Overseas Learning

Experiences for

Students

# A Resource for Schools

Published by

International Education Division

School Education Group

Department of Education and Training

Melbourne

Published March 2015

© State of Victoria 2015

The development of this resource

has been managed by the Asia

Education Foundation on behalf of

the International Education Division,

DET

The copyright in this

document is owned by

the state of Victoria. No

part may be reproduced

by any process except in accordance

with the provisions of the *Copyright*

*Act 1968*, NEALS (see below) or with

permission.

An educational institution situated

in Australia which is not conducted

for profit, or a body responsible for

administering such an institution,

may copy and communicate the

materials, other than third party

materials, for the educational

purposes of the institution.

Authorised by the Department of

Education and Training,

East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002.Contents

**Part 1: Why an Overseas Learning Experience?**

Developing Global Citizens

**Benefits**

Benefits for Students

Benefits for Teachers

Benefits for School Communities

**Overseas Learning Experiences for Intercultural Understanding**

**International Education: A Whole-school Imperative**

**Key Elements of International Education**

**Part 2: Planning, Implementation and Follow-up**

School Readiness

Effective Overseas Learning Experiences

**Action Overview**

**Before the Overseas Learning Experience**

Pre-departure Organisation

Pre-departure Learning and Teaching

**During the Overseas Learning Experience**

In-country Organisation

In-country Learning and Teaching

**After the Overseas Learning Experience**

Post-experience Learning and Teaching

Sharing the Experience

# Reflecting on and Evaluating the Experience .

**Sample support documents**

**These support documents are intended ONLY as SAMPLES, all schools (government and non-government) must customise these documents to conform to the requirements of their school and system.**

Student Application Form

Teacher Application Form

Student Code of Conduct

Staff Code of Conduct

Risk Management Framework

Luggage List

Acknowledgements

DET acknowledges the significant contributions from the following schools in the development of this resource.

Ballarat South Community

Learning Precinct

Balwyn High School

Beaufort Secondary College  
Bendigo cluster schools

Colac Secondary College

Crusoe College

Dandenong High School

Footscray Primary School

Glen Waverley Secondary College

Grovedale College

Hampton Park Secondary College

Ivanhoe Grammar School

Mount Clear College

Norlane High School

Rowville Secondary College

Western Heights Secondary College

Warrnambool College

**Part 1: Why an Overseas Learning**

## Experience?

This resource is designed to support schools in effective planning, implementation and integration of student overseas learning experiences into school programs. It draws upon the work of schools that have successfully incorporated such experiences into whole-school programs for international education.

Although many of the examples in this resource are drawn from experiences in Asia, the support materials provided in the resource have been selected for their transferability to any in-country context.

Underpinning the resource is the rationale that while student overseas learning experiences represent just one of many international education opportunities for schools, these experiences are invariably life-changing, building students’ capacity to operate effectively as active and informed local and global citizens. Throughout this resource, Victorian principals, teachers and students advocate overseas learning experiences as a school improvement strategy and an investment in the future of young Victorians.

#### Experiential Learning

The need for Victoria’s young people to be globally connected, informed and active has never been greater:

*Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.* ([Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians)](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf) (2008: p 4)

Across Victoria, schools are responding to these opportunities through innovative approaches to international education. Which may include but is not limited to sister school partnerships, language specific study tours and DET initiatives such as the Victorian Young Leaders to China Programs. Many schools have discovered that learning while living in another country is one of the most powerful catalysts for effective international education. The positive impact of learning in another country is profound; students return home with enhanced intercultural understandings, sharpened self-awareness and emerging leadership skills.

### Developing Global Citizens

Throughout their learning students progressively develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that support them to develop into active and informed global citizens.

From Foundation to year 4 students connect with others through their family, school and local community. Through these years they come to understand cultural similarities and differences and to appreciate that different cultural, language and religious groups make up Australia.

During years 5–8 students become increasingly aware of national events, environmental, social and political issues, and international events and crises. Through these they evaluate their role as a global citizen.

As students consider future pathways in years 9–10 they have greater awareness of political, legal, national and international issues and consider their roles and responsibilities as global citizens.

The provision of an overseas learning experience supports students to consider and engage in the role and responsibilities they have as active and informed global citizens through connecting with peers in other countries, experiencing new cultures and developing new understanding of their place in the world.

**Australian Context**

In Australia, two key national policy platforms provide schools with the authorising environments in which to provide an international education program:

The [*Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* December 2008](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf) (MCEEDYA) includes among its educational goals the commitment to developing successful learners, confident individuals, and responsible global and local citizens able to relate and communicate across cultures, especially those of the Asia–Pacific region.

The [*Australian Curriculum*](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au)supports the imperative for international education.

* General capability[: Intercultural understanding](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/intercultural-understanding/introduction/introduction) enables students to respect and appreciate their own and others’ cultures and to work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds.
* Cross-curriculum priority: [Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/CrossCurriculumPriorities/Asia-and-Australias-engagement-with-Asia), one of three priorities identified to ‘equip young Australians with the skills, knowledge, and understanding that will enable them to engage effectively with and prosper in a globalised world’**.**

**Victorian Context**

The Victorian Government is committed to students appreciating the cultural, scientific and historical heritage of our society and other societies and to communicate in languages other than English.

### Benefits

#### Benefits for Students

Participation in an overseas learning experience enables students to build their personal and social competence and intercultural understanding, including language skills.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Personal and social competence** | **Intercultural understanding** |
| * Enhanced sense of self and personal identity * Increased independence, maturity, confidence and self-awareness * Enhanced social competence, through confronting challenges beyond their familiar environment and comfort zone * Opportunities to be ambassadors for the school * Increased awareness of future study and career opportunities and broader community broader community participation. | * Move beyond stereotypical views and attitudes * Greater interest in global and international issues * Increased proficiency in the use of another language * Motivation to further engage with other cultures through future travel and consideration of employment opportunities overseas * A more global outlook on life, and a heightened sense of engagement with, and increased awareness and appreciation of, different cultures * A deeper understanding of their own culture as distinct from others |

**[video]**

**Building respect: Joshua,**

**Ballarat South Community**

**Learning Precinct student**

“You’re more about others than yourself when you come home … You’re more of a leader because of the skills you gain from the experience.”

**[video]**

**Encouraging personal**

**growth: Sophia Fiusco,**

**Ballarat South Community**

**Learning Precinct teacher**

**Jayden, Warrnambool College student**

#### 

**[video]**

[**Overseas study program to Asia Outcomes for students**](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/policy_and_research/research_reports_pr/oversea_study_program_to_asia_folder/oversea_study_program_students_outcomes.html)

#### Benefits for Teachers

* increased knowledge and understanding of other cultures
* broadened world views and life experiences
* improved proficiency in other languages
* appreciation of the challenges faced by second-language learners of English
* insight into, and professional engagement with, different education systems
* inclusion of authentic international experiences in curriculum programs and activities for students
* opportunities to develop rapport with colleagues and students outside the everyday school environment
* increased capacity to lead international education programs and activities in the school.

