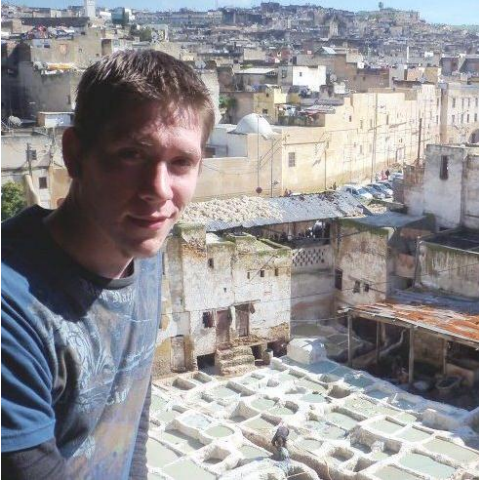


# More than Coffee, Copies, & Cantonese: Helping Returnees Articulate Professional Skills Gained through Education Abroad



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**Ben Efird**  
University Relations Manager  
SIT Study Abroad

**Aileen M. O'Donnell**  
Assistant Manager  
Gilman International Scholarship

**Jeannie Stumne**  
Director, CEHD Career Services  
University of Minnesota

We recommend administering a **SELF-ASSESSMENT** to students, which will help students reflect on the many transferable skills gained while abroad. Below is a checklist of skills returnees gain while abroad. You can use these examples when designing a self-assessment for your campus.

### SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES

- Adapt to new environments
- Handle difficult situations
- Demonstrate flexibility
- Function with a high level of ambiguity
- Manage time and prioritize tasks
- Communicate effectively (written and oral)
- Conduct research despite language and cultural differences
- Gain foreign language skills/proficiency
- Understand a different culture (includes an organization's culture)
- Develop intercultural awareness
- Communicate despite language barriers
- Identify career objectives
- Lead others in formal and/or informal groups
- Take initiative; be confident in skills and ideas
- Handle difficult situations diplomatically
- Be self-reliant and function independently
- Crisis management: identify problems and utilize available (often limited) resources to solve problems (quickly)
- Work as part of a team (often with members with different perspectives and approaches)
- Approach issues with tolerance, open-mindedness, and cultural sensitivity

### QUALITIES

- Flexibility
- Independence
- Self-reliance
- Appreciation of diversity
- Tolerance/Open-mindedness
- Cultural Sensitivity/Awareness
- Inquisitiveness
- Self-confidence
- Self-knowledge
- Perseverance
- Assertiveness



Source: University of Minnesota, *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student's Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*, 2012

### SKILLS SURVEY

Below is an example of a survey that can be given to students during pre-departure and upon re-entry in order to help them become more aware of ways that they may have changed as a result of studying abroad. Ask them to evaluate skill levels before and after studying abroad (1 = lowest and 10 = highest)

#### ANALYSIS & PROBLEM SOLVING

Capacity to ask for and receive help from others

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Willingness to confront problems and look for alternative solutions

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Ability to listen and observe carefully

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Ability to think critically

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

#### INTEGRATIVE & ADAPTIVE SKILLS

Experience and capability in balancing two or more cultures

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Awareness of values and lifestyles in the United States

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Ability to interact with and relate to many different people

<b>Before</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>After</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Source: Levinger, Morrison, & Jouannelle. *Beyond "It was awesome!" Enriching the Student Experience after Re-entry*. CIEE 2011 Annual Conference, New Orleans. [http://www.ciee.org/conference/downloads/past/new-orleans/skills\\_survey.pdf](http://www.ciee.org/conference/downloads/past/new-orleans/skills_survey.pdf)

Aptitude to perceive things from another person's point of view

<b>B</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

**COMMUNICATION/LANGUAGE SKILLS** *(in foreign language, if applicable)*

Oral Proficiency

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Written Expression

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Ability to listen and observe carefully Listening and comprehension skills

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

**OPENNESS**

Ability to compromise and be flexible

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Tolerance for differences

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Openness to new experiences and activities

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Awareness and respect for beliefs of others

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: Levinger, Morrison, & Jouannelle. *Beyond "It was awesome!" Enriching the Student Experience after Re-entry*. CIEE 2011 Annual Conference, New Orleans. [http://www.ciee.org/conference/downloads/past/new-orleans/skills\\_survey.pdf](http://www.ciee.org/conference/downloads/past/new-orleans/skills_survey.pdf)

**RESILIENCE**

Patience and adaptability

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Ability to keep a sense of humor in stressful situations

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Capacity to deal with failure

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Strength in handling unpredictable and unfamiliar situations

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

**CONFIDENCE**

Ease in establishing relationships with people from a different culture

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Willingness to take risks

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>







Awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Self-sufficiency

<b>Before</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>After</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: Levinger, Morrison, & Jouannelle. *Beyond "It was awesome!" Enriching the Student Experience after Re-entry*. CIEE 2011 Annual Conference, New Orleans. [http://www.ciee.org/conference/downloads/past/new-orleans/skills\\_survey.pdf](http://www.ciee.org/conference/downloads/past/new-orleans/skills_survey.pdf)

