After Going Abroad
A Re-Entry Handbook for Returning Students

UCSC Study Abroad
Division of Global Engagement
Dear Returning Students,

Congratulations on being one of 10% of students nationwide who participate in education abroad! This is a great accomplishment, and on behalf of our study abroad team and the entire Division of Global Engagement, we applaud your courage to study in another country. We hope that your experience was academically and culturally enriching, stimulating, and all in all, unforgettable!

It may seem like only yesterday you embarked on your intercultural journey of learning and discovery. The good news is – this journey is never ending!! Now that you have returned to UCSC, we want you to continue your path of intellectual and cultural engagement by applying your new insight into language, knowledge, ideas, people, and perspectives in the classroom and community.

We realize that there are many emotions involved in the process of returning home. While you might be excited to see family and friends, you also may be sad to leave the people and routines you got used to while abroad. Remember – these mixed emotions are a normal part of the re-entry process!

To prepare you for readjustment, we have created this re-entry handbook. Its purpose is to help you:

- Understand the concepts of re-entry and reverse culture shock
- Identify challenges of the re-entry process and develop strategies for adjustment
- Reflect on the ways in which your international experiences may have reshaped or redefined your values, beliefs, and goals
- Recognize transferable skills gained from studying abroad and how to showcase those skills to future employers
- Review opportunities to go abroad again

We hope you find the content in this handbook relevant and informative of the issues you might face re-acclimating to life at UCSC and in the U.S. The most important thing to remember is to be patient with yourself and others! Just as it took you time to get used to living in your host community, it will also take time to reconnect to life at home.

Again, welcome back to UCSC! Please visit us at the Division of Global Engagement if you need anything at all! We are committed to assisting you with your international interests and goals.

Sincerely,
The team at UCSC Study Abroad
The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.

Marcel Proust (French Novelist)
# Table of Contents

**Re-entry: The Process of Returning Home**  
So, What Is Re-entry, Exactly?  
Returning Home Stress Factors  
How Do I Perceive Re-entry? Exercise  
Reverse Culture Shock  
Quick Tips for Returning Home  
Anticipation and Expectation Exercise  
How Do I Feel, How Do I Want to Feel? Exercise  
Common Re-entry Challenges—and Solutions!  
My Best Coping Strategies Exercise  
My Re-entry Support System Exercise  
Staying Involved After Going Abroad  
Integrating Your International Experience into Your Daily Life  
Campus Resources for Mental and Physical Health  

**Marketing Your International Experience**  
Warm-Up Reflection Exercise  
International Experience Transferable Skills  
Study Abroad and Your Application Materials  

**Going Abroad After Graduation**  
Go Abroad Again  
International Work and Volunteer Opportunities  
International-Related Graduate Study Programs  
Additional Useful Resources
Re-Entry: The Process of Returning Home
So, What Is Re-Entry, Exactly?

Simply put, re-entry is the process of returning home after spending time abroad. So, why are we talking about re-entry, and, more importantly, why do we need an entire handbook about it?! What could be easier than going home, right? After all, you know the language, understand the culture, and you have your family and friends. When you were abroad, you may have even dreamed about how great it would be returning home, surrounded by your loved ones, in a familiar place where you feel comfortable because you can be YOU.

Well, regrettably, it is not quite that simple because, often times, you are not the same you as before you went abroad. To better understand this change, we’d like to present you with the cultural sunglasses metaphor.

Imagine that since the beginning of time, from the time of the first people, today, and far into the future, everyone that is born has 2 legs, 2 arms, 2 eyes, a nose, a mouth, and a pair of sunglasses. People in different countries wear sunglasses with different color lenses. In your own country, the color of the lenses in the sunglasses is yellow. Since you have been able to hear, see, walk, and talk, everything you have learned and experienced has entered the brain through yellow lenses. These yellow lenses shape your beliefs, values, attitudes, and they way you actually “see” the world.

Thousands of miles away in another country, from the time of the first people, today, and far into the future, everyone that is born has sunglasses with blue lenses. Everything people see, learn, or experience is filtered through the blue lenses.

When you study abroad in a new country, you initially have trouble understanding the perspectives and actions of host locals because they are not wearing the same color sunglasses as you are. You realize that you must adopt a pair of blue sunglasses in order to function effectively and appropriately. Through these blue lenses, you are able to learn the attitudes, values, and beliefs of that country. However, when you return to your home country, you notice that your sunglasses are now green because your “lenses” have become a mix of both countries’ cultural values and, as such, you operate based on characteristics of both cultures.

Re-entry then is about getting to know the new you, deciding on your best next steps, and carving out a journey in which you can continue to be an engaged global citizen. In order to do this, however, you must reflect on the learning that took place abroad, articulate the impact of your international experience, and integrate those lessons with your overall life goals. This handbook’s purpose is to equip you with strategies and tools to do just that!
Returning Home Stress Factors

*Adapted from University of the Pacific’s, “What’s Up with Culture”*

Returning home can be both exciting and difficult. While there are lots of reasons to look forward to going home, it may not be as simple as resuming your old routines and reestablishing prior relationships. There are also psychological, social, and cultural stresses of re-entry that we want you to be aware of. Below is a short list of factors that can cause tension during the re-entry process.

**It Is Largely Unexpected**
Most people do not prepare for returning home because they expect it to be easy-- and are surprised when it is not.

**The Reality of Home Differs from Reality**
When you are abroad, images of home life can become idealized or romanticized. It is easy to forget or minimize the problems or issues that once were sources of stress in your everyday life. Re-encountering them can be disconcerting.

**Change Has Occurred to Everyone**
However major or subtle, things are different. You, the people around you, and your culture have changed. Sometimes this is obvious and immediately observable; sometimes it is "hidden" and only comes out under certain circumstances-- which are usually unpredictable and therefore unsettling.

**People May React to Returnees in Ways They Consider Inappropriate**
People generally expect you to be the same person you were when you left and usually attempt to treat you that way. They often have little patience for a returnee who seems to be significantly "different" or who exhibits behaviors or attitudes that, to them, seem odd or uncharacteristic of that person.

**Reverse Culture Shock Is Neither Recognized nor Understood at Home**
Few people in your home culture are likely to be familiar with the concept of reverse culture shock. Therefore, people often respond to a returnee having difficulty readjusting by bluntly suggesting they "get over it" as though it were a conscious act on their part or that they could control their emotions if they wanted to. Unlike undergoing culture shock while abroad where people are likely to be sympathetic, upon reentry, the pressure to conform quickly and substantially can be intense and tolerance can be in short supply.
How Do I Perceive Re-Entry? Exercise

Now, let’s look at your perceptions of re-entry. In the space below, write down all of the words phrases, and feelings that come to you when you hear the word re-entry.

Re-Entry Is…

Take a look at what you wrote above. Circle the words that are positive and underline the ones that are negative. Which do you have more of: positive or negative thoughts, images, and feelings about re-entry?

One way to make re-entry a positive experience is to figure out how to see the positives in it! We will be doing that more throughout this handbook, but first, we need to discuss some general emotions and reactions during the re-entry process.
Reverse Culture Shock

While the concept of culture shock is increasingly well known, fewer people comprehend the notion of reverse culture shock—the psychological, emotional and cultural aspects of reentry. Reverse culture shock is less recognized because it is assumed that since one is returning home, there is no process of re-adaptation. However, many times, we find ourselves shocked when our idealized view of home does not meet expectations. This shock can manifest itself through feelings of loneliness, anxiety, sadness, alienation, resentment, restlessness, fatigue, loss of appetite, or difficulty communicating. However, there are varying degrees of reverse culture shock unique to each person and situation. Below are three key characteristics of reverse culture shock.

