

Work Abroad: Employment Outside The United States

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Why Work Abroad?

Working in a foreign country can be an exciting and enriching experience. The opportunities to share your career-related expertise with international peers, travel to interesting places, and gain cross-cultural insight are tremendous. Many people who have worked abroad feel the experience helped them to grow and their memories of the experience last a lifetime. This guide was created to help you examine the issues involved in working abroad. Hopefully, it will answer your questions while encouraging you to think about new issues. At the end of this guide is a list of useful Career Center resources you can use as you think about working abroad.

How Long to Work Abroad?

As with any other employment opportunity, you will want to consider how much time you want to commit to working abroad. Some overseas assignments may be for specified lengths of time, varying with the organization that employs you. Two strategies for seeking full-time employment overseas are:

1. You can pursue a long-term position with a company whose affiliates are in foreign countries, search for foreign-based companies that have U.S. offices, or seek American-based companies that have branches in foreign countries (e.g., Coca-Cola). Many American companies with offices abroad require employees to build seniority before assigning them to other countries. If you are seeking placement in a foreign country, be sure and ask for information regarding company policies for assigning employees abroad.



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2. You can seek shorter-term work with foreign employers, such as teaching English or providing a service. For example, there are many non-professional positions as servers, bartenders, and maids available in other countries. Another option is to work as an Au pair caring for a family's children and home in exchange for room and board. Such work can be obtained fairly easily through agencies specializing in these positions. Summer jobs may involve agricultural work, working on an archaeological dig, or working in a kibbutz. In most cases, more satisfaction comes from being part of a new culture than from job related duties. Many students report that the opportunity to meet and work with new people made up for the nature of their service oriented work. Groups such as the British Universities North America Club (BUNAC) and the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) provide information to students on options for working abroad. Additional information is also available in the Career Center library.



Vivian Colon, a Peace Corps volunteer in Turkmenistan (courtesy Peace Corps).

What Experience Do You Want?

Once you decide how long you want to work abroad, consider what kind of work experience will benefit your career goals. Some of your options include finding experience through:

An American employer

American-based firms with branches in foreign countries have two choices for filling job vacancies: they can fill the position with an American employee or a qualified national. Americans sent abroad by their firm are usually employees who have been with the company and proven their desire to establish themselves within that company. If you choose this route for obtaining international employment, remember that you may have to work on home soil before you work abroad. It is always important to gather information regarding international employment possibilities from a company prior to accepting employment. Be sure you inform your employer early of your desire to work abroad at some point in your career. If you wish to work abroad for an American firm, it is advisable to negotiate with the company while still in the United States. In this way, you can discuss transportation and relocation costs in your negotiations.

A foreign employer

With some exceptions, your chances of being hired by a foreign-based firm are slim. Often the employer must prove to the government that none of his/her fellow nationals are being denied employment because a foreign employee is being hired. As always, changing global economic and political trends and technological needs can shape the availability of employment for Americans in foreign countries. Permit and visa requirements also vary among countries.

The U.S Government

Some United States government departments hire personnel to work abroad. The Foreign Service branch of the Department of State has placements in embassies and consulates worldwide. Applicants must pass one or more exams (e.g., The Foreign Service Exam) to be considered for these positions. Learn more at www.careers.state.gov or in the Career Center.

Employment as a teacher, counselor, educational specialist and many other career opportunities are available through the Department of Defense (DOD) at www.dodea.edu. The DOD hires American nationals with proper credentials to be employed on military and government bases in foreign countries. Language fluency is sometimes less of a concern in these work settings, since American nationals are the majority of the population.

The Peace Corps also provides volunteer opportunities for individuals with a wide variety of interests and geographical preferences. Some benefits of volunteering can include graduate education, student loan deferment, and a strong alumni network. Information is available online at www.peacecorps.gov and in the Career Center Library. Representatives also frequently visit the FSU campus to provide information and recruit participants during the academic year.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

There are also many organizations of international scope such as the United Nations and the Red Cross. These organizations conduct a multitude of programs, such as UNICEF, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Health Organization. The needs of these organizations vary greatly depending on their activities, and employment opportunities may be limited. You will probably work in the same professional capacity abroad as you do in the United States. You should directly contact any organization in which you are interested to see what their current hiring needs may be.

Searching on your own

Be sure you are particularly fluent in the native language of a country before striking out on an independent job search. A successful job hunt is more likely to occur in countries with labor shortages in certain fields and in developing countries with inadequate employee pools from which to draw. Keeping abreast of current events and global economic and political trends will help you in your search.

Functional Areas

Define the specific area(s) within an organization that can make the best use of your education, skills, and interests. Phrases like "I want to work with people" or "I want to be in management" are too vague. Some functional areas include:

- Accounting
- Administrative/Management
- Banking/Finance
- Communications
- Computers/Data Processing
- Consulting
- Cultural Affairs
- Engineering
- Exporting/Importing
- Foreign Policy
- Industrial Relations
- International Business
- International Relations
- Legal Affairs
- Operations/Production
- Public Relations
- Purchasing
- Research & Development Sales/Marketing
- Teaching
- Trade
- Translating/Interpreting
- Transportation
- Travel Industry

Volunteer Opportunities

If you are not worried about salary, a work camp or service project may be a solution. A wide range of options are available, from building homes and schools to teaching basic community hygiene. Opportunities are also available through churches, service organizations, and famine and relief agencies. Traineeships and internships are also available overseas. Economics, architecture, mathematics, management, and the sciences are just a few of the disciplines in which training is available.