**[video]**

**Developing intercultural understanding – a teacher’s perspective:**

**Joanne Johnson, Rowville**

**Secondary College teacher**

### 

**[video]**

[Overseas Study Program to Asia – outcomes for teachers](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/policy_and_research/research_reports_pr/oversea_study_program_to_asia_folder/oversea_study_program_teacher_capacity.html)

“For those students coming back and talking to teachers about the sorts of activities and

programs and work that they’d produced as part of this project – it actually says to the teachers,

‘we are capable of doing fantastic work and now, how are you going to challenge me as I work my

way through the school’. ”

**Deborah Harman, Balwyn High School Principal**

#### Benefits for School Communities

For school communities, benefits include:

* a school culture that:
  + promotes a sense of belonging for every student
  + supports students’ personal growth
  + prepares all students for success in an increasingly globalised and connected world
* opportunities to strengthen links with individuals and groups in the wider community to support and enhance international education programs
* enhanced connectedness between participants, their families and the school
* development of and continuing support for sister-school partnerships and other international links
* opportunities for families’ and friends’ attitudes and understandings to be broadened through contact with participating students.

**[video]**

**A parent’s perspective:**

**Patricia, Ballarat**

“For families who don’t have the facilities at home they can join in in the classroom – we put Skype on the interactive whiteboard and not only families can talk to each other, students can talk to each other and

they can have a different learning experience through Skype.”

**Chau Cong, Footscray Primary School teacher**

**DET sister school resource kit**

In the [sister school resource kit](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/pages/sisterschools.aspx#link82) you will find information about effective sister school partnerships and how they can contribute to preparing your students for life as active and engaged citizens with a global outlook. Sister school partnerships play a key role in internationalising school communities.

### 

**Bendigo Team China**

### Over twenty schools in the Bendigo region have come together to build Asia literacy and support language learning. They have done this through sister school partnerships and by providing an overseas learning experience.

### This unique networked sister school arrangement, which involves Bendigo primary schools partnering with Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) sister schools in China, allows small and low socio-economic status rural Victorian schools with limited cultural diversity to experience another culture through activities such as teacher professional learning, student reciprocal visits and language learning. View the video [Bendigo Team China](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/bendigoteamchina.aspx).Overseas Learning Experiences for Intercultural Understanding

Overseas learning experiences in Victorian schools take a number of forms serving different purposes:

* language immersion programs
* curriculum-focused programs
* cultural study programs
* overseas service and community engagement projects
* sporting and arts programs
* individual student exchange programs
* exchange programs with sister schools and partner organisations

Regardless of purpose, all overseas learning experiences are intercultural experiences in which students have the opportunity to develop intercultural understanding. The development of intercultural understanding is a general capability of the Australian Curriculum:

*In the Australian Curriculum students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to understand themselves in relation to others. This involves students valuing their own cultures and beliefs and those of others, and engaging with people of diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections and cultivate respect between people*

[Australian Curriculum: Intercultural Understanding](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/Intercultural-understanding)

An intercultural experience is most effectively undertaken as a facilitated process of action and reflection. Whether involved in a French language learning study program, a sister school visit to China or a program focused on environmental sustainability in Vietnam, students require support to develop intercultural skills and processes (such as the ability to *recognise*, *interact* and *reflect)* and dispositions and values (such as *empathy, respect* and *responsibility*).

This resource provides a range of stimuli and materials assisting schools to ensure students (and accompanying teachers/ personnel) are prepared for intercultural experiences. These stimuli and materials support the overseas learning experience process that begins in the pre-program period, is built on during the in-country experience and continues when participants return.

**[video]**

**Looking back – a former student’s perspective:**

**Lauren, Geelong**

### International Education: A Whole-school Imperative

**[video]**

**A rationale for overseas learning experience:**

**Mary Pendergast, Warrnambool College principal**

All Victorian students can expect to experience international education programs throughout their formal school years, supported by Victorian and national education policies. These programs take many forms and differ depending on a particular school’s context and priorities.

Not all schools will design their international education programs similarly, nor will all schools be engaged in each of the components in Figure 1 (page 12) simultaneously. However, schools delivering effective international education programs most often include, or aspire to include, student overseas learning experiences, as shown in the following examples.

Rowville Secondary College has mapped school programs and activities that have international and global foci.

**[Download]**

**Rowville Secondary College**

**[Download]**

**Dandenong High School**

Dandenong High School has designed a whole-school strategy designed to embed studies of Asia into school practice. It has developed an Asia literacy values wheel to show how the different elements relate to one another and the rationale for their inclusion in school programs.

The following template (Figure 1) gives a map of program activity, which may be helpful for schools implementing an effective whole-school approach to international education.

#### Mapping International Education

***Figure 1: Mapping International Education***

**[Download]**

**Mapping International Education template**

**International Education:**

Planned and ongoing development of programs and activities that equip students with knowledge, skills and values to operate effectively in a globalised society

**Overseas sister schools**

* Reciprocal visits of students and teachers
* Ongoing communication
* Collaborative learning projects
* Joint professional learning

**Global and intercultural components of the curriculum**

* Scope and sequence of global and intercultural components in school programs and activities
* Languages programs
* Units of work specifying content and approaches to global and intercultural components of student learning programs
* Collaborative learning projects involving overseas students and schools
* Use of ICT to support synchronous learning opportunities

**Service and community engagement projects**

* International educational programs for students, with a focus on life skills
* Collaborative community development projects

**Staff professional learning**

* Professional learning programs focusing on global and intercultural components of teaching and learning programs (content, pedagogy, assessment, use of ICT)

**International delegations**

* Visits from overseas officials, principals and teachers
* Information and ideas exchange

**International student program**

* Fee-paying students from overseas

**Overseas student exchange programs**

* Individual exchange programs of varying length

**Overseas study programs**

* Language immersion
* Cultural programs
* Sports programs
* Musical performance programs
* Art and history programs

**Overseas Learning Experiences for Students**

**Overseas staff exchange programs**

* Individual/group exchange programs of varying length and purpose

### Key Elements of International Education

Embedding overseas learning experiences into school programs and practices requires consideration of how current school vision, policies and practices reflect international education. Six key elements underpinning effective international education programs can support this process.

##### Leadership

School leaders embed international education across school policies, programs and activities.

##### School Culture

The school is culturally inclusive and encourages, promotes, embeds and sustains international education in policies, programs and activities.

##### Curriculum

The school implements a curriculum that equips students with the knowledge, skills, understandings and capabilities needed to effectively participate in globalised societies.

##### Professional Learning

Educators are encouraged to participate in international study programs. Opportunities for sharing experiences, building professional practice and using expertise to develop curriculum resources are provided.

##### Monitoring and Evaluation

The school monitors and evaluates international education programs and activities across the curriculum.

##### Student, Parent and Community Involvement

The school community understands, supports and is encouraged to contribute to the school’s international education program.

**[video]**

**Overseas learning experiences – part of the curriculum:**

**Tim Bush, Ivanhoe Grammar School teacher**

#### Using the Elements of International Education for School Reflection

Schools should consider the six key elements of international education as the basis for reflection on the extent to which they are internationalising programs and activities. The school practice rubric in Table 1 may be used for this purpose.

