

**Participant Information and Consent Form for the Study:**

**Intercultural Competence in Online Learning**

**Michigan State University**

You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring international students' experiences with online courses. **Refusal to participate will involve NO penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.** The study is being conducted under the supervision of Adan Quan, Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology at MSU and Brendan Guenther from MSU-vuDAT. You were asked to participate in this study because you have been identified by the MSU OISS as an international student at MSU. The study is designed so that OISS cannot know who chose to participate or not, and so that the researchers will not know your name unless you choose to share it with them. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of foreign students using online communication tools (chat boards, blogs, email, etc.) in online courses they have taken at MSU. We are interested in understanding how culturally shaped differences in communications styles, student expectations, social relationships, work patterns, and other factors affect the experience and performance of foreign college students in online courses at MSU.

Participation is voluntary, you may choose not to participate at all, or you may refuse to participate in certain procedures, or answer certain questions, or discontinue your participation at any time without consequence. We estimate that the focus group will take approximately one hour to complete, although this may vary, depending on how participants answer the questions. With your permission, the focus group discussion will be recorded. If you prefer not to be recorded, you may choose a focus group where we will take notes but not record the discussion. Please place your initials after the relevant choice:

I agree to participate in a focus group session where audio will be recorded: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to participate only in a session with NO audio recording: \_\_\_\_\_ (please initial only one)

The potential risks of participation in this study are minimal, limited to the emotional and psychological risks associated with the discussion of classroom experiences in a group setting that includes other foreign students. Do not feel obligated to discuss anything that makes you uncomfortable. Although you will receive no direct benefits from participating in the study, you may find that it is useful to explore and share your thoughts and impressions about your experiences with online courses at MSU. In compensation for your participation, and to provide a comfortable environment, snacks and beverages will be provided during the focus group discussions. The research is expected to benefit international students, MSU, and society by improving understanding of possible problems international students may experience taking online courses and using this knowledge to develop resources that may help students and professors experiencing such problems.

Everything we learn about you in this study will be confidential and we will not identify you as an individual or include any information that could identify you personally in any reports resulting from this research. Any information that is published use pseudonyms so you cannot be identified; specific information that may identify you will be edited, for example, if we cite a comment you made about a particular class, we would refer to the class using broad-terms such as "elective", "social science", "seminar course". We will not associate individual comments with your nationality, substituting continents if necessary to preserve some context to your statements. Records resulting from this study will be retained for the regulatory minimum period of three (3) years after the project closes. Records

This consent form was approved by the Social Science/Behavioral/Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB) at Michigan State University. Approved 03/04/11 – valid through 03/03/12. This version supersedes all previous versions. IRB # 11-163.

will be stored at MSU in the Primary Principle Investigators office. While publications may result from the analysis of data gathered during this study, your data will be held confidentially, and access to your records and data will be limited to primary investigators and the MSU Institutional Review Board. **Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please feel free to contact Dr. Adan Quan at 517-353-6728, [quan@msu.edu](mailto:quan@msu.edu), or write him at: Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University, 354 Baker Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu), or regular mail to: 207 Olds Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824.

In case your participation in this study causes you discomfort or leaves you with unresolved emotions, we want to be sure you are aware that MSU students are eligible for free and confidential counseling services from the MSU Counseling Center. "Counseling" may not be familiar to many international students because it is not common practice in some other countries and cultures. International students often choose to talk to their friends and family members when they face concerns and problems. In the United States, it is normal to seek counseling to discuss their concerns. For instance, it is not unusual for many international students to experience difficulties with cultural adjustment, homesickness, friendship and relationship concerns, academic and family issues, etc. MSU counseling staff can help students learn new coping skills and focus on helping students achieve their maximum potential and fulfillment through counseling. MSU's professional counseling staff will work with you confidentially. Appointments may be arranged by calling (517)355-8270, emailing [counseling@cc.msu.edu](mailto:counseling@cc.msu.edu) or visiting 207 Student Services Building.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study by submitting this online sign-up form.