Name			Major/Minor(s)					
3 Career Interests								
			Date Completed					
Skill (Reference Skills Cards on ICON for thought starters)	 = To be Developed (TBD)   = Limited (LTD)    = Strong (ST)	Activity Coursework, PT Job, Student Org, Internship, Study Abroad, Community Svc, Other	Location (Name the Activity)	Description of the Skill	Skill Source Leadership, Curriculum, Global Perspective, or Experiential Learning	Skill Source 2 If Applicable	Skill Source 3 If Applicable	Comments
Sources of Skill								
Identification								

Source: Henry B. Tippie College of Business at the University of Iowa, *Tippie Roadmap Skills Inventory*, 2012. <http://tippie.uiowa.edu/undergraduate/roadmap/skills-inventory.cfm>

## RÉSUMÉS

A résumé should effectively communicate why an applicant is an ideal candidate for a specific position or field. We recommend that students add their transferable skills and knowledge gained from studying or interning abroad to their résumés in order to show why they would be a valuable employee.

If a student's program was primarily academic, we advise that returnees list the program information under the **education section**. If the program abroad entailed an experiential learning component, such as an internship, work experience, or volunteer opportunity, this can be listed under **experience**. Students may also choose to list leadership achievements, honors, and skills developed abroad under the appropriate headings. (*Example résumé on the following page*).

### Education section

- Name of university, city and country of program
- Term of enrollment (i.e. Spring 2012)
- Description of program to highlight the academic, professional, and personal impact
- Relevant coursework

### Experience section

- Experiential education abroad components and achievements can be listed under experience
- i.e. internships, independent research, service-learning

### Skills

- List foreign language acquisition and level
- Add any further abilities acquired from experience abroad

### Additional Heading Options

- Separate "*International Experience*" section can be added to highlight experiences abroad
- Additional "*Leadership*" section can include any leadership opportunities from abroad
- Honors and scholarships linked to programs abroad (such as the Gilman Scholarship or Fulbright Grant) may be listed under "*Honors and Awards*" or added to the education section

## Further Résumé Recommendations

### Encourage students to focus on what they achieved

- Advise returnees to use action verbs, describe tasks or situations, and highlight the impact
- Example for an Editor-in-Chief of a university newspaper: "*Managed volunteer submissions, provided topic guidance, and compiled and reviewed over 20 articles per week, increasing campus readership by 45%*"

### Help students tailor their résumés to fit job descriptions

- Show students how to analyze a job description and highlight their background and experiences that are pertinent to the position
- Advise returnees to refer to job descriptions and use the organization's terms when describing their responsibilities and accomplishments

**Education****Bachelor of Arts in Journalism & Middle Eastern Studies****University of Texas at Austin**, Austin, Texas (*cum laude*), May 2013

- *Relevant Coursework*: Intensive Arabic, Arab-Israeli Politics, Gender Politics in Islamic World, Entrepreneurial Journalism, Audio Visual Storytelling, Long-Form Feature Writing
- *Thesis*: Falling Dominos: The Spread of Democracy from Tunisia to Egypt

**University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan**, Fall 2012

- Semester-long academic experience which included home-stay with non-English speaking family; gained fluency in colloquial Arabic
- *Relevant Coursework*: Development Economics and the Middle East, Political Structure and Dynamics of the Middle East Regional System

**Professional Experience****Media Development Intern****United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

Amman, Jordan, September 2012 – December 2012

- Worked as part of a close team in managing the EU funded initiative titled “Enhance Professional and Accurate Media on the Electoral Process in Jordan”
- Helped to develop and coordinate strategies for enhancing the Jordanian online media
- Created an online toolkit to spread awareness of the essential role of the media in the electoral process and provide tips regarding best practices for online journalism

**Barista****Mozarts on the Lake**

Austin, Texas, December 2010 – January 2012

- Provided excellent customer service in a fast-paced environment where multi-tasking was critical
- Rotated through various positions and duties from making specialty drinks to handling money

**Leadership****Student Union Communications Department Representative**, *UT Austin*, 2010-2011

- Main departmental emissary between students, faculty, and student government

**Co-chair of campus Model United Nations Middle Eastern Crisis Simulation** *UT Austin*, 2011

- Helped organize and facilitate a realistic simulation for international relations students

**Orientation Leader**, *UT Austin*, September 2013

- Facilitated transition to college experience for freshman through tours and mentorship

**Relevant Skills**

- Expertise using WordPress and Microsoft Office Suite
- Proficiency in Final Cut Pro X
- Experience with Adobe InDesign, Photoshop and Dreamweaver
- Fluency in Arabic and beginner Spanish language



Undergraduates must also be prepared to describe how their transferable skills from abroad can be applied to a potential position or field. Advisors can work individually with students and also distribute examples to returnees, such as the one below.

