



# INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE CAREER WORKBOOK:

## HOW TO UNPACK YOUR NEW INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE



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# WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

This workbook will help you process your study abroad experience - and it's an excellent activity for an airplane ride! Once you reflect on the ways in which you have changed and grown from your time abroad, you can use your newfound skills and international experience in the future. Employers these days are often looking for responsible, flexible, well-travelled, bi-lingual, and open-minded employees. Study abroad is evidence of this, if you know how to share it! (For proof, check out the article in **Appendix A.**)

You've learned a lot from practical experience, including everyday interactions with peers and new international friends, coursework, and travels. From these, you've gained not only language skills, but also knowledge on how to interact respectfully with others and to adapt to a different culture. Through your various experiences abroad, you've reached a higher level of what is called *intercultural competence*.

**INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE:** Behaving and communicating effectively, based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to achieve one's goals.

**HOW DID YOU LEARN THIS?** Circle the activities that you think helped:

internship

new international friends

volunteering

Tandem

Umbra classmates

travels

courses

class projects

community engagement

field trips

workshops

# INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

To understand some facets of intercultural competence, check out the Italian coffee culture example below:

***Put it on your résumé!***

***International Experience:***  
*Perugia, Italy (August-Jan 2015)*

***Linguistic Skills:***

*"Vorrei un cappuccino, per favore!"*



***Use your experience abroad and problem-solving skills in interviews:***

*One time, I was stranded in a small town on a Sunday and was able to make a cappuccino using only a spoon, solar energy, a single coffee bean, and a cow.*

***Cultural Understanding:***

*I would never order a cappuccino after lunch, because I know that Italians consider this too rich, and therefore, a breakfast beverage.*

***New Skills and Attitudes:***

*I'm flexible and open-minded; I can even make a soy cappuccino for my vegan friend.*

# REFLECTION WORKSHEET

Reflect now while you still remember the details! You can come back to this later when you want to share your stories or apply for a job or internship. Begin by answering the following questions:

*As a result of my international experience,...*

1. I can identify a change in myself – my values, outlook, attitude and/or abilities.

An example of this is:

2. I experienced new cultures. One strategy that was really helpful in learning how to interact with people from another culture was:

3. I've clarified what is important to me – who I am, who I want to be, and what I want to accomplish. For instance,...

4. I had to learn how to adapt. One change that was really hard for me to adapt to in my host culture was:

5. Some strategies I've used to adapt to these challenging changes were:

6. I've gained a greater perspective on global (social, economic, political) issues. One such issue that I learned more about is...

(Adapted from "Beginning with the Outcomes," Ann Hubbard and Anne Haberkern, 2014.)

# TIPS FOR RÉSUMÉS

Now that you've reflected on your experience abroad and how it has changed you as a person, you can articulate it to showcase your skills on your résumé!

## EMPHASIZE NEW SKILLS

- Establish rapport quickly
- Manage/Organize
- Communicate despite barriers
- Cope with rejection and/or criticism
- Identify and solve problems
- Learn through listening and observing
- Adapt to new environments
- Function with a high level of ambiguity
- Handle stress/difficult situations
- Learn quickly
- Lead formal and/or informal groups
- Accept responsibility
- Understand an organization's culture
- Take initiative and risks
- Time management skills
- Achieve goals despite obstacles

## SHOWCASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Create sections that highlight your global citizenship! For example:

- International Experience:  
Italy (one semester abroad)
- Language Skills:  
English (Native Speaker)  
Italian (Intermediate)

## INCLUDE STUDY ABROAD ACTION VERBS

- Adapted
- Awarded
- Built
- Cooperated
- Developed
- Exchanged
- Fostered
- Implemented
- Immersed
- Improved
- Lived
- Managed
- Organized
- Overcame
- Practiced
- Translated
- Represented
- Recognized
- Shared
- Traveled

## REQUEST REFERENCES

Think back on your experience and determine who would be good for you to ask to be a reference: a teacher from the country in which you studied or an overseeing faculty member from your home school are just a few possibilities. While the experience is fresh in your mind, gather those references soon after having your study abroad experience. To facilitate their work and make the reference relevant, you might want to provide them with some information. Try highlighting the experience you had with them and let them know your goals and for which jobs or internships you're applying.

Check out **Appendix B** for a great resource on résumé-building with your intercultural competence!

(Adapted from Salisbury University)

# NETWORKING

Networking is key for getting jobs and going places. Your Umbra peers will be all around the country and the world, so stay connected!

