

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



ESTABLISHING DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC MEANINGFUL INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES



Meaningful International Experience (MIE)

The International Education Committee (IEC) was charged by the Provost's office to prepare a definition of a 'meaningful international experience'. Through this definition, the College will have the ability to expand international academic opportunities, ensure greater consistency in the outcomes of these experiences and support academic programs interested in inclusion of these activities within their curricular program design. Throughout the process to develop this document the IEC consulted with faculty in a variety of ways. Through review of this feedback, the IEC felt that it is most important for specific activities to be defined and designed within each academic program to ensure practice and theoretical relevance. The idea is not that EVERY course includes a MIE, but that the program include a MIE as an integral part of the entire academic program as a graduation requirement. Therefore, what follows is general information on meaningful international experiences.

Ramapo College has always held international education as core principle. In the development of the College's current Strategic Plan, designed by a task force comprised of faculty, staff, students and trustees, there is specific mention about the importance of international education. The [Ramapo College Strategic Plan](#), (Achievement Target 1.1.2) calls for '50% of undergraduate major programs [to] require successful engagement by graduation in a meaningful international experience'. Over the last few years, this was defined simply as any academic program that has been approved through the Roukema Center for International Education. Any participant received transcription in the INTD 011 – *International Academic Experience* – course (0 credits) in order to have this integrate with the degree audit process. Therefore, any program that currently required such a requirement could easily identify a student's satisfaction of said requirement. Therefore, the International Education Committee has prepared the following document to help guide the disciplines on what is a 'meaningful international experience' (MIE), through this expanded definition.

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Definition

Transformation through experiential programs and activities specifically designed to improve global competencies & critically engage with the discipline within a global context.

Core Outcomes of a Meaningful International Experience

In an effort to avoid creating an additional set of student learning outcomes, those core elements listed below have been adapted from existing lists of outcomes within international academic programs and general education.

Ideally, an MIE should meet two sets of outcomes. One set of outcomes concerns **global/cultural awareness and communication**. Those outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- *Articulate what it means to be the 'other'*
- *Strengthen and develop an understanding of the importance and implications of intercultural communication within a variety of contexts (cultural, disciplinary, linguistic, business, social, etc.) through interactions and communications with cultures different from one's own and through post-experience reflections*
- *Develop geographic literacy (physical, social, cultural and ecological)*

In all likelihood, a student will meet one or more outcomes related to global/cultural awareness and communication by taking a course in the Global Awareness category in general education. Thus, the MIE could simply reinforce those outcomes either explicitly or implicitly. To reinforce the outcomes explicitly, the program may consider including or refining a global/cultural awareness and communication outcome--either one listed above or one assigned to Global Awareness. Alternatively, the program may consider reinforcing the outcomes implicitly through a discipline-related outcome (as described below).

The other set of outcomes for the MIE concern the **academic discipline within the global context**. These outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- *Broaden and apply disciplinary knowledge, perspectives and/or skills beyond the U.S. context and reflect on these to become professionals within the discipline*

This discipline-related outcome is broad enough to include, implicitly at least, the global/cultural awareness and communication outcome (reinforced from general education) while focusing the MIE on the major. At minimum, an approved MIE must meet the disciplinary outcome cited above or a refined version of it.

Implementation Characteristics and Qualities

A meaningful international experience, domestically or internationally, should include the following qualities to achieve the definition and outcomes above:

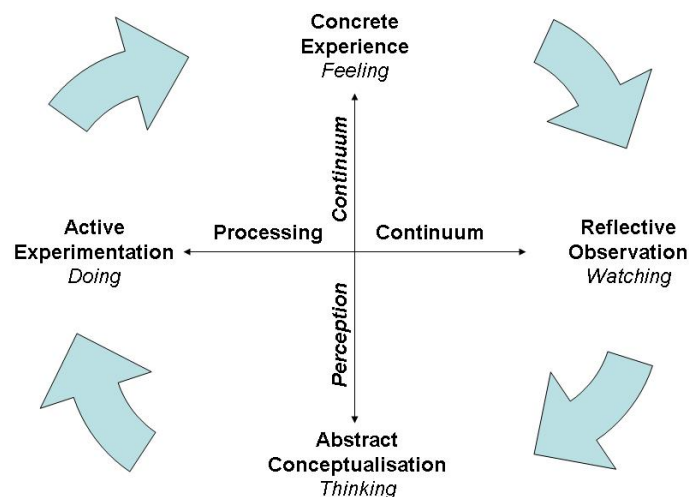
- Interactive, experience-based learning that is inclusive of individuals with international backgrounds

