

Life After Study Abroad

Activity Packet

ACTIVITY ONE – INITIAL REFLECTION (“ROLLER COASTER”)

Objective: Identify personal changes that occurred while you were studying abroad, and in doing so create a holistic perspective of your semester abroad.

In this first activity, you will take a look back at your semester abroad and reflect on the opportunities and challenges you encountered.

It is important to take stock of where you are now at the end of your program and where you came from. By doing this reflection, you will be able to gain a greater sense of where you are, what you learned, and how you can move forward in the reentry process.

Directions:

Create a study abroad “roller coaster”. Draw a graph of highs and lows you’ve experienced while studying abroad. (The x-axis is time and the y-axis shows the highs and lows.)



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Complete the following prompts with your roller coaster in mind:

- I learned something new about myself when:
- I made my biggest cultural faux pas when:
- I had my greatest cultural success when:
- I had my proudest moment when:
- I had my weakest moment when:
- I learned a new skill when:
- I tried a new activity when:
- I overcame a challenge when:

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ACTIVITY TWO – BEFORE AND AFTER

Objective: To gain a clear picture of aspects of your personality or beliefs that may have changed due to studying abroad, and to identify the skills and qualities associated with such changes.

You have experienced a lot during your time abroad. You've met new people and tried new activities. You've learned new skills and overcame new challenges. You've seen foreign places and experienced a different culture. Whether you notice it or not, you've changed. Maybe you're more open-minded towards ideas, thoughts, and opinions different than yours. Or maybe you've found new interests you would like to pursue. All of these changes and the new skills you have gained will prove invaluable to you as you head into life after college.

Directions:

Reflect on changes you've noticed in yourself between now and before you left to study abroad, and describe them below. In thinking about these changes, consider the following questions:

- What did you learn in the process of all these changes?
- Are there certain skills or qualities you gained or honed during your time abroad?

	Before Studying Abroad	After Studying Abroad
Attitudes & Beliefs		
Behaviors		
Hobbies & Interests		
Knowledge of Host Country		
Plans for After Graduation		

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	Before Studying Abroad	After Studying Abroad
Long-term Goals		
Language Skills		
Other		

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ACTIVITY THREE – CONNECTIONS

Objective: Identify ways you can connect with your study abroad experience back in the US.

Your lifestyle changes when you live abroad. Think about a typical day for you right now. What's your commute to school like? What is grocery shopping like? What are activities that you do everyday? When students return home, it is easy to get swept up into the activity of life back in school and your study abroad experience can slip into the background. New interests, experiences, or favorite foods are forgotten.

One way to ensure that you build off of the experience you had abroad is to find connections to that culture back home. Integrating these new-found "favorites" into your life back in the US can be an enriching experience and can help ensure that your study abroad experience has a longer lasting impact than just the few months you were away.

Directions:

What will you miss once you get home? How can you reconnect with these even though you'll be in the U.S.?

Things I'll Miss	Why?	How to Connect

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ACTIVITY FOUR – ALUMNI EXPERIENCES

Objective: To learn from previous participants how their study abroad experience has impacted their life after college.

In this activity, you will hear the experiences of other study abroad alumni and how study abroad has had an effect on their life.

One benefit of the college experience is being surrounded by peers, professors, advisors, and mentors who can offer support, guidance, and inspire new ideas, as no doubt you have experienced thus far. Study abroad is a unique opportunity for every individual who partakes in it and many people experience it in different ways and go on to incorporate it into their lives by different means.

In an effort to inspire you as you embark on your own journey post-study abroad, here are stories from others who were once in your shoes, who embraced their time abroad, and who have incorporated their study abroad experience into their careers and life after college.

Watch their short videos [here](#), and then answer the following questions.

Directions:

After watching the videos and hearing the stories, consider the following questions:

- What stands out to you about these stories?

- Did anything in particular resonate with you?

- Compare yourself to one of the Study Abroad Alums. What would you do differently? What would you do the same?

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ACTIVITY SIX – FINAL REFLECTION

Objective: Demonstrate an understanding for how your study abroad experience has your life on a personal and practical level, and what the long-term impact of this experience could be for you.

Remember that roller coaster you created in Activity One? The ride doesn't stop when your program ends. The effects of studying abroad and the reverse culture shock of returning to the U.S. last beyond the end of your program.

With the five previous activities in mind, complete this final reflection activity.

Directions:

Read the following article: [Re-Entry Quick Guide](#) (after you follow this link, click the link for "Re-Entry Quick Guide" at the top of the page.)

Reflect on your experiences abroad and the article above, and then answer the following questions.

- What am I looking forward to the most?

- In what ways might my friends or family have changed?

- How would I like my family and friends to treat me when I return home?

- What can I do to manage my personal and emotional stress when I get home? Who can I reach out to?

- What are the lessons I have learned that I never want to forget?

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- Many say that the experience of re-entry is more challenging than the initial move to another place. What are some things I might do to make the transition easier?

- What have been the important things about this experience that I want to share with my family and friends?

- What do I want to do with the experiences I've had (e.g., stay in touch with people I've met, continue with a new interest)? How can I share my experiences with my family, friends, school, and community?

Activities and Content Adapted From:

- Clarkson, B. (2015, November 6). Discussions: SUMMARY: Reverse Culture Shock Activities [Electronic mailing list message]. Retrieved from <https://listserv.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=secuss-l>
- World Learning. (2008). After Study Abroad: A toolkit for returning students. Retrieved from <http://www.worldlearning.org/documents/worldlearning/studyabroad-reentry-toolkit.pdf>
- LaRosa, S. (2015, October 24). Beyond life-changing: How to articulate the benefits of study abroad [handout]. Lessons from Abroad Greater DC Conference, Washington, DC.