

Study Abroad to Career

USING YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD FOR FUTURE
PROFESSIONAL BENEFIT



What's In This Guide

- Ways to reflect on your study abroad experience as it relates to your future professional goals
- Why international experience matters to employers
- How to incorporate your study abroad experience into your resume
- How to communicate the importance of your international experiences to employers in an interview, at a career fair, during informational interviews, and on LinkedIn or Handshake

"International experiences are extremely valuable to students who are developing their skill sets for the workplace."

- NACE Staff

Why Reflection Matters

Reflecting on your experience as a study abroad student is a critical first step.

- You may discover things you learned that you didn't realize
- You will be better able to articulate why your experience was meaningful
- You can take advantage of opportunities to bring up your experience in conversations with others

First, reflect generally...

- What was your favorite experience when you were abroad?
- Which experience had the most impact on you personally?
- What was the biggest difference in culture that you experienced while abroad?
- What surprised you the most about your time abroad?
- How has this experience changed you?

Adapted from: Creating Reflection on International Experience through Appreciative Advising, Megan Larsen, University of South Carolina

Now, get more specific.

- How do you think your international experience will aid you in the future?
- What courses did you take that are most relevant to your future career and why?
- What did you learn about interacting with people from a different culture?
- What is an example of a time you made a cultural misstep and how did you respond?

Tip: write down your responses to these reflection questions!



Why Study Abroad Matters

A 2019 study found that the students who study abroad score higher in valuable areas than students who do not study abroad. These areas include:

- Functional knowledge
- Knowledge of world geography
- Knowledge of cultural relativism
- Knowledge of global interdependence

Salvadge, A. (2019, February 7). *The Impact of Internships and Study Abroad on The Career Readiness of First-Generation Students*. In NACE.

Ask yourself: How will I prove that I have these skills?

Keep in mind:

- Just knowing that employers value international experience is not enough...
- ...Now you need to show them how your experience will benefit them:
 - On your resume
 - On your cover letter (if requested)
 - In an interview
 - Throughout the job search

Speaking of resumes, let's cover some ways to show off your intern abroad experience on a well-written, professional resume.



The Resume

HOW TO POP OFF THE PAPER



2 Basic Rules of Resume Writing

1. Make It Visually Appealing

- No templates
- Formatted consistently
- Glance-able (easy to read quickly)

2. My Experience = Your Needs

- Showcase education, skills & experiences that match the employer's needs
- Use strong action verbs and accomplishment statements to effectively communicate what you know and what you've done

What did you gain from the experience?

Saying you have experience is one thing, but what you learned from that experience is even more important. Consider the following when asking yourself what else to add to your resume:

- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Communication skills to overcome language barriers
- Independence, self-reliance
- Problem-solving, crisis management
- Ability to deal with ambiguity
- Resourcefulness

Keep an active tone in your resume by using strong action verbs. Consider these examples:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • Cooperated | • Enhanced |
| • Fostered | • Practiced |
| • Immersed | • Lived |
| • Overcame | • Realized |
| • Translated | • Recognized |
| • Traveled | • Navigated |
| • Exchanged | • Adapted |
| • Visited | • Shared |
| • Learned | • Coordinated |
| • Developed | • Executed |
| • Implemented | • Improved |
| • Yielded | • Expanded |
| • Achieved | • Overhauled |

Placement on Your Resume

There are multiple options for where you can place your international experience on your resume...

Choose one or more of the following options.

Education

Institute for the International Education of Students, La Plata, Argentina Summer 2021

- Completed coursework in Latin American culture and society
- Demonstrated willingness to take risks through enrollment in Spanish-speaking curriculum
- Gained fluency in Spanish by living with a host family
- Examined the effect of birth control on population growth in Argentina as an independent research project

and/or

Experience

English Tutor, Zemmer Primary School, Zemmer, Germany Fall 2021

- Developed and implemented lesson plans for 12 primary students, ages 6 to 8
- Communicated with parents regarding daily lessons, proficiency progress, and enrichment activities
- Gained fluency in German through daily communication with students and parents
- Integrated cross-cultural learning into daily lesson plans and enrichment activities through use of Skype, traditional pen pals, and guest speakers

and/or

Cultural and Travel Experience

- Lakeshore Summit on Racism, Hope College, May 2021
- Institute for Healing Racism, GVSU, December 2020
- Lived and studied in Mumbai, India
 - Traveled extensively throughout Southeast Asia from July to December 2019

and/or

International and Cultural Skills

- Visited three international companies in Europe: Johnson Controls, Caterpillar, and MasterCard Corporation
- Adjusted to living with a family in Ecuador, participated in local cultural events
- Completed six week field study of French language and culture in Lille, France
- Interviewed German nationals on taxation and public health care which was incorporated into comparative analysis based research project for public policy course



Your study abroad experiences are unique & valuable - show them off on your resume!

