

**University of Minnesota
Learning Abroad Center
School of Record
PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT**

of the

**DIS Study Abroad in Scandinavia
Program
Stockholm and Copenhagen**

October 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The Learning Abroad Center-appointed review team is pleased to present the following report on the DIS Study Abroad in Scandinavia program in Stockholm, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark. With its role as the School of Record for DIS, reviews are conducted every four to five years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The DIS program's long history as a study abroad destination for U.S. students, results in a program that knows and understands higher education in the U.S. as well as the preferences of students. With Copenhagen opening in 1959 and the addition of Stockholm in 2016, both sites provide a "high touch" educational, personal, and cultural experience for students demonstrating innovation, best practices, and a high commitment to learning. Dedication is expressed in all aspects of the DIS experience and by all members of the community (staff, faculty, students). This DIS program is a unique opportunity for students to learn about a wide range of disciplines in the Scandinavian context. Students experience a combination of traditional classroom learning, with a strong commitment to experiential learning – including "core course week", study tours, and field studies. The Review Team often reflected during the week how Scandinavian culture and values provided the foundation for the program while incorporating the needs of U.S. higher education – not an easy feat, but one which DIS seems to do with ease.

A very dedicated and knowledgeable staff tends to virtually every aspect of the student experience, and the facilities support the students' academic, study and social needs. Positive teamwork between the North American Office staff and those on-site was well-evident, notably for a comprehensive student communication plan from post-admission to post-arrival.

Overall, the Review Team was impressed with the academic quality, the staffing and the facilities. There were no major concerns and very few, if any suggestions are urgent ones. The University of Minnesota remains grateful for the long-standing partnership with DIS.

METHODOLOGY

The Program Review Team was composed of:

- Ann Hubbard, Assistant Vice Provost, Learning Abroad Center, University of Minnesota
- Lorene Lanier, Associate Professor, Department of Neuroscience, University of Minnesota
- Juan Juan Wu, Professor, Retail and Consumer Studies; Associate Dean for Academic Programs, College of Design, University of Minnesota

- Jodi Schwarz, Associate Professor, Biology, Vassar College - and visiting professor at DIS Copenhagen, Fall 2024

The members of the site visit team reviewed:

- the history of the program
- annual reports
- student evaluations
- course syllabi
- participant statistics and demographic information
- staff and instructor curriculum vitae
- pre-departure materials, and a virtual session
- on-site orientation material

And, the Review Team made a four-day visit to the program – two days in Stockholm and two in Copenhagen – where they participated in a host of activities ranging from meetings with faculty and administrators, observed a range of classes including field studies and guest lectures offered by both full-time and part-time faculty, spoke with students (from the University of Minnesota and other institutions), visited housing options in both Stockholm and Copenhagen. Prior to the team visit, Jodi participated in a three-day study tour to Western Denmark and a week-long study tour to Tromsø with a Polar Biology course. The Review Team also informally spoke with faculty and staff they randomly encountered at coffee breaks in an effort to gain a fuller understanding of the program. The Review Team jointly drafted and agreed on the recommendations in this report.

The agenda of this review is attached as an appendix.

MISSION OF THE PROGRAM

- Overall structure

DIS is a non-profit study abroad foundation established in Denmark in 1959 and in Stockholm in fall of 2016. The program provides semester, academic year, and summer programs taught in English. DIS works in partnership with approximately 200 U.S. institutions, with the University of Minnesota as its School of Record, offering a UMN transcript to U.S. students whose institutions do not directly transcript DIS courses.

DIS is recognized by the Ministry of High Education & Science which appoints one member to the DIS Board as an oversight and good governance measure. In 2023, DIS received a positive Re-Declaration of Recommendation from the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), reporting that DIS has sufficient overall quality and meets defined standards. EVA is an independent organization operating under the Danish Ministry of Education to evaluate educational programs based on the internationally approved

methodological elements recommended by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). DIS is evaluated by EVA every three years. The DIS curriculum is broad, relevant, innovative, and enriched by experiential learning features (with excursions around the host-city, and weeklong, faculty-led study tours across Europe), which deepen core course content.

The strategic goals established for the period from 2024 to 2026 provide context for this review:

1. Building for Excellence - Continue to proactively expand our capacity in Stockholm and Copenhagen to better meet demand while upholding and improving quality. 2024 - 2026
2. Student Mental Health and Wellbeing - Incorporating universal design principles throughout the student journey, considering mental health and wellbeing in all program components and reimagining what support looks like. 2024 - 2026
3. Organizational Learning, Technology and Data - Improving our ability to respond to rapid tech changes, strengthening our infrastructure, and enhancing the capabilities we need to be an even stronger learning organization. 2024- 2026
4. Ambitious on Access - Expanding financial access to DIS and redesigning on-site funding to level the playing field for students. 2026
5. Arctic Grand Challenges Program - Developing a cutting-edge curriculum in the Arctic focused on 'grand challenges' while building reciprocal relationships with the local community. 2026

DIS Mission Statement

By inspiring each student's curiosity and love of learning, DIS fosters academic achievement, intercultural understanding, and development of life skills essential for engaged citizenship.

DIS Guiding Principles

Our stance in the world is shaped by our educational ethos, Scandinavian roots, and strong ties to U.S. higher education.

While the world evolves: civil rights, gender equality, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental sustainability, personal autonomy, and protecting democracy remain the cornerstones of our beliefs. We boldly stand by these principles.

Our pedagogy and learning communities are shaped by our history and these beliefs. In fulfillment of our mission, this stance is infused in everything we do.

EVALUATION

ACADEMICS

Curriculum

DIS has a deep commitment from both administration and faculty to creating inclusive and pedagogically rich learning spaces in which all students can experience deep learning and demonstrate their learning in meaningful ways. The use of active, experiential, and place-based learning is standard in DIS courses. Faculty are encouraged to continue growing as teachers, and the establishment of a faculty-facing Learning Lab at DIS has created a central resource and expertise for onboarding new faculty to learn the DIS approach, as well as many opportunities for faculty to continue expanding their teaching toolkit, expand their pedagogy, and become ever more inclusive teachers. The Learning Lab has a committed and knowledgeable staff who organize a wide variety of faculty development opportunities from informal lunch conversations, short workshops, ongoing faculty learning communities, and faculty semester kick-off events. Most of these reflect collaborations between the Learning Lab and faculty or other practitioners who can bring a particular topic to faculty. A recent initiative to help faculty employ a Universal Design for Learning framework aims to provide sustained support to help faculty diversify the modes and styles of teaching that they employ, with the goal of creating a welcoming and supportive learning for all and minimize the need to separate out students with formal academic accommodations to receive separate treatment (such as proctored exams). Faculty are enthusiastic about creating productive learning environments for their students, with some tension points around the request that faculty eliminate timed, in-class, closed book exams (which is a common assessment tool in some disciplines). The conversation about how to support each student's learning is vibrant at DIS.

Disciplines: There is a wide selection of disciplinary offerings structured as a combination of core courses and electives, ensuring that students can engage with their academic disciplines while also being encouraged to explore other perspectives, integrating with local histories and cultures. The place-based, active learning pedagogy is evident in nearly every class we observed. Faculty members are enthusiastic and intentional in both the design and delivery of the curriculum. They truly take a student-centered approach, considering that they are teaching American students from various disciplines and institutions over a short period in the context of studying abroad. This necessitates not only individualized academic enhancement but also cultural immersion.

To accommodate different academic backgrounds, learning styles, and cultural needs, faculty intentionally build flexibility and locality into their courses. Students can individualize their learning, bringing unique perspectives that enrich group discussions and course outcomes. They are encouraged to apply what they learn in their extended classrooms—using the city and

even countries as their laboratory—to think critically about real issues such as politics, economics, sustainability, global relations, and their future careers.

Experiential Learning: Many courses highlight hands-on experiences. Particularly in Architecture and Design, studios are at the heart of its design pedagogy. Students learn by doing and making. Focus of studios ranges from architecture, interior architecture, urban design, graphic design, to furniture design. Visual journaling, user experience research, field studies of sustainability and urban design, and exposure to local histories, craftsmanship, and material culture equip the students with rich resources for their creative inquiries and expressions. Flexible tooling offers multiple analog and digital methods for design thinking and making, empowering students to examine important issues in design and how those intersect with broader social psychological or anthropological topics, such as gender, power, and identity.

Faculty are skilled at guiding students in linking theory to practice and engaging in critical analyses of how their learning and actions reflect societal values. We are impressed by the thoughtfulness of the faculty in inspiring students to compare the USA with their study site, and more broadly with the EU. Learning is situated in real, relevant contexts. They help students understand the significance and urgency of global issues that require collaboration and cooperation at the global level, highlighting the interconnectedness of globalization, shared values, and cultural competency. Additionally, they encourage students to reflect on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion values. Global vision is balanced with local materiality. Through field studies students are immersed in local practices and deeply engaged in reflecting on diverse cultural values. For example, one member of our review team went on a field trip with Petra Ahde-Deal's Nordic Design class and visited I Tråd Med Verden (ITMV), a fashion enterprise with a mission to support and develop the women's workforce in upcycled textiles and fashion production. The students are motivated to learn about what a social enterprise is and what it does, as well as how it connects with the local community through labor training, creativity workshops, and other design and cultural events that celebrate creative talents, designs, and cultural pride. Foregrounding values of locality, and environmental and social sustainability helped to motivate the students for active learning and creative inquiries during this field trip.

