

ACB Evaluation Executive Summary

Language and Culture Program, CIEE Study Center at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

Spring 2011

The Lisbon Language and Culture Program is designed to develop participants' skills and competency in Portuguese and to enhance their understanding of contemporary Portuguese society and culture through a combination of language courses, CIEE content courses, co-curricular cultural opportunities and for more advanced language students, the opportunity for direct enrollment courses at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. The following report reflects our team's impressions of the program after three days of review. Our mission was to analyze all aspects of the program and compare its goals with our impressions of what actually occurs. Our reflections are based on significant interaction with the resident staff, students, and faculty as well as on course information, faculty curriculum vitae, and student evaluations.

Overall, the team found the Lisbon program to be an important complement to the CIEE program portfolio in terms of destination and student experience. We were extremely impressed with the quality of the host institution specifically as it relates to quality teaching faculty (for the CIEE courses and direct enrollment), a genuine willingness and commitment to partner with CIEE, and a strong institutional infrastructure. Those factors coupled with a highly competent on-site CIEE staff result in a solid program but with the potential of being a program of excellence.

The team did however unanimously determine that the most critical area to review is the role of language competency in the program. We all agree that if the program articulates the goal of language competency then there needs to be a significant modification of approach in nearly every aspect of the program. From the intensive language course pedagogy to the commitment of the homestay families to interact with the students and lack of CIEE content-based courses designed to be taught in Portuguese, there needs to be more intentional focus on language learning regardless of participant level of proficiency at the beginning of the program. It was our impression that the students find the program destination and Portugal in general a wonderful site mainly due to the minimum number of other American programs. They also feel strongly that the onsite staff does a remarkable job in providing a high level of service to them. The majority of students did, however, comment on the program's lack of focus on language. Below is our comprehensive review with specific recommendations which may not only strengthen this program but provide students with a richer background to continue pursuing related coursework on their home campuses.

CIEE Action Plan

Language and Culture Program, CIEE Study Center at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

October 2011

Overview

The Action Plan outlines the key recommendations from the Evaluation and the specific steps CIEE plans to follow to address the recommendation. While the Action Plan is authored by CIEE, staff solicited input from the ACB team leader from the evaluation (Dr. Joel Gallegos, University of North Carolina, Charlotte) and, where appropriate, from other members of the evaluation team, Tania Martuscelli, Assistant Professor of Portuguese, University of Colorado at Boulder and David George, Lecturer of Spanish, Bates College). The Action Plan should be read in light of the ACB Evaluation and with reference to the detailed description of the program available from CIEE.

CIEE staff are pleased to provide this Action Plan in response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) report on the Lisbon Language and Culture program at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa in Lisbon. The report of the site visit was received by members of the ACB at the Spring 2011 meeting. After review, the ACB accepted the report, and presented it to the Academic Consortium.

The “ACB Plan for Program Evaluation”, the Evaluation report, the Action Plan, and program details are available at www.ciee.org.

ACB Recommendations

- Shape language courses to accommodate or capitalize on students' prior study of other romance languages, redesign language courses syllabi and adopt a text book.
- Implement a communicative methodology without sacrificing attention to essential grammar.
- Integrate multimedia materials in daily lessons and take advantage of site to link classroom with experience with Portuguese society.

Action

The syllabi for fall 2011 forward have been redesigned to incorporate a wider variety of exercises in each class and classes are being taught in Portuguese only. Português XXI - A1. Lisbon, Edições Lidel and Leonel Melo Rosa, Vamos lá continuar!, Lisbon, Edições Lidel has been adopted as a textbook for this academic year and other textbooks are being considered for the future. Syllabi reflect the more communicative approach as well as the multimedia materials integrated linking the classroom to local Portuguese culture.

A “Portuguese for Spanish Speakers” course will be offered when the number of students justifies it, which has not been the case in the past. However, because all CIEE language courses are for CIEE students only and therefore have a small number of students, their contents can be somewhat tailored to the special needs and prior knowledge of each group of students.

CIEE sent both of its language teachers to the CIEE Study Center in Seville for several days of classroom observations, meeting with the language coordinator and teachers in early summer 2011. CIEE sent one of its two language teachers to the University of Minnesota summer language institute as well and will send the second teacher in 2012. As a result of these activities, a more communicative approach, new types of exercises, and a teaching style in Portuguese-only has been adopted.

ACB Recommendation

Portuguese language should be used whenever possible in and outside of the classroom; day-to-day interaction with program staff could happen in Portuguese, excursions and weekly activities could also be conducted in Portuguese, and homestay families could be asked to speak only in Portuguese with students, and the “buddy system” could be promoted beyond the initial sponsored contact.

Actions

CIEE staff is in full agreement with these recommendations, and these language issues have been addressed. Staff is using Portuguese in their interactions with students and hosts have also been encouraged to use Portuguese whenever possible.

As mentioned above, CIEE sent one of the CIEE Lisbon language teachers to the University of Minnesota CARLA summer language institute. As a result of her experience there, she is no longer using English in CIEE language classes. As a result of Portuguese language classes being conducted entirely in Portuguese students have proven much more receptive and eager to interact in Portuguese with staff in both everyday contacts and in program activities.

Starting in fall 2011, CIEE is offering “conversational groups”. Portuguese students who are studying to become language teachers have been recruited for this purpose and the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (UNOVA) has agreed to give them academic credit for this activity.

ACB Recommendation

Create a {CIEE} content course taught in Portuguese; given institutional context a multidisciplinary culture course or survey of literature might be appropriate places to begin.

Action

The CIEE Language and Culture program has created a new CIEE content course, *Tópicos sobre Cultura Portuguesa Contemporânea* (Topics in Portuguese Contemporary Culture), designed for students with advanced language skills. It confronts students with complex linguistic structures through the analysis of selected texts in three areas: current political and social events, literary representations, and ideas of Portugal. The goal is for language proficiency to be developed while furthering the students’ knowledge and understanding of Portuguese contemporary culture.