Bringing the learning *home*

User's guide
to learning & teaching resources

A resource for studying abroad
Australian Learning & Teaching Council

Produced by Jan Gothard,
Greg Downey, & Tonia Gray

2012

The *Bringing the Learning Home* Team:

Jan Gothard (Murdoch, Project Leader)
Greg Downey (Macquarie)
Tonia Gray (University of Western Sydney)
Linda Butcher (Murdoch, Project Manager)

Design by Greg Downey

The BTLH Students were exchange students from Macquarie University, Murdoch University, and the University of Wollongong.

The objectives of the Bringing the Learning Home (BTLH) team included the development of a three-phase learning and teaching curriculum suitable for use with study abroad and exchange students across the Australian university sector. In its totality, the curriculum represents a semester-long course which supports the exchange experience. The BTLH materials consist of a series of ten teaching modules complemented by video clips, handouts, slides and a sample weblog (a blog or other online forum is ideal for in-country facilitation of skills development). The materials, including teaching strategies, exercises, suggestions for assessment, supplementary readings, workshop materials, sample student interventions and exemplary video presentations, are all available on the project's website.

Designed to encourage the development of skills in cultural competence and informed by the principles of experiential and reflective learning, the ten modules emphasise facilitated reflective activity to augment the mastery of new attitudes, behaviours and knowledge.

The project team wanted to create teaching materials suitable for presentation by international education office staff or by academics, and for use by individual students working independently. Our intention was to design materials which would be suitable for adaptation across individual campuses, and which could be fitted into different delivery timetables, either as a whole or in parts.

The approach taken was to focus initially on the traditional points of intervention for students going on exchange and study abroad – namely, pre-departure, in-country and after return – then to pull these moments apart to create a series of modules structured by over-arching themes which we consider transcend those three phases of exchange. The materials were also specifically made modular so that facilitators or presenters could choose which themes or modules were most appropriate for their own program's learning goals, the time available for delivery and intended outcomes. The versatile modular design allows elements of our material to be readily incorporated where appropriate into existing or potential programs. In addition, the careful articulation of materials across the duration of the exchange or study abroad experience serves to reinforce and consolidate student learning.

The materials support the whole exchange process from before departure to return, but a particularly important focus has been on 'bringing the learning home' and on making the most of exchange as an opportunity for life-long learning. Our project team believes strongly that one of the missed opportunities in the exchange experience is the failure to capitalise on

students' experience after their return: to reinforce and validate global competence; and to acknowledge and make use of the experience for the benefit both of the student and the university community. While researchers have pointed to the importance of re-entry, existing re-entry material has tended to focus not on educational, research, or skills-development objectives, but on psychological readjustment, self-reflection, social reintegration, and re-acculturation to daily life. The goal seems to be to return students to their pre-sojourn state rather than to incorporate experience into heightened competence and a new sense of self. While social and psychological reintegration is crucial, achieving educational goals for student internationalisation requires a greater concentration on consolidating cultural competence and increasing awareness. Professional development, and incorporating international experience into the student's tangible portfolio of assets, is another aspect of the re-entry process which has also been under-developed.

For personal and professional reasons – especially because the team combined expertise in experiential learning, history and anthropology – we were sceptical about some types of intercultural training, particularly those which assumed a single trajectory for intercultural development, or which treated other cultures as uniform. We believed that our materials had to be supple and to recognise that each student's journey of learning could be quite different. Our approach was to encourage students to use their academic and personal skills to engage intellectually with the exchange experience, rather than having them decide – prematurely perhaps – that they were 'competent' across cultures.

With abundant first-hand experience working with international students, minority groups, and even in disability studies, we knew that students and host cultures alike were far more diverse than is sometimes acknowledged. Although most of the BTLH curriculum could be adapted to other settings (and we encourage that), recognising that a student's home culture can vary as much as the destination culture is an important step in providing rich and robust support programming. The BTLH program was designed to support the sorts of exchange programs in which students from Australian campuses are most likely to engage; yet that does not mean our pool of students is homogenous. For example, in our survey of students, we found that a significant number of students going on exchange from Australia were themselves international students, in Australia to complete their undergraduate education. These and other factors make blanket statements about 'Us' and 'Them' tenuous and liable to problems; the BTLH materials specifically address this complexity.

