Overview of Guidelines for Curricula and Assessment for Immersion Programs in the CIEP

Overview
The CIEP Immersion Programs at the University of Northern Iowa facilitate cross-cultural understanding and enrichment by providing a unique opportunity for: cultural immersion, intensive English language study, exposure to American academic classroom settings, travel excursions, recreational adventure, personal growth and building life-long friendships. Depending upon their surveyed needs, students may participate in the regular CIEP courses, take an additional American culture course, or follow their own separate, customized cohort of listening/speaking, reading, and writing courses.

These programs are offered several times a year and are flexible in length and content. A program could be customized for three weeks to two months. If special programs include individuals who are under 18 years of age, special minor guidelines must be followed. Examples of two types of these programs are the Instituto Presbiteriano Gammon, a kindergarten-12 grade school in Brazil and Kyungpook National University (KNU), a teacher’s university in South Korea. Students participating in a CIEP immersion program may enroll in regular CIEP classes and one or more additional classes, such as a U.S. Culture and English Pronunciation course (e.g., attended by the students from Gammon). Others may desire their own special courses designed to meet their specific needs and not enroll in any regular CIEP classes (e.g., the students from KNU). See V:\Curriculum\CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material.

Step 1: Establishing the Purpose of the Special Program
Before creating a special program curriculum, it is important to learn what the students’ academic English language and cultural learning needs are for their program. Many times the institutions sending the students have particular requirements for such a program and what the program provides students. The sending institution and students coming for a special program first fill out a Special Programs Preliminary Questionnaire online at: http://www.uni.edu/ciep/sites/default/files/u6/special_program_guide_to_applying_online.pdf
Students’ answers to the questionnaire can be obtained from the Promotions and Admissions Specialist.

After receiving this information, the Program Coordinator for the special program can conduct a more extensive students’ needs analysis focusing on students’ English experience and the language learning needs for the special program. This needs analysis provides the foundation of the curriculum for a **Suggestion:** Ask for photos of students before they arrive. Another way is to require photos as part of the application process. Seeing students’ faces before they arrive will help the instructor to identify students faster for a short immersion program.
particular special program as it informs the curriculum designers of what the students need and would like to learn. For example, special program coordinators could ask whether the group is coming to learn about U.S. culture, STEM curriculum in K-12 schools in the U.S., or about multicultural education. The coordinators and CIEP administration discuss the purpose for the special program, students’ needs and interests, and their sponsors’ requirements.

Such needs analyses can be developed by using the surveys created through Google Forms on a personal Google Drive or Survey Monkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com). After the survey is designed, the students, their instructors or even their institution can be contacted to participate. It might be necessary to include some translations into the students’ native language to ease communication. It is essential, however, to obtain some responses in English to allow instructors to assess the students’ English writing skills. See an example of interest survey here: V:\Curriculum\CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material\Proyecta Summer 2015\Proyecta Email Script and Survey.

**Step 2: Setting Course Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes**

Once the purpose of the special program has been determined and information gathered on students’ needs and interests, then building the curriculum can begin.

Clarify the goals of the students. Are they here to improve skills or focus on content? Design goals, objectives, and outcomes around the goals of the students.

Students who will take courses in the regular CIEP follow those established goals, objectives and student learning outcomes (SLOs). The CIEP Instructional staff coordinating and teaching in the Immersion Program work together to establish those course goals, objectives, and SLOs prior to the start of classes. Previously developed goals, objectives, and SLOs for Immersion Programs can be found on the CIEP V: Drive here: V:\Curriculum\CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material. These should also be summarized and organized by level in a proficiency scale for each special program. Please examine the CIEP Proficiency Scale as an example: T:\CIEP teachers.

**Past instructors of immersion programs recommend limiting SLOs to 2-3 instead of a longer list, due to the limited time of study in immersion programs.**

The Commission on English Language (CEA) *Accreditation Handbook* (2014) outlines the four terms (pp. 51, 54-55):

Course Goal(s): The course goal is the overall intended outcome or target for the course. The goal guides the development of meaningful course objectives and informs the students and teachers of the purpose of the course.