**[Download]**

**School Practice Rubric**

###### Table 1: International Education: School Practice Rubric

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School Practice Rubric** | | | | |
| ***Elements of international education*** | **What are we doing?** | **How well are we doing?** | | |
| **Just starting** | **On the way** | **Well developed** |
| ***Leadership***  School leaders embed international education across school policies, programs and activities. |  |  |  |  |
| ***School Culture***  The school is culturally inclusive and encourages, promotes, embeds and sustains international education in policies, programs and activities. |  |  |  |  |
| ***Curriculum***  The school implements a curriculum that equips students with the knowledge, skills, understandings and capabilities needed to effectively participate in globalised societies. |  |  |  |  |
| ***Professional learning***  Educators are encouraged to participate in international study programs. Opportunities are provided for sharing experiences, building professional practice, and using expertise to develop curriculum resources. |  |  |  |  |
| ***Monitoring and evaluation***  The school monitors and evaluates international education programs and activities across curriculum. |  |  |  |  |
| ***Student, parent and community involvement***  The school community understands, supports and is encouraged to contribute to the international education program of the school. |  |  |  |  |

## Part 2: Planning, Implementation and Follow-up

Schools conducting successful overseas learning experiences for students recognise that careful planning and preparation are required to ensure the experiences are part of a whole-school approach to international education and that students derive maximum benefit from them.

Three interlinked stages comprise the planning, implementation and follow-up of overseas learning experiences for students:

* pre-departure
* in-country
* post-overseas learning experience.

Each stage is critically important for ensuring that the overseas learning experience has a significant impact. Thus careful planning for each stage is essential.

**[Download]**

**School Readiness Checklist**

### School Readiness

The School Readiness Checklist (Table 2) is designed to assist schools to determine if they are ready to embark on overseas learning experiences for students. Before completing it, schools should gather data on their current engagement in international education programs and activities. The ‘Mapping International Education Template’ and ‘School Practice Rubric’ are useful tools for this task.

###### Table 2: School Readiness Checklist

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **School Readiness Checklist** | |
| School leaders and staff understand the importance and significance of embedding international education into school practices. | **❑** |
| The school has an agreed vision and purpose for engaging students in learning activities incorporating international perspectives and content. | **❑** |
| The school has developed internationally focused curriculum programs and activities. | **❑** |
| School leaders and teachers are clear about the purpose of overseas learning experiences for students and the benefits to students, teachers, the school and community. | **❑** |
| School leaders and teachers are clear about how overseas learning experiences fit into school programs and practices and link to the School Strategic Plan. | **❑** |
| The school has identified staff with the capacity to plan, lead, coordinate and participate in overseas learning experiences for students. | **❑** |
| School leaders and School Council are aware of the approval processes and procedures required prior to provision of overseas learning experiences for students. | **❑** |
| School leaders and staff are aware of the organisational requirements for conducting successful overseas learning experiences for students: pre-departure, in-country and post-overseas learning experience. | **❑** |
| School leaders and staff are aware of the requirements and procedures for ensuring the welfare and safety of all participants in overseas learning experiences, including risk management planning and insurance. | **❑** |
| The school community has the resources to support overseas learning experiences for students. | **❑** |
| The school has considered the cost of and funding arrangements for overseas learning experiences for students. | **❑** |
| The school has established transparent processes and procedures for selecting students and staff to participate in overseas learning experiences. | **❑** |

### Effective Overseas Learning Experiences

Determining that the school is ready to engage with overseas learning experiences for its students is an important step, but it is only a first step. Ensuring that the overseas learning experience is effective in achieving the hoped-for benefits depends on a number of factors:

* clearly stated purpose and aims linked to the School Strategic Plan
* sufficient lead-in and planning time
* adherence to a pre-departure, in-country and post-overseas learning experience framework
* incorporation of processes and activities designed to enable students to reflect on their experiences and how they can respond to them
* effective engagement strategy with teachers and staff, students, parents, school and broader community
* motivated and well-prepared teachers, students and parents
* embedded in the school’s curriculum
* capacity for the in-country experience to have a multiplier effect in the school community
* accountability to school community
* capacity to conduct a risk analysis and develop thorough framework.

These factors are addressed in the following sections which deal with the learning and teaching and organisational aspects of the pre, in-country and post experience stages of the overseas learning experience for students.

### Action Overview

The following action overview (Table 3) covers the curriculum and organisational aspects to be addressed in the planning, implementation and evaluation of overseas learning experiences for students. It is intended as a guide and reference point for schools in the development of the proposal and to assist in planning, recognising that a lead-up time of 12 months will probably be required to ensure successful implementation.

###### Table 3: Action Overview

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action Overview** | | | |
| **Stage** | **Activity** | **Click on hyperlink below**  **to jump to relevant section** | **Outline** |
| **Before the Overseas Learning Experience** | **Forward Planning** | Aims and purpose of overseas learning experience | Linking the experience to school policy and  programs and the School Strategic Plan |
| Building teachers’ knowledge base | Determining current knowledge and accessing resources to build on this |
| Pre-Departure Organisation | Developing a proposal | Key components of a proposal |
| School Council approval | Links to DET approval processes and proformas |
| DET approval | Regional Director approval and Emergency and Security Management Unit notification |
| Liaison/planning with overseas hosts/schools | Planning and communication procedures and protocols |
| Accommodation arrangements | Consideration of homestay accommodation |
| Engagement of travel agent | Services provided by a travel agent |
| Fundraising/sponsorship | Options for reducing travel costs |
| Information for teachers, students and parents | Seeking interest and keeping the community informed |
| Selection of staff and students | Processes and criteria |
| Final details and preparation | Pre-departure information: checklists and consent forms |
| Registering with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) | Links to relevant DFAT resources |
| Pre-departure Learning and Teaching | Planning curriculum programs and activities | Embedding the overseas learning experience in the curriculum, focus questions for teachers, and examples from Victorian schools |
|  | Developing intercultural understanding: and students’ knowledge base pre-departure learning activities | Pre-departure activities to build intercultural understanding and students’ knowledge base |
| Pre-departure Learning and Teaching | Engaging with the overseas learning experience: examples from Victorian schools | Pre-departure activities to engage students with the study program |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Activity** | **Jump to …** | **Outline** |
| **During the Overseas Learning Experience** | In-Country Organisation | Daily organisation and planning | Planning for a satisfying and rewarding experience for all |
| Engagement | Communicating with school and home |
| In-Country Learning and Teaching | Developing intercultural understanding and students’ knowledge base | In-country activities for developing intercultural understanding and students’ knowledge base and reflecting on the experience |
| Personal reflection: graphic organisers | Alternative ways for participants to record their experiences |
|  | Curriculum programs and activities | In-country activities planned or commenced prior to departure |
|  |  |  |  |
| **After the Overseas Learning Experience** | Post-Experience Learning and Teaching | Consolidating intercultural understanding and students’ knowledge base | Activities to enable students to reflect on intercultural experiences and their knowledge base and revisit pre-departure expectations |
| Incorporation into school programs | Students returning from overseas share their learning with classmates (and in-country partners) |
| Sharing the Experience | Sharing information and key learning | Sharing the experience with the school community |
| Professional learning for educators | Building wider staff awareness of the overseas learning experience and its place in the school curriculum |
| Maintaining partnerships | Encouraging relationships with international partners to grow |
| Reflecting on and Evaluating the Experience | Reflection and evaluation | Choosing appropriate ways to reflect, evaluate and report on overseas learning experiences |

### Before the Overseas Learning Experience

#### Forward Planning

This stage involves curriculum planning and organisational arrangements. In practice these activities will overlap and occur simultaneously. Schools indicate that effective planning and organisation requires around 12 months.

