TRANSLATING YOUR STUDY AWAY EXPERIENCE TO AN EMPLOYER

Sure, your international experience was “Awesome!” and “Amazing!” and you “had the time of your life!” But how can you express the benefit of your experience to an employer? The skills and perspective you gained from your international experience sets you apart from other students. Here’s how you can show that to employers:

Words and phrases which emphasize skills and qualities gained from learning abroad:

- Adaptable to new environments
- Appreciate diversity
- Awareness of global issues
- Flexibility and patience
- Foreign language proficiency
- Handle difficult situations/stress
- Inquisitive, curious, and open-minded
- Self-confident and independent
- Willing to take initiative

“A global point of view is a critical skill set that is not easily come by in the US, and it is a skill that facilitates creativity, diversity of thinking, and better skills for working with a variety of individuals with varied backgrounds, interests, and capabilities.” - Advertising Executive

“I usually bring up my international experience when asked, ‘tell me something interesting about yourself.’” - Clinical Research Coordinator

“My experience in Russia and Ukraine differentiated me from the masses of ‘standard’ college grads hunting for the most desirable jobs. I heard it time and time again from employers.” - Account Planning manager

Related Action Verbs:

Adapted  Cooperated  Immersed  Overcame
Developed  Improved  Initiated  Practiced
Enhanced  Lived  Managed  Realized
Exchanged  Noticed  Organizer  Represented
Fostered  Observe  Organized  Recognized

Shared
Traveled
TRANSLATING YOUR LEARNING ABROAD EXPERIENCE TO AN EMPLOYER

Self-Reflection

Be prepared to give insightful comments about your experience at any time. Which stories highlight new skills and knowledge from your learning abroad experience?

• How did your study abroad experience enhance your knowledge, skills, and understanding of your intended career field? What assets might international study yield as opposed to someone who studied domestically?
• Share an example of a travel situation that helped build your understanding of human motivation. How did this enhance your understanding of leadership or teamwork?
• How did you adjust/adapt to new cultural surroundings? Share examples from academic, social, and work settings. How did these influence your ability to interact successfully with others?
• Were there ever times when you may have been in danger or afraid? What did you learn from it and why?
• Did you gain a new appreciation for the current events/issues in country/region where you studied? How so?
• What was the most significant thing you learned about yourself through your study abroad experience?

Résumé

Locate your intentional experience where it makes the most sense with your intended position. There are several ways to do this:

• List the program in your education section if it was a study abroad program
• If you held a job, internship, or volunteer position while abroad, you could list it in your relevant experience section.
• If the work you did abroad isn’t directly related to your intended career, list it as work experience but focus on the cross-cultural learning and skills gained.

Visit www.redlands.edu/ocpd for résumé insights

Cover Letter

Think through how your experience relates to your field. Then develop a strategy to specifically address this in your cover letter or résumé.

• My experience living in Ecuador will enhance my ability to communicate and interact with the local Latino population this position will work with.
• Studying in Brazil provided me unique insights into the country’s educational disparities and ignited my passion for helping disadvantaged and underrepresented students with an organization such as yours.
• My studies in Japan provided me with great insight into the cultural differences that influence consumers in different countries and will improve my ability to contribute to international initiatives.

Even if your career goals do not include a specific international dimension, you can promote the general transferable skills from your experiences such as independence, confidence, and problem solving

Networking & Interviews

If someone asks about your international experience, take it as an opportunity to expand. Don’t let the moment pass by with a simple “Yes, it was great!” Use the reflection questions below to prepare specific examples of stories/responses in advance.

• Did you learn to work with a more diverse group of people than you had previously been exposed to?
• Why did you choose the program?
• Did you engage in a new language, activity, hobby, or skill?
• Did you travel independently outside the formal program?

Be sure to use an appropriate balance of international and domestic examples depending on the position you are seeking.