**Euphoria** Most students will experience some form of euphoria or high when returning home. For weeks you have anticipated returning home and have now come face to face with family, friends, and In N Out burgers. To friends and family, you are nothing short of a celebrity. People want to hear about your study abroad program, most enthusiastically look at your photos, and everyone is really glad to see you. This eagerness can last for a surprisingly short period of time. As can your tolerance to hearing over and over again, “how was it?”

**Shock** All those social cues that you once took for granted now have to be relearned. You feel frustrated that loved ones have so quickly put your experience abroad into the past. You may feel similar to the effects of culture shock: anxious, irritable, nervous, unable to sleep, or oversleeping. There really is no one pattern or set list of symptoms for reverse culture shock. And unlike culture shock, there is no timetable for moving past it.

**Adjustment** Given time, the majority of students will come to some final state of adjustment. They will take their experience and put it into the context of their home. Homesickness for the home that you left behind gives way to a renewal of bonds with old and new friends and family. Your life begins to resemble a little of the life you left, except with a broader perspective from your journey.

---

1. As defined by the U.S. Department of State
Another useful tool to better understand cultural readjustment is a popular model referred to as the re-entry worm. This model illustrates common patterns that exist among travelers upon and after their return to their home country. Its purpose is to help you realize that you are NOT alone in feeling a range of emotions. While the worm offers a range of feelings associated with being home, not ALL students’ experiences fit into the categories below. Moreover, it’s important to recognize that there is no set order for how you will emotionally experience re-entry. Many aspects of the re-entry process are subjective; therefore, everyone will have a unique experience in readapting to their home culture. Margaret D. Pusch is the designer of the worm and also has a resource that identifies personality types and draws connections to re-entry.

---

Quick Tips for Returning Home

Adapted from University of the Pacific’s, “What’s Up with Culture”

So, what can you do to prepare for cultural readjustment? The first and most important thing that you are already doing by completing this handbook is to be aware of the reintegration process. The following list is comprised of additional tips to consider upon your return home.

1. Mentally prepare for the adjustment process
The more you consider your alternatives, think about what is to come, and know about why returning home is both similar to and different from going abroad, the easier the transition will be. Anticipating is useful. As one psychologist put it, “Worrying helps.” However, obsessing does not, so be prepared -not paranoid!

2. Allow yourself time
Reentry is a process that will take time, just as adjusting to a new foreign culture required a period of acculturation. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Give yourself permission to ease into the transition.

3. Understand that the familiar will seem different
You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps even unsettling. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological responses to being home. Everyone does.

4. There will be some "cultural catching up" to do
Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment, and current event topics may be unfamiliar to you. New academic programs or regulations, slang expressions, popular culture references, recent events, and even major social changes may have emerged since you left. You may have some learning to do about your own culture. The longer you have been gone, the more you may have to discover, and the more noticeable it will be to others that you are not culturally fully up-to-speed. Approach this challenge in the same way you approached culture learning overseas, with a sense of humor and an open mind.

5. Reserve judgments
Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering the culture of a new foreign country, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first, and your most valuable and valid analysis of events is likely to take place after allowing some time for thorough reflection. Most returnees report gaining major insights into themselves and their home countries during reentry, but only after allowing a sufficient period of time for reflection and self-analysis.
6. **Respond thoughtfully and slowly**
Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions (like “How was studying abroad?”). Prepare to greet the less predictable questions with a calm, thoughtful approach. This will benefit both you and the person with whom you are talking.

7. **Cultivate sensitivity**
Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is a sure way to reestablish rapport. Much annoyance with returnees results from the perception that returnees are so anxious to tell their stories and share their experiences that they are not interested in what happened to those who stayed at home. This is ironic because one of the most common frustrations reported by returnees is that those at home only ask superficial questions (e.g., “So how was it?”) and want short answers. Returnees see this as a lack of opportunity to express their feelings fully. In such circumstances, being as good a listener as a talker is a key ingredient in mutual sharing and you may need to practice those skills upon return.

8. **Beware of comparisons**
Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after residence abroad. However, a person must be careful not to be seen as too critical of home or too lavish in praise of things foreign. A balance of good and bad features is probably more accurate and certainly less threatening to others. The tendency to become an “instant expert” is to be avoided at all costs.

9. **Remain flexible**
Keeping as many options open as possible is an essential aspect of a successful return home. Attempting to re-socialize totally into old patterns and networks can be difficult, but remaining aloof is isolating and counterproductive. What you want to achieve is a balance between resuming and maintaining earlier patterns and enhancing your social and intellectual life with new friends and interests.

10. **Seek support networks**
There are lots of people back home who have gone through their own reentry process and understand and empathize with a returnee’s concerns. You may find it useful to seek out people with international living experience such as academic faculty, exchange and international students, Peace Corps volunteers, Global Engagement staff, diplomatic or military personnel, church mission officials, and those doing business internationally. Be sure to visit the UCSC Division of Global Engagement (both the study abroad office and international student and scholar services) to find support and empathy as you go through the reentry process.
Anticipation and Expectation Exercise

This exercise is to help you better gauge how the process of cultural readjustment has played out for you personally. It’s important to go through self-reflective exercises at various stages of your journey to gain additional insights into the kinds of personal changes a study abroad program can bring about.

The five things that have bothered me most about being home are:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.  

The five things that I have enjoyed most about being home are:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.  

The five international things (people, places, situations, etc.) I miss the least since I have returned home are:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.  
The five things (people, places, activities, etc.) I miss *most* from abroad since I have returned home are:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

My greatest single challenge since I have returned home has been:

[Blank space for text]

*Take time to reflect*
When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door, that we do not see the one that has been opened for us.

Helen Keller (American Author)
How Do I Feel, How Do I Want to Feel? Exercise

Feelings. We have so many of them in re-entry! Your feelings are important to listen to because they are data that tell you what you want and don’t want in your life going forward.

To begin, take a look at the Feelings List. Use a pen to circle the ones that describe how you’re currently feeling. Then use a highlighter (or different colored pen) to select the feelings that represent how you want to feel. If what you’re feeling or what you want to feel aren’t listed in the list, add them! Finally, choose six of the feelings that you circled or highlighted and add them to the “My Return” page. As you go about each day in re-entry, check in with yourself by reflecting on two simple questions:

1. How am I feeling today?
2. What can I do to feel how I want to feel?

We encourage you to keep track of your feelings in a journal or planner, so you can reflect on the events, people, and activities in your life that help or hinder feeling how you want to feel.

Feelings List

- Overjoyed
- Confident
- Amazed
- Free
- Playful
- Courageous
- Energetic
- Excited
- Enthusiastic
- Bold
- Loved
- Comforted
- Liberated
- Cheerful
- Sympathetic
- Brave
- Serene
- Satisfied
- Bitter
- Receptive
- Challenged
- Certain
- Reassured
- Impulsive
- Unique
- Secure
- Disinterested
- Exhausted
- Panicked
- Weary
- Suspicious
- Terrified
- Fearful
- Aching
- Desperate
- Heartbroken
- Agonized
- Appalled
- Capable
- Happy
- Proud
- Worthy
- Important
- Adored
- Alive
- Wanted
- Pitied
- Respected
- Empathetic
- Independent
- Concerned
- Appreciated
- Consoled
- Delighted
- Eager
- Optimistic
- Joyful
- Courageous
- Hopeful
- Cared for
- Patient
- Strong
- Inspired
- Sulky
- Yearning
- Peaceful
- Determined
- Relieved
- Glad
- Adventurous
- Intelligent
- Friendly
- Lost
- At-ease
- Comfortable
- Content
- Alert
- Amused
- Daring
- Resigned
- Unpopular
- Moody
- Gloomy
- Tired
- Indifferent
- Unsure
- Impatient
- Dependent
- Unimportant
- Regretful
- Self-conscious
- Upset
- Reluctant
- Sensitive
- Envious
- Stuck
- Unhappy
- Bored
- Disappointed
- Inadequate
- Uncomfortable
- Confused
- Nervous
- Tense
- Worried
- Alarmed
- Annoyed
- Provoked
- Resentful
- Fed-up
- Frustrated
- Sad
- Sick
- Worn-out
- Hopeless
- Rejected
- Guilty
- Embarrassed
- Anxious
- Apprehensive
- Mad
- Torn
- Angry
- Hurt
- Miserable
- Lonely
- Abandoned
- Shocked
- Trapped
- Afraid
My Return

How I feel...

