

GLOBAL COMPETENCY

Global competency is a key to success in today's job market. It is imperative to be 'global ready' to compete in a demanding, constantly changing global economy. This guide will help you take stock of your experiences and understand how to translate these into tangible evidence of your competencies both on your cover letter and resume as well as during an interview.

A Michigan State University "Recruiting Trends" report identified **"geographic awareness and global understanding" as the primary "new competencies [for job seekers] critical to future success."** The report notes that, "as businesses become realigned globally, having employees with an awareness of space, ...social and cultural geographic movement, as well as dominant physical assets of a region will be critical to a company's vitality."

What Does Being Global Mean?

- A mindset that appreciates and respects other cultural perspectives and norms (*open-minded; non-judgmental; accepts differences*)
- Experienced in multicultural environments either abroad or in your own country
- Adaptable and flexible in unfamiliar situations
- International awareness, knowledge and understanding
- Effectively communicates across cultural and linguistic boundaries

How Can Students Develop Their Global Competence?

At Home:

- Join an international or cross-cultural student organization. Interact with and build relationships with international students in residence halls, International Student and Scholar Services office (ISSS), study groups, ESL, etc.
- Learn a new language.
- Find meaningful ways to use and strengthen languages known or studied.
- Volunteer or intern at culturally-based organizations or in elementary, middle/high school ESL programs.
- Create an internship with an international focus.
- Choose academic programs and elective courses that will increase global competency and awareness.
- Build international themes and interests into class assignments.
- Attend cultural events on campus and in the community.
- Read a foreign newspaper; watch foreign news such as BBC.

Abroad

- Become fully immersed in local culture, reflecting on similarities and differences between your native cultural norms and host country.
- Build relationships with students, faculty, and community members in your host country and maintain those relationships after returning to the US.
- Connect with alumni living in the host country through LinkedIn to gain further insight into living and working as a US citizen abroad.
- Explore opportunities to intern, volunteer or pursue other career-related activities to learn about your field in a global context.

What Skills/Qualities Do Globally Competent Graduates Possess?

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| • Initiative | • Self-reliance | • Positive outlook toward adversity | • Comfort with uncertainty |
| • Enthusiasm | • Self-confidence | • Appreciation of Diversity | • Open-mindedness |
| • Inquisitiveness | • Cultural awareness/sensitivity | • Perseverance | • Language/communication skills |
| • Interest in continuous learning | • Self-knowledge | • Creativity | • Assertiveness |
| • Courage | • Independence | • Flexibility | • Sense of humor |

Identifying Your International Competencies

The following list of questions is intended to help you *begin to identify* some of the international knowledge, skills and experience you possess.

Language and Communication Skills:

- What languages do you speak? Write? Understand?
- In what languages are you fluent?
- Do you have a professional network (i.e. professional contacts) in other countries?
- Do you have an ear for understanding different accents?
- Are you able to recognize different meanings in gesturing from more than one culture? For example, hand waves and head nods can mean vastly different things from one culture to the next.
- Do you understand slang words in more than one language or dialect?

Knowledge of Culture, Both Traditional and Popular:

- With what cultures and nationalities have you had close dealings?
- What ethnic or religious traditions do you observe?
- Are you familiar with the nuances of ethnic or religious traditions beyond your own?
- Can you cook traditional or popular dishes associated with your country or culture?
- Are you closely familiar with specific cultural, religious or national festivals and their significance?
- Can you identify traditional and/or contemporary forms of art from multiple countries?
- Are you familiar with social trends in other countries (i.e. what's popular in music, fashion, movies, etc.)?
- Do you use, or are you familiar with, technologies or gadgets that are currently popular in other countries?
- Do you know of websites that are popular in other countries?

Knowledge of Business and Employment Practices:

- Are you familiar with the predominant management styles in more than one country? Can you articulate differences and similarities of these styles?
- Are you familiar with labor standards and/or hiring practices in other countries?
- Are you aware of specific labor laws from other countries?

Education:

- In how many countries have you studied?
- Are you able to articulate the similarities and differences in educational systems with which you are familiar?
- Have you observed a noticeable difference in teaching and/or learning styles in different countries?

Ability to Adapt:

- How many countries have you visited? Lived in? Worked or volunteered in?
- Do you adjust quickly to new surroundings?
- When faced with a new environment, do you fit in quickly?
- Are you comfortable using public transportation in multiple countries?

Global Thinking Skills:

- Do you follow the news from multiple countries on a regular basis?
- When news happens in one country, do you often think of its implications on other countries?
- Can you clearly describe the political parties from at least one other country?
- Do you know how to access social services in another country?
- Have you participated in providing humanitarian aid in another country?

Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are skills that are not limited to any one academic discipline or field but are transferable to many occupations. These are the skills sought after most by employers and include the global competencies listed in the previous section. Consider how your cross-cultural experience has developed or strengthened particular skills and attitudes. What have you learned from the experience and how did it change you?

Carefully read the job description for your desired position: what specific skills are mentioned and what can you pull from your cross-cultural experience to strengthen your case? Make a list of your transferable skills and the job qualifications, and then match them up, being sure to highlight these in your resume, cover letter and interview.

From Thoughts to Paper: Capturing Your Global Competency in a RESUME

Regardless of your career goals, include details about your intercultural experience, language abilities, work experience with international organizations, volunteer work/research abroad, or coursework with international/global aspects. An international or study abroad experience demonstrates adaptability and flexibility, motivation to explore outside of the “comfort zone,” assuming responsibility for one’s own experiences and success, the ability to communicate in foreign environments, interest or skill in intercultural competency, the ability to handle stress in unknown situations, open-mindedness, self-reliance and self-confidence.

