



Preparing Interns and Co-ops for the Work Abroad Experience

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Effective preparation increases students' chances of . . .

- Thriving in a new culture
- Making significant contributions on the job
- Gaining new skills in their chosen field



What types of information do students need prior to working abroad?

- Program logistics
- Safety
- Health
- Cross-cultural preparation
- On-the-job success strategies



Program Logistics

Understanding transportation, housing, food, money, and financial aid issues; knowing the time it will take to complete degree if one works abroad; knowing the reporting requirements for the work term; understanding course or program credit; getting necessary work permits and visas; establishing local and international contacts; having sufficient insurance (health, liability, etc.); predicting language requirements early on; knowing which campus resources are available (having organizational clarity); developing contracts or agreements with employers.



Safety

Having adequate insurance (health, liability, travel interruption, etc.), personal safety – knowing local laws, customs, and safety issues unique to the host country, avoiding pickpockets, knowing relevant contacts on campus, making sure campus knows how to contact students, knowing U.S. State Dept. warnings/recommendations, having emergency plans in place, registering whereabouts with embassy, understanding local transportation, knowing how to ask for help in the language of the host country, knowing which number to dial in case of an emergency, understanding workplace safety issues.



Health

Evidence of health insurance coverage, repatriation/evacuation insurance; having medications (properly labeled) and birth control; awareness of food and water safety; immunizations for specific countries/regions (CDC specifies which are needed – www.cdc.gov); having first aid kit; knowing where to go if student becomes ill or injured; knowing how to explain allergies or other health conditions in the language of the host country; having identification and contact information on person in case one is unconscious and unable to communicate.



Cross-Cultural Preparation

Participating in language study (early preparation is needed); knowing etiquette/local customs; knowing appropriate dress for culture and work environment; understanding relevant gender, historical, religious, and political issues; knowing about food of the country; encouraging an open mind, patience, flexibility, and sense of humor; knowing that punctuality may be interpreted differently in different cultures.

Recommendations: Require students to study language of host country; use CultureGrams (buy at www.culturegrams.com for 190 individual countries); use stand-alone courses on cross-cultural issues, orientations, games/activities, embassy web sites, university web sites, and relevant books.



On-the-Job Success Strategies

Understanding hierarchy/organizational structure of company, understanding the corporate culture, knowing basic expectations, setting goals and objectives, knowing dress code and workplace etiquette, having a pre-planned strategy for dealing with problems that may emerge, knowing how to take responsibility for the quality of one's own work assignment, understanding company's work ethic, knowing the right persons to contact on the job, understanding that feedback may be infrequent, knowing not to take criticism seriously, not expecting work environment to be the same as in one's own country, asking employers to provide mentors in addition to supervisors, knowing that various leadership and communication styles exist.



How do you convey this information to students?

- Courses
- Orientations
- Handbooks/Newspapers
- Web sites
- Podcasts
- Mentors (use previous work abroad students with same major)
- Student organizations



What are the best resources for work abroad information?

- Conferences such as this global colloquium
- Study abroad resources that transfer to work abroad programs
- Best practices from other institutions
- Organizations such as Engineering without Borders, NAFSA (www.nafsa.org), IAESTE (www.iaeste.org), CDC (www.cdc.gov)
- Returning work abroad co-ops and interns as mentors and ambassadors
- Students from other cultures
- Company representatives
- U.S. Dept. of State; embassies/consulates of individual countries
- German American Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations
- Cross-cultural books, web sites
- Orientations, classes
- Assessment results



Georgia Tech



- Located in Atlanta, GA
- Founded in 1885
- Average SAT score: 1340
- Average high school GPA: 3.74
- Ranked in top ten of public universities by US News & World Report
- 17,000 students (12,000 undergrad)

6 Colleges: Architecture, Computing, Engineering, Management, Sciences, Liberal Arts (Ivan Allen); largest - Engineering



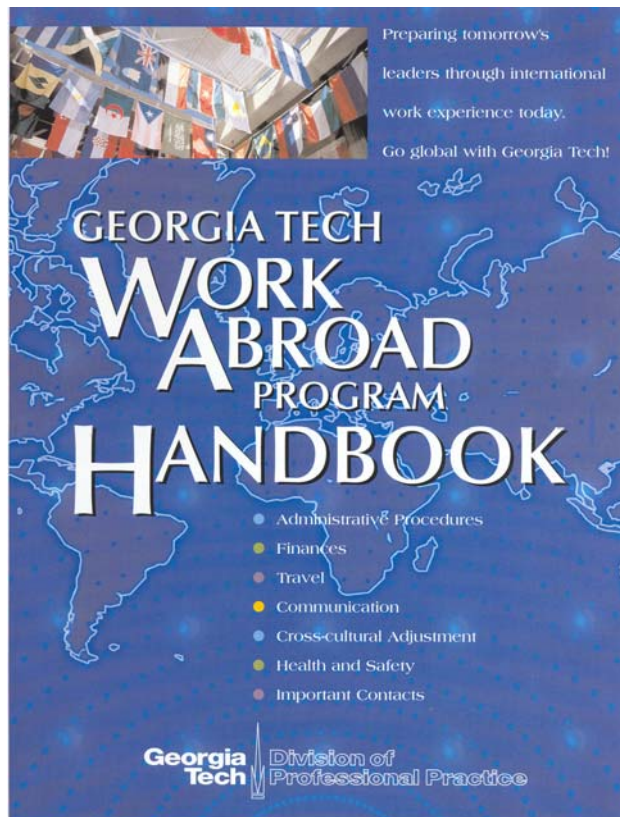
Course work to prepare for working abroad

If student is enrolled in International Plan . . .

- Language courses (English-only plan also available)
- Global economics
- International relations
- Course that is country/region specific
- Capstone course in senior year tying international experience to student's discipline



Students may work abroad with or without participating in the International Plan. In either case, students will attend a Work Abroad Orientation.



The Work Abroad orientation may be conducted individually or in a group setting.



Program Logistics

- Passports and visas
- Earning program credit/audit credit
- Reporting requirements
 - Pre-work abroad assessment
 - Post-work abroad assessment
 - Assignment record
 - Work report
 - Supervisor's report (performance evaluation)



Health

- Immunizations
- International health insurance
- First aid and precautions during trip



Safety

- **Pre-departure**
 1. Embassy registration
 2. Communication plan
 3. Backing up documents
- **While abroad**
 1. Smart strategies
 2. Emergencies/Emergency Preparedness Plan



Cross-Cultural Adjustment

- Pre-departure preparation (additional orientation provided by Office of International Education)
- Chapter in the *Work Abroad Handbook*, additional handouts, and *CultureGrams* to assist in learning about cross-cultural adjustment



Preparing for the International Work Assignment

“I hear, and I forget. I see, and I
remember. I do, and I understand.”

--*Chinese Proverb*



Job-related Cultural Considerations

- Corporate culture reflects national culture
- Organizational structure may appear more rigid than in U.S.
- Problems are often solved differently in other cultures
- Various forms of leadership exist



Job-related Cultural Considerations (continued)

- Organization may work at a pace that is different from student's prior experience
- American tendency to operate by "trial and error" may be shunned in another culture
- Communication styles vary



Other Considerations

- Technical, social, and communication skills are required for success
- Adaptability, flexibility, and patience are essential
- Emphasis may be more on observing than doing
- Ambiguity vs. “right” answers may be a factor
- Feedback from supervisor may be infrequent



Guidelines for a Successful Work Abroad Assignment (handout)



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