**Study-Abroad Programs: Promoting Global Engagement While Maintaining Academic Integrity**

**By**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Study-abroad programs: Promoting global engagement while maintaining academic integrity**

Many colleges and universities are facing the dilemma of, while encouraging students to study abroad, they are faced with assessing the myriad of study-abroad opportunities.

This paper examines various study-abroad models, discusses the advantages and limitations of each, and suggests ways of evaluating not only the programs but also of assessing student learning and achievement while studying internationally.

The paper concludes with an example of a very successful short-term study abroad-program developed by the author.

International study for undergraduate is to be encouraged, but colleges need to be aware of possible pitfalls.

**Study-abroad programs: Promoting global engagement while maintaining academic integrity**

A generation or two ago, the children of privilege would take a “grand tour” of Europe upon graduation from an elite college. Other privileged graduates would spend a year or two as Peace Corp volunteers in a third-world country. But for most college graduates, a steady job was the immediate post-graduation goal. In addition very few U.S. students had an opportunity to study abroad while in college. This was not a priority for colleges or for undergraduates. The limited number of undergraduates who did study abroad reported a life-changing experience[[1]](#footnote-1).

Today the study abroad experience is becoming more common and at some colleges it is either mandatory or “strongly encouraged”[[2]](#footnote-2). At many colleges, international study is a process that aims to complement the undergraduates’ entire collegiate experience. From a practical perspective, for many young adults this will be the only time they will have an opportunity to immerse themselves in a foreign culture, living and studying in the host country rather than being a tourist.

In this paper, I will describe various study-abroad models, discuss some of the benefits of studying abroad, address some home-college concerns, and provide details of a highly successful program that I have developed.

Models

1. Direct enrolment – This presents two options:
2. The student withdraws from his/her home college, enrolls in the host college, and at the conclusion of the course of study applies for reenrollment at the home institution, while seeking to obtain credit for the courses taken abroad.
3. The student remains enrolled and pays tuition at the home institution which in turn arranges for the student to attend the host college as a visiting international student.

In the first option the student is faced with the stress of navigating admissions, registration, and housing issues, but will generally find this to be a less expensive option due to lower tuition at most overseas universities.

1. Exchange Partnerships – Several universities have created global partnerships facilitating student (and sometimes faculty) exchanges[[3]](#footnote-3). These connections permit students to enroll at their home institutions while taking classes at a college in another country. A possible drawback with this model is the issue of tuition equity. Tuition costs at most U.S colleges is considerably higher than that at overseas institutions (specifically private U.S. colleges). This can create an imbalance when U.S. students pay tuition at their home colleges while studying at a less expensive host university. The reverse, of course, is true for international students studying in the U.S.
2. International Campus – A limited number of U.S. colleges have established campuses overseas, staffed by their faculty and support personnel[[4]](#footnote-4). Since most of these campuses are accredited by U.S. agencies, academic standards can be assured. This enables students from other colleges to enroll at these campuses and transfer credits to their home institutions. Nevertheless this is an expensive undertaking for the U.S.-based colleges to establish, staff, govern, and maintain a global institution.
3. Short-Term Programs – Many students need little encouragement to sign up for a study-abroad program offered by their college, especially when the college takes care of most of the logistics, including travel, accommodation, and field trips, and the students receive college credit for the experience. In most cases, this opportunity to participate in a short-term program is more attractive that a semester or a full year abroad. For many it is seen as a “working vacation” that balances classroom study with travel, sightseeing, and other entertaining educational activities[[5]](#footnote-5).

Benefits of Study Abroad

In recent years there have been several studies seeking to measure the benefits gained by students studying abroad. [[6]](#footnote-6) While most of the studies report qualitative data, a study by the University System of Georgia shows that students who study abroad tend to have higher grade point averages (GPAs) and better college completion rates than their peers. (These results may be biased in that only the higher performing students are selected or choose to study abroad.) Never the less, the qualitative data summarized in the NAFSA report indicates that study-abroad experiences can have a long-lasting impact on participants’ careers, education, and world views. The participants benefit not only academically but professionally, culturally, and personally as well.

Concerns and Cautions

Not all study-abroad programs are created equal. Some are more expensive than others, some may expose the students to personal risk, and there are home-institution concerns about academic integrity and learning outcomes. I will address each of these issues.

