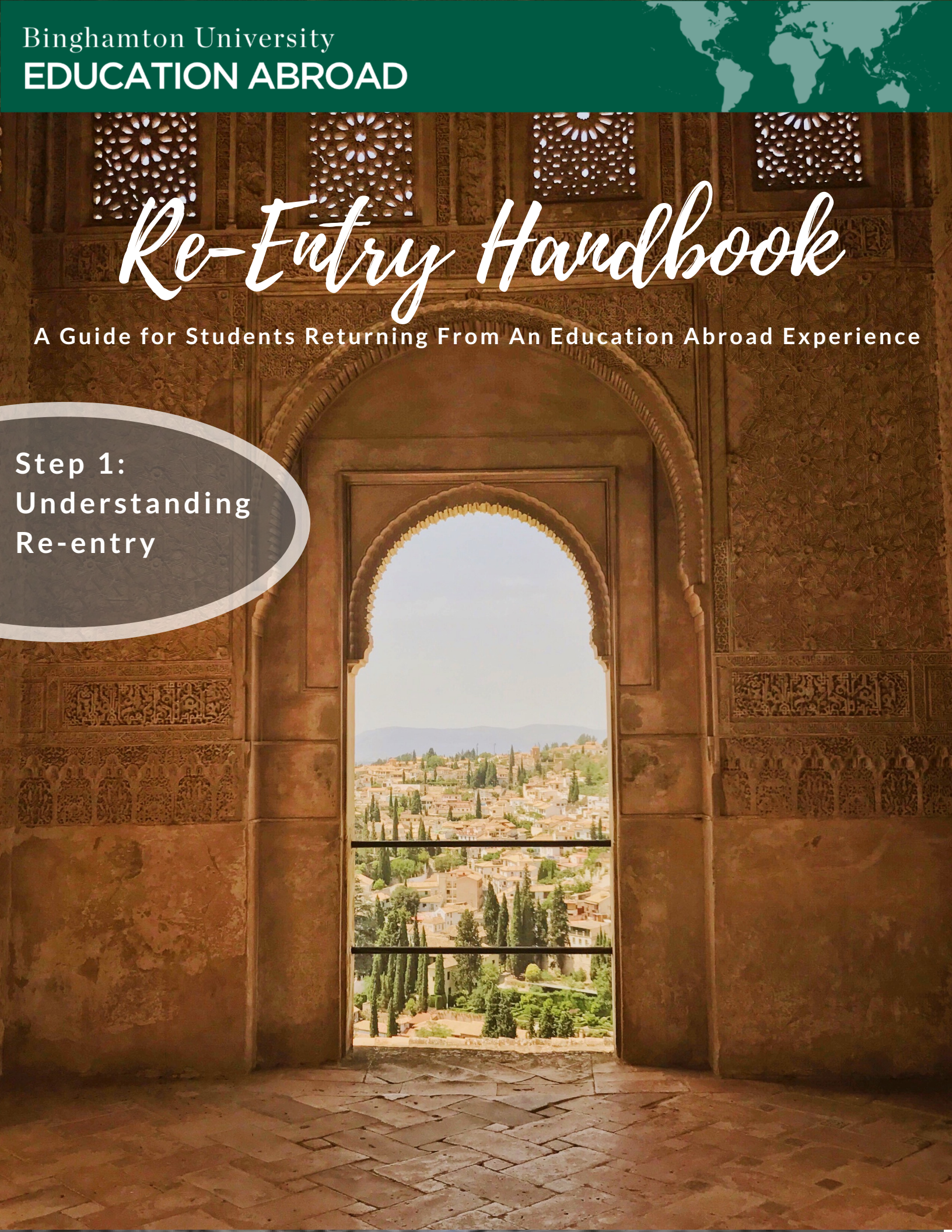


# *Re-Entry Handbook*

A Guide for Students Returning From An Education Abroad Experience

Step 1:  
Understanding  
Re-entry







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**Section 2 - Returning Home 101: What can you do now?**

**Section 3 - The Career Search**

**Section 4 - Additional Resources**

\*Find sections 2, 3, and 4 on the IEGI website or in your Binghamton online application.

# Welcome Home!

**Dear Returning Student,**

**Welcome back!** The Office of International Education and Global Initiatives (IEGI) congratulates you on your education abroad experience and applauds your courage to study in another country. We hope you enjoyed your time living and learning abroad and that you have returned with a suitcase full of stories to share. We also hope that your journey of academic and cultural growth will continue as you complete your studies, and beyond.

