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Enhancing learning during the liminal journey of study abroad:

Developing a study abroad transformative learning framework

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The research: Morgan (2019)

- **Background:** Study abroad generates positive learning outcomes^{1,2}. Experiences of learning, & processes during unaccompanied study abroad are unclear.
- **Aim:** To investigate student experiences of learning during study abroad (comprising a professional placement) in all contexts (formal & informal) in order to gain empirical understanding.
- **Methods & Participants:** Hermeneutic phenomenology³. N = 20 student nurses. X 2 semi-structured interviews per participant (return & follow up). Phenomenological Hermeneutical Method of Analysis⁴.

The findings

- Learning is experienced within the context of difference.
- Study abroad is a journey of liminality^{5,6}.
- The journey comprises preliminal, liminal and postliminal stages^{5,6}.
- Students are 'liminal entities' as they are 'betwixt & between'⁶.
- Learning processes and strategies comprise students taking responsibility and undertaking active sense-making activities. This learning is also influenced by others.
- Students may struggle to make sense and troublesome-ness continues until a threshold of understanding is crossed^{7,8,9,10,11}.
- At the end of the journey students experience transformation¹²: personal & professional development, progression toward cultural competence¹³; global graduateness¹⁴.

The innovation

- **Development of a study abroad transformative learning framework**
- Blended approach – face-to-face interactions/ activities & online supported learning activities & interactions
 - Stage 1: Programme of learning developed as a framework
 - Stage 2a: Development of teaching and learning materials
 - Stage 2b: Develop online programme and interactive content
 - Stage 3: Implementation
 - Stage 4: Evaluation

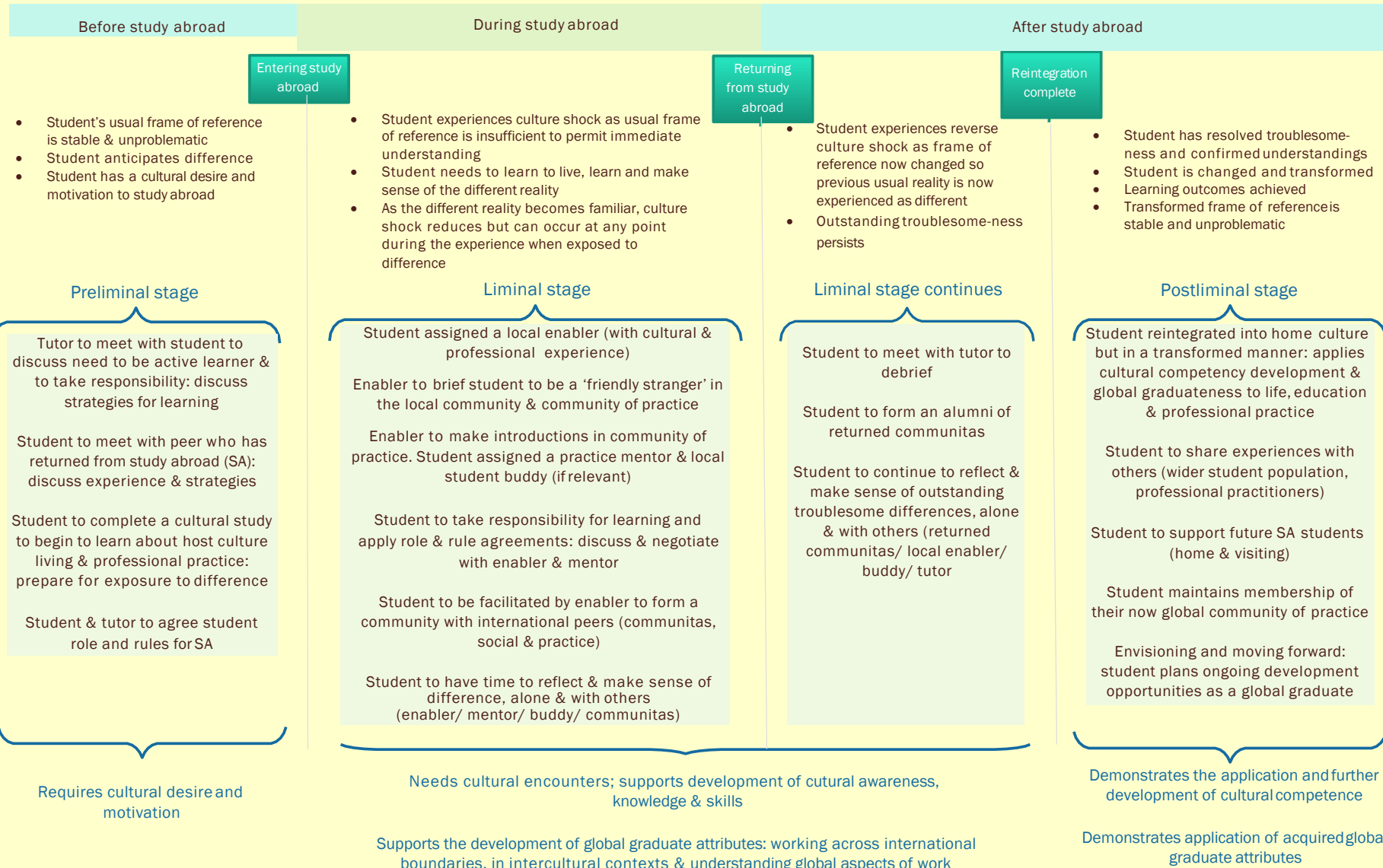
NB: See programme & study abroad specific material(s) for application & other processes

