Study Abroad & Your Graduate School Application

**Did you study abroad? Graduate schools may be interested in you**

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The [Institute for the International Education of Students (IES)](http://www.iesabroad.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) surveyed alumni from their study abroad programs between 1950 and 1999, and found that “regardless of where students studied and for how long, studying abroad is usually a defining moment in a young person's life and continues to impact the participant’s life for years after the experience.”

One of the ways a study abroad experience could impact a student’s life is by utilizing that experience in [graduate school](http://www.gradschools.com/?utm_source=SAB&utm_medium=blog-post&utm_content=graduate-school-study-abroad&utm_campaign=content-cross-promotion&c=graduate-school-study-abroad&v=SAB" \t "_blank). Whether the experience was for one semester/quarter or for an entire academic year, during or after college, the applicant will have some very useful information to share with the admissions committee.

Many graduate schools are looking for a diverse student body, with a very strong mix of women, men, ethnic groups, foreign cultures, undergraduate majors, post graduate work experiences, and more. Studying in another country allows (in some ways, forces) the student to broaden her/his perspective about the larger world we all call our home.

When evaluating applicants, the admissions committee may take note of someone who has spent an extended period of time in another country. Why? Because it is believed that students who do this may bring the following to the table as applicants:

**Exposure, knowledge, and appreciation of another culture**

Living, studying and working in one place all of your life can tend to provide you with a more limited view of the world. Studying abroad will help expand that view. As Valeri Boyle states in her [article for StudyAbroad.com](http://www.studyabroad.com/articles/why-should-i-study-abroad.aspx%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), “You will learn how your home country fits into humanity, and through the eyes of a different culture, you can more precisely reflect upon your own culture. While learning another country’s traditions, you will understand the significance of keeping your own traditions alive while sharing them with others. “

**Studying one’s chosen field at a university in another country**

Depending on one’s intended field of graduate study, delving into related subject matter at a university in another country could be extremely beneficial. For example, a U.S. citizen who wished to pursue a [master’s in European History](http://www.gradschools.com/search-programs/european-studies/masters?utm_source=SAB&utm_medium=blog-post&utm_content=graduate-school-study-abroad&utm_campaign=content-cross-promotion&c=graduate-school-study-abroad&v=SAB" \t "_blank) could have a major advantage by having spent a semester or a year studying World War I in Germany, France or Italy.

**Familiarity with a second language**

As is often suggested, the best way to learn a new language is to spend a lengthy amount of time in place(s) where that language is spoken. The likelihood of improving foreign language skills increases greatly when forced to communicate in a way that will initially be completely foreign.

**Experiencing what it is like to be an international student**

Living in an environment where communicating with ease is no longer the reality, a student is forced to achieve a level of social maturity that s/he would most definitely not have to develop at home. Being part of a foreign culture, the student must go to greater lengths to communicate regarding even the most mundane issues (i.e., grocery shopping, going out for a night on the town). This enables one to be more socially assertive, improving confidence and comfort level in various academic and professional settings.

**Stepping outside one’s comfort zone and succeeding**

While studying abroad is a rewarding and exciting experience, it is not necessarily easy. There will be many challenges, especially early on, that offer opportunities for personal growth and maturity. As [StateUniversity.com](http://www.stateuniversity.com/blog/permalink/Five-Benefits-of-Studying-Abroad.html) so adequately suggests: “A student choosing to study in a foreign setting by either enrolling in a foreign university or taking advantage of a domestic university exchange program will stretch and strengthen their skills academically, personally and socially.”

**Having had the opportunity to travel and see more of the world**

While overseas, you will most likely have the opportunity to travel in your host country or in neighboring countries. By all means, do this if at all possible. Experiencing these cultures and their peoples will have a profound effect on your view of yourself, and how you fit in to our global community.

All of the above may help to make a graduate school applicant more appealing to the admissions committee, and could definitely serve to balance out other aspects of the application (i.e., GPA, test scores) that might be less competitive.

Read more: <http://www.studyabroad.com/articles/study-abroad-and-your-graduate-school-application.aspx#ixzz3M8bmg6Lj>