

Our Educational Philosophy



/ GAP
YEAR

How we help students develop the 21st-century skills they will need to become global citizens and thrive in an ever-changing world

The true definition of global citizenship

Global citizenship is a term that many people use, but few can actually define. Since 1965, EF Education First has introduced students to the world and allowed them to explore for themselves what true global citizenship means through hands-on learning experiences.

At EF Gap Year, we take experiential learning to the next level. Our carefully curated program of interconnected global experiences enables students ages 18 to 22 take their first steps toward adulthood in a globally connected future. It puts them on the fast track to becoming a leader in the 21st century.

Our students find focus for their college education. They figure out how they want to make their mark on the career world. They learn how to communicate in another language. They test out what true service means to them. They experience civilization’s greatest cultural achievements and architectural masterpieces firsthand with immersive travel to Europe, Australia, and beyond.

We can’t tell our students who they will become, but we can promise them a life-changing journey—supported every step of the way—that will lead them to discover it for themselves.

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Our 360° educational philosophy

We prepare students to succeed in all aspects of adult life: personally, academically, and professionally.

At EF Gap Year, we take experiential learning to the next level with a 360-degree approach. Our aim is to provide students with a diverse range of skills and experiences to help them become happy and successful adults.

We create a program of carefully curated learning moments that foster a love of lifelong learning, enhance their natural strengths and talents, develop their ability to connect with others in meaningful ways, and build the skills most sought after by colleges and employers.

We believe that students learn best by doing—especially out in the wide world. Lessons are always more powerful when the growth experience is self-directed. The key is to allow each student to approach every learning opportunity in their own unique way and at their own pace.

Mentorship support and built-in moments of reflection are critical to this innovative, hands-on approach.

Creating lifelong learners

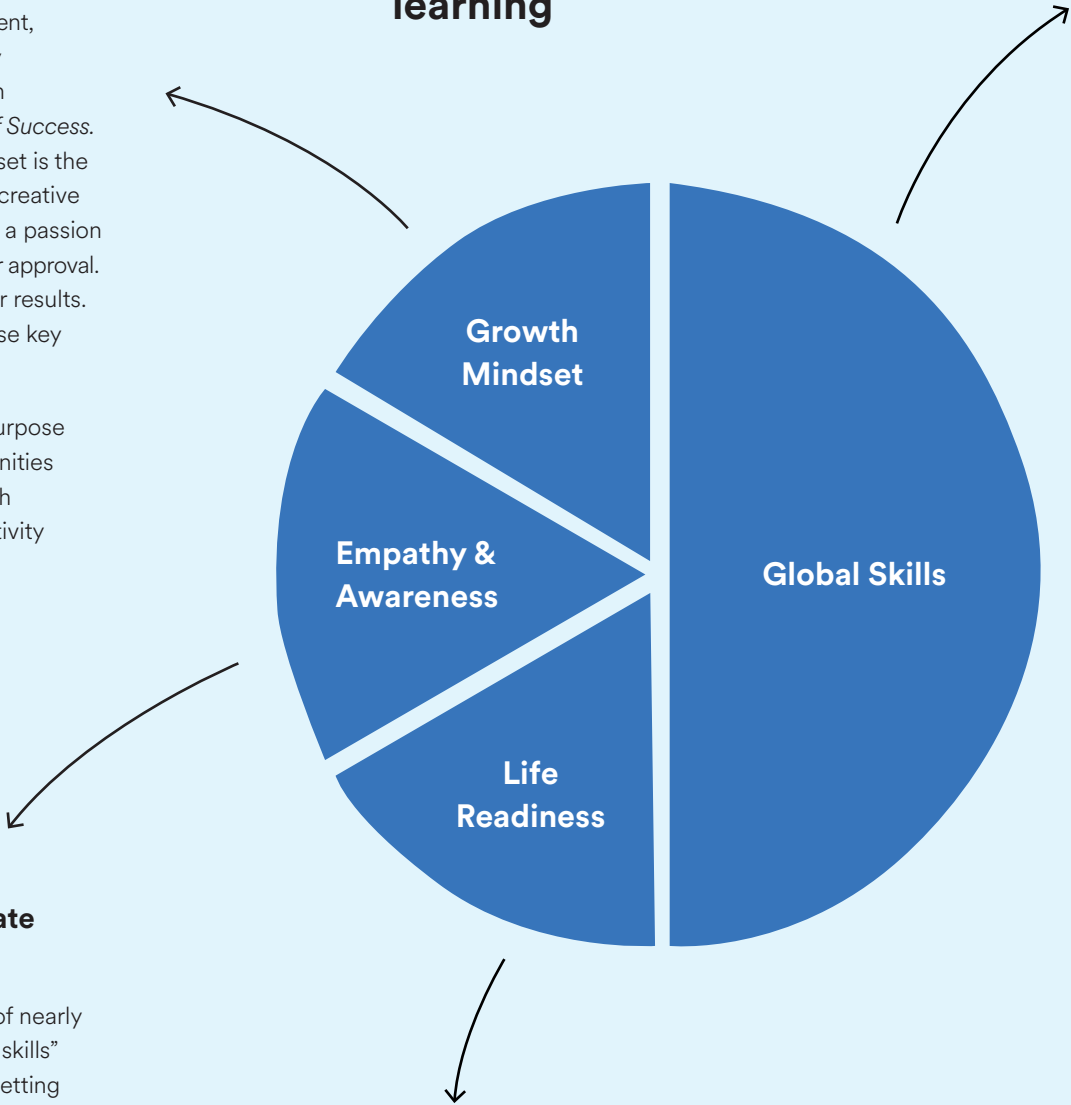
When students believe they can get smarter, they put in extra time and effort which leads to higher achievement, according to Stanford University psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Studies show that growth mindset is the number-one trait underpinning creative achievement. Students develop a passion for learning rather than a need for approval. They learn to value process over results. An EF Gap program fosters these key attributes of growth mindset:

