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SHORT-TERM PROGRAM (RE-ENTRY WORKSHOP) FOR GRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS RETURNING FROM THE UNITED STATES TO KOSOVO

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SHORT-TERM PROGRAM (RE-ENTRY WORKSHOP) FOR GRADUATE
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS RETURNING FROM THE UNITED STATES TO KOSOVO

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PIM 76

A Capstone Paper in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of International
Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, US

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Advisor: Dr. Alla Korzh

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Abstract

The proposed short-term program is designed to prepare Kosovo graduate students to transition from their academic studies in the United States to their home country Kosovo. The program design is informed by the need assessment based on consulting participants through a survey and extensive professional observations and experience of the author. It is meant to address the participants' need to get structured support in planning and managing this significant life event, coming back to Kosovo, after one to two years away pursuing Master's degrees in their chosen field of study, and reintegrating into their country and culture. The program is based on two levels of support, online and in-person workshops timed in a way that would best provide support and tools needed to manage the challenges of re-entry to Kosovo. The curriculum of the workshop is based on experiential learning principles combining theoretical background with practical tools needed for successful reintegration to the home country. This proposed program is designed as a low-cost addition to an existing program or future similar programs implemented by international education organizations.

Introduction, Statement of the CLC Focus, and Project Parameters

For the past 13 years, I have been working on international development education programs focusing on student exchanges, policy development, higher education, and curriculum development and advancement. In the international education field, mobility programs are also called exchange programs; however, it is not always a straightforward two-way exchange of people from two countries. For example, a high school exchange might be designed in such a way that two students from two different countries and high schools travel abroad to study at their counterpart's high school and country. However, most mobility programs involve participants from one country going to another country to live there while they study, research, and learn about the local culture. This capstone paper will focus precisely on such type of exchange program for graduate students from Kosovo studying in the United States. For the last 10 years, I have been working almost exclusively with participants coming to the United States for exchange programs varying from two-day trainings for seasoned professionals and government officials, to two year-long academic undergraduate or graduate student exchanges. I have also had the privilege to work as an alumni coordinator for three years supporting returning exchange participants during their re-entry adaptation to being back in their home countries.

Currently, World Learning is implementing a five-year program to strengthen the academic capacity of Kosovo through providing graduate education for a large group of Kosovo citizens. Through this program 185 participants have been brought to the United States to complete their graduate MA/MS degrees. At this time, over 180 of the participants have completed their degrees and returned home to Kosovo. Their graduate degree programs were in various fields such as business, finance, agriculture, public administration, education, gender studies, economics, law, computer sciences, among others. These programs varied in duration,

ranging from nine to 24 months. To prepare international students for graduate studies in the United States, World Learning provides extensive support with academics and cultural adjustment. This is provided in the two stages of Pre-departure Orientation: online and in-person in Kosovo, and immediate 24/7 support post arrival to campus in the US. While students were pursuing their studies, my former team and I provided them with 24/7 support with any issues and emergencies through monitoring calls and meetings with their dedicated World Learning Program Officer (which was my role). This support ends on the day of the completion of their degree and departure from the United States to Kosovo.

Prior to working with graduate students from Kosovo, I had worked with undergraduate exchange students from the same region, more specifically from Serbia and Montenegro for six years (Global UGRAD program). These students came to the United States for a year-long academic exchange program in various fields of studies. They were provided the same cultural adjustment, academic and emotional support as the group from Kosovo. Unlike students from Kosovo, students from Serbia and Montenegro would receive a well-structured and targeted re-entry program in person about one month upon return to their home country. Over 300 alumni of that program in Serbia and Montenegro shared their experiences with me about the benefits of the re-entry workshop while I was tasked with serving as the alumni coordinator as mentioned above.

The main objective of this capstone is to create a short-term re-entry program for Kosovo returning students based on my experience with these students who have had quite different experiences when returning home from their long-term academic exchange experience in the United States. Students from Serbia and Montenegro had the re-entry workshop provided to them and hence the tools and support to work on their adjustment to being home. The graduates from

Kosovo had no preparation nor a re-entry workshop after the exchange program, which tends to be twice as long compared to the Serbia and Montenegro exchange group. This short-term re-entry program is intended to provide the Kosovo group of students, who studied in the United States for up to 24 months, support and additional tools needed to handle the reverse culture shock and readjustment to being back in their home country.

Kosovo represents a culturally diverse case that might also be applied to other countries. Kosovo's cultural diversity is based on multi-nationality mix with Albanian as a dominant nationality and several minority nationalities (Serbs, Tucks, Bosnians, and Roma) and a representation of three organized religions (Muslim, Orthodox Christian, and Catholic), which presents challenges for students upon return. Although the short-term program will be specifically designed for students from Kosovo, the program curriculum design will offer recommendations for cultural adaptations to make the short-term program more universally applicable.

Theoretical Foundations

My research on the re-entry programs for long-term study abroad students demonstrated that the topic was not sufficiently explored. Compared to the abundance of data on pre-departure preparation for study abroad, re-entry programs are somewhat overlooked in the study abroad literature. Neglecting the value of successful reintegration into the home society can lead to the subsequently decreased success in what study abroad experience has to offer.

Christofi and Thompson (2007) study demonstrates a tendency among international students choosing to return to the US after unsuccessful return to their home country. Although their study is not about the re-entry process itself, the success or failure to re-assimilate back

home is at the core of their study. The authors report reverse culture shock as one of the paramount challenges facing international students. However, like myself, authors find that relatively little research has been done on culture shock resulting from re-entry into one's home country following a long stay abroad. Furthermore, the re-entry research has been limited to quantitative studies that, although identifying the culture shock phenomenon, fail to provide an in-depth description of the experience (Christofi and Thompson, 2007). This is in line with my premise that re-entry experience requires more attention and can be crucial to the success of international students upon return to home country. Christofi and Thompson's study is based on theory from Uehara (1983) on the impact of culture shock through temporary psychological effects on a person during the adjustment process based on variables like individual's background, host culture and re-entry environment, which are some of the major points in the re-entry program I will be creating in the capstone paper.

The importance of preparing students for return home may be interpreted as one of the crucial parts of their international experience (Young, 2014). As the dean for Study Abroad at Barnard College, Columbia University, Young (2014) recognizes the stages of adjustment and their effect on the participants. One of the most important observations that aligns with my professional observations is that often time the reverse culture shock can be more severe because students assume they will adjust easily to returning to their home country. Compared to the excitement about adjustment to a new culture when international students are visiting for a predefined period of time, returning home is a challenge they often are unprepared for and feel frustrated and misunderstood by their families and peers at home. The elaborate support system that is in place upon arrival to a new country is not available for students upon return home.

Students as well as their families and friends do not have the needed tools to manage this new change.

Allison, Davis-Berman, and Berman's research (2012) explores reverse culture shock for overseas expeditions from the UK highlighting same struggles most exchange programs returnees face. The authors' primary interest was on reverse culture shock. To this effect, they briefly discussed the six main components of culture shock identified by Oberg (1960) including psychological strain; sense of loss and feelings of deprivation; feelings of rejection by the new culture; confusion in role expectations, values and feelings; surprise and anxiety at realization of cultural differences; and feelings of impotence at inability to cope with or integrate into the new environment. The spark that prompted many others to explore the culture shock phenomenon, which is now a widely accepted term in relation to stress related to traveling abroad, was initiated by Kalervo Oberg during a talk at Women's Club in Rio De Janeiro, 1954.