Guest Lectures: Various guest lectures connect students with wonderful local resources, which enhance the distinguished expertise of the DIS faculty, providing enriched experiential learning and networking opportunities. For example, a guest lecture featured prominent Danish fashion designer Nicholas Nybro. His design journey and philosophy powerfully illustrate the deep Meaning of Style, which is the course taught by Jeppe Juel Rishøj. Nicholas's pioneering exploration and experimentation with inclusive bodies and ages in fashion are inspirational for American students. Through sharing stories of his design journey, he also revealed the institutional biases within the fashion system toward new designers. He showcased his various fashion collections at Copenhagen Fashion Week and in exhibitions at the Design Museum Danmark, providing students with inspiring and impactful visual and sensory stories.

The course assignments are thoughtfully designed to scaffold the learning of complex concepts and methodologies, breaking down comprehensive requirements into manageable, sequential components. For example, Andreas Brøgger, Program Director of European Humanities, mentioned that he scaffolded a research project through a series of progressive requirements: first, students interviewed each other; then, they interviewed DIS students; and finally, they interviewed people on the streets. This type of intentional scaffolding helps to reduce anxiety when students engage with new methodologies and work in new groups.

Language & Culture Learning

With 60% of DIS students taking either Swedish or Danish – while only 50 of the 204 U.S. partner schools require it – the review team was pleased to see the effort and commitment to learning made by students and faculty in this area. The sections targeted to specific disciplinary areas – for example, for Architecture and Design Students, or through Food and Sustainability – is also an impressive feature of this department in promoting communicative language learning.

The review team endorses the practice of the first few sessions of this course providing a general overview of “what is culture?” as this is an essential framework for cultural learning. It is also a positive that faculty make this course a forum for students to ask questions about things they have seen or experienced in daily living and need help understanding.

The new Danish language workbook has an engaging format, and the images make it clear that the course blends grammatical and cultural knowledge. The workbook provides the essential content while also allowing faculty to do some tailoring throughout the course as they wish. The upcoming Swedish workbook will be an asset in supporting an integrated approach to language and culture teaching and learning.

Commendations

- Place-based, active, experiential learning distinguishes the DIS curriculum. Instructional design demonstrates resourcefulness, flexibility, and a student-centered approach.
- Coverage of a wide range of disciplines is complemented by interdisciplinary collaborations at both the faculty and student levels.
- Close and deep connections with the local community and professionals greatly enhance faculty expertise and provide networking opportunities through guest lectures, field studies, and study tours.
- Assignments are thoughtfully designed to encourage group work, incorporate multiple perspectives and modes of inquiry, link theory with practice, scaffold requirements, and accommodate diverse learning styles

Recommendations

- Find ways to support part-time faculty in being available to engage in faculty development initiatives.
- Adding grading rubrics to assignments could help students better understand layered requirements, thereby reducing anxiety and minimizing grade disputes.
- Leverage your unique position as a study abroad program to provide safe spaces for creatively engaging students in difficult conversations and critiques – a common issue faced by faculty at students' home institutions.

☒	☐	☐
Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

Experiential Learning: Core Course Week, Study Tours, Field Studies

Field Studies: The two dedicated four-hour field study sessions are clearly an essential and defining component of DIS elective classes. The field studies allow faculty to develop unique and discipline-specific activities that cannot be accomplished within a classroom and that expose students to real world examples of what they are learning in each course. It ranges from being powerful learning experiences in which students deeply engage with the city/culture/people/history of Denmark to field trips that may not focus on Denmark specifically but rather allow students to get experience with the discipline of the class. The field studies excursions typically are not standalone trips, rather they are integrated into the learning outcomes of the course such that the experience outside the classroom deepens/enhances the topics that are addressed within the classroom. They also offer the opportunity for students/faculty to deepen their relationships and create a bonding experience that elevates the academic experience throughout the semester. Faculty put a lot of care and thought into how they use their field study time. One member of the review team joined students in a Danish Language and Culture course in forming a choir with local gymnasium students during which Danish and English skills are developed, musical notation is used to create compositions between Danish/American groups, students learn about the lives of their counterparts, and through learning the lyrics DIS students learn the nuances of how to pronounce various challenging vowel sounds. This visit created a safe space for students to be vulnerable and to develop trust and friendship with others. In so doing, this single four-hour experience provided an authentic and meaningful intercultural experience, deepened the academic understanding of the Danish language and music composition, and also contributed to the DIS focus on student wellbeing. Another team member joined the class on Inclusive Design in Architecture and Urban Spaces for a tour of the Danish Handicap Association Building. Touted as ‘The world’s most accessible office building’, the students were intrigued to learn how the end users were actively involved in the design process, resulting in a building that meets the needs of those who work and visit. For the students, this was the first time they experienced a building designed from the

start to be accessible. In a post visit debrief, students expressed amazement at how comfortable and 'normal' the building is.

Study Tours (Core Course Week/Long Study Tour): Within any Study Tour offered by DIS there is diversity and coherence in the range and types learning experiences that students engage in, from meeting with experts in their fields, to engaging in community-based activities, to considering how cultural elements of the tour connect to the academic topic of the class. In so doing, students simultaneously engage in an intercultural and multidisciplinary experience that enhances both academic and cultural learning. For faculty, this is an aspect of course development that they find especially meaningful, and study tours are rich with experiences that are tailored to the class and which students would not be able to access otherwise. For example, a study tour for Polar Biology included a hike across the tree line led by a local PhD student studying Arctic botany who taught students about the physiology and ecology of arctic plants, a fishing expedition accompanied by dissection of the fish and a plankton tow to identify zooplankton living in polar waters, a tour of an oceanographic research vessel, visits with members of the Arctic Council to discuss international efforts to protect the Arctic, presentations of research biologists, a visit to learn about fish farming in Norway, a guided history interpretation of Arctic exploration, a visit to a Sami reindeer grazing grounds with discussion of Sami/Norwegian history and explanation of Sami clothing sewed from reindeer hide, and two opportunities to view the Northern lights. Students were guided through this experience by their faculty, through on-site discussions, and through an assignment booklet that helped direct their attention to various components of the tour and provided opportunities to reflect and connect back to class.

Alignment of academic elements with course learning goals: Usually the Long Study Tour plays a role in one or more stated learning outcomes, and the work that is undertaken during Study tours is assessed by the faculty and comprises a portion of the course grade.

Prior reports recommended that students be offered the opportunity to reflect upon and connect the Study Tour activities to the learning goals of the course. This appears to have become a much better integrated component of the study tours. Faculty now provide many structured ways for students to reflect on learning and connect back to class: in some cases, this is quite well developed – for example students are responsible for creating a short introduction to that day's academic visits, students develop projects throughout the week that integrate various elements of the study tour. In other cases, students are provided a booklet with short assignments that they complete during each visit. In some cases, the study tour could be strengthened by utilizing the bus rides for group reflection and connection to class.

Student preparation for travel outside the classroom: students are provided a wide array of information about what to expect and how to pack/prepare for their study tours. However, they are given specific information about the travel details and itinerary only a few days before departure. This creates anxiety among students and does not allow sufficient preparation time,

in some cases. Early departure times create challenges for students who live far from the airport.

Faculty preparation to lead travel outside the classroom: The Study Tour department has created a well-developed Canvas course for faculty, supplemented by in person/zoom workshops where faculty talk through the roles of the two co-leaders, and role-play possible scenarios that might arise, and other salient aspects of leading groups of students. There is also a “Study Tour for Study Tour Leaders” experience that helps faculty consider the range of academic goals and learning experiences that they might want to build into their own Study Tour. The Study Tour department has developed a digital booklet to help faculty develop different modes and styles of assignments for their Study Tours. This support of faculty is invaluable.

The integration between the academic and logistical components of the study tour has been undergoing evolution over the past few years, to try and create the best academic experience possible and to streamline the process and improve the lines of communication. One (of several) positive developments over time has been the effort to create a direct relationship between faculty (who are responsible for developing the discipline-specific academic components of the study tour) and the study tour department (who have deep knowledge of the range of cultural components that can be included in the tour, as well as hotels/restaurant/local tour guides, etc.). This has paid off enormously. Both faculty and the study tour office seem to feel that the end result (the study tour itinerary and logistics) reflect knowledge and expertise that would not be possible if either one were arranging the tour alone. Faculty feel supported and empowered to add components that they think are academically important, and the study tour staff appreciate that they can work with the same faculty over multiple years to help build and deepen the tour experience. Another positive development has been the development of a comprehensive Study Tour training course and resource site where faculty can get help with everything from how to address difficult issues that arise (such as harassment or emergencies) to how to develop different modes and styles of assignments that help enhance student learning.