1. Cost. Although tuition at most U.S colleges and universities is higher than at international schools, students still face additional expenses related to travel, accommodation, and dining. Also, short-term programs during inter-terms and the summer are often assessed additional tuition and fees. Each university develops its own model for addressing these expenses. Some colleges charge students its usual tuition and fees, pays the host institution or third-party provider fees, and retains any surplus which is a net financial gain for these institutions. Other colleges charge students the host program costs and adds a service fee, often 5-10% of the costs. Other colleges, for example Goucher College, gives each student a grant to assist with the addition costs incurred in studying abroad – this is especially useful for short-term programs that are not covered by the regular semester tuition charges.
2. Risk. The US Department of State regularly issues travel alerts and warnings[[7]](#footnote-7). Colleges, students, and parents should familiarize themselves with all warnings when planning to travel overseas. Schools may be liable for any injuries suffered by students travelling abroad on a school-approved program. Colleges should discourage study in a country under a travel warning or alert. If students insist on participating in such a program, they should have the option of withdrawing from their home college, enrolling directly in the host institution, and later applying for readmission to their home college. This option relieves their college of any liability associated with the potential risk.
3. Rigor. Faculty are, quite justifiably, concerned about the academic quality, integrity, and rigor of the host institution. *Will the course content and assessment meet the same standards as our on-campus courses?* Colleges can address these concerns by reviewing the host institutions accreditations. Some international colleges have obtained accreditation from US-based associations, others have regional or national accreditation. This is an important first step in evaluating programs. Next the faculty should request course syllabuses and instructor qualifications. Fortunately these are usually available on college websites. Most colleges already have a process for evaluating transfer credits submitted by students who have taken summer courses elsewhere or who are transferring in from other schools. This same process can be utilized for foreign transfer credits.
4. Cultural. To gain maximum benefit from studying abroad students must actually become immersed in the host culture and not merely hang out with their home-country peers. Many international colleges assign US students to an international hall where most of the residents are not from the host country. In many situations the American students are housed together. This inhibits the students’ opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture. Preferable alternatives are to encourage homestays (students live with host families) or to integrate Americans with host-country students in residence halls or apartments.

To conclude, faculty and administrators must try to balance the benefits of a study-abroad experience with the risks and uncertain academic quality of the programs. Learning should not be limited to the classroom but is enhanced through living amongst and interacting with people in a new environment.

A Sample Program

In 2004 the author was invited to spend his six-month sabbatical as a visiting professor at the National University of Ireland, Galway. This was his first visit to Ireland, and he rented a house for his family in a residential neighborhood in County Galway. His five children enrolled in local schools, and the family worked hard to become integrated into the local community. This inspired him to plan a study-abroad program with the aim of immersing students into the culture of Ireland while providing quality instruction that blended culture with management.

For centuries Ireland was an English colony. The colonists ruled the colony with an iron fist, relegating the native population to second-class status. While the English “invaders” were aligned with the protestant Church of England, the native Irish were Catholic. While much has been written about the conflict between Protestants and Catholics (officially called “the troubles”) in reality the conflict has been between “Invaders” and “Natives”. Although Ireland became an independent republic in the 1920s, essentially it still remained an agrarian economy, and retained very strong ties to the Church in Rome. Despite its tragic history, or maybe because of it, Ireland has produced countless writers, poets, artists, and musicians.

Until the 1990s Ireland was regarded as the “poorest of the rich nations”. Then its economy grew to one of the richest and strongest in the world. During these “Celtic Tiger” years, Ireland benefited from partnerships with government, business, and labor unions, and received significant direct foreign investments. However at the end of 2008 Ireland encountered a severe banking and real estate crisis. With assistance from the European Central Bank, Ireland recovered from the recession and is once more an attractive location for foreign investment.

It is the author’s belief that it is impossible for students to study the management practices, the economy, or really any aspect of a country without first gaining a basic understanding of that country’s culture.

This study-abroad program has two primary learning objectives:

1. To immerse students into the culture (history, literature, theater, religion, social norms) of Ireland via lectures and field trips to sites of historic and cultural significance. The course concludes with a medieval banquet and traditional Irish entertainment at an historic castle.
2. To study the economy, entrepreneurship, management practices, and business climate of modern Ireland including its role in the European Union via lectures, meetings with business leaders, and visits to national and international businesses.

To achieve these objectives, the program has three components:

1. In the term preceding the trip to Ireland, students participate in a series of orientation seminars so they can “hit the ground running” when they arrive in Ireland. Students watch a selection of movies based in Ireland, write book reports on assigned Irish novels, and participate in seminars to discuss the movies and assigned readings.
2. Classes in Ireland begin with several guest lectures from academics at the host institution. Lecture topics include the writings of James Joyce, the poetry of WB Yeats, Irish history, and Ireland’s religious heritage. These classroom sessions are reinforced with field trips to cultural and historic sites, and an evening of traditional music and dance at an Irish Cabaret. The program concludes with a medieval banquet at an historic castle,
3. Ireland has been a laboratory of economic change and business innovation. These are addressed via a series of lectures from economic and management faculty at the host universities, and also from practicing business leaders and entrepreneurs. These lectures are supplemented with visits to selected national and international businesses, large and small, established and entrepreneurial.