Course Objectives: A course objective is a specific curricular element taught through course content and activities. The course objectives guide instruction
and lesson planning in order to provide a learning experience for all students and, in aggregate, address the course goals.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):** A description of what the student will know or be able to do with the language as a result of the course of instruction. A student learning outcome is written in terms of observable and measurable language skills. Along with course objectives, student learning outcomes provide the foundation of assessment by implying what will be assessed and appropriate methods of assessment.

**Proficiency Scale:** The range of possible levels of proficiency related to the length and structure of the curricular program.

### Step 3: Placement Exam

Whether the students are enrolled in the regular CIEP or have their own cohort, administering a placement exam to the students is essential. Typically, students who are enrolled in the regular CIEP will receive the CIEP Placement Exam (CPE) and will be placed in their appropriate levels.

Students studying in a special cohort receive a placement exam designed for their program. This may include parts of the CPE. Even if there is only one section of students, the coordinator and instructors involved in the special program need to design a reliable and valid placement exam. Such an exam is based on the goals, objectives, and SLOs of the skills-based courses the students will be taking and is necessary to understand the students’ current mastery of academic English.

In the past, attempts have been made to administer online placement tests through eLearning. Unfortunately, these attempts were not successful due to scheduling and internet access issues at the foreign university.

After compiling the results of the placement exam, instructors may need to revise the level of their teaching and tasks to best meet students’ levels of proficiency and assist them in achieving the special program’s academic English language goals. An example of the placement exam specifically designed for a special cohort of students can be found at: V:\Curriculum\CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material\KNU Program\KNU Program 2015\Placement Exam

---

*If instructors of immersion programs wish to attempt online placement, here are some suggestions:*
- *Allow one week to take the exam.*
- *Add time limits on certain test sections.*
- *Create a test bank of writing prompts and randomize answers.*
- *If students are unlikely to cheat, online testing could be useful.*
**Step 4: Classroom Practice Activities**

**Activities Outside Class**
While creating class activities, special programs instructors should include language practice activities that help students achieve their academic English language learning needs, skills and content that reflect the purpose of the special program, student interests and the mission of the CIEP. The special program coordinator and instructors work closely with the Student Services Coordinator to align any outside-of-class assignments with activities being planned. Past activities included guest speakers from the UNI community, authentic materials from content textbooks, trips to cultural sites and businesses around eastern and central Iowa, interviews with people from a variety of majors at UNI, and careers outside of the campus. Examples used in other special programs can be found at: V:\Curriculum\CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material.

**Collaborating with Other Instructors**
Students in immersion programs will often receive classes from different teachers (e.g. Listening/Speaking, Reading, and Writing teachers). Share curriculum with each other, such as vocabulary lists, lesson plans, or reading assignments. This will help reinforce and recycle lessons for students.

**Step 5: Considering Assessments**
Special program instructors also need to decide how they will evaluate student learning and in what form students will be assessed. Many times, the partner institution will have guidelines on how the students are to be graded. Some institutions may ask for either a letter grade, a pass/fail, credit/no credit or some other form of scoring. All of these should be considered when creating assessment tools.

There is a wide variety of assessment choices, depending on the skills of the students and the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the course. The instructor should assess students in special programs as they would in their regular CIEP courses. There may be speeches or presentations, compositions, readings, writing logs, or other material. Instructors can also be creative in how students are assessed such as video productions, slide shows, student-led culture talks or other creative means in assessing whether students have met outcomes or not. Instructors are encouraged to examine other courses and see how these students were assessed as well.

The most important point in considering assessments is to establish grading criteria among all instructors of the immersion programs before the immersion program begins.

The type, frequency, and grading scale of assessments should be decided in advance. In addition, instructors and office administrators should establish how the final grades will be reported: Pass/Fail? Progress made? Letter grade? Instructors should also identify whether to have set criteria for grading or allow discretion in their evaluations. These choices must be standardized for the program.
It is essential that once teachers have selected the assessment types, that these assessments align with the outcomes and meet requirements of validity and practicality. See the document *CIEP Curriculum Assessment Guidelines* for more information. The assessments should be created, administered, and revised as necessary for future special programs.