One of the ideas that followed a few years later by Adler (1975) about so called "U" curve is still widely used in pre-departure and re-entry workshops worldwide to explain the initial feelings of happiness and fascination followed by depression, anxiety and discomfort, that finally lead to being adjusted to a new environment abroad. Using "U" curve helps explore various factors that can influence the travel abroad experience like reasons for travel and related duration (holiday vs. gap year or business relocation), prior expectations, social network support and similar mentioned by Stewart and Legatt, 1998. The "U" curve exploration will be a part of the re-entry program in this paper. Allison, Davis-Berman and Berman (2012) recognize that reverse culture shock is less researched than needed and attempt to build on the existing culture shock literature. They explored re-entry experiences of Peace Corps evacuated staff, as well as business expatriates working abroad for a long time. In the case of evacuated staff, their return

experience was strongly influenced by the sudden nature of return; while for the business returnees the experience was related to the management of their expectations. Although these groups may not seem similar to study abroad groups I worked with, they all face the same challenges of adjusting to both a life in a new country and re-adjusting to coming back home. The circumstances of their re-entry to home country may be different but their shared return experiences corroborate the rationale for a re-entry program. Managing expectations for return can significantly help with managing re-entry experience. My experience has shown that preparation for participant's expectations for an event related to a study abroad experience can significantly offset the resulting challenge.

The main purpose of Allison, Davis-Berman and Berman's (2012) research was to gain insight into the experience of young people returning from an expedition, to understand the challenges of adjusting back to home environment. While examining existing literature, I recognized that many challenges authors explored related closely to the challenges Kosovo students face upon returning home from a long-term academic exchange program in the United States. Allison, Davis-Berman and Berman (2012) found in their study three themes related to re-adjustment to being home: a sense of isolation; extending lessons of the group; and using the group as a compass for the future.

While the above three themes are not all identical to the challenges faced by long-term academic exchange students, the first one is right to the point. A sense of isolation is one of the most recurring sentiments shared with me by returning exchange participants from Serbia and Montenegro. In discussing a sense of isolation, Allison, Davis-Berman and Berman (2012) reported that many participants shared the sense of isolation stemming from uniqueness of their experience that was hard to share with someone back home who has not experienced it. Their

research subjects reported needing to keep in touch and talk to their peers who shared this or similar experiences. This would provide them an opportunity to share and keep exploring their feelings about the experience. They were often met with limited or no interest in details on their experience by the friends or family that stayed “behind” so of speak. This same sentiment was often shared with me by alumni of exchange projects in Serbia and Montenegro. The short-term re-entry program curriculum I propose in this capstone paper would include a number of strategies to manage the feeling of isolation.

The other two themes of extending lessons of the group and using the group as a compass for the future are not directly applicable to my target group. Expedition travelers are always together and have experiences as a tightly knit group doing the same thing, while academic exchange students I work with often meet only several times as a group during their entire exchange experiences. Lastly, the third theme – using the group as a compass for the future – feels somewhat related as the experience of Kosovo students I work with. Although academic exchange participants study in different academic programs and in different locations around the United States, the basic premises of their experience abroad are similar enough that they create a connection. This can make them a support group that could be a significant factor in their future life in Kosovo. In conclusion to their research Allison, Davis-Berman and Berman (2012) confirmed that ideas by Oberg (1960) and Adler (1975) were applicable as models to interpret collected data and are still relevant for the issues of culture and reverse culture shock. Their recommendation for long-term support after return from the expeditions is in line with my recommendations on preparing students for return.

Further examining the return home experience, Wayland’s (2014) explorations seem universally applicable and connect with the main premise of my paper on the need for a

structured support in all phases of the study abroad experience from start to finish. He speaks of a “wrap-around” model of education abroad programming. This model stipulates that preparations and support throughout and post processing are equally important to success of the programming. Wayland identifies three stages of support: pre, during, and post programming. The author recognizes that the post programming support is the hardest to implement due to multiple obstacles. He states that “re-entry programming greatly enhances the global competence that engineers can acquire by helping them adjust emotionally and behaviorally and by giving them an opportunity for transformative learning” (Wayland, 2014, p.1). This resonates strongly with my initial observations and conversations with participants from Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro that structured re-entry support for students returning to Kosovo could help them better achieve the goals of their study abroad program and successfully adjust to life back home. Wayland (2014) recognized that the importance of study abroad experiences as a new way to increase one’s competence has been on the rise for a while. Regardless of this, the implementation of such programming is still widely focused on the increase in number of participating students, probably not realizing that the number of students will not necessarily increase the global competence overall, which can be achieved through quality programming.

Regardless of the benefits of the “wrap around” approach to study abroad programming, few institutions offer it. Since culture shock has been recognized as a natural part of the study abroad experience since the mid-1950s, it is no wonder that most institutions have well established the first part of the “wrap around” approach to prepare sojourners for the travel. The second part is also well established through follow-up and discussions during the experience. It is the third stage of the “wrap around” approach that is the hardest to implement. It is often due to unexpected “reverse culture shock” as the sojourners see their home anew. It is the experience

of being away that gives them a new perspective on everything they are used to at home. The severity of this shock can vary based on many factors like duration, degree of cultural differences, and specific personal circumstances (for example LGBT participants returning to home countries that are less accepting of their life style). There are various interpretations on how and why the preparation for the reverse culture shock affects returnees. Programmatically there are several reasons why it is hard to implement the stage three of “wrap around” approach: the participants no longer have the obligations towards the program implementer, and the participants are overwhelmed with new activities in home country. Some of these challenges to implementing effective phase three of “wrap around” approach will be addressed in this capstone paper as obstacles to successful reintegration and mitigation of reverse culture shock management. However, it is important to mention that Wayland sees the re-entry shock as an opportunity for learning. With some guidance from facilitators of the program the participants are able to critically reflect on the shock of the readjustment through new lenses, a transformative framework allowing them to reflect on the cultural assumptions, values, beliefs, and behaviors in their everyday life.

Needs Assessment

Through my various roles as Program Officer, Deputy Program Director and alumni coordinator at World Learning I have had the opportunity to be the co-creator, facilitator and observer of many pre-departure and re-entry workshops, as well as responsible for the on-going monitoring and support of students throughout their exchange experience. All these experiences and extensive interactions with the participants while in and upon completion of the exchange

program have given me a unique perspective on the specific challenges faced by international students from Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro.

Kosovo students I worked with are expected to get a graduate degree in the United States, return home and actively work on advancing their country in academic, business, technology, government and other fields they studied in. Although a lot of care is put into preparing participants to arrive and successfully find their place at their university in the United States, the preparation for return home is basically administrative. Immediately upon return the participants are left to their own devices to adjust to the life back home. The changes they face are multiple, and hardship is real; however, apart from the personal experience of World Learning program staff willing to advise participants, there is no strategic or structured support provided for this important life event. The reason for this has been lack of donor financial support for this activity. In this paper, I will demonstrate that exchange program providers can implement a re-entry program with minimal or no additional funds and provide structured support for easier reintegration of our participants and offer strategic planning tools for their work and meeting long-term “give back” goals.

The two sources of data that have informed the needs assessment part of this capstone are survey administered with the Kosovo returning students and my observations from past communication with exchange program returnees from Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro.

Survey

The survey I have administered has helped identify and confirm the crucial components of the short-term re-entry program design. It consisted of a number of questions that allowed participants to express their opinion on the following components of the short-term re-entry program:

- The most appropriate time for the online and in-person components of the program
- Relevant subjects related to cultural readjustment and to re-entry the work market and be successful.

Survey consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions to provide options for survey participants to share more and include anything they think is relevant but not covered by questions provided.

The survey was administered online, using Google forms which also ensured complete anonymity of the responses and provided a safe and comfortable environment for participants to express their needs and fears related to return after a long academic program in the US. The participants were free to choose to participate voluntarily if they were comfortable sharing their opinion and expectations on the subject of re-entry program.

The participants who have received the survey were selected through purposive sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) of approximately 180 Kosovo program alumni who have returned to Kosovo after having successfully graduated in the United States during program implementation between May 2015 and June 2018. The survey sample included male and female participants age 24 to 57, with representation from Albanian, Bosnian, Serbian, Turkish, Roma and other nationalities living in Kosovo. Since the aim of the capstone paper is to create the short-term program/re-entry program for this exact type of participants, they represent best informed individuals about the type of re-entry program needed upon return to their home country.

