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Why the Danenberg Oberlin-in-London Program?

For Oberlin College

For decades, the London program has changed the lives of Oberlin faculty and students. With its several distinct structures (see “history” below), the program has stimulated its participants through synergy and inquiry in an exciting urban environment.

The London program contributes to the college in many ways. It helps to internationalize the curriculum, building on some 30 years of experience in sending Oberlin students to study with Oberlin faculty in the center of one of the world’s great cities. It assures students of a high-quality Oberlin-taught study away experience. It provides an experiential base to the curriculum by emphasizing the centrality of the city as a site for learning. It develops interdisciplinary and collaborative learning by bringing faculty together to team-teach around issues and subjects that demand collaborative and multiple viewpoints.

For faculty

Oberlin faculty teaching on the program have found this to be a unique, exhilarating, and inspiring experience. The interdisciplinary team-teaching component in the spring semester allows a faculty member to learn from a colleague both in pedagogical and disciplinary methods. Teaching with and amidst the great resources of London has been for many faculty a stimulating experience of field-based and experiential pedagogy. The program, involving a more focused semester for both students and faculty than usual on campus, creates a lasting bond among students and faculty, and a sense of education at its best as an extended and in-depth communal search for knowledge. For many, the experience has led to changes in their pedagogy, increased interdisciplinary and collaborative work, and new developments in their scholarship.

For students

Students find the program to be intense and focused. Studying in London alerts students to the importance of a dialog between knowledge and the world. For many, it is the interdisciplinary aspect that matters most: surrounded by London’s multiplicity, they begin to recognize how crucial it is to sustain a multiple and flexible approach to understanding. It can be a time for students to pursue depth in their major; it also has the effect of helping students see how general education and the pursuit of knowledge beyond their major can be important to the liberal arts education.

History of the program

The first Oberlin-in-London programs were conducted in the 1970s and 80s by the English Department, sending one faculty member in the fall semester only, with about 18 students. These semesters were minimally administered; faculty designed their own budgets; a recent graduate often went along as an administrative assistant; the faculty member found a place to live and a place to teach (sometimes the same).

In 1983, the program was expanded. That expansion was initially funded on the basis of a major gift, but the donor, interested primarily in innovation, insisted that the funds be spent over a limited period rather than endowed. At that point, the college was expanding its interdisciplinary programs, and London was seen as a vital place to create team-teaching partnerships among faculty and to teach students interdisciplinary ways of thinking. The program was named the Danenberg Oberlin-in-London program (DOIL) in honor of recently deceased Oberlin president Emil Danenberg. For about twenty years, the program ran both semesters with the same structure in each: two Oberlin faculty team-taught one interdisciplinary course, and each taught a second seminar course. Each student would enroll in the team-taught course and one of the seminars, each of which earned 6 credits, and extra courses were offered to fill out 14 credits. The program was housed in various rented facilities and administered by a former Oberlin College Residential Life administrator, Gwyneth Love, who served as Resident Director in London. Neither the facilities nor the administration were shared with other programs; the Oberlin program was self-contained. Generally, enrollments were high – in the 20s – and student and faculty interest were strong. The program ran for two decades until closed down suddenly for budgetary reasons in 2005.

The program was reconfigured (with considerable reduction in the budget) to begin again in fall 2006, now in collaboration with Grinnell College. Grinnell had been running a two-semester London program, but had recently cut back to fall semester only. Meanwhile Grinnell and London had recently become collaborators on a Mellon-funded faculty career enhancement grant. So it made sense for Oberlin and Grinnell to connect their programs. The Oberlin program moved to Florida State University's large quarters (centrally located in Bloomsbury and shared by a number of American programs), and hired Donna Vinter, Grinnell's resident director, as its new Resident Director, following the retirement of Gwyneth Love.

A list of the Oberlin faculty who have taught on DOIL since 1983, and the titles of courses they offered, can be found on Oberlin's London [website](#) under "Previous Courses," and is recommended for faculty starting to think about a possible London program.

The Shape of the Curriculum

For more details, consult the program websites (www.oberlin.edu/london and www.grinnell.edu/academic/gil).

Fall semester

In the fall, Oberlin sends one faculty member to London; Grinnell sends two.

Regularly teaching for both Grinnell and Oberlin in fall and spring are Donna Vinter, who holds a Ph.D. in English from Harvard, and is also the Resident Director of the Grinnell and the Oberlin programs, and Lisa Bowers Isaacson, who earned her Ph.D. in History from Princeton (bios and pictures are on the [Grinnell website](#)). Grinnell also hires several other London-based adjunct faculty who teach in the fall semester for Grinnell and Oberlin.

