

VCU

Welcome Back!

Education Abroad Returnee Manual

Returnees,

We welcome you back to the United States and to Virginia Commonwealth University! We hope your time abroad was impactful, challenging, and rewarding.

We hope you will use this manual to navigate your return to VCU, and that it provides you with tips and information you can use during your adjustment back to life at home.

Please contact our office if you have any questions, we would love to hear from you!

The staff of VCU's Education Abroad Office

Part One: Logistics

Credit transfer process:

Upon your return, please take the following steps to ensure that your grades will be transferred correctly and in a timely manner. If students do not complete these steps, the Education Abroad Office cannot guarantee a transfer of credit.

1. Confirm with the host institution that your transcript will be sent to the correct address:

Education Abroad
912 W. Grace Street
P.O. Box 843043
Richmond, VA 23284

Please be aware that your study abroad institution most likely will not send your transcript if you have any outstanding bills (library fines, housing fees, etc).

Note: We must receive **an official transcript directly from the host institution**. Please do not have your transcript sent to Records and Registration or to your academic department because it will delay the transfer of your credits. Study Abroad transcripts will not be processed for transfer credit by any office other than Education Abroad.

2. Once your transcripts arrive you will be contacted by Sarah Carrier (syoung8@vcu.edu), Returnee Advisor. If the classes on your transcript differ from your original course approval form, you will need to obtain a new [Course Approval Form](#) and set up an appointment with an academic advisor in the appropriate department (i.e., if you took a history class you need to meet with faculty in the History department) to have him/her assign the appropriate VCU course equivalent. Please be sure to bring your course descriptions and syllabi with you when meeting about credit equivalencies, as your advisor needs to have some direction when assigning equivalents.

Note: Course descriptions/syllabi for all courses that require approval from the School of World Studies (language courses, religious studies, international studies, etc) should be given directly to Sarah Carrier. She will coordinate directly with the School of World Studies (SWS) to obtain these approvals. Please do not bring paperwork directly to the School of World Studies.

3. Once you have obtained all the necessary approvals, please return your course approval form to Sarah Carrier. Once everything is complete it should take approximately 3-4 business days for your credits to appear on your transcript.

FAQS regarding the credit transfer process

1. I need to complete my graduation application but haven't gotten my transcript back from my study abroad, what do I do?

If you are waiting to receive a transcript from your study abroad you can list the courses you took as pending on your graduation application.

2. I have heard that my credits have been transferred but I don't see them on my transcript!

Your study abroad credits will appear under the Transfer Credit section of your transcript (look towards the top), not chronologically.

Part Two: Re-entry Programming

Returnee orientation:

Every semester Education Abroad holds a re-entry orientation for study abroad returnees. At this orientation we provide a forum for students to share their experience with others who have studied abroad and as a group we discuss issues ranging from reverse cultural shock to transferring credits. We also spend time discussing how to incorporate study abroad into your resume, career goals, and future academic plans. Check your email for information about orientation specifics such as location, date, and time.

If you are unable to attend re-entry orientation you can always schedule an individual appointment with Sarah Carrier, the Returnee advisor.

Photo contest:

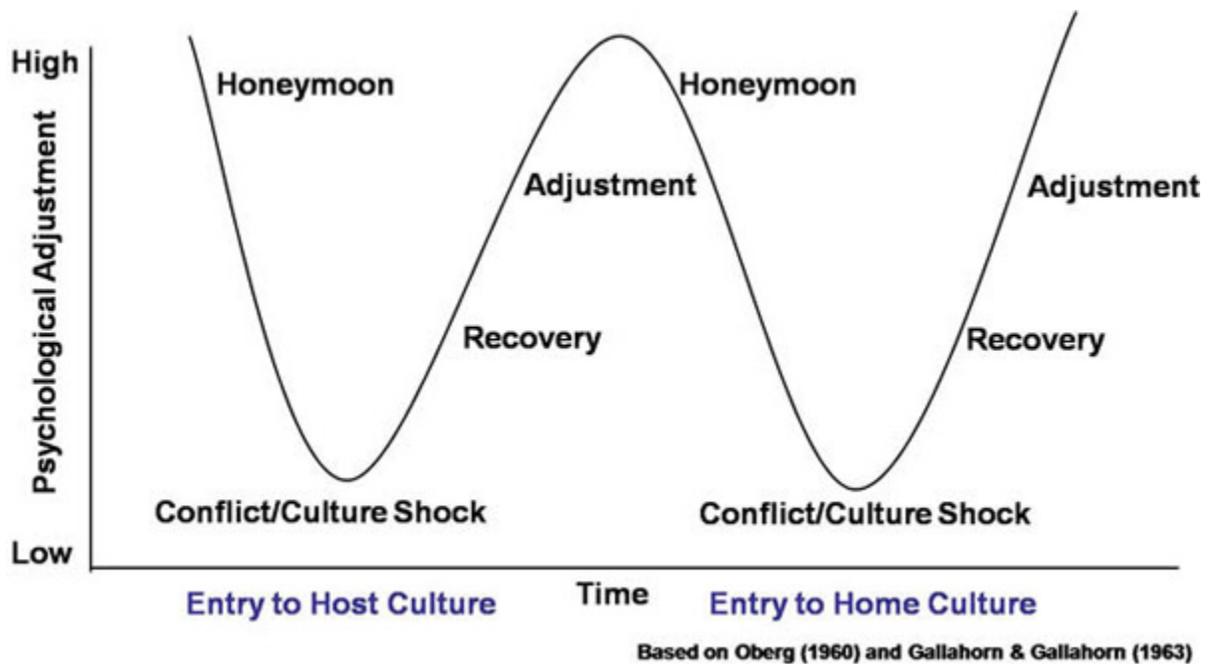
Education Abroad would love to see photos from your travels! Every year we host a photo contest that is open to all students that have studied abroad during the previous academic year. Deadline for photo submission is usually the end of September.