1.
2.
3.

How I want to feel...

1.
2.
3.
Common Re-entry Challenges--- and Solutions!

Challenges adapted from University of the Pacific’s, “What’s Up with Culture”

So, what are the most common re-entry challenges for returning study abroad students, anyway? The following list was created by interviewing students, like you, who have been through the re-entry experience—and survived! They offer the following thoughts on re-entry so that you can be aware of the challenges one might experience upon returning home. After each challenge, we have included solutions and activities to tackle them head-on!

1. Boredom or Frustration

After all the newness and stimulation of your time abroad, a return to family, friends, and old routines (however nice and comforting) can seem very dull.

Furthermore, many returnees are also frustrated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, linguistic, and practical coping skills that appear to be unnecessary or irrelevant.

Solution... Create an Adventure Passport

One of the best ways to avoid falling into boredom and frustration is to intentionally seek out new adventures. Whether you’re home for a semester, a few years, or indefinitely, creating an Adventure Passport will keep your life exciting and full of adventure.

Start by reflecting on what made you feel “alive” while abroad. Was it certain activities? Being with specific people? Learning new things? Speaking in another language? In the space below, write down everything that you loved doing while abroad.
Now write down all of things you look forward to doing at home, whether for the first or hundredth time. Maybe you can’t wait to revisit a favorite hangout with friends. Or perhaps you’re eager to connect with local Chinese speakers. Or maybe you can’t wait to take a scuba diving or surf lesson?! What about traveling around California or other states?! Jot it all down below!

The next step is to select 5-10 adventures that you want to have while at home. Make it official by writing them on the next page. Here are a few tips for making the most of your adventure passport.

1. Set a date for each adventure, and then put it in your calendar. Make these adventures a priority!

2. If you’re going through re-entry with friends, have everyone share the adventures they most want to have while at home. Cheer each other as you complete each one!

3. If you’re crafty, why not create a simple “passport” out of a pocket journal or small notebook. Write each adventure on a different page in the journal. As you complete each one, jot down notes and memories.

4. Once you’ve completed an adventure, “stamp” your Adventure Passport so you can keep track of your experiences. A simple check mark will do but why not get creative with gold stars, stickers, or a fun stamp?

Happy Adventuring!
## Adventure Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adventure</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes and Stamp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No One Wants to Hear

One thing you can count on upon your return: no one will be as interested in hearing about your adventures and triumphs as you will be in sharing those experiences.

This is not a rejection of you or your achievements, but simply the fact that once they have heard the highlights, any further interest on your audiences’ part is probably unlikely.

Solution... Create a Digital Story

Digital storytelling can be a great way to both reflect on your study abroad experience and share your story! Digital storytelling is defined as a short, first-person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds. A modern take on traditional storytelling, digital storytelling is an excellent way to reflect on your time abroad, including the big and small moments or lessons learned. It offers reflection, articulation, validation, and can share the identity and diversity of experiences, people, and places. Plus, it’s a product you can share with family, friends, and perhaps future employers curious to know more. Because the digital storytelling genre is limited to a two to three-minute finished piece with no more than a 350-word script, it can reach and be watched by a broad audience!

To take a workshop on digital storytelling, visit the Story Center at: https://www.storycenter.org/workshop

To see example of other study abroad returnees’ digital stories, visit here: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=study+abroad+digital+stories

4 http://storycenter.org/index1.html
You Can’t Explain

Even when given a chance to explain all the sights you saw and feelings you had while studying abroad, it is likely to be at least a bit frustrating to relay them coherently. It is very difficult to convey this kind of experience to people who do not have similar frames of reference or travel backgrounds, no matter how sympathetic they are as listeners. You can tell people about your time abroad, but you may fail to make them understand exactly how or why you felt a particular way. It’s okay.

Solution... Have a Sound Answer to, “How was it?”

The Abroad Guide has a great article on how to answer the question, “How was your study abroad experience?” Visit the website for more information, but as a synopsis they suggest:

1. Pick out your adjectives in advance. It sounds a little silly, but the good ol’ thesaurus can be your best friend when trying to answer this question. Your initial reaction is to blurt out the words “amazing!” and “awesome!”, because it was amazing and awesome. But so is pizza and The Avengers, so those adjectives lose their meaning pretty quickly. And because we can all relate to an awesome experience, it doesn’t push the conversation further. Really try and think about your experience and figure out the best and most specific way to describe it. Maybe your study abroad experience was “Humbling”. An answer like that is likely to open the floor to a follow-up question like, “How so?” Now you can keep going and talk about why studying abroad was so awesome.

http://theabroadguide.com/how-to-answer-how-was-study-abroad/
2. **Have specific stories to tell.** You could talk for days on end about studying abroad, so don’t get caught in an incoherent ramble trying to quickly talk about everywhere you went and everything you did, saw, and ate there. Talk about a specific story or memory instead. Have a few in mind and ready to be shared. **Think about the best thing you ate, the most adventurous thing you did, and the place so beautiful it actually took your breath away** - those are perfect go-to’s. Plus, when you’re really passionate about the story you’re telling, it’ll show, and whoever you’re telling will be just as excited to hear it. There are bonus points if you have photos to accompany your stories!

3. **Know your audience.** Think about who just asked you that question. Was it your Great Aunt June? (Maybe don’t tell her about that pub crawl in Dublin that got out of control.) Or are you talking to a group of your college friends at a party? (Odds are they’re not in the mood to hear about your self-guided tour of an 18th century estate house in the English countryside.) **Your audience will be more interested in hearing about your study abroad experience if you talk to them about something they’re interested in as well.**

4. **Let your friends and family talk about themselves too.** Don’t be a conversation hog! The last thing you want to do is come off all self-absorbed and better-than-you just because you’re fresh off a semester’s worth of worldly experiences. **Ask them what’s new in their lives and what they’ve been up to while you were away.** Chances are your questions will probably be met with close-ended replies such as “not much” or “the same”, so better yet, ask them about their past travels or future travel plans.

5. **Remember to let them know you’re happy to be home (even if you’re not).** Everyone reacts to coming home after studying abroad differently. Some people can’t wait to be home, some people dread going home, and most people leave with that bitter-sweet in between feeling. But no matter how you’re feeling when you arrive home, **it’s important to remember to let your friends and family know you’re happy to be home and happy to see them again.** Because they’re really happy to have you home and see you again.
Reverse “Homesickness”

Just as you probably missed home for a time after going abroad, it is just as natural to experience some “reverse” homesickness for the people, places, and things that you grew accustomed to as a student overseas. When daily life back home is less enjoyable than you had remembered, it is natural to feel some alienation, see faults in your home society that you’ve never noticed, and become critical of everyone and everything for a time.

Solution... Thoughtfully Reflect on How Your Host Country has Impacted Your Identity

Identity Challenges

You may feel in between 2 “poles” and for months following your return, you might experience a feeling of “cultural identity crisis.” Indeed, you might feel like creating a new identity for yourself. Be patient and take time to reflect upon how you can incorporate all of your cultural identities into your own unique perspective on the world. For now, take a moment to reflect upon these questions:

- What value, beliefs, and behaviors have I learned from my host country that I want to try to maintain while back in the US?
- In what ways might these values, beliefs, and behaviors conflict with US culture?
- How can I find support for these new values?
Seeing the US and the World in a New Light

You have probably changed your views on a number of things since you came back. Many students have a new awareness of politics and the interpretations they get from the media of different countries and cultures. Some people feel either more highly critical of their own country or very grateful for the things that they enjoy in their own country—or both. To sort through your changing perspectives, jot down a few ways in which your views have changed. Here are a few questions to get you thinking.

