

Engaging the Global Community (EGC) Study Abroad Reflective Essay Prompt

In order to use your study abroad experience to satisfy the core requirement *Engaging the Global Community*, you must write and submit a reflective essay.

The institution has a number of **learning goals** that this core category is expected to meet.

Consequently, you should write your essay with these goals in mind:

- A student applies or connects skills, knowledge, or methodologies gained in one academic, cultural, or experiential context to different academic, cultural, or experiential context.
- A student demonstrates knowledge about the world's diverse cultures, environments, practices, or values.
- A student evaluates global systems, institutions, or relationships of power in a historical or geographical context.
- A student understands that individual and collective decisions have global implications.

Additionally, good writing in the core meets these expectations:

- A student selects, develops, and supports a complex topic given audience, purpose, and length requirements and effectively situates it in a larger context, engaging with and integrating credible and reliable evidence.
- A student avoids plagiarism and documents sources consistently, demonstrating concern for ethical representation of other scholars' work.
- A student uses language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency and is free from errors.

The **reflective essay** is a type of writing that typically gives you the chance think about what you are doing more deeply and to learn from your experiences. You will have the opportunity to discover how what you experience both inside of and outside of class connects with your larger education and even with your future. Writing your thoughts down makes it easier for you to think about them and make connections between what you are thinking, what you are being taught and what you are doing. Your written reflection will also serve as a source of reference and evidence in the future.

Reflective essays are often written in a questioning, speculative **tone**. In a reflective essay, you are not necessarily working toward answers or providing them neatly organized and ready for consumption. This means you may not have all the answers to how you have been affected by this experience, but you should provide a genuine speculation at how it may be useful in the future.

The framework provided below asks you to *explain, describe, identify*, etc. Be careful to avoid broad generalizations and clichés (*It changed my life!*). Instead, provide **specific details**. Particularly since you are writing about your own experiences, you will need to provide sufficient detail for your reader (who may have never visited your location) to understand and connect with what you have to share. The observations you make and the concrete examples you provide may come from classwork, but they should also derive from your experiences outside of class.

While the framework below provides prompts for each section of the essay, your final product should be a polished coherent essay with a clear controlling idea (*not* a sequence of disconnected paragraphs).

1. Provide your reader an overview of your study abroad experience and introduce your key topic (1-2 paragraphs).

While abroad, you may have encountered and engaged with a range of differences between your host country and the U.S. The experience of difference may have prompted you to reflect upon the nature of difference and how and why these differences exist and what they mean. Your return to the U.S. may have prompted further reflection upon difference.

2. Using one to two examples, explain how your study abroad experience advanced your knowledge and understanding of one of the following: differences in cultures, environments, practices or values (2-3 paragraphs).

You may have encountered and engaged with global, transnational forces and power (forces that shape societal and individual experiences in your host country, and/or in the U.S.). You might have begun to ask questions about global forces and global dynamics and the way that they shape societal and individual experiences. Or, you may have learned about education, the media, religions, marriage and the family, civil society, healthcare, or other formal or informal institutions.

3. Using one to two examples, describe how your study abroad experience has impacted your knowledge and understanding of one of the following: global systems, institutions, or relationships of power (2-3 paragraphs).

As you study abroad, you may begin to question where you and your experiences, values, and actions fit within an increasingly globalized world. You may recognize that the choices that individuals and groups make have wide-reaching, transnational, even global effects.

4. Using one to two examples, identify and describe how a decision (or lack of a decision) made by people in your home community or country has impacted your host community or country. Or, if you prefer, identify and describe how a decision/lack of a decision made by people in your host community/country has impacted your home community/country (2-3 paragraphs).
5. Describe a disorienting experience that challenged your assumptions, and why you found it disorienting. How did the experience challenge your previous knowledge of the world's cultures, environments, practices, or values? How did the experience help you to understand how your decisions and the decisions of others have global implications? (2-3 paragraphs).
6. Explore and reflect on how you see your study abroad experience integrating into your life. How has your study abroad experience changed your goals, aspirations, or perceptions? Are you or do you plan to do anything differently after returning home from this study abroad experience? (2-3 paragraphs).

Finally, you may include up to two pictures into your essay that illustrate what was important and meaningful about your experience, using captions and/or references in the text to explain their significance.