The net result is that the students achieve an excellent understanding of Ireland’s role in the world economy while appreciating Ireland’s unique culture. The Appendix includes the 2017 course syllabus. Student reaction to the course has been extremely positive.

Designing this program is no easy task. It involved meetings with colleagues at the host institution and with business leaders to insure a broad scope of lectures and field trips. Logistics included reserving classrooms, securing accommodations, booking coaches for field trips, and a multitude of other arrangements. It was essential to have a “point person” on the ground to assist and make the necessary introductions. During the program, the professor in on duty 24/7, attending lectures, coordinating activities, grading assignments, and numerous other managerial responsibilities.

After eight very successful programs, the author can attest that the course has achieved its objectives of providing a rigorous academic experience, blending culture with academics.

Conclusion

This paper recognizes the trend towards international study. Increasingly U.S undergraduate are choosing to study abroad – sometimes in a short-term program and other times in a semester or year-long course of study. While college advisors should be encouraging students to get out of their comfort zone and become immersed in a foreign culture, these advisors also need to evaluate the academic integrity of the available study-abroad opportunities, while recognizing the risks associated with travelling internationally.

For many students, study-abroad is often a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will broaden their horizons and begin the process of developing global citizenship.

**APPENDIX**

**SAMPLE SYLLABUS**

**Business Administration 390-01**

**The Culture & Business of Ireland**

**Spring 2017**

**Professors**

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**Course Description**

Twenty-five years ago Ireland was regarded as the “poorest of the rich nations”. Then its economy grew to one of the richest and strongest in the world. During these “Celtic Tiger” years, Ireland benefited from partnerships with government, business, and labor unions, and received significant direct foreign investments. However at the end of 2008 Ireland encountered a severe banking and real estate crisis. This course has two primary objectives:

1. To immerse students into the culture (history, literature, theater, religion, social norms) of Ireland via lectures and field trips to sites of historic and cultural significance. The course will conclude with a medieval banquet and traditional Irish entertainment at an historic castle.
2. To study the economy, entrepreneurship, management practices, and business climate of modern Ireland including its role in the European Union via lectures, meetings with business leaders, and visits to national and international businesses.

**Learning Objectives**

During the course you should

* develop an understanding of the culture of Ireland
* critically evaluate the unique economic, management, and business environment of Ireland

**My Expectations**

Class attendance and participation are course requirements. Since learning is facilitated via class discussion, class attendance should be a major priority.

**Reading List**

Required

1. R.F. Foster, *Luck and the Irish: a Brief History of Change, 1970-2000*. Penguin, 2008
2. James Joyce, *The Dead,* from *The Dubliners,* 1914

Select one of the following

1. Michael Foley, Kings of September: The day Offaly denied Kerry five in a row. O’Brien, 2007 [A true story about the business of amateur Celtic football]
2. Tom Lyons & Richard Curran, Fingers, The Man Who Brought Down Irish Nationwide and Cost Us €5.48B. Gill & Macmillan, 2013 [An account of the Irish banking crash]
3. Frank McCourt, *Angela’s Ashes.* Scribner, 1996 [Frank McCourt’s memoir of his childhood in Ireland in the 1930s]
4. Belinda McKeon, *Solace*. Scribner,2011 [A story of a father clinging to the old country and a son plunging into the new, post Celtic Tiger]
5. Tomás O’Crohan, *The Islandman.* Oxford University Press, 1951 [Born in 1856, O’Crohan writes in the tradition Irish language about his life in the remote Blasket Islands]
6. Donal Ryan, The Spinning Heart. Steerforth Press, 2014 [A novel about the aftermath of the Irish economic crisis]
7. Colm Tóibín, *Brooklyn: A novel.* Scribner, 2009 [A story about a girl who moves from small-town Ireland to New York following World War Two]

Course Pack

You will assemble a course pack containing articles, literature, and cases selected by the lecturers. There will be reading assignments for most class sessions.