During this stage engagement occurs with School Council, staff, students, parents, community groups and DET. If this engagement is to be effective, it is vital that the staff members proposing an overseas learning experience understand how the program fits into the School Strategic Plan. They should also have a thorough understanding of the planning required to ensure their knowledge base is sufficient to lead an overseas learning experience.

##### Aims and Purpose of Overseas Learning Experience

Clarity about the aims, purpose and target group of students for the overseas learning experience is important for gaining in-principle School Council support and for generating essential information for staff, students and parents.

The following examples show how some schools in Victoria have demonstrated effective engagement strategies regarding their international education programs and overseas learning experiences.

* In its [Vision and Values](http://www.balwynhs.vic.edu.au/visionAndValues.aspx) statement, Balwyn High School includes ‘an international perspective’ and ‘responsible global citizenship’ among the skills, attributes, knowledge and personal qualities it nurtures in its students.
* Rowville Secondary College states the goals and activities of its [sister school program](http://www.rowvillesc.vic.edu.au/about-us/sister-schools) on its website.

##### Building Teachers’ Knowledge Base

Teachers must be clear about and comfortable with the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities associated with taking groups of students overseas. Development of a thorough risk management framework including mitigation strategies and action plans for potential scenarios is essential.

The nature and extent of teachers’ personal and professional knowledge and understandings required for the overseas learning experience will depend on the specific aims and purpose of the experience.

In preparing themselves for the experience teachers require:

* an understanding of cultural, belief and language issues and practices related to the places to be visited
* knowledge of the histories, geography, society, arts, literature and languages of the destination

They can draw on:

* prior personal travel experiences
* other staff members’ knowledge
* experiences of other schools
* school, parent and community resources
* links with organisations (for example the [Asia Education Foundation](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/default.asp), [Goethe-Institut](http://www.goethe.de/ins/au/lp/lrn/mel/enindex.htm)e, subject associations).
* guidebooks, travel websites and online forums
* embassies and consulates.

A well-developed knowledge base of the places to be visited is not only important for the teachers, but for communicating with students and parents and for developing teaching and learning activities for students.

Completing the ‘Engage in the Overseas Learning Experience’ reflection activity (see Table 4) in the forward planning phase of the overseas learning experience will help teachers to direct their planning so that the existing knowledge base is accessed, the experience meets the needs and expectations of the participants, and participant learning is captured and shared. It is important to remember that ‘participants’ in an overseas learning experience refer to both students and teachers/leaders.

It is important to benchmark participants’ existing knowledge, cultural understanding and attitudes at a very early stage of pre-departure planning, so that the impact of the overseas learning experience can be quantified. One way that data can be collected is to conduct pre- and post-experience surveys. The DET 2011 Field Trials of Overseas Learning Program Student and Teacher Surveys could be used as a model for schools to adapt to their own circumstances as a pre-departure survey. Asking participants to complete the survey again after returning to Australia enables the school to gauge the impact of the overseas experience.

**[Download]**

**Pre-departure Teacher Survey**

**[Download]**

**Pre-departure Student Survey**

###### Table 4: Engage in the overseas learning experience

**[Download]**

**Engage in Overseas Learning template**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Engage in the overseas learning experience** | |
|  | ***Pre-departure*** |
| **1.** | **What do we know about ourselves, our community, workplace, state, country that will help us as leaders/educators/participants in the overseas experience?**  **How do we benchmark our existing knowledge?** |
|  | * personal values, beliefs, lifestyle and knowledge of and attitudes to other cultures * Australian identity: national, regional, local values, belief systems and culture * professional/learning identity: education system, school culture and structures and educational values. |
| **2.** | **What cultural knowledge and understanding do we need to have about the country/region we are visiting?**  **How do we benchmark our existing cultural knowledge and understanding?** |
|  | * social behaviour and etiquette * gifts: giving and receiving. |
| **3.** | 1. **What do we expect to/want to discover and learn in the country/region we are visiting?** |
|  | * histories, geography, society, arts, literature and languages of the destination. |
| **4.** | **How do we share our emerging learnings?** |
|  | * sharing with classmates, families and the school community. |
|  | ***In-country*** |
| **5.** | **How can we capture our key learnings about the cultures of the place we visit?** |
|  | * personal and group reflection * maintenance of written/digital records * responding to the questions posed/expectations identified prior to departure. |
| **6.** | **How will we share our learnings as the experience unfolds?** |
|  | * group blog/wiki * social media posts: text, audio, video, still image. |
|  | ***Post-experience*** |
| **7.** | **How will we share our key learnings with colleagues/students/wider school community?** |
|  | * presentations to school community (year level/whole school assembly, staff meeting, council meeting) * blog/school webpage or newsletter. |
| **8.** | **Do we have a responsibility to maintain the connections with students, teachers, schools, other institutions in the overseas setting? If so: What can we offer? What do we want in return? What level of connection is feasible and sustainable?** |
|  | * sister-school partnerships * collaborative learning projects * reciprocal visits * e-pals. |

### Pre-Departure Organisation

Schools must invest significant time and effort in planning and organising overseas learning experiences for students. Duty-of-care issues, regulatory requirements and behaviour expectations should be understood by all participants. See sample documents listed on contents page for examples of Student Code of Conduct, Staff Code of Conduct and Risk Management Framework. Clearly defined itineraries and travel and accommodation arrangements are also necessary components of the planning process.

Knowledge and understanding of DET regulations and compliance requirements are essential to this planning process. Relevant requirements can be found in DET’s [School Policy and Advisory Guide.](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/planning.aspx)

For overseas learning experiences approval needs to be given by School Council and the Regional Director.

Development of a detailed proposal for the overseas learning experience is a key step in the planning process. Proposals provide school leaders and School Council with information upon which to base approval. They also pave the way for effective engagement with staff, students and parents.

##### Developing a Proposal

Mapping international education programs and activities across the school and using the School Practice Rubric and School Readiness Checklist will enable a school to identify its existing knowledge base and areas of engagement and to determine future directions. This process should inform the aims and purpose of a proposed overseas learning experience. The proposal should also reflect the school’s Strategic Plan, policies and curriculum. Development of the proposal for the overseas learning experience is at the heart of the pre-departure stage of implementation. It should draw together the initial preparation, curriculum planning and organisational aspects of the experience.

Proposals for the consideration and approval of the principal and School Council should cover:

* purpose and intended outcomes
* links to school vision, policies and Strategic Plan
* links to curriculum programs and school activities
* person in charge
* destination, dates, duration
* year level(s)
* student safety and risk management processes and procedures
* travel, insurance and accommodation arrangements
* costs, sources of funds, fundraising
* process for selecting students and staff
* processes for communicating with students and parents
* outline of pre-, during and post-overseas experience requirements, activities and communication
* key contact persons/organisations for travel and in-country experiences and activities.

##### Liaison and Planning with Overseas Hosts/Schools

In many instances, development of the overseas learning experience proposal will require close liaison with hosts/ schools and key persons/organisations in the country/places to be visited. In these cases, the establishment of planning and communication procedures and protocols will be necessary.

**[Video]**

**Partnerships with overseas institutions – Chris Rodier, Rowville Secondary College International Programs Coordinator and Linda Flynn, Mount Clear College principal**

##### Accommodation Arrangements

An important consideration in planning overseas learning experiences is whether or not a homestay will be included. Homestays provide students with significant opportunities for deepening intercultural understanding and appreciation of the similarities and differences between cultures. Including a homestay provides more exposure to the language of the host country and may also reduce the overall accommodation costs.