Commendations

The study tours are a “trademark” feature of DIS, with faculty and the study tour office making an incredible commitment to develop highly relevant site visits. The demands of traveling at such an intense pace, and with students who may feel challenged by the newness of the experience – is a true sign of the faculty’s commitment to teaching and learning.

Recommendation

Part-time faculty who teach a core course can struggle with the demands of developing study tours and coping with the many logistics involved. The Study Tour department reported that they have ideas to better support part-time faculty

☒ Exceeds expectations	☐ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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Research

The DIS research opportunities – and interest in them – have been growing in recent years. While placements were only in Science and Health for the first six years, other areas have been popular with students (Architecture, Environmental Science, and Psychology).

Compliance with IRB requirements: Students in classes that involve research of human subjects are made aware of the IRB and ethical requirements in their host countries and are required to get IRB approval at their home institutions (DIS staff help students navigate this requirement). Co-taught small-size labs ensure proper instruction and attention for every student. The research labs that we observed demonstrate good organization, collaborative learning, attention to detail, and deliberate procedures. In their research labs, students have the opportunity to engage at all levels of research, ranging from identifying research problems, literature review, hypothesizing, pilot study, recruiting subjects, data analysis and collection, and reporting results. For example, during our visit in the Neuroscience of Emotion Lab class taught by Elodie Cauvet, students worked in groups to collect data to understand how frustration/fear influenced decision making/ability to adapt. They practiced informing and getting consent from research subjects prior to obtaining data during a pilot study.

Utilization of research tools: In the same class as mentioned above, students utilized a skin response device to measure levels of frustration and fear, triangulating physiological data with perceptual survey results with an attempt to gain an accurate reading of human emotions. Students are made aware of the validity and reliability of their measurement tools and data collected. They use statistical methods for data processing and analyses. Students' level of engagement with class instruction, peer learning, research design, and technology are commendable.

Student Preparation: A mixed use of scientific, design, and heuristic methods are prevalent in various courses. Multiple modes of inquiry and different epistemological perspectives are covered in the research curriculum. Students commonly engage in both scientific and interpretive inquiries. They observe locals and their own lived experiences and are encouraged to appreciate individual creativity, emotions, and perspectives as much as collective behaviors

and goals. For example, the design research that students conduct in the Architect and Design program uniquely challenges them to record and communicate their individual understanding and reflections of rich Scandinavian histories, city landscape, architecture, foods, and fashions in a visual journal.

- Both sites offer a number of lab-based courses on psychological/biomedical/behavioral sciences. Lab instructional design allows for flexible tooling and encourages collaborative learning, where students can benefit from working with people from different disciplinary backgrounds and research interests.
- Students can apply for Research Assistantships (RAs) to work on research projects led by DIS faculty. Research topics range from designing a framework and training program for cultivating a creative mindset to evaluating the protective and regenerative molecular mechanisms of mesenchymal stem cells and their secretome in vitro models.
- The majority of RA positions are 3 credits, but those in biomedical 'wet labs' are 6 credits, requiring students to arrange their course schedules so they can commit 2 days a week to lab work.
- Students must submit an application which includes an academic reference. They also interview for RA positions, with the ultimate decision made by the faculty leading the research. With over 250 applicants for 78 RA positions, this means a keen competition, resulting in approximately 30% (average from both campuses) of the applicants getting accepted.
- An effort has been made to 'harmonize' the RA experience so that, whatever the research topic, students meet certain milestones and participate in meetings that bring all the RAs together to discuss and present their research. This is a nice addition to the RA experience that helps students appreciate the breadth and depth of research. The involvement of DIS staff (in addition to the faculty leading the research) helps ensure consistency in setting expectations and evaluating student effort.

Commendations

Expanding the available positions in recent years, providing strong direction, and including training for students on topics such as presenting, using social media, or preparing a 'short pitch' about their research are high-quality measures.

Students engage with research at multiple levels of topics, disciplines, ethics, methods and tools, modes of inquiry, data collection and analyses, and the implications of research findings.

Recommendations

There are two enclosed station spaces in the lab for data collection in Stockholm, along with two computers, allowing two teams to simultaneously collect data. If resource permits, this lab space could double in size.

In Copenhagen, it may be valuable to assess which disciplines would benefit from expanding their research space, to be able to offer an even broader array of research assistant experiences to students.

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Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

Faculty

Qualifications: Faculty at DIS display a high level of dedication and commitment to providing academically rigorous and high-quality courses. All DIS faculty hold a master’s degree or a terminal degree (such as a PhD) in their field. A unique aspect of the faculty at DIS is the number of part-time faculty who hold professional positions outside of DIS (in industry, medicine, non-profits, arts/architecture, etc.) and who teach one or two courses for DIS. These part-time faculty are able to offer students a unique academic experience that incorporates their professional experience and networks (in field studies, guest lectures, and other academic activities). Core courses are taught primarily by full-time faculty who primarily hold PhDs and who teach 3 courses per semester, as well as being engaged in various DIS initiatives outside the classroom. The full-time faculty provide continuity to the academic programs and create the foundation for the continuing evolution of the academic programs. Program Directors are responsible for hiring faculty and working with them to develop as teachers, by connecting them to the Learning Lab and by providing regular class observations and conversation around teaching approaches. Program Directors are sensitive and responsive to the needs of their faculty.

Quality of instruction: DIS faculty are highly qualified as experts in their field, and most have extensive teaching experience. Combined with the rich opportunities they have for professional development; the overall quality appears to be very high. The cohort of 27 faculty who participated in the bi-annual DIS Educators Workshop (DEW) to three campuses in Minnesota in October 2024 was an example of the commitment to continuous learning and expansion of pedagogical knowledge. Informal comments about the exposure that DIS faculty had to observing classes on the campuses of three very different institutions reveal the benefit of the week – several have talked with reviewers about how in one class session, they observed new and highly interactive practices, that strategically promote each student making a contribution to the discussion, etc.

Accessibility of the instructor: For the most part, faculty make themselves available to students in a variety of ways – after class, via email, via online groups, or by scheduling an “office hour”

meeting outside of class time. Some faculty make a point of regularly hanging out in student spaces, to make themselves informally available. A few faculty and students expressed frustration with the availability of students/faculty for out-of-class consultations or help sessions. This is compounded in Copenhagen where it is not possible for students to simply drop by a faculty office for help, as most faculty do not have dedicated office space. It is essential for faculty to be flexible, creative, and willing to find ways to meet with students or converse with them virtually or by email, in order for student learning to be supported.

DIS intentionally cultivates their faculty by providing visiting and exchange opportunities with higher education institutions in the US. These opportunities allow faculty to update their disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and develop both professional and personal connections.

☒	☐	☐
Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

Syllabi

All faculty provide syllabi with clear information about their course utilizing the Canvas platform. Class attendance is mandatory at DIS, and being on time is expected. Overall, the syllabi provide students with a good overview of the course, the learning outcomes and expectations for students, the major assignments/assessments and their contribution to the final course grade, the flow of topics (via the calendar), and the available learning resources.

Contact hours: DIS utilizes the standard U.S. formula for the number of contact hours that equate one semester credit – with each 3-credit course having 45 contact hours. DIS follows the UMN policy that formal instruction time is defined as 1) in-class instruction, 2) facilitated discussion, 3) pre-arranged guest lectures with a content expert, and 4) onsite lectures during site visits and excursions. And, that informal instruction (experiential learning) counts as half-time and does not include formal lectures or guidance from an expert or the instructor, and is defined as 1) site visits, 2) excursions, 3) field trips, 4) community engagement, or 5) guided tours.

Texts and readings: Faculty are encouraged to create syllabi that list the out-of-class learning resources on their syllabi (mostly readings, but also including other modes of learning using audio or visual modes such as videos, animations, podcasts, films, etc.). The syllabi that the review team examined provided a rich set of readings, and many also included other resources. These resources are available to students via the course Canvas site (or, if there is a textbook, it is provided to students by DIS).

Assessment: an examination of canvas syllabi and conversations with faculty and students revealed a rich array of assessment types that expose students to different ways of demonstrating their learning. Faculty are encouraged to create a range of assessment activities to allow students varied ways of demonstrating their learning, in keeping with the spirit of Universal Design for Learning. Faculty are encouraged to scaffold students' learning to avoid creating high-stakes assessments that comprise a large portion of the grade (such as a single exam worth a large portion of the final grade). Many faculty have embraced this approach, and a typical class might include a collection of assignment types that can be extremely creative and intellectually challenging. The most typical kinds of assignments include written homework/problem sets, online Canvas quizzes or short exams, short in-class quizzes, research or response papers, interviews, group projects that culminate in a presentation or other creative product, assignments where students choose how they want to communicate what they have learned, and final capstone projects. In some cases, students expressed anxiety when their class offered only a few high-stakes assignments especially in classes that do not provide an opportunity to build their learning or get feedback prior to the final product being graded (for example a paper worth 30% that does not include a draft that receives feedback from the instructor). A few students indicated a desire for more explicit and transparent communication around the expectations for each assignment.