Although the survey had the possibility to reach about 180 alumni online, due to the time constraints for preparation of the capstone paper and time of the year when many of the alumni

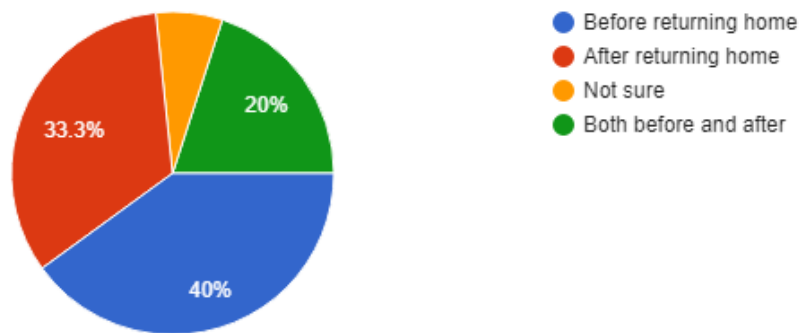
take their vacation outside of their country, I have received responses from 15 participants. The survey and the informed consent form can be found in Appendices A and B of this paper.

Based on the responses received these are the conclusions that influenced the final program design.

On the subject of timing for the re-entry program the participants have had two levels of options to choose from. The timing in relation to their return home regarding before and after physical return to Kosovo. The second level was the most appropriate time before or after return to receive relevant re-entry information.

If you had an opportunity to learn about these topics in a structured workshop, when would they be most useful:

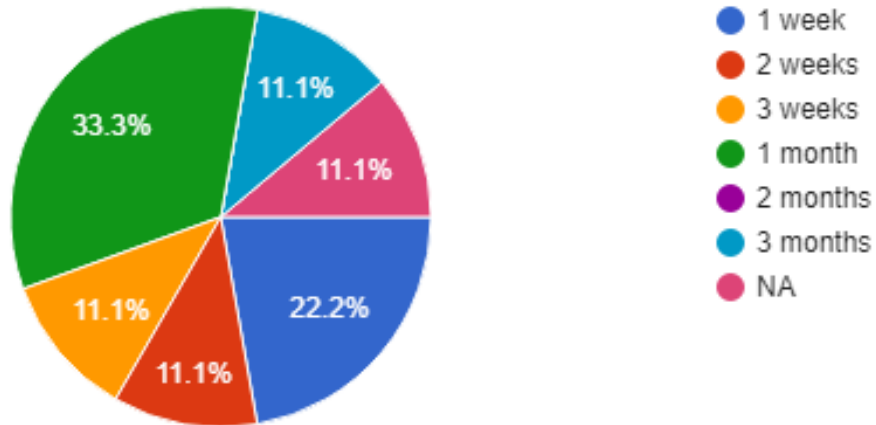
15 responses



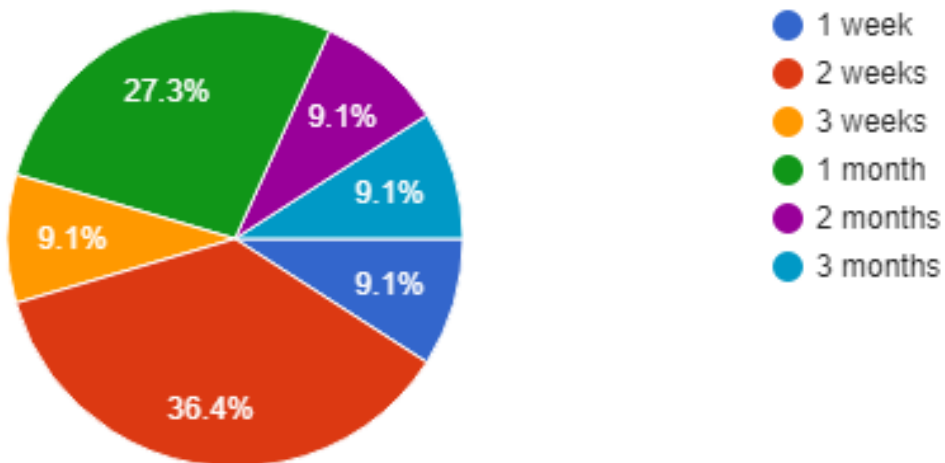
This response is in line with my initial idea to create a program that would provide re-entry information prior to return and upon return to give the best coverage to respond to the needs of the participants.

The second level of responses has provided a useful guidance as to the precise timeline for the programs before and after return to Kosovo. Most participants who chose to receive

information before return home have grouped the responses in the period about 1 month prior to return home as can be seen from the chart below.



A similar response was received for the period upon return to Kosovo as shown in the chart below:



As to the relevant information related to cultural readjustment and settling in upon their return, the participants have responded as follows:

More than 60% chose these as their expectations from the program:

- ✓ Adapting to new circumstances in home country
- ✓ How to manage change in expectations (both internal and external)
- ✓ Job search
- ✓ Career management
- ✓ Networking/ Increasing professional visibility with new qualifications

Over 40% of participants chose these as important learning for the program:

- ✓ Reverse culture shock
- ✓ How to manage change in communication
- ✓ How to manage change in professional outlook and life

The least interest was shown in the following subjects (20% or less):

- ✓ Sharing exchange experience with broader audience
- ✓ Learning tools for managing reverse culture shock

In the program curriculum I will discuss why although these may have not been the most interesting, they are an integral part of the re-adjustment process for participants and will be incorporated in the activities naturally.

Observations

My observations during almost 10 years working with exchange students from Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo were the crucial part of my decision to pursue this particular capstone paper topic and content. I have had the opportunity to work with exchange students for the

moment they apply for the exchange program until the time when they are well established in their home country years upon returning from the exchange experience. At that time, they proudly take on the role of program alumni and help others deal with pre and post exchange program adjustments.

There are several levels of challenges that have been already discussed in this paper from a theoretical point of view like cultural readjustment and reverse culture shock, feelings of estrangements and needing to find a new place for themselves experienced by the returning exchange participants.

Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo share many cultural, political and economic similarities and therefore it was only logical for me to compare the experience of students from these countries upon their return to their home country upon completion of their exchange academic program in the US.

The most important specific cultural, political and economic similarities and almost always the greatest sources of stress and need for readjustment are the following:

- ✓ Being a post conflict country on a road to recovery in national, religious and economic unrest. In case of Kosovo due to a recently ended conflict based on nationality and religion, the political situation is still volatile and changes in government leadership are frequent and extreme. This causes uncertainty in every sense, including finding somewhat secure non-politically relevant employment, forming personal and professional networks and allegiances that are safe in this everchanging climate. As graduates from some of the most prestigious U.S. universities these participants are often approached to join political parties and find employment through these politically charged relationships. That can be a

harmful long-term strategy, which causes many participants to struggle with navigating this climate upon return.

- ✓ Struggling economy of the countries, and hence hardship in finding appropriate employment with sufficient pay to sustain independent living. Independent living becomes the new norm for exchange program participants while in the US and returning to living with family presents an often-emphasized issue they all want to resolve fast upon return.
- ✓ All three countries have diverse population with three major religions and multiple nationalities living together (in some communities there are up to 40 different nationalities living within only several square miles with four to seven different religious affiliations) and it creates a multitude of expectations and issues in the everyday life as well as professional work.
- ✓ Relationships changes and adjustment to these changes and communication challenges related are often the cause of stress even months before returning home from the exchange experience in the US.

After more than six years working with participants and alumni of the exchange program in Serbia and Montenegro, I was well aware of these challenges as I have spent hundreds of hours talking to alumni of the program about the challenges, they faced from the day of departure through the years later. I also had learned how preparation for these challenges in the form of a re-entry program was useful to help manage these challenges. I was a part of the Re-entry programs for several years and have witnessed firsthand the immediate and long-term benefits of the program delivery.

Once the students from Kosovo started returning home, I was often contacted by participants to talk about their adjustment. These communications are not part of the standard program procedure but thanks to the relationships built during the years of support I have provided during their exchange experience in the US they have felt empowered to seek my support and guidance and share their hardship as well as their successes. I was not surprised to find out that the challenges and their experiences did not differ much from what I have been learning about for years before from participants from Serbia and Montenegro. These challenges were related to cultural and personal readjustment upon return, professional prospects and dealing with changed outlook after exchange experience in the US. It was only logical for me to assume that a re-entry program in some format would be beneficial to the returning Kosovo participants as well.