This present project has also focused on helping students develop personal strategies to incorporate international experience into the curriculum of their home universities. This academic incorporation was deemed important for a number of reasons. Without this intervention, a rich resource to assist in the internationalisation of other students and the curriculum is lost; the students' experiences are under-valued by their home institutions; skills gained through international experience are not recognised or reinforced; and an

opportunity to disseminate information about study abroad programs among students is neglected.

Resources

The ten modules in our teaching portfolio are:

- Adaptation
- Communication
- Cultural relativism
- Education and culture
- Exploration
- Globalisation and cosmopolitanism
- Professionalisation
- Reflection
- Stereotypes
- Transformation

The Communications module can also be regarded as a resource module; it contains suggestions on, for example, writing reflective blog pieces, as well as comments on communication issues and challenges more generally.

The table below sets out the learning outcomes of modules, plus suggestions for sequencing. [See figure 1]

Figure 1

Module	Learning goals	Delivery mode for materials & themes
Exploration	To develop a sense of exploration prior to students' sojourns overseas in order that they learn more about their particular destination. To develop a greater awareness of and capacity to reflect on their own culture.	Mostly **pre-departure**; themes should be reinforced in country through facilitated reflection; picked up on re-entry though globalisation module.
Reflection	To understand the reflection cycle in experiential learning. To develop the skills of recalling past experiences by storytelling and photo-reflection (re-storying). To apply the basic tenets of reflection to subsequent study abroad experience. To become informed life-long learners by embedding aspects of reflection into their personal skill-set or toolkit.	**Pre-departure**; **in country** through facilitated reflection; revisited in the **re-entry** module.
Stereotypes	To recognise the difference between understanding cultural difference and engaging in stereotyping behaviour through, for example, reflection on images of Australians which students may encounter while sojourning overseas.	The majority of material is delivered in a **pre-departure** workshop, to be followed up with in-country reflections about encounters with stereotypes of Australians encountered.
Cultural relativism	To understand the concept of cultural relativism and how it differs from moral relativism. To learn to interpret new experience overseas through awareness of the tools of cultural analysis. To learn to apply the D.I.V.E (Describe–Interpret–Verify–Explain) model for cultural discovery and analysis.* To develop greater curiosity about other ways of life. To learn to avoid being excessively judgmental. To learn to investigate experience through the example of encounters with new cultural practices	Parts of this module are delivered in **pre-departure** phase, when students should be prepared for cultural difference, including the possibility of 'culture shock (see the Adaptation module); and parts on **re-entry**. Key concepts from the module should inform interaction with students in-country.
Communication	To be aware of potential problems in communication, including communication strategies that undermine other learning objectives while overseas. **This module also includes resource designed to refine students' writing ability and provide them with easy-to-follow advice about reflection assignments, online writing and other assignments.**	Themes are raised in **pre-departure** workshops. Resources should be made available through handouts or student handbook so that they can be referenced when necessary during other modules or on re-entry.

Adaptation	To understand the 'W' curve in the *transitioning* and *integrating* phases of study abroad. To understand and apply the basic tenets of *experience, reflection, processing and application*, to their study abroad experience. To identify the *deep learning experiences* students encounter. To be alert to the kaleidoscope of emotions students may encounter (homesickness, alienation and disequilibrium)as part of the adjustment phase.	**Pre-departure**; supported in country through facilitated reflection.
Transformation	To identify opportunities for personal growth embedded within the study abroad experience. To re-story their experiential learning cycle into behavioural change. To incorporate the basic tenets of the experiential learning cycle, *experience*, *reflection*, *processing* and *application*, into the study abroad experience. To become informed life-long learners by incorporating new-found knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours into their personal toolkit.	In-country through facilitated reflection; but primarily emphasised in the **re-entry** module.
Globalisation & cosmopolitanism	To develop and maintain a globalised world view. To develop interest in international events. To be aware of further opportunities overseas. To better understand the concept of 'global citizen'	The themes of this module are set up pre-departure through the exploration module; themes are re-visited in country through facilitated reflection; however the primary delivery focus is **re-entry**.
Education & culture	To understand education as a cultural institution and to reflect on educational differences. To generate effective strategies to better integrate exchange experience into Australian academic settings. To develop increased empathy for overseas students in Australia.	Elements of this module are set up before departure in the exploration module; themes are developed in country through facilitated reflection; but this module is mostly delivered on **re-entry**.
Professionalisation	To become oriented to potential professional and skills-based outcomes of study abroad prior to departure. To understand how to leverage study abroad experience into career opportunities, post-graduate education, and into greater expertise. To develop and articulate a better understanding of what students have learned in terms that will make sense to potential employers, both in interviews and in job letters. To develop a better understanding of the long-term and ongoing benefits of study abroad.	Most of the contents of the module are delivered on **re-entry**, although we recommend alerting students to Professionalisation goals and opportunities prior to their departure.