Write your responses in the following chart:

1. What new experiences did you have while abroad that shocked or surprised you about the world?

2. How do you feel now about those experiences after returning to the US?

3. Are there certain stereotypes that you have let go of? Kept? Modified?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How have my views of the world changed?</th>
<th>How have my views of my own country and culture changed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Relationships Changed

It is inevitable that when you return you will notice that some relationships with friends and family will have changed. Just as you have altered some of your ideas and attitudes while abroad, the people at home are likely to have experienced some changes. These changes may be positive or negative but expecting that no change will have occurred is unrealistic.

Solution... Be flexible, open, and optimistic

Reacting to the Changes

Returning to one’s home environment isn’t easy for a number of reasons, including how much you have changed, how much you understand these changes, how much your friends and family accept these changes in you, and how much you accept changes in friends and family. It’s important to take time to consider what particular frustrations are for you so that you can be open and optimistic to change. Record your reactions to these questions and statements below.

1. I know that I have changed as a result of my experience because...

2. My friends do seem to understand ________________ about me, but they don’t understand...

3. My returnee experience would be better if...

4. Now that I am home, I worry most about...

5. The one thing I know I have learned about myself is...

6. I wish I could explain to my family and friends that...
Loss/Compartmentalization of Experience (Shoeboxing)

Being home, coupled with the pressures of job, family, and friends, often combine to make returnees worried that somehow they will “lose” the experience. Many fear that it will somehow become compartmentalized like souvenirs or photo albums kept in a box and only occasionally taken out and looked at. You do not have to let that happen: maintain your contacts abroad; seek out and talk to people who have had experiences similar to yours; practice your cross-cultural skills; continue language learning.

Solution... *Remember and honor both your hard work and the fun you had while abroad!*

Complete this 25 Questions- Self Disclosure Exercise so that you can always go back and reflect on your memories from abroad.

- What was the strangest food you ate?
- How were the restrooms different?
- What was your most memorable experience?
- What was the funniest thing that happened to you?
- What was your most embarrassing cross-cultural communication moment?
- What do you miss most about your host country?
- Where would you go if you had the chance to study abroad again?
- What was your living situation like abroad (host family, dorm, etc.)?
- Who did you spend most of your free time with abroad?
- Where did you travel before/during/after your program?
- What was your favorite place in your host city?
• Where did you want to go but didn’t get the chance to?
• What was the best language experience you had?
• What was the best present you brought back for a friend/family member?
• What was your favorite thing to do on a Friday night?
• When did you start to feel more “at home” in your host country?
• Who did you wish would visit you abroad so that you could share the experience with them?
• Did you have the chance to see live theater, dance, or music performed?
• What was your first impression of your teachers?
• What was the best photograph you took during your stay?
• What was the biggest change in your daily routine?
• Why did you choose to go on a program to your host country in the first place?
• What was the place you missed most in the US while you were abroad?
• What was the thing (food, clothing, activity, etc.) you missed most while you were abroad?
• What is the most special item you brought back from your host country? Why is it such a treasure?

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time”

T.S. Elliot (American Essayist)
My Best Coping Strategies Exercise

If you’ve been home for more than a few days, you’ve probably already developed some re-entry coping strategies. Now’s your opportunity to decide if these coping strategies are helpful or if you want to exchange them for something more conducive to happiness and success.

Here’s an example. When you feel misunderstood by friends and family, you might retract to your bedroom and fire up Netflix. Or when you feel sad about no longer being abroad, you might jump on Snapchat to reconnect with friends who shared your international experience.

Either strategy can be positive or negative in re-entry. Watching Netflix, for example, could be the perfect time-out. Or it could be a way to numb yourself to difficult experiences.

Connecting with friends on Snapchat could be a way to feel seen and understood. Or it could be a way to avoid the reality that your abroad experience has come to a close and it’s time to embark on your next adventure.

In this activity you’ll take stock of your current coping strategies and evaluate how they’re working for you. Then you’ll choose and refine the best strategies to draw on in the future.

To begin, make a list of the positive and negative ways you currently cope with re-entry. Do you stay really busy? Go for a walk in nature each day? Eat too much or too little? Write everything down below.

Here are the ways I currently cope with re-entry…
Now, let’s evaluate four specific strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy #1</th>
<th>Coping Strategy #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When I feel</strong></td>
<td><strong>When I feel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I tend to cope by</strong></td>
<td><strong>I tend to cope by</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When I do this, it makes me feel</strong></td>
<td><strong>When I do this, it makes me feel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This strategy is ultimately</strong></td>
<td><strong>This strategy is ultimately</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive/negative (circle one)</td>
<td>positive/negative (circle one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>So, I’m going to</strong></td>
<td><strong>So, I’m going to</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continue/discontinue (circle one)</td>
<td>continue/discontinue (circle one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>using this strategy.</strong></td>
<td><strong>using this strategy.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to modify this coping strategy by</td>
<td>I’m going to modify this coping strategy by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping Strategy #3</td>
<td>Coping Strategy #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When I feel</strong></td>
<td><strong>When I feel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to cope by</td>
<td>I tend to cope by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I do this, it makes me feel</td>
<td>When I do this, it makes me feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This strategy is ultimately positive/negative (circle one)</td>
<td>This strategy is ultimately positive/negative (circle one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, I’m going to continue/discontinue (circle one) using this strategy.</td>
<td>So, I’m going to continue/discontinue (circle one) using this strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to modify this coping strategy by</td>
<td>I’m going to modify this coping strategy by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___________________</td>
<td>____________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Re-Entry Support System Exercise

One of the ways we often cope in re-entry is by relying on a few close friends or family members to meet all of our emotional needs. Not only is that placing a lot of pressure on those who mean the most to us, it also sets us up for disappointment if friends or family don’t respond in the way that we need or expect. So, let’s create an intentional support system. If you have a network of support, you’ll know exactly who to go to and you’ll be more likely to get the support you need. To create your support system, start by identifying your needs. Some common needs are listed below but be sure to add yours to the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>venting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travel talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brainstorming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, make a list of who you could go to for support.

In my family....

On campus...

In the university community...

In my home community...

Among my friends...

Once you have identified your needs and who you can go to for support, create your support system by creating the following statements.

When I want/need______________________________________________________________

I’ll go to_______________________________________________________________________
Staying Involved After Going Abroad

Whether you are a long-time alumnus, a recent grad, or a recent study abroad returnee, we encourage you to stay involved with international activities on campus, in your community, and at your local high schools or community colleges. There are many ways you can stay in touch with the international education community at University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)!

Follow UCSC Study Abroad
Follow UCSC Study Abroad on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date on announcements and opportunities.

Returnee Profiles
Learn about some of our recently returned students!

Apply to work at UCSC Global Engagement
Study Abroad alumni interested in working as Study Abroad Peer Advisors or Global Engagement Assistants are invited to apply to join our team at UCSC Global Engagement. Our recruitment period is June-September. Students currently abroad are also encouraged to apply! For additional information, contact studyabroad@ucsc.edu.

LinkedIn
Join your official UCSC Study Abroad Alumni LinkedIn Group for career advice and to network with fellow study abroad alumni.

Career Center
Staff at the Career Center can help you incorporate your international experience abroad in your job search and can also tell you about opportunities to work and intern abroad.
Visit: careers.ucsc.edu

International Mentorship Program
The International Mentorship Program helps first-year international students transition to life at UCSC by pairing them with a current UCSC student who serves as a Peer Mentor. Our Peer Mentors are both U.S. and International student volunteers dedicated to helping new international students navigate their first year at UCSC.

