

Questions of Cultural Competency:

If there is a picture that captures you feeling, please feel free to incorporate that in your response.

Two references for this material are

- What's Up with Culture, <http://www.pacific.edu/culture>
- At home in Japan: <http://nealrc.osu.edu/AHIJ/index.html>

Before Departure: For Anticipation and Expectation Exercise, see material at end.

Week 1: Have you been able to settle the logistical and practical arrangements? What were some of the most critical issues to resolve? Please check any that apply and **elaborate.**

- Transferring or changing money
- Grocery shopping
- Restaurants
- Public transportation
- Telephones (cell phone or pay phone?)
- Homestay culture (if appropriate)
- Lab needs such as computer, internet access, desk, etc.
- Places to go socially
- Visa & administrative processes
- Preparing for your lab research

Describe your surrounding, how you get to work, where you shop, and other features of your daily life. What are some of your first impressions of your new environment? (Think about the city, the workplace, your housing, the people, etc.)

For Further Reference: Common Reactions to cultural transition:

<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Section 1.7.1 (is this too soon?)

Transition Tips: <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Section 1.7.3 (I like this one)

Week 2: What have you experienced so far that you may not have expected? Think of Critical Incidents that have surprised you during your experiences within your host country. Please write one or more of these down. What did you learn from this and how has it affected your view of the new culture? What did you observe about yourself during these experiences?

For Further Reference:

Critical Incidents a Definition: **[See Below]**

Common Reactions to cultural transition: <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Section 1.7.1

Transition Tips: <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Section 1.7.3

Week 3: How have you been received in your host country? What have your host mentors, colleagues and friends said that reveals their view of the U.S. or of their expectations of you?) What do they know of your culture and how do you interact with one another?

For Further Reference: Revisit your handout on American Values, or *What's Up With Culture* website for more information on US-American Values:
<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Section 1.5.2

Week 4: What have you noticed is different in how people communicate in your new environment from that of how people communicate back home? (Aside from just verbal forms, also think about touch, eye contact, gestures, personal space and timing i.e. turn-taking, pauses, silences and interruptions.)

For Further Reference: Contrasting Communication Styles, available at
<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Section 1.6.3.

Week 5: What is the most valuable lesson you have learned so far in your host environment? How will this impact your view of your host country and your own culture?

Week 6: Now that you have a few weeks left, is there anything you wish you had known before arriving in your host country? If so, could you describe that. What advice would you give next year's participants?

Week 7: Your experience will soon come to an end. What would be a culturally appropriate way to capture your memories and say goodbye? (i.e. taking last minute photos and getting addresses of overseas friends / colleagues) How will you preserve your memories (journals, souvenirs, photos, videos, art work)?

For Further Reference: Top 10 Challenges and Top 10 Tips:
<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Challenges: Section 2.3.4, Tips: Section 2.3.3

Week 8: Home is waiting for you. What do you most look forward to and how do you hope to integrate your new perspectives, academic and career as well as personal, upon your return? Please fill in Exercise C, section 2.2 of *What's Up with Culture* (or see this link).

For Further Reference: Top 10 Challenges and Top 10 Tips:
<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/> Challenges: Section 2.3.4, Tips: Section 2.3.3

What Is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident is an occurrence that in some way raises questions and leads the participants to wonder “What just happened?” and “Why?” Everyone who goes abroad is, eventually and inevitably, faced with some kind of a situation we could call a critical incident, *even if s/he is unaware of them at the time or can't figure out what was going on immediately*. Such encounters illustrate the tricky nature of interpreting everyday events in a different culture.

Critical incidents often revolve around a misunderstanding, a dispute, a linguistic error, or some other kind of cultural faux pas. They are the sorts of events that highlight different cultural assumptions and behaviors. They are about attitudes and behaviors that might (read “probably will”) be interpreted in different ways by different people, particularly when people from different cultural backgrounds interact. Thus, they help illustrate why you need to be aware of multiple cultural contexts in order to make sense of what happens between people when something goes wrong cross-culturally. Often what we consider “common sense” is seen in other cultures as neither common nor making much sense! And “just acting naturally” is seldom good enough or effective for very long as an adjustment strategy.

Some critical incidents are funny and some of them are decidedly not amusing at the time they happen. But they are all instructive. They represent concrete examples of what can occur when study abroad students, operating with the best of intentions, find out that cultures can indeed be very different and that different rules often apply overseas. You can't expect to figure out in advance all the kinds of interesting things that might happen when you are overseas. That is impossible. But gaining an awareness of yourself as a cultural being will give you the tools to make sense of future situations abroad that may seem, at first, to be very odd indeed.

Figuring out how to “figure out” these kinds of things *before* one goes abroad will go a long way to help you determine “what just happened” and, more importantly, understand the “why.” It won't prevent critical incidents from occurring, but it will allow you to laugh about most of them when you come home.

Adapted from LaBrack, Bruce. “What's Up with Culture Culture”.
(<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/File/crit-incid-expl.htm>)

Anticipation and Expectation Exercise A

What's Up With Culture?

<http://www.pacific.edu/culture>

If you are entering this website because you are soon to go abroad on a study abroad program, congratulations on your decision to travel and learn internationally! Part of what this resource tries to do is to show how one's personal background and cultural values will effect, in part, how you will perceive others who think and behave differently and how they may perceive you. But in addition, we hope that by going through some self-reflective exercises at various stages of your journey, you can gain additional insights into the kinds of personal changes a study abroad program can bring about. This is particularly true in terms of one's perceptions about the self and others, both before and after a period of intense cross-cultural exposure.

What we are asking you to do is to write your own personal responses to the questions below. Be as honest as you can be. Your responses should reflect how you feel right now, before going abroad. Then either print them out and put them in a place you can retrieve them at a later time or save them on a computer. We will refer to them in later sections dealing with preparing to come home and readjusting after reentry, where you will be asked to compare your prior answers about your expectations about studying abroad with those evaluations you will generate four months to a year (or longer) in the future.

We believe taking this exercise seriously will eventually assist you to better gauge how the process of overseas adaptation has played out for you personally. It will also facilitate your understanding about how expectations, realistic and unrealistic, play a role in how well you adapt and how you feel about it in retrospect. So take a few minutes and fill out the following questions and put your answers in a safe place. We promise it will be worth your effort as you work through similar pre-reentry and return exercises at the appropriate time.

Please be sure to fill in all fields.

Name

Select...

Host Site

Select...

If other, please specify

a. What are the five things that you are *most looking forward to* about studying abroad?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

b. What are the five things that currently worry you *most* about going overseas?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

c. What are the five things you believe you will miss *most* from home when you are abroad? ?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

d. What are the five things (people, places, activities, etc.) you believe you will miss *least* from home when you are abroad?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

e. My greatest single challenge overseas will be

1. _____

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