

CROSS-CULTURAL CO-OP PAPER GUIDELINES

The cross-cultural experience is a planned and evaluated learning experience which places the learner in an environment where learning is accomplished through active interaction with the people, use of language, history and institutions of other cultures.

The cross-cultural experience should help the student to form a clearer understanding and appreciation of both common characteristics of another culture's people and social institutions as well as their complexity and diversity. It should allow the student to experience the power of culture as a determinant of human actions, beliefs, and interactions with the environment. Through fulfilling of this requirement a student should develop a sense of cultural humility and an appreciation of the sources and values of one's own culture.

Learning through the cross-cultural co-op experience results from many varied components. Students should demonstrate growth in their ability to understand and acknowledge cultural differences and to conceptually relate one's own culture to another. Of course, you will have a great deal to share about your cross-cultural experience, but please plan for your paper to be between 6 and 8 pages in length. Areas that should be incorporated in the documentation of this experience include the following topics.

- 1. Educational goals:** What were your educational objectives? How did your expectations change during the co-op period?
- 2. Learning from the job or experience:** What were your hopes for the experience? Do you feel you successfully completed the requirements of the job? Why? How? Do you feel your performance best represents you? What were the benefits of this experience for you? What knowledge, insights and skills did you develop? What was difficult about the experience?
- 3. Institutional structure of the host societies or communities:** What did you learn about the culture? What values, traditions, and social behaviors did you notice? What socio-economic class structure is operative? What are the gender issues? What ethnic groups are present in the culture? How do they interact? How did you interact with them? What religions were practiced? How were they practiced?
- 4. Self-reflection:** Please reflect upon some aspects of your identity including: nationality, race, ethnic origin, gender, age, education, sexuality, and class. What did you learn about your own cultural perspectives, values and biases?
- 5. Historical heritage:** Indicate ways in which you have developed an understanding and respect for the customs, practices, and beliefs of the host community. What differences among members of the community did you notice? How does this affect your understanding about your own position in the world?
- 6. Environment:** Describe the variations in ecology and "built" environments (architecture, layout of towns, public transportation, and existence of integration or segregation).
- 7. Language:** If you had the opportunity to speak another language, what were the challenges you faced? How did your language skills change?
- 8. Reciprocity:** What were your contributions to the community in which you lived?
- 9. Conclusion:** Summarize the topics raised in your paper Include general observations regarding your experience as a whole. What did it all mean to you? Why? What decisions or conclusions have you made as a result of this experience? What questions did this experience raise for you? What might you

like to explore in your future classes, co-ops or community involvement? Is there an event or experience from this co-op that sums up what you learned?