Learning outcomes: Syllabi that were examined contained clear and measurable learning outcomes. Faculty are encouraged to define clear and measurable learning outcomes and to then reference the learning outcomes throughout the semester to help students see how the activities in class are helping them work towards the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes assessed at different levels – course, program, and institution – can benefit strategic curriculum and programmatic planning.

☒	☐	☐
Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

Recommendation

Continue supporting faculty in ensuring that any large assignment is scaffolded to build student learning (provide instruction in how to perform research on a topic, how to read scholarly papers, introduce a draft stage that receives feedback, provide practice with how to research or interview before asking students to do that kind of work for a grade). Provide rubrics that clearly show how student work will be evaluated and what qualities of the work would demonstrate a level of understanding/skills at an expert level vs. an “emerging/developing” level.

Academic Advising, Student Evaluations

Pre-Departure Advising: The on-site Academic Support team coordinates closely with the North American Office staff to help guide students from post-acceptance through the arrival/orientation period. Students are required to watch a Compass course, receive a series of emails, strategically paced, and have the opportunity to meet with DIS staff if needed.

On-site Advising: The Academic Support team provides support for students as needed, including guiding students through the process of dropping/adding courses, addressing absences, and grade appeals. This team coordinates with the enrollment team to prepare for the semester, and the accommodations team throughout, ensuring that advising is done from a holistic perspective.

Student Evaluations: Students are asked to complete separate evaluations on housing, courses, and the overall program. Overall results are tallied and appropriately shared.

☒ Exceeds expectations	☐ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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Commendations

The virtual orientation attended by one of the reviewers was engaging and with highly important and relevant info. DIS has prioritized the information that students need at that pre-departure period.

The entire advising process appears highly cohesive, which no doubt takes continuous monitoring by all involved.

Recommendations

DIS needs to continue to be mindful of and support faculty in finding ways to meet with students or converse with them – either in-person, virtually or by email, in order to provide the support students may need outside of class time.

STUDENT SERVICES

Pre-departure Services & Materials

The North American Office (NAO) supports its U.S. partner institutions and students well. Communication is strong, and needed updates are shared with students. The NAO staff provide pre- and post-admission guidance, including academic, travel/practical and immigration information.

Admitted students are promptly invited to join Canvas to access the Compass Course which includes modules before and during their time abroad on the topics of Academics, Housing, Health & Safety, and Life Abroad.

Students are able to connect with others in their cohort by using the DIS Navigate App starting a couple of months before departure.

Students we met with reported some anxiety in not having their housing/accommodation confirmed until 10 days before departure from the U.S., but the review team knows that this is a standard industry timeline. Continuous assurance to students may feel repetitive, but it is likely the only tool available.

On-site Orientation

The Review Team found the orientation to be thorough, relevant and helpful for students. As part of the arrival workshop and orientation, students are introduced to their housing; take tours of their neighborhood, e.g., where to buy groceries, the commute to DIS etc. There is time designated to build community within their housing and the DIS population (housing community dinners) and connect with affinity groups and/or participate in new in town meetups (hikes, puzzles etc.).

DIS holds an activity fair to learn about being engaged in the local community as well as sessions on living in their new city (e.g. biking in Copenhagen; sex and dating in Stockholm). Students also do a tour of DIS classroom and hub spaces to learn how to navigate these spaces and where to study and socialize.

Orientation also includes students learning about the many types of support available (for example, academic, mental health, medical) and they may also get support with their phone, learn to access the Canvas site and WIFI, obtain transportation pass, laundry cards, and their food stipend.

Housing

There are a range of housing options for students, and they all seem to be carefully planned and managed. DIS considers safety and cleanliness, access to public transit, and amply furnishes each living space. The review team visited a residence in Stockholm that is being renovated and will open in Spring 2025. It is fresh and clean, and with many amenities, located right in the center of the city (and only a 15-minute walking distance from DIS).

With so few students choosing homestays (11% in Stockholm; 7% in Copenhagen), it is understandable that DIS considered eliminating it as an option. However, they are to be commended for retaining it as there are students who seek out this experience. Integrating host country students into some types of housing is a positive addition as well.

The Housing Policies and Student Handbooks are provided to students in the pre-departure stage.

Meals: Students reported that DIS provides a \$600 food allowance that can be used to supplement their food costs; students felt that this was very helpful, and some students aimed to constrain their semester food costs to that amount. Many students have no prior cooking experience as they eat in dining halls in the U.S. The opportunity to develop independence in managing one's own food purchases and preparation and learning how to navigate the kitchen alongside roommates is a valuable experience.

Health & Wellness

The Student Wellbeing staff makes an incredible effort to consider the student experience from a holistic perspective. The degree of services is very high, and commendable for what appears to be easily accessible.

Staffing: The recent hire of two staff (currently totaling five) was reported as adequate for now. A total of twenty staff shares the assignment of managing the 24-hour emergency phone, with a smart delineation: once a student has contacted them to have the staff in "Role 1" to serve as the central communicator, but a "Role 2" staff to accompany the student to an appointment, etc. This is an efficient way to spread the responsibility and the time commitment among staff. It was evident that access to English-speaking medical and mental health care is strong and without issue.

Learning and Physical Accommodations: Students are encouraged to disclose any needed accommodations before they arrive in-country. Most do so, and depending on the degree of accommodation, may have a virtual meeting with a staff in the North American Office (or in-country). Some students do forget or fail to disclose learning accommodations in advance, but if they have documentation in place at their home institution, it is easily put into place for them on-site.

A very creative provision is that all students may access the Calm app at no cost for the semester. It provides guided relaxation and reflections, calming stories, and breathing exercises meant to induce sound sleep.

The e-newsletters and the DIS Navigate app provides students with ample ability to contact staff for help; students may also find staff in the Hub, contact the Community Advisor (CA) assigned to their specific accommodation (and even meet with the CA on-site during office hours once each week).

The staff has found that doing programming more heavily in the first half of the semester maximizes attendance – from pop up sessions on life skill topics from ‘how to clean your water kettle’ to cooking events.

Cultural & Career Considerations

DIS students have an abundance of opportunities to engage in cultural activities and events. From local excursions, to being able to socialize with local students who live in the same building (or suite), to meeting with high school students as part of their Danish/Swedish language class, students have a significant range of choices.

During the review visit, a session on careers abroad featured many DIS alumni as well as other foreigners who are now working in Denmark – they shared their experiences and offered advice. The session was very well-attended.

Linked to the promotion of career development may be the work that the North American Office is doing to build and maintain an alumni network. In the past two years, there have been several all-alumni reunion events, and a “come back and visit DIS in Copenhagen” event. These may bode well in helping students receive informal mentoring by other DIS alumni, and in career networking.

Summary of Student Services Sections:

☒	☐	☐
Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

Commendations

DIS makes a variety of good options - including homestays - available to students, describing them accurately, and allowing students to prioritize their choices.

DIS students receive helpful information about the typical as well as the unique types of activities available in the city and surrounding areas.

Recommendations

The DIS staff - just like the entire field - has found itself supporting a student population with shifting views of their mental health and wellbeing, and ways to manage it. DIS should continue to provide staff development on current trends in this area and adopt ways to best support students.

DIS should continue to build the integration of career skills - and help students identify and articulate the transferable skills they develop while abroad - to build recognition of the career value of the experience.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The DIS Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion provides context for this section:
We believe that diversity in all aspects of the educational environment is necessary for students to reach their full potential, and strive to put diversity, equity, and inclusion at the center of how we define an impactful learning environment.

DIS takes this mission seriously. The DIS culture is to welcome, respect, and listen to all people in its community. There is a concerted effort to create a welcoming and supportive environment for students, faculty, and staff. There are frequent opportunities for both formal and informal DEI training and learning for students, faculty, and staff. Academically, faculty are supported and encouraged to consider the diversity of students and learning styles that may be present in the classroom.

Of the five key areas for strategic development in the DIS Strategic Plan, all of them incorporate DEI goals, and two of them focus on DEI specifically. The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing priority aims to incorporate universal design principles throughout the student journey and develop a more proactive approach to student mental health that integrates student wellbeing and mental health into academics. And the Ambitious on Access priority aims to expand financial access to DIS and redesign on-site funding to level the playing field for students.

DEI - Student Services

DIS has made DEI training a requirement for faculty and staff, seeming to blend a U.S. perspective with the local (Danish or Swedish) one, and highly appropriate given the demographic they serve. We often heard faculty and staff speak about a priority to create a sense of belonging. There is recognition that this may be very different for each student, and the importance is communicated to everyone in the DIS community.

