

Putting Your Study Abroad Experience to Work on Your Resume

Adapted with permission from Career Services at Harvey Mudd College:

<https://www.hmc.edu/career-services/students/study-abroad-career-resources/putting-your-study-abroad-experience-to-work/>

Welcome back to campus! We hope you had a wonderful experience studying and living in another country. How does it feel to be back? Are you finding that coming home is more difficult than you anticipated, or have you made the transition back with ease? Reentry can be just as difficult as adjusting to another culture when you went abroad, and for some students it may be even more challenging.

You still may be trying to figure out how you can incorporate everything you've learned abroad into your life here. Maybe you've decided that you'd like to capitalize on your study abroad experience in your job search. Studying abroad usually provides additional opportunities for you to hone various transferable skills, as well as key competencies such as leadership and the ability to deal with ambiguity. Make time after the study-abroad experience to take an inventory of the skills you possess. How were your existing strengths enhanced by your time overseas, and what new additions might you have made to your skill set?

MARKETING YOUR STUDY-ABROAD EXPERIENCE TO EMPLOYERS

After spending time overseas where you learned about a different culture, adapted to new ideas and cultural expectations, you now need to apply these new skills to finding a job. Many students describe their study-abroad experiences as “wonderful” and “life-changing.” In addition to sharing your study-abroad stories with friends, family, and advisers, you will also need to reflect on your experience and be ready to speak intelligently about it to potential employers.

Some students have difficulties communicating the value of their overseas experience. The fact that you spent time overseas is not the key point for employers. You must be able to articulate how your study-abroad experience relates to and benefits them. Through written materials or in conversations, employers need you to clearly and thoughtfully convey how your study-abroad experience has prepared you to be a strong candidate for their organization.

POSSIBLE SKILLS GAINED WHILE STUDYING ABROAD

During your time abroad, you most likely developed or honed a variety of skills and competencies that might be cross-cultural, industry-specific, or transferable. The list below includes qualities and abilities which students studying abroad frequently develop. In preparation for a job interview, you may want to think of concrete examples from your experience abroad that demonstrate your development of some of these characteristics.

Ability to establish rapport quickly
Achieving goals despite obstacles
Adaptability
Applying information to new contexts
Assertiveness
Awareness of global economic and political issues
Cross-cultural communication
Conveying ideas verbally
Critical thinking skills
Enhanced cultural awareness and sensitivity
Flexibility

Foreign language proficiency
Independence
Self-reliance
Inquisitiveness
Open-mindedness
Patience
Perseverance
Problem solving
Self-Confidence
Taking initiative
Time management

Reflect upon your experience and the career-related strengths you may have gained. For example, did you:

- Work on group projects with students from different cultures?
- Initiate meetings with professionals at local organizations to gain insights into corporate and industry culture?
- Actively participate in a student organization?

Through experiences within and outside of the classroom, studying abroad may have improved your abilities to:

- Creatively solve problems by applying familiar concepts to unfamiliar situations
- Look at a project or situation from different perspectives
- Maintain self-confidence while listening and learning from people with different backgrounds
- Be flexible and adaptable to rapidly changing situations and new environments
- Imagine, forecast, analyze or address business situations from a different cultural frame of reference
- Develop an understanding of global issues in your industry of interest

PUTTING IT ON YOUR RESUME

You can incorporate your study-abroad experience into your resume in a variety of ways:

- List the name of the program/institution in the “education” section of your resume, just as you list Lewis & Clark College.
- Consider listing coursework if it is related to your internship/job search.
- Describe relevant projects or any work, intern, or volunteer experience you had during your time abroad.
- Depending on the level of detail you want to include, you can list these study-abroad-related experiences in the “education” section, the “related experience” section, or perhaps in an “international experience” section, if you plan on conducting a search with an international focus.

If you are unsure about where to best highlight your program and additional international experiences, bring a copy of your resume to drop-in hours to schedule an appointment with a Career Center staff member.

RESUME EXAMPLES

EDUCATION

Australia Summer Abroad Program, Brisbane, Queensland Summer 2019

- Gained insight into the social and political history of Australia through an international studies course and a psychology-focused internship at a social service agency
- Participated in volunteer activities at local orphanages, homeless shelters, and elementary schools
- Wrote a 10-page paper to summarize the experience

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM), Santiago, Dominican Republic Fall 2019

Study abroad experience through Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE)

- Enhanced global perspective through increased understanding of political, socioeconomic, and cultural issues faced by local populations

RELATED EXPERIENCE

China Studies Institute, Peking University, Beijing, China August 2018 – Spring 2019

- Completed a comprehensive study of the Chinese language, developing cross-cultural communication skills through collaboration with Chinese students
- Gained insight into Chinese culture through a variety of courses that focused on the art, history, literature, economics, politics and sociology of China
- Participated in an 18-hour internship for credit with an NGO
- Conducted fieldwork and research with local citizens and the health education community, resulting in a 15+ page research paper addressing common health issues faced by local populations