- Discovering a true sense of purpose
- Seeing challenges as opportunities
- Embracing setbacks as growth
- Cultivating curiosity and creativity
- Developing grit

Enhancing the ability to connect and communicate with others

In a *Wall Street Journal* survey of nearly 900 executives, 92% said “soft skills” such as clear communication, getting along with co-workers, and critical thinking were equally or more important than technical skills. Yet 89% of these same executives said they had a difficult time finding job candidates with these skills. In fact, a 2015 LinkedIn survey found that 58% of hiring managers believed the need for empathy and awareness skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability were such a problem it was limiting their company’s productivity.

EF Gap Year’s holistic approach to experiential learning



Preparing students for success as an adult

In a 2015 survey of over 1,000 recent gap year participants conducted by the Gap Year Association, students self-reported the positive impact the experience had on their personal, college and career plans:

- 98% Greater personal development
- 97% More mature
- 96% More self-confident
- 87% Better career skills
- 82% Expanded global citizenship
- 77% Clearer purpose in life
- 73% Increased readiness for college

Developing the global skills employers need most

Study abroad had a positive impact on 14 of the 15 skills most valued by employers in the U.S. and Europe, according to the Institute of International Education’s Generation Study Abroad Initiative. With the sole exception of technical/software skills, the majority of all study abroad students surveyed saw marked improvement in the following “hard” and “soft” skills. The longer the program, the higher the improvement.

Intrapersonal competencies

- Intercultural skills
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Self-awareness
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Work ethic

Cognitive competencies

- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Problem-solving
- Language skills
- Course/major knowledge
- Technical/software skills

Interpersonal competencies

- Interpersonal skills
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Leadership

Sources:

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck, PhD.; Random House, 2006.

“Employers Find ‘Soft Skills’ Like Critical Thinking in Short Supply” by Kate Davidson; *The Wall Street Journal*, August 30, 2016.

“Data Reveals The Most In-Demand Soft Skills Among Candidates,” by Guy Berger; LinkedIn Talent Blog, August 30, 2016

2015 National Alumni Survey conducted by the Gap Year Association, americangap.org.

2017 Institute of International Education study “Gaining an Employment Edge: The Impact of Study Abroad on 21st Century Skills & Career Prospects in the United States” by Christine Farrugia, Ph.D. and Jodi Sanger.

Our hands-on approach

A progressive series of hands-on learning experiences that allow students to make the world their classroom

Our program is tailored to each participant. This is accomplished through the creation of an individualized learning and personal growth plan at Orientation, which is then facilitated on-program by EF Gap advisors and ground staff—but driven and managed by the students themselves.