DIS has a diverse body of faculty, specifically in Stockholm, and faculty are very intentional about DEI experiences for the students in curriculum and other areas of cultural engagement. DIS is focused on making the program more accessible, and keen on targeting its scholarship dollars to high/er-need students. Over the past few years, DIS has addressed financial need not only by increasing financial aid, but also by providing on-the-ground financial support via public transportation passes, grocery stipends, and reimbursement for DIS-related expenses. On study tours, faculty have funds they can use to support students.

There have been features and services added since the DEI initiative began. For example, there are two affinity groups for students to join - one for LGBTQ students and their allies, and another for Students of Color (only). The Copenhagen staff are researching the possibility of physical space dedicated to these groups - perhaps space in the Hub or even housing dedicated for these students. A working group with staff from both sites will meet soon to submit a proposal by the end of this year. There is support for student identity needs (gender, sexuality, race, religion, etc.). On-site housing advisors are available to assist students in their residential spaces.

DIS has created an open forum to discuss issues of discrimination and student bloggers openly share their experiences with racism or other forms of discrimination and how they have found support in coping and responding to these experiences.

☒	☐	☐
Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAM

The review team met a highly qualified staff at every level of responsibility in all of our interactions. From the leadership of executive director Malene Torp and academic director Helle Rytikønen, to the department chairs and student-facing roles, we witnessed a caring, competent and motivated staff. They display pride and are eager to provide students with a high-quality educational and living experience.

Many faculty have served as practitioners in their fields and bring a wealth of real-world knowledge and experience to their classrooms. This serves to connect students with the local culture and society despite being in classes only with other U.S. students. Many faculty also have spent time teaching, working and living in the U.S. and this provides strong insight into their student populations.

☒ Exceeds expectations	☐ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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QUALITY OF FACILITIES

Office and Class Space

DIS has a clear and visible commitment to creating community and deepening the academic experience through the design of space and DIS has engaged in a remarkable process to innovate and update several different types of spaces. In Stockholm, the design of DIS offices and class space has been possible to coordinate from the beginning, and the space seems to be designed in a manner that elevates the teaching and work that happens in those spaces. The community at DIS Stockholm feels connected, supportive, and cohesive. There is space dedicated to faculty, space dedicated to students, classroom space that is easily reconfigurable for different styles of learning, rooms designed for different purposes, and the lovely Octav lunch cafe. These all work together to bring faculty, staff, and students into community together

DIS Copenhagen has accomplished a significant amount in the past few years to improve the sense of community and belonging among faculty and students. To address concerns from faculty and staff who felt that their work relationships were somewhat siloed (especially part time faculty who do not have office space at DIS), DIS repurposed an office building into a DIStrict Cafe that contains multiple space for meetings, individual work, friendly conversation, and a great cup of (free) coffee. There is universal agreement that this space has dramatically improved the workday experience, and many people choose to work at the DIStrict Cafe as their main workspace. Part time faculty in particular feel that they have a place to go where they can work, meet with colleagues, and have chance encounters with other DIS staff that often lead to productive outcomes (guest lecturing in a class, convening of an interest group, etc.).

DIS has also innovated and updated the student space in Copenhagen, creating a Student Hub where students can meet, study, and have access to Student Hub staff who can direct them when they have a question (a quiet room to hold a Zoom interview, how to find a doctor, who to talk to if they are having conflict with their roommate or academic challenges,, etc.). The student hub offers many flavors of spaces for students to gather, including rooms they can book, rooms where they can lay down and rest, kitchen spaces, etc.

Teaching space is limited at DIS Copenhagen and would benefit from the same process of re-envisioning and innovating as has occurred with faculty/staff space that resulted in the DIStrict Cafe and student space that resulted in the Student Hub. In Copenhagen, some disciplines have been able to create academic spaces that perfectly fit their pedagogical goals and styles. Other disciplines feel constrained by a lack of access to space that is designed specifically for their particular disciplinary needs and feel that they cannot achieve their pedagogical goals because they do not have access to the appropriate space/resources/equipment to do so.

☒	☐	☐
Exceeds expectations	Meet expectations	Do not meet expectations

Commendations

The acquisition of space on Vestergade and nearby has been strategic and efficient - producing both beautiful and functional facilities.

The recent design of customized teaching space, such as the new site for Architecture and Design, reflects a strong commitment to the pedagogical needs of different disciplines.

Recommendations

Just as the planning for the Hub produced great spaces, the faculty spoke about how the renovation of some of the teaching spaces need to be as carefully planned, since currently they find some deficits in design, functionality, and size. The process that led to the developments of the Student Hub and V8 could be employed to re-envision both the quantity and design of academic teaching spaces to better meet the pedagogical needs of more disciplines.

Study Space

Study spaces meet diverse learning needs with a combination of lecture classrooms in different sizes, laboratories, art studios, and maker spaces. Classroom facilities, such as large touch screens, mobile whiteboards, and flexible seating arrangements provide hyper-connected, effective and productive learning environments. The design of the study spaces reflects an empathetic mindset that values a good balance between privacy, individual wellbeing and collaboration and proficiency. Study spaces effectively accommodate different learning styles, facilitating group discussions and public reviews. The distinctive style and identity and aesthetics of each room are impressive.

☒ Exceeds expectations	☐ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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Library

The library is conveniently located within one building where the student hub is, encouraging frequent use of academic resources. The subjects are thematically organized in different floors that can help to promote conversations among the students with shared academic interests on related issues. Digital resources are also made available to students and faculty.

☐ Exceeds expectations	☒ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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Technology

The IT department is highly responsive with well trained staff who support students, faculty and staff in their technology needs. If a problem arises in a class, an IT team member can be reached immediately. One of the strategic goals at DIS is to continue improving the infrastructure and capabilities for Organizational Learning, Technology and Data, and investment in resources towards creating connected, intuitive, and robust technology systems that can evolve in real time is essential to the DIS academic mission. The review team did not learn about the specifics of this initiative during our site visit.

☐ Exceeds expectations	☒ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS & PRACTICES

DIS commits an impressive amount of time and effort to climate literacy and sustainable practices. Most faculty and staff complete a Carbon Literacy/Sustainability training to understand issues from a broad perspective and learn how to reduce carbon emissions. These

practices are, in turn, incorporated into the daily practices at DIS facilities, and students may discern that there is a much greater concern for climate change in Denmark/Sweden than in the U.S.

While DIS planned to be carbon-neutral by 2025, they have instead determined that while continuing to strive for lower emissions, there is a positive educational “ROI” on carbon-emitting programmatic elements such as the study tours. The Arctic Grand Challenge is an example where considerable travel will be required, but perhaps could be justified by the outcomes from an interdisciplinary academic program that directly addresses the real-world issues of this complex geopolitical, cultural, and environmental region. Learning Outcomes around mitigating climate change are imperative to justify this initiative.

The Stay Local weekends promoted by DIS build awareness among students of the emissions from short-haul flights. This, along with recycling programs in student residences, demonstrate the importance of conservation.

☒ Exceeds expectations	☐ Meet expectations	☐ Do not meet expectations
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Commendation

DIS has established a number of courses that address issues of climate change, and across a number of disciplines, integrates the topic of sustainability into the curriculum.

Recommendation

Given the magnitude of the study tours’ carbon footprint, DIS should continue to practice a strong commitment to sustainable practices in every other area possible. Its promotion of “Local Travel Weekends” builds awareness of the high emissions of short haul flights and may cause students to re-evaluate their frequent weekend travel..

SAFETY & SECURITY ISSUES

The team did not review safety and security beyond assessing the information provided to students but shares some observations:

- Immediately upon acceptance, students are advised on how to prepare for any medical considerations while abroad – both physical and mental.
- Students receive information about ensuring their safety - while traveling, while out at night, and in their living spaces, etc.
- DIS guides students in managing daily health and safety issues
- Students have support available for identity-specific issues: gender, race, sexuality

With a Director of Student Health & Safety in the NAO since 2015 who is closely connected to the Student Wellbeing teams on-site, it is apparent that these areas of responsibility are effectively integrated.

FUTURE PROSPECTS & PLANS

The current strategic planning goals of DIS are listed at the beginning of this document and have served as a context for the review team's assessment of many aspects of the program.

Commendation

In discussions with leadership, a particular challenge was addressed regarding engaging students in difficult conversations - such as issues around identity politics, and inclusivity. The wish of leadership is that DIS can create an environment where students can and do open up about sensitive topics. It is noted that the previous review team recommended continued professional development and training about classroom dynamics, and there is evidence that considerable time and energy has been committed to this in the years since.

This is a laudable goal, and perhaps they can make progress; perhaps with students in a slightly different context (in class with other U.S. students, but outside the U.S.), DIS can move this difficult dial. And yet, the review team also noted that with U.S. faculty highly challenged to find a way to facilitate difficult discussions - and with the political climate in the U.S. becoming even more tense - it may not be reasonable to expect DIS faculty to solve a current but fundamental U.S. dilemma.

