Welcome Back!

Reflection Guide
For Study Away Students
Photos from clockwise: Supercomputer ‘Jaguar’ by Nick Roe, Oakridge Science; Chicago Theater by Emily Witte, Newberry Seminar; Philly Zoo by Ramon Rochester, Philly Center; Isla Tiburon sunrise by Max Wedding, Border Studies.

Front and back covers: by Bret Linvill, New York Arts
# Table of Contents

Photos 1
Table of Contents 2
Welcome to “Life After Study Away” 3
The Importance of Reflection 4
Framing Journal Reflections 5
Journal Reflections 6
Personal Growth 7
Share Your Experience! 8
Grades and Credits, Planning Your SIP 9
Looking Ahead... What’s Next? 10
Welcome to “Life After Study Away”

We in the Center for International Programs would like to be among the first to welcome you back to Campus from your Study Away program. Things are probably incredibly busy for you right now: seeing old friends, visiting family members, moving in to your new apartment, new classes, catching up with faculty, figuring out the next academic step at “K,” and trying to make all those changes in your life you vowed to make when you were away. In the midst of all this activity, you might be feeling at a loss as to how to begin again.

In this guide we have included information we hope will help you make the transition from being away to being back on Campus. We’ve provided answers to questions about reflection, transcripts, grades, and resources. We hope to help you with the common concerns faced by all returning students by incorporating some suggestions as to how to cope with being back home and at school.

As you have undoubtedly realized by now, everyone’s experience away is unique. The same is true for everyone’s experience returning home. You may find that you do not feel the same way your friends are feeling—even those who were on the same program with you. However, we think that you will find that you probably share a number of common concerns and feelings with your fellow travelers, regardless of where you spent your time. You’ve had a tremendous experience, filled with challenges and rewards. And now you’re faced with the task of continuing your life here at “K.”

Even though this is one of the busiest times in your life, now is the time to sit back and reflect on your experience. Self-reflection makes the reintegration process easier—it helps you prepare for the “How was it?” question and makes it easier to continue to grow as a person—compared to just picking up your life as you left it.

Again, welcome back to Kalamazoo College. If you would like to talk about your experience with someone in our office, please drop by or make an appointment. Also be on the lookout for the activities we offer to help make your transition from your program back to school a bit easier. We’d love to hear from you!

Joseph Brockington
Associate Provost for International Programs and the Staff from the Center for International Programs
The Importance of Reflection

Setting aside the time to think in-depth about any significant event or experience sets the stage for better understanding of the situation and the individuals involved. In terms of study away, reflection can often facilitate clearer ideas of the qualities and skills you have developed, more precise views about what is important to you, your communication and leadership styles and more relevant standards for your personal, educational and career goals. In other words, participating in a study away program is just one component of the experience.

Evaluating your experience and determining its contribution to your development is another component and it is just as important. Interestingly enough, reflection often continues long after students return to campus and even after graduation. In this way study away may be with you for years to come.

We’ve listed below a number of questions that may help you begin to examine your time away from the College.

What did you like most about your study away experience? Why?

What did you like least? Why?

What do you think is the most important thing you learned?

What were some of the challenges you faced?

What surprised you?

What did you expect to get out of this experience?

In what ways did your program meet your expectations? In what ways did your program not meet your expectations?

What was the most difficult thing to adjust to? Why?

What skills, knowledge, and attitudes did you gain?

How can you take what you have learned and use it in the future (in courses, in “real life,” in relationships, etc.)

What personal values, opinions, or decisions changed during this experience?

How have the friends, instructors or contacts from your study away experience influenced you?

Did this experience impact your thoughts about your major, minor, or SIP topic? Why or why not?

Journaling is just one way to reflect. Many students use scrapbooks, presentations, discussions with instructors, family and friends or creating pieces of art that represent their feelings to explore and share what study away means to them.
Framing Journal Reflections

Observing: If you saw something interesting, curious, amusing, or thought-provoking, try to capture it in your reflection. Observation entries may help you gain insights.

Questioning: Use your journal to formulate and record questions that are important to you.

Speculating: Think on paper about the meaning of images, facts, readings, encounters, patterns you observed, conversations you took part in, and the direct experiences you had. Ask yourself “What if?” and “Why?”

Self-Awareness: Think about who you are and what you stand for, in relation to the work/field/research culture of which you were a part. Ask yourself: How did you resemble colleagues? And how did you differ? How did you react to uncomfortable situations? How did you learn in the workplace/field? What values are most important to you? What values are changing for you? Where do you stand on ethical or cultural issues? Who influences you? Or whom do you influence?

Digression: Let your writing lead your thinking. Allow yourself to drift off the subject of your entry and often you will discover the ideas that interest you most.

Synthesis: Journaling provides a space for you to make connections. Find relationships between ideas, experiences and cultural events. Link your learning from study abroad to decisions you may soon be making in your personal or professional life.

“Tools for Framing Your Journal Entries” adapted with permission; Dr. Ruth Overman Fischer, George Mason University
Personal Growth

No doubt, your time away from campus changed you. Some changes may be obvious while others are subtle. Most often they will present challenges upon your return. Carefully considering the ways in which you are different or have gained new perspectives usually helps to ease the transition back to life at K or with your family and friends. Below are a few questions to think about. They may help you recognize the ways you may have changed.