Each program module features a thoughtfully designed, hands-on learning curriculum that organically addresses each of our four key learning areas: growth mindset, empathy/self-awareness, global skills, and life readiness so that lessons percolate up through the experience rather than being clamped down upon it.

One-on-one coaching, group discussions, and built-in moments of reflection all play a critical role in ensuring meaningful outcomes for each student.

“CQ” ASSESSMENT

We actively attempt to measure a student’s progress toward global citizenship by partnering with the Cultural Intelligence Center to administer its Cultural Intelligence (CQ) assessment which maps to each of our four learning areas: growth mindset, empathy/awareness, global skills, and life readiness. A pre-program test benchmarks the student’s global cultural awareness. A post-program test then charts the student’s growth in each of these areas.



Pre-departure

GOAL SETTING

Students work with EF Gap Year advisory staff to set goals using a 3-step model:

My Compass: An inventory of values, beliefs and interests that focuses a student’s goals and grounds the student in moments of uncertainty.

My Future: Concrete goals for success in college and the career world.

My Gap Goals: An action plan for how to achieve a student’s vision of the future by setting one key goal in each of the four learning areas: growth mindset, empathy/awareness, global skills, and life readiness.

On-program

MODULE-SPECIFIC CURRICULA

To ensure every EF Gap student is on the path toward global citizenship, we’ve designed a progressive module-by-module learning experience. Our structure provides space for students to develop the independence and self-reliance needed to grow into fully fledged adults while, at the same time, learn the “hard” and “soft” skills they need to become documented citizens of the world.

For more details, see pp 7-10

MENTORSHIP & COACHING

All EF Gap students are supported with integrated mentorship and coaching, both pre-departure and throughout their time on program. To ensure a rewarding individual experience, EF Gap advisors and on-the-ground staff guide students toward achieving their unique individual goals, help them stay focused and on-track, and provide advice and support every step of the way. This mentorship is provided both virtually and in person, depending on the location and structure of each module.

DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

Guided discussion and reflection sessions at key points in every module help participants translate their experiences into learnings. Students are encouraged to interpret the immediate environment around them from different perspectives throughout the experience. Reflection sessions are a time to compare and contrast impressions from different cultures, opinions and world views.

Post-program

OUTCOMES

Students build a portfolio of module-specific certificates over the course of their EF Gap experience to document their growth and success. They also receive a final Certificate of Completion (see p. 11). If they choose, they can also earn college credit during their program through Southern New Hampshire University (see p. 13).

MODULE-SPECIFIC CURRICULUM

EF Gap Year

How EF Gap Year students continuously learn and grow over the course of their 25-week program

The focus of our full-year program is global citizenship. Student travel to upwards of 9 countries and gain experience in areas that are essential to a successful international career: cultural knowledge, language proficiency, service learning, business practice, and leadership development.



TERM 1				
	ORIENTATION (3 days)	EUROPEAN IMMERSION (2 weeks)	LANGUAGE STUDY (6 weeks)	SERVICE LEARNING (6 weeks)
GOAL	Set off on the right foot.	Gain cultural literacy with firsthand exploration of London, Amsterdam, Paris and Barcelona.	Connect with others more profoundly by communicating in their native tongue.	Learn more about other people, the planet and yourself; make a real difference through service.
STRATEGY	Meet at an EF campus in New York to bond as a group and prepare for the adventure ahead.	Compare the cultures of four cities to gain a richer understanding of European art, music, fashion, and popular culture.	Learn another language by living and studying in a country where it is spoken daily.	Engage in true cultural exchange with local communities; complete service projects that protect the environment and improve people’s quality of life.
SAMPLE CONTENT*				
Growth Mindset	Set goals for yourself and create an action plan for how to achieve them.	Take a snapshot of an art-work that moves you and post why on Instagram.	Check in with your teachers to discuss progress and adjust plans.	Identify your misconceptions with the Gap-minder “Factfulness” global quiz.
Empathy & Awareness	Share your “why” for taking a gap in a group setting.	Share a daily high and low: What do you want to take with you or leave behind?	Engage in meaningful cultural exchange by living with a local host.	Participate in a “privilege walk” to examine your own cultural advantages.
Global Skills	Attend seminars on risk management, safety, first aid, and self-care.	Take a London street art tour followed by a pop art painting workshop.	Attend a weekly schedule of college-level language classes.	Set actionable intentions that align with the UN’s Sustainable Global Goals.
Life Readiness	Bond as a group and make commitments of support to each other.	Navigate public transport in each city to explore sights of personal interest.	Join an international campus of classmates from up to 100 countries.	Gain real-world skills so you can build, plant, conserve and teach.