**Umbra Linked-In:**

[www.linkedin.com/company/the-umbra-institute](http://www.linkedin.com/company/the-umbra-institute)

**Umbra Alumni Group:**

[www.linkedin.com/groups/Umbra-Institute-Alumni-66248/about](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Umbra-Institute-Alumni-66248/about)

Plus, check out your university's Career Center and even the Study Abroad Office for more resources.

# STUDY ABROAD STORYTELLING

## “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SEMESTER IN ITALY...”

Are you ready to respond to that prompt with a meaningful and concise reply? Instead of saying, “It was awesome!,” come up with a short response ahead of time.

*“My experience in Italy was one of personal transformation. While studying Italian Art History through the Umbra Institute and interning in the House Museum Marini Clarelli Santi in Perugia, I discovered my true passion for art history and archiving and my ability to engage and communicate with diverse cultures.”*

**QUICK TIPS:**

1. Have several unique stories ready about your time abroad for when people ask!
2. Think of moments that were especially challenging so that you can tell how you overcame the conflict!
3. Make sure to give the story a clear beginning and end while making a relevant point about the skill or quality the tale demonstrates.
4. Don't give too much detail. (If the story involves a missed train, don't bother with the train number.)
5. Respect cultural differences!

# INTERVIEWS: CREATE A STAR

Modify your stories so they're meaningful and appropriate even for interviews! Recruiters are looking for concise, but descriptive responses, so try using the **STAR** technique : **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esults.

If someone asks, "Give me an example of an accomplishment you are proud of," or "What is your greatest skill?," you might answer, "I believe I can set goals and meet them," and then give a STAR story.

## HOW TO CREATE A STAR



**S** – Describe the specific **setting** or **situation** for which the experience took place.

*Example:* While studying abroad in Germany, I found that my coursework was extremely different from what I was accustomed to at the University of Minnesota. I was used to having assignments due throughout the semester, but for my German courses the entire grade was based on the final with no accountability beforehand.

**T** – Describe the specific **task** or project related to the skill sought.

*Example:* During that semester, I was taking a full load of coursework for my major, and I was really motivated to do well during my time abroad. I knew I had to figure out a way to stay on top of all the information I was learning because it would be impossible to do well at the end of the semester if I left studying until the end.

**A** – Describe the specific steps or **actions** you took to complete the task or project.

*Example:* I had to act as a self-starter, and I set out a structured study plan for myself for the entire semester. I formed small study groups with 4-5 classmates for each of my classes, and we would meet over coffee once a week.

**R** – Describe the **results** or outcomes resulting from the actions taken.

*Example:* I developed strong time management skills because of the new type of academic setting I experienced in Germany. Because I kept up with my study plan throughout the semester, I ended up earning As and Bs in my classes, and I was able to keep my stress level down before final exams.

## PREPARE YOUR OWN "STAR" FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

**S:**

**T:**

**A:**

**R:**

# INTERNATIONAL CAREERS

Did you fall in love with studying abroad? Try volunteering or working abroad!

## **WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF):**

This organization links volunteers with organic farms and growers around the world. Choose a country, register as a member, and get in contact with some hosts! Be sure to ask specific questions before you commit to make sure your language, timeline, interests, accommodations, and workday meet your expectations. Hosts usually provide food and lodging in exchange for six-hour workdays. New Zealand is particularly famous for WWOOFing, but Italy has some gems, as well. Previous Umbra staff members have successfully WWOOFed in Italian castle-vineyards, rustic farms, and mushroom-hunting B&Bs. Give it a try! ([www.wwoof.net](http://www.wwoof.net))

## **WorkAway:**

WorkAway is similar to WWOOF, but has a wider variety of volunteer options. Help a farmer in Turkey, work at a hostel in the south of France, volunteer with a Costa-Rican whale conservation project, learn to breed rare skyrian horses in Greece, or stay as an au-pair in Hong Kong! This can be a great resource for traveling economically and cultivating specific passions. As always, make sure to find a good fit before choosing your host. ([www.workaway.info](http://www.workaway.info))

## **PeaceCorps:**

PeaceCorps provides two-year-long opportunities all over the world for English-teaching or a variety of work. Though technically a volunteer, you're provided with a stipend and governmental benefits, such as tuition-partnerships for graduate schools, and college loan deals. ([www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov))

## **Teach English as a Second Language (TESOL/TEFL):**

Teaching English as a second or foreign language is a great way to live abroad, and a useful certification for your professional future. Consider taking a certification course (abroad or at home), or enrolling in a teach-away program. Some of these country-specific programs require language skills and are paid, and some charge you for training and placement abroad.