Limitations

Like any needs-assessment process, there were limitations that influenced the data acquisition or availability:

- The participants of the survey were not available in the short timeframe, so the response rate was lower than ideally expected.
- The literature on the topic is limited; also, the availability of relevant sources through SIT library was somewhat limited.

Goals and Objectives

Goals of the program are closely tied with the participant goals, but they also represent a part of the overall educational exchange goals to assure successful reintegration and support for the development of their home country.

Program Goals

The main goals of the program are:

- ❖ Preparing participants to successfully re-integrate to their home country
- ❖ Supporting participants to achieve the best possible outcome for their exchange program
- ❖ Providing added value to the participants towards success of their exchange program experience
- ❖ Providing added value for donor towards success of the education exchange program being funded

Participant Goals and Objectives

Personal goals

- Prepare for life back home in regard to housing, everyday activities, communication with family and friends, resuming relationships
- Learn tool to manage reverting from independent living to living with the family
- Learn how to manage lack of available funds before a job is secured and handling changes involved
- Prepare to manage possible hardship related to leaving new friends and partners in the United States.

Professional goals

- Be better prepared to search for employment in their chosen field
- Use the existing and create new networks to succeed in finding employment and advancing in the future

- Be recognized for the new skills and knowledge gained in the United States.

Re-entry Program Description

Based on my 13-year experience of supporting several hundreds of exchange participants, spending hundreds of hours communicating with international students from Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro and drawing on the needs assessment survey method that has solicited Kosovo returned students' feedback, I have created a short-term re-entry program that will consist of two components (20 hours in total):

1. Online program (pre-departure from the United States in four one-hour sessions) - four hours total
2. In-person program (two-day program within one month of return to home country) – 16 hours total

These two-re-entry program components will attempt to prepare Kosovo international students for a successful reintegration into their home country Kosovo, enabling them to thrive following their academic experience in the United States. Beginning this re-entry preparation while international students are still in the United States is essential to equipping students with competencies and tools to support them in their preparation for reverse culture shock and managing their re-entry expectations. Upon return to Kosovo, the in-person program will provide structured guidance, addressing the most common but also culturally specific issues encountered by returning Kosovo international students. The list of common issues to be explored in the program is as follows:

- Strategic planning for re-entering the job market or pursuing advanced education degrees at home;
- Providing tools and guidance on managing reverse culture shock;

- Staying involved in and benefiting from the alumni network;
- Managing specific adjustment challenges of life back home in Kosovo's cultural context;
- Utilizing academic and life experiences in the United States in their professional and academic life in Kosovo;
- Sharing extracurricular and cultural experiences in the United States that could inform the way they interact with or maybe want to influence the development and changes in their home communities throughout Kosovo;
- Creating a safe space for sharing achievements as well as challenges (hardship/frustration) of re-entry to home communities.

Curriculum of the Re-Entry Program

The curriculum is focused on orientation, coursework activities, and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum design is deemed to be useful for the Kosovo returning students and transferable to returning international students from similar countries with cultural diversity.

Based on the received responses to the survey for Needs Assessment and previous knowledge of re-entry programs the curriculum is strongly focused on two main components, with enough attentions given to all aspects of readjustment. The two components in focus are:

- Managing reverse culture shock
- Preparation to re-enter the work market with new qualifications and expectations

The curriculum is separated in two logistical parts:

- Online component of the program before departure from US that will be delivered within one month before leaving US and returning home
- In-person component of the program delivered as soon as 1-4 weeks upon return to Kosovo

Curriculum Part One (Online Component)

This part will present the curriculum for the first part of the re-entry program which will be delivered online as 4 weekly one-hour one-on-one or group of 3-5 participant Skype sessions between participant/s and Program Officer. The decision on whether participants will take part in the individual or group session would be left to participants as it covers some sensitive subjects like fears and expectations regarding return to home country and not everyone might be comfortable sharing these with others. Depending on their personal background participants will face some personal challenges that may not be discussed with the group if they are not comfortable or safe doing so (for example LGBTIQ participants who are not “out” in the home country). The first part of the program is intended to prepare students for immediate challenges they will face upon return home and how to manage these before the opportunity to have an in-person program to manage long term planning and adjustment challenges. These sessions are intended to provide safe space for discussion about participant expectations and concerns about the imminent return to home country and should therefore be conducted with outmost consideration for participants’ stress and need for confidentiality, especially in the group sessions.

Each one-hour session would include the following components:

- a) Participants sharing their expectations regarding return home and possible issues they identify;
- b) Program Officer delivering planned theoretical information and/or practical tools for managing these expectations;
- c) Discussion on practical issues related to preparation for departure and related travel tips;

- d) Sharing and discussing final mandatory academic and exchange program requirements to be fulfilled by the participant;

In regard to item b) these are the planned theoretical inputs and practical tools that would be delivered to the participants with consideration to the specific context of their expectations and related issues.

- The most important theoretical information shared is about cultural shock and it would be presented and discussed using the “U” curve (Adler, 1975) (please see image below).

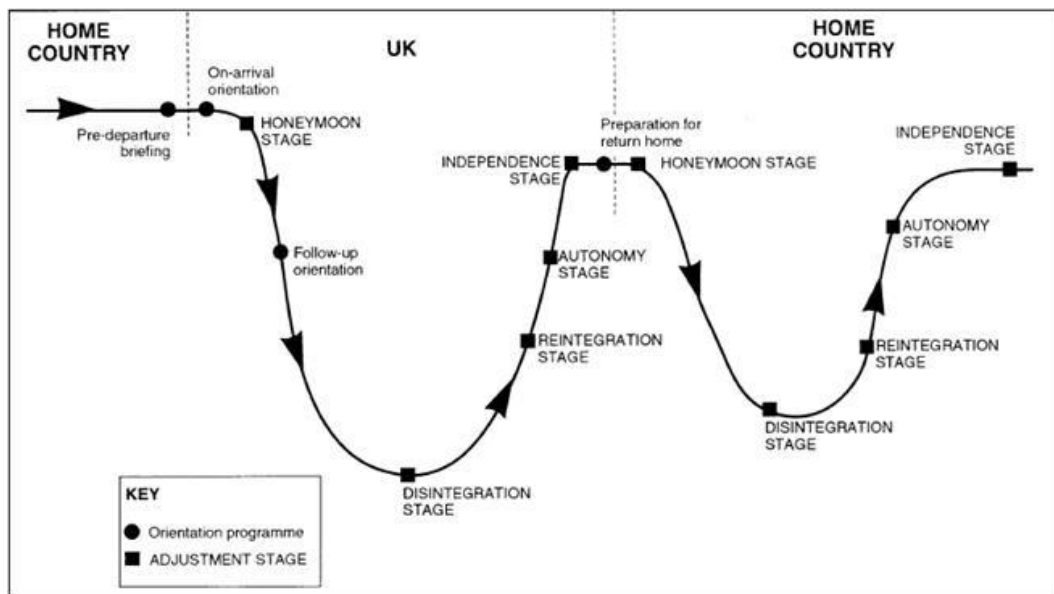


Image 1. Double “U” curve (also known as W curve) depicting stages of cultural adaptation in new country and upon return home (Barker, 1990)

- Providing relevant feedback related to personalized expectations within the scope of experience and expertise of Program Officer;
- Providing tools for managing expectations like:
 - o Creating short-term goals and new routines;
 - o Communication with peers from the program on the issues facing them upon return as a support mechanism;

- Avoiding comparisons between the two countries and instead;
- focusing on benefits of having the opportunity to know two different life styles and circumstances and discussing how that has improved their outlook for the future.
- Providing practical information on the travel like:
 - effective packing;
 - disposing of unnecessary items participants purchased for life in US (donations, selling/giving to new students at their schools, etc.);
 - preparing for immigration procedures and questions possible at departure and while transiting other countries, assuring all documents are prepared and available at time of travel, amongst others.
- Discussing information on communication challenges like:
 - Re-establishing relationships like reconnecting with partners, friends and family;
 - Maintaining contact with people remaining in US like new friends and partners;
 - Recognizing challenges of external expectations upon return home and related communications.
- Supporting participant in creating structured approach to managing professional expectations upon return such as:
 - creating a list of professional expectations and assessing feasibility at the present time;
 - discussing strategies for advanced networking and job search, among others.