*Representative sample only. All activities are subject to change and may be modified or moved due to availability and local conditions.

WINTER BREAK	COLLEGE APP SEMINAR (OPTIONAL)
Rest, reflect, share!	Apply to the college of your dreams (or reapply).
Assess your gap experiences to date, adjust your goals, and share your progress with family and friends.	Learn how to translate your gap experiences into a compelling story for admissions officers.
	Envision your most logical next step academically in a lifetime of learning.
	Honestly assess your skills and talents and make a list of compatible schools.
	Build a resume, complete the Common App and write an essay.
	Learn how plan for and meet critical deadlines.

TERM 2	AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND IMMERSION (3 weeks)	INTERNSHIP (6 weeks)	EF LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (1 week)	WRAP-UP (1 day)
	Do a cultural deep-dive into Australia’s and New Zealand’s past, present, and future.	Understand how today’s global society works on a professional level.	Discover your inner leader.	Return home a true citizen of the world.
	Test your evolving ideas about post-colonialism against those of another English-speaking culture.	Take your first big step into the adult world by interning at a host company and living on your own in an apartment.	Develop 21st-century leadership skills through strengths-building, teamwork, and motivational techniques.	Evaluate your experiences and develop a post-gap plan for success in college and your career.
	Debate as a group America’s own colonial legacy and global impact.	Gain insight into the business world and learn by doing at a host organization.	Embrace challenges as opportunities and setbacks as learning moments.	Review the goals you set at Orientation and discuss successes and failures.
	Examine the tensions between being local, other, or “another”.	Integrate yourself into the daily business culture of your host organization.	Take Gallup’s Strengths-Finder test to understand yourself and others better.	Build a tower of your new skills take a selfie to share with family and friends.
	Contrast the culture of colonial cities with that of aboriginal communities.	Complete assignments that contribute to the success of the organization.	Participate in a public speaking workshop and give a 3-minute speech.	Participate in workshops that help you synthesize program outcomes.
	Practice safety boundaries with adventure sports like zip-lining and snorkeling.	Add your first professional credential to your resume.	Learn how to lead from your strengths and be a better team player.	Learn how to give and receive constructive feedback.

MODULE-SPECIFIC CURRICULUM

EF Gap Semester

How EF Gap Semester students continuously learn and grow over the course of their 12-week program

Our semester program is ideal for students who need more flexibility about when and how long they can be away. Students focus their gap experience in two of the following areas that are essential to global citizenship and a successful international career: language study, service learning, and internship.



	ORIENTATION (3 days)	EUROPEAN IMMERSION (2 weeks)	CUSTOM MODULE A (4 weeks)	CUSTOM MODULE B (4 weeks)
GOAL	Set off on the right foot.	Gain cultural literacy with firsthand exploration of London, Amsterdam, Paris and Barcelona.	Focus your gap program on a topic that meets your personal, academic or career goals.	Focus your gap program on a topic that meets your personal, academic or career goals.
STRATEGY	Meet at an EF campus in New York to bond as a group and prepare for the adventure ahead.	Compare the cultures of four cities to gain a richer understanding of European art, music, fashion, and popular culture.	Gain skills and experience in your choice of the following topics: language study, service learning or internship.	Deepen your understanding of the same topic with a change of country, or broaden your knowledge by exploring a different topic.
SAMPLE CONTENT*				
Growth Mindset	Set goals for yourself and create an action plan for how to achieve them.	Take a snapshot of an artwork that moves you and post why on Instagram.	(See right)	(See right)
Empathy & Awareness	Share your “why” for taking a gap in a group setting.	Share a daily high and low: What do you want to take with you or leave behind?		
Global Skills	Attend seminars on risk management, safety, first aid, and self-care.	Take a London street art tour followed by a pop art painting workshop.		
Life Readiness	Bond as a group and make commitments of support to each other.	Navigate public transport in each city to explore sights of personal interest.		