Part Three: Readjustment and ways to get involved

Just as you most likely experienced culture shock upon arrival in your host country, most students experience a period of readjustment when they return home to the United States. It is important to process the feelings that you have upon returning home and to address the changes that have occurred both in yourself and your surroundings since you left. The ways you coped

with challenges and stress abroad will be useful to you again as you return home. NAFSA (Association of International Educators) identifies four stages of reentry that most students experience

- Disengagement
 - The one foot in each country feeling before you return home.
- Euphoria (more or less)
 - You're back! And get to see family, old friends, and familiar places.
- Dampened Euphoria
 - May be frustrated or critical of your own culture, comparing it with where you have been.
 - Good time to seek out other returnees that can relate
- Gradual Readjustment
 - May adopt certain host culture characteristics for your own life
 - Come to terms with changes in yourself based on your experiences
 - Applying and processing what you have learned



If you are having difficulty transitioning back to life in the United States please consider the following:

- **Get in touch with other returnees.** Having someone to talk with that has had similar experiences can be extremely beneficial in the re-entry process.
- **Stay in touch with your host country.** Keep up on news and events from your host country, have dinner with international students at VCU from the country where you studied, keep in touch with friends you made abroad.
- **Talk to staff in the Education Abroad office.** We all have spent time studying and living abroad and have lived through the readjustment process. Please feel free to come and speak with a staff member if you have questions or concerns upon return from your program.
- **Visit VCU Counseling Services.** The office can be reached at 804-828-6200 or by visiting Room 238 of the Student Commons. There are a number of staff members on hand that specialize in cross-cultural issues.

Ways to get involved with the Global Education Office

-Apply to be an Education Abroad Ambassador

The Education Abroad Ambassadors are a team of students who assist the Education Abroad office in their efforts to promote study abroad. They are students who have studied abroad previously and are eager to share their experiences. Trained to provide accurate information about study abroad and basic peer advising, they will help inform their fellow students about various program options, scholarship opportunities, and events. Ultimately, they are a part of the Global Education Office's mission to internationalize the VCU campus and increase students' global engagement.

-Come to International Café and meet VCU's International Students

Did you know that VCU has over 1,400 international students?! The Global Education Office hosts International Cafes in the Student Commons twice a month. These cafes include a short program, light refreshments, and serve as a chance for international students to meet each other and VCU students, faculty, and staff. Please check the GEO calendar for dates and times.

-Be a buddy for an exchange student

Many of you probably had buddy programs at the university that you attended abroad, and know how important they can be in helping students adjust to a new school, city, and country. Now is your chance to be a friend and mentor to an exchange student attending VCU! Every semester we receive new exchange students and pair them up with study abroad returnees. As buddies you will be asked to help them navigate VCU and Richmond, and show them all the great things this area has to offer.

-Be a conversation partner for an international student

Many international students at VCU are looking to practice their English in an informal setting. VCU's international students and native English speaking volunteers meet for one hour each week to enable students to learn more about American culture, practice English language skills, and gain confidence in their communication abilities. It also provides volunteers an opportunity to serve as a cultural mentor to international students and practice cross-cultural communication skills. You may also be able to have your conversation partner assist you in learning their native language!

For more information about the program please email Nichole George (georgenl@vcu.edu) or contact the Global Education Office.