Take a look at World Teach ([worldteach.org](http://worldteach.org)), Teaching Assistantship Program in France ([tapif.org](http://tapif.org)), Japan English Teaching ([jetprogramme.org](http://jetprogramme.org)), the Cultural Ambassador program in Spain (called Auxiliar de Con-  
veracion at <http://www.mecd.gob.es>), and more!

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL IN INTERNATIONAL FIELDS:**

Interested in a post-graduate degree? You can research programs in International Policy, International Business, International Relations, International Marketing, and more!

Make sure to check out your opportunities abroad; many European countries have affordable degree programs and student visas, which is an excellent way to study abroad again.

If you'd like to work in the field of study abroad, you can even get a Master's in International Education Management!

### INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE EXERCISE

**Instructions:** Check each change that you feel has happened to you. At the end, go back and choose 3 or 4 that are the strongest or most significant to you. Think about how you can relay those new skills/attitudes to a potential employer that makes you stand out. You have a lot to offer an employer with your experiences in Italy!

#### INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- I have a greater capacity to accept differences in others' actions and ideas that may be vastly different from my own.
- I'm more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle.
- I have improved my ability to communicate with people in a second language (or understand better "International English").
- I have a greater ability to empathize (i.e., to sense how an event appears and feels to someone else).
- I understand that there are many ways to accomplish the same task and those approaches not necessarily better or worse.
- I have learned to improve interpersonal communication through increased abilities in listening well, speaking clearly, and understanding to nonverbal cues.
- I have more curiosity about, and respect for, new ideas.
- I'm more flexible and able to adjust to changes in others.
- I'm more tolerant of ambiguous situations, that is, of situations that are confusing and open to differing interpretations.
- I realize why stereotypes can be so harmful and hurtful, both to others and myself.
- I have learned how to recognize when I have made a cross-cultural mistake and can use culturally appropriate language and measures to repair damage.
- I understand and appreciate how much educational systems can differ across cultures.
- I have a greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed.
- I can adapt and cope in vastly different settings.
- I'm more able to accept as valid others values and lifestyles.
- I'm more balanced in my judgments (i.e., less likely to judge things as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong").
- I think more critically: I'm more discriminating and skeptical, particularly of stereotypes.
- I have improved my overall observation skills.
- I realize the importance of time to be alone to think.
- I find myself regularly reflecting about the overseas experience and its meaning for me.
- I'm confident that I can meet and make friends abroad.
- I have an increased motivation to go abroad again.

#### WORLD VIEW

- I understand another country's role in world affairs better than before.
- I have a better understanding of how and why political policy differs abroad.
- I have the ability to see situations and issues from more than one perspective.
- I understand more clearly how US-Americans and the US are viewed overseas.
- I see the world as more interconnected than ever before.
- I value human diversity and respect others from a variety of backgrounds different from my own.

- I have greater sympathy for the struggles of international students and immigrants as a result of my experience.
- I have a deeper understanding of the common problems and issues that confront all human beings on this planet.
- I have greater awareness of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world.
- I seek out international news and want to know what is going on in the world more than before.
- I am aware that cultural changes can have unexpected consequences.

### **PERSONAL CAPABILITIES**

- I understand more fully my own strengths and weaknesses.
- I feel more confident in undertaking new travels or projects.
- I can accept failures and shortcomings in myself more easily.
- I'm more confident and assertive when facing new situations.
- I have become a more patient person.
- I'm more willing to share my thoughts and feelings with others, and to be open when others wish to share theirs with me.
- I'm less afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at than I used to be.
- I see myself more objectively (I see my day-to-day problems in a broader, more realistic context.)
- I have increased my perseverance and self-discipline.
- I can "analyze" social situations more quickly (figure out what is going on and react appropriately).
- I'm more deeply committed to an idea, cause, or goal.
- I have the ability to create personal peace and satisfaction in my life.
- I have a greater sense of responsibility for other people.
- I'm more able to express deep emotions freely.
- I'm more able to ask for and receive help from others.
- I have increased my capacity to experiment and take risks.
- I have a clearer notion of what I wish to do with my life.
- I'm more aware of opportunities in life that are open to me.
- I feel greater respect and appreciation for my natural family.
- I'm more independent in my relations with family and friends.
- I can accept the shortcomings of my family members in an understanding way.
- I think that I need fewer friends but deeper (more intimate and more trusting) friendships.
- I'm more aware of the way I use and structure time.
- I'm interested in, and capable of, making long-range plans.
- I'm more determined to develop fully my skills and talents, especially those recently gained through overseas living.
- I feel a greater need to have diverse experiences and friends.
- I feel that being abroad helped clarify my goals and values.
- I'm more likely to do things spontaneously (i.e., to do things without undue concern about possible consequences or any advanced planning).
- I'm more capable of solving life's day-to-day problems and accomplishing necessary tasks.
- I can set more realistic priorities, both short-term and long-term, for myself.
- I'm more confident about the decisions I make.
- I have a greater appreciation for what I have.