*Representative sample only. All activities are subject to change and may be modified or moved due to availability and local conditions.

EF LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

(1 week)

Discover your inner leader.

Develop 21st-century leadership skills through strengths-building, teamwork, and motivational techniques.

Embrace challenges as opportunities and setbacks as learning moments.

Take Gallup’s Strengths-Finder test to understand yourself and others better.

Participate in a public speaking workshop and give a 3-minute speech.

Learn how to lead from your strengths and be a better team player.

WRAP-UP

(1 day)

Return home a true citizen of the world.

Evaluate your experiences and develop a post-gap plan for success in college and your career.

Review the goals you set at Orientation and discuss successes and failures.

Build a tower of your new skills take a selfie to share with family and friends.

Participate in workshops that help you synthesize program outcomes.

Learn how to give and receive constructive feedback.

Choice of topics for custom modules A & B

LANGUAGE STUDY	SERVICE LEARNING	INTERNSHIP
Connect with others more profoundly by communicating in their native tongue.	Learn more about other people, the planet and yourself; make a real difference through service.	Understand how today’s global society works on a professional level.
Learn another language by living and studying in a country where it is spoken daily.	Engage in cultural exchange with local communities; complete projects that protect the environment and improve lives.	Take your first big step into the adult world by interning at a host company and living on your own in an apartment.
Check in with your teachers to discuss progress and adjust plans.	Identify your misconceptions with the Gapminder “Factfulness” global quiz.	Gain insight into the business world; learn by doing at a host organization.
Engage in meaningful cultural exchange by living with a local host.	Participate in a “privilege walk” to examine your own cultural advantages.	Integrate yourself into the daily business culture of your host organization.
Attend a weekly schedule of college-level language classes.	Set actionable intentions that align with the UN’s Sustainable Global Goals.	Complete assignments that contribute to the success of the organization.
Join an international campus of classmates from up to 100 countries.	Gain real-world skills so you can build, plant, conserve and teach.	Add your first professional credential to your resume.

Learning outcomes

Built into every program module are key benchmarks for growth as well as documented proof of success.

During each program module, students develop an impressive range of “hard” and “soft” skills. Our advisors help them quantify and assess these at key phases of the learning journey.

Students are also able to document the global skills they acquire during their EF Gap experience by earning a portfolio of official credentials they can then present to prospective universities and future employers.



Sample learning outcomes

	GROWTH MINDSET	EMPATHY & AWARENESS	GLOBAL SKILLS	LIFE READINESS
“CQ” ASSESSMENT	Pre-program benchmarks set at Orientation in each of these four key learning areas			
EF PROGRAM MODULE				
European Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curiosity• Flexibility• Openness to new ideas / lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural sensitivity• Appreciation for cultural diversity• Group dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural literacy• Art / architectural history• Effects of globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigation of public transportation• Budgeting• Setting boundaries
Language Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effort as path to mastery• Deriving inspiration from criticism• Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-cultural communication• Cultural exchange• Self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language proficiency• Link of language to culture• Clear communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College-level coursework• Academic skills• Decision-making
Service Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Situation-based inquiry• Viewing challenge as opportunity• Cultivation of grit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy• Cultural sensitivity• Appreciation of own privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of global social, economic and environmental issues• Community-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endurance• Resiliency• Teamwork• Basic manual skills
Australia & New Zealand Immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking• Contextualization• Development of an authentic point of view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural sensitivity• Appreciation for cultural diversity• Group dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colonial history• First-nation history• Botany• Marine biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adventure skills• Budgeting• Setting boundaries• Decision-making
Internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hands-on learning• Problem-solving• Value of effort over praise• Self-advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear communication• Listening to feedback• Expectation-setting• Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global business culture• Career skills• Business etiquette• Effects of globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independence• Personal finance• Time management• Teamwork
EF Leadership Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Value of mentorship• Strengths assessment• Critical analysis• Ownership of attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-assessment• Team motivation• Conflict resolution• Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global tech trends• Influencing others• Public speaking• Personal brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-assessment• Decision-making• Planning• Networking
“CQ” ASSESSMENT	Post-program growth assessed at EF Leadership Academy in the four key learning areas			
OUTCOMES	Global citizenship	Life-long learning	Social responsibility	Adult independence

CREDENTIALS

- Language proficiency assessment mapping to Common European Framework of Reference
- Certificate of Service listing community projects and hours of service
- Certificate of Internship listing host organization and projects completed
- Letter of recommendation
- Global Leadership Certificate
- Certificate of Completion

Earning college credit

EF Gap students can also opt to earn college credit or a university-level certificate.