*See Brewer, Elizabeth, and Kiran Cunningham. 2009. Capturing Study Abroad's Transformative Potential. In Elizabeth Brewer and Kiran Cunningham, eds. *Integrating Study Abroad into the Curriculum: Theory and Practice Across the Disciplines*. 1-19. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

The materials make extensive use of concrete examples of learning experiences and insights provided by students on exchange programs who participated in the Bringing the Learning Home project.

To make the most of these resources before running workshops, we suggest that presenters familiarise themselves with each of the modules beforehand by working through the presenter's notes and accompanying slide presentation. These notes provide background to the aims of each module and our suggested strategies for delivery, as well as additional background material and other resources. Some workshops also require the preparation of handouts for students ahead of time – these are included as part of each module where relevant. Some handouts can be circulated to students electronically; some need to be printed out.

We also strongly suggest drawing on the expertise of past returned students by asking them to participate in these workshops where possible. Not only will this benefit departing or recently returned students, students' continued participation will reinforce the value of exchange for former exchange students and continue the process of reflection on their exchange experience.

Description of resources

Each module comprises:

- a set of notes for presenters. As teachers, we are aware that trying to conduct a workshop simply on the basis of another person's PowerPoint slides is not conducive to good teaching or learning outcomes. For many people, the material being delivered will be unfamiliar, and we have therefore sought to give a manageable but thorough background in the presenter's notes.

- a set of student notes and hand outs where appropriate;

- suggestions for further reading and resources for both teachers and students;

- a slide show in PowerPoint, pdf format, and Keynote (an alternative slide presentation software, often used with Apple computers), to accompany the presenter's notes and to serve as the backbone for the workshop presentation where suitable. We offer the presentations in these three different modes to facilitate their accessibility for presenters using different platforms. However, the availability of PowerPoint slides means that anyone who wishes to do so can simply pull out or modify slides from our resources to create presentations tailored to their own program requirements.

- an alternative Prezi version of many of the workshops. Prezi is a web-based presentation mode which gives a great deal of dynamism to a presentation.

NB: **We recommend consulting the PDF version for a workshop/presentation because of its formatting. The PowerPoint version may not display as well depending on the computer you are using! The slides make extensive use of fonts that you may not have.**

A key focus in preparing the project's written learning teaching resources has been making them accessible and attractive to all users, and to provide clearer articulation between the different elements. The format of these materials has been developed by team member and designer Greg Downey and is in a consistent and identifiable style in keeping with the project's visual identity.

In addition, our suite of teaching materials includes stand alone pre-departure and re-entry workshops (videos and PowerPoints) and an early, minimalist version of the 'professionalisation' workshop. These are made available for presenters who wish to focus only on these particular areas or who do not have the time or resources to offer all modules. Pre-departure and re-entry are the traditional moments of intervention for exchange students, so we believe these two presentations will be useful on many campuses and may provide the initial point of uptake of the BTLH materials. However, we urge anyone using these two teaching workshops or the professionalisation workshop as discrete presentations to first view all the associated modules in order to understand how we have conceptualised pre-departure, re-entry and professionalisation within the overall exchange trajectory.

Videos

Our teaching resources include an initial selection of 54 video clips produced in the course of the project.

