

They Speak English too, So How
Different Can it Be? Advising on
Differences in Academic Cultures



NAFSA Region III/VII Conference
San Juan, Puerto Rico
October 2012



Presenters

Opal Leeman Bartzis

Field Director

Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University, Indiana

oleeman@ifsa-butler.org

Gaby Peschiera-Carl

Assistant Director, Study Abroad

University of South Carolina

peschier@mailbox.sc.edu

Todd Karr

Assistant Director

Arcadia University, The College of Global Studies

karrt@arcadia.edu



Session Goals

- ❑ Explore the obvious and subtle differences in academic cultures, systems and expectations between the U.S. and other English-speaking locations
- ❑ Examine the possible ramifications for students who are not prepared for such differences
- ❑ Discuss tips for successful pre-departure advising and on-site assistance, using specific examples
- ❑ Reflect on personal advising practices and gain new perspectives and strategies for deeper advising
- ❑ Become familiar with resources to support all of the above

Pre-departure Advising



Advising Sessions

- Printed/online program materials- Explain differences in credits, subjects, etc.
- Eligibility- Emphasize reason behind GPA requirement for admission into program
- Courses- Encourage students to choose their course load wisely; less in quantity

Pre-Departure Orientation

- Show video clips of past students explaining their personal experience with academic differences
- Use case studies to encourage discussion
 - Grading scale/assessment
 - Relationship between professors/students and student etiquette in class
 - Classroom structure/teaching style (discussion based vs. lecture)
- Provide a chart that outlines differences between American students vs. host university students
- Use of returnees/current exchange students

On-site Support



The Assumption

The Breakdown

The Goal



The Assumption

The Breakdown

The Classroom	American Universities	British Universities
Admissions	SAT/ACT: general	A-Levels
Class Organization	Syllabus, textbooks, reading assignments	Lecture series, reading list, seminar topics
Lectures	Relates clearly to course structure	<u>Theme structured, rather than textbook</u>
Seminars/Practical Classes	Follow the instructor	<u>Open-ended discussion, student led</u>
Feedback	Frequent: Quizzes, midterms, essays	Infrequent: One essay, one final
Exams	Mixed – short answer	<u>3 hours, essays, wide choice</u>
Essays	1,000-2,500 words; Specific instructions	5,000 words; Less direction
Grades	C and above = 70 – 100%	<u>C and above = 40 – 100%</u>

The Goal

An understanding that courses are
LESS RIGIDLY STRUCTURED

+

Students will have **FEWER ASSESSMENTS**

+

Students will gain **MORE FREEDOM**

=

MORE RESPONSIBILITY

A Few Words about Oxford and Cambridge



- Overview
- Academic Structures and Cultures
- Eligibility and Admissions
- Preparing a Solid Argument

Academic Ethics Across Cultures



- The Problem
- The Problem in Cultural Perspective
- Cross-cultural Preparation

Questions and Idea Sharing



Resources

- International Center for Academic Integrity
www.academicintegrity.org
- IFSA-Butler Oxford Programs Academics
<http://www.ifsa-butler.org/oxford-university.html>
- NAFSA's *U.S. Classroom Culture* guide www.nafsa.org
- USC Exchange Program Briefs
http://www.studyabroad.sc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=205&Itemid=1171.

Resources Continued

- Higher Education in Ireland
<http://arcadia.edu/abroad/default.aspx?id=6050>
- Higher Education in New Zealand
<http://arcadia.edu/abroad/default.aspx?id=6393>
- Differences in UK/US Learning Environments
<http://arcadia.edu/abroad/default.aspx?id=6012#differences>
- British Council USA <http://educationuk.org/USA/A-UK-education>
- Scotland Video
<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/arcadiascotland>

Thank You. Contact Us.

Opal Leeman Bartzis

Field Director

Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University, Indiana

oleeman@ifsa-butler.org

Gaby Peschiera-Carl

Assistant Director, Study Abroad

University of South Carolina

peschier@mailbox.sc.edu

Todd Karr

Assistant Director

Arcadia University, The College of Global Studies

karrt@arcadia.edu