Past special program coordinators and instructors have designed a template for final evaluation and reporting on the students’ accomplishing the SLOs for the courses. Instructors teaching in the special program fill out this template for each student in their course. It can be revised to reflect SLOs specifically designed for the courses in which the students were enrolled. This template for special program assessment reports (Student Evaluation Form) can be found here: 

**Step 6: Writing the Syllabus**

The special programs coordinator and instructors are recommended to follow examples of previous programs syllabi at: *CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material*. These can be revised to suit students’ needs of the special program, listing applicable goals, objectives, and SLOs, and any other course information. The coordinator and instructors can also explore the use of the standardized fillable syllabi available at: *CIEP teachers\Syllabi*(standardized information). It’s recommended to contact the Promotions and Admissions Specialist if there is interest in using this format for building this type of syllabus.

**Step 7: Teaching the Course**

One of the most important lessons of teaching is to be flexible because there may always be surprises. Despite what teachers and the coordinator learned from the surveys, the level of the students who appear at placement testing may be very different from what you expected earlier. While it is helpful to have students answer questions on a survey to get an idea of their abilities, sometimes the students may have had help in responding to those surveys. Therefore, teachers should be prepared to show flexibility when working with these special student groups. In other words, plan to make adjustments in SLOs, assessments and course materials after the students have completed the placement test.

**Teaching Mixed Abilities**

Students in immersion programs are often mixed with higher and lower abilities. Keep this in mind when assessing progress. Consider lower or intermediate student grades differently from higher proficiency students.

**Adapting to Students Enrolled in the Full-Time Program**

Students who attend CIEP Immersion Programs may also be enrolled in the full-time program classes of Reading, Writing, or Listening and Speaking. If this is the case, that instructor must
make some adjustments in order to ensure these students’ success. For example, students in an immersion program may begin at Week 5, after Midterm Exams, and miss all instruction from the first four weeks. The instructor must make efforts to catch up these students on what they have misses, especially if those skills or materials are on any assessments. On the other hand, immersion program students may begin classes full-time time program in Week 1 or Week 2, so the instructor may make an effort to put off introducing important skills and outcomes until these students have begun attending.

**Step 8: Grading Students**

Student grading should be input into both SIS and Smartsheet. Only one instructor should be tied to this unique immersion class. In SIS, this instructor should enter “pass” or “fail” grades at the end of the immersion program. A unique, pass/fail class should be created in SIS for immersion program students only in order to generate separate U-bills. Immersion students should not be enrolled in SIS for other full-time program classes.

In Smartsheet, class instructors of the full-time program classes should enter one of the following ratings in place of the grade: Superior, Above Average, Average, Needs Improvement, or Not Satisfactory. Absences and tardies should both be recorded in the Absences column, and comments for the students in the appropriate field. Additional columns should also be added to enter grades, attendance, and comments for any extra immersion classes, such as an American culture class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progress Distinction</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>100-96%</td>
<td>Passing. The student exceeds all proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance is exceptional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>95-86%</td>
<td>Passing. The student meets almost all proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance is significantly above the average standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>85-76%</td>
<td>Passing. The student meets many proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance fulfills the average standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement</td>
<td>75-61%</td>
<td>Passing. The student meets the minimum of proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance fulfills the average standard despite many minor deficiencies. More work and effort may be required in completing assignments to meet the average standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Satisfactory</td>
<td>60-0%</td>
<td>Failing. Student performance is poor. The student fails to meet many or all major and minor proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. The student does not meet the minimum standard for this level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For immersion classes, remember to determine assessments and final grading method before the immersion program begins.

If immersion students are enrolled in regular CIEP classes, follow the standardized grade weights to determine grades.
Step 9: Providing Recommendations and Feedback for Future Programs

The instructor should keep notes, daily lessons results from assessments, assignments, observations, and other activities that indicate to what degree students met the SLOs of the special program courses and compile a report when the program is completed. This information will be used in the future for instructors and in creating and revising new special programs. The report is presented to the CIEP Director. Examples of such instructors’ reports can be found at: V:\Curriculum\CIEP Immersion Programs Course Material\Immersion Program Instructor Reports