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The fall semester offers Oberlin and Grinnell students a variety of two- and four-credit courses; students cross-register in these courses regardless of their home college or the college of the instructor.

The semester is divided into two phases (roughly, modules, but the first is 9 weeks long and the second is 6 weeks; there is a week break between). Courses are self-contained within the phases (that is, no one course lasts the entire semester). In Phase 1, students take several courses, including the two-credit History of London course, which Oberlin requires its students to take. In Phase 2, they can either take one four-credit course or enroll in an internship as well as an Internship Seminar. The Oberlin faculty member teaches one 4-credit course in Phase 1, another 4-credit course in Phase 2, and the Internship Seminar for Oberlin students in Phase 2. The Oberlin faculty member also supervises the internships in Phase 2.

Faculty from Oberlin teaching in the fall should know that the scheduling of courses is limited by classroom availability and the pre-arranged schedules of adjunct London faculty. Oberlin faculty should take this scheduling into account when planning fieldtrips and other activities outside the classroom. Coordination with Donna Vinter and other faculty is necessary when planning longer fieldtrips which, because of the full schedule of classes Monday to Thursday, can only take place on Fridays and at weekends (see the section “Field Trips, Theatre, and other Programming” below). The current fall schedule for Phase 1 is as follows, with the visiting faculty slots for the three Phase 1 courses taught by Oberlin and Grinnell faculty listed in bold (the schedule for future fall semesters is likely to be similar):

Mon/Wed:	8:45 – 10:15	History of London (section 1)
	10:30 – 12:30	Visiting faculty course (OC or GC)
	1:00 – 2:15	British Theatre in Performance
	2:30 – 4:30	Visiting faculty course (OC or GC)
Tue/Thurs:	8:45 – 10:45	Visiting faculty course (OC or GC)
	11:00 – 1:00	Introduction to Shakespeare
	1:45 – 3:15	The Early Renaissance in Florence and Flanders
	4:30 – 6:00	Principles of Ethno-National Conflict
	4:30 – 6:00	History of London (section 2)

In Phase 1, there are no classes offered on Fridays.

In Phase 2, students either choose one of three 6-week courses (one offered by the Oberlin visiting faculty, one offered by one of the visiting Grinnell faculty, and one offered by Donna Vinter) or they choose to undertake an internship as well as enroll in the accompanying the internship seminar taught by the visiting Oberlin faculty member (this is for Oberlin students only; the Grinnell students take an internship seminar with two Grinnell faculty members).

The precise Phase 2 teaching schedule is worked out among the three faculty offering courses sometime during Phase I. Phase 2 classes normally meet Mondays, Tuesdays

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and Wednesdays for two hours each day. A classroom is booked only for those days. However, faculty may choose to meet less frequently, e.g. only two meetings week. Budget permitting, the longer weekend periods may be used for course-related field trips.

Internships in fall semester

The internship program for Phase 2 in the fall runs parallel to that for Grinnell students. In applying to the program, students are asked whether they wish to take a single Phase 2 course or else do an internship for 4 credits, along with which they need to enroll in the 2-credit Oberlin internship seminar, coordinated by the visiting Oberlin faculty member. In early summer, students going on the fall program submit an internship application indicating several choices for the kind of internship they would like. [See appendix for examples of range of internships.] A London internship coordinator then works to place the students. Early in Phase 1, they go to the worksite for an interview. Once the internship is agreed upon, they are expected to do 32 hours/week of work at the worksite. The worksite supervisor will be expected to supply an evaluation of their work at the end of the internship.

In addition, an internship seminar meets once a week during Phase 2, taught by the Oberlin faculty member, who also functions as the faculty internship supervisor for each of the students. The seminar is an important and required part of the internship program, designed to give students the opportunity to place their worksite experience in a context of other student experiences and readings and discussion about work in general. Grinnell has a syllabus for their version of this seminar (the one that Grinnell students take). Oberlin faculty have worked up their own version of this seminar, and a recent syllabus is appended.

Spring semester

In the spring semester Oberlin sends a team of two faculty members. The program resembles the fall and spring semesters of the pre-2005 DOIL structure. The two faculty members co-teach a course for 6 credits, which all students take. They also each teach separate 6-credit seminar courses, of which students elect one at the time of applying. Students also have the choice of one of two courses taught by our regular London faculty, Donna Vinter (The London Stage, 3 credits) and Lisa Bowers Isaacson (History of London, 2 credits).