- ❑ I have the ability to make clear personal choices and goals for my life rather than complying with what others expect and want from me.
- ❑ I have learned to place a lower value on material things.
- ❑ I want to use my skills in future work and can articulate what those are to a prospective employer.

#### **OWN CULTURE**

- ❑ I see my own cultural values more clearly and understand how and why they differ from others.
- ❑ I can evaluate advantages and disadvantages of my own culture and society more objectively (i.e., from the perspective of an outsider).
- ❑ I'm sensitive to subtle features of my own culture that I had never seen before.
- ❑ I have both a greater appreciation for US-American culture and a clearer critical sense of its limitations and problems.
- ❑ I have a deeper understanding of (if not necessarily commitment to) the values and lifestyle of my native community.
- ❑ I appreciate US-American efficiency, but miss the different pace of life abroad.

(On-line cultural training resource for study abroad university of the pacific. Retrieved 10/22, 2009, from [www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/](http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/))

#### **LIST OF TRANSFERABLE INTERCULTURAL SKILLS**

Perseverance  
 Independence  
 Second (or more) language ability  
 Ability to solve problems  
 Tolerance for stress  
 Negotiations skills  
 Motivation  
 Sensitivity to cultural context  
 Time management skills  
 Accept responsibility for actions  
 Can communicate across borders  
 Respect for difference and diversity  
 Sense of curiosity and adventure  
 Ability to work in multicultural group  
 Ability to work in multilingual environment  
 Demonstrated initiative  
 Self-reliance  
 Enhanced listening skills  
 Able to establish rapport quickly  
 Ability to cope with difficulty  
 Demonstrate intercultural written and oral communication skills  
 Possess an understanding of culture's complexity  
 Demonstrate self-confidence/self knowledge  
 Flexibility

**THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**Study Abroad's New Focus Is Job Skills**  
**Colleges Strive to Translate Students' Experience for Employers**

October 17, 2010

By Karin Fischer

Cheryl Matherly was going through résumés with a hiring manager for a major consulting firm when she had her “aha” moment.

Like many employers, the campus recruiter put a premium on the ability of potential hires to succeed in unfamiliar situations with co-workers from different backgrounds and cultures. Ms. Matherly, then assistant dean of students for career and international education at Rice University, thought she had the perfect candidate, a history major who had won a scholarship to conduct three months of solo research in Spain. The value of his having navigated working alone in a foreign country, she thought, was obvious. But the recruiter pushed the résumé aside, dismissing the student's experience as a “backpacking trip through Europe,” Ms. Matherly recalls. “That's what it boiled down to for him.”

“It spoke volumes to me about how employers commonly view an overseas-study experience,” she says.

The discrepancy isn't unusual. Even in an increasingly global economy, few companies set out to hire recent graduates who have studied or interned abroad. More than one survey of employers ranks international study low among cocurricular activities in its relevance to the workplace.

One problem, argues Ms. Matherly, who is now assistant provost for global education at the University of Tulsa, is that students don't know how to talk about their time overseas in a way that is meaningful to employers. So, she set out to design workshops and seminars to help students do just that.

“The value isn't that you had the abroad experience itself,” she says. “It's what you learned overseas that allows you to work in a cross-cultural environment. Students have to learn how to talk about that experience in terms of transferrable skills, how it relates to what an employer wants.”

### **COMBATING PERCEPTIONS**

One challenge is the nature of the hiring process. While executives may recognize the importance of hiring employees with international experience, recruiters typically have more focused goals.

“They're looking for a dozen engineers, a dozen accountants,” says Ralph Brigham, global director of campus relations at Southwestern Company, a company that sells educational products and a past president of the National Association of Colleges and Employers. “They're not thinking about how, in the long term, an international experience might pay off.”

The roots of study abroad's perception problem, many in the field agree, is that it has historically been seen as an add-on, a perk for wealthy students at selective colleges. That view is reinforced by the demographics: Although students from a wider swath of majors are going overseas, and to more diverse destinations, the typical participant still is a white woman in the humanities or social sciences.

Europe, rather than Asia, with its growing business and economic clout, remains the top destination.

It's not just employers' attitudes that must be changed. College career-office staff members often know little about overseas study or its employment value. And study-abroad advisers typically focus on getting students overseas, not on what happens once they return. What's more, colleges' organizational structures can mean that interaction between study-abroad and career counselors is rare. Frequently, the two groups are housed in different offices and report to different supervisors.