Students who are looking to enhance their EF Gap Year or Gap Semester experience academically can complete university-level coursework through Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU).

Any student can opt to earn three general education credits each for their Language Study, Service Learning, or Internship modules. Additionally, EF Gap Year students can combine all three modules and complete a summative project on the topic of global citizenship to earn nine total credits and a university-level certificate.

Students who attend these courses are able to complete advanced coursework in their future college major. In the process, they often refine their academic goals. They also begin the process of building a professional resume.

Students find they are more prepared for college success, better positioned to take on community, campus, or business leadership roles, and are a step ahead when it comes to understanding what the professional world values.

Learn more: <https://snhuvt.org/gapyear>



Individual courses

SNHU offers individual courses for credit that correspond with the following EF Gap Year or Gap Semester program modules: Language Study, Service Learning, and Internship. Students can earn three semester hours of general education credit each for any or all of these modules in their program. The student's firsthand experiences abroad form the basis for the coursework they complete. They connect with their SNHU professor via email or video chat at key points to discuss how they have been thinking, reading, and writing about those experiences, complete assignments, and develop a final project that explores a topic related to the course theme.

EF program module	Language Study	Service Learning	Internship
SNHU course	Language and Cultural Fluency	Civil Service in Modern Society	Fundamentals of Global Enterprise
Course theme	Learn a language in the city of your choice. Improve your written and spoken use of the language through hands-on practice. How are local culture and customs influenced by the written and spoken word?	Discover the impact of 21st century service on communities in need through firsthand experiences with a range of organizations who are leading the way in defining what it means to be a global citizen.	Gain a better understanding of global business practices with an internship in your career field at an organization abroad. Complete daily tasks and projects to make a real impact.
Credits	3.0	3.0	3.0

EF Global Scholars Certificate Program

EF Gap Year students have the additional option of earning a university-level certificate from SNHU. They can combine individual courses for their Language Study, Service Learning, and Internship modules—for a total of 9 semester hours of credit—and then complete an additional summative project that explores a key aspect of global citizenship. Throughout the program year, students connect periodically via email or video chat with their SNHU professor to complete assignments and create a final project that translates their hands-on EF Gap Year experiences, research activity, new knowledge, and continuous self-reflection into an authentic contribution to the conversation about global citizenship. On successful completion of the program, students can also request a letter of recommendation from their professor and be considered for preferred admission to a degree program at SNHU.

Required SNHU course	Language and Cultural Fluency	Civil Service in Modern Society	Fundamentals of Global Enterprise
Capstone project	Transform your EF Gap Year firsthand experiences, supporting research, and self-reflection into an authentic and original contribution that explores a key aspect of global citizenship.		
Credits (9.0 total)	3.0	3.0	3.0
Certificate	EF Global Scholars Certificate awarded by Southern New Hampshire University		

What our alumni say

“A lot of my friends verbalized that they didn’t feel ready for school. They wished they had done what I did. Now, I feel in front because I had all this real-world experience. I feel like a more well-rounded person. I came out of it ready to take classes and work out a job opportunity I didn’t know I’d get.”

—SARA, EF GAP SEMESTER SPRING 2019

“With my new confidence and leadership skills, I know I’ll be more ready and mature when it comes to entering college in the fall.”

—DAVID, EF GAP SEMESTER FALL 2019

“My gap program affected me in so many different ways. I saw such an improvement in my Spanish. I gained a sense of independence. Service affected me deeply on the inside. It translated into my future career path—now, I want to look at my future as much more purpose-based, philanthropy-based and meaningful. During my internship, I totally blossomed. Working in the business-style environment made me excited for my future career in the business world as well.”

—DIEGO, EF GAP YEAR 2019-2020

“I am immensely grateful for the travel, service, and educational opportunities that EF has provided for me. Thanks to the emphasis our mentors placed on professional development, setting realistic goals, and career trajectory, I am both well-prepared and excited to start my freshman year of college.”

—HANNAH, EF GAP SEMESTER SPRING 2019



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