



# INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE CAREER WORKBOOK:

HOW TO UNPACK YOUR NEW INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

THE UMBRA INSTITUTE  
 SPRING 2015

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# WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

During your time abroad, you have gained certain skills and qualities which have helped you interact respectfully with others and adapt to Italian culture. You have also learned about other cultures from your peers, new international friends, and travels!

## LINGUISTIC SKILLS

&

## INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE:

behaving and communicating effectively, based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to achieve one's goals to some degree.

## HOW DID YOU LEARN IT?

Circle the choices that you feel helped you learn these new skills:

internship

new international friends

volunteering

Umbra classmates

travels

courses

class projects

community engagement

field trips

workshops

Tandem

# INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

If you take some time to reflect on your time abroad and the specific skills you have gained, you will find that you can also use them to market your experience to future employers! See the following example of your Italian and coffee culture competence.

***Jan-May 2015:***

***Barista experience in Italy***

Create an "International Experience" category on your résumé!

***Vorrei un cappuccino, per favore!***

You know how to order in Italian, you have exceptional language skills.



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

Incorporate stories from your study abroad into interviews, using the STAR technique to demonstrate your new experiences and problem-solving skills.

***You would never order a cappuccino after lunch.***

You have gained some intercultural competence, by knowing how to appropriately and effectively interact with other cultures.

***You are flexible and open-minded; you can even make a soy cappuccino for your vegan friend.***

You have developed new qualities, possibly including:

- Flexibility
- Self Confidence
- Curiosity
- Enthusiasm
- Tolerance
- Appreciation of Diversity
- Empathy
- Independence
- Creativity
- Self-Reliance

# REFLECTION WORKSHEET

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

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

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

An example of this is:

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

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

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

Strategies I used to adapt:

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

# RÉSUMÉ COMPETENCE ACTIVITY

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

## **CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND WORLD VIEW**

As a result of my international experience(s), I have developed:

- o A greater knowledge about another culture
- o Awareness of political, economic or social events around the world
- o My interest in global or transnational issues
- o My involvement with a global issue
- o My involvement with a civic cause
- o A definition of my political views
- o My ability to speak a foreign language

## **PERSONAL GROWTH AND VALUES**

My international experience(s) have helped me to grow and develop:

- o My desire for more diverse friendships and social networks
- o My desire to further my education (e.g., postgraduate degree)
- o A better understanding of myself and my values
- o My sense of confidence in new situations or when meeting new people
- o My ability to accept differences in other people
- o My ability to empathize with people, especially those who are different from me
- o My ability to be more flexible and open-minded
- o My tolerance of ambiguity in a variety of situations
- o An understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses
- o My ability to be independent
- o My ability to take initiative

And, I have:

- o Become more aware of the way I use and structure time
- o An increased capacity to profit from my mistakes
- o Strengthened relationships with my family members
- o Strengthened relationships with my friends
- o A clearer notion of what I will do with my life
- o Critical thinking skills: I am more discriminating and skeptical
- o Improved observation skills
- o More confidence about the decisions I make
- o Recognized the importance I put on developing my skills and talents
- o An increased willingness to work hard and sacrifice in order to do well in school or a job

### **PROFESSIONAL & CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Studying abroad contributed to:

- o My ability to formulate my career goals and clarify my professional aspirations
- o My awareness of the opportunities in life that are open to me
- o Developing skills and intercultural competencies which will aid in obtaining my first job after graduation
- o A greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed
- o The importance I place on working in a field that I find interesting
- o The importance I place on having personal fulfillment in my work
- o My ability to speak a foreign language in the workplace
- o Developing my ability to understand an organization's culture
- o My ability to adapt to diverse workplace environments





# INTERVIEWS: STAR STORYTELLING

When answering interview questions, recruiters are looking for concise, but descriptive responses. If someone asks, “Give me an example of an accomplishment you are proud of,” or “What is your greatest skill?” you might answer, “I believe I can set goals and meet them,” and then give a STAR story. 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 below. Try using the **STAR** technique : **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esults.

## HOW TO CREATE A STAR



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

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

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

*Example: During that semester, I was taking a full load of coursework for my major, and I was really motivated to do well during my semester abroad. I knew I had to figure out a way to stay on top of all the information I was learning because it would be impossible to do well at the end of the semester if I left studying until 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 4-5 classmates for each of my classes, and we would meet over coffee once a week.*

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

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



# PREPARING “STAR”S FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

1. S:

T:

A:

R:

2. S:

T:

A:

R:

## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR ONE-LINE RESPONSE TO “TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SEMESTER IN ITALY...”

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

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

# TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

- Have 5-7 stories - in which you acquired a new skill or demonstrate a positive quality - ready when you go into any job interview.
- Include a few unique stories from your semester and travels abroad.
- Your time abroad has a certain 'shelf life' - for greatest relevance, you should use it within a year of your return from studying abroad.
- A good way to build your collection of stories is to think about times when you have been especially challenged or taken a risk (even in a prolonged situation).
- Give the story a beginning and an end while making a relevant point and specifically identifying the skill or quality it demonstrates.
- Don't bother with too much detail. For example, if your story is about a missed flight or train, no need to call out the flight numbers or the exact departure times!
- Be sure to show respect for cultural differences. No matter how challenging it is, you don't want to use denigrating terms. Instead of saying your room was 'ridiculously small' you can explain that the room was 'much smaller than you were used to.'
- Stories need to be appropriate. When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Be aware that even though you now understand that having a drink with friends in a pub is a common 'no-big-deal' occurrence in Perugia, you may want to eliminate any reference to pubs, bars or alcohol in your stories since your interviewer may not have that same frame of reference.

# TIPS FOR RÉSUMÉS

## EMPHASIZE NEW SKILLS

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

## INCLUDE STUDY ABROAD ACTION VERBS

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

## SHOWCASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Create sections that emphasize your global citizenship! For example:

- International Experience
- Language Skills

## REQUEST REFERENCES

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

(Adapted from Salisbury University)

# NETWORKING

Networking is key for getting jobs and going places. Your Umbra peers will be all around the country and the world, so stay connected! Check out your Career Center and even your Study Abroad Office for more resources.

**Umbra Linked-In:**

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

**Umbra Alumni Group:**

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

# INTERNATIONAL CAREERS

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

**Volunteer with WWOOF:**

[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)

**or WorkAway:**

[www.workaway.info](http://www.workaway.info)

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

**Graduate School Options:**

Research Master's programs abroad or in the U.S. in:

International Education Management, Policy, or Relations!

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

*Marketing Your Study Abroad:* [www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/studyabroadmagazine/2006Fall/marketing\\_your\\_study\\_abroad.shtml](http://www.transitionsabroad.com/publications/studyabroadmagazine/2006Fall/marketing_your_study_abroad.shtml)

*Life After Study Abroad:* [www.lifeafterstudyabroad.com](http://www.lifeafterstudyabroad.com)