

International Opportunities

Students often choose to pursue international teaching experience, volunteerism or internships as part of their collegiate experience or directly following graduation. These international opportunities provide a global learning opportunity in an environment of cross-cultural collaboration and help to build your international skills for future employment opportunities.

There are a myriad of organizations that can assist you in developing your international experience, and it is likely that researching these experiences can be quite overwhelming. The Career Center recommends approaching your international interest by first developing your larger goals for your experience. Please don't hesitate to schedule an appointment with a member of the Career Center for additional assistance in working through your international interests.

Stage 1: Where am I right now in the process?

Understanding personal objectives, motivations and limitations will support the process of searching for an international experience. Having a clear sense of your reasons for your international experience interest, as well as the challenges that you may face will help you make clear decisions in how you pursue your international experience.

Ask yourself these key questions:

1. Am I seeking an experience while I am still in school or after graduation?
Some programs will require you to be affiliated with your university or be a certain amount of time recently graduated so that you can still qualify for a student-type of visa.
2. What benefits do I wish to gain from my international experience?
For example: to more fully immerse myself in a foreign language, to travel, to meet people, to gain insight into a future job prospect, to test my comfort zone.
3. Do I want to start a long-term international career or am I looking for a short-term experience?
4. What is more important to me – the actual experience volunteering, interning or working abroad, OR the location?
5. What are the opportunities in my field of interest in the country that I am most interested in living?
6. What are my language skills?
7. Do I have the education, skills and abilities that I need to pursue my interest abroad?
8. How much support will I require living abroad?
For example: language/cultural support systems, health/mental health resources, friends and family, etc.
9. What are the challenges I anticipate in the process of arranging my international experience?
For example: financial constraints, limited geographical location due to language knowledge, time for application process, not having any experience abroad previously, etc.

Stage 2: Where do I want to go?

Now that you have some concrete understanding of your motivation, goals and challenges, you can start to formulate your ideas for where you might want to go or decipher which programs to pursue that will align best with your personal situation. It is recommended to complete a lot of research about both countries of interest and programs of interest, with the ultimate goal in mind to hone these down to a top five choice list. Begin very broadly and pursue all of the resources available, while making notes about which countries or programs seem particularly attractive. Starting with a list of ten top choices and rank ordering those choices based upon your financial, time, geographical, and language constraints may be a helpful approach to get you to your eventual list of top five.

One way for you to identify where you want to go is to start with the top choices for countries that you want to live in. You may want to write out intentional statements about what you are hoping to accomplish in each country and then complete research on programs or resources that may assist in accomplishing those intentions.

Examples of intention statements:

- I am seeking a volunteer opportunity in Guatemala where I can develop my language skills and help others.
- I am seeking a career in the Foreign Service to ultimately work and live in Africa.
- I am seeking an internship in publishing in London, U.K.
- I want to teach English in an Asian country.

If you can't narrow down your initial intentions enough, then you might want to create a smaller goal to propel you to keep researching and learning about international opportunities.

For example:

- I am going to gather more information on whether I want to volunteer, intern or work abroad
- I am going to gather more information on internship programs in France.
- I plan to study abroad in Costa Rica next summer and look for opportunities while I am there.

Another way to approach your search is to review programs that are available and determine which countries those programs support. Below are websites and programs that may help you in starting your research.

International Internship Resources and Search Engines

[Global Edge – International Internships Directory](#)

[Study abroad.com](#)

[Go Abroad.com](#)

[Transitions Abroad](#)

[Go Overseas.com](#)

[University of Michigan – International Center](#)

[MyWorldAbroad](#)

International Internship for Credit Providers and Study Abroad programs

[Cultural Vistas](#)

[Global Experiences](#)

[Education Abroad Network](#)

[STE](#)

[Global Education Oregon](#)

[Abroad](#)

[IE3 Global](#)

[International Cooperative Education](#)

[International Education Programs \(IEP\)](#)

[Intrax](#)

[Proworld](#)

[L&C Overseas and Off-Campus Program](#)

Internship Exchange/Work Permit Programs

[AIESEC](#)

[BUNAC](#)

[Center for International studies \(CIS\)](#)

[Connect 1-2-3](#)

[Cross Cultural Solutions](#)

[EPA – Internships in Europe](#)

[InterExchange](#)

[World Internships](#)

Teaching English Abroad * Additional Resources in the Career Center**

[Adventure Teaching](#)

[CIEE: the Council on International Education Exchange](#)

[EF Education First](#)

[Japan Exchange Teaching Program \(JET\)](#)

[Word Teach](#)

Direct Experience with International Organizations

[Mercy Corps](#)

[Peace Corps](#)

[United Nations](#)

[U.S. AID](#)

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[U.S. International Trade Association](#)

Stage 3: How do I get there?

