

4. What impact will the successful realization of your goals have on your life?

Setting Goals & Defining Learning Objectives:

1. Name one or two overarching goals for your experience abroad?

2. What are your SMART learning objectives? (List at least 3)

How SMART Are Your Learning Objectives?

Need some help determining how SMART your learning objectives are? Here are some tips for how to reframe vague goals into concrete learning objectives.

#1 Learning Objective: While in Chile, I will improve my Spanish.

PROBLEM:

This objective is difficult to measure as it is open-ended, meaning that it doesn't define specific goals or competencies to be mastered.

NEW LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

By the end of my program in Chile, I will have learned how to complete the following tasks in Spanish: ordering food at a restaurant, using public transportation and asking for directions, greeting my classmates and host family in Spanish, and posing basic questions to my host family. I will also attend all scheduled language exchange activities and make a point to attempt to speak in Spanish with the ISA staff.

WHY THE SECOND OBJECTIVE IS BETTER:

As you accomplish each of the objectives above, you will acquire a concrete sense of the ways in which your Spanish abilities are improving. You will also gain confidence with each new communicative task that you master. Learning a foreign language can be overwhelming and concentrating on the ways in which you can communicate (rather than on the ways in which you cannot) will give you both the incentive and the motivation to continue learning!

#2 Learning Objective: I will network in New Zealand and meet people who will help me get a job when I graduate.

PROBLEM:

This goal may not be very realistic, and could potentially set you up for disappointment.

NEW LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

As an intern in New Zealand, I will seek a mentor (either my host supervisor or someone else with whom I work closely) and ask for regular feedback so I can monitor my progress and work on any areas that need improvement. At the end of my program, I will approach my mentor and any other co-worker with whom I connect to see if they would be willing to write letters of recommendation for me or endorse my skills on LinkedIn. I will regularly update and maintain my LinkedIn profile as I connect with people I meet at my internship placement.

WHY THE SECOND OBJECTIVE IS BETTER:

While you cannot always control the number of contacts that you make through your internship, you can attempt to connect meaningfully with the people with whom you interact.

#3 Learning Objective: As a Service-Learning participant in Galway, I will contribute to my host community and be viewed as an asset to my host organization.

PROBLEM:

While this objective is positive and optimistic, it is not measurable or very specific. Likewise, it can potentially set you up for disappointment if you feel like you do not have a leading role in projects or tasks. It is possible that you will be working for an organization that asks Service-Learning participants to support initiatives being led by employees and you may feel like you are not doing enough in this more “behind the scenes” role.

NEW LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

As a Service-Learning participant, I will seek out ways in which I can take the initiative on projects or tasks. I will also ask my host-site supervisor to keep me in mind for projects that could benefit from my different perspective or ideas.

WHY THE SECOND OBJECTIVE IS BETTER:

The initial objective is ambitious, but not measurable and not always realistic. As a Service-Learning participant, you cannot always choose the projects or assignments that you will be given. You can however communicate your willingness to take on more independent tasks with your host-site supervisor. It is important to keep in mind that your host-site supervisor does not know how much you know (or don't know!) about the organization, so open communication is important. Just as you should feel comfortable asking questions when you do not know how to perform a task, you can also ask to do more.

Learning Objectives: Follow Up

Once you return from your program abroad, you will want to leverage this experience in graduate school applications, scholarship applications, job cover letters, interviews, etc. Being able to articulate your learning and growth is important.

1. As you approach the end of your ISA program, reflect on the way your goals may have changed throughout your experience abroad.

2. What unforeseen factors contributed to your success (or lack thereof) with regards to accomplishing your learning objectives? How will you account for such factors in the future?

3. The transition back home can be full of challenges. What are your goals for this period? How will your international experience play into those goals?

4. Reflecting on the ISA areas of discovery (Intercultural, Historical, Sociopolitical, Professional, Environmental), how do you think your goals helped you grow and develop new competencies in these areas?



INTERCULTURAL



HISTORICAL



SOCIOPOLITICAL



PROFESSIONAL



ENVIRONMENTAL