**Assessment**

1. You are to write book reports on the Foster book and the selected novel, and a review of the Joyce short story.
2. You are to write three papers, due at the end of weeks 1-3, based on the reading, lectures, and discussions. Topics will be provided at the beginning of each week.
3. You will keep a journal (photos, videos, script) of your insights and experiences.
4. Students will form teams of 3 members. The task for each team is to develop a profile of an Irish business. Topics will be assigned on Tuesday April 25.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

1. Book Reports & Review 25%
2. Papers (3) 45%
3. Journal 10%
4. Project 20%

**Logistics**

Housing: Students will be accommodated in fully furnished apartments from Thursday April 20 through Saturday May 20, 2017.

Classes: Unless otherwise noted, classes will be held in GO 11 – Library Seminar Room, on the campus of the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Lunch: On the days we have class on the NUI Galway campus lunch will be provided in a university dining room. Many of the lecturers will be joining us for lunch so that you can continue discussion in this informal setting.

**Winter Term Seminars**

A series of four or five seminars will be scheduled during winter term 2017 to introduce students to the history, literature, and culture of Ireland and to prepare them for the intensive spring-term course. At the seminars I will also discuss the logistics for the course and emphasize my expectations for each student.

**Course Outline & Itinerary**

**ORIENTATION**

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| **Friday****April 21** | **Room: AC 201** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Welcome sessionJim Browne, President of NUI GalwayProfessors Roger Dean & Aidan Daly |  |
| 11:00 a.m. | A History of Galway CityPeadar O’Dowd |  |
| 12:00 noon. | Lunch |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | Walking tour of historic GalwayTour guide: Peadar O’Dowd |  |

**WEEK 1 Themes: The Culture of Ireland, Economic Development in Ireland**

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| **Monday April 24** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | *The Dead* by James JoyceProfessor Hubert McDermott, English Department**Analysis of *The Dead* due at beginning of class**  | *The Dead* from the *Dubliners*  |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | Ireland’s Recent HistorySpeaker: Professor Geroid O Tuathaigh, History Department | Articles in Course Pack |
| **Tuesday****April 25**  | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Attracting Mobile Investments to IrelandRegional Manager, Industrial Development Agency  | Article in Course Pack |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | The Irish Economy, Present and FutureProfessor Alan Ahearne, Economics Department, and Chairman of the Central Bank of Ireland | Articles in Course Pack |
| **Wednesday****April 26** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Aspects of Irish Industrial RelationsDr. Mary Quinn, Management Department | Article in course pack |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | Innovation ManagementMike Moroney, Management Department | Article in course pack |
| **Thursday****April 27** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | The Poetry of W.B. YeatsDr. Riana O'Dwyer, English Department | Selections in course pack |
| 12:00 noon | Field trip and lunch: Coole Park. Now a nature reserve, Coole Park was the home of Lady Augusta Gregory dramatist and co-founder, with Edward Martyn and W.B. Yeats, of the Abbey Theatre.<http://www.coolepark.ie/> |  |
| 4:15 p.m. | An Overview of Christianity in IrelandUniversity Chaplain |  |
| **Friday****April 28** |  |  |
| 5:00 p.m. |  | **Paper # 1 due** |
| 6:30 p.m.  | Greyhound Racing: History and Business StrategyFintan Monahan, General Manager, Galway Greyhound Stadium |  |
| 7:00 p.m. | Dinner and a “Night at the Dogs,” Galway Greyhound Stadium |  |
| **Saturday****April 29** | **Bus departs at 10:30 a.m.** |  |
| Morning | Field trip: Tour of the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher.<http://www.bamjam.net/Ireland/Burren.html><http://www.cliffsofmoher.ie/TheCliffs.aspx> |  |
| Evening | Fleadh na gCuach (The Cuckoo Festival), Kinvara<http://www.galwaytourism.ie/event/Fleadh-na-gCuach-01st---04th-May-2015-n139.html> |  |