Recommendations

A strong recommendation is for DIS to undertake a research project on a 'meta-level' of student learning – for example, assessing students' intercultural development pre- and post-program. DIS is in a key position to significantly inform the field about the impact of various elements of program design. With such a large student body, variables such as housing type, or language study (vs. no language study) could be analyzed for significance in students' overarching development. Semester vs. short-term participants could be another comparison.

There are a number of available assessment tools with the needed validity and reliability for a study like this (see for example, the Global Perspectives Inventory - GPI, or the Beliefs, Events and Values Inventory - BEVI). It may require hiring a researcher on contract but would be a highly valuable contribution to the body of education abroad findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the evaluation team benefited greatly from the care and concern for this process by the DIS staff in Stockholm, Copenhagen, and St. Paul. The faculty and staff were welcoming in their hospitality and generous with their time. The preparation meetings and the materials provided to us were thorough and helpful.

A grand thank you to Kim Hindbjorgen for her attention to detail over the course of several months to help prepare for our visit.

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

Academics
Place-based, active, experiential learning distinguishes the DIS curriculum. Instructional design demonstrates resourcefulness, flexibility, and a student-centered approach.
Coverage of a wide range of disciplines is complemented by interdisciplinary collaborations at both the faculty and student levels.
Close and deep connections with the local community and professionals greatly enhance faculty expertise and provide networking opportunities through guest lectures, field studies, and study tours.
Assignments are thoughtfully designed to encourage group work, incorporate multiple perspectives and modes of inquiry, link theory with practice, scaffold requirements, and accommodate diverse learning styles

Experiential Learning: Core Course Week, Study Tours, Field Studies
The study tours are a “trademark” feature of DIS, with faculty and the study tour office making an incredible commitment to develop highly relevant site visits. The demands of traveling at such an intense pace, and with students who may feel challenged by the newness of the experience - is a true sign of the faculty’s commitment to teaching and learning.
Research
Expanding the available positions in recent years, providing strong direction, and including training for students on topics such as presenting, using social media, or preparing a ‘short pitch’ about their research are high-quality measures.
Students engage with research at multiple levels of topics, disciplines, ethics, methods and tools, modes of inquiry, data collection and analyses, and the implications of research findings.
Academic Advising, Student Evaluations
The virtual orientation attended by one of the reviewers was engaging and with highly important and relevant info. DIS has prioritized the information that students need at that pre-departure period.
The entire advising process appears highly cohesive, which no doubt takes continuous monitoring by all involved.
Cultural & Career Considerations
DIS makes a variety of good options - including homestays - available to students, describing them accurately, and allowing students to prioritize their choices.
DIS students receive helpful information about the typical as well as the unique types of activities available in the city and surrounding areas.

Office and Class Space
• The acquisition of space on Vestergade and nearby has been strategic and efficient - producing both beautiful and functional facilities.
• The recent design of customized teaching space, such as the new site for Architecture and Design, reflects a strong commitment to the pedagogical needs of different disciplines.
SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS & PRACTICES
• DIS has established a number of courses that address issues of climate change, and across a number of disciplines, integrates the topic of sustainability into the curriculum.
FUTURE PROSPECTS & PLANS
• In discussions with leadership, a particular challenge was addressed regarding engaging students in difficult conversations - such as issues around identity politics, and inclusivity. The wish of leadership is that DIS can create an environment where students can and do open up about sensitive topics. It is noted that the previous review team recommended continued professional development and training about classroom dynamics, and there is evidence that considerable time and energy has been committed to this in the years since.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS with DIS Response

Academics

RECOMMENDATION

Find ways to support part-time faculty in being available to engage in faculty development initiatives.

DIS RESPONSE

We share the Review Team's eagerness to ensure that faculty development opportunities are accessible to part-time faculty both in terms of scheduling and compensation.

We offer compensation for faculty to participate in mandatory development sessions such as introductory seminar for new faculty, study tour training, the bi-annual faculty seminar, the week-long DIS Educators Workshop to partner universities in the U.S. and semester kick-off workshops. We also remunerate faculty who participate in smaller learning communities around a topic of strategic importance to DIS, e.g., Universal Design for Learning and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

We also have a professional development fund where faculty apply for individual funding for conferences, workshops or collaborative activities.

We strive to schedule development opportunities, which take other work commitments of part-time faculty into consideration, we e.g. host the faculty seminar on the weekend and other events after regular work hours. We offer childcare for events like the faculty seminar.

Part-time faculty development will continue to be a priority for DIS.

RECOMMENDATION

Adding grading rubrics to assignments could help students better understand layered requirements, thereby reducing anxiety and minimizing grade disputes.

DIS RESPONSE

We agree that grading rubrics can be a great pedagogical tool that helps with the transparency around grading. We have sample grading rubrics for inspiration on our course management course for all DIS faculty and in the onboarding of new faculty, we always discuss grading rubrics as an option. However, we leave it to the faculty to decide if this is the best way of creating clarity and fairness around grading and while most faculty have a grading rubric, it's not all and that's perfectly fine. We emphasize the importance of giving constructive and timely feedback on all assignments and this is an important part of faculty training.

Maybe for that reason, we have very few grading disputes each semester.

RECOMMENDATION

Leverage your unique position as a study abroad program to provide safe spaces for creatively engaging students in difficult conversations and critiques – a common issue faced by faculty at students' home institutions.

DIS RESPONSE

As the Review Team mentioned, the commitment to engage with difficult subjects is at the core of DIS' mission as an educational institution. Although it can be difficult, we will not shy away from this responsibility but continue to work carefully to create safe – and brave - spaces for dialogue.

We appreciate the review team's eye for our unique position: the close relation between students and faculty that develop in small classes and also during field studies and study tours creates psychologically and intellectually safer spaces for the students to lean into.

The Learning Lab also regularly hosts (well-attended) sessions for faculty on how to teach difficult topics and the week following the recent U.S. election, DIS hosted Seminar Nights in both Stockholm and Copenhagen where local experts shared views on the election and its potential impact on the U.S., Europe and the world. Our slight nervousness about hosting these events was put to shame as the DIS students showed tremendous curiosity and maturity in debating this new political reality.

Experiential Learning: Core Course Week, Study Tours, Field Studies

RECOMMENDATION

Part-time faculty who teach a core course can struggle with the demands of developing study tours and coping with the many logistics involved. The Study Tour department reported that they have ideas to better support part-time faculty.

DIS RESPONSE

The students benefit tremendously from their part-time faculty's expertise and the professional network they actively draw upon to enrich the courses they teach. This is certainly the case when part-time faculty teach core courses and generously utilize their network inside and outside of Scandinavia to provide students with unique experiences and access to stakeholders. We will continue our efforts to optimize the collaboration between our Study Tour department and the faculty including to minimize the workload for faculty in terms of logistics where applicable.

Research

RECOMMENDATION

There are two enclosed station spaces in the lab for data collection in Stockholm, along with two computers, allowing two teams to simultaneously collect data. If resource permits, this lab space could double in size.

DIS RESPONSE

We are proud of the lab and research opportunities we provide to students and committed to continuous development. We have a third mobile lab station which has come to good use this semester. If additional space or resources are needed to support student learning in this area it is something we will look favorably on and prioritize.

RECOMMENDATION

In Copenhagen, it may be valuable to assess which disciplines would benefit from expanding their research space, so as to be able to offer an even broader array of research assistant experiences to students.

DIS RESPONSE

Yes, indeed. While we are happy to have the research mentorship positions be competitive, our strategy for the past 18 months has been to expand even more to, e.g. the humanities, and social sciences to give a broader number of students an opportunity to engage in research. We will continue to do so.

Syllabi

RECOMMENDATION

Continue supporting faculty in ensuring that any large assignment is scaffolded to build student learning (provide instruction in how to perform research on a topic, how to read scholarly papers, introduce a draft stage that receives feedback, provide practice with how to research or interview before asking students to do that kind of work for a grade). Provide rubrics that clearly show how student work will be evaluated and what qualities of the work would demonstrate a level of understanding/skills at an expert level vs. an “emerging/developing” level.

DIS RESPONSE

We agree that assignments should be scaffolded and very much also recommend that faculty provide opportunities for students to receive peer and/or faculty feedback on drafts. Since not all our assignments are written papers, the scaffolding will sometimes/often look different than what is described above but it is of course important to ensure that students are acquiring the skills they need to work on a larger assignment.

Academic Advising, Student Evaluations

RECOMMENDATION

DIS needs to continue to be mindful of and support faculty in finding ways to meet with students or converse with them – either in-person, virtually or by email, in order to provide the support students may need outside of class time.

DIS RESPONSE

This is an interesting and important point. Very few DIS faculty have weekly office hours so the review team is right that we have to be mindful of how students can then contact their faculty. In most cases, faculty stay before or after class and are very responsive via email. There is also often an opportunity to talk – formally or informally – during or after field studies and study tour visits. Core course faculty travel with the students, share meals and cultural experiences, etc., which often allow for opportunities to talk. Some faculty go on walks with students if they sense that a student is sad or need some support and all of us meet with our class representatives to hear their perspective on how the class is going. Faculty also frequently schedule drop-in hours in connection with assignments or schedule meetings with students who need extra support or have questions about an assignment or a grade.