-Join an international organization or club

There are a large number of international clubs and organizations that you could be a part of here at VCU (http://www.usca.vcu.edu/student_involvement/stu_orgs.html). The SOVO fair, held at the beginning of every semester, showcases over 500 VCU student organizations and community partners, many of which have an international connection. Get involved!

-Attend a pre-departure orientation

The presence of returnees at pre-departure orientation is one of the most important and effective parts of the program. Students that are getting ready to study abroad love to hear your experiences, advice, and stories about your time abroad. We devote a portion of pre-departure orientation for returnees to mingle and share their experiences with outbound students. We would love to have your participation!

-Do a classroom presentation or independent study

Ask your professors about giving a short presentation to the class about your time abroad, or other ways you could incorporate it into your studies. Many professors will love to hear your experiences and understand the importance of what you can share with your peers. Continue to think about ways you can complete an independent study, research project, or program based on your time abroad.

-Keep up with all the GEO events and opportunities through our Facebook page and website

Facebook pages: VCU Education Abroad, VCU Global

Website: <http://www.global.vcu.edu/>

Events and announcements can be found in the middle of the right hand side of the page

Part Four: Looking forward

We hope you had such a great time abroad that you want to pursue options for going abroad again! Over the years our office has compiled information on international opportunities, including teaching, interning, working, and studying abroad. Some of these options are listed below, and please feel free to stop by our office and look through our library as well.

Study abroad again!

If you are still a VCU student you can contact the Education Abroad office to discuss options for studying abroad again, whether it is for a summer, semester, or year.

Please note that the information provided below is to be used as a starting point, and students should conduct their own thorough research before pursuing any of these opportunities. VCU is not affiliated with, nor do they endorse, any of these programs. You can also find web links and more resources here on our website: <http://www.global.vcu.edu/abroad/students/resources>.

Teach abroad programs

These are just a few of the many options that exist for teaching English abroad

Dave's ESL Café

This website offers information on teaching overseas, and an international job bulletin.

English First

Teaching jobs abroad!

<http://www.englishfirst.com/esl-jobs/teaching-english-overseas/>

French Ministry of Education

Offers the opportunity to teach English in all areas of France for seven months

<http://www.frenchculture.org/assistantshipprogram>

Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship

This program places a Fulbrighter in a classroom abroad to provide assistance to teachers of English to non-native English-speakers. <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/application-tips/eta>

JET (Japan Teaching and Exchange)

Teach English in Japan <http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/JET/>

TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea)

Teach English in Korea <http://www.talk.go.kr/talk/talk/talkhme/main.jsp>

Post-graduate education abroad

Fulbright

Graduate and undergraduate research abroad

Boren

Critical Language Scholarship(CLS)

Marshall scholarship

Graduate study in the UK www.marshallscholarship.org

Rhodes scholarship

Graduate study at Oxford www.rhodesscholar.org

Truman scholarship

Funding to pursue careers in government

Please visit VCU's National Scholarship Office website for more information about scholarship programs abroad

<http://www.honors.vcu.edu/nationalscholar/natscholarships.html>

Peace Corps

The Peace Corps is a US government agency that sends US citizens all over the world to serve on various types of international development projects. A Peace Corps representative visits campus a few times a year and would be happy to meet with students that are interested in the program. <http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

Consult faculty in your discipline to see what options may exist for pursuing higher education in other countries

Please use the [HireVCURams](#) portal to view job and internship opportunities abroad, as well as domestic jobs that have an international component. Our office regularly receives information about jobs and internships in the fields of international education, international development, teaching English as a second-language, etc. We work in coordination with the VCU Career Center to have these opportunities posted on the HireVCURams site. Check them out!

Part Five: Marketing your study abroad experience

It has never been more important to have study abroad experience on your resume, cover letter, applications, etc. As our economy continues to become more global, the skills you gained living and studying abroad are in high demand and set you apart.

Here are some tips for articulating your study abroad experience for career development or future educational pursuits.

-Ensure that your study abroad experience is prominently mentioned on your resume and that you articulate not only where and when you went, but the **results** of your time abroad.

-Include any volunteer, research, or work experience you had abroad. Include any special educational study or research you may have partaken in that you could not have done here in the US.

-Ask yourself the following questions about your experience abroad so that you can articulate these things when asked in a cover letter, graduate school application, or job interview.

How did your time abroad affect your career and educational goals?

How did it change the way you see the world?

How did study abroad change the way you communicate?

How did study abroad change the way you handle unfamiliar and/or difficult situations?

-Think about other skills you have gained while abroad, which could include increased fluency in a language, international research/study in your academic field, increased independence and flexibility, experience living in/navigating a foreign country.

Please contact Sarah Carrier (syoung8@vcu.edu) if you would like to have an individual meeting regarding your resume or other career information.