

# A Guide to Education Abroad Scholarship Applications

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Updated: October 2020

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# Background on Education Abroad Scholarships

Before you begin writing your scholarship essays, it is beneficial to understand why these scholarships exist. In general, education abroad scholarships can be placed in the following categories:

- Internal - these are scholarships available through Texas Woman's University
- External - these scholarships are available through private or public organizations with a vested interest in international education
- Program specific - these are scholarships offered by the International Education Organization (IEO) who oversees the program itself

Of course, scholarships may be categorized in different ways to help students more easily identify funding sources that might be a better fit. For example, it is common to group together location specific scholarships even if the organizations sponsoring these scholarships are a mix of internal, external, or program specific.

## Motivation

While it is useful to have a general understanding of “who” sponsors scholarships, it is equally beneficial to understand “why” these scholarships exist. What motivates these external organizations to provide funding support for education abroad?

There are likely several reasons why a public or private organization might offer scholarship support. However, one fairly common theme in regards to education abroad specific scholarships is to increase the rate at which underrepresented students in higher education are able to participate in education abroad programs.

## Underrepresented Students

Each year, the [Institute of International Education](#) compiles data from colleges and universities across the United State specifically looking at variables related to both international students and education abroad activities. This data is then made available yearly via the [Open Doors Report](#). This report helps us identify “who” is considered underrepresented in education abroad.

In recent years, these variables have included:

- Non-traditional aged students
- Veterans
- First generation college students
- First generation American students
- Students who are parents of minor dependents

- Students with a disability
- Students who identify as LGBTQ+

Underrepresentation in education abroad goes beyond demographics. It is equally important to consider other uncommon data sets in education abroad participants, including:

- Academic area of study
- Location
- Language of instruction

## Top Writing Tips

A better understanding of why education abroad scholarships exist and “who” is often the intended audience for these scholarships can help you begin to frame your approach to writing essay responses. Each scholarship application is likely to include some kind of written component. While the essays vary, there are some common themes that emerge across internal, external, and program specific scholarships. Below are examples of common essay components:

- Description of the Education Abroad program
- Articulation of why you chose this education abroad program
- Linking your selected program to your academic, personal, and professional goals
- Discussion of previous challenges demonstrating an ability to persevere
- Communicating your plan to actively engage in your “home” community upon return from abroad

It is incredibly important to thoroughly read the essay prompts, and consider not only “what” you are being asked to respond to but also, “why?” It is encouraged that you take a quick moment to research the organization sponsoring the scholarship. What is the mission statement? What do they do? These are key components that might be pertinent to weave into your essay responses.

## Know the Competition

Before you begin to write, you will want to consider your competition. Who else might be applying to this scholarship? In general, these are other students who:

- Are planning to participate in education abroad programs
- Have experienced transitioning to college at some point
- May identify as an underrepresented student in education abroad

## Know Your Audience

Knowing “who” is reading and reviewing scholarship essay is definitely useful! Scholarship reviewers may be both internal or external to the organization. Below are some characteristics of reviewers:

- Typically work in international education
- Volunteers
- Could review upwards of 80 scholarship applications within 2 weeks
- Have varying levels of experience in education abroad and/or as a reviewer
- Have varying levels of bias

## General Best Practices

Considering your competition along with the reviewers can help you determine how to best stand out. Below are tried and true essay writing tips:

- Avoid sweeping generalizations without articulating clear examples as a follow-up.  
Example phrases to avoid without explanation:
  - a. “This is a transformational experience”
  - b. “Once in a lifetime”
  - c. “Expand my global perspective”
  - d. “Life changing experience”
  - e. “Broaden my horizons”
- Be authentic! Tell an original story important to who you are and the choices you make.
- Don’t play hide and seek! The reviewers may be reading a lot of scholarship essays. Don’t make them “hunt” to find out more about who you are OR the answer of the question.
- No time for modesty. If you’ve got something unique to say, say it loud and say it proud.
- Be willing to be vulnerable. This can be challenging but appropriately sharing relevant information may be the difference between being awarded a scholarship and being passed by.

## Best Practices for Describing your Program

- Fully describe your education abroad program and BE SPECIFIC
  - a. Possible areas to describe: housing, classes, activities, etc.
- Draw clear links at fully articulate responses
- Do some research about the program or location, then connect the dots.
- Highlight unique program aspects

## Best Practices for Follow-on Project Essays

- Be specific
  - a. Who, what, why, when, where, how?
- Leverage current or past involvements and connections

## DON'T FORGET!

If nothing else, it is essential that you reread your essay(s) and revise as needed. If possible, have someone else look over your essay for content and clarity.

It is highly encouraged you work with the [TWU Write Site](#). Write Site advisors are skilled at helping students conceptualize and articulate written responses. Additionally, Education Abroad provides regular training to Write Site staff specific to scholarships supporting global education opportunities.