The age of participating students, their welfare, the potential benefits to students and the views of parents are important considerations for deciding whether homestay accommodation is appropriate. Schools should also ensure that the vetting process for homestay families is adequate and that processes for dealing with homestay problems are in place beforehand.

Feedback from schools is that the homestay is often one of the most significant aspects of an overseas learning experience and it is strongly recommended that a homestay component be included where possible.

**[Video]**

**Developing intercultural understanding through homestays – principal and teacher perspectives:**

**Linda Flynn, Mount Clear College principal, and**

**Emma Risby Warrnambool College teacher**

##### If a homestay component is unavailable or unsuitable for your school’s needs, you may want to consider providing home visits to your students instead. Rather than being billeted to stay overnight at a local home, students can be allocated a daytime visit to their local buddy’s home. In this way, they can experience some of the benefits of interacting with a local family. This experience can provide an opportunity for genuine intercultural learning and use of language and the interchange can be two-way. During a home visit, some host families will take the visiting student on a family outing, which can provide access to some of the experiences rarely seen by visitors and introduce them to authentic cuisine. Australian and local students can also enjoy the time away from the formality of school to form friendships. Home visits could be arranged for one day of each weekend for the duration of the overseas learning experience.

##### Engagement of Travel Agent

The choice of a reputable, licensed travel agent is an important decision for the school. Negotiations with travel agents will involve:

* planning of the travel itinerary and travel arrangements
* preparing travel and insurance information and requirements for students, parents and the school
* costing of the overseas learning experience.

##### Fundraising/Sponsorship

Once the costs have been established schools may choose to undertake fundraising or seek sponsorship to subsidise the experience for students whose parents/guardians cannot afford to pay the full cost.

**[Video]**

**Pre-departure preparations – fundraising: Joanne Johnson, Rowville Secondary College teacher**

##### Information for Teachers, Students and Parents

In the early stages of planning, expressions of interest from students (parents) and teachers can be sought in order to gauge the viability of the overseas learning experience. In doing this, the key organiser should consider whose interest is to be sought, how information can be effectively disseminated to interested parties and what information they need to make informed decisions about their level of interest.

**[Video]**

**Pre-departure preparations – keeping parents informed: Deborah Harman, Balwyn High School principal**

### Selection of Staff and Students

Selection processes for staff and students should be transparent and include an application process, short-listing and interviews conducted by a selection panel.

Prior to the selection process, staff, students and parents should be provided with an outline of the overseas learning experience, its aims and purposes, the process and criteria for selection and the commitments required.

Staff should be informed of their responsibilities before they apply to participate in the overseas learning experience. They should have a clear understanding of:

* the nature and aims of the overseas learning experience and its place within the school curriculum
* their duty-of-care responsibilities
* additional responsibilities, which may include:
  + participating in student selection
  + planning and implementation of overseas learning/research projects
  + liaising between homestay families and the students’ families
  + representing the school at official functions
  + understanding and managing the medical requirements of students
  + guest teaching in the host school
  + post-experience activities and follow-ups (e.g. changes to curriculum and sister-school relationships developed), presentations and professional learning activities for colleagues and other audiences.

Schools must ensure that accompanying adults who are not registered teachers have completed a [Working with Children Check](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren)

#### Suggested criteria for selection of staff: (please see sample ‘Teacher Application Form’ for further information)

* understanding of the nature and purpose of the overseas learning experience and its place within the school’s curriculum and links to the School Strategic Plan
* high-level communication and social skills and relevant language skills
* personal and professional qualities enabling them to be ambassadors for the school, Victorian education system, their community and Australia
* first-aid training
* high-level planning, organisational and problem solving skills
* ability to liaise and negotiate with key personnel in the overseas setting
* appropriate qualifications for specific outdoor activities that may be included in the experience.

#### Suggested criteria for selection of students: (please see sample ‘Student Application Form’ for further information)

* capacity to be ambassadors for their school, community and country
* capacity to work effectively in a team
* good communication and social skills
* ability to undertake and maintain engagement in learning activities/ research projects prior to, during and after the overseas learning experience.

Consideration should also be given to identifying students who might benefit most from the overseas learning experience; for example, students at risk of disengagement.

Once students and staff have been selected, schools should provide an immediate opportunity for parents and students to meet with all staff who will be travelling with the group.

##### Final details and preparation

In the weeks prior to travelling overseas it is important to attend to final organisational matters including:

* reinforcing expectations for students and staff
* allocating responsibilities
* ensuring the [relevant consent forms](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/edoutdoors/forms.htm) and passports have been completed and lodged by parents
* ensuring that student and staff [medical information forms](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/edoutdoors/forms.htm) have been completed and lodged
* ensuring school sector travel approvals are sought
* confirming travel and personal insurance arrangements
* establishing codes of conduct/participation agreements
* briefing participants on
  + clothing and toiletry requirements
  + travel and luggage requirements
  + money and gift arrangements
  + resources/stationery items to be taken
  + communication with school/home: telephone and internet access
  + establishing mechanisms for capturing learning while overseas (including high-quality photographs and video records).

It is essential that staff meet with participating students regularly prior to departure. Knowing the students — their hopes, expectations, current knowledge base, anxieties, feelings, anticipated learning – is a pre-condition for ensuring that opportunities for learning are maximised. To prepare students for the intercultural challenges, see p 28.

[Team China Bendigo’s Blog](http://teamchina.global2.vic.edu.au) provides an overview of the many different aspects of planning required in order to develop and facilitate an overseas learning experience.

#### Pre-departure Information and Sample Forms

The following downloadable examples of pre-departure information and sample forms/record sheets have been compiled following visits to schools and conversations with principals and teachers.

These documents should be regarded as examples only and could be used to assist the design of school-specific information notices and forms. The nature and purpose of overseas learning experiences will determine the content and detail of documents prepared by individual schools.

**[Download]**

**Pre-departure checklist**

**[Download]**

**Teacher application form**

**[Download]**

**Student application form**

**[Download]**

**Permission for photographing/ filming students**

**[Download]**

**Participant information forms**

**[Download]**

**Pre-departure information for students**

**[Download]**

**Staff code of conduct**

**[Download]**

**Student code of conduct**

**[Download]**

**Luggage list**

**[Download]**

**Risk management framework**

##### Registering with DFAT

Schools must register their overseas travel plans with the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).](http://www.dfat.gov.au/) This enables DFAT to respond to travellers’ needs more quickly should dangerous or exceptional circumstances arise.

Before travelling overseas, schools should check the [Smartraveller](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) website, the Australian Government’s travel advisory and consular assistance service. This site provides up-to-date government travel advice for all countries as well as useful travel information and tips.

### Pre-departure Learning and Teaching

##### Planning Curriculum Programs and Activities

Embedding the overseas learning experience into the school’s curriculum programs will assist in maximising learning outcomes for students. Curriculum plans that include pre-departure, in-country and post-overseas experience learning sequences and activities represent the most effective way to achieve this.

Ideally, curriculum programs and activities should be inclusive of all students. They should also refer specifically to the overseas learning experience and the range of activities intended for participating students.

All students should be engaged in activities designed to:

* determine their current levels of knowledge, understanding and cultural awareness of the places to be visited
* pose questions that can be used as the basis for research and inquiry related to the overseas learning experience.

