
   b. Describe how the dilemma challenged your previous knowledge of the world’s cultures, environments, practices, or values.
   c. Explain how the dilemma helped you to understand how your decisions and the decisions of others have global implications.

7. Finally, please attach two pictures, with captions, that illustrate what was important and meaningful about your experience.

Create a cover sheet that provides the following background information:

Name:
Major(s)/Minor(s):
Site(s) of Experience:
Dates of Experience:
(Expected) Graduation Date:
Support from UW-Eau Claire: Scholarship name: ________________________ $______________

REV JAN 2015
Critical Reflective Assignment
What I learned in my study abroad experience
2015-16 Academic Year

As the world becomes ever more complex and inter-connected, it becomes increasingly important to recognize, analyze, and evaluate those complexities and connections between systems, institutions, and issues in local and global contexts, and across cultures. Global Learning also explores the personal and social responsibility required for ethical global citizenship and develops the skills necessary to thrive in a pluralistic and globally interdependent world. UW-Eau Claire has defined three elements to Global Learning, described below. Study abroad experiences foster opportunities for global learning in significant and transformative ways.

Reflecting on your study abroad experience, please answer each of the following questions individually, using concrete examples to support any observations made. You are expected to critically reflect on and evaluate your study abroad experience and its contribution to your intellectual understanding, personal growth, and professional/career aspirations. You should include the contributions of your coursework – as well as out-of-class experiences – in your answers. Avoid broad generalizations regarding the culture as well as your experience such as “it was great” or “it changed my life”. Support your statements with specific examples for a reader who has never been to this country.

1. Provide a brief introduction and overview of your study abroad experience (1-2 paragraphs).

2. Global Learning Element A: Demonstrate knowledge of the world’s diverse cultures, environments, practices, or values. While abroad, you may have encountered and engaged with a range of differences between your host country and the U.S. The experience of difference may have prompted you to reflect upon the nature of difference and how and why these differences exist and what they mean. Your return to the U.S. may have prompted further reflection upon difference.

   Using one to two examples, explain how your study abroad experience advanced your knowledge and understanding of ONE of the following: the world’s diverse cultures, environments, practices or values (2-3 paragraphs).

3. Global Learning Element B: Learn to evaluate global systems, institutions and relationships of power in a historical or geographical context. You may have encountered and engaged with global, transnational forces and power (forces that shape societal and individual experiences in your host country, and/or in the U.S.). You might have begun to ask questions about global forces and global dynamics and the way that they shape societal and individual experiences. Or, you may have learned about education, the media, religions, marriage and the family, civil society, healthcare, or other formal or informal institutions.

   Using one to two examples, describe how your study abroad experience has impacted your knowledge and understanding of ONE of the following: global systems, institutions, or relationships of power (2-3 paragraphs).

REV June 2015
Critical Reflective Assignment
What I learned in my study abroad experience
2015-16 Academic Year

4. **Global Learning Element C: Develop an understanding of the global implications of individual and collective actions.** As you study abroad, you may begin to question where you and your experiences, values, and actions fit within an increasingly globalized world. You may recognize that the choices that individuals and groups make have wide-reaching, transnational, even global effects.

   Using one to two examples, identify and describe how a decision (or lack of a decision) made by people in your home community or country has impacted your host community or country. Or, if you prefer, identify and describe how a decision/lack of a decision made by people in your host community/country has impacted your home community/country (2-3 paragraphs).

5. Describe a disorienting experience that challenged your assumptions, and why you found it disorienting. How did the experience challenge your previous knowledge of the world’s cultures, environments, practices, or values? How did the experience help you to understand how your decisions and the decisions of others have global implications? (2-3 paragraphs).

6. Explore and reflect on how you see your study abroad experience integrating into your life. How has your study abroad experience changed your goals, aspirations, or perceptions? Are you or do you plan to do anything differently after returning home from this study abroad experience? (2-3 paragraphs).

7. Finally, please attach two pictures, with captions, that illustrate what was important and meaningful about your experience.

*Students who provide exceptional answers to the questions will be invited to participate in the Provost’s Honor Symposium in the spring following the study abroad experience. Student work will be publicly available to faculty and administrators as evidence of the impact of learning study abroad programs for our students, as well as to other students who are thinking about studying abroad, and to benefactors looking for ways of supporting high-impact programs for students. Submitted work will also be used as a component in assessing the merits of UW-Eau Claire’s study abroad programming.*

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