More Ways for Returnees to Get Involved
Looking for ways to get reacquainted with campus life or stay involved in the international community in Santa Cruz? Look no further! The following campus resources and opportunities will help you re-integrate into campus life and keep the study abroad experience alive:
- You are invited to the annual Lessons from Abroad Conference! For more information, visit: http://www.lessonsfromabroad.org/
- Attend International Education Week events – held every November at various venues across campus.
- Check out our Calendar page for information on upcoming events!
Integrating Your International Experience into Your Daily Life

Join a student club at UCSC or an organization in the community:
- International, multicultural group
- Student/social/political awareness group
- Leadership group
- International Student Association on campus

Continue learning/expanding your mind:
- Subscribe to alternative and/or international news media
- Find ways to incorporate some of the activities you did, foods you ate, music you listened to, etc. into your daily lifestyle now
- Take an international relations, world history, cultural/ethnic studies, language, or sociology class

Stay connected to the experience:
- Make a playlist that reminds you of your time abroad or songs that represent the experiences you encountered
- Watch movies or read books about your host country
- Stay in touch with your host family or friends you made abroad

Continue studying a new language:
- Take or continue language courses at UCSC
- Find native speakers in your community
- Join a language club in your community or on campus
- Volunteer with an international organization
- Be a tutor for students who need help in elementary or intermediate language courses

Share your experiences and get published
- As a study abroad returnee, there are many ways for you to share your experiences with others. Publishing them is not only beneficial for the reader, but great experience for you and your resume!

Shop at international grocery stores in the area

Volunteer in the community
Campus Resources for Mental and Physical Health

Being both mentally and physically healthy will make your transition back to UCSC much easier. We encourage you to utilize campus resources. If you have any additional troubles or concerns, please reach out to your study abroad adviser.

**CAPS.** Many people who are transitioning from one culture to another report a higher-than-average rate of stress-related issues. For different individuals, this can take the form of depression, insomnia, difficulty in focusing, trouble in getting along with others, academic problems, anxiety, etc. If you have any of these symptoms or are just feeling overwhelmed, consider contacting staff of CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) in the Cowell Student Health Center building in the East Wing on the second floor.

*Phone:* 831.459.2628  
*Website:* caps.ucsc.edu

**Student Health Center.** If you have any physical problems that may need medical treatment, visit the Student Health Center and let your physician know that you have just returned from study abroad; this may help with the diagnosis. The SHC is located on McLaughlin Drive, across from Colleges 9 & 10.

*Phone:* 831.459.2211  
*Website:* healthcenter.ucsc.edu

**Resources:**  
*Information for this section was obtained from the following sources:*

- College of Saint Benedict Saint John’s University, After Study Abroad: A Resource Guide for Returned Students  
- Cate Brubaker, The Re-Entry Relaunch Roadmap  
- R. Michael Paige, Maximizing study abroad: A student’s guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use  
- University of Richmond, Study Abroad Re-Entry Manual  
- University of the Pacific, What’s Up with Culture
Marketing Your International Experience
Education abroad does not inherently endow a career advantage. It’s only perceived as advantageous when a student can articulate how they have used that experience to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities required by an employer...

Sheila Curran (International Educator)
Warm-Up Reflection Exercise

Taking some time to think about your responses to these questions will help set your mind in the right direction. These questions are somewhat ‘big picture’, and the exercises following will help you identify even more specific skills gained from studying abroad.

From My International Experience...

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

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

I have clarified what is important to me – who I am, who I want to be, and what I want to accomplish. For instance:

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

but I overcame it by:

I gained a greater perspective on global issues. One social issue (local or global) that I learned more about is:
International Experience Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are a core set of skills and abilities that you acquire over time, which can be applied to a wide range of jobs and industries. Not only do they show employers how you’d be a good fit for a team, they also demonstrate what you bring to a role, and how much you’ve learned from previous positions or experiences. Through an international experience, you develop a wide range of skills that can prepare you for many career options. In this worksheet, you will find a list of core and additional skills commonly developed through studying abroad and suggestions for you to think about how you will or have developed these skills through your international experience.

Core Skills Gained Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>How did you develop this skill? Think about….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Adaptation & Coping (Top Skills #2, #7, & #8) | ...a time when you experienced personal or academic failure abroad, and how you used the lessons you learned to build a new strategy or behavior  
...when you arrived to your host country and the strategies you used to adjust to your new environment  
...how you acclimated to the changes in academic expectations                                           |
| Work Effectiveness (Top Skills #4 & #6)    | ...a time you needed to be resourceful to overcome an obstacle abroad  
...a time you took initiative in coming up with a solution in a group  
...a time you had to manage your course load and activities  
...a time when you became involved in something separate from other study abroad participants or international students  
...a time you took on a project/activity that initially intimidated you                                       |
| Cross-Cultural & Foreign Language Skills (Top Skill #3) | ...how you challenge your beliefs and assumptions after living in another country for an extended period of time  
...what you learned about similarities & differences between your own culture and another culture  
...how your international experiences have affected your worldview  
...a time you had to translate a message for a fellow study abroad or international student  
...a time you had to give a presentation in a foreign language                                                    |
| Organizational & People Skills (Top Skills #1, #5, #9, & #10) | ...a group exercise that was successful due to your interpersonal relationships  
...a presentation where you had to summarize, organize, and present information  
...a time when you developed a relationship with someone from another culture                                   |

Top Skills Employers Want

1. Ability to work in a team
2. Problem-solving
3. Communication
4. Strong work ethic
5. Leadership
6. Initiative
7. Analytical skills
8. Adaptability
9. Detail-oriented
10. Interpersonal skills
Additional Transferable Skills Gained Abroad

Check the skills that apply to you and think about a time when you were able to develop those skills abroad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation &amp; Coping</th>
<th>Work Effectiveness</th>
<th>Cross-Cultural Skills</th>
<th>Organizational &amp; People Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Adaptability</td>
<td>❑ Independence</td>
<td>❑ Tolerance</td>
<td>❑ Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Problem-solving &amp; crisis management</td>
<td>❑ Self-discipline</td>
<td>❑ Cultural Sensitivity</td>
<td>❑ Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Ability to deal with stress &amp;</td>
<td>❑ Resourcefulness</td>
<td>❑ Understand cultural differences and similarities</td>
<td>❑ Project management skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficult situations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Flexibility</td>
<td>❑ Versatility</td>
<td>❑ Culture-specific knowledge</td>
<td>❑ Writing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Perseverance</td>
<td>❑ Persistence</td>
<td>❑ Foreign language skills</td>
<td>❑ Verbal and non-verbal communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Withholding judgment</td>
<td>❑ Initiative</td>
<td>❑ Open-Mindedness</td>
<td>❑ Empathy and respect for others’ point of views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Learn quickly</td>
<td>❑ Critical-thinking</td>
<td>❑ Understanding other worldviews</td>
<td>❑ Skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Function with high level of</td>
<td>❑ Time-management</td>
<td>❑ Curiosity and discovery</td>
<td>❑ Establish rapport quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Patience</td>
<td>❑ Ability to set &amp; achieve goals</td>
<td>❑ Appreciation of diversity</td>
<td>❑ Listening and observation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Self-reliance</td>
<td>❑ Technical skills or knowledge base</td>
<td>❑ Awareness and concern for global issues</td>
<td>❑ Detail-oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples

Understanding cultural differences and similarities:
Think about a time you made a cross-cultural mistake and how you used culturally appropriate language and measures to repair the situation.

Function with a high level of ambiguity:
Think about a time when you were in a confusing situation while abroad in which there were differing interpretations of how to complete a task.

Project management:
Think about a time when you took charge of planning a visit to another city, state, or country while abroad. How did you organize the excursion, manage your traveling peers’ expectations, book accommodations, budget, etc.?
Study Abroad and Your Application Materials

Incorporating your study abroad experience and details about what you learned can be a great addition to self-marketing. Remember that employers see the most value in study abroad experiences through the relevant connections you make to their role, organization or industry area.