What Documents Will I Need?

Many countries require working papers. In some countries you must have a firm job offer before working papers will be issued. If possible, get your working papers before you leave the United States. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) can help you get a work permit for a summer job in France or New Zealand, or for temporary jobs year-round in England and Ireland. Work in Israel on a kibbutz may also be arranged through CIEE. Visit www.ciee.org to learn about these and other options for working abroad.

You may also need a residence and/or immigration visa. Check with resources, agencies, and foreign government officials before you leave to make sure you do not become a victim of red tape once you are abroad. Also, keep in mind that governments often put restrictions and lengthy procedures on the employment of foreign nationals (you!) to protect jobs for their own citizens. Plan well in advance of your departure date. Prepare for delays and difficulties; they will occur. Your best remedy is to ensure you have a "buffer zone" of extra time. The Boy Scout motto is sound advice in this situation.... *Be Prepared.*

How Will I Adapt To A Foreign Culture?

As an American working abroad, you will be seen as a representative of the United States and of the organization you work for. Your actions may be more closely scrutinized than if you were in a comparable situation in the U.S. It is imperative that you familiarize yourself with cultural norms and native customs so as not to unknowingly offend the people with whom you work and live. Your employer might help you find a mentor to facilitate your adjustment to the new culture.

If your family moves abroad with you, familiarize yourself with the educational philosophy of your host country so that you and your children may adjust more easily to the inevitable differences. Language fluency will ultimately add to the ease of your transition, as well as increase the enjoyment and freedom you experience while abroad.

Where Can I Learn More?

Libraries

Public and university libraries can provide additional resources and information on working abroad. Faculty and staff may also be useful sources of information on this topic. Meet with faculty in fields in which you want to work, as they may have useful facts or relevant contacts.

Online Directories

Online directories often include international employer information. Two such databases with contact information for many types of organizations can be accessed through the FSU University Libraries at www.lib.fsu.edu:

Select E-Resources by Subject: Business; then select from the Databases list...

1. Business and Company Resource Center

- a. select Advanced Search
- b. change Content Area to Company Profiles/Products
- c. change Company Name to State/Country
- d. type in the country you are researching

2. Hoover's Company Capsules/Profiles

- a. select Advanced Search if it doesn't come up by default
- b. type country name in the location box

The World Wide Web

The Web also contains many resources related to working abroad. At the Career Center Library, you can learn how to use the Internet in your job search. Get a copy of our *Job Searching on the Internet* guide, review our *International Employment Hotline* listings located in the red Employment Subscriptions Binder, or the Overseas/Non-teaching file in the Job Openings.

Going Global, is an exciting web-based resource which contains information on international employment opportunities in 24 countries. Not only can you search for work abroad with this on-line database, you can also find culture specific tips on resumes, interviews, and employment trends. Use your FSUID and password to access Going Global as a secure application through campus.fsu.edu.

Selected Web Sites

www.ciee.org
www.iss.edu
www.jobsabroad.com
www.jobsbazaar.com
www.overseasdigest.com
www.overseasjobs.com
www.search-associates.com
www.rileyguide.com/internat.html
www.transitionsabroad.com
workabroad.monster.com

Career Center Library Resources

General Information

American Jobs Abroad	VIC H3
Careers for Foreign Language Aficionados.....	IIB 27-3091 S2
Careers in Foreign Languages.....	IIB 27-3091 C3
Careers in Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality	IIB 39-6000 E2
Going Abroad	Mobile File 14
How to Get a Job in Europe.....	VIC S2
How to Get a Job in the Pacific Rim	VIC S21
How to Get a Job on a Cruise Ship	IVC K3
International Jobs: Where They Are, How To Get Them.....	VIC K5
Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands – How to do Business in 60 Countries	VIC M56
Opportunities in Foreign Language Careers	IIB 27-3091 H8
Opportunities in Travel Careers.....	IIB 39-6000 M5
Response 2003: Directory of Volunteer Opportunities	IVD C3
Transitions Abroad.....	VIC T7
Volunteer!	IVD C6
Work Abroad: The Complete Guide to Finding a Job Overseas	VIC T715
The World Factbook.....	VIC C41
Work Your Way Around the World	VIC G7

International Affairs

Careers in International Business	IIB 13-1000.01 H3
Internships in International Affairs	IVB C25
Opportunities in International Business Careers	IIB 13-1000.01 A7

International Internships

The Back Door Guide to Short-Term Job Adventures	IVB L3
The Internship Bible.....	IVB O4
Yale Daily News Guide to Internships.....	IVB S65

Researching Employers

Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries	VIC F5 (Vol. 1-3)
Hoover's Handbook of World Business	VIC H6
World Chamber of Commerce Directory.....	VIC W71

Teaching Overseas

Overseas Employment Opportunities for Educators	VIC O8
The Teach Overseas Information Handbook	VIC I71
Teaching Abroad	VIC J6
Teaching English Abroad	VIC G71
Teaching English in Asia	VIC V3

