



Study Abroad: Academic Purpose Statement

The following information is directed to students who are applying to study abroad and serves to guide them in the writing of an Academic Purpose Statement.

The International Office at Uppsala University (UU) offers students different opportunities to do internships or study part of their degree abroad. For the academic year 2017-18 these opportunities are

<i>Exchange studies</i>	Students at UU may study one or two semesters at one of our partner universities.
<i>Erasmus internship</i>	Students can do a 2-12 month long internship or gather data for their graduation project in another EU-country.
<i>Minor Field Studies</i>	Students apply for the MFS grant to gather data for their graduation project in a country approved by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (only for Nordic citizens and students with a permanent residence permit)
<i>Summer schools</i>	Students can study a short course during summer, usually between 5-7,5 credits, at selected partner universities.

The International Office works actively to support students in improving their employability through maximizing their study abroad experience, identifying competences and ability to verbalize them. When students apply to any of the programs offered by the International Office they are asked write an Academic Purpose Statement (APS). In the APS, students should aim to explain how the activity they are applying for will contribute to their future academic and professional life. For example, when applying for exchange studies, students should be able to account for their selection of host country, university and desired courses. When applying for an Erasmus Internship it should be clear how the selected internship is relevant to the degree studied at Uppsala University.

Research presented by CIMO¹, the Finnish agency for EU-funding of international programs, from 2014 shows that a study abroad experience does not necessarily give you an advantage when applying for a job unless you are able to account for what competences have been learnt or improved during from the experience. This result is corroborated by a study made by the EU-commission, 'The Erasmus Impact Study', that shows that many employers are looking for the soft skills competences developed through a study abroad experience². During spring 2017 a group of students at Uppsala University a smaller interview based study with employers from both the private and the public sectors about their attitudes towards study abroad. Again, the attitudes were positive but only if the applicant was able to tell how the experience had contributed to the development of a skillset sought by the employer.

In order to improve your employability, it is of great importance that you are able to identify and tell others about your aquired skills and competences. Writing an APS is the starting point of a conscious process to reflect over your choices and explain what you are expecting to gain from a study abroad experience. Part of that is through identifying concrete academic and professional competences useful to your future career but it is equally important to look at the development of soft skills. The APS is your opportunity to show your process of identifying skills you would like to master and how you will obtain them through your study abroad experience.

¹ CIMO (2014), Fakta - Facts and Figures 1/2014: Hidden Competences.

² European Commission (2014), The Erasmus Impact Study: Effects of mobility on the skills and the internationalisation of higher education institutions.