Resume

In your resume, there are three key sections where you can highlight your international experience:

1. Education
   - List the name of the institution
   - List relevant coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of California, Santa Cruz</th>
<th>Santa Cruz, CA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.A., Political Science</td>
<td>Expected June 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| National Taiwan Normal University (UCEAP) | Taipei, Taiwan |
| Exchange study in Chinese language and culture | Sept ‘17 - Jan ‘18 |

2. Experience
   - Describe projects, fieldwork, research, volunteer, or internships

Research Experience:
Tropical Research Laboratory, Georgetown, Guyana
Researcher
- Collaborated with international team of scientists from 10 Caribbean states
- Visited local engineering company to design a water purification system
- Surveyed water supply for data on pollutants
- Analyzed chemical composition of petroleum-based compounds
3. **Skills**
   - Indicate the level of language fluency and computer skills

**Computer:** Experienced graphic artist well versed with Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator; proficient with MS Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

**Language:** Spanish (*elementary:* cultivated communication skills through sustained dialogue with host family, professors, classmates and communities)

---

**Building Bullet Points**

Beneath the basic information for education or experience, you can include a bullet point to expand on your duties within that position. Each bullet point should include a *concise phrase or sentence that begins with an action word.* You can make each bullet point unique for the job you’re applying for by selecting duties or achievements that match the qualifications for the job. Once you have created a resume with bullets, you can change the bullet points when you submit your resume to each new job.

- **First**
  - Start with an action verb
  - Adapted to living in a foreign environment

- **Second**
  - Add qualifiers
  - Adapted to overseas living in Florence, Italy

- **Third**
  - Add quantifiers
  - Adapted to overseas living in Florence, Italy during a 6-month cultural immersion program

- **Last**
  - Speak to outcomes
  - Adapted to overseas living in Florence, Italy during a 6-month cultural immersion program, while successfully completing requirements for a Psychology degree
Study Abroad Action Verbs

- Acquired
- Applied
- Built
- Communicated
- Compared
- Cooperated
- Demonstrated
- Developed
- Discovered
- Exchanged
- Facilitated
- Fostered
- Identified
- Immersed
- Implemented
- Improved
- Incorporated
- Increased
- Integrated
- Learned
- Lived
- Located
- Managed
- Observed
- Organized
- Overcame
- Practiced
- Realized
- Recognized
- Reinforced
- Represented
- Scheduled
- Translated
- Traveled
- Shared
- Studied
- Visited

In the space below, build 2-3 bullet points based on the skills you’ve developed from your study abroad experience. (Refer to the skills you identified from the transferable skills section).

- __________________________________________________________________________
- __________________________________________________________________________
- __________________________________________________________________________

Cover Letter

Cover letters provide the opportunity to describe how and why your experience has prepared you for the position you are targeting.

Cover letters should be:
- Completely tailored to the job to which you’re applying
- Demonstrate your knowledge about the company
- Prove that your summarized qualifications make sense in the context of the job

Make sure to include:
- A job description analysis
- Qualities that employers value (e.g., your international experience)
- How your skills and experiences are a match for the job
Complete the below summary for a position or job function you would (realistically) like to have within the next five years. Then, think about how you can provide examples for the skills and qualities that align with the job position.

**Name of targeted position/job function**

**Type of organization(s):**

**Skills necessary by successful people in targeted position:**

**Qualities possessed by successful people in targeted position:**

Providing specific examples is one of the most effective ways to make your cover letter stand out. Listing skills without examples is often less memorable for employers (reading more like a list than as specific experiences). Incorporating details from study abroad experiences can be a great way to provide examples and a context for the skills and/or experiences you describe.

**For example:**

“Studying abroad in Italy developed my ability to quickly build relationships and rapport. Through taking courses at an Italian university and traveling extensively on the weekends, I prioritized meeting students and travelers with backgrounds different than my own. I developed both interpersonal communication and listening skills and often overcame communication barriers through persistence and patience. I have maintained these relationships through email and online networking websites since returning to the United States. The knowledge I developed through my relationships with students of diverse backgrounds has also reinforced my sensitivity to individual differences. Since studying abroad, I have been especially attentive to how it is important to consider a variety of perspectives when making decisions or considering marketing approaches and would bring this approach to business relationships. These skills will help me succeed in your organization’s marketing position as I professionally present services to existing and potential clients and maintain positive relationships throughout and after marketing campaigns.”
Focused Interviews

Adapted from AIFS

When answering interview questions, recruiters are looking for concise, but descriptive responses. Focused interviewing techniques are often used by interviewers to draw out information from the candidate. If you are able to respond with a “STAR,” your responses will be concise and descriptive and the interview session will proceed more effectively.

What is 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 in the U.S. 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 semester abroad. I had to figure out a way to stay on top of it all because it would be impossible to do well at the end of the semester if I left studying all to 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 a few classmates for each of my classes, and we’d meet 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 A’s and B’s in my classes, and I was able to keep my stress level down before final exams.

This is a typical STAR answer. It could be the answer to, “Give me an example of an accomplishment you are proud of.” If someone asked, “What’s your greatest skill?” you might answer, “I believe I can set goals and meet them,” and then give a story like the one above. Or, if the interviewer says, “Why should we hire you?” you can respond, “I am a good problem solver, for instance...” and give an example like the one above.

The interview is your chance to speak to your qualities and qualifications; knowing what you want to say before you even enter the interviewer’s office can be a helpful tool in assuring that you’ll be able to do that. Having some STAR stories prepared in advance can help you ensure that the employer knows all you want them to know about who you are and what you have to offer to their organization.
Telling Your Story
Adapted from AIFS

The following examples utilize the STAR format. Note that the recommended response time to an interview question is from 30 seconds to 2 minutes maximum (if you exceed that, you may start losing your audience). Craft your story carefully so that it highlights what is clearly relevant and doesn’t include the unnecessary.

Sample Story #1

I learned how to take initiative and problem-solve in a class I took abroad in England. The format was very different from what I was used to in the States. There was no syllabus and we received a very long reading list instead. There were mostly lectures given and not much discussion or interaction.

At first, I was really worried because it’s not how I was used to learning. But instead of panicking, I tried to examine the differences from a more ‘outside’ perspective. I realized that if the British students managed in this system, I likely could as well.

I figured out that by asking my classmates a few questions about what was expected of us, by identifying and focusing on several of the key texts the instructor referenced and by committing to study time each week even though I wasn’t required to submit any work, I could keep up and succeed in the course. The final exam was a bit daunting, but I ended up doing quite well in the course. I realize now that I not only learned a lot about the subject area, but about my own learning styles and my ability to take initiative and succeed when challenged as well.

Note: Showing cultural respect is important. Note how this story doesn’t log any complaints about the system abroad. It speaks respectfully, in descriptive terms about the differences.

Sample Story #2

I lived in a homestay during my semester in Spain. From this situation, I learned how to consider and respect different viewpoints and that it is possible to become very close to people with very different opinions than my own – and all of this was accomplished despite the fact that my Spanish was not quite yet fluent.

My host father wanted to engage me in discussions on world politics, especially about U.S. foreign policy. He wasn’t happy about the U.S. influence in the world and asked me questions that honestly, I wasn’t prepared to answer. I felt so ignorant with my limited language skill and by not knowing the specifics about the foreign policies of my own country. I faced this challenge head-on: I made a point to read the Spanish newspaper each day so that I could acquire both the knowledge and the vocabulary. Over time, I got pretty good at being able to engage in discussion with him. We had quite different viewpoints on a number of things, but his approach was not to insult but to challenge me respectfully.

I respect him for this, and I am grateful for the opportunity to see political discourse as an exercise in learning and not demeaning anyone. I am very close with everyone in my homestay and am still in touch with them.