Videos of workshop presentations

Pre-departure and re-entry workshops, and an earlier version of the professionalisation workshop (focusing on content rather than on student interaction), were video recorded and edited to provide examples of delivery or content of these workshops. These three workshops are available in the form of long video clips, but are also broken up into shorter topic-based clips to enable teachers and presenters to access video material more readily for their own purposes. The videos are useful in modelling a range of styles for delivering similar materials in different teaching situations. They demonstrate how different team members have presented the workshop materials. All are available as online resource on the project's website; each has accompanying PowerPoint slides.

Videos of student interviews

Edited interviews with students appear both in their entirety and as shorter clips which focus on topics of particular relevance for teaching.

Videos have been put as unlisted clips on YouTube. A full list of videos with a description of their content is available at the Bringing the Learning Home project website. Video resources have been broken into three sections:

- http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/project/btlh/vid_interviews.html
- http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/project/btlh/vid_predeparture.html
- http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/project/btlh/vid_reentry.html

All video material is provided under a Creative Commons licence:

> **'No Derivative Works** — you may not alter, transform, or build upon this work'.

This means that the material may not be altered by any video editing process; however, clips can be embedded within other study abroad teaching programs, such as in your own individually tailored workshops, if you choose.

The blog & in-country support & reflection

A weblog, a Blackboard or other LMS-style interface, a Wikispace, or a Facebook group: there are many possibilities for establishing a forum for supporting student learning while students are on exchange. A number of the modules suggest in-country delivery or support of their themes, and a blog or similar forum is probably the best way of facilitating in-country activities, through direct intervention and reflective questioning.

Notes on writing reflective blog entries have been included as part of our teaching materials in our Communications module. Additional thoughts on the use of a blog or other forum such as Facebook are available in that module.

The BTLH team chose a weblog because we particularly wanted to encourage photo-reflection as a tool for learning; the blog lent itself to this approach. In addition, we knew that our materials were to be made publicly available and wanted to make certain that students understood this possibility. *Oz Students Abroad* (http://ozstudentsabroad.com) was established through Wordpress, and though the weblog is no longer active, it remains accessible as a model of one type of learning and teaching resource, which can be set up to support students during the in-country phase of the exchange experience.

Over three semesters of our project, nearly 500 entries and comments were posted on this blog and by the end of 2011, more than 10,000 viewings had been registered. The team monitored the blog, responded to written and photo posts and actively encouraged reflection and experiential learning. However, there is little doubt that *requiring* students to engage on the blog, or on a closed forum such as a Moodle or Blackboard, by making it a requirement of a credit-bearing course, would increase student activity and its benefit to students in terms of developing skills of active reflection. For this reason, we recommend that teachers who are able to do so try and encourage participation by giving students credit for this sort of in-country activity.

Campus internationalisation & Bringing the Learning Home

In Australia today, universities' aspirations for their graduates almost invariably include attributes based around ideas of 'becoming global citizens' who can 'engage in an internationalised world'.

According to their respective websites, Murdoch University strives to have its students acquire a global perspective through 'awareness of and respect for the social, biological, cultural and economic interdependence of global life'; University of Melbourne expects its graduates to become active global citizens who accept 'social and civic responsibilities', are advocates 'for improving the sustainability of the environment', and who have 'a broad global understanding, with a high regard for human rights, equity and ethics'; while Monash University prepares its graduates to be 'responsible and effective global citizens' who 'engage in an internationalized world', 'exhibit cross-cultural competence' and 'demonstrate ethical values'.

As these descriptions attest, however, and as international higher education pundits such as Madeleine Green (2012) and Hans de Wit (2012) have argued, the meanings of terms such as 'global citizen', 'internationalisation', and 'global engagement' are hard to pin down and contextually dependent. Some of the measures which universities use to demonstrate their internationalisation credentials include:

- the extent of student mobility in terms of students going on exchange or on study abroad trips;
- the number of units with 'international' or 'global' or similar in their titles, for example international relations, international business, Chinese business economics, Islamic law, or global engagement;
- the number of students enrolled in foreign languages;
- majors or degree programs specifically targeting international topics, for example, international development; and
- above all, the number of international students enrolled.