**WEEK 2 Theme: Management and Entrepreneurship in Ireland**

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| **Monday****May 1** | **Bank holiday - May Day** |  |
| **Tuesday****May 2** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Marketing, with an Emphasis on Services MarketingDr. Aidan Daly, Marketing Department | Article in Course Pack |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | Forum Theater sessionDr. Aidan Daly, Marketing Department |  |
| **Wednesday****May 3** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | The Laws and Regulations of the EU and their Impact on IrelandAnna-Louise Hinds, School of Law | Case in Course Pack |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch  |  |
| 1:05 p.m. | Train to Dublin |  |
| 4:15 p.m. | Company visit: Jameson Irish WhiskeyGlobal Senior Marketing Manager |  |
| 6:00 p.m. | Check in at The Abbey Court Hostel, 29 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1<http://www.abbey-court.com/> 353 (0)1 878 0700, |  |
| 7:00 p.m. | Dinner and Cabaret with traditional live Irish music and Irish dancingArlington Hotel O’Connell Bridge, 25 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1 |  |
| **Thursday****May 4** | **Visit to the National College of Ireland, Dublin** |  |
| 10:00 a.m. | Human Capital as a Source of Competitive AdvantageDr. Colette Darcy, Vice Dean Postgraduate Studies & Research, NCI |  |
| 11:30 a.m. | Entrepreneurship, Questions, Some AnswersProfessor Jimmy Hill, VP Academic Affairs and Research, NCI |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | Lunch |  |
| 2:00 p.m. | Establishing an Irish business in Singapore ….. with a minimalist business plan! |  |
| 6:30 p.m. | Dinner and Storytelling at The Brazen Head  |  |
| **Friday****May 5** | **National College of Ireland, Dublin** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | My Journey to Establish SPARKDIGITAL |  |
| 12:00 noon | From Multinationals to Change XFounder and CEO |  |
| 1:15 p.m. | Lunch |  |
| 2:15 p.m. | Global Supply Change Management in PharmaceuticalsPfizer  | Company profile |
| 4:00 p.m. | Company visit: Guinness Storehouse |  |
| **Saturday****May 6** |  |  |
| 9:00 p.m. |  | **Paper #2 due** |

**WEEK 3 Theme: Business Leadership in Ireland**

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| **Monday****May 8** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Marketing strategy at DubarryDirector of Marketing, Dubarry Ltd | Company profile |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| **Tuesday****May 9** | **County Mayo - Bus leaves at 8:30 a.m.** |  |
| 9:30 a.m. | Company visit: McHale Agricultural Machinery, Ballinrobe | Company profile |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch and company visit: Hollister, Ballina | Company profile |
| 3:30 p.m. | Company visit: Glamping Sligo | Company profile |

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| **Wednesday****May 10** |  |  |
| 9:30 a.m. | Company visit: Boston Scientific | Company profile |
| 2:00 p.m. | Company visit: AVAYA Ltd - *Digital Presentation* | Company profile |
| 3:30 p.m. | Life after investment bankingFounder and CEO Hillwalking Ireland |  |
| **Thursday****May 11** | **Room: GO 67** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Marketing Tourism, particularly the Wild Atlantic WayFáilte Ireland |  |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| 2:00 p.m. | Company visit: ThermoKing | Company profile |
| 4:00 p.m. | Company visit: Penn Engineering | Company profile |
| **Friday****May 12** |  |  |
| All day | Field trip to the Aran Islands<http://www.aranislands.com/> | All day |
| **Saturday****May 13** |  |  |
| 5:00 p.m. |  | **Paper #3 due** |

**WEEK 4 Theme: The Liberal Arts, Business, and Entertainment in Ireland**

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| **Monday****May 15** |  |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Creative WritingIrene Graham |  |
| 12:00 noon | Lunch |  |
| **Tuesday****May 16** |  |  |
| 8:45 p.m. | Medieval Banquet: Bunratty Castle, County Claire**Bus departs at 7:00 p.m.** |  |
| **Wednesday****May 17** |  |  |
| 5:00 p.m. | Project reports due | **Projects due** |
| 9:00 p.m. | Electronic journal due | **Journal due** |
| **Thursday****May 18** | **Room: GO 11** |  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Project presentations |  |
| 12:30 p.m. | Lunch  |  |
| 1:30 p.m. | Project presentations |  |
| 3:00 p.m. | Course wrap-upProfessors Aidan Daly & Roger Dean |  |
| Evening | Farewell reception |  |

1. In 1973 the author, a third-year undergraduate at Australia’s University of Queensland, was selected to participate in a unique program that began with an orientation at the University of Cambridge followed by an internship at IBM in London. This program was sponsored by the English Speaking Union in Australia and the Career Research Advisory Council in the UK. Following graduation the student entered graduate school in the U.S. and has since worked in Australia, Ireland, Italy, and the U.S. His international career had its roots in the 1973/74 study-abroad program. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example: Goucher College requires all students to have a study-abroad experience. Davidson College strongly encourages foreign language majors to spend at least one semester abroad. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The University of Nebraska at Omaha hosts students from Shizuoka University in Japan. Washington & Lee University School of Law has both a faculty and students exchange relationship with Trinity College, Dublin in Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Until recently Geneva College maintained a campus in Rome. New York University has many international campuses including Abu Dhabi, Buenos Aires, Florence, and London. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The author has created a highly successful short-term program which will be discussed in detail later in this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.nafsa.org/Resource-Library\_Assets/Public\_Policy/Measuring\_the\_Impact\_of\_Study\_Abroad/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html [↑](#footnote-ref-7)