Researching international opportunities can take a lot of time and effort. In addition, many programs require an application at least three to six months at *minimum* prior to your departure, so it's very important to map out the time that you have to dedicate yourself to the researching phase.

Start by asking yourself:

- How quickly can I become an “expert” on the opportunities in my country of interest?
- What resources (books, people, and websites) are available to help me? Which methods of researching do I want to focus my time in pursuing?
- What first step can I take to move closer to my goal? How can I break down my research into steps and what deadlines will I give myself to complete each step?

Once you have an initial sense of your research plan, it's best to use the target date for your international departure and work back to the present for planning purposes. Using your departure date as the target, determine the amount of time you have left to complete your research, get your plans in order, and prepare for your international experience.

Helpful advice for this stage of planning includes:

- Break your goals down into sub-goals and specific tasks or action plans to accomplish each step.

- Try asking yourself, “Can I accomplish this goal tomorrow, this week or next week?” in order to set deadlines of when you will accomplish each specific task within your goals.
- Create a timeline next to each specific goal so that you will hold yourself accountable.
- Set financial goals as well as task oriented goals! Money gives you flexibility when you travel and provides support. Having a good idea of how much you need to save and plan to accomplish your ideal savings will ensure that you have a solid financial cushion while living abroad.
 - If you are a current student, meet with financial aid to understand the availability of aid and any possible repercussions to taking a leave of absence from L&C to participate in an international internship.
- Find others who can support you in your international experiences searching process. Talk with professors, students and alumni who have traveled, worked or volunteered internationally to exchange tips, best practices and receive advice.
- Keep assessing your progress and change your goals frequently as you complete tasks. If what you are doing isn't working, meet with a staff member in the Career Center for help.
- Stay flexible and focused. Keep your eye on your eventual goal to go abroad, but don't be afraid to pursue an interesting opportunity that may suddenly show up.

One way to have additional structure, support and access to international experience opportunities is to consider participating in an experience via a placement agency. Many agencies exist that will provide help with visa requirements, internships or volunteer placements or support in searching for international work opportunities. Agencies usually charge a fee for these support services, so having a clear understanding of the financial considerations and support mechanisms prior to committing to a program will benefit you greatly.

Key questions to ask an agency when you are considering an opportunity:

1. Is this a US-based agency?
Applying for an international placement via a UW-based agency is beneficial for several reasons. In addition to having simpler methods of contact, they may have a greater understanding of the US education system, career skills and abilities of graduates, and are usually regulated by US laws and customs.
2. Is the agency affiliated with a university?
3. Is there a contact person, coordinator, or agency representative from the agency in the country you're planning to have your experience in? Will this person be near where you plan to volunteer, intern or work?
4. How frequently does the agency communicate with you prior and during the international experience?
5. How frequently does the agency communicate with a work, intern or volunteer placement supervisor prior and during your international experience?
6. Does the agency assist with paperwork and/or provide training on international visas, rules and regulation?

Key questions to ask an agency when you are considering an opportunity (continued...)

7. What international insurance coverage is arranged or provided by the agency, specifically in regard to your health.
8. What is the cost of the program, and what is included within that cost?
9. What are the living costs and any unforeseen costs in the country you are planning to have your experience in?
10. Are scholarships available or funding resources available that you can take advantage of?
11. Is the work experience, volunteer experience or internship paid or unpaid?
12. What is the level of support provided by the agency during the application process as well as after you arrive in the country?
13. Are there any amenities provided such as housing?
14. What is the agency's response to a crisis during your work, intern or volunteer experience?
15. Have other students had negative experiences in the program? What are some of the general issues that may occur?