

Guidelines for Completion of Module IFA (International Research and Exchange)

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A) Objectives

Study abroad:

The overall goal of in-country study is for students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the language, culture, values, history and contemporary society of their country or region of choice. Students will participate in a learning program at a host university, immerse themselves in local communities and undertake independent study.

Mentoring at home:

The overall goal mentoring an in-coming student from abroad is for students to extend their knowledge and understanding of the language, culture, values, history and contemporary society of another country or region. Students will encounter in debates with their mentoring partner another educational system, discuss the cultural similarities and differences of another cultural and political context, and undertake independent study.

Students studying abroad or mentoring at home will:

- identify, analyse and evaluate processes of social and cultural change
- demonstrate engagement with the a foreign environment
- demonstrate the capacity to undertake independent learning and research
- compare, contrast and critically reflect upon aspects of culture in home and host societies
- demonstrate capacity to build logical arguments drawing on relevant examples from own experience or research, using humanities methods and approaches
- demonstrate ethical behaviour and follow good academic practice

B) Format

The evaluation of this module is based on a **structured report with 4 individual essay components**. The total length of the report is **10.000 words**.

Mentoring students should meet their mentoring partners at least **5 times over the course of one semester, for at least one hour each**. Each meeting should be documented by short

minutes of 500 words each ('Verlaufsprotokoll', signed with date and place of the meeting), which are to be attached in an **Appendix** to the module report.

c) Core Components

The structured report consists of **4 core components**:

Task 1: First Impressions (Cultural Report / Media Analysis: 2.500 words)

Study abroad: 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.

Mentoring: "Media Analysis: First Impressions" is a reflective piece of writing in which you discuss and evaluate an aspect of the local culture of your mentoring partner you have encountered in a preliminary research of the local media coverage of your partners national or regional context. The key to this Report is to focus on a specific problem or event and your reactions to it rather than provide a general overview. The Report, accordingly, could focus on

a cultural text or phenomenon and its mediatisation in Germany, which has encouraged you to reflect on your mentoring partner's home environment and engage in a learning process.

In composing the essay, observe that the media, whatever form it takes, is not an innocent purveyor of facts and stories. Rather, it is a forum or medium in which broader social struggles and forces become visible and reach large audiences. Media analysis is thus not only concerned with the 'what' of the information(content), but the 'how' as well: the 'shaping' and 'filtering' of the information. In any media analysis, a range of key issues need to be considered:

- Are emotive words used in news reports? If so, what messages are such words transmitting about a particular issue? How will you track them?
- Are rival points of view given the same amount of space? How will you measure it?
- How much space or time is given to your particular issue or event compared to others?
- How is your topic's media coverage received by audiences? Why are audiences important? How do you know what audiences think about, a TV news broadcast or topical issue?
- What are your own interests and biases in relation to the topic at hand?

Task 2: Second Impressions and Reflection (Cultural Report / Interview Analysis: 2.500 words)

Study abroad: 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.

Mentoring: Conversation Analysis: Second Impressions and Reflection: “Interview Analysis: Second Impressions and Reflections” draws on the structured conversations with your mentoring partner, and shall return to the earlier media analysis to verify its impressions and evaluations. Rather than providing a general summary of your conversations, 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 discussed intensely with your mentoring partner, and which highlights in comparative fashion new insights into your mentoring partner's home 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)

Study abroad *and* mentoring: This essay component shall draw on your personal experiences studying abroad or your discussion with your mentoring partner, and combine it with research into your host university's / your mentoring partner's former university's approach to academic teaching, learning, and knowledge production. The essay should move from the micro-level of academic education to the macro-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)

Study abroad *and* mentoring: This essay component encourages you to reflect on your host country's, or your mentoring partner's home 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 / your structured conversations with your mentoring partner 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.