Because study abroad and career staffers are unlikely to meet over the water cooler, colleges need to be deliberate in their efforts to build connections, says Martin Tillman, a former associate director of career services at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. "Campuses have to be proactive," says Mr. Tillman, a higher-education consultant and longtime expert on career development and international study.

## **DEVELOPING A NARRATIVE**

At Rice, an unusual administrative setup meant that both offices reported to Ms. Matherly. Even there, however, Ms. Matherly says she had to work to build bridges between the two, through small but concrete steps, like inviting career counselors to contribute a section to the university's study abroad handbook about doing a job search from overseas. Employees from each department also attended relevant workshops put on by the other.

A number of institutions and some third-party providers are getting involved in similar efforts to help students translate their study abroad experience into terms employers can understand. One of those companies, Cultural Experiences Abroad, has fashioned a semester-long career-development course, now offered as a pilot at two of its European sites, in Florence and Paris. The optional program includes pre-arrival reading assignments, Webinars with career consultants, and regular meetings that incorporate experiential exercises and journal writing.

For example, students might participate in business simulations or be asked to do specific tasks such as applying for a local library membership; they then reflect on cultural distinctions they encountered and the skills they used to navigate those differences.

If the pilot takes off, CEA administrators plan to check back in with students after they return to their home campuses and help them connect with career offices there, says Kevin J.F. Murphy, the Italy academic dean and campus director.

Some colleges have developed their own programs to better integrate international study and career planning. The University of Michigan, for one, offers a dozen panel discussions each year on what it calls "international career pathways," most of which focus on how students can put their overseas experience to use in particular fields, such as global health or the environment. At the Georgia Institute of Technology—where nearly half of all students have a cooperative-education experience, many overseas—the Work Abroad Program helps place students in international internships and jobs and advises them on marketing such study and work to global employers, says Debbie Gulick, the program's director.

When Ms. Matherly began her work at Rice back in the mid-1990s, she says, she had few models to emulate. Rather than requiring formal training for career and study-abroad staff members, she says she encouraged

them to learn more about each other's roles through working together: co-sponsoring panel discussions on international careers, compiling print materials to help guide students in internship and job searches, and leading re-entry programs for students back from overseas study.

A development that helped spur further cooperation, Ms. Matherly says, was growing student interest in working overseas, both before and after graduation. At Rice, she hired students to serve as advisers to their peers who sought internships or work abroad. That's a position she hopes to replicate at the University of Tulsa.

Out of that interest grew a conference and study tour that exposed students to global careers in Asia, which Ms. Matherly continued when she moved to Tulsa in 2006. Another effort, a summer nanotechnology-research program for freshmen and sophomores in Japan, earned National Science Foundation support. Built into the NanoJapan program, as the latter is known, are weekly sessions aimed at getting students to think about the real-world skills they are learning overseas. As part of discussions and writing assignments, Ms. Matherly and other leaders encourage students to think about questions such as, "Why do research abroad, rather than at a well-regarded university closer to home?" (One answer might be to understand how people may bring different sets of assumptions to research problems, depending on their cultural background.)

In one instance, a missed tram in a small Japanese town became a lesson in using problem-solving skills in an unfamiliar environment, in which students knew little of the local language. In workshops and in one-on-one advising, Ms. Matherly and her advisers try to break down overseas experiences to help students see how what they learned abroad can be adapted to the workplace.

"We want to help students develop a narrative for employers, not just give them a list of internships and activities," says Jacqueline Hing, interim director of the Center for Student Professional Development at Rice. "It puts their experience abroad in terms of what an employer is looking for."

## **ADAPTING PERSPECTIVES**

Ms. Hing's own experience abroad, helping Rice's then-sister institution, the International University Bremen, set up its career placement office, made her more attuned to opportunities overseas and gave her firsthand insight into cultural and workplace differences.

A growing number of career counselors are going abroad, through the Fulbright International Education Administrators Program. When Ms. Matherly won a short-term grant to study in Germany through the program, in 1996, she says she was the only one of her group of 15 from the career side. Last year one of her staff members at Tulsa went on the same program; that time, half of the participants were from career services, she says.

Still, Ms. Matherly says it can sometimes be easier to get career counselors on board than study abroad advisers, because it's a natural extension of career services work to help students put their experiences in terms relevant to employers. Study abroad advisers have been slower to adapt, she says, because they tend to deal with students on the front end of the process.

But Mr. Tillman, the higher education consultant, says that may be changing, as students focus more intently on job prospects in the economic downturn. "We're moving from the idea that study abroad is inherently a good thing—which it is," he says, "to thinking more about the utilitarian benefits of going overseas."