

OPTION A):
students spending a semester abroad during the MA programme

Task 1:

First Impressions (Cultural Report: 2.500 words)

The “Cultural Report: First Impressions” is a reflective piece of writing in which you discuss and evaluate an aspect of local culture you have experienced during your first month as an international student in your host society. The key to this Report is to focus on a specific issue, event or experience and your reactions to it rather than provide a diary-like description of your activities over the first month. The Report, accordingly, could focus on a specific incident or event, or a cultural text, artefact or phenomenon, which has encouraged you to reflect on your cultural environment and engage in a learning process.

For composing the essay, select an aspect of local culture that you have encountered during your first month of in-country study and discuss and evaluate it.

Possible choices include:

- a political or social event of national importance, which you have experienced directly or through media coverage;
- a meal or an outing that enabled you to learn more about your host culture;
- a cultural tradition, for instance, local dance, or music forms;
- a film, novel, play, television program, magazine, museum, festival etc., which you have experienced in the language of your host country;
- local dress-codes, dietary habits, attitudes to time, or religious rituals;
- the ways local people occupy or move through public space;
- a local neighbourhood and its specific characteristics.

Task 2:

Second Impressions and Reflection (Cultural Report: 2.500 words)

The “Cultural Report: Second Impressions and Reflection” is a reflexive piece of writing in which you return to your first report to verify its impressions and evaluations towards the end of your stay. Rather than providing a general summary of your experiences, the key to this Report is to set your first essay into dialogue with a second reading of a related, specific incident or event, or a cultural text, artefact or phenomenon which you have encountered in the final weeks of your stay, and which highlights in comparative fashion new insights into your host culture, or treats those aspects that have remained opaque. The comparative approach should lucidly document your learning process.

Task 3:

Approaches to Academic Education (Experience and Research Essay: 2.500 words)

This essay component shall draw on your personal experiences studying abroad and combine it with research into your host university’s approach to academic teaching, learning, and knowledge production. The essay should move from the micro-level of academic education to the marco-level of systemic organization.

Aspects that should be discussed include:

- How are class sessions (lectures, seminars) typically organized? What is the relationship between teachers and students, what is the relationship among students?
- Which type of knowledge are students encouraged to digest, produce, and share?
- How are study programmes organized, how are they administered?

- What is the status of the humanities in the larger university context?
- How are study programmes funded, who carries which costs?
- How dependent or independent are universities from external bodies (the state, private corporations, etc.)

Compare these and related issues with your knowledge about and impressions of studying in the Anglophone Modernities in Literature and Culture programme at the University of Potsdam. Do not shy away from comparative value judgments, but make sure that you do so in a way that is carefully argued and respectful to your host environments and conversation partners.

Task 4:

Multiple Modernities (Experience and Research Essay: 2.500 words)

This essay component encourages you to reflect on your host country's status of being 'modern'. Your discussion of this question should be critically informed by the different interpretations and evaluations of what being 'modern' may mean that you have encountered in module EAM (Introduction: Anglophone Modernities). On this basis, your essay should combine your personal experiences in the host country with a review of academic discourses on local modernity/modernities. You are encouraged to critically read your personal encounters and relevant literature by observing critical categories such as:

- The (aesthetic) standard of literary production
- Artistic and cultural production in other media
- Mobility and migration
- Human rights and questions of postcolonial justice
- Gender politics
- Politics of race and ethnicity
- Politics of class and material culture
- Processes of globalisation
- Etc.

You must follow the rules of good academic practice in all essays and properly document your sources wherever necessary. Note, however, that other than in proper research essays, you are encouraged to much more freely share your personal observations and subjective impressions.