The course schedule for the spring semester typically looks as follows:

Monday & Wednesday mornings: History of London (1 ½ hours each meeting)

Tuesday & Thursday mornings: The London Stage (1 ½ hours each meeting)

Wednesday afternoons: the Oberlin team-taught course (3-4 hour meeting, at faculty discretion)

Tuesday & Thursday afternoons: Oberlin faculty individual courses, normally 2 hours each meeting; e.g. one course meets 1-3 pm; the other 3-5 pm)

Administration

In Oberlin, the program is administered by the Danenberg Oberlin-in-London Program Committee, the A&S Dean's Office and the Office of Study Away. The DOIL Committee, a CF Committee with Conservatory representation, is responsible for setting policy, curriculum and budget and recruiting faculty and students. The dean's office is responsible for general administration and budgetary oversight, as well as support for faculty teaching on the program. The Study Away office, in combination with faculty teaching on the program, also recruits students and prepares them for the semester abroad. Karen Barnes, who also serves the Classics and Philosophy Departments, provides administrative assistant support for the program (King 105).

In London, the program is administered by Donna Vinter, Resident Director of the program (who also teaches courses in literature and theater for the program). Donna works both for Grinnell College and for Oberlin as administrator and faculty member. Among many other things, she runs orientation, helps students find housing, manages the finances of the program, schedules classes and facilities, and handles student life issues.

The program is also a registered UK charity, meaning that it is a "company" under British Law, with its own Board of Directors/Trustees in London. That board includes college representatives as well as persons in London not formally associated with the college (though with various affinities to Oberlin). The board takes an active interest in the program, approving budgets and policies. It has legal responsibility for directing the affairs of the charity and ensuring that it is solvent, well-run and delivering the charitable outcome for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up. Members of the board also take an interest in the actual semester programs, occasionally meeting with students and faculty and at times helping to arrange internships and other activities. The board currently comprises alumni David Schlesinger, Anita Avramides, Natalia Schiffrin, Allyson Devenish and David Krischer, (for Oberlin College) Nick Jones and Marc Blecher. In addition Dean Sean Decatur and Gwyneth Love serve as "Company Members" (a formal position under UK law), and Donna Vinter acts as Company Secretary.

Normally, Oberlin College faculty teaching on the program are expected to attend one board meeting while they are in London and give the trustees a brief report about the semester so far.

Student Welfare

Donna Vinter has primary responsibility for student welfare and crisis management. However, visiting Oberlin faculty are expected to support her in this function as necessary. If she is out of town, for example over a weekend, the Oberlin faculty become primarily responsible for handling any crises that may arise. Donna Vinter will provide faculty with a copy of the Oberlin-in-London Crisis Management Plan as well as confidential health and emergency contact information for each student.

Office, Classroom and Other Facilities

The program rents classroom and office space in the Florida State University (FSU) Centre in Bloomsbury, a block from the British Museum (99-103 Great Russell Street,

London WC1B 3LA). The building comprises a series of late 17th-century houses that have been converted for academic use, linked together by a basement-level corridor. Photos of the space can be seen at FSU's website at www.international.fsu.edu/london/building.php.

The program office, Room 29, is fairly large, with two desks, two Mac computers networked to a printer, a photocopier and a fax machine. One of these desks is for the use of the Resident Director and one for the visiting Oberlin faculty. Faculty can use this office for course preparation activities, for internet access, and for meeting both with students and with one another. Office spatial arrangements are conveniently flexible. The Grinnell office is immediately adjacent to the Oberlin office; if necessary for privacy or convenience, Donna Vinter can work in the Grinnell office.

The building has a number of classrooms of various sizes. Oberlin and Grinnell (fall) and Oberlin (spring) typically hire one classroom for our scheduled teaching days during the term. Billing is for either half-day (9-1; 1-5) or full-day use. Classrooms have whiteboards, TVs and DVD/VCR machines; a few have built-in digital projectors. For those that do not have this latter facility, faculty can request that a digital projector be made available in the classroom for a particular class. They should make these requests to staff at the Reception desk of the building. Projectors have to be shared among faculty in the building, so it is advisable to put one's request in early. There is wireless access in all classrooms, and throughout the building.