Tailor Your Resume

- Always have the information displayed on your resume match what the employer is looking for. Ask yourself:
 - Would they care more about the classes I took or the cultural experiences I had?
 - Are language skills the most important aspect of my experience to emphasize?
 - Was my community involvement something worth noting?
 - Would this organization value the independent research I did while abroad?
- Take advantage of the job description – showcase how your skills and experiences align with what they're looking for
- Create a new resume for each job to which you apply
- Use a master resume to keep track of everything you've written; this makes it easier the next time to add and change aspects of your resume to match the job/organization you're applying to

"Create a new resume for each job to which you apply."

Accomplishment Statements

When describing your internship abroad experience on your resume, it is best to follow this 4-step process:

1. Start with an Action Verb

- Adapted to foreign living environment

2. Add Qualifiers

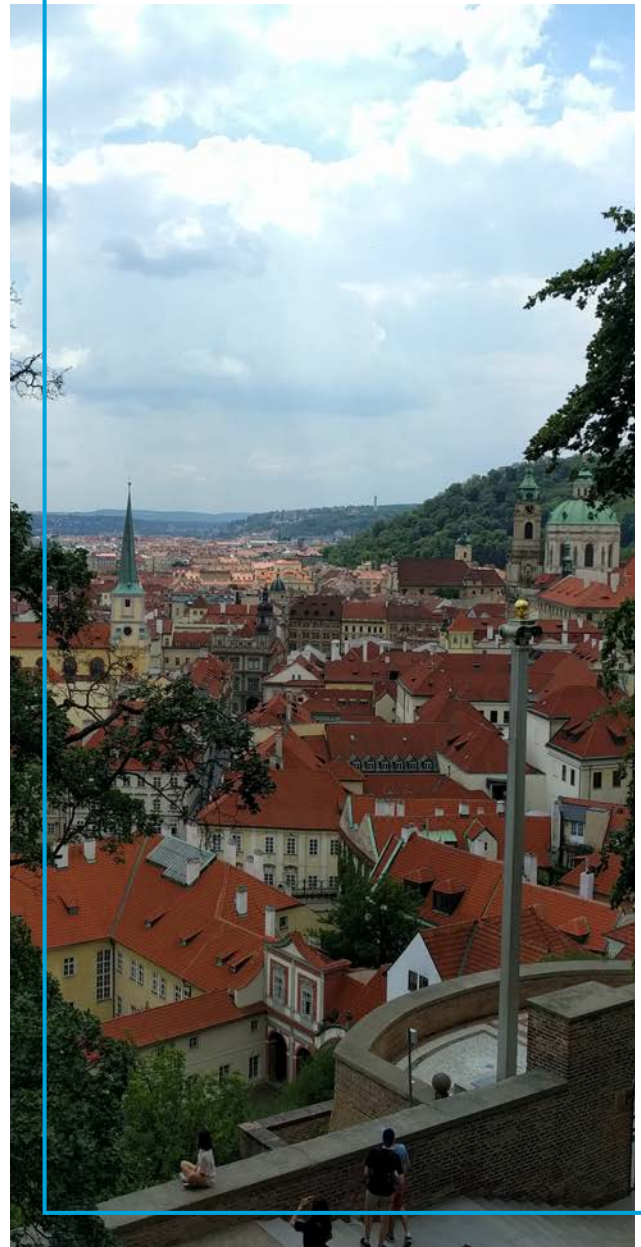
- Adapted to overseas living in Zemmer, Germany

3. Add Quantifiers

- Adapted to overseas living in Zemmer, Germany during a 12-month cultural exchange program

4. Speak to Outcomes

- Adapted to overseas living in Zemmer, Germany during a 12-month exchange program, while successfully completing a business degree



Example:

- ***Coordinated 12 daytime excursions with classmates and communicated with local guides and attendees to better learn Italian***

The Interview

TRUST US, YOU'VE GOT THIS



General Interview Tips

- Gather a group of specific examples of cross-cultural experiences that will showcase the talents and skills you gained while abroad
- Practice the STARR method when describing experiences:
 - *Situation*
 - *Task*
 - *Action*
 - *Results*
 - *Reflection*
- Write down your best stories and examples from your time abroad!