Study abroad transformative learning framework

To support:

- Personal and professional development
- Development toward global graduateness
- Development toward cultural competency

read in conjunction with summary report*



*Morgan, D.A. (2018) 'Learning in liminality: student experiences of learning during study abroad: Summary Report' Northumbria University (summary acknowledges underpinning theorists).

Before study abroad – preliminary stage

Experience	Activity	Media
Student's usual frame of reference is stable & unproblematic ¹²	Tutor meet with student - discuss need to be active learner & take responsibility: discuss strategies for learning	Face to face meeting Online learning - eLP
Student anticipates difference	Student meet with peer returner from study abroad (SA): discuss experience & strategies	Face to face meeting(s) Social media establishment
Student has a cultural desire ¹³ and motivation to study abroad	Student commence cultural study to begin to learn about host culture living & professional practice: prepare for exposure to difference	Online learning activity Storyline. – creative approach – Reflections. PebblePad
<i>Pre-requisite: cultural desire¹³ & motivation</i>	Student & tutor agree student role and rules for SA/ learning contract	Face to face meeting Upload online. PebblePad

During study abroad – liminal stage

Experience	Activity	Media
Student experiences culture shock ^{15,16} , as usual frame of reference insufficient	Student assigned local enabler	Face to face meeting(s)
Student needs to learn to live, learn and make sense of different reality	Enabler briefs student ‘friendly stranger’; makes introductions to community of practice ^{17,18}	Face to face meeting(s)
As reality becomes familiar, culture shock reduces (can re-occur)	Student assigned professional practice mentor & local buddy student	Face to face meeting and working
<i>Requires: cultural encounters¹³</i>	Student continues to take responsibility for learning & apply rules set. Discuss & negotiate with enabler & mentor	Face to face Continue cultural study – online or hardcopy
	Student facilitated to form communitas ⁶	Face to face Reflective activities (flexible)
	Reflect alone & with community	Online synch/ async - social media/ skype/ eLP blog share & comment/ discussion board

After study abroad – liminal stage continues

Experience	Activity	Media
Student experiences reverse culture shock ¹⁹ as frame of reference changed	Student debriefs with tutor	Face to face meeting(s)
Outstanding troublesome-ness persists	Student to form 'alumni' of returned communitas.	Face to face meeting(s)
	Student to continue to reflect & make sense of troublesome-ness, alone & with others	Reflections on learning - PebblePad Face to face meeting(s) Skype/ Social media
Requires: continued contact		

After study abroad – postliminal stage

Experience	Activity	Media
Student has resolved troublesomeness & confirmed understandings	Student reintegrated into community in a transformed manner.	
Student is changed and transformed	Student shares experiences with others	Face to face / presentations/ eLP
Learning outcomes achieved	Student to support future students	Face to face meeting(s)/ Social media establishment
Transformed frame of reference is stable & unproblematic ¹²	Student maintains membership of global community of practice	Face to face/ social media
	Envisioning & moving forward: student plans ongoing development as a global graduate ¹⁴	PebblePad

In conclusion

- The study abroad transformative learning framework is underpinned by research findings and aims to maximise student learning during each stage of the study abroad journey.
- The framework necessarily requires a blended approach to meet the requirements of students who study remotely from their home university. And promotes inclusion of a global community of practice.

Thank you

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References

- This paper is an impact output from my doctoral research. Further details of this research can be found online in **Morgan, D.A. Learning in liminality: Student experiences of learning during a nursing study abroad journey: a hermeneutic phenomenological research study. *Nurse Education Today* 2019; 79: 204-209.**
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