Students and faculty have access to a library and two computer labs in the building. These facilities are shared by all programs that rent FSU space. The library is small, but with holdings that are well targeted to the sorts of courses that tend to be taught on study-abroad programs; its stock includes academic books and travel books, a good selection of CDs, videos and DVDs (including many useful for teaching), and even some sheet music. It subscribes to *Time Out*, *The Economist* and *Art Review*, and receives a selection of daily British newspapers. The library also operates reserve shelves for courses requiring books to be kept on reserve. The FSU Study Centre library catalogue is currently only available online via intranet at <http://library:8000/>. That is, one can only view it on an FSU Study Centre computer lab terminal or when attached to the local wireless network. But the Supervising Librarian, David Parkes, is happy to answer any inquiries that faculty may have about library holdings. He may be contacted at DParkes@admin.fsu.edu.

The library is open 10 am to 10 pm Monday to Thursday; 10 am to 4 pm Friday; 4 pm to 10 pm Sunday. It is closed on Saturday. However, the two computer labs are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

A core collection of books owned by the Danenberg Oberlin-in-London Program, many associated with courses that have been taught in the past, is kept in the program's office.

Student Logistics, Finances and Housing

It is helpful for faculty to become familiar with at least the basic outlines of the administrative impact of the program on students. More details are available on the website (www.oberlin.edu/london, which is primarily directed to students).

Student registration

After applying and being accepted to the program (a process in which the faculty are very involved), students register for the program and are given ENR status (Enrolled, Not in Residence). This differs from the ALOA (Academic Leave of Absence) status that they move to when studying abroad on non-Oberlin programs. This means that they register for courses and interact with the college in almost the same ways that they would if studying on campus. It also means that courses they take in London are reported on their transcripts with grades, unlike courses transferred from other study away programs.

Student fees

Students are charged regular Oberlin tuition and student activity fees for the semester. They are not charged room and board fees. If they are receiving financial aid, this is continued: the financial aid office also works to reconfigure their package to take account of higher living costs in London and the fact that work-study is not available there. The website gives estimates of how much a semester will end up costing a student. The program is generally more expensive than other study-abroad options, since full Oberlin tuition is high compared to the cost of most of those programs. Thus, cost sometimes operates as a disincentive for students to choose this program; on the other hand, there are distinct advantages to being on ENR: students are taught by Oberlin (or Grinnell) faculty; the credits earned are Oberlin credits, not transfer credits, and so they appear on transcripts as graded credits, which transfer credits do not; and students do not need to apply for ALOA status and essentially leave the college for a semester.

Student housing

As on many other London programs (including Grinnell's), students may find their own housing in London, or the college will connect them with agents to find pre-arranged housing. In on-campus orientation, the program will explain to students the various options, from taking pre-arranged housing through a rental company or getting dorm rooms in a residence hall to finding one's own flat with a group of students, or arranging a home-stay with a London family. Our experience is that with proper orientation and planning, finding housing is not a daunting activity, and indeed students report that it forms an important part of an urban-based learning semester.

Student Handbook

A DOIL Student Handbook on the program website contains much helpful information about the program and about life in London. Faculty may wish to refer students to this handbook if they have questions or concerns, for example about the practicalities of finding a flat on their own. It also contains practical information that visiting faculty may find useful.

Support for Faculty Teaching in London

Oberlin faculty teaching in London receive their regular Oberlin salary, and are also reimbursed for certain additional expenses:

- Roundtrip coach airfare for the faculty member up to \$1100

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- Reasonable ground transportation for faculty and family from airport to flat and back
- Housing in London in a two-bedroom flat that is reasonably centrally located, beginning a week before the program begins, and extending a week after, up to £475/week)
- Reimbursement for the cost of broadband internet in their flat
- Zone 1 & 2 weekly or monthly Travelcards for the duration of the program (16 weeks in the fall; 14 weeks in the spring)

Faculty who have taught on the program in recent years are good resources for flat information (and much more!): at least one flat has been fairly continuously (and successfully) occupied by Oberlin faculty in recent years. Airfare for family members traveling with the faculty member is not reimbursed by the program. Admission costs for family members participating in program activities must also be paid for by the faculty member. The program does not cover shipping of books and other items.

Field Trips, Theater, and Other Programming

Support for field trips and other academically related expenses for students and faculty in the program is part of the London program budget. To the degree possible within the budget, the program will support the use of London and areas beyond as part of the learning experience. This includes, when relevant, coach trips to sites beyond London, entrance fees to museums, tickets to concerts or theater events, and honoraria for visiting lecturers. The specifics are discussed between the faculty and the DOIL Committee chair as part of the overall planning for the semester. Additionally, once they are in London faculty should regularly consult with Donna Vinter, who is responsible for balancing the program budget.

