

Re-entry Workshops: A Toolkit for Continued Personal and Professional Growth

This toolkit of activities is meant to help facilitate re-entry workshops for students who are soon to return, or have returned, from their study or internship experiences abroad.

Tools for continued Professional Development

1. Mock Interviews:

- a. Step 1. Have your students in pairs of two pretend they were in an interview for a job, internship, graduate school and receive this question: "So, I see you studied abroad in (Country), tell me about it?" Ask them each to respond in 30-45 seconds, then ask them if that was easy or difficult to answer.
- b. Step 2. Have your students fill out "**Discover Skills you Have Acquired and Strengthened.**"
- c. Step 3. Have your students choose one area where they have improved the most and write down one specific example that illustrates how they have improved. (this example is very important)
- d. Step 4. Now have the students answer the interview question again using their new ways of articulating the experience. Tell them to think about what the interviewer wants to hear and how they can tailor their words towards that specific interview.

Debrief: The goals of this activity include: having students prepare this answer several times before they get into the real situation and helping them realize all of the skills they have learned or strengthened.

2. Keep on Learning.

- a. Step 1. Students complete the exercise **Discover the Skills you Have Acquired and Strengthened**, then find an area where they are weakest and could use improvement.
- b. Step 2. Students come up with an action to plan strengthen those weaknesses now that they are home.

Debrief: The goals of this activity include: helping students discover their areas for improvement and then prepare a plan of action to improve.

3. How to put Study Abroad on your resume.

- a. Step 1. Have students bring in their current resume
- b. Step 2. Talk with students about where to add study abroad on their resume. Consider sections such as Study Abroad Experience, International Experience, International Work Experience, International Internships or simply Education.
- c. Step 3. Use "Skills acquired and strengthened" to add bullet-points in the resume. Encourage students to add hard skills and soft skills.

Debrief: The goals of this activity include: coaching students on how to add their study abroad experience to their resume, to think about ways they can "sell themselves" with the experience and help them realize the soft skills they have acquired and strengthened.

For Personal Development

1. **Subjective Adjectives (Steps 1 – 3 is an activity that can be done before going abroad to help link orientation to re-entry; Step 4 is upon return)**
 - a. Step 1. Write 6 adjectives that describe **your own** culture.
 - b. Step 2. Write 6 adjectives that describe **the target** culture.
 - c. Step 3. Write 6 adjectives that describe what you think the target culture would use to describe your culture.
 - d. Step 4. Now that you have returned, would your answers be different to any of the above? What specifically changed your mind?

Debrief: The goals of “Subjective Adjectives” include: Talking about stereotypes; reflecting on home culture, reflecting on how experiences abroad influence your stereotypes and reminding us that we are ambassadors for our culture when we travel.

2. **Mentor (for students once they’ve returned)**
 - a. The student pretends s/he is a mentor to a student about to go abroad. The student writes down his/her advice on:
 - i. If you could take one aspect of the culture home with you, I’d recommend ___ because...
 - ii. You can’t come without having done ___ because...
 - iii. While you are abroad, make time to ___ because...
 - iv. You might really miss _____ from home.
 - v. While you are abroad, watch out for _____.
 - vi. When you leave (country/city abroad) you’ll probably miss _____.
 - vii. The best way to keep the experience alive when you get home is _____.
 - viii. Your biggest challenge when you get back home could be _____.
 - ix. What you might gain most professionally from the experience is _____ because...
 - x. What you might gain most personally from the experience is _____ because...

Debrief: The goals of “Mentor” include: helping students write out their reflections of their time abroad, encouraging them to think more profoundly about what the experience meant, getting students to feel more confident in the mentor role, having students think about regrets and how they could have done things differently which will help them in their next experience. Note: students don’t actually have to mentor a future student; the activity in itself is beneficial, but if they CAN mentor a future study abroad student, great.

3. **Five Why’s (could be used pre-departure to talk about goals, and upon return for reflection and realization of what’s been learned)**
 - a. Step 1. Ask students a simple question: “Why did you study in Rome?” i.e. “I studied in Rome because I wanted to see what life is like in Italy.”
 - b. Step 2: Take the answer and ask why to that. “Why did you want to see what life is like in Italy?” i.e. Because I wanted to open my mind to different ways of thinking.

- c. Step 3: “Why did you want to open your mind to different ways of thinking? “ i.e. Because I know it will help me in the future if I can look at things from different perspectives.
- d. Step 4: Keep going this way until you have completed 5 levels of “why?”

Debrief: The goals of “Five Why’s” include: coaching students to find the deep, personal reasons behind what they want to get out of the experience (pre-departure – to be used as goal setting) or what they got out of the experience (re-entry). Note: make sure the questions don’t sound aggressive; rather, they should be inquisitive and thought provoking.

4. The “other” interview... “How was it?”

- a. Step 1. Tell students that aside from the professional interview, they will have to answer this interview question dozens of times from friends and family: “How was it?!”
- b. Step 2. In small groups, have them answer the question.
- c. Step 3. In small groups, discuss what are some of the challenges to answering this question.
- d. Step 4. In small groups, come up with strategies to overcome those challenges.
- e. Step 5. Have students think about preparing 3 sets of answers: the 3 second answer, the 3 minute answer and the 30 minute answer, depending on their audience.

Debrief: The goals of “The “other interview”... “How was it?” include: preparing students for the inevitable question, getting students to reflect on re-entry challenges of explaining their experience to others, having students work together to overcome those challenges and prepare more concise answers depending on the audience.

5. Titanic Comparisons (or “Day-by-day”)

- a. Step 1. Have students finish this chart with several activities they did on a daily basis abroad vs. what they do on a daily basis in the home culture.
- b. Step 2. Have students write out the second part, which is why they think there is this difference.

While I was (in X city/country) I would...., But at home I

--- I think this is because in (X /city country) they [prefer/value/believe /reward...] but it might also be because...

i.e. While I was in Barcelona, I would eat lunch and it would take 1.5 hours but at home I eat lunch in 10 minutes while I am studying/working. I think that’s because in Spain they don’t care about work as much but it might be because they prefer to take their time when eating; eating is a social activity more than in the U.S. and they don’t usually work while eating because they value personal time and relationship building.

Other examples might include how people commute, daily schedules, dress, shop, communicate, greet each other, take leave, spend free time, spend money, view

religion and many more.

Debrief: The goals of “Day-by-day” include: encouraging students to think more deeply about the experience and not just on a superficial level and getting them to reflect on their home culture values.

6. 20/20 Vision

1. Step 1. Ask students to find 20 photos that describe different aspects of their experience abroad and put them together to tell the story of their experience.
2. Step 2. Give students only 20 seconds per slide to tell their story.

Debrief: The goals of “20/20 Vision” include: helping students to condense their study abroad story into 6 and a half minutes, using images to facilitate that story and reflecting on the experience in a meaningful way.

7. Your Weak Hand *(contributed by Anthony Ogden, University of KY)*

1. Step 1. Have students print their name five times on a piece of paper with their strong hand.
2. Step 2. Have students print their name five times on a piece of paper with their weak hand. Tell them to work at making their name look as nice with the weak hand as it does with the strong hand.
3. Step 3. Ask students to describe how they felt as they were writing with the weak hand.

Debrief: The goals of “Your weak hand” include: reflecting on how writing with the weak hand is similar to crossing cultures – we often feel that everyday activities that we are comfortable with take longer, don’t result in the way we want them to, and cause frustration but the process can get easier over time especially with explicit emphasis on the task. This could be used pre-departure to prepare students for culture shock or in re-entry to prepare students for re-entry culture shock.