We have almost no complaints from students that they are unable to reach their faculty but as part of our increased focus on student mental health and wellbeing, we are considering if we should implement a more formal approach to office hours.

Cultural & Career Considerations

RECOMMENDATION

The DIS staff - just like the entire field - has found itself supporting a student population with shifting views of their mental health and wellbeing, and ways to manage it. DIS should continue to provide staff development on current trends in this area and adopt ways to best support students.

DIS RESPONSE

We are excited about having Mental Health and Wellbeing as a central component in our DIS Strategy 2024 – 2026. We have a good starting point with robust student support structures and staff and faculty development in this area, but we are committed to further developments, also as the student population changes. In our strategic work we are particularly focused on a public health approach to student wellbeing, relying on the most promising research in the area, also to support faculty better in their changing role.

RECOMMENDATION

DIS should continue to build the integration of career skills - and help students identify and articulate the transferable skills they develop while abroad - to build recognition of the career value of the experience.

DIS RESPONSE

We couldn't agree more – and not just career skills but the skills necessary to become engaged citizens.

In their future jobs, today's students are likely to be collaborating with colleagues in remote destinations and they are likely to have several careers and hold jobs in professions that do not yet exist.

As a result, the purpose of a liberal education today is the “preparation for appointments not yet made,” as Howard Swearer, former President of Brown University put it. There is increasing focus on the disconnect between the importance of lifelong learning and the way higher education is organized with the bulk of learning taking place at a young age and almost none later. It is increasingly important for our students to “learn, unlearn and relearn” in order to succeed, as Alvin Toffler pointed out already a while ago.

In a sense, there is more need than ever for the innovative curriculum and student-centered pedagogy known from the best universities and colleges and for the holistic learning experiences of a study abroad program like DIS where students engage with other cultures and gain more knowledge of themselves.

We help students realize the transferable skills they have learned, not just the content specific knowledge but also critical thinking, curiosity and the ability to learn from mistakes. Through experiential learning and by expanding the classroom to all of Europe, we move our students from passive listeners and absorbers of knowledge to active learners. We engage in an embodied pedagogy where students learn in a holistic manner and through all of their senses.

Our Career Nights draw more than a hundred students each time, and we are also proud of our educational opportunities through our Alumni Network.

Office and Class Space

RECOMMENDATION

Just as the planning for the Hub produced great spaces, the faculty spoke about how the renovation of some of the teaching spaces need to be as carefully planned, since currently they find some deficits in design, functionality, and size. The process that led to the developments of the Student Hub and V8 could be employed to re-envision both the quantity and design of academic teaching spaces to better meet the pedagogical needs of more disciplines.

DIS RESPONSE

We appreciate the Review Team's acknowledgement of the quality and the improvements we have recently made to several DIS spaces. We are proud of our Student Hubs; the new Architecture & Design facilities and we will continue to improve our educational spaces incrementally in the same vein. In addition, we are grateful for the recent art donation from the New Carlsberg Foundation that DIS has received. The 50 carefully selected artworks aligned with DIS values and curriculum also serve as an impactful way to heighten the quality of our educational spaces.

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS & PRACTICES

RECOMMENDATION

Given the magnitude of the study tours' carbon footprint, DIS should continue to practice a strong commitment to sustainable practices in every other area possible.

DIS RESPONSE

We recognize the carbon footprint of DIS operations and the study abroad industry we are part of. Our Going Greener strategy continues to focus on continued carbon reductions from DIS operations and further strengthening our educational handprint through our curriculum focused on the climate crisis, biodiversity, etc. In 2025 we plan to introduce a new and significant DIS initiative in this area.

FUTURE PROSPECTS & PLANS

RECOMMENDATION

A strong recommendation is for DIS to undertake a research project on a 'meta-level' of student learning – for example, assessing students' intercultural development pre- and post-program. DIS is in a key position to significantly inform the field about the impact of various elements of

program design. With such a large student body, variables such as housing type, or language study (vs. no language study) could be analyzed for significance in students' overarching development. Semester vs. short-term participants could be another comparison.

There are a number of available assessment tools with the needed validity and reliability for a study like this (see for example, the Global Perspectives Inventory - GPI, or the Beliefs, Events and Values Inventory - BEVI). It may require hiring a researcher on contract but would be a highly valuable contribution to the body of education abroad findings.

DIS RESPONSE

We are honored that the Review Team identifies DIS as an institution with the potential to make a research contribution that can move international education forward. We are intrigued by the idea and see potential in some of the current strategy work we are engaged in. It is early days, but the pilot work we are doing on mental health and wellbeing in collaboration with the Danish Student Counseling Services is showing potential. The fast growing DIS Alumni Community could also enable us to contemplate a longitudinal study.

APPENDIX A - Itinerary of the Review Team, October 21-25, 2024

Review Itinerary



DIS Program Review

Ann Hubbard (Assistant Vice Provost, Learning Abroad Center)

Jodi Schwarz (Associate Professor, Biology; Vassar College)

Juan Wu (Professor, Retail and Consumer Studies; Interdisciplinary Design Minor Director; Associate Dean for Academic Programs)

Lorene Lanier (Associate Professor, Neuroscience)

Stockholm

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DIS is located in the Östermalm neighborhood of Stockholm, only a two-minute walk from the 1912 Olympic Stadium. The main building at DIS Stockholm was completed in 2016 and is shared with the Royal College of Music Stockholm (KMH). The building is located at the T-bana stop 'Stadion,' a five-minute ride from the central railway station 'T-Centralen.'

Monday, October 21

8.00 Meet Kim in hotel lobby to depart for DIS Stockholm

8.30 – 9.50 Welcome to DIS Stockholm: Kickoff and Introduction to the Week with **Malene Torp** (Executive Director), **Marcel Grüniger** (Director of Housing and Student Affairs), and **Karoline Beronius** (Director of Academic Operations and Outreach)

Location: Meet inside Kungliga Musikhögskolan (KMH), Valhallavägen 105

10.00 – 11.25 Class Observations

Jodi

Behavioral Economics (Lars-Erik Boström)

Topic: Neoclassical economics vs. behavioral economics

Location: 1D409

Juan

Data Visualization (Angie Dag Hjort)

Topic: Visual cognition (perception)

Location: 1D509

Lorene

Storytelling Workshop: How Narrative Works (Michael Ioannou)

Topic: Voice!

Location: 1D-508

10.00 – 11.25

Ann

Student Life with **Marcel Grüninger** (Director of Housing and Student Affairs) and **Alice Ronnehed** (Student Life and Host Coordinator) and **Nyamusi Nyambok** (Community Specialist and Student Life Coordinator)

Location: 1C-516

11.30 – 13.00

Lunch with DIS Full-time Faculty: **Élodie Cauvet** (Neuroscience), **Fei Hussein** (Economics), **Meiling Liu** (Psychology), and **Polina Smiragina-Ingelström** (Politics & Society)

Location: Oktav

13.10 – 14.35 Class Observations

Ann

Swedish Language and Culture (Faculty: Lena Norrman)

Topic: Is Sweden really a country with great gender equality?

Location: 1D-409

Jodi

Public Health Policy in Practice (Faculty: Jad Shedrawy)

Topic: Health Economics

Location: 1D-411

Juan

Power of the Mind: Psychology of Performance (Faculty: Meiling Liu)

Topic: Procrastination

Location: 1E-509

Lorene

Immunology and Infectious Diseases (Faculty: Chenhong Lin)

Topic: Effector of Adaptive Immunity

Location: 1D-410

14.45 – 15.15

Tour of Facilities with **Henry Summ** (Academic Coordinator) and **Cassandra Kenning** (Community Advisor)

Location: Meet in Staff/Faculty Kitchen

15.15 – 17.00

Housing Tour: Visit our new housing site, Blekholmen, currently under development, where student well-being and sustainability are at the forefront of the design process. Hear from **Marcel Grüninger** and **Fanny Stenberg**, Architect and Sustainability Strategist), who is involved in the project, along with other key contributors.

