Work Abroad FAQ’s

What are my options for working abroad?

For most students and recent graduates, your best bet is to go through special programs for working, interning, volunteering or teaching abroad. Students (especially at the graduate level) also find their own placements abroad, sometimes with help from their professors. The International Center has resources to help you find programs for working abroad.

Do I need a visa to work abroad?

In most cases, you will need a special type of visa known as a work permit. Some countries even require work permits for unpaid internships or volunteering. Working for pay without a work permit is usually illegal and may put you at risk of deportation. Special programs for working, such as AIC and TIG, interning and volunteering abroad can usually help arrange for a work permit. If you are not going through a work abroad program, a work permit can generally be obtained only with assistance from your overseas employer. Most countries give information about work visas on their Embassy’s web site. See Embassy.org.

I’m considering working in a foreign language environment, but I’m not sure my language skills are good enough. What do employers expect from foreign employees or interns?

If you do choose to work in a foreign language that you’ve already studied, communicating in a foreign language at the workplace is certainly one of the most challenging parts of working abroad, but it should not intimidate you for several reasons. First, you will be surprised at how comfortable you become in the language, since you will be immersed in it every day. Second, employers understand that you are not a native speaker and will have a certain level of patience for language difficulties you might have. Be ready to work hard, but most likely you won't be required to independently publish reports in a language you aren't completely fluent in. Finally, your superiors will be excited to have someone from another country working with them and will want their company to make a good impression on you. Also, note that it's not always necessary to work in the language (if other than English) of the host country. For example, teachers of English as a foreign language are rarely required to know the host country's language.

Some programs say I need to find my own housing. I am totally lost. Where should I start looking?

Just showing up in a foreign country and finding a place to live is certainly a challenge, but it is not as difficult as it might sound. Research can be done in advance or you can begin your search after you arrive and stay in a youth hostel until you find a room. Usually, university or student housing postings are a great place to start looking. Information can usually be found online, in local newspapers, or on public posting boards on university campuses. Also, while your employer, work-abroad or study-abroad program might require that you find your own housing, this doesn't mean they won't provide you with any help. Most likely, they have assisted others in the past and know the best places to start looking. Be aware that housing is a significant cost. In addition to monthly payments, most landlords require an up-front security deposit, so be prepared to make a sizeable cash payment directly upon arrival.