We created this handbook because we recognize that returning home after your experience abroad can be challenging. *Some students find it just as difficult, or harder, to readjust to life back in the United States as it was to go abroad in the first place!* This is what is referred to as “reverse culture shock.” Even if your transition home has come with ease, you may still be wondering how you can incorporate your international learning and newfound perspectives into your daily life. We are here to help you!

The tools provided throughout this handbook will help you unpack your experience and apply what you have learned to your professional and personal goals. We are confident that your sojourn abroad has given you the tools for success!

We invite you to come visit us at the IEGI to talk about your experiences and to discover how you can continue to stay involved! Again, welcome home Bearcats and other travelers!

Sincerely,

**Office of International Education and Global Initiatives (IEGI)**

Old Champlain Room, 240

Binghamton University, State University of New York

4400 Vestal Parkway East

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A photograph of two young women standing on a balcony with ornate blue and white balustrades. In the background is a large, ornate building with a tall, tiered tower and a dome, likely a cathedral or a grand historical building. The sky is clear and blue. A black lamppost stands to the right of the women.

# Let's Talk About Re-Entry...

**Simply put, “re-entry” is the process of returning home after journeying abroad.**

While you are abroad, you learn and grow, both academically and culturally. You are introduced to new beliefs, values, and ways of life. This is a wonderful, enriching experience and it can be rewarding on many levels. You may initially find it difficult to adjust as you encounter the shock of so many new things, but you soon adapt and you make it work. In the end, you probably walked away considering it to be one of the most

memorable experiences of your life! You are now a more globally-oriented student, you have made connections around the world, you have seen new places, you have tried new foods, and, perhaps, you have learned a new language. You are ready to take on your future with an open mind and to embrace the opportunities that await.

But, now that you are home, you may be wondering, “What next?” or looking for ways to connect your experience abroad to your everyday life. You may also be feeling a mix of emotions related to your return. All of this is normal and part of the re-entry process.

# Reverse Culture Shock:

## What does it mean?

Coming home can be just as overwhelming as going away in the first place. It is a physical, mental, and emotional adjustment. When you return home, you might expect that life will resume just as it was prior to leaving and that everything will be the same. However, for most travelers this is not the case!

Sometimes it is because people or places (or you) have changed and sometimes it is because friends and loved ones just don't seem to fully understand. When this occurs, *frustration*, *boredom*, and *disappointment* may set in. These feelings are what is referred to as "reverse culture shock."

Reverse culture shock is subjective, meaning that each person experiences it in a unique way. For some, the shock may not even be noticeable, yet for others it can cause added stress and other difficulties. The time that it takes to adjust to these changes is also unique, taking anywhere from a few short weeks to several months. For students who spend a longer period of time abroad, it often takes longer to re-adjust to life at home.

Reverse culture shock comes in stages and can be visually represented by a U-shape curve. These typically align with the stages experienced in a new country, so when put together, they form a W-shape curve (see page 5).

The culture shock curve begins with the "honeymoon" phase of excitement, but is soon followed by descent to the crisis phase where shock sets in and you may feel disconnected and insecure.

However, you find ways to adjust to your new surroundings, it becomes your new norm, and eventually you return home.

There is yet again a "honeymoon" stage of excitement to see spaces and faces you haven't seen since you left. However, feelings of boredom and disconnect may again set in when those around you are unable to relate to your life-changing experiences and newfound curiosities. You may even feel like a foreigner in your home country! Though it may take some time, eventually, you adapt to your "new" surroundings and continue on to your next great adventure.



Image Source: State.gov (n.d.). "Reverse culture shock: The challenges of returning home."

Emotions that often accompany reverse culture shock include:

- Boredom and restlessness
- Frustration and withdrawal
- Homesickness or longing for the people you met and the places you visited abroad
- Change in goals or priorities
- Insecurity and isolation

It is important to note that the U- and W-shaped curves of adjustment represent the most simplistic depictions of culture shock and reverse culture shock. Because reverse culture shock is subjective, the path will not be the same for any two students. It is quite possible that other stages may present themselves as speedbumps as you journey through the curves.

Some students may circle back to various stages or skip stages all together. So remember, the curves may not accurately represent your own individual experience.

Whether your experience follows the U or W curves, or has taken a completely different path, you should know that others are on similar sojourns around the world and back. Your experiences are unique, but many of your personal and professional gains are shared. We encourage you to engage with one another, to share what you have learned, and to unpack your time abroad.

The remaining handbook sections provide you with ideas and activities for reflecting on your time abroad and what to do next.





If you have any questions or would like more information about the tools provided in this handbook, please reach out to us. We want you to make the most of your experience abroad, and we are here to help!

**Office of International Education and Global Initiatives**

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