- Implement & contextualize globally at a discipline/program level
- Facilitate, holistic experiences that students can reflect on and integrate into the curriculum, with particular consideration to Kolb's experiential learning cycle (*see below*)
- Explore and critically analyze discipline in a global context
- Consider how the experience positively impacts globally-focused program outcomes and a students' future employability
- Focuses on quality of experience, not quantity. For example, a weekend experience in an immigrant community in metro NYC may be more impactful than a series of short discussions on the immigrant experience spread over a semester

Meaningful International Experiences (MIE) through an Experiential Pedagogy

It is recommended that MIE activities are constructed through an active, engaged pedagogy to maximize the critical thinking of contextual application of the discipline in practical and globally oriented ways. We recommend considering the Experiential Learning Pedagogy as a model. A four-stage cyclical theory of learning, Kolb's experiential learning theory is a holistic perspective that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior. Building upon earlier work by John Dewey and Kurt Levin, American educational theorist David A. Kolb believes 'learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience'. The theory presents a cyclical model of learning, consisting of four stages shown below. One may begin at any stage, but most follow this sequence:

- Concrete experience ('do')
- Reflective observation ('observe')
- Abstract conceptualization ('think')
- Active experimentation ('plan')



Kolb's four-stage learning cycle shows how experience is translated through reflection into concepts, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences. The first stage, *concrete experience*, is where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or

field work. The second stage, *reflective observation*, is when the learner consciously reflects back on that experience. The third stage, *abstract conceptualization*, is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what is observed. The fourth stage, *active experimentation*, is where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience.

Kolb identified four learning styles which correspond to these stages. The styles highlight conditions under which learners learn better. These styles are:

- Assimilators → learn better when presented with sound logical theories to consider
- Convergers → learn better when provided with practical applications of concepts and theories
- Accommodators → learn better when provided with ‘hands-on’ experiences
- Divergers → learn better when allowed to observe and collect a wide range of information

For more information: Kolb, David A. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Faculty need to consider all learning styles when developing their meaningful international experiences. The chart below provides some examples for each of the four learning phases of Kolb’s model.

Learner Type	Sample Activities
Concrete Experience (Feeling)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners rely on personal involvement for understanding ▪ Learners rely on feelings rather than a systematic approach ▪ Learners rely on ability to be open-minded and adaptable ▪ Learners are self-directed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group work ▪ Peer feedback ▪ Games ▪ Films ▪ Field work
Reflective Observation (Watching)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners need to view situations from multiple perspectives ▪ Learners rely on their own thoughts and feelings to form opinions ▪ Learners exercise patience, objectivity and careful judgement but do not take action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lectures ▪ Journals ▪ Discussions and questioning ▪ Observations
Abstract Conceptualization (Thinking)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners like to involve logic rather than feelings to understand ▪ Learners like to form theories from observations and experiences ▪ Learners like to develop explanations and hypotheses ▪ Learners use rational evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making analogies ▪ Writing papers ▪ Building models ▪ Reading theory ▪ Analyzing case studies
Active Experimentation (Doing)	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners are actively experimenting with influencing or changing situations ▪ Learners have a practical approach and concern for what really works, as opposed to watching a situation ▪ Learners value attaining goals and seeing the results of their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects ▪ Self-directed assignments ▪ Simulated experiences ▪ Problem-solving exercises
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Source: Academy of Art University, San Francisco. <http://faculty.academyart.edu/resource/kolb.html>

Notes on Assessment

Assessment of a Meaningful International Experience (MIE) could come in a variety of forms. MIEs should be assessed routinely as part of the annual assessment of student learning in the major. As convening groups discuss the development of their program's MIE, they should consider how to appropriately and adequately assess them.