It is important for faculty to realize that, while the program does its best to make the programming possible that will support the education of the students, not everything can be supported on a limited budget. The budgeted amounts for each semester, moreover, need to cover a number of types of programming, not just those for the courses taught by the Oberlin faculty.

Fall semester

In the fall, the programming budget covers expenses for Oberlin students on excursions and activities planned for the program as a whole (such as during orientation) and for classes taught by adjunct faculty, as well as expenses for classes taught by Oberlin faculty. A British Theatre in Performance course taught during the fall term attends eight plays: tickets for these are made available to all students, whether or not they are in the course, as well as to visiting faculty.

During Phase I of the fall term, co-curricular activities are often planned at weekends, including day and overnight trips out of London. These must be scheduled so as not to conflict with one another. Planning these activities and trips is a joint effort amongst the Resident Director, the adjunct faculty, and the Grinnell/Oberlin visiting faculty. A planning meeting takes place on the Tuesday morning of arrivals week for this purpose (2009: Tuesday, August 25th). Oberlin faculty should plan to attend this important meeting.

The tightness and crowdedness of the Phase I timetable means that faculty may occasionally find it more practical to require students to do some field work in their own time, e.g. museum visits. Such assignments are not necessarily at all second-best to group work, if they are designed in such a way as to promote independent observation and analysis.

Spring semester

In the spring semester, the programming of field trips and other activities is less complicated but still needs to be worked out in consultation with the Resident Director in order to budget for course needs as well as the expenses of orientation, the courses taught by adjuncts, and other programming needs.

Faculty are encouraged to contact the Resident Director before the program starts, for planning programmatic events, to suggest trips or events or to consult on logistics, expenses, and feasibility in general.

Recruiting students

The Program targets 20 students in the fall and 25 in the spring. These are not always easy goals to meet, and the College expects the faculty to work actively with the DOIL Committee and the Study Away Office to do so during the semesters of recruiting. This starts with faculty planning a program with broad appeal both to their department's majors but also to students generally. Indeed, the capacity to fill the program is a major criterion by which the DOIL Committee evaluates proposals from faculty. Recruitment entails getting students interested, attending study away fair, running informational meetings, helping them understand the nature of the program, how it can help with their majors and their education, and generally nurturing them towards applications. Publicity is handled by our office, though faculty are expected to help provide the content thereof. The personality and enthusiasm of the faculty are key in getting students interested in the program.

Planning & Proposing

The selection of faculty to teach on the London program is made by the Dean and council on the basis of recommendation from the London committee. The selection process works two years in advance: that is, in the fall of 2008 the committee will be making recommendations for the AY 2010-11. The proposal is requested in two phases – one preliminary, and the second a fuller proposal with course details.

A number of factors go together to create a successful proposal, including:

- Exciting courses, with clear and appropriate goals outlined. While the committee does not expect syllabi, we appreciate detailed information about the content and pedagogy.
- Ideas about how the coursework will use London as a basis for learning. While we realize that some faculty may not know London in detail, we need to know how the learning will be different for students from being on campus.

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- Overview of how the proposed curriculum will appeal to students. We need courses that will attract students and serve their curricular needs, such as major requirements, distribution requirements for graduation. It is important that prerequisites be clear and accessible for enough students to fill the program.
- A sense of the semester as a whole. For the fall semester, we are looking for courses that will complement those offered by Grinnell. For the spring, the three Oberlin-taught courses should relate to each other in some way; we are looking for how the program (especially in the spring) amounts to more than the sum of its parts.

No proposal springs full-blown from the heads of the inventors. We encourage faculty to contact us early in the process to discuss options. We would also recommend that faculty interested in putting proposals together contact other faculty who have submitted successful proposals to discuss their ideas.

Immigration

Immigration regulations have been undergoing many changes that alter permissible routes into the UK for various groups. From December 2008 the majority of visiting professors coming to the UK for less than six months should fit neatly into the immigration category of Business Visitors. The UK Border Agency Statement of Intent, published 16 October 2008, specifically mentions visiting professors accompanying students on study abroad programs on pages 4, 6 and 11. Click on the link below (when the page opens, click on 'Statement of Intent' at the bottom of the page or under 'Related Documents' on the right-hand side of the page).

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/managingborders/managingmigration/businessandspecialvisitors/

Contacts

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Head Receptionist: Janice Moody

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Please don't ask Reception Desk staff to take messages unless it's extremely urgent.
Several hundred students use this building.

Websites

www.oberlin.edu/london

www.grinnell.edu/academic/gil

Appendix 1: Internship examples

(in process)

Appendix 2: Internship syllabus

(in process)