



# Unpacking Study Abroad

Employers or members of graduate or professional school admissions committees may not have had study abroad experiences themselves. In order to be competitive, your portfolio needs to be clear and specific. It is up to you to effectively communicate the skills and proficiencies that will benefit their organization.

## JOB HUNTING & GRADUATE SCHOOL PLANNING

Whether you're searching for a job or applying for graduate schools, you can use examples from your study abroad experience to articulate your skills. Think about how your international experience might benefit a professional in your chosen field. You may be able to cite some of the following:

- Strengthened foreign language fluency
- Gained awareness of global economic and political issues and realities
- Increased awareness of cultural differences and understanding of customs
- Gained understanding of others' cultural views of the United States
- Increased confidence in working with individuals from other cultures
- Gained independence in taking risks and dealing with unfamiliar situations
- Practiced ability to problem-solve and handle difficult situations in unfamiliar environments
- Experienced challenges obtaining resources
- Improved skills in organizational management, budgeting, patience, adaptability, and flexibility
- Expanded ability and willingness to travel
- Improved skills and knowledge in my discipline

**Next, think about how you would use your skills.**

Outline short examples that integrate your international experience:

*My studies in Japan provided me with great insight into the cultural differences that influence consumers in different countries and improved my ability to contribute to international marketing initiatives. I credit my experience abroad with my increased awareness of global economic realities.*

*My courses in Australia gave me an international perspective on the kinesiology field. My ability to problem-solve and handle difficult situations improved greatly during my biometrics lab. I will use this knowledge and these skills as I do further research as a graduate student.*

**Always include international experience on your résumé.** It will almost always have some connection to your objectives. You should customize your résumé to fit the job description. For assistance in résumé writing visit the Career Development Center's website: [lclark.edu/student\\_life/career\\_development/](http://lclark.edu/student_life/career_development/)

**Plan in advance how and where you will refer to your experience abroad in an interview.** Focus on the specific examples that will make your case. While it is important, it is only a small piece of your qualifications from your full college academic experience. Did you...

- complete a specific project, research, or case study related to your career field/area of interest?
- learn to work with a more diverse group of people or a specific culture?

Prepare specific examples using relevant short stories highlighting your experience and skills, not only travel. Do not only give a list of skills and characteristics. Remember to prove by example.

## ***Telling Your International Story***

Making meaning of your experience requires some thought and intention. Consider your holistic experience in and out of the classroom, traveling, living with strangers, etc. Look through your journal, blog, emails to friends to help jog your memory.

### ***Start with Reflection***

*What were goals/intentions in studying in Munich? How did you achieve them? Where did they shift or get redirected?*

*What did you learn about yourself (skills, values, abilities, interests)?*

*What did you learn about your environment?*

*Where did you struggle? Where did you thrive?*

*What were your successes? What is important about them?*

*What were your most meaningful experiences? Why were they meaningful?*

*How did you grow or change from your experience?*

*Where did you find meaning? connection? disconnection?*

*What did you take from your experience? How do you want to apply it now?*