Note: Carefully consider whether you think it’s a good idea to reveal your political party preferences in a job interview. This story does not ‘call’ either point of view by a name. While perhaps the listener could speculate on the political orientation of the storyteller, it still leaves room for ambiguity.
Sample Story #3

I learned the importance of planning while studying in London. I was in a short-term program that was only a few weeks long, so it meant I had class assignments due every day. This made it difficult to find time to visit all the sights I wanted to see. In order to accomplish both my coursework goals and my sightseeing goals, I needed to set objectives, prioritize activities, and set an action plan that allowed me to achieve my personal desires while performing at my best in my coursework. This was made more challenging because I had to do this in a strange city with a transportation system that I had never experienced before and was far different from what I was accustomed to at home (my car).

I believe this will serve me well in my professional career. I will set both professional and personal goals and then create a plan that allows me to successfully accomplish both. My study abroad experience taught me the importance of self-discipline and diligence regarding my responsibilities.

Note: Learning to be proactive is important. Note how this story doesn’t log any complaints about having to limit personal desires. It speaks of the challenges, but focuses on being successful in personal obligations.

Sample Story #4

As part of my study abroad program, we visited a number of businesses to meet with their managers and tour their production facilities. We discussed the similarities and differences in business practices there versus the US. In order to maximize my learning from these visits, I learned to research the different companies so that I could ask questions that would give me insights into the company and the managers we met with.

As a consequence of these visits, I have a great appreciation for the challenges of managing a business in a global industry. Our goals may be the same, but cultural differences result in very different ways of achieving those goals. It is critical that I both understand those differences and respect them. For example, some cultures are more direct in their communication when they see a problem developing, while others are very indirect. In those cultures, it would be seen as extremely rude for me to bluntly state what I see as a problem we need to fix.

Note: Showing cultural respect is important. This story doesn’t log any complaints about the system abroad. It speaks respectfully, in descriptive terms about the differences.

Resources:

Information for this section was obtained from the following sources:

- AIFS, Marketing your International Experience: A workbook for students preparing for the job interview process
- Georgia State University, Beyond “It Was Awesome”: Study Abroad & Your Career Workshop
- Northwestern Career Advancement Study Abroad Transferable Skills
- Seattle University, Re-entry Handbook
Going Abroad After Graduation
Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.

Henry David Thoreau (American Essayist)
Go Abroad Again

*Adapted from University of Minnesota*

There are a variety of ways to go abroad again after you have graduated. Even on a tight budget, work, volunteer, internship, and teaching English abroad opportunities are readily available to you. The information below is intended to provide you with ideas to help you consider which option is best for you.

However, before researching any opportunity, consider the following:

- What do you hope to gain from the experience?
- Where do you prefer to go?
- Would you like to utilize any language skills? Are you proficient enough to work in that language?
- How long would you like to stay abroad?
- How important is it to be paid? Can you support yourself financially?
- How will the experience relate to longer term academic or career goals?
- What type of working visa, if any, is required?

Go Abroad with a Fulbright

The U.S. Fulbright Student Program offers fully-funded awards that allow U.S. citizens who are recent graduates or graduate students to go abroad for study, research, or teaching. There are opportunities in over 140 countries. During their grants, Fulbrighters will meet, work, live with and learn from the people of the host country, sharing daily experiences. The program facilitates cultural exchange through direct interaction on an individual basis in the classroom, field, home, and in routine tasks, allowing the grantee to gain an appreciation of others’ viewpoints and beliefs, the way they do things, and the way they think.

Fulbright Award Types:

- **Open Research**: Design your own research project. Participants typically work with advisers at foreign universities or other institutes of higher education. See Study/Research Awards.
- **Study (Graduate Degree)**: Study in a graduate degree program. Participants receive standard benefits (monthly living stipend, health benefits and round-trip airfare) plus tuition coverage for the graduate degree program. See Study/Research Awards.
- **Field-Specific Opportunities**: Special opportunities exist for those interested in business, journalism, sciences and public health. See Study/Research Awards.
- **English Teaching Assistant**: Provide assistance to the local English teachers in a classroom abroad. ETAs help teach English language while serving as cultural ambassadors for the U.S. See ETA Awards.
• **Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellowship**: Participate in an academic year of overseas travel and storytelling in one, two, or three countries on a globally significant theme. See Fulbright-National Geographic Award.

Learn more at: [https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/alumni/fulbright.html](https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/alumni/fulbright.html)

**Internships Abroad**

Internships abroad are a good way to build on the skills and knowledge you have already developed while gaining professional experience and networking within your field of interest. You can intern abroad as an undergraduate or after you graduate. Both options can help you gain practical experience, explore new career options, and strengthen your resume. You can participate in an internship as part of a study program or find a position through a placement provider such as Cultural Vistas or Cross-Cultural Solutions.

**Volunteer Abroad**

Restoration projects, literacy campaigns, and teaching are just a few examples of the many volunteer programs abroad. Some programs charge a fee and provide services such as insurance coverage, meals and even housing. Some provide free room and board in exchange for work. Volunteer work opportunities range from a few weeks to two or three years. If you’re interested in development work, want to meet other foreigners and host nationals, and don’t mind rudimentary living conditions, consider volunteering. Peace Corps can be a great opportunity to engage in a volunteer experience. See [https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/alumni/peace-corps.html](https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/alumni/peace-corps.html) for more information.

**Teaching English Abroad**

There are many opportunities to teach English abroad through established programs. Most programs prefer a commitment of one academic year, though some offer summer or semester possibilities. In general, a bachelor’s degree is required, although in most cases you do not need to be an English major. Organizations are more interested in your ability to speak native and fluent English. Volunteer and paid teaching opportunities can be found throughout the world. See [https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/alumni/others/teaching.html](https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/alumni/others/teaching.html) for more information.

**Short and Long-Term Work Abroad**

Short-term work abroad (less than one year; typically, 4–12 months) usually involves working in an unskilled job, where you can earn enough to cover your food, lodging and daily living expenses. This type of job probably will not pay enough to cover air transportation, but it may help provide some extra money for travel after you leave your job. Short-term work experiences include positions such as “au pairs” (a person who does domestic work for a family,
possibly taking care of children in exchange for room and board and a chance to learn the family’s language), farm workers (through organizations like WWOOF*), typists, cruise ship staff, hospitality workers, and youth camp leaders, among others. If you are a full-time student or a recent graduate, some of the easiest ways to secure legal employment overseas include the work abroad programs through the British Universities North American Club* (BUNAC), USIT: Work and Travel Ireland*, or the CEI Work in France program*.

Long-term work abroad opportunities can be very career-focused opportunities. Usually obtaining a longer-term work visa requires sponsorship by an employer. For more information on obtaining work visas, visit the immigration website of the country in which you would like to work.

* UCSC Study Abroad is not partnered with and therefore does not endorse these organizations. They are provided as an informational resource and individuals must evaluate organizations for any usefulness or purpose.
International Work and Volunteer Opportunities
Adapted from materials compiled by St. Michael’s College

Alliance Abroad
Work and Volunteer Abroad programs around the world
http://www.allianceabroad.com/

BUNAC (British Universities of North America Club)
Non-profit that arranges volunteer and work programs in Britain
https://www.bunac.org/usa

Cadres Online
Job Recruitment site in French
http://www.cadresonline.com

CareerBuilder.com
Database of job openings from hundreds of employers across the U.S. and around the world
(Asia, Canada, India, UK)
http://www.careerbuilder.com

CareerOne
Employment Opportunities in Australia

CIEE (Teach Abroad)
Teach abroad in selected countries
http://ciee.org/teach.aspx

Cultural Vistas
Internship and Exchange programs around the world
http://www.culturalvistas.org/

Electronic Embassy
Guide to foreign embassies in Washington, D.C.
http://www.embassy.org

Employment Guide
Database listings of job opportunities worldwide through key word search
http://www.employmentguide.com

Escape Artist
Thousands of articles, contacts, resources, links and tools for living, working, traveling, retiring, and investing abroad
http://www.escapeartist.com

Euro Jobs
Resource database for jobs in Europe
http://www.eurojobs.com

Eurograduate
Information on jobs and opportunities in Europe
http://www.eurograduate.com
Global Business Alliance  
http://gbane.org/  
Site with over 25 business organizations listed in New England that are involved with international trade

Global Careers  
http://www.globalcareers.com  
Job listings and employers with a worldwide perspective. The site is run by a recruitment agency that specializes in international employment

Go Abroad  
https://jobs.goabroad.com/  
Job and work programs abroad

GOINGLOBAL  
http://www.goinglobal.com  
Information on resumes/CV’s, work permits, employment trends and job opportunities in the country of your choice.