What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others?

How did you address the challenges you faced?

How did you manage the adjustments that you had to make while away?

What personal qualities or strengths did you develop or fine-tune?

In what ways has your sense of confidence changed?

How did you cope when your expectations were not met?

How has your perspective on your values and lifestyle changed?

How has your perspective on others’ values and lifestyles changed?

How might you stay connected with the your new network of friends, mentors, instructors and contacts?

Since your return, what have been the most difficult adjustments to make and how did you make them?

What changes have occurred among family and friends, on campus or in your hometown?

How do you feel about all the changes that have taken place?

What can you do to cope with so much change and your feelings about the changes?

How are you different now than when you left for study away?

These changes are great for you, but friends and family members are just beginning to understand why you are so different. This may generate awkward feelings or situations, but with a little patience and time most people will adapt to your changes. And remember, you will be adapting to the ways in which your friends, parents and instructors have changed while you were away.

If you are having a hard time finding people to listen or you are confused by your own feelings, the staff at the Counseling Center is available to help with the reflection process. It is common for returning students to feel stressed and overwhelmed. The key to moving past these emotions is understanding their source. Counselors at the Center can assist you with these challenges.
Program Survey

You will soon receive an e-mail invitation to complete a survey of your program experience. Your constructive feedback is most welcome and will help us improve study away for future students.

Thank you for your feedback.

Share Photos and Written Pieces

CIP staff and Peer Advisors sponsor a variety of ways for you to share your study away experience with others. If you would like to share photos, quotes, or other expressions in future editions of this guide, on the CIP website, or in K study away-related publications, send your contributions to Teresa Lyn at tlyn@kzoo.edu or drop them off at the CIP/CCPD Resource Room. While you’re there, you can chat with a Career Advisor, peruse career development materials, or set up an appointment with a CCPD staff member.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Reintegration Activity Survey

Looking for ways to reintegrate yourself back into K after study away? If you haven’t already, please take a few moments to complete the Reintegration Activity Survey at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RAS_13-14.

We will send you information on the activities in which you have expressed an interest in the survey.

Photos: At the Philly Zoo by Ramon Rochester, Philly Center
Grades and Credits

It is important that students complete the paperwork necessary to forward their study away grades and credit to the Center for International Programs to the attention of the Associate Director. If you did not complete this step before leaving your program, be sure to do so immediately.

Study Away grades are reviewed and certified by the Center for International Programs and recorded by the Registrar on official Kalamazoo College transcripts. Credits will normally be listed with the same academic rubric used at the host institution; for example, a class listed as a “History” course will be listed as a “History” course on the Kalamazoo transcript.

What credits can I expect to receive?

If you completed all of the program requirements, you are eligible to receive 3 K-Units of academic credit that can be applied to general graduation requirements. You can expect the following credit from:

- The Borders Studies Program-Anthropology, History and Political Science
- The Newberry Seminar-Humanities
- New York Arts-Apprenticeship and Humanities
- The Philadelphia Center-Interdisciplinary
- Oak Ridge Science Semester-Science

Be sure to discuss credit earned on any of these programs and their application to graduation requirements with your academic advisor.

When and how will I know my grades are in?

The CIP forwards to the Office of the Registrar study away credit that has been certified. The Office of the Registrar posts study away grades on WebAdvisor and on official Kalamazoo transcripts.

It is the student’s responsibility to consult their academic advisor and understand how study away credit can be distributed and how those units are used to meet graduation requirements.

Planning Your SIP

Is new knowledge gained from your study away program redirecting or enhancing plans for your SIP? Fresh insights and recently discovered resources can contribute to a SIP that truly reflects your interests and capabilities. If you are considering a college-related project like a SIP overseas, the Center for International Programs offers support through the Student Projects Abroad (SPA) grants and fellowships. SPA awards range from $800 to about $2,700. See https://reason.kzoo.edu/cip/aid/ for details.
The Center for Career and Professional Development (in conjunction with the CIP) can help you integrate the new knowledge, skills, and intercultural competencies that you have acquired while away. Identifying and articulating what you have learned and how those discoveries can apply at a workplace or during graduate studies will be one key component in securing your desired post-graduate opportunity.

Alumni often tell us how crucial it is to be able to communicate clearly the value of your study away experience as it relates to your professional aspirations. As you reflect on your own experience, take some time to articulate the specific knowledge, perspectives, and skills you gained. For example, in an interview setting, how would you answer the following questions?

- How did your study away experience impact your career choice?
- How has working in different situations better prepared you for work?
- Please describe the skills that you have acquired while participating on study away as they relate to this position.

As you prepare for opportunities after graduation, the CCPD can help you talk about the transferable skills that you bring to a potential employer or graduate program and represent these valuable skills on your résumé. Stop by the CCPD to set up an appointment with a Career Counselor, visit our website at www.kzoo.edu/career; or visit during drop-in hours with staff availability Monday through Thursday from 2:00PM to 4:00PM.

For career help, check out the CCPD website at: https://reason.kzoo.edu/ccd/

Looking Ahead... What’s Next?

Painted staircase by Emily Witte, Newberry Seminar