Equally difficult to define, though equally popular, is the associated notion of 'campus internationalisation', which has seen a two-fold emphasis on curriculum internationalisation, largely driven in Australia through the work of Betty Leask; and better integration of international students into the classroom and into campus life. The ALTC project Finding Common Ground (Arkoudis et al 2010) has recently focused on this particular element of campus internationalisation. As part of these sorts of initiatives, academics are being encouraged to become more aware of international students in the Australian classroom and of the value of incorporating their perspectives into classroom discussion. At the same time

the diversity of perspective which already exists within the domestic student cohort, in terms as broad-ranging as gender, age and maturity, regional background, internal or external modes of study, part time or full time, ethnic or migrant background, and indigeneity, is increasingly being acknowledged.

The experience of having studied abroad should add another rich element to that diverse mix. Yet the overwhelming experience of returned exchange students is that their experience is not acknowledged or valued; indeed that it is largely irrelevant on their return to their home classroom. Students often say when they come back from exchange that they seem to pack away all their experiences – their travel and personal experiences but also their academic learning – into a suitcase, never to draw on them again; that even the academics who supported them going abroad are not interested in their academic experiences on return.

Teachers may not be indifferent to a student's international experience but the idea of capitalising on it, for the benefit of the rest of the class as well as for the individual student, has little or no currency in Australian classrooms, despite universities' evidently genuine concern with campus internationalisation and creating globally-engaged citizens.

One of the beliefs which motivated the Bringing the Learning Home project team was that the academic insights and the knowledge of other national approaches to particular disciplines gained while students were on exchange, was potentially an important learning resource for Australian universities. We continue to believe that the returned exchange or study abroad student can help facilitate campus internationalisation in their home classrooms simply by sharing their knowledge of international approaches to education. Further, we believe the returned exchange student in the Australian classroom can serve as a conduit between the local and the 'international' student: part of the 'common ground', in the parlance of the Finding Common Ground project (Arkoudis et al 2010) and a powerful means of facilitating interaction between those two groups of students.

However, while returned students can be encouraged by study abroad educators or supportive re-entry programs to look for ways to incorporate new ideas about different approaches to education into their continuing approach to learning, it is clearly difficult for students to drive this process without some active encouragement on the part of their classroom teachers. The Australian tertiary education sector has not yet developed a culture which values study abroad and exchange as a learning activity, and does not yet capitalise on the academic experiences of returned exchange students in Australian classrooms.

We recognise of course that enhanced campus internationalisation cannot be brought about by exchange alone, although we would strongly support universities in setting a goal for participation in exchange, at the very least. But the Bringing the Learning Home team believes that formalising and supporting the attainment of learning outcomes for study

abroad and exchange, and requiring that the 'learning be brought home', can help facilitate this process. As part of this, a culture of viewing exchange as an academic learning opportunity should be fostered across campus, amongst students, international office staff and academic staff.

References

Arkoudis, S, Baik, C, Chang, S, Lang, I, Watty, K, Borland, H, Pearce, A & Lang, J. 2010. *Finding common ground: enhancing interaction between domestic and international students*. Melbourne Vic.: ALTC.
http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/projectsites/enhancing_interact.html

De Wit, Hans. 2012. 'From globalisation to global citizenship'. In *University World News*. March 2011. Issue 211.
http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20120229100311808

Green. Madeleine. 2012. 'Global citizenship – what are we talking about and why does it matter?'. In *Trends and Insights for International Education Leaders*. January 2012
http://www.nafsa.org/about/default.aspx?id=30005

Credits

Cover photos by Lisa Redwood (snow scene in Alaska) and Zhijia Lai (sunset in Venice).

Photo of lightning strike in the US by Liam Turbet.

'Snow angels' by Thomas Nolan.

Bringing the Learning Home
ozstudentsabroad.com
http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/project/btlh/

Australian Government
Office for Learning and Teaching

Office for Learning and Teaching
Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
GPO Box 9880, Location code N255EL10
Sydney NSW 2001
Australia
learningandteaching@deewr.gov.au