Posing research and inquiry questions to the whole group, not just those students who will go overseas, helps to embed the experience into the curriculum and will give participating students the opportunity to provide focused reports to students while overseas and on return.

**[Video]**

**Student engagement in overseas learning:**

**Ben, Ballarat South Community Learning Precinct student**

**Year 9 China focus**

The table below provides a scope and sequence of learning opportunities for a China focus in the Year 9 curriculum.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning area** | **English** | **History** | **Geography** | **Economics and Business** |
| **Content Description** | **Literature and context** Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts [(ACELT1633)](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACELT1633)  **Texts in context** Analyse how the  construction and interpretation of texts, including [media texts](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/glossary/popup?a=E&t=media+texts), can be influenced by cultural perspectives and other texts [(ACELY1739)](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACELY1739) | **The Making of the Modern World**  The experiences of non-Europeans in Australia prior to the 1900s (such as the Japanese, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Afghans) ([ACDSEH089](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACDSEH089))  **World War One** The commemoration of World War I, including debates about the nature and [significance](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/glossary/popup?a=H&t=Significance) of the Anzac legend [(ACDSEH097)](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACDSEH097) | **Geographies of interconnections** The effects of people's travel, recreational, cultural or leisure choices on places, and the implications for the future of these places [(ACHGK069)](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHGK069) | **Economics and Business Knowledge and Understanding** Australia as an ‘[economy](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/glossary/popup?a=ENB&t=Economy)’ and its place within the broader Asia and global [economy](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/glossary/popup?a=ENB&t=Economy) [(ACHEK038)](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHEK038) |
| **Resource** | [Understanding China through literature](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/teachers/professional_learning/english_and_history_modules/years_9-10_english_understanding_china_through_literature/years_9-10_english.html) | [Chinese migrants and the gold rush](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum_resources/history_cr/china_elearning_sequences/china_elearning_sequences_landing_page.html#Year_9). [Australian attitudes towards Chinese migrants](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum_resources/history_cr/china_elearning_sequences/china_elearning_sequences_landing_page.html#Year_9http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum_resources/history_cr/china_elearning_sequences/china_elearning_sequences_landing_page.html).  [China and the West](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/teachers/professional_learning/english_and_history_modules/years_9-10_history_strangers_bearing_gifts_china_and_the_west/years_9-10_history.html). [Chinese ANZACs](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum/history/details?id=chinese-anzacs---a-missing-history).  [Terracotta Warriors.](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum/history/details?id=terracotta-warriors) | [Shanghai a city on the move](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum_resources/geography/year_9_geography_shanghai__a_city_on_the_move/year_9_geography_shanghai__a_city_on_the_move.html) | [Trade Statistics](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculuhttp://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum_resources/economics_and_business/year_9_food_and_fibre_trade_statistics.htmlm_resources/economics_and_business/year_9_food_and_fibre_trade_statistics.html) |

**Developing Intercultural Understanding: Pre-departure Learning Activities**

The development of intercultural understanding is a general capability of the Australian Curriculum:

*In the Australian Curriculum students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to understand themselves in relation to others. This involves students valuing their own cultures and beliefs and those of others, and engaging with people of diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections and cultivate respect between people.*

[Australian Curriculum: Intercultural Understanding](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/intercultural-understanding/introduction/introduction)

The Intercultural understanding learning continuum is organised into three interrelated [organising elements](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/intercultural-understanding/organising-elements/organising-elements):

* Recognising culture and developing respect
* Interacting and empathising with others
* Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility



Many schools prepare a range of pre-departure material for teachers, students and parents that includes information on the customs and cultures of the countries they intend to visit. These ‘what to expect’ documents provide a quick overview to guide culturally appropriate behaviour in-country and to avoid offence and ensure respect. It is important, however, that preparation goes beyond a list of cultural ‘do’s and don’ts’, as such a list can inadvertently ‘blind’ students to anything outside the listed set of expectations.

Behaviour can be ambiguous in that the same action may have different meanings in different situations and no-one can be armed with information for every contingency. Instead, students need to first understand the assumptions and values that guide their own cultural behaviour. This can then be compared with what is found in the ‘other’ culture. Essentially, students need to understand their own cultural drivers in order to build their intercultural understanding through overseas learning experiences.

The following activities are designed using these concepts and reinforcing the need to **assume difference instead of similarity** when working across cultures. These activities could be incorporated into general classroom learning or could be part of a planned pre-departure briefing program. The activities will help teachers find out what students already know and what they expect and will provide a reference point to build on in-country and revisit on return to Australia.

*Cultural Comfort Zone*

Students identify their cultural learning zone and understand the difference between this zone and their cultural comfort zone on one hand and their panic zone on the other.

*Pictures of Perception*

Students recognise that ‘typical’ images are often stereotypes. This activity is particularly useful as a preparation for a post-experience reflection on their own changed perceptions.

*Origins of Culture*

Familiar topics, such as food, clothing and the physical environment, are used to alert students to the role of culture in everyday life and how it is represented. This activity can be used as a stimulus for an in-country investigation.

**[Download]**

**Teacher instructions for pre-departure learning activities**

### Planning for In-country Learning

##### Developing Curriculum Programs and Activities: Focus Questions for Teachers

* What do my students already know about the country they are visiting?
* What do my students want to find out about the country they are visiting?
* What are the key focus areas/inquiry questions I want students to engage in as part of their overseas learning experience?
* What pre-departure, in-country and post-experience activities should be included to support learning and reflection?
* What resources can I use to support the overseas learning experience?
* What Web 2.0 tools could students use to investigate and collaborate with students in the sister school (if applicable)?
* How will I support students’ learning throughout the overseas learning experience?
* How will I evaluate and assess the learning activities?

##### Examples of Curriculum Plans

Depending on the nature and purpose of the overseas learning experience, it would be mutually beneficial where there is an overseas sister school to plan the in-country learning activities in collaboration with the host school.

“In a pre-trip survey, 59 percent of students said they had already changed their impressions of the destination country, primarily through pre-trip research, information provided by teaching staff and ‘Googling’ with their families. Knowing that they would be going there stimulated a desire to know and understand that would not have been generated by a normal curriculum approach.”

**DET Overseas Study Program Field Trials Evaluation Report (2009: p 10)**

###### Inquiry-based Project: ANZAC Commemoration Service in France

Students from five Victorian government schools travelled to France in 2011 as part of a DET-funded overseas learning experience, which included attending an ANZAC day dawn service in Villers- Bretonneux, France. To enhance their understanding of the experience, students undertook inquiry-based projects that drew on ideas from various learning areas. The projects were developed using an Understanding by Design Framework:

Stage 1: identifies desired results

Stage 2: identifies assessment evidence

Stage 3: outlines a learning plan.

Students undertook their projects with reference to a concept map identifying the links between their research question and various VELS strands, domains and dimensions.

**[Download]**

**ANZAC project design**

**[Download]**

**ANZAC project concept map**

###### A Teaching and Learning Framework for a Malaysian Learning Experience

Teachers from Colac Secondary College developed a teaching and learning framework for a Malaysian overseas learning experience in July 2011. The framework sets out the learning objectives for different domains within the curriculum, the learning activities to be undertaken in Australia and Malaysia, and the ways in which students can publish and share their learning on return.

