

EUTOPIA Certificate of Internationalisation (EUCI) REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO



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INTRODUCTION

Since my childhood, I used to stand and stare at the horizon, thinking about what would be lying behind the frames of Morocco. I used to dream of wandering around the world, finding differences where the language, customs, and landscapes are completely different. This was very far-fetched as I grew up, especially that my English was never my strong suit. While my friends dreamt of visiting France our second language and thus more familiar, I clung to a different vision.

I continued with my own personal mission to master English. I went in for a course to learn English, filled myself with English songs, and watched English movies avidly. Slowly but surely, my skills improved, and I reached a point where I could hold a conversation in English. The achievement sent the dream to this point: speaking in the same language to people from whom English came as naturally as breathing air does.

My opportunity came when I discovered a university in Morocco that offered an exchange program abroad. Without hesitation, I chose this path, knowing it was my chance to step into the world I had long imagined. My journey took me to Liverpool, England, where I experienced life in a vibrant and culturally rich environment.

In addition, I had the unique experience of guiding both Texan and English students at the same time while working within a summer school program in Morocco for my university. Being the exchange student himself and at the same time the cultural guide, gave me much insight into personal development and intercultural relations.

In this portfolio, I will delve into my transformative experiences in Liverpool and Morocco, reflecting on how these journeys fostered personal growth and intercultural awareness.

1st experience: one semester exchange on Liverpool John Moores University



As I boarded the plane bound for England, a mix of excitement and anxiety swirled within me. This was my first time traveling abroad, far from the comfort and familiarity of home and my parents. The prospect of living in a new country, with new customs and people, was both exhilarating and daunting. Little did I know, this journey would become a transformative chapter in my life, fostering both personal growth and intercultural awareness.

When I first arrived in Liverpool, the sense of being in an entirely new world was overwhelming. The bustling city, with its historic architecture and vibrant cultural scene, was a stark contrast to the familiar surroundings of my hometown. One of the earliest challenges I faced was adapting to the local customs and communication styles. Understanding the distinct accents, especially the Scouse accent, required significant effort.



My experience in Liverpool wasn't just about external exploration; it was also a journey of internalisation. As I immersed myself in British life, I began to unconsciously absorb their customs and perspectives. The initial awkwardness of navigating social situations gave way to a growing comfort with British humor. The once-unfamiliar rhythm of their conversations became a melody I could understand and even participate in. This internalisation process wasn't just about language; it was about developing a deeper empathy for the Liverpoolian way

of life. It allowed me to see the world through a new lens, enriching my own cultural identity and fostering a newfound appreciation for the beauty of diversity.

My time in Liverpool wasn't just about exploring a new city; it was a deep dive into the transformative power of cultural differences. Every interaction, every experience, challenged my preconceptions and pushed me to grow in ways I hadn't anticipated.

I learned to Embrace Flexibility, Sharpened Communication Skills Navigating the nuances of British humor, sarcasm, and indirect communication was a challenge at first. However, deciphering these subtleties and learning to express myself in a way that resonated with my new friends honed my communication skills. I became more adept at reading nonverbal cues, actively listening, and expressing myself clearly and concisely.



I had the remarkable opportunity to watch a Liverpool football match. Witnessing a live game at Anfield Stadium was more than just a sporting event; it was an experience that encapsulated the passion and pride of Liverpool's community. The atmosphere in the stadium, filled with chanting fans and a palpable sense of camaraderie, was electrifying. It not only deepened my

appreciation for football as a cultural phenomenon but also provided insight into the profound connection between sports, identity, and community spirit.

On a personal level, living and studying in Liverpool allowed me to develop a greater sense of independence and self-confidence. Managing daily life in a foreign country, from navigating public transportation to understanding local customs, required me to step out of my comfort zone .



Discussions with classmates about everything from politics to pop culture opened my eyes to diverse perspectives. Hearing their views on global issues challenged my own assumptions and encouraged me to approach the world with an open mind. This broadened perspective has made me a more well-rounded individual and a more engaged global citizen.

There were moments of frustration and homesickness during my time abroad. Finding my way around an unfamiliar city, dealing with cultural faux pas, and missing loved ones all tested my resilience. However, overcoming these challenges instilled in me a sense of self-reliance and the confidence to navigate unfamiliar territory, both literally and figuratively.

As I settled into my new life in Liverpool, England, there was this cultural shock that I experienced from time to time. This truly surprised me, as I tried to relate to the professors and the academic staff, who were addressed by their first name and not such titles as "Mrs." or "Ms.", a common practice in Morocco. In my culture, there is a deep sense of addressing the elders or authority in person with titles of respect. However, the application of first names here was, in other words, the etiquette that ran, meaning they wanted to uphold an informal approach regarding the society. This was a very fine but very striking difference that made me revise my definition of respectful communication. I eventually took the idea to live with that practice and started to understand the fact that culture differs in different aspects, and respectful communication can be shown differently. This, indeed, turned out to be the very good lesson of cultural sensitivity and embracing of diversity in any form.