Curriculum Part Two (In-Person Component)

Curriculum for the second part of the re-entry program is to be delivered in person as two-day (8 hours/day) group sessions with 10-50 participants and Program Officer/other assigned staff. This component of the program would take place in participants' country of origin, in this case Kosovo, in the World Learning office in Prishtina (the capital of Kosovo).

The in-person program component will consist of several longer activities meant to address the most important subjects identified through needs assessment in an experiential learning environment intended for participants to actively engage, seek solutions and use theoretical and practical information offered by the facilitator.

The sessions are not meant to address individual adjustment issues at a time but rather several connected issues together to show the interconnectivity of relevant theory, accrued knowledge and experiences from the U.S. exchange program, with the future endeavors and opportunities in the home country of Kosovo.

The curriculum will consist of six 1.5-3.5 hour long sessions intended to achieve a particular goal towards achieving the overall re-entry program goals. The outline below will explain individual session goals and activities undertaken to achieve this goal. More details on the hour-per-hour schedule of the program can be found in Appendix D.

Session One:

This is an introductory session and is intended to facilitate group cohesion and introduce an agenda for the two-day program as well as reacquaint or introduce new members. The reason for this is that some of the participants that will be in the group have not had the chance to meet before. It is crucial for participants to feel at ease in the group so that participants can share their experiences and discuss the highlights and hardships of re-adjusting to their life upon return to

Kosovo in an open and safe environment. To achieve this the following activities will be carried out:

- ✓ Facilitator will explain the goals and expectations, and briefly open these for discussion with participants so they can add to the list of expectations as needed.
- ✓ The introduction game will be implemented: Human treasure hunt (Brandes, D. 1995, p. 97). In this game participants are asked to find peers who have a certain common characteristic. Since it is intended to create a relaxed and familiar atmosphere there will be chosen randomly by the facilitator and called out every two to three minutes giving participants time to find at least one other person who shares the identified characteristic and chat with them for a bit. The activity is usually called off after 15-20 minutes and the energy of the group is at its peak rather than waiting for it to die down. This is an ideal way to also keep the group energized for the remaining part of the session in which facilitator will introduce the rules of group conduct for the remainder of the program.

Session Two:

Session two is intended to revisit and refresh the existing knowledge on the theoretical background on culture shock and reverse culture shock. Although this was a subject of one of the online sessions, now that the participants are actually going through the stages of “U” curve (see image 1. above) it would be timely to apply theory and practice. This session would allow for reviewing the practical use of some of the tools discussed previously in online component of the program, and how they are working for this group of participants. Discussion topics to be included in the discussion are as follows:

- Challenges in communication and reconnecting with friends and family;
- Challenges of re-adjusting to life in Kosovo (financial strain, living arrangements, political issues encountered, specific cultural adjustment challenges, among others).

Session Three:

Session three is the crucial session of the day one of the program as it makes the basis for the entire program action planning. It is important for the participants to engage and participate fully to be able to benefit from the session and the entire program. The session activity is called “Map of my experience”. The participants are asked to create a visual outline of their experience in the US by using words, images, drawings, oral presentation, any form they are comfortable with and find most suitable. The exact instructions are as follows.

Activity “Map of My Experience”

Participants are asked to take one or more flip chart papers and as many as needed multicolored markers to work on their individual presentation. If participants have been at the same location/university, they are allowed to work on the presentation together as long as they all contribute and participate in the presentation afterwards. The presentation should involve the following components at a minimum:

- Timeline of time their studies in the US;
- A short story of the location and university, and how they engaged with the academic and local community (e.g. volunteering, international days at university, community work, etc.);

- A brief description of academic program, and knowledge / skills gained;
- A brief overview of knowledge acquired about how their chosen industry functions in the US (as learned through field visits, internships, work, volunteering, meeting industry leaders at conferences or at networking / career days/events at their university, among others);
- Their personal conclusion on how they have changed, if they feel they have as a person and professional due to these experiences.

Logistically this is a session in which the main facilitator may need some help from other staff members if the group is larger than 15 participants, to help visit with everyone while they work, answer any question they may have on the activity guidelines and keep everyone on the schedule.

At the end of this session participants and facilitator discuss in an open forum the impressions from the activities and theoretical inputs of the day. Wrap up the first day of the program with a relaxed brain-storming session on lessons learned from the days' activities which will be helpful for the opening session on day two.

Day Two - Session Four:

Session four will be a continuation of session three from the previous day. It is intended to support participants in finding connections between experiences and knowledge gained during international exchange experience with their new life circumstances; and how to use these to positively affect their life and their community. This activity has a form of action planning session titled "How to make my experience map my path to future". The instructions given to the participants are as follows:

Activity "How to make my experience map my path to future"

Based on the number of participants, participants would be guided to form groups of three-seven, selection of group members would be made in advance by facilitator to assure diversity, maximum sharing and networking potential in the groups. Once in the group participants would be asked to shortly share the “Map of my experience” they have prepared the previous day. In the meantime, the group participants would look for similarities as well as differences which they would outline on a flip chart paper or deliver to the rest of the group in a short oral presentation. Sharing and discussion in each group would last no longer than 35 minutes to one hour (depending on the size of the group). After this, each group would present their findings to everyone present.

The facilitator would use these presentations to make a summary which would support the next activity. Participants would be asked to take a short break (15-30 minutes based on size of the group) and use this time to discuss with their group the challenges their local community or country as a whole is facing, especially the ones they have noticed since arriving back home.

“Brainstorming” activity

After returning to the large group facilitator would lead a short brain storming activity to summarize participants’ finding from the informal discussion they had over the break. Using this information and the presentations from the previous activities, the facilitator would show participants an example of how to connect the experience and knowledge they brought from the US to the local context. I will use a simple example here as it is impossible to predict every possible scenario that could arise from these discussions:

Let’s assume that a participant who studied in a Master’s of Public Policy program identifies a policy related issue in their local community in regard to handling proper waste disposal causing accumulation of dangerous and serious public health hazards, as well as causing

the community to lose a visual appeal to possible tourist visitors. Another participant from the group has had an internship with the local government at their location in the US and has shared experiences with policy creation and management of city facilities and resources. Participants are asked to discuss how they see a possibility to use some of what was learned in the US to help steer the local community towards improving policies that are currently in place. The participants are asked to identify the following in this scenario:

- ✓ Identify similarities and differences between the issues in both locations;
- ✓ Identify similarities and differences between how the policies are set up and created in both locations;
- ✓ Identify policy changing scenario that seems feasible to transfer to local Kosovo context looking at the best-case scenario;
- ✓ Identify stakeholders who could be allies in supporting this positive change;
- ✓ Identify stakeholders who would be opposing the change;
- ✓ Identify the role they could take on in the process.

Upon completing this activity, the facilitator asks the participants to take some time and think and discuss how their experiences could be transferable to their local communities and Kosovo as a country based on this scenario. The discussion is intended to take place in small groups of their choosing during lunch break.

Session Five:

Session five is a continuation of the dialogue on the feasibility of using new skills and experiences but the focus is placed on employing the "human potential" in their new networks. The main focus is on providing the participants with practical skills in identifying networking

opportunities and the value of developing existing and creating new networks as part of their adjustment.

