

TIPS FOR THE YEAR ABROAD FOR LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Employers are increasingly in the hunt for the 'Global Graduate', the individual who sees the international dimension to life, understands it and respects it.

As a linguist undertaking a phase of your degree outside of the UK, you have a prime opportunity to develop an impressive skillset and portfolio of experiences, not automatically available to students who remain in their home country for the duration of their degree.

So make the most of this opportunity by:

- ✓ experiencing academic life at your new institution to the full. Even if your time is not credit-bearing and lectures are not compulsory, failing to make the most of all the academic opportunities is a waste. Every session you attend has the potential to refine your language skills and open your eyes to new topics and different ways of thinking.
- ✓ getting involved in any extra-curricular opportunities. UK universities often have a well-defined framework of societies and groups. Such a structure might not be so well-developed elsewhere but it's worth seeking out groups who might follow interests similar to yours at home. This is a classic way of extending the scope of the 'Interests' section of your CV in an engaging and unusual way.
- ✓ trying to obtain some work experience whilst away. If undertaken overseas, casual work will have a very different edge. If you're interested in a particular sector, is it possible to volunteer or find a placement in a similar setting? This will take a lot of advance work but your university Careers Service should have plenty of ideas as to where to look for leads. Alternatively, if you are not intending to follow a course and want to work overseas, internship portals advertise formal placements in the bigger cities and it is also worth using British companies who might have a base in your target location, or making use of local Chamber of Commerce resources. In all circumstances, take great care and keep yourself safe. As a footnote, you may need to use a different style of CV - your Careers Service will know.
- ✓ keeping in touch with contacts in the UK. For example, are you thinking of a career in journalism? Then write articles on your life abroad for your student newspaper! Are you considering what your final year will hold and what you need to do and when to find employment? Follow Careers Service blogs and make the most of any email guidance provision that may be on offer. Just because you aren't at home, doesn't mean you put planning for your future on hold.

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- ✓ reflecting on your experience, and recording it. Your time will be so full and you will achieve so much that it is wise to keep notes. A daily/regular learning log is ideal for this and will formalise all your experiences into an impressive listing, ready to be incorporated into any applications for jobs that you might make later on.

You should also consider recording your linguistic, mobility and work experiences with *Europass* (www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu) so that you build a CV and European Skills Passport during your time abroad.

- ✓ appreciating just how wide your range of skills is becoming. It is highly likely that you will develop the following, amongst others:
 - communication skills – spoken and written language
 - cultural awareness
 - transferable work skills - planning, organising, interpersonal, networking, initiative
 - self skills – independence, resilience, self management
 - adaptability, flexibility, problem solving
 - financial skills – familiar with different currencies

- ✓ anticipating your return! All too soon, your time will be over and you will be back in your home institution. Some students find this quite a tough transition, and if you are returning for a final year, you may need to make some swift job/course applications for life after graduation. All of this can be made easier by arranging a meeting with a Careers professional before you go away. You might enjoy your time so much more with an action plan in place!