

Study Abroad Outcomes Assessment

Longitudinal Studies

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Longitudinal studies that measure study abroad outcomes are critical to understanding the impact and the effects of study abroad over time. Longitudinal studies examine the ongoing effects of study abroad and make it possible to track historical changes thereby treating the “reentry” phase of study abroad as part of the study abroad process.

There are two general categories of longitudinal studies: institutional impact and student learning. Both types of studies take a historical approach at considering various forms of data over time in order to study the outcomes of study abroad.

- Institutional impact: This approach draws upon several data resources at an institution’s disposal to measure the impact of overseas learning on a particular institution. Examples of such studies would include:
 - Curricular reform: how the curricula at the institution has changed due directly to study abroad programming. For example, has study abroad led to more international courses being developed on the home campus to accommodate returning study abroad students?
 - The marketing of the institution to external constituents, including prospective students and parents, Board members, donors, and the community at-large. Has growth in study abroad over time led to greater use of it as a marketing tool to these constituents?
 - The financial effects of study abroad on an institution over time, including revenue, expenses, tuition and fee increases, staffing, and overhead. What are the effects of study abroad programming on the institution’s fiscal profile?
 - The impact of study abroad on enrollment and retention over time. Are more students inquiring and enrolling, and staying enrolled, based on the study abroad programming?
 - The effects of study abroad programs on the faculty: teaching, tenuring, research, retention, compensation. What is the relationship between faculty culture and issues and study abroad?
- Student learning: Longitudinal assessments of student learning consider data such as grades, self-assessments by students, and retrospective studies based on alumni memories and analyses of the study abroad experience. The advantage of this type of research is that rather than provide a “snapshot” of student learning, it considers study abroad learning as a continuous process that evolves over time.
 - GPA: how have grade point averages changed over time for various generations of study abroad students, or for a single student?

- Ongoing self-analysis of learning: incorporates a self-evaluation process in study abroad programming, allowing for comparisons within and across generations;
- Retrospective studies: these studies ask alumni of various generations to reflect upon and analyze on an ongoing basis what they remember about their study abroad learning, providing useful data on the long-term meaning of study abroad.