**[Download]**

**A teaching and learning framework for a Malaysian learning experience**

##### Engaging with the Overseas Learning Experience: Examples from Victorian Schools

For many students, the overseas learning experience will be the first time away from Australia. Even for those who have travelled, a planned approach to engaging students with the overseas learning experience is vital to ensure that they understand the purpose of the study program and can make the most of the opportunities it offers.

In many instances, schools have tapped internal and community resources (staff, students and parents who have travelled overseas; and teachers of language, history, geography, economics and politics) to assist in the preparation of students prior to departure. In some schools, parents have participated with their children in these activities.

###### Footscray Primary School: Pre-departure Language Lessons

Chau Cong, teacher at Footscray Primary School’s Vietnamese Bilingual Program, conducts weekly lessons for participating students prior to their visit to the sister school in Nha Trang. Parents are also invited to participate. Emphasis is placed on language use in situations likely to be experienced and audio and text resources are provided to help students (and their parents) practise at home.

###### Mount Clear College: Pre-departure Learning Activities

Prior to their visit to Gallipoli in 2009, students from Mount Clear College participated in an Art Competition with the theme of ‘Peace and Friendship’. Students at Mount Clear College’s sister school, Gallipoli Anatolian High School in Turkey, also participated in the competition. Prizes were awarded on ANZAC Day.

###### Hampton Park Secondary College: Overseas Learning Experience Booklet

Staff from Hampton Park Secondary College, accompanying students from five schools on a trip to France, designed a booklet for students to refer to before and during their overseas learning experience and to keep as a memento of it. The booklet contained (among other things) travel tips, itinerary, language activities and space for journal writing.

**[Video]**

**Pre-departure learning:**

**Deborah Harman, Balwyn High School principal**

### 

**Language Learning Space**

The [Language Learning Space](http://www.lls.edu.au/home) provides a range of materials focussed on China and Indonesia.

### [World student China](http://www.lls.edu.au/teacherspace/assets/uploadResources/challenges/Indonesian/World_Student_China.pdf) Visiting China for the first time: a guide for students and teachers

### [World student Indonesia](http://www.lls.edu.au/teacherspace/assets/uploadResources/challenges/PL modules/Indonesia-ESA-EB-Final.pdf)

### Visiting Indonesia for the first time: a guide for students and teachers During the Overseas Learning Experience

The nature and purpose of the overseas learning experience will impact on the teaching and learning, organisational and engagement components of the in-country learning experience for students. Individual student exchange programs will differ from language and cultural study programs, as will sporting programs and visits to, and activities undertaken with, sister schools.

#### In-Country Organisation

Forward planning and organisation in conjunction with hosts, tour operators and guides will assist in making the experience a satisfying and rewarding one for students and staff.

At all times, it is important to place priority on the safety and physical and emotional welfare of all students. Staff are required to ensure that all necessary duty-of-care arrangements and procedures are in place and activated when necessary.

##### Daily Organisation and Planning

Continuing attention should also be directed to:

* awareness of risks and procedures for managing them
* protocols and etiquette required for specific occasions
* adherence to agreed codes of conduct
* sharing of responsibilities
* accommodation and travel arrangements
* monitoring of student and staff wellbeing
* personal and recreational time for staff and students
* oversight of money and gifts
* security for personal items and documents.

Tour operators and in-country guides will be useful sources of information and assistance in many instances.

##### Communication

Organising times for contact with school and family will require consideration before embarking on the overseas learning experience, particularly in the case of significant time differences.

###### School Contact

During the in-country experience it may be appropriate to use mobile telephone and other technologies to provide updates and progress reports to school leaders and staff at the home school.

Students can be encouraged to prepare brief reports of their experiences and to send initial responses to questions posed pre-departure via blogs and wikis. They also could be encouraged and supported to provide written and photographic ‘snapshots’ of the experience for inclusion in newsletters and on the school’s website.

###### Home Contact

It is important that schools develop policies and protocols related to contact with home and that these are discussed with parents and students prior to the overseas learning experience. It may be appropriate for students, particularly primary school students, to be able to contact parents/guardians at times agreed and specified prior to departure. The cost of telephone contact may be prohibitive and therefore text messaging, email and networking technologies may be more viable options.

**[Video]**

**Using technology to stay in touch:**

**Chau Cong, Footscray Primary School teacher**

**Technologies to enable communication and collaboration**

A range of technologies is freely available to support students to document their overseas learning experience and to share their learning across the school community:

* [**Global2**](http://global2.vic.edu.au/)is a collaborative space for DET teachers and students to collaborate, communicate and create globally.

#### [Wikispace](https://www.wikispaces.com/content/classroom)s is a collaborative space that enables students to share content and engage in online forums.

#### [Travelbugs](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/curriculum_resources/travelbugs_cr.html) is a social learning network that allows students to investigate other countries and cultures and participate in collaborative activities with peers.

#### [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com) enables students to create a shared photo album of their overseas learning experience.

#### [VoiceThread](http://voicethread.com) is a collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos that allows students to navigate slides and leave comments using voice, text, audio file, or video (via a webcam).

#### [Virtual conferencing](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/Pages/vcc.aspx) opens doors to new learning and teaching opportunities beyond the classroom. Victorian students and teachers have access to a flexible suite of virtual learning tools enabling them to connect, interact, share and learn with others outside of their classroom and school.

* [**Connect with China Collaborative**](http://www.flatconnections.com/connect-with-china.html) is a learning environment where ways to connect between China and other places are explored to increase global collaboration for learning.

**Victorian Young Leaders to China Program - Shared Experiences**

In 2014, 148 students and 18 teachers took part in the Victorian Young Leaders to China Program where they participated in an incredible six-week educational experience in China. Read all about their journey via their [blog and photo gallery](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/cultures/Pages/experiences.aspx).

#### In-Country Learning and Teaching

There will be many unintended learning outcomes for students as they encounter experiences that take them outside their existing frames of knowledge, understandings and attitudes. Capturing this new learning, for example via photographs, video, daily journal writing, blog and phone messaging, is an important aspect of the overseas learning experience. Notwithstanding this, it is important that there are structured learning activities that link with the school’s curriculum and that enable the students to engage with the world around them.

##### Developing Intercultural Understanding: In-country Learning Activities

Activities that build students’ intercultural understanding by first helping them to recognise their own cultural drivers were introduced in the *Pre-departure Learning and Teaching* section. The following activities are based on this principle.

###### Daily Bread

Students play cultural detective – using interviews and observation to examine a narrowly defined activity (in this case, how people eat breakfast). This activity encourages students to test their assumptions about similarity while developing their research skills.

###### Look Who’s Talking

Students observe different elements of non-verbal behaviour and use prompts to examine the nuances of the observed behaviours in more depth.

###### School’s Out

Like the Daily Bread activity, students play cultural detective, but this time they investigate a familiar cultural scene, such as a school or a shopping centre, and use ethnographic techniques to concentrate on observation and resist the temptation to jump to conclusions. (Ethnography can be broadly defined as a method of social research committed to studying the cultural patterns, shared beliefs and behaviours of others in their natural setting.) The data collected in the School’s Out activity may be used for in-country group reflection or shared with classmates in Australia in the School’s Back In post-experience intercultural understanding activity.

**[Download]**

**Teacher instructions for in-country learning activities**

##### Personal Reflection: Graphic Organisers

Taking time to reflect on the travel experience during the experience itself provides a valuable record for the traveller. However, trying to convey experiences in written form can be overwhelming. Using graphic organisers as prompts for jotting down immediate reactions is one way to make a record of observations and reactions for later reflection.

