

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-program 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 immersion 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 W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs for teaching material on separate cohort programs.

Below are some guidelines for instructors to follow when designing an immersion program, assessing students in class, and providing feedback to improve student success.

Establishing the Purpose of the Immersion Program

Before creating an immersion 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. After receiving this information, the Program Coordinator for the immersion program can conduct a more extensive students' needs analysis focusing on students' English experience and the language learning needs for the immersion program. This needs analysis provides the foundation of the curriculum for a particular immersion program as it informs the curriculum designers of what the students need and would like to learn. For example, immersion program coordinators could ask whether the group is coming to learn about U.S.

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.

culture, STEM curriculum in K-12 schools in the U.S., or about multicultural education. The program coordinators and CIEP administration should discuss the purpose for the immersion 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: W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs\Culture\Proyecta 100,000 (Mexico)\Proyecta Summer 2015\Proyecta_Email Script and Survey.docx.

Setting Course Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Once the purpose of the immersion 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 here: W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs. These should also be summarized and organized by level in a proficiency scale for each immersion program. Please examine the CIEP Proficiency Scale as an example: W:\CIEPGroups\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.

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 immersion 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 immersion program's academic English language goals. An example of the placement exam specifically designed for a special cohort of students can be found at: W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs\Multiculturalism\Korean Multiculturalism Program 2016\Placement Materials.

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.*

Classroom Practice Activities

Activities outside Class

While creating class activities, immersion 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 immersion program, student interests and the mission of the CIEP. The immersion 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 immersion programs can be found at:
W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs.

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.

Assessing Immersion Program Students

If students are enrolled in classes with regular program students:

Students should submit assignments by their due dates, regardless if they are immersion program or regular program students. It is important that teachers make clear their expectations to the immersion program students as early as possible. Some teachers meet with these students outside of class time to go over the syllabus and expectations.

If students take classes as a separate cohort:

immersion 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 immersion 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* (W:\CIEPGroups\CIEP teachers\Course Goals, Objectives, SLOs) for more information. The assessments should be created, administered, and revised as necessary for future immersion programs.

Past immersion 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 immersion 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 immersion program assessment reports (*Student Evaluation Form*) can be found here: W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs.

Writing the Syllabus

The immersion programs coordinator and instructors are recommended to follow examples of previous programs syllabi at: W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs. These can be revised to suit students' needs of the immersion 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: W:\CIEPGroups\CIEP teachers.

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 if there is a separate cohort class. Keep this in mind when assessing progress. Consider lower or intermediate student grades differently from higher proficiency students.

Suggestion: *Immersion program students should use their UNI emails before they arrive at UNI. This will allow time to clear up issues.*

Adapting to Students Enrolled in the Regular Program

Students who attend CIEP Immersion Programs may also be enrolled in the regular program classes of Reading, Writing, or Listening and Speaking. The students in the immersion programs will only be joining classes for a part of the term. If this is the case, that instructor must make some adjustments in order to ensure these students' success. A student shouldn't be expected to perform a skill that was covered before he or she arrived. Teachers have made several accommodations for this. Some teachers modify assignments and assessments to remove skills or tasks that immersion program students would not have learned. Other teachers will not count the skills towards the points total of the assessment or quiz, and simply give constructive feedback. The instructor may make efforts to catch up these students on what they have missed, 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. Again, consider the outcomes that were taught while the students were in the class, and assign progress distinction appropriately.

Classroom Behavior

All students are expected to follow the behaviors as outlined in the Student Handbook, found here: <https://uni.edu/ciep/student-handbook>. Students will receive a document describing their expected behavior. They should sign the documents to show they understand and agree to follow the behavior.

Grading Students

If immersion program student are enrolled in regular-program classes, their grades should be entered into both SIS and Smartsheet by the classroom teacher. If there is a separate course for the immersion program. Only one instructor should be tied to this unique class. Student grades should be entered into both SIS and Smartsheet. 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.

Progress Distinction	Score	Meaning
Superior	100-96%	Passing. The student exceeds all proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance is exceptional.
Above Average	95-86%	Passing. The student meets almost all proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance is significantly above the average standard.
Average	85-76%	Passing. The student meets many proficiency expectations and student learning outcomes. Overall, student performance fulfills the average standard.
Needs Improvement	75-61%	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.
Not Satisfactory	60-0%	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.

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.

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 immersion 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 immersion programs. The report is presented to the CIEP Director. Examples of such instructors' reports can be found at: W:\CIEPPublic\Curriculum\Immersion Programs\Culture\Gammon\Instructor Reports.