

# Marketing Your Study Abroad Experience

In a competitive job market you need to highlight everything that might set you apart from other candidates and your experience from studying abroad can do just that. As our economy becomes more and more global, our ability to communicate and interact with people from backgrounds and ethnicities different than our own is imperative. It is important to incorporate your experience and the valuable skills you gained from studying abroad on your resume, cover letter and in job interviews.

## Including Study Abroad Experience on your Resume

When including study abroad in your résumé, think about the skills you gained and what you learned while abroad. Did you become proficient in a language? Did you gain research experience through conducting an independent study project? Have you become well versed in some aspect of your host country's culture? Remember that you must make the connection to the actual skills you gained through the experiences you had—it won't always be obvious to an employer.

- Focus on your accomplishments and skills (see examples below). Your resume should focus on the “results” of your study abroad experience, not simply where you went or what you did.
- You can include your study abroad experience under education or relevant experience (see examples below). If your experience was heavily academic (large course load, research work, etc.), it may be best to include it under education. However, if you completed a professional internship while abroad, you might choose to include study abroad under relevant work experience. You can also include study and work abroad programs in a separate category titled **International Experience**. This option may be the most appropriate if you've had multiple experiences abroad. Be sure to include key skills you developed through these experiences.
- Adjust your resume to your audience. You likely won't submit the same resume to a graduate school and to a potential employer. It is important to note that you may need to develop an alternate résumé for applying to positions overseas, dependent upon the country. Career Services can assist with developing "foreign" résumés (a.k.a. "curriculum vitae", or, "CV").
- Don't forget to include any other relevant aspects of your experience - such as volunteer work, independent studies, etc.

## Skills and Attributes Gained from Study Abroad Experience

Spend some time reflecting on your time overseas and what you learned from the experience. Think about the person you were before you left and how you changed during your time overseas. Studying abroad is often an eye-opening and self-changing experience. Be prepared to discuss this. And, be prepared to discuss the skills, credentials, and awareness you gained, as this can be attractive to potential employers.

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### **Communication Skills**

- Foreign language skills
- Effectively participate in group discussions with people from diverse backgrounds
- Identify and manage different needs of people and groups

### **Interpersonal Skills**

- Global point of view
- Appreciation of diversity
- Cultural awareness
- Establish rapport quickly
- Understand an organization's culture
- Understand global dependence
- Sensitive to other cultural values, norms, customs and communication patterns
- Tolerant of differences
- Open to new ideas and practices
- Empathetic toward other perspectives

### **Organizational Skills**

- General travel and navigational skills
- Successfully juggle multiple demands
- Able to prioritize
- Time management skills

### **Intrapersonal Skills**

- Patience
  - Function with a high level of ambiguity
  - Achieve goals despite obstacles
  - Take initiative and risks
  - Accept responsibility
  - Handle stress and difficult situations
  - Learn/adapt quickly
  - Flexible
  - Assertive/self-confident
  - Inquisitive
  - Independent
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## **Including Study Abroad Experience for your Interview**

Although you are excited about your study abroad experience, not everyone will be, so make sure that you mention it at the right time during your interview and focus on its relevance to the position for which you are applying. Remember, first impressions are key and anything on your resumé is fair game for questioning.

If the employer asks about your travels as a conversation starter, use the opportunity to break the ice and highlight it as a life-changing experience. Be prepared and articulate—talk about deciding to study abroad, where you traveled, and what you learned. If the employer incorporates study abroad into an interview question, then answer that question only, being brief, focused, and clear in your response. Often returnees get carried away with enthusiasm, going off on tangents and rekindling memories or situations that happened overseas. You can easily lose your potential employer in a long-winded and vague response, making your study abroad experience more hurtful than helpful in the interview.

You can and should always find a relevant way to incorporate your study abroad experience into an interview. In many ways this experience sets you apart from your peers, bringing a completely different skill set and outlook to a potential employer. As a study abroad returnee, you have gained a tremendous amount of transferable skills during your study abroad experience. These may seem general to you and go overlooked or unmentioned in an interview, but they can almost always connect in some way to any job description.

## Helpful Hint: Develop a Stock of Career Stories for Interviews

Everyone who has studied abroad has their own list of "wild and shocking" stories to share with friends. These edgy cross-cultural experiences are fun to share, but not with potential employers. You need to modify them or devise a new set of cross-cultural career related stories about your study abroad experience. Craft these stories ahead of time, and build them to reinforce professional skill sets. Here are a few examples:

- Describe your role when working with student teams while abroad.
- Describe your encounters when meeting professionals working in your field.
- Speak about personal encounters that gave you insight into the local culture.
- Speak about the link between your country and the host country, especially in terms of the work place. Describe your professional skills through a story about a cross-cultural encounter that went wrong.

## Sources/Additional Resources

- [\*Career Pathways\*](#) by Cheryl Matherly and William Nolting
- [\*Marketing Study Abroad: How to Sell Your Overseas Experience to Employers\*](#) by Jean-Marc Hachey
- [Abroad View](#) "Packaging your International Experience"

## Contact our offices with any questions!

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