### SAMPLE COVER LETTER

March 3, 2013

Name of Individual  
Title  
Company  
Company Address

Do not use "To whom it may concern." Research to find out the appropriate person to address.

Show interest in position & succinctly articulate why a best fit. Include details about why this specific company/organization.

Dear Dr./Mr./Mrs./Ms.:

Describe qualifications & skills for the position (matching job description). Cite transferable skills from abroad & use examples.

I would like to apply for the International Finance position with Bank of America. I am uniquely qualified to excel in this position with my background in finance, experience handling investments, and knowledge of Chinese business operations. Bank of America has built outstanding relationships with multinational businesses and I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to help enhance the global reach of the company.

This May, I will be graduating from Elon University with a degree in Finance and a minor in International Business. Last summer, I held an internship with Wachovia Securities, which fostered my analytical skills and gave me an in-depth understanding of handling investments. My experience studying abroad in China provided me with a cross-cultural perspective on business and finance. Learning first-hand about the expanding Chinese market awarded me invaluable expertise in this area; I would like to use this knowledge to help improve Bank of America's financial interactions with Asia.

My subject knowledge as well as my ability to adapt to changing environments will make for a smooth transition from the classroom to a corporate setting in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to my education and work experience, I have many skills that will enable me to be an excellent addition to Bank of America. I am efficient at problem solving, cross-cultural communication, and I am self-reliant. My internship with Wachovia Securities and my academic experience in China taught me how to multi-task and work independently.

I am interested in learning more about this position. I am available to interview at your convenience. I can be reached at (336) 555-4076. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Margot A. Broad  
123 Phoenix Lane  
Elon, NC 27233  
(336) 555-4076  
[marGoAbroad@gmail.com](mailto:marGoAbroad@gmail.com)

Close the letter, noting confidence in their response. Show gratitude for the consideration.

## INTERVIEWS

Once students have been able to identify transferable skills from abroad through self-assessments, advisors can also guide students in answering mock interview questions by using the S.T.A.R. approach (acronym for Situation, Task, Actions, and Results). This will help returnees come up with specific examples to show how their skills and experiences will translate into the professional world.

**Situation:** Describe the backstory to a challenge you have overcome.

**Task:** What was your exact role or responsibility in this situation? What was your end goal?

**Action:** Explain the sequence of actions and thought process to how you dealt with this challenge. Why did you choose this method?

**Results:** Summarize the tangible results and impact of your work and decisions. How were things better off because of your input? Use a high level of detail and concrete evidence to show the full impact of your initiatives.

Below are a few examples of interview prompts that advisors can guide students in answering. Many of these can be answered by giving examples from experiences abroad:

- Tell me about a time that you had to adapt to a difficult situation. How did you handle this challenge?
- How has your education prepared you for this job?
- What accomplishment has given you the greatest satisfaction?
- What is the toughest challenge you have faced? How did you overcome this challenge?
- Can you work independently and take risks? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you were flexible and adaptable to a rapidly changing situation.
- Describe a situation where you had to work under pressure. Were you successful?
- What motivates you to put forth your best effort? Give an example.
- Why did you decide to study or intern abroad? What did you gain from the experience?
- Tell me about a time that you worked with someone you disliked and how you managed this situation.
- Describe a time when you had to juggle multiple projects and deadlines at the same time. How did you manage these projects?
- Give an example of a time that you contributed to an ethnically diverse team.
- Tell me about a time that you worked with someone who did not share your communication style. How did you handle this situation?

### FURTHER RESOURCES

- ❖ Gardner, Gross, & Steglitz. (2008). Unpacking Your Study Abroad Experience: Critical Reflection for Workplace Competencies. *Collegiate Employment Research Institute Research Brief, 1 (1)*. Retrieved from <http://ceri.msu.edu/publications/pdf/brief1-2008final.pdf>
- ❖ Henry B. Tippie College of Business at the University of Iowa. (2012). Tippie Roadmap Skills Inventory. <http://tippie.uiowa.edu/undergraduate/roadmap/skills-inventory.cfm>
- ❖ Kuh, G. (2008). High-Impact Educational Practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. *Association of American Colleges and Universities*. Retrieved from [http://www.neasc.org/downloads/aacu\\_high\\_impact\\_2008\\_final.pdf](http://www.neasc.org/downloads/aacu_high_impact_2008_final.pdf)
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- ❖ Tillman, M. (2014). Campus Best Practices: Supporting Education Abroad & Student Career Development. Retrieved from [http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/Tillman\\_Best\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/Tillman_Best_Practices.pdf)
- ❖ University of Texas at Austin, Center for International Business Education & Research (CIBER). Planning for Study Abroad with Recruiting and Your Career in Mind. PDF Retrieved from <http://www.mcombs.utexas.edu/Centers/CIBER/Summer/~media/Files/MSB/Centers/CIBER/Study%20Abroad%20and%20Career/Planning%20for%20Study%20Abroad.aspx>
- ❖ University of Minnesota. (2012). *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student's Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