Proposed Timeline

In lieu of rolling out the MIE initiative to ALL faculty, we thought we would request approximately 2 disciplines per school to volunteer to work with us on creating models for their disciplines. We would then hold a lunch workshop where we would walk the group of conveners through a process to develop their MIEs. We would then push these disciplines MIE through the revised timeline below. In the fall semester, we would then host a professional development day for all faculty as a workshop on MIE and use these disciplines models and their conveners to help facilitate the Fall workshop. We thought this revised approach would allow us to establish some concrete models of the MIE initiative to support disciplines that are finding this initiative more difficult to conceptualize, and further allow additional facilitators in all schools to support moving this initiative through additional disciplines in the future, ultimately to achieve the 50% of all academic disciplines requiring this by the target deadline of June 2018.

Deadline	Activity
<i>Before winter break 2015</i>	<i>Ask Conveners to add MIE as agenda item for first meeting of Spring 2016</i>
<i>late January</i>	<i>Step 1: Conveners discuss MIE at first Spring meeting (see guidance document of questions)</i>
<i>Mid-March</i>	<i>Finalize M.I.E. document (from feedback from Conveners) Request/Confirm 2 disciplines per school to volunteer to work on the MIE initiative</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>During a lunch workshop, work through Step 2 w/ the volunteer conveners:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Review Final MIE document</i> • <i>Globally-focused graduate attributes</i> • <i>MIE outcomes specific to the discipline</i>
<i>April/May</i>	<i>During a lunch workshop, work through Step 3 w/ the volunteer conveners:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Specific activities/programs that meet the MIE requirements</i>
<i>Late Sept</i>	<i>MIE Models/Plan go from the Conveners to the Int'l Education Committee</i>
<i>Before Oct. 15</i>	<i>MIE Models/Plan sent to ARC</i>
<i>November</i>	<i>Hold Fall Professional Development Day with approved MIE models and</i>

	<i>utilize conveners as co-workshop facilitators</i>
	<i>MIE is entered into 2017 – 2018 Ramapo course catalog in a consistent presentation</i>

Key Definitions

ATTRITION

The reduction in size of a designated group (i.e. 2012 incoming class) over a designated period of time (i.e. academic year).

CO-CURRICULAR

Being outside [of] but usually complementing the regular curriculum (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*)

COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION

A commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility.

Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it. (Hudzick, 2011)

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies, in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities. ([Association for Experiential Education](#))

GLOBAL CITIZENS

Global citizenship is an umbrella term for the social, political, environmental, or economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. The term can refer to the belief that, rather than actors affecting isolated societies, individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks. Global citizenship is an interdisciplinary lens through which to analyze the history and development of our changing world. Although there is no standard definition of global citizenship, there are common topics that guide conversations in the field. ([United Nations Academic Impact Hub on Global Citizenship](#))

GLOBAL COMPETENCIES

"Having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, and leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively in diverse environments." ([Hunter, 2004](#))

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The development of one's own conception and expression of their individuality or group affiliations over time.

INTERNATIONALIZATION

"Internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution. This definition understands internationalization as a process, as a response to globalization...and as including both international and local elements." (*Knight & de Wit, 1999*)

INTERDISCIPLINARY

Involving two or more academic, scientific or artistic disciplines (*Merriam-Webster*).

KEY POINT OF ENGAGEMENT (KPE)

A structured, high-impact activity with substantive interaction with peers, faculty and staff; a common experience that deepens understanding of self and others; or an opportunity to connect in-class and out-class learning. ([Ramapo College Website](#))

LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY (LLC)

The learning community approach fundamentally restructures the curriculum, and the time and space of students. Many different curricular restructuring models are being used, but all of the learning community models intentionally link together courses or coursework to provide greater curricular coherence, more opportunities for active teaming, and interaction between students and faculty. (Smith, Barbara Leigh; McCann, J., eds. (2001). *Reinventing Ourselves: Interdisciplinary Education, Collaborative Learning, and Experimentation in Higher Education*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.)

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

Combining or involving several academic disciplines or professional specializations in an approach to a topic or problem (*Oxford Dictionary*)

RE-ENTRY

The process of coping with the issues that may arise after students return from international experiences, reflecting and placing meaning on those experiences and how to continue their learning. Support is often necessary for the unexpected process of cultural re-adaptation, on the integration of their intense international experiences with their current intellectual and emotional lives, and on where they can go from here personally and in their career preparation. They often have the desire to continue the cross-cultural learning process, to make better sense of their experiences abroad, and to further refine their skills in cross-cultural observation, adaptation, and communication. ([GlobalScholar.us](#))