

## FOR OUR STUDENTS

# Study Abroad in China and Japan: New Program Models and Approaches to Curriculum Integration

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Many of us who teach and work as administrators in East Asian Studies share a particular kind of study abroad experience—we went to Japan or Taiwan (China less commonly until the 1990's, and Korea is a growing but still small segment) and studied Japanese or Chinese language. Period. And there were few choices of programs available to us, yet that was fine—serious language acquisition was the goal.

No longer do students share such a limited set of goals and options when it comes to study abroad in East Asia. ASIANetwork faculty members likely find that more of your students are going to East Asia and for quite a diverse set of learning opportunities:

- Faculty-led research projects
- Intensive language training
- Language study combined with area studies courses taught in English
- Thematic study programs on particular topics
- Travel-study courses exposing students to several countries

The Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) has been offering study abroad programs in Asia since 1986. We support both the faculty-led model, where a home campus faculty member devises and organizes a study tour to Asia, as well as resident programs in Beijing, Tokyo, Nagoya, and Delhi (beginning in January 2007) with local staff and faculty to organize the academic and extracurricular programming. Our academic staff members, both in the U.S. and overseas, continually work on

ensuring the quality of our programs, and in turn we report to an Academic Council comprised of faculty and study abroad administrators from top U.S. colleges and universities who belong to our consortium.

We continually evaluate and respond to the changes in study abroad for students interested in East Asia and as a result we are implementing changes to our program

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models to address the wider range of learning objectives students are bringing with them. The dominant IES model for a resident program of one or two semesters' length in China or Japan has been one in which the students split their time between language learning and taking college-level area studies courses in English. This original program model appeals to many students, as it offers enough language to ensure a serious student body, and also enhances students' intercultural development by offering area studies courses with field trips and other exercises meant to bring the culture to life for the student living there. From a practical perspective, students and their home college advisors appreciate the ability to transfer back non-language courses so that they can keep pace towards meeting their graduation requirements.

However, in the past few years as study abroad numbers to East Asia have increased, we've noticed an interesting split among the students our programs in China and Japan attract. The students do all still value the variety of area studies options, rather than a program with only language study; however, we see two main kinds of students—those whose primary goal is the language study and those whose primary goal is the cultural and area studies learning. And we've learned that serving these two kinds of students with a

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one-size-fits all program is not the best option. Thus both our Tokyo and Beijing programs have recently split into two distinct models precisely to better serve the needs of students with differing priorities.

## Beijing Program

In Beijing we now have two programs—one a language-intensive program and the other a modular program focusing on the politics, economics, literature and major policy issues facing contemporary China.

The language intensive program takes seriously the goals some students have to improve their Chinese language skills:



IES in Beijing

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- requires previous study of the language
- places students either in a home stay with a Chinese family or in dormitory with a Chinese roommate
- offers a for-credit part-time internship option for students to be placed in jobs with Chinese organizations
- and even offers this fall a pilot area studies course offering taught in Chinese for advanced-level students.

The Contemporary Issues in China program addresses the students whose expressed goal is to learn as much about China as possible, even if this is a student's first exposure to the country or the language.

- Offers beginning-level Chinese as well as second and third-year language
- begins with an introduction to China course to equalize students' understanding of essential issues in the history and culture
- teaches one term-length course at a time over several weeks each so that students can explore a topic intensively and have maximum class time available for field trips and research projects
- includes travel directly in the curriculum much as a faculty-led program would.

### Tokyo Program

Our Tokyo program has also moved to address these two kinds of students. Students looking for more of a balance between area studies and language learning, as well as those with little or no study of Japanese, opt for our Society and Culture program, where they take 6 credits of Japanese language along with 3 or 4 area studies courses. And those students with at least one and a half years of Japanese study who are looking to focus on their Japanese language skills can opt for a program with 12 credits of Japanese and one area studies course. All students are particularly encouraged to participate in our experiential learning seminar where they spend one day a week as a participant-observer in a Japanese organization—



*IES in Tokyo*

businesses, temples, schools, community service organizations—and process their learning about Japanese culture with a sociology teacher.

### Help for Returning Students

Of course, other than helping a student think through his or her options for study abroad, ASIANetwork faculty members and advisors no doubt concern themselves a great deal with what happens \*after\* the student returns. Integrating the student's study and experiences abroad into his home campus learning, helping the student maintain or further his or her language abilities, and drawing out the student's first hand knowledge and experience for the benefit of classmates are all challenges facing the faculty. IES often runs faculty

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workshops and seminars for members of our consortium precisely to bring together faculty and discuss ideas related to study abroad and its integration with the college curriculum.

One of the most important issues in curriculum integration for ASIANetwork members I've met at recent conferences has been related to helping a student maintain or build on his or her language skills after study abroad. This can be especially difficult on a small campus where Chinese and Japanese classes may not go

beyond the intermediate level. Quite a few colleges and universities have found that bringing a native speaker as a student language assistant for a year can be a great way to approach this challenge. IES offers a student assistant program to facilitate the process of inviting a Chinese or Japanese student to spend a year on a U.S. college campus to be an assistant to the language teachers in exchange for room and board and the opportunity to take classes. Typical assignments for student assistants include hosting language tables in the dining room, helping with language drill sessions, living in a foreign-language themed residence hall, and serving as conversation partners and tutors for more advanced students.

As you consider the role of international study in the curriculum on your campus, as well as your own role as an advisor to students learning about Asia, I invite you to familiarize yourself with the range of options now available to students. Your students will be coming in your office door with different interests and goals, but the good news is that there's quite likely to be a program that will meet the needs of each student! If you'd like to learn more about IES and how we may be able to assist you in serving the needs of your students learning about Asia, please contact us.

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