

**Listen to part of a talk about global workforce development.**

**Optional exercise**

What is the main theme of this talk?

- a. How companies can help their employees become global-ready.
- b. What students can do to become global-ready.
- c. How universities can help students to become global-ready.

(Answer below)

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One of the biggest challenges facing employers and educators today is the rapid advance of globalisation. The marketplace is no longer national or regional, but extends to all corners of the world, and this requires a global-ready workforce. Universities have a large part to play in preparing students for the twenty-first century labour market by promoting international educational experiences.

The most obvious way universities can help develop a global workforce is by encouraging students to study abroad as part of their course. Students who have experienced another culture first-hand are more likely to be global-ready when they graduate. There are, of course, well-established international undergraduate student exchange schemes, such as Erasmus, which operates within Europe, and the exchange partnerships that exist between universities around the world. The Fulbright program in the US enables graduate students to study and conduct research abroad. We need to expand and add to such schemes, to enable many more students to study abroad.

Global workforce development doesn't always have to involve travel abroad, however. If students learn another language, and study other cultures, they will be more global-ready when they graduate. It is important to point out that students also need to have a deep understanding of their own culture before they can begin to observe, analyse and evaluate other cultures. In multicultural societies, people can study each other's cultures to develop intercultural competencies such as critical and reflective thinking, and intellectual flexibility. This can be done both through the curriculum, and through activities on campus outside of the classroom such as art exhibitions and lectures from international experts.

Many universities are already embracing this challenge and providing opportunities for students to become global citizens. Students themselves, however, may not realise that when they graduate they will be competing in a global labour market, and universities need to raise awareness of these issues amongst undergraduates.

**Answer: c**