



Assessing Study Abroad: Theory, Tools, and Practice

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This book is intended to guide advisors, administrators, and faculty members engaged with study abroad who are concerned with answering the question: what does study abroad achieve? It will also inform the work of study abroad organizations as well as institutions receiving study abroad students.

Offering a broad-based approach to assessment, the book will appeal to those starting out. However, an array of case studies, illustrating the often untidy process of implementation, will equally appeal to those further along by offering creative – and often simple – approaches to common problems.

Following an account of how, and why, assessment in the field has evolved, the first part of the book sets the stage for the reader to consider the role of mission and context in determining purpose, goals and outcomes; to identify and consult with stakeholders; determine what data and expertise may already be available on campus; match methods and tools to questions; and create realistic plans to communicate findings, and to act upon them.

The second part of the book offers an overview of appropriate tools and strategies for assessing study abroad, emphasizing the importance of carefully formulating and prioritizing assessment questions and understanding the advantages and drawbacks of different instruments. It describes an array of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, illustrating their application with examples of practice, and concludes by outlining the process of putting a plan into action.

The book concludes with ten case studies that illustrate various approaches to planning, experimentation, and implementation, some revealing false starts and lessons learned, and all conveying the message that assessment is an iterative, on-going process that needs constant refinement. The cases represent a wide variety of institutional and organizational types and demonstrate how each selected methods suited to their capacities and cultures.

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Editorial Review

Review

“One nice feature of this book is that it offers an inside view of ways study abroad administrators can assess their programs. The process is seldom clean or clear-cut, and sometimes the data do not generate the results hoped for. I particularly liked the way Savicki and Price described the development of an in-house assessment tool at Wesleyan University in Chapter 12. That tool can be adapted for use at other institutions freely if proper citations are made. This is welcome because many commercial assessment tools such as the BEVI, GPI, and IDI cost over \$20 per participant (Roy, Wandschneider, & Steglitz, 2012) - a figure that may be beyond the budget range of some schools.

Another nice feature of this book is that it introduces a wide range of theoretical concepts. Although few of these are explained in detail, proactive readers will be able to find more information about unfamiliar ideas and terminology elsewhere. In particular, I felt Saunders, Hogan, and Olson's discussion of a "backward design" assessment process in Chapter 4 was helpful. The final overview of study abroad assessment resources by Brewer was also useful.”

“*Assessing Study Abroad* has the advantage of offering an in-depth comparison of how nine institutions evaluate their study abroad programs. If you are fairly new to the field of educational assessment and hoping to garner a range of different ideas about how to evaluate the international programs at your school, Savicki and Brewer's book is worth reading. If, however, you are looking for a more practical 'cookbook' approach to assessing study abroad outcomes, perhaps Deardorff's *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators: A Practical Approach* (2015) might be more useful. That volume offers many handouts, worksheets, and practical ideas for administrators wanting to evaluate their programs. Then again, if you are interested in larger issues of program design and how to optimize pedagogical interventions in addition to assessment issues, I believe that Berg, Paige, and Lou's *Student Learning Abroad: What Our Students Are Learning, What They're Not* (2012) is certainly worth a read. Since more and more financial resources are being devoted to study abroad at many institutions around the world, study abroad advisors and program directors should probably become acquainted with each of these books.” (Ryugaku: Explorations in Study Abroad)

“This book on assessment of study abroad [is] timely and relevant. Its framework promotes an *institutional* approach to assessing study abroad, with advice about and examples of how to embed effective assessment strategies into the workings of a college, university, or education abroad organization. Each chapter presents practical guidance on the many aspects of study abroad assessment that can be approached through a collaborative model of shared responsibility and commitment to benefit all constituents.

This book is distinctive in that it includes both theoretical perspectives from assessment experts, and concrete examples from practitioners who have been involved with different aspects of study abroad assessment. The fact that most of these practitioners are not experts in assessment should inspire other study abroad professionals to develop and sustain their own assessment efforts at their institutions in order to make study abroad a more robust vehicle for student learning and development.

This type of wisdom and experience informs the guidance offered in this book, leading to several qualities that readers will appreciate. First it is written by colleagues who are already doing study abroad assessment at multiple levels of experience and expertise and is therefore relevant for everyone in the field. Second, the

theory and methodology are aimed specifically at study abroad, and therefore require no translation from an academic discipline to the study abroad field. Third, the book demonstrates many different approaches to tackling the real challenges and problems that assessment brings by discussing and analyzing both successful projects and the many bumps and pitfalls along the way that lead eventually to success. Finally, this book, unlike other books on assessment, is approachable to practitioners in the field because it explains ideas and methods clearly in clear, jargon free language with plenty of concrete examples to elucidate its points.” (Brian Whalen, President and CEO)

"Assessment is both an imperative and a problem. These essays are a vital corrective to simplistic "solutions". They present historical, theoretical and practical perspectives that confront the big questions of why, how and what we assess, and what we do with the landslide of data that threatens to bury us all. This crucial text illuminates what is, indeed, a "complex endeavor", scattered with paradoxes, "dumb questions", and credible answers. Brewer and Savicki have made a major and timely contribution to the literature of international education." (Dr Michael Woolf, Deputy President for Strategic Development)

“An accessible demystification of assessment relative to study abroad, this book offers a good balance of general research considerations and specific case studies. Writers adopt a straightforward, conversational tone in their sharing of first-hand accounts of the why’s, how’s, and what’s of the assessment process. There is food for inspiration and controversy and, above all, substance for the on-going dialogue regarding learning outcomes so important to the evolution of our problematic field." (Lilli Engle, Founding Director)

About the Author

Victor Savicki is Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, at Western Oregon University. His recent research has focused on stress, coping and adjustment in cross-cultural settings. He has participated in a variety of study abroad programs both as an instructor and a researcher.

Elizabeth Brewer is Director, International Education, at Beloit College.

Brian Whalen is the President and CEO of The Forum on Education Abroad. Until 2010 he was also Associate Provost, Associate Professor of International Studies and Executive Director of the Office of Global Education at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where The Forum continues to be housed. A well-known international educator, Brian writes and speaks on a wide range of international education topics and serves on a number of boards, including the Advisory Board of the National Science Foundation Partnership for International Research and Education, NanoJapan Program and the Editorial Board of the journal, *Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature*. Brian is the founding editor of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, started in 1994 as the first academic journal devoted to study abroad, and he continues to serve as its editor and publisher. For five years he was an on-site resident director of study abroad programs in Italy, and he has developed and overseen programs in over 40 countries.

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