Role-play activity

Participants will be asked to participate in a role-play activity in which they will practice networking and “mingling” skills. As the participants (at this point alumni) of such a large scale exchange program as Kosovo TLP they will be frequently invited to spend time at important government, local universities’, and US Embassy organized events. These are valuable opportunities to meet people relevant for their work in policy and having an effect on the future development of their country, their future job opportunities, or simply networking with likeminded individuals in their chosen field of study. Although in the US it is quite common to learn how to network as part of the lifestyle, it is not a skill most Kosovo participants have. Some have learned during their studies, for example, if they were studying in a Master of Business Administration program that would be standard part of the curriculum, but most have not had a chance to practice the skill with proper guidance. These are the instructions participants will receive:

Activity

You are at a conference in your chosen profession. You know that some renowned and influential people will be present, and you will have an opportunity to meet them in a more informal setting during a “meet and greet” event. Please work in groups of three and come up with a strategy to introduce yourself effectively in 30-60 seconds and make a lasting impression thus opening the door to future interactions and possible cooperation. Each group will be invited to “role-play” the proposed scenario/conversation. Participants will be given 15 minutes to prepare their strategy/presentation and three minutes for the role-play.

After all groups have presented, the facilitator will guide a discussion and generate conclusions on successful communication techniques and skills. The participants will be advised to seek and use multiple online resources to advance these skills as well as practice with their peers who have more experience.

Session Six:

After a short break, the final session of the program will be the final opportunity for participants to learn about and practice their skills. The goal of the session is to draw conclusions on the “relevance” of their new skills and knowledge in their home culture and work environment. The additional goal of this session is to carry out a short evaluation of the whole program to help improve the delivery in the future. This would be done by offering a written evaluation for participants to fill out anonymously and leave in a designated box before leaving the program space. The evaluation form can be found in Appendix E.

As the beginning of the session the facilitator will ask three volunteers from the group to be part of the panel that would lead the discussion on the future place of Kosovo TLP graduates in the Kosovo society. They will be advised to open the session with a few questions they have and then open the floor to “questions and answers” session (Q&A session). The facilitator will be available to help as the moderator but only if the discussion goes off subject.

The discussion/Q&A session will last for one hour and the facilitator will call for a final closure of the program by thanking the participants, asking them to fill out the forms and take part in the informal post program farewell with staff and their peers to practice their skills more and network.

This effectively concludes the curriculum for the entire re-entry program. Please see the detailed schedule in the Appendices C and D for visual representation of the program curriculum and resources used/needed.

Staffing Plan

The intended program activities are planned for implementation by one lead staff member, ideally the US based Program Officer who has worked with the students/participants during their stay in the US, with possible support by a few more local Kosovo team members during the in-person component of the program. The staff member who is facilitating both components of the program must have experience with participant support, and individual and group delivery of training materials.

Program Marketing

The program does not need to be marketed separately as it is delivered as part of the overall exchange experience for the participants. Nevertheless, it can and should be a part of the “marketing” of the program when proposed to donors as well as to the participants who are applying, as it increases the overall value of the program delivery by directly contributing to the overall success of the returning participants.

Logistics

Due to the specific nature of program delivery the logistics have two components. The first component is the online delivery and it does not include any specific logistical preparations as it is delivered entirely online and requires the use of already existing resources for both participant and facilitator (computer, Skype or similar software, and stable, fast Internet connection). The second component of the program delivered in-person would require the use of the office space

in the World Learning field office in Kosovo, specifically the conference room, with access to kitchen and toilet facilities for staff and participants. The participants mostly live in the same city where the World Learning office is located or in cities/villages within one-two hour long bus travel, so no accommodations or travel arrangements would be needed. In special cases, for participants with special needs due to disability or health issues appropriate and reasonable accommodations would be made in the form of online participation or transport to and from the office.

Health and Safety Plan and Crisis Management Plan

During the first component of the program the participants are based in the US where they have the full support for health, safety and crisis management in place. During the in-person component of the program, the participants would be in the office space of the organization where there are standard safety measures in place, and since they are in their own country where they have access to health services, additional accommodations are not necessary.

Budget and Budget Notes

One of the main ideas behind this short-term program design is to make it cost effective and easy to implement. Therefore, the focus of this section will be on the effective use of existing resources. Since the re-entry program would have two components, the budget will include the needed resources, staffing and other costs that are relevant only as they are deviating from the original already available funding for the overall exchange programing for Kosovo students. To clarify this point, the Kosovo Transformational Leadership Program (Kosovo TLP) scholarship program has a budget which does not include this re-entry program. The budget shown here will

show the additional cost needed to add this re-entry program to the implementation of the original Kosovo TLP program. Since the original budget for Kosovo TLP is proprietary to World Learning and contains confidential information, it does not make sense to ask permission to include the entire Kosovo TLP budget here as it holds an abundance of data not relevant for the proposed re-entry program.

Budget

Program name: Re-entry program component 1 (online)			
Participants: 10 (randomly chosen number to show possible program costs as it could vary between 10-50 participants depending on the end semester of their program, typically more participants graduate and leave at the end of Spring then Fall semester)			
Program duration in hours: Four			
Currency: USD			
Source of funding: To be proposed to be include in original program Kosovo TLP budget			
Budget item	Cost per unit	Units	Total per budget item
<i>Staff</i>			\$1,400
Program Officer (cost per participant for four one-hour sessions, total 40 hours for 10 participants)	\$28.00	40	\$1,120.00
Staff benefits (25%)			\$280.00
<i>Indirect Rate (5%)</i>			\$70.00
Grand Total			\$1,470.00

Program name: Re-entry program component 2 (in-person)			
Participants: 10			
Program duration in hours:16			
Currency: USD			
Source of funding: To be proposed to be include in original program Kosovo TLP budget			
Budget item	Cost per unit	Units	Total per budget item
<i>Participant cost (10 participants)</i>			\$200.00
Refreshments and meals for two-day program	\$20	10	\$200.00
<i>Staff</i>			\$832.50

Program Officer (1 employee at 18 % FTE for four days - two days of travel + two-day program)	\$2,200	0.18	\$396.00
Program Officer staff in Kosovo (two staff members for two days each, total 18% FTE)	\$1,500	0.18	\$270.00
Staff benefits (25%)			\$166.50
<i>Travel expenses</i>			\$1,500.00
Participant travel (for special circumstances like disability or health related issues requiring these accommodations) (per participant)	\$50	2.0	\$100.00
Travel, accommodation and per diem cost for Program Officer from HQ in Washington, DC to Prishtina, Kosovo	\$1400	1.0	\$1,400.00
<i>Direct costs (e.g. communication, supplies, rent, etc.)</i>			\$50.00
Program supplies (per participant)	\$5	10.0	\$50.00
<i>Indirect Rate (5%)</i>			\$129.13
Grand Total		4,400	\$2,711.63

*FTE-Full Time Equivalent

Budget Narrative

This budget is to account for the amount that it would cost to deliver the re-entry program to ten participants returning from the US to Kosovo from the study abroad experience. This budget includes the costs of personnel required to execute the re-entry program, travel expenses and other direct costs. It also accounts for any indirect costs that may occur.

Some conclusions to be made are that staffing costs make for the bulk of the program expenses. The cost of additional resources is minimal mainly because some resources are already made available through the World Learning Kosovo TLP program budget and office resources both in the US and Kosovo.

The funding source for the program would ideally come from USAID as the addition to

the original Kosovo TLP program budget or as allowed reallocation within the original budget.

Budget Notes

Direct Cost

- **Participant cost and travel** is planned to cover basic meal, refreshment and special circumstances travel only for the in-person part of the re-entry program taking place in Kosovo.
- **Staff time** is budgeted at planned level of engagement with respect to full time equivalent (FTE) for the duration of the program (more details on individual staffing time allocation is available in Staffing section).
- **Staff travel expenses** are planned for one trip from the US to Kosovo and back for one Program Officer. This cost includes all cost of flight, accommodation, and per diem as per published US government allowance rates.

Indirect Cost

Indirect Rate covers expenses, such as maintenance of office space, equipment and supplies, support for volunteer expenses, and additional human resource if needed. The existing resources of World Learning are vital to the success of the program therefore the direct and indirect costs are a very low rate just to cover for minimal cost of implementation and possible contingencies.