Interaction  
http://www.interaction.org  
A network of organizations working in international development. Look out for internship opportunities on their homepage

InterExchange  
http://www.interexchange.org/  
Work, Internship, and Volunteer Abroad programs around the world

International Research and Exchanges Board  
http://www.irex.org/  
International non-profit that specializes in global education and development

International University of Japan  
http://www.iuj.ac.jp/career  
Information on resumes and cover letters for Japanese & non-Japanese employers, including Rirekisho (traditional Japanese form of a “resume”)

LanguageCorps  
http://www.languagecorps.com  
Opportunities to teach English abroad

Monster  
https://www.monster.com/geo/siteselection  
Provides access to thousands of career opportunities in all fields. Search by location, industry, company, discipline, or key word

My World Abroad  
http://myworldabroad.com/  
Guide for studying, interning, volunteering, and working abroad

Overseas Job Web  
http://www.overseasjobs.com/  
Features overseas jobs and international employment opportunities
Peace Corps  
http://www.peacecorps.gov/  
Volunteer program run by the US government; work is generally related to social and economic development

Prospects  
http://www.prospects.ac.uk  
Lists entry-level and graduate-level job opportunities in the U.K.

Taking it Global  
https://www.tigweb.org/  
Online community to help youth find volunteer opportunities

Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF)  
http://frenchhighereducation.org/teaching-assistant-program  
The Teaching Assistant Program in France offers the opportunity to work in France for 7 months, teaching English to French students of all ages

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET)  
http://www.jetprogramme.org/  
Provides opportunities to teach foreign language education at Japan’s local government offices, Boards of Education, elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools

United Nations  
Information on UN programs, employment and internship opportunities

United States Department of State  
https://www.state.gov/careers/  
Information about federal career opportunities

United States Department of State  
http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/  
Information about teaching in US Overseas Schools

Volunteer Service Overseas  
https://www.vsointernational.org/  
Volunteer opportunities focused on fighting poverty

World Teach  
http://www.worldteach.org  
Non-profit NGO that provides volunteer teachers to low and middle-income countries

UCSC Study Abroad is not partnered with and therefore does not endorse the listed organizations. They are provided as an informational resource and individuals must evaluate organizations for any usefulness or purpose.
International-Related Graduate Study Programs

Returned learning abroad students are often interested in pursuing graduate work in international education or comparative international education. The following lists were compiled from a listserv discussion of international education professionals. These lists are not exhaustive, and inclusion does not imply endorsement.

International Education

The following schools offer degrees in international education or a similar field:

- Boston University
- Florida State University
- George Washington University (Washington, DC)
- Harvard University
- Lesley University (Massachusetts)
- The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (California)
- New York University
- School for International Training (Vermont)
- University of the Pacific (in collaboration with Intercultural Communication Institute in Portland, Oregon)
- University of San Francisco

Comparative International Education or International Educational Development

The following schools offer degrees in comparative international education:

- American University (Washington, DC)
- Claremont Graduate University (California)
- Columbia University (New York)
- Florida International University
- George Washington University (Washington, DC)
- Harvard University
- Indiana University Bloomington
- Iowa State University of Science and Technology
- Loyola University Chicago (Illinois)
- The Pennsylvania State University
- Stanford University
- State University of New York at Buffalo
- University of California Los Angeles
- University of Florida
- University of Maryland
- University of Massachusetts Amherst
- University of Minnesota in Minneapolis
- University of Pittsburgh
International Funding Sources
For even more information on funding sources, visit:
https://studyabroad.ucsc.edu/programs/others/postgradresearch.html

David L. Boren Fellowship https://www.borenawards.org/
National Security Education Program (NSEP) David L. Boren Graduate Fellowships Opportunities for graduate students to add a study abroad and language component to their studies.

Davies-Jackson Scholarship www.cic.edu/daviesjackson
Awarded to first-generation students to participate in a course of study at St. John’s College at the University of Cambridge.

Fulbright Scholarship http://us.fulbrightonline.org/types-of-grants
For study, research, or teaching abroad. Applications are to ONE specific country.

Gates Cambridge Scholarship www.gatesscholar.org
Awarded to students from outside the UK to study at Cambridge. The program aims to build a global network of future leaders committed to improving the lives of others.

Marshall Scholarship www.marshallscholarship.org
Marshall Scholarships “finance young Americans of high ability to study for a degree in the U.K.” For study at any UK university, including the “Big Three.” Need a 3.7 GPA minimum to apply

The George J. Mitchell Scholarship https://www.us-irelandalliance.org/mitchellscholarship
Competitive scholarship sponsored by the US-Ireland Alliance to introduce and connect generations of future American leaders to the island of Ireland, while recognizing and fostering intellectual achievement, leadership, and a commitment to community and public service.

The Huntington www.nationalgridus.com/huntington.asp
The Huntington Public Service Award provides an annual stipend of $15,000 for a graduating senior to pursue public service anywhere in the world.

Thomas R. Pickering Graduate Foreign Affairs Fellowship www.woodrow.org (search Fellows)
For graduate students (or students accepted to a grad school program) with an emphasis on language learning

Rhodes Scholarship www.rhodesscholar.org
For study at Oxford University, UK. The scholarship is extremely competitive. Students must have impressive grades and leadership experience.

Rotary World Peace Fellowship www.rotary.org (Search World Peace Fellowship)
Rotary World Peace Fellowships fund either master’s degree or professional development certificate study at one of the six Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution at seven universities worldwide.

Thomas J. Watson Fellowship https://watson.foundation/fellowships/tj
The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship is a one-year grant for purposeful, independent exploration outside the United States, awarded to graduating seniors nominated by one of 40 partner colleges.
Additional Useful Resources

For more reintegration information and support, see the following:

Article that examines cross-cultural re-entry.

L'Auberge Espagnole (DVD)
2002 French-Spanish film about a French student's experiences studying abroad in Barcelona, from his preparations to his conflicting feelings about returning home.

Life After Study Abroad
http://www.lifeafterstudyabroad.com/
A comprehensive guide to students coming home.

Offers advice and tips about the process of returning home after time spent abroad.

Transitions Abroad
http://www.transitionsabroad.com/
Features articles, resources and advice as well as a database of opportunities for working, studying, volunteering, living and internships abroad.

World Learning: After Study Abroad, a Toolkit for Returning Students.
Comprehensive toolkit for study abroad returnees.

What’s Up with Culture—Module II
http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/Module_II_-_Welcome_Back._No.htm
An online and interactive resource to support re-adjustment.

Resources:
Information for this section was obtained from the following sources:

- College of Saint Benedict Saint John’s University, After Study Abroad: A Resource Guide for Returned Students
- Kalamazoo College, Reintegration Handbook for 2016-2017 Study Abroad Students
- Seattle University, Re-entry Handbook
- University of Minnesota, Learning Abroad Center Re-entry Handbook
In a sense, it is the coming back, the return, which gives meaning to the going forth. We really don’t know where we’ve been until we come back to where we were – only where we were may not be as it was because of who we’ve become, which, after all, is why we left.

Bernard (TV Character from “Northern Exposure”)