Location: Meet in KMH Lobby

17.00 – 18.00

Time on Own

18.00

Dinner with DIS Faculty: **Iwo Nord** (Gender & Sexuality Studies), **Kim Bergqvist** (European Humanities), **Monica Siqueros Sanchez** (Psychology), **Natalia Landázuri Sáenz** (Program Director of Computer Science and Engineering), and; plus **Richard Lewis** (DIS Visiting Faculty and Professor of Neuroscience and Psychological Science at Pomona College), **Susan Castagnetto** (Senior Lecturer for Philosophy at Scripps College), and **Kim Hindbjorgen**

Location: Nybrogatan 38

Tuesday, October 22

7.45 Check out of hotel and bring luggage to DIS

8.25 – 9.50 Class Observations

Ann

Tumor Biology and Oncology (Faculty: Pavitra Kannan)

Topic: Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy

Location: 1E-509

Jodi

Epidemiology: Swedish Case Studies (Faculty: Sergio Flores)

Topic: Health inequalities and the role in public health

Location: 1D-409

Juan

Philosophy of Technology and Human Values (Faculty: Jan Holmgaard)

Topic: Technology and surveillance

Location: 1D-410

Lorene

Human Trafficking in a Global Context (Faculty: Polina Smiragina-Ingelström)

Topic: Prostitution and human trafficking

Location: 1D-509

10.00 – 11.25 Class Observations

Jodi

Medical Ethics (Faculty: Henrik Ahlenius)

Topic: TBA

Location: 1D-409

Juan

International Investment and Portfolio Management (Faculty: Greger Wahlstedt)

Topic: Interactive hands-on simulation in Portfolio Theory

Location: 1E-508

Lorene

Neurodegenerative Diseases (Faculty: Jan Mulder)

Topic: Experiment design

Location: 1E-509

10.00 – 11.00 **Ann, Kim**

Meeting with **Natalia Landázuri Sáenz** (Program Director of Computer Science and Engineering)

Location: 1C-516

11.30 – 14.30 **Ann, Lorene**

Lunch and visit to Biomedicum at Karolinska Institutet with **Jan Mulder** (Faculty, Neuroscience).

Location: Meet in KMH Lobby (or go from previous class)

11.30 – 12.30 **Jodi, Juan**

Lunch with current DIS students

Attendees: Jodi and Juan

Location: 1C-516

13.10 – 14.35 Class Observations

Jodi

Economic Competitiveness in a Changing Global Economy: Swedish Industries (Faculty: Fei Hussien)

Topic: Guest lecture from Weini Smon (Founder, With Weini) on her experience working at Nordea

Location: 1E-508

Juan

Neuroscience of Emotion Lab (Faculty: Élodie Cauvet)

Topic: Scientific writing

Location: 1E-511

14.35 – 15.00 Fika with DIS Faculty and Staff

Location: DIS Staff Kitchen; E-Hallway

15.00 Depart for Stockholm Central Station. Be sure to grab dinner for the ride in the train station.

16.15 – 21.45 Train to Copenhagen

21.45 Arrive in Copenhagen and head to Hotel SP34

Copenhagen

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Wednesday, October 23

8.45 Meet in lobby of SP34 and depart for DIS

9.00 – 10.45 Welcome to DIS Copenhagen and tour of student spaces including the Student Hub, Learning Lab, and signature classrooms with **Malene Torp** (Executive Director) and **Helle Rytikønen** (Academic Director). This session will include a tour of the Architecture & Design studios with **Natalie Jeffers-Hansen** (Program Director of Architecture & Design)

Location: Meet in DIStrict (Vestergade 8)

11.00 – 12.00 **Jodi, Juan**

Lunch with current DIS students

Location: F24-202

11.00 – 12.00 **Ann, Lorene**

Undergraduate Research lunch with **Susana Dietrich** (Director of Science & Health programs and Research) and **Jeannette Erbo Wern** (Senior Research Manager and faculty)

Location: Vestergade 8-1.05

11.45 – 12.30 **Ann**

DEI meeting with **Helle Rytikønen** (Academic Director)

Location: Vestergade 8-1.02

13.00 – 17.00 Field Studies

Ann

Renewable Energy Systems (Faculty: Emmanuel Gentil)

Topic: Visit to Ørsted; meet with Helene Gamborg Bruhn, Senior Sustainability

Strategy Specialist, and gain an overview of Ørsted's sustainability journey and current challenges.

Meeting time and point: Meet Jamie at 13.00 outside Vestergade 8. She will take you to meet Emmanuel at Nørreport Station. You will then travel with Emmanuel to Ørsted (Nesa Allé 1, 2820 Gentofte).

Jodi

Danish Language and Culture through Music, Rhythm, and Song (Faculty: Camilla Kirchhoff)

Topic: Song and word music workshop with Danish high school students

Meeting time and point: Meet Emma at 12.20 outside Vestergade 8. You are also welcome to travel on your own – the class will meet at 13.00 at Sundby Kirke (Amagerbrogade 71).

Juan

New Nordic Design (Faculty: Petra Ahde-Deal)

Topic: Social Design: Visit ITMV, a social enterprise focused on design and textiles, followed by a walk to Superkilen and Nørrebrohallen to see communal public places.

Meeting time and point: Meet Annie Hess (Customer Programs Coordinator) at 13.00 outside Vestergade 8. You will then meet the class at Vestergade 8 and travel as a group to ITMV.

Lorene

Inclusive Design in Architecture and Urban Spaces (Faculty: Heitor Lantarón)

Topic: Guided tour of the Danish Handicap Association Building: 'The world's most accessible office building'.

Meeting time and point: Meet Marcus Newton (Academic Development and Project Manager) at 12.45 outside Vestergade 8. You will then walk to meet the class at Nørreport.

Evening (*optional*) Seminar Night:

17.00 – 19.00 *International Careers*

Topic: Opportunity for students to learn from international professionals about working in an intercultural environment, securing overseas employment, and the experience of relocation after graduation.

Location: Student Hub (Vestergade 23)

18.30 – 21.30 *Arctic Seminar*

Topic: Viewing of the film *Magic Mud*, plus Q&A with the director

Location: Grand Bio (Mikkel Bryggers Gade 8)

Thursday, October 24

8.15 Meet outside Vestergade 8

8.25 – 9.50 Class Observations

Juan

Globalization and European Economies (Faculty: Adrian Mongan)

Topic: Introduction to the EU

Location: F24-503

Lorene

Cognitive Neuroscience of Creativity (Faculty: Angela Mastropasqua)

Topic: Visual artistic creativity

Location: Fi6-Metro 104

9.00 – 9.45 **Ann**

Language and Culture Courses with **Andreas Brøgger** (Program Director of European Humanities)

Location: V8-1.01 (if the meeting must happen on Zoom)

9.00 – 10.00 **Jodi**

Study Tours meeting with **Julie Uhrskov Nielsen** (Associate Director of Study Tours)

Location: V8-1.02

10.00 – 11.25 Class Observations

Ann

Fleeing Across Borders: International Refugee Law (Faculty: Campbell Munro)

Topic: Push-backs and Non-Refoulement

Location: V10-A22

Jodi

Prostitution and the Sex Trade in Europe (Faculty: Deivida Vandzinskaite)

Topic: Guest lecture on the relationship between archives and queer/marginalized communities from Maya Acharya (Exhibition Curator at Raven Row and PhD fellow at The Danish School of Education, researching queer & anti-racist resistance within higher education, transformative pedagogy, and collective archiving practices).

Location: N7-B12

Juan

Meaning of Style (Faculty: Jeppe Juel Rishøj)

Topic: Guest lecture by Nicholas Nybro. Nicholas is a Danish fashion designer known for conceptual clothing, costumes, and art direction. The talk will explore his design process and how his Danish nationality influences his work.

Location: Fi6-Metro 103

Lorene (Note: Unable to attend)

European Storytelling: From Myth to Marvel (Faculty: Bettina Sommer)

Topic: Comparing the Völsungasaga and the Nibelungenlied

Location: V23-201

11.30 – 13.00 Lunches with Program Directors and faculty:

Ann

Neringa Vendelbo (Program Director of Environment, Politics, and Society), **Camilla Hoff Jørgensen** (Full-time faculty, Environmental Studies), **Katja Petersen** (Faculty, Environmental Studies), and **Teresa Bengtsson** (Academic Consultant and Faculty)

Juan

Andreas Brøgger (Program Director of European Humanities), **Natalie Jeffers Hansen** (Program Director of Architecture & Design), **Anders Larsen** (Full-time Faculty, European Humanities) and **Katarina Hjerskov** (Full-time Faculty, International Business and Global Economics)

Jodi

Suman Ambwani (Program Director of Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience), **Bettina Hornbøll Borch** (Full-time Faculty, Science and Health), and **Eleftherios Saftis** (Assistant Program Director and Faculty, Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience)

Locations: DISh (Vestergade 7)

13.00 – 14.00 Ann

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing with **Helle Gjerlufsen** (Care Team Manager), **Shanal Uduwana** (Academic Counselor & Student Support Advisor), Care Team Manager), and **Meagan Gonzalez** (Community Advisor)

Location: Vestergade 8-1.02

14.00 – 15.00 Ann DEI with Helle Rytkenen (Academic Director)

Location: Vestergade 8-1.02

13.00 – 17.00 Report writing

Location: Vestergade 8-1.05

Friday, October 25

8.30 – 15.00 Report writing

Location: Vestergade 8-1.05

10.00 – 10.30 **Ann**

Meeting with **Malene Torp**

Location: Vestergade 8-05

12.00 – 13.00 Report writing and lunch

Location: Vestergade 8-1.05

16.30 – 18.00 Final report presented to **Malene Torp** (Executive Director) and **Helle Rytönen** (Academic Director)

Location: Vestergade 8-1.05