Other Employer Interaction

1) Career Fairs:

- Be prepared to describe your international experience to employers at a career fair
- Clearly articulate 1-2 points about why your experience was meaningful
- Example: "I am very interested in working for your company because you work with clients around the world. I studied abroad in Chile for 5 months where I took courses with Chilean students and lived with a host family. My cross-cultural communication skills and style developed a lot during my trip, and I feel comfortable working with people from other countries."

2) Informational Interviews:

- Don't sit back and wait for a future employer to cross your path, go meet people!
- Set up meetings with individuals who have positions you'd enjoy or work at organizations where you'd like to work
- During these networking opportunities, it may be a great time to discuss your international experiences. Perhaps the person you're meeting with has spent time abroad, thereby fostering a connection

LinkedIn

Include your abroad experience on your LinkedIn profile! Here's an example:

Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

International Semester, Fall 2019

- Successfully completed Business, Marketing, and Intercultural Awareness courses
- Traveled around Europe to the South of France; Paris; Dublin, Ireland; and Sweden
- Interacted with locals while speaking in English and Dutch

List relevant skills and expertise in your profile:

- I.e. – intercultural communication, cross-cultural research
- Your connections can then endorse the skills you list, which adds credibility

Other Tips

Don't undersell your experiences

- Your abroad experiences are uniquely yours, and that will set you apart from other applicants
- Employers love to see passionate applicants, and talking with gusto about what you learned abroad shows employers you enjoy trying new things and stepping out of your comfort zone

Utilize online platforms

- Make sure your LinkedIn and Handshake profiles have all the necessary detail about your time abroad
- You can also share a portfolio containing projects you completed during your time abroad, places you visited, people you interacted with, or cultural experiences you took part in

Get Out There!

Remember to:

- Know why your experience abroad matters (both personally and professionally)
- Share information about your experience on your resume and during interactions with future employers
- Be proactive in reaching out to others throughout the job search – set yourself up for success!

Looking for additional help with any of these elements?

The Career Center on campus can help! Find us virtually or in-person at:

www.gvsu.edu/careers

@gvsucareers

200 Student Services (Allendale campus)

101B DeVos (Pew campus)

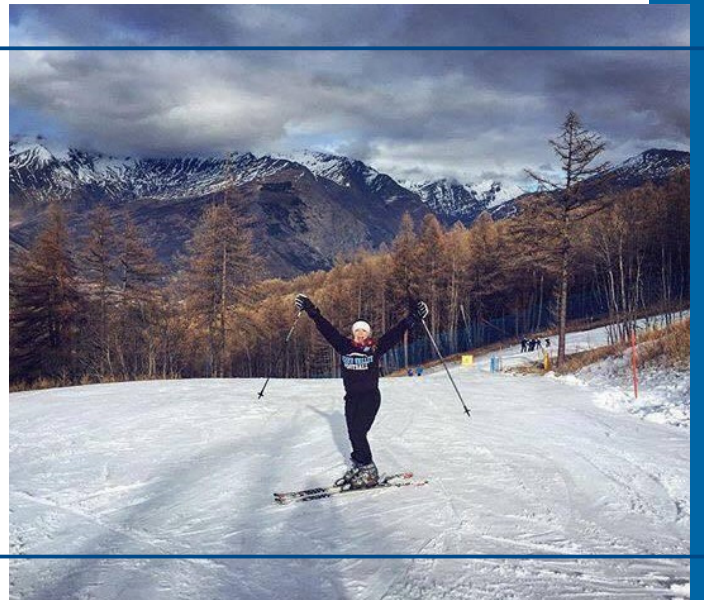
To make an appointment, call: 616-331-3311



Check out the kinds of places your fellow Lakers are visiting through Study Abroad!



Colosseum - Rome, Italy



Bardonecchia Melezet, Italy



Prague, Czech Republic