

BOSTON COLLEGE OGE RETURNEE GUIDE



STAGES OF REENTRY

1: Disengagement/Departure

Towards the end of your semester, students will start to think about their return home. They will start to wrap up their semester and start planning what they will do when they get home.

2: Excitement to return home

While students may be sad to depart their host city, most students are excited to return home and to a familiar environment. Returnees may have missed friends, family, food, or speaking their native language. This stage may be brief for those who were well-adjusted to their home environment. For some students, their reverse culture shock may end at this stage, especially if they were unhappy while abroad.

3: Disillusionment and alienation

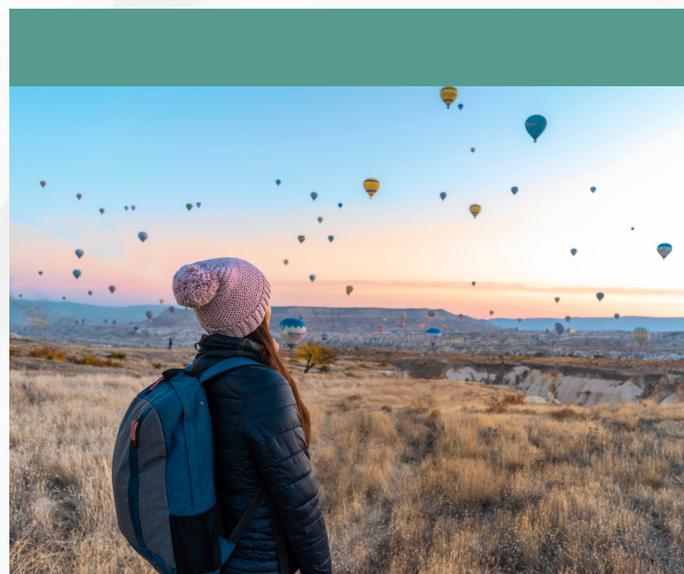
This stage occurs after a short time back in students' home country and is characterized by feeling like a foreigner in their own country. Returnees may feel frustrated, alienated and critical of their own culture. Things that were previously completely normal to them now stand out. They feel like no one really wants to hear about their experience and can't relate to it. This is a good time to seek out other study abroad returnees and OGE staff. They can provide support and sympathy as you readjust to life back in your home country.

4: Gradual readjustment

As time passes and you adjust to being home, you become less critical of your home country and things are no longer as shocking as they were during the Disillusionment and Alienation stage. You begin to consider what you learned abroad and how to integrate it into your life at home and at BC, and how to leverage your experience both academically and professionally.

WHO IS A RETURNEE?

A RETURNEE IS ANYONE WHO HAS JUST RETURNED HOME AFTER A PROLONGED PERIOD ABROAD. RETURNEES OFTEN EXPERIENCE REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK AND A RE-ENTRY PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT AFTER THEIR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE. THE DEGREE OF ADJUSTMENT AND ADJUSTMENT TIMELINE THAT RETURNEES EXPERIENCE VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON, AND SOME STUDENTS WILL EXPERIENCE RETURN CULTURE SHOCK MORE THAN THEIR PEERS.



Symptoms of Reverse Culture Shock:

- Feelings of restlessness, boredom, or depression
- Missing the culture, people, places, or lifestyle of your host country
- Negatively comparing the U.S. with your host country, particularly American attitudes, behaviors, and customs
- Isolating yourself from friends and family at home

Managing Reverse Culture Shock:

To help alleviate the symptoms, utilize the strategies and coping mechanisms you developed while experiencing culture shock in your host country

- Keep in touch with friends you made abroad
- Bring some of your host culture back with you and share it with friends and family. One example of this is to cook a meal from your host country for your friends at BC
- Keep your experience alive by sharing your study abroad stories with others. Sign up for an OGE podcast to talk about your experience as a resource for interested freshmen and sophomores
- Join international clubs on campus to meet other students and connect to your host culture
- Continue taking a language class if you learned a new language abroad
- Participate in returnee events hosted by OGE
- Acknowledge and accept that your values and beliefs may have changed. Intentionally seek out ways to incorporate new and meaningful values and beliefs in your life.
- Understand that your friendships and relationships might have changed as a result of your new experiences. Explore new places and people with whom you can share your international experiences

Leveraging your international experience

- Reach out to the BC Career Center to learn how to incorporate study abroad on your resume or speak about your experience in a job interview. If your study abroad experience has influenced your post-graduation plans, they may also be able to help you identify international opportunities after graduation, or positions relating to your abroad experience
- Take coursework that relates to your abroad experience (international history, language & culture, etc.)
- Fellowship opportunities abroad after graduation (Fulbright, etc.)
- Reach out to your OGE Program Manager for ways to get involved at OGE through social media, events, and pre-departure preparation



Resources on campus for support and community:

- OGE Staff
- University Counseling Services
- Bowman AHANA and Intercultural Center
- Women's Center
- International Clubs on Campus
- Campus Ministry