When including study/work abroad in your resume, think about skills you gained and what you learned. Make the connection for the employer as to the actual skills you gained—it won’t always be obvious.

To effectively present an international experience on your resume, ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I trying to communicate to a potential employer about my international experience? About its relationship to my major?
- What skills did I gain? What cross-cultural competencies did I develop? Did I become proficient in a language?
- Where should I include this experience on my resume so that it will have the most impact and support what I am trying to communicate?
- Did I gain research experience through conducting an independent study project? Have I become well versed in some aspect of my host country’s culture?

Emphasize your international experiences by:

- Making sure your study abroad experience stands out and is identified as part of the “Education” section OR have a separate section for Study Abroad
- Highlighting the subjects you studied while abroad, the place where you studied, the grades you received, and the amount of time you were there.
- Focusing on your accomplishments and skills. Your resume should focus on the “results” of your study abroad experience, not simply where you went or what you did.
- If you completed an internship abroad, make sure to give this experience its own space and detail, especially if it was language intensive or provided practical work experience in your academic major. This could be located in a “Relevant Experience” section of your resume or under “Education,” separated from but associated with your study abroad program.
- Using the *Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Self Assessments* (<http://www.govtilr.org/>) in describing your language proficiency.
- If you are applying for a position that involves travel or significant work with overseas offices or customers, and if you have done a significant amount of travel to other countries, you may want a “Countries Visited” section. This will demonstrate your exposure to a variety of cultures and that you are well-traveled, suggesting you will require less preparation and hand-holding when it comes to this part of the job. It also reflects an interest in travel, adventure, self-reliance, and heightened cross-cultural sensitivity. Don’t list countries you spent a day or two in, only those where you really spent some time and could discuss them in an interview or conversation.

Sample Resume Entry

EDUCATION

Binghamton University, State University of New York
Bachelor of Arts, expected May 20XX
Major: Linguistics, Arabic Minor: Global Studies

Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco
Intensive Arabic Language Program, summer 20XX

CROSS-CULTURAL CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

English Conversation Pairs, Program Assistant and Participant, fall 20XX – present
Native Speaking Assistant, University ESL Class, spring 20XX
Binghamton University Globalistas (BUGs), Undergraduate Student Representative, fall 20XX-present

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Working Proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic
Familiar with Moroccan Dialect

From Thoughts to Paper: Presenting Your Global Competency in a COVER LETTER

The goal of a cover letter is to motivate the recipient to review your resume and ultimately invite you for an interview. Your cover letter is your opportunity to highlight to your prospective employer what sets you apart from other candidates. As you construct a letter of application consider how your cross-cultural experiences have helped you develop and/or strengthen the skills and competencies required for this specific position. How might your international experience uniquely benefit you in this role as well as the organization? Even if you are not focusing on a specific international position or organization, you can promote general transferable skills, such as independence, confidence, and problem solving.

From Thoughts to Words: Articulating Your Global Competency in an INTERVIEW

You can and should always find a relevant way to incorporate your study abroad experience into an interview. In many ways this sets you apart from your peers, bringing a different skill set and outlook to a potential employer. As a study abroad returnee, you have gained a tremendous amount of transferable skills during your study abroad experience. These may seem general to you and go overlooked or unmentioned in an interview, but they can almost always connect in some way to any job description.

Think of examples related to your experiences abroad that have demonstrated your ability to:

- Creatively solve problems by applying familiar concepts to unfamiliar situations
- Be self-confident, yet able to listen and learn from people whose value systems are different
- Take personal risks and act independently
- Be flexible and adaptable to rapidly changing situations
- Have a basic command of the local language, and be able use it in practical situations
- Imagine, forecast, analyze or address business situations from a different cultural frame of reference

Sample Interview Questions: Directly Related to Study Abroad

Employers are looking for specific examples of ways in which you bettered your communication skills, adaptability to new circumstances, flexibility and cultural awareness. Think of a specific story as related to your overseas experience that best highlights your newly acquired skills.

- **Why did you choose to study abroad?**
- **Why and how did you choose your study abroad program and location?**
- **How did study abroad change you? How will this be helpful to you in the future?**
- **Tell me about your volunteer and work experience while abroad.**
- **What did you learn overseas that would help you in this job?**
- **In what ways are you more adaptable, open-minded and observant?**
- **Describe your role of working with students from different cultural backgrounds.**
- **Tell me how you immersed yourself in an unfamiliar environment.**
- **Can you identify cultural differences? Can you identify a specific time when you needed to modify your behavior to accommodate cultural norms?**

Sample Interview Questions: Indirectly Related to Study Abroad

These questions do not explicitly ask about your experience abroad but present opportunities to talk about your international experiences and skills developed and strengthened in new and unfamiliar environments.

- **Tell me something interesting about yourself.**
- **Tell me about your most challenging situation while in college and how you handled the situation.**
- **Tell me about a time when you took a risk. What did you gain or lose from the risk?**
- **By giving an example, what role do you typically play on teams?**
- **Tell me about a time when you had to think on your feet to come to a decision quickly.**
- **Tell me about an interpersonal conflict you had with someone. How did you deal with this conflict?**
- **Name an accomplishment that has given you the most satisfaction. Why?**

Sources:

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4. A View from LanguageCorps' Founding Partner Jed Willard: What is Global Competency? NAFSA Global Workforce Development
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6. Packaging Your International Experience, by Kimberly Larsson, published in *Abroad View* fall 2008