As I assimilated the rich cultural milieu in Liverpool, there was an undercurrent of anxiety that couldn't be lost on me, my family back in Morocco. An anxiety made even more acute by the fact that my family was purported to have been back then during an earthquake in Morocco, of course. My mind raced home, fearing for the lives of those I held dear. The distance seemed cruelly large as I tried to catch at the unknown. In the grip of my new friends and the warmth of the English community, my heart was back with worries about the safety of my family. Our lives how connected they were, traversing continents and cultures. It was a painful reminder. My moments of worry and anxiousness related to the ordeal were soon deleted through the support from my peers and the resilience of my family back home. The support words, such comforting words and speaking actions between people in pain, took away fears and

Reminded me of the strength found in unity against adversities. This is an experience that has made me appreciate the family and community ties that bind us beyond just geographical boundaries and cultural differences.

Moreover, the international exchange was instrumental in honing my intercultural communication skills. Interacting with students from various cultural backgrounds, I learned to navigate and appreciate cultural differences, which has significantly improved my ability to work effectively in multicultural teams. This experience has made me more empathetic, open-

mindful, and culturally sensitive, enabling me to foster inclusive environments where diverse perspectives are valued and respected.

Professionally, the exchange at LJMU provided me with a unique opportunity to expand my network and build connections with students, faculty, and professionals from around the world. These relationships have not only enriched my understanding of global business practices but have also opened doors to potential international career opportunities.

On a personal level, living and studying in Liverpool allowed me to develop a greater sense of independence and self-confidence. Managing daily life in a foreign country, from navigating public transportation to understanding local customs, required me to step out of my comfort zone and develop problem-solving skills. This independence has translated into a greater ability to tackle challenges in my academic and professional life with confidence and poise. Additionally, the vibrant cultural scene in Liverpool, with its rich history, music, and arts, provided a well-rounded experience that went beyond academics. Engaging in cultural activities and exploring the city's heritage deepened my appreciation for diversity and broadened my cultural awareness.

As my exchange semester ended, I found myself grappling with a bittersweet mix of emotions. While excited to return to Morocco and apply what I had learned, leaving behind the friends and the vibrant atmosphere of Liverpool was not easy. The connections I made during my time abroad had become an integral part of my life, and saying goodbye felt like leaving a piece of myself behind. However, this departure was also a testament to the depth of the experiences and relationships I had cultivated a testament to personal growth and the resilience gained from navigating life in a foreign country.

Upon returning home, I carried with me more than just academic credits and professional insights. The friendships and cultural experiences from Liverpool continue to influence my perspectives and interactions, both in my academic pursuits at Université Internationale de Rabat and in my professional endeavors. The resilience and adaptability I honed in Liverpool have proven invaluable in navigating the complexities of my internship at CDG Capital Bourse, where understanding diverse perspectives and fostering meaningful connections are essential.

Reflecting on my international exchange in Liverpool, I am grateful for the opportunity to have immersed myself in a new culture, explored historical landmarks that embody human ingenuity, and most importantly, forged friendships that transcend borders. These experiences have not only enriched my academic and professional journey but have also shaped me into a more empathetic, culturally aware individual prepared to contribute meaningfully to a globalized world. Liverpool will forever hold a special place in my heart, not just for its historical monuments or academic rigor but for the enduring friendships and personal growth it facilitated.

2nd experience: Guiding Lone Star College students from Texas during a summer school program in Morocco.

My experience of guiding Lone Star College students from Texas during a summer school program in Morocco was both enriching and eye-opening. As an exchange student myself, taking on the roles of cultural guide and peer mentor provided me with invaluable insights into personal growth and intercultural relations.



Navigating the cultural differences between Morocco and Texas while facilitating their immersion in Moroccan society was a deeply rewarding experience. From exploring Moroccan landmarks to delving into local customs and traditions, I had the privilege of witnessing their curiosity and enthusiasm firsthand. Our interactions fostered a mutual exchange of knowledge and perspectives, enhancing their understanding of Moroccan culture while enriching my own appreciation for cultural diversity.

Guiding Lone Star College students through academic discussions and cultural activities not only strengthened my leadership and communication skills but also deepened my commitment to fostering global citizenship. Facilitating their integration into Moroccan daily life from navigating markets to experiencing traditional cuisine created a bond that transcended geographical boundaries. These experiences underscored the importance of empathy and cultural sensitivity in bridging gaps between different cultures.

Moreover, the friendships formed during this journey were truly special. Sharing laughter, challenges, and moments of discovery with students from Texas forged connections that continue to resonate in my personal and professional life. As we navigated language barriers and embraced new experiences together, we built a community rooted in mutual respect and curiosity.

Reflecting on my time guiding Lone Star College students in Morocco, I am grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to their educational and cultural journey. The experience not only reinforced my passion for cross-cultural exchange but also equipped me with skills and perspectives that continue to shape my academic pursuits and professional aspirations. It remains a cornerstone of my growth as a global citizen, reminding me of the transformative power of cultural immersion and the importance of fostering understanding in an interconnected world.