**[Download]**

**Sample graphic organisers**

##### Curriculum Programs and Activities

Curriculum programs developed and commenced prior to the in-country experience can be further implemented as the experience unfolds for students. Students can be engaged in activities that build on and flow from the pre-departure learning activities. Such activities, depending on the nature of the experience, enable students to:

* reflect on and process their new experiences
* undertake research/inquiry-based projects
* pursue questions posed prior to the overseas experience and to frame responses ready for reporting on return
* develop communication skills in the context of maintaining records, planning and preparing reports and presentations in-country and on return
* develop team and leadership skills in the context of maintaining records, planning and preparing reports and presentations in-country and on return
* develop skills related to the use of a language other than English
* use technology to reflect, capture and present learning.

In some instances, joint learning projects and activities with students in the host school may be possible with teachers working collaboratively to plan and implement such activities.

### After the Overseas Learning Experience

On their return, students and teachers will have a rich store of knowledge and new understandings that can be shared with fellow students, colleagues, parents and friends, and members of the wider community. They will also become sources of information and resources to be incorporated into the school’s teaching and learning programs.

#### Post-experience Learning and Teaching

##### Developing Intercultural Understanding: Post-experience Learning Activities

The process of developing intercultural understanding does not stop once participants return from their overseas learning experience. On the contrary, the sensory overload of overseas travel can make it difficult to maintain perspective. Consequently, it is vital that time is given upon return to reflect on and discuss observations and possible meanings of those observations.

The Pictures of Perception activity outlined in the *Pre-departure Learning and Teaching* section is designed specifically as a ‘pre- and post-’ activity. Other activities described in the *Pre-departure* and *In-country Learning and Teaching* sections can also be revisited after returning from the overseas learning experience.

**[Download]**

**Teacher instructions for post-experience learning activities**

##### Incorporation into School Programs

Students returning from overseas can prepare and deliver individual and team reports for whole classes. Doing so will not only enable students to process their direct experience of other countries and cultures, but also help them to organise their thinking and to decide on the most appropriate ways in which to communicate their findings and new learning. Where these are aligned to the planned curriculum programs they will be more likely to have an impact on other students.

Many schools have promoted and encouraged the use of various media (including print, video, podcasts, audio-visual presentations and web pages) for this purpose in an inquiry-based learning framework.

In the case of student exchange programs and visits to sister schools/host schools, reporting back to the hosts regarding the value of the experience is a powerful learning activity for students. A reciprocal arrangement is even more powerful and enhances international and intercultural relationships.

#### Sharing the Experience

Schools have adopted a variety of approaches for sharing the overseas experience within the school and the wider community.

Undertaking reporting and sharing activities sends a clear message that the school is strongly committed to embedding international education into school programs and practices and providing students with the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to operate effectively in an increasingly globalised world.

Further, reporting the outcomes of the overseas learning experience to the School Council, staff, school community and broader community is a demonstration of its accountability.

##### Sharing Information and Key Learning

Activities could include:

* presentations to year level and whole-school assemblies
* presentations to staff
* report and presentation to the School Council
* school displays of student writing, photographs, artefacts and videos
* presentations to parents, community members, local businesses, community organisations and civic leaders
* preparation of media releases for distribution within the wider community and to local newspapers
* podcasts, vodcasts, vignettes for the school’s website
* articles for the school’s newsletter
* letters to overseas hosts/institutions.

##### Professional Learning

Teachers participating in overseas learning experiences for students have a responsibility to engage colleagues in professional learning opportunities related to the experience. Doing so can draw them into the key learnings from the experience and potentially enrich the school’s curriculum programs through sharing resources and different approaches to learning and teaching, expanding knowledge bases of the country visited and indicating the range of outcomes of the overseas learning activities for students.

Teachers returning from the overseas experience are in an excellent position to lead workshop activities focusing on using aspects of the overseas learning experience in the school’s teaching and learning program. Practical demonstrations of how the overseas experience can be incorporated into school practices enhance the school’s commitment to international education. They also provide a deeper understanding of the benefits of the experience for students, staff and the school.

##### Maintaining Partnerships

Where continuing partnerships between Victorian and overseas schools operate, relationships between teachers and students and host schools/families in the overseas setting are at the heart of successful overseas learning experiences. In the case of sister-school arrangements where reciprocal visits usually occur, it is particularly important to cultivate and sustain positive relationships and partnerships. School leaders play an important role in encouraging the relationships and ensuring that they continue.

Providing the opportunity to maintain and extend relationships with overseas students, teachers and families is an important part of the learning experience. It reinforces the ambassadorial role of students and teachers and contributes significantly to the further development of understanding and knowledge about other countries and cultures. It can also open opportunities for the online exchange of student work and the development of collaborative learning activities that may also involve students who did not participate in the overseas experience.

Maintaining professional relationships between school leaders and teachers can lead to the development of collaborative learning projects and the exchange of teaching and learning resources.

#### Reflecting on and Evaluating the Experience

Post-experience learning and teaching activities, sharing the experience with the school community and providing professional learning for teachers – the focus of the previous section – all assume reflection on the part of overseas learning experience participants. Making time for these and other reflective activities upon return to Australia is essential for the learning that has taken place overseas to gel and to enable participants to articulate what they have learnt and how the experience has changed them.

It is also important for the school, as part of its regular monitoring and review processes, to evaluate the overseas learning experiences for students. Data for this evaluation, which may be drawn from participant surveys and post-experience debriefing for example, should be collated, analysed and recorded in detail. This record then serves as an information base for staff and School Council. It enables teachers to see the potential for using the experiences in teaching and learning programs and activities for all students. It will also serve as a useful reference point for planning future overseas learning experiences.

The evaluation should enable reflection on what went well and what didn’t work so well in relation to the pre-departure, in-country and post-experience stages of the program. It should also consider the impact on teachers, students and the wider school community and make suggestions for future planning of similar experiences.

It is vital that evaluation reports are comprehensive and that information is stored in a readily-accessible form and place. It can also be useful to provide a summary of the detailed report and to use a consistent format for summarising each subsequent group’s report. The summary should be linked to the full report for cross-referencing.

Table 6 on pages 34–35 is a suggested format that schools could use or adapt to establish and maintain a summary record of overseas learning experiences for students for the purposes of dissemination to future overseas learning experience planners.

**[Download]**

**Evaluation Summary template**

##### Table 5: Sample Evaluation Summary

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Summary** | | |
| **Name and destination of overseas learning experiences (attach itinerary)** |  | |
| **Purpose** |  | |
| **Dates and duration of experience** |  | |
| **Number and names of students** |  | |
| **Names of staff and leader** |  | |
| **Year levels** |  | |
| **Evaluation data collected (attach or specify file path)** |  | |
| **Outcomes:** | | |
| ***What worked well?***  **Pre-departure:**  **In-country:**  **Post-experience:** | | ***What didn’t work so well?***  **Pre-departure:**  **In-country:**  **Post-experience:** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Evaluation Summary** |
| ***What has been the impact on:***  **Students:**  **Teachers:**  **School teaching and learning programs**  **School community:** |
| ***Suggestions for next time***  **Pre-departure:**  **In-country:**  **Post-experience:** |