Name/s: Pauline Hill; Annette Stenberg
Title of unit/course: NURS2730: Study Abroad
Discipline: Nursing
Student Numbers: 10 – 25 per year
Optional/compulsory: Optional
Credit bearing: Yes
Faculty/Department: Faculty of health Sciences
School of Nursing and Midwifery
Web link: http://www.flinders.edu.au/nursing/international-students-&-programs/international-links-&-offshore-programs.cfm
Key words: Study Abroad, International exchange, Study Tour

Overview:
The topic NURS2730: Study Abroad provides students with an opportunity to undertake a work integrated cultural and health focussed study tour in another country as part of their undergraduate Bachelor of Nursing or Midwifery program. Students participate in a negotiated study program involving pre-departure workshops and a 2-3 week short term overseas study tour.

Learning Outcomes and links to Graduate Attributes:
Expected learning outcomes
On completion of the Study Abroad topic students:
• have an understanding of the knowledge, skills and disposition required to be a culturally aware practitioner
• reflect on their own and other peoples' cultural assumptions which influence the delivery of health care services
• are aware of other approaches to health and health care service delivery to those of their home country
• are aware of the intellectual knowledge traditions and approaches to learning of the host country
• can critically examine and compare their home country health care system with that of the host country.
The graduates who complete a study abroad tour gain great insight into their own behaviours and how this effects their work as an individual or when working collaboratively in a team. They gain increased communication skills, including aspects of other languages, with respect and tolerance for others.
The Study Abroad program is unique in its ability to develop students both personally and professionally to be flexible problem solvers for an ever changing world.

Structure of the program:
The program is flexible and depends on the host country’s ability to accommodate students within the university and clinical institution settings. Generally, the students undertake a 2-3 week overseas semi-structured study tour which includes placements ranging from city hospitals and health clinics to rural village primary health programs. In some programs, students participate in programs which have an in country research focus.

Special features:
The study abroad program offers insights into a wide range of countries with reduced group travel costs and a broad range of cultural activities. It enables supported overseas travel for
first time travellers and young students with opportunities to meet other students they would not normally meet in a degree with approximately 500 students in each year level. Students learn the basics of another language in addition to their studies; have the opportunity for personal development and to see other health care systems. Opportunities to meet locals and interact intimately with people about their health and culture in ways not afforded the normal tourist.

**Process for implementation of WIL activity:**

- **Preparation** - Applications, interviews, workshops, group building dinners relevant to host country
- **Supervision** - Great academics, teachers or researchers may not always make great supervisors for student groups travelling overseas. They need travel experience, a positive ‘flexible’ attitude and they need to remember they are in charge but not their parent.
- **Engagement/Liaison with organisation/employer** - A well planned itinerary is important but expect changes to activities and times. Negotiate in person well in advance and/or with those working on the ground in host country via email and Skype if not in person. Use a reputable company if you don’t have strong links with the university or host country.
- **Assessment and Moderation** - Need to be creative and flexible to ensure each student maximises their learning and development. All students will have a different experience and it is good to tailor the assessments to capture these differences rather than have traditional long written papers as the only option.
- **De-brief (students and organisation)** - This is crucial to ensure future placements are successful. It is also extremely important to ‘listen’ to what the host venue is really saying. Often they are extremely polite and do not want to offend as they want to continue but they may be quite concerned about an aspect.

**Critical success factors:**

In real estate the motto is Location, Location, Location! In study abroad it is Preparation, Preparation, Preparation! There is the obvious preparation of where are you going, passports, Visa, what will you do, how much free time will I have and how does it count for your study. Then there is the group travelling and living together 24/7, the staff with each other and the students 24/7, illness and students poor self-management of GI disturbances, lost luggage, hot climates, different languages, different cultures, different foods (fried spiders legs and cows eye balls), Risk assessment and interviews have become critical factors to anticipate and discuss potential ‘issues’. To not only identify potential issue about specifically to discuss and what would you do – immediately in 30 minutes and 24 hours later. Need to know how experienced they are at travelling and modify information to the individual. May have travelled extensively or only with family and thus not really taken any notice of key issues when going through customs etc.

**Evidence of positive outcomes for: students, university staff and industry/employers:**

Assignments make terrific reading and watching with very detailed examples of the students learning.

Assignment 1 – a critical reflective paper demonstrates their personal journey and the personal and professional learning and development.

Assignment 2 – a creative artefact identifies their creativity and encourages them to show their perceptions of their overseas study experience.
Particular challenges and resolutions:
Group Dynamics but the students always learn a lot about themselves and this ultimately contributes to their personal and professional development as they mature and gain insights into working in a team and with others that they may not normally choose to work closely with at university or in the workplace.

Additional insights:
Don’t assume anything! For example:

- Check students have or can get a passport and Visa for the host country well in advance. Website says 3 weeks for a passport but always allow at least 6.
- Foreign exchange – Australia post needs 3-4 working days to get currency for no additional charges for you. You can also exchange on return for no extra charges.
- Mobile phones – avoid large bills and encourage them to turn off roaming, leave on airplane mode at all times and then use free WiFi and Viber (a free downloadable text and mobile phone system over the internet) or they can buy a pre-paid sim card in the host country to use while they are there.
- Facebook – may not be accessible i.e. China
- Dress Code – ask them what they would wear to a wedding or funeral. It will give your insight into their understandings about appropriate dress code.
- Footwear – thongs (flip flops) are not always suitable!
- Group activities – some flexibility and time apart is important. Travel to and from host country together. Mix up combinations within the group as you would in a classroom to limit students feeling excluded from others.

Future plans:

- Maintain study abroad opportunities within the BN curriculum as a primary health care placement overseas.
- Develop the expertise of staff to accompany students.
- Engage with Australian employers to enable them to better understand the additional qualities of these students as employees for their organisation.
- Build better interactive examples of study abroad tours on the website to excite and encourage students to undertake this form of learning.