SPEAKING STUDY ABROAD MEANINGFULLY
QUESTIONS FOR ADVISORS

One of the biggest challenges for students is learning to talk about study abroad. It's generally a challenge associated with students who return from abroad. However, learning to speak meaningfully about study abroad should begin before students go abroad. Advisors can help students go beyond the basics by asking questions that could help students better prepare, better experience, and better reflect on their time abroad.
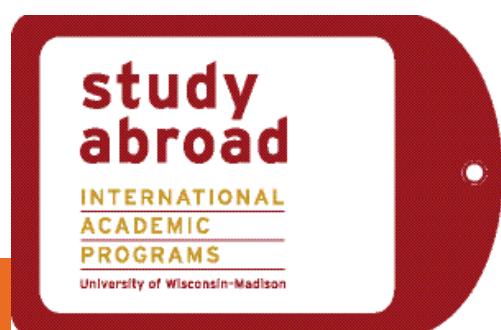
Below are suggestions of questions for advisors to ask students who are considering going abroad, are abroad, or have returned from abroad. Questions can be interchangeable and certainly adapted to fit individual styles.

BEFORE

- What led you to choose this study abroad program?
- Why are you interested in studying on this program?
- How would you describe your feelings about going abroad (i.e. nervous, excited, unsure)?
- How do you think this study abroad experience will complement your education at UW-Madison?
- What do you look forward to the most in going abroad? What are you least looking forward to? Why?
- If the experience doesn't turn out like you expect, how will you react?
- What do you think will be one of the most challenging aspects of your time abroad?

DURING

- What has been the easiest to adjust to? What has been more difficult? Why?
- Thinking back to how you felt before going abroad, how would you describe your feelings now?
- What is one thing about your host country/culture that has surprised you?
- How do you think this study abroad experience will complement your education at UW-Madison?
- How do you plan to apply the academic and personal learning of study abroad to your remaining time at UW?
- What are some cultural successes/failures you've had thus far? What have you learned from this?
- What's an academic or personal goal you would like to accomplish before returning home?

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AFTER

- In what way has your cross-cultural awareness expanded as a result of studying abroad?
- What is one thing about your host country/culture that surprised you? Why?
- What was one thing that was difficult during the experience? How did you work through that difficulty?
- What do you feel the most accomplished about? What's one thing you would have done differently? How would that have impacted your study abroad experience?
- What would you tell an employer (or friend or parent) who is unsure of the benefits of study abroad?
- How are you applying, or how do you intend to apply, the academic and personal learning of study abroad to your remaining time at UW?
- How does your study abroad experience complement your education at UW-Madison?
- What are some examples of how you gained new knowledge and understanding of your major and/or concentration?
- What's one thing you think your family or friends don't understand about your study abroad experience? What steps can you take to help others to understand?
- How has the transition been from your study abroad program, to returning home, to campus? Are there any resources that would be helpful for you?

Resources for returned study abroad students at www.studyabroad.wisc.edu/returneddiscover.html

A NOTE ON TRAVEL

The questions deliberately leave out asking specifically about travel. Travel is a great side-benefit to studying abroad and students should take advantage of the opportunities. In speaking meaningfully about study abroad experiences, especially in job interviews, travel should be seen as one part of the experience and not the focus. Study abroad can be a differentiation for employers, but it does not guarantee a job, especially if a student can't speak professionally about their program. The employer evaluating a potential employee for their skills and ability to fit the organization is looking for the individual to link skills to practical experience. Travel experiences will naturally come out in conversation when sharing stories, but if students can't say what they got out of the experience, it won't be relevant.

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