Evaluation Plan

The program evaluation is important for a continuous improvement of the program delivery. Both formative and summative evaluation is built into the program. Formative evaluation will include an anonymous “Helping and Hindering” activity (administered as a Google survey). The “Helping and Hindering” activity will encourage participants to share their concerns and questions regarding their return home and comments on the available support

system and monitor students' experiences in the first four weeks of the program online so that it could be adapted to meet participants' needs when they return home. Upon return home, the participants will continue sharing their feedback in the "Helping and Hindering" activity to help adapt planning for the in-person program component, if needed. Please see the template for the "Helping and Hindering" activity in Appendix E.

Summative evaluation will involve a program evaluation survey administered at the end of the program in Kosovo. The survey will consist of Likert scale type questions and open-ended questions to provide space for comprehensive feedback. The program evaluation form can be found in Appendix F. The data collected through the "Helping and Hindering" activity and the program evaluation survey will be used by the program team to improve the program delivery in the future to ensure its successful implementation.

Conclusion

This capstone paper was prepared with a set of learning objectives intending to build on the existing knowledge in the field and my professional experience working at World Learning to design a short-term, re-entry program for international students returning to Kosovo from the United States.

The subject of re-entry to one's home country from academic studies in the US is not sufficiently researched. More scientific and practical input from professionals and educators in the field would be valuable if systematically approached in a large-scale research.

Creating a hybrid online and in-person re-entry program platform demonstrates that re-entry programs can be delivered at a low cost. I have no doubt regarding the usefulness of the program as my experience and work with over 1,000 alumni from long-term academic exchange

programs in the US confirms that readjustment to the home country can be as stressful and sometimes even more than studying abroad.

It is my hope that the international education community will pursue avenues to provide re-entry programming support to international students, which is bound to contribute to the overall success of study abroad programs.

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<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Preparation-and-Arrival/Facing-culture-shock>

Appendices

Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey and share your perspectives about your experience returning home after your academic studies in the United States. As part of my Master's in International Education, I am preparing a capstone paper which will be a proposal for a re-entry workshop for someone like you, a recipient of a graduate academic scholarship who has returned home after successfully completing their program. Through this survey, I would like to hear your insights about the challenges you have faced when you returned home from your studies in the United States.

Please rest assured that all information collected through the survey is anonymous and it will only be used as part of the needs assessment for me to better understand your needs and to design the appropriate re-entry workshop. No personal data will be requested in the survey or is needed for you to successfully complete the survey.

If you would like to participate in this survey, please press next at the bottom of the page, and that will be considered your consent for collecting the anonymous data you provide.

Please be advised that there is no obligation to do so, and if you are not interested to share your experiences, we thank you for your time.

1. How long have you been back in your home country?
 - a. Less than
 - b. 1-3 months
 - c. 4-6 months

d. 6-12 months

e. 12-18 months

f. Other _____

2. How long was your academic program in the United States?

a. Less than one academic year

b. 1 academic year

c. 1.5 academic years

d. 2 academic years

e. More than 2 academic years

f. Other _____

3. Before departing to the United States, you had a chance to participate in a Pre-

Departure Orientation workshop. What information was most useful in that

workshop (please mark all that apply and add anything else not listed in the text box):

a. Information on academic expectations in US

b. Information on culture shock and adaptation strategies

c. Information on life in United States

d. Information on program policies

e. Information on university policies and resources

f. _____

4. Based on that experience, if a re-entry workshop related to your scholarship

program would be available, what topics would be most useful (please mark all that apply and share your ideas in the space provided):

- a. Reverse culture shock
 - b. Adapting to new circumstances in home country
 - c. How to manage change in communication
 - d. How to manage change in professional outlook and life
 - e. How to manage change in expectations (both internal and external)
 - f. Job search
 - g. Career management
 - h. Networking/ Increasing professional visibility with new qualifications
 - i. Sharing exchange experience with broader audience
 - j. Learning tools for managing reverse culture shock
 - k. _____
 - l. _____
 - m. _____
5. If you had an opportunity to learn about these topics in a structured workshop, when would they be most useful:
- a. Before returning home
 - b. After returning home
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Both before and after
 - e. Other _____
6. Based on your previous answer please choose between question 6A and 6B below:
- 6 A. If you chose after returning home, how long after the return would the workshop be useful:

- a. 1 week
- b. 2 weeks
- c. 3 weeks
- d. 1 month
- e. 2 months
- f. 3 months
- g. Other_____

6 B. If you chose before returning home, how long before the return would the workshop be useful:

- a. 1 week
- b. 2 weeks
- c. 3 weeks
- d. 1 month
- e. 2 months
- f. 3 months
- g. Other_____

7. What mode of workshop delivery would be your most preferred option:

- a. In person
- b. Online (Skype or similar application)
- c. Both in person and online
- d. Either in person or online
- e. Not sure
- f. Other_____

8. If you selected the session in person would you prefer it to be:
 - a. Individual one - on - one session with your advisor
 - b. Group session with other participants
 - c. Either
 - d. Both
 - e. _____
9. Similarly, if you selected the session delivered online would you prefer it to be:
 - a. Individual one - on - one session with your advisor
 - b. Group session with other participants
 - c. Either
 - d. Both
 - e. _____
10. Do you consider yourself to be:
 - a. At the beginning of your professional career
 - b. Mid-level professional
 - c. Senior level professional
 - d. Other: _____
11. How would you rate your satisfaction with adjustment to being home since you returned?
 - a. Very satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Somewhat satisfied
 - d. Not really satisfied

- e. Completely unsatisfied
- f. Other _____

12. If you would like to tell us more about your experience adjusting to being home, please use this box to share your experience.

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Marija

Appendix B

Survey Participant Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

Researcher: Marija Nikolic

Email: marija.nikolic@mail.sit.edu Phone: 202-765-6964

Program Title: Short-term Re-entry workshop

You are invited to take part in a survey that may inform the content of a proposed curriculum for the re-entry workshop for students returning to Kosovo or a similar country from a long term educational exchange experience in the United States of America. The decision to participate is up to you. I would be asking you to about your experience and challenges of returning home and re-adjusting to your home country after a long educational exchange stay in the United States. The questionnaire would also include questions on your opinion on specific information that you think could have helped you better prepare for this adjustment process, and when you think would have been the best time to receive such information.

If you decide to participate in this survey, you will not be asked to share any personal information. I will be the only person with access to the anonymous questionnaire responses, which will be kept under password protection. The data collected from the survey will be summarized and used as aggregated information in my capstone paper. I will not use direct quotes from answers to open ended questions in the questionnaire. All the collected data will be removed from the survey web site at the end of survey period and the raw data deleted permanently after aggregated information is used for the final capstone paper.

The survey should take 15-25 minutes to complete online. You can decide to not answer any question or to stop participating at any time during the process.

Your participation in the questionnaire will be very important in creating a strong and useful curriculum for the proposed re-entry workshop that could help future exchange participants prepare for successful return to their home country. The final capstone paper will be stored in the School for International Education (SIT) library.

Please sign if you are willing to participate.

