

FOUNDATIONAL READING FOR EDUCATION ABROAD & EMPLOYABILITY

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The body of research examining the connection between learning abroad and increased employability continues to grow. Looking back to the Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman's 2007 article in *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, their recommendations for exploring and strengthening this connection still continue to guide the field: 1.) design programs so that students may develop specific skills, 2.) continue research on this topic, and 3.) help students learn to speak about their experience in ways that employers can appreciate.

As dialogues about the priority employability should have in higher education have become more frequent among employers, students and educators, examining the learning outcomes associated with education abroad participation has grown more important. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2017, 2019) includes Global/Intercultural Fluency in its Key Career Readiness Competencies and a number of employer surveys (see below) rank this skill set with high importance. The skills that define intercultural competence align closely with transferable skills valued by employers; helping students articulate this connection when speaking about these newly-acquired skills solidifies the employability value of education abroad.

This list shares current research across relevant categories to offer perspective about the employability agenda, the perspectives from employers, student outcomes as well as resources for advising and reflection/training sessions with students.

1. HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE EMPLOYABILITY AGENDA

Student employability has become a pressing priority since the disruptive economic conditions of 2008 and given the global economic impacts of the Covid pandemic. The concept of employability is driving higher education policy worldwide as governments see their economies inextricably linked to a trained workforce. A universal concern has emerged about the effective transition of students to the workplace.

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2. EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION ABROAD

A review of research on employer perspectives on the value of education abroad – in particular, study abroad and internships – reveals growing evidence in the past decade that hiring managers value specific skills and competencies which students develop from purposefully designed education abroad programs.

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3. IMPACT OF EDUCATION ABROAD ON STUDENT CAREER OUTCOMES

There has been a steady evolution of research findings supporting the proposition that international experience contributes to both student career development and post-graduation employability. However, the direct relationship between employability and education abroad is mixed and sometimes overstated. Research about the impact of international internships on employability is less robust and presents an important area for future inquiry; specially to determine whether the learning outcomes from virtual education abroad programs provide students with comparable value to their post-graduation employability.

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4. RESOURCES ON STUDENT ADVISING

To maximize the benefits of their international experience, students must effectively communicate what they learned to prospective employers. Employers do not presume that a prospective new hire has acquired skills and competencies merely because they have been abroad in an applied learning program. Purposefully designed integrated advising strategies - before, during and after students return to campus- will support successful translation of the value of education abroad.

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