
Living and Working Abroad



Office of Career Development

Vassar College

Does the thought of living and working abroad excite you? Do you feel that now is the time to take the plunge and make your dream of living in Paris or Tokyo come true? Many college students are eager to turn these exciting ideas into reality, but don't know where to begin.

Before you start to plan your overseas adventure, try to clarify what you hope to gain from the experience. What areas of the world interest you most? Do you want to spend most of your time traveling, or would you rather live in one place? How much interaction do you want to have with local people? Would you rather study, work, or do some combination of the two? Try reading *The Harvard Guide to International Experience* if you need help clarifying your objectives.

The scope of international-related opportunities for students and recent graduates is quite broad. There are paid and voluntary types of work, as well as academic study and travel programs. Any of these can take place during the summer or after you leave college. (Junior Year Abroad won't be covered here.)

Here is some information about the various types of overseas opportunities. The resources listed are in the Career

Development Library in the Employment and Internships section or the Geographic Information/International section, or on the web at <http://careers.vassar.edu>.

Summer Work Opportunities

For many college students, an idyllic summer is one spent combining overseas paid employment with travel. Perhaps you'd like to wait tables in Australia, do word processing in England, or work on a farm in Israel. How do you find out about these and other positions? One of the most successful strategies is to go through an employment organization that deals specifically with placing students abroad. One such organization is BUNAC. For a fee, they will provide you with a work visa (essential for legal employment), job listings, and housing information in participating countries (including Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). Check out their website at <http://www.bunac.com/>. There are many other options out there. Take a look at the CDO website International section as well at: <http://careers.vassar.edu/category/resources/international/>.

Finding work in other countries is entirely possible, but may take more effort on your part. You could contact the Consulate of the country where you hope to work and ask about temporary employment opportunities. Locate the embassy or consulate for any country at www.embassyworld.com. Family members and friends may have useful contacts in your countries of interest, and you can check our V-NET (Vassar Career Advisory Network) database for names and addresses of Vassar alumnae/i living abroad. Do some on-line searching as well: universities and colleges all over the world have web pages that could include job listings.

Academic Study Options

Are you fascinated by a specific country or culture? Do you want to see that land and get acquainted with its people firsthand, or study the language intensively? Then you may be interested in a summer or post-graduate study program abroad. The CDO has a wealth of information on the topic; you also should contact the Dean of Studies Office and check departmental bulletin boards.

You can look online at *Transitions Abroad* magazine (<http://www.transitionsabroad.com>), which features articles on international study and

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travel and Going Global (see CDO website).

Financing overseas study often is a major concern. While there are numerous fellowship opportunities for graduate students, it is more difficult to obtain money for undergraduate study. One source of funds is the Rotary Foundation (www.rotary.org), which provides undergraduate and graduate scholarships for study abroad in any field. Applications for Rotary scholarships must be submitted a year in advance of when you plan to leave. The Office for Fellowships and Pre-Health Advising has information on funding sources for post-graduate study; See Idealist.org and [Foundation Grants to Individuals Online](http://FoundationGrants.com)—email cdo@vassar.edu for password; also refer to the *Work, Study, and Travel Abroad* book mentioned previously.

Volunteer Programs

If you're interested in humanitarian service or aid to developing countries, you may want to look into volunteer service programs. There are short-term summer programs, often called work-camps, as well as ones for graduates which may require a one or two year commitment.

"Volunteer" typically means that you don't earn a salary. Although some programs, such as the Peace Corps, provide you with a stipend, that is the exception rather than the rule. Because volunteer service organizations are nonprofit and usually run on a tight budget, you may even be asked to pay a fee in order to participate.

Resource books to review include the annual edition of *Volunteer!*, *Alternatives to the Peace Corps*, *International Voluntary Work*, and *The Peace Corps and More*.

Post-Graduate Work Opportunities

Often in the CDO, we hear phrases like this: "I want to work for an advertising agency in Japan..." or "I'd like to get involved with international business..." Can you define what kind of work sparks your interest to go abroad? Because the word "international" can be applied to almost any career field, one of your first steps is to determine the type of industry or organization for which you'd like to work. You also need to examine your skills and background, and then try to decide what sorts of jobs within that industry or organization would be most appropriate for you.

Some employer options to consider include governmental agencies such as the Foreign Service, American or international schools, business firms which have foreign offices or interest, and nonprofit organizations. Although many U.S. students have the expectation that immediately upon graduation they can secure a career-related job in a foreign country, this usually is not the case. With a few notable exceptions, most employers do not hire Americans straight out of college and send them abroad. It usually takes time to develop skills, learn the ropes in the U.S. office, and establish your worth before an employer

would feel comfortable sending you overseas. For certain occupational fields, however, there are international opportunities for recent graduates. The Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) program, for example, hires recent college graduates to teach English in schools all over Japan.

If you are a citizen of another country, or your citizenship enables you to work in more than one country, your employment options may be broader. Talk with a career development staff member for more information.

To find out about careers and hiring practices in your industry or geographic region of choice, you might look at [Going Global](http://GoingGlobal.com) online, the *Guide to Careers in World Affairs* and *Careers in International Affairs*. For actual job listings, look online at Idealist.org and [eRecruiting](http://eRecruiting.com), and at the binders titled *Current Jobs International*, *International Employment Hotline* and *The International Educator*, among many others.

Employment, study, and volunteer opportunities exist all over the world, but discovering the ones of most interest to you takes time and careful organization. Don't despair, however, because in this situation the old maxim "where there's a will there's a way" holds true. A dose of realism, persistence, and optimism will take you far. *Bon voyage!*