X _____ Date _____

Questions or concerns beyond what are addressed by the researcher can be directed to:

Advisor: Alla Korzh

Email: alla.korzh@sit.edu

OR

SIT Institutional Review Board:

Email: irb@sit.edu

Appendix C

Timeline	Duration	Goal(s)	Activity	Materials needed
4 th week before return home	1 hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of relevant concepts for re-entry process - Providing safe space for discussion on participant expectations and concerns regarding imminent return to home country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing participant information on theoretical concept of reverse culture shock - discussing practical tools for adjustment like creating short-term goals and new routines, communication with peers from the program on the issues facing them upon return, avoiding comparisons between the two countries and instead focusing on benefits of having the opportunity to know two different life styles and circumstances and how that has improved the outlook for the future 	<p>Stabile internet connection, Skype enabled computer and quiet/discreet space for communication on both ends</p>

<p>3rd week before return home</p>	<p>1 hour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supporting participant in creating structured approach to managing expectations upon return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating a list of professional expectations - discussing strategies for remote networking 	<p>Stabile internet connection, Skype enabled computer and quiet/discreet space for communication on both ends</p>
<p>2nd week before return home</p>	<p>1 hour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing space for recognizing and acknowledging stress related to return home on personal issues like housing, relationships, reconnecting with partners, friends and family - providing simple strategies to balance stress in the final weeks of stay in US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discussing personal stressors related to return home at this point in the process - providing guidance on managing stress in final weeks 	<p>Stabile internet connection, Skype enabled computer and quiet/discreet space for communication on both ends</p>

<p>last week before return home</p>	<p>1 hour (or more)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bringing focus back to the basic practical issues of international travel is intended to help refocus and reduce stress of thinking about the long-term future and success of reintegration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - session on practicalities of travel and how-to best approach first few weeks upon return to home country 	<p>Stabile internet connection, Skype enabled computer and quiet/discreet space for communication on both ends</p>
<p>Total number of sessions 4</p>	<p>Total duration: 4 hours</p>		<p>Main subjects of re-entry preparation introduced and discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reverse culture shock - Adapting to new circumstances - Changes in communication, professional outlook and life style - Internal and external expectations - Networking 	

Appendix D

Timeline (3-4 weeks upon return to Kosovo)	Schedule per hour	Goal(s)	Activity	Materials needed	Additional human resources and support needed
Day 1	9am-11am	Set up the dynamic for the program and create a safe space for achieving overall goals.	Introduction to the program including: - Warm up game/activity to re-acquaint and/or introduce unfamiliar members of the participant group; clarifying program goals and expectations;	Projector/power point set up or flip chart stand and paper; handouts with the agenda for entire program including a link to all other	None

			outline plan of activities for the entire program.	relevant resources online (cost saving measure)	
	11:00am-11:30am		Break		
	11:30am-1:00pm	Refresh participants knowledge of the subject and introduce new tools need to successfully manage re-entry culture shock and readjustment	Culture shock/Reverse culture shock theory and practical tools (presentation and discussion) (detailed description of activity on curriculum narrative)	Power point projector/screen or flip chart stand/paper set up	Depending on the size of the group it is needed to have at least 1 staff person per 10 participants (includes the lead facilitator)

					for this activity to help support/guide the participants and assure timely completion.
	1:00pm- 2:30pm		Lunch break	N/A	Depending on group size 1-3 staff members needed to manage timely conclusion of activity
	2:30pm- 5:00pm	Participants create a visual outline of their experience on US as a tool	“Map of my experience” activity (detailed	Flip chart papers (one -	

	including a 15-minute break mid-session	to explore the skills and knowledge they gained that can help with their cultural readjustment and future planning Wrap up of the day by exploring lessons learned from two main sessions of the day	description of activity is in the narrative part of the chapter Curriculum part two)	two per participant, multicolored markers and crayons, multicolored post it notes.	
Day 2	9:00am-12:30pm (includes time for short 15-minute coffee break while	Support participants in finding paths between experiences and knowledge gained during international exchange experience with their new life circumstances; and how to use these to positively affect their life and their community	Action planning:” How to make my experience map my path to future” (detailed description of activity is in the narrative part of the chapter Curriculum part two)	Markers and a few flip chart papers	

	preparing presentations)				
	12:30pm-2:00pm		Lunch		*See details on lunch break from day 1
	2:00pm-3:30pm	Summarizing the previous activities guide participants in discovering how to network internally and externally, negotiate their new life in Kosovo and find their own professional place in their home country	Networking, negotiating and finding your place	Flip chart stand and paper	
	3:30pm-3:45pm		Break		

	3:45-5:00pm	Conclusions discussion facilitated by Program Officer but led by participants, followed by written evaluation of the whole program.	Conclusions and evaluation	Printed out evaluation forms	
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Appendix E

Dear participant,

As we are working together to prepare you for successful return home, we are meeting every week to discuss various subjects relevant to your preparations for return. We are aware that there are various questions, concerns or ideas you may have about what you may need to be better prepared for return, so we have created this online tool for you to share your feedback with us in an anonymous way and help us provide you with the best support possible during this stressful period. You can access this form as many times as you need in the following period before we meet in person in Kosovo about 4 weeks upon your arrival there. As this form is anonymous and always starts from beginning, you can use it every week after our session or several times a week, practically every time you have some feedback or concerns you want us to address during these sessions.

Please consider this form a space where you can share your ongoing concerns regarding preparations to return home as well as after you are back in Kosovo. As we are meeting every week to discuss various aspects of preparation and tools to prepare for adapting to being back home, you may come up with ideas, questions, concerns that you would prefer not to directly share while we are in the individual or group sessions. This is the space where you can address all of these and we will incorporate the general answers to these questions or concerns in the sessions to assure your continuous anonymity and confidentiality.

You have the option to also provide us with feedback on the conversations we have every week and ask for more in-depth clarifications on subjects of interest regarding your return home or introduce new subjects that you consider relevant and helpful at this final stage of your exchange experience.

Please remember that this form is entirely anonymous, and the data shared will be used exclusively to improve our support to You during this important period.

Question 1: During the last month of my stay in the U.S. I am interested to learn more about how to manage these questions related to my return home to Kosovo (feel free to include multiple questions, concerns and ideas on support you need):

Question 2: These are the questions I have after the Skype re-entry session/s that took place in the last few weeks regarding my return home (please feel free to share anything you need more clarification on what was discussed in our sessions, we are happy to provide more clarification to support you towards successful reintegration to life in Kosovo):

Appendix F

Evaluation of the Re-entry program

Dear participant,

We have worked together with you to prepare you for successfully returning home from your exchange experience in the US for several months now. We would like to hear from you about how useful this experience was for you, as you can estimate today at the end of our journey together. Please feel free to share your feedback with us both positive and negative, we do encourage you to be constructive in your feedback and if possible, offer ideas on improvements, so that we can best use your thoughts to improve the future programs for your fellow alumni of the program. Please be advised that the evaluation is anonymous, and you will not be asked any personally identifying questions as your responses will serve exclusively as a learning and improving tool for our team.

Thank you kindly!

Part one: Re-entry program delivered online in the US

Please rank the statements by choosing the most appropriate answer on the scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the least likely to agree with the statement, and 5 representing strong agreement with the statement).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. Knowledge on reverse culture shock stages was useful for me when I returned home.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Discussing challenges of returning home in advance of the return has helped	1	2	3	4	5

me prepare for return with more structured approach.

3. Receiving advanced guidance and travel tips on preparation for return from a long-term exchange program was very useful for me.	1	2	3	4	5
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4. Having a plan on how to approach communication challenges associated to returning to Kosovo from US was very useful.	1	2	3	4	5
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5. I think the information I received on reverse culture shock and preparations for return to Kosovo was timely delivered in a manner I could easily use to adjust to my personal needs.	1	2	3	4	5
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6. Now that you are back home for a few weeks we would like to know if there were topics of interest we did not discuss in these online sessions or provide enough information about, but you now think would have been useful for you. Please use this space to share your thoughts and ideas:

7. Please share any comments and suggestions you have for our team, on how we could make this part of re-entry program provide better support:

Part two: Re-entry program delivered in-person in Kosovo upon your return

Please rank the statements by choosing the most appropriate answer on the scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the least likely to agree with the statement, and 5 representing strong agreement with the statement).

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. It was very useful for me to discuss the stages of reverse culture shock now that I have returned home.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I found it useful to create a “map” of my experience in the US as a tool to support my re-entry efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I appreciated learning about other participants experience of returning to Kosovo.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I think sharing our return experiences and discussing possibilities has made it easier to start planning my future activities in Kosovo	1	2	3	4	5
5. I appreciated the opportunity to network with my peers and learn more about how to communicate effectively about my new experience and knowledge from US	1	2	3	4	5

6. The activities were appropriate for the subject matter and made it easy to learn though using personal experience.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The room and other resources were appropriate for the program.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The facilitator has made it easy for me to engage and express myself in the program.	1	2	3	4	5

9. I wish we had more time to discuss these subjects:

10. I am still interested to learn about following subjects/concepts/tools I believe would be beneficial to my successful adjustment to life in Kosovo:

11. Please tell us how we could have done better:

Thank you!