

Guide To

Teaching Abroad

Career Center

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Explore your next adventure

The idea of teaching English abroad after graduation attracts many CC students. CC students often want to return abroad after a positive study abroad experience. It's a great opportunity to explore another country and culture before beginning a career or graduate school. Teaching English in another country is probably the easiest way to spend some time abroad without incurring too much cost. There are many opportunities, but it will take time, effort, and sometimes money to make this happen. There are a growing number of established programs. Participants are often responsible for round-trip transportation and health insurance, as well as additional program fees. Students may or may not be paid a salary that compensates for these costs. Often costs have to be paid up front. Most organizations prefer a commitment of one academic year, although some offer summer or semester possibilities. A bachelor's degree is usually the minimum requirement for most positions. Your major does not have to be in English in most cases, nor do you need to be fluent in the host country's language. Organizations are mostly interested in your ability to speak native and fluent English, especially in Asia and Eastern Europe, where they may have had the opportunity to study English but not with a native speaker. Other countries and more competitive programs want you to already have training and experience in teaching English as a second language (ESL), which can be obtained before graduating college, or some training and certifications may be required.

PREPARATION

It is strongly recommended that you can gain experience and training prior to applying to teaching overseas. It will make you a better teacher and maximize the experience for you. You can do this in several ways:

- You can volunteer to teach or tutor English in a local ESL program or tutor English and/or reading at local elementary schools. Contact the Center for Service and Learning to get started.
- You can take an ESL course (ED202) during half block or in the summer (ED340 or ED341) while at CC, which will provide training and hands on experience. You can do a similar ACM Urban Education Program in Chicago. Contact the Office for International Students and Study Abroad for more information.
- You can complete a one-month course, which provides students with a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate or a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Training to Adults) certificate. TEFL teaches more modern and less structured teaching methods; CELTA is more traditional. One of these certifications may make you more competitive for positions in Western Europe, but is not necessary for all programs or opportunities.
- You can also make yourself a more competitive candidate by learning another language while at CC, taking advantage of opportunities to study abroad, living in a language house and participating in the language tables, or even mixing with our international students. It doesn't matter which language you choose - the experience of learning a second language yourself, will make you a more empathetic teacher.

Good programs generally provide training and curriculum, but some teachers must develop their own curriculum. Since teachers may be given a lot of responsibility with little training and no curriculum in some teaching locations, you should prepare before you get into a classroom situation. Keep in mind that classroom sizes may be much larger in some of these countries.

PAY

Pay can vary: costing money, breaking even, or allowing you to save a little while away. Pay can be similar to American wages in Japan, but somewhat less in South Korea and Taiwan. In China and the Eastern European countries, it can be enough to get by in that country, but little more. There are usually only unpaid volunteer opportunities in Africa and Latin and Central America. There may even be fees to volunteer on top of your living and transportation expenses. Opportunities in Western Europe are slim for Americans

because English speaking members of the European Union can teach without work permits and Visas. However, North Americans can teach English to a family 15 hours per week in exchange for room and board. If you are mainly interested in a reasonably priced foreign experience, this may be a good route for you since you will have plenty of free time to explore. Unfortunately, there is a preference for females in the private home teaching opportunities.

Warning!!! Before starting, keep in mind that there is an emerging market for international scams and “fly by night” programs. Opportunities can look very legitimate on the web. Always be wary of programs that have not been around for more than a few years, make huge promises, have hefty up front costs, or are vague in nature. Ask a lot of questions! Always watch for hidden expenses. If you aren’t sure about a program, make an appointment at the Career Center to discuss it.

THE JOB SEARCH

The search process is a lengthy one. You should start your search about nine months before you plan to teach since the application process itself may take up to 6 months. Before you begin searching for the right program, there are a few things you should do. You’ll need to ask yourself some questions:

- (1) What do you want to gain from an overseas experience? Is your goal to experience a different culture, learn or improve a language, or explore teaching as a possible career?
- (2) How much money do you need or want to make? Rarely does someone profit financially from teaching ESL overseas. Can you afford to just break even or even spend more than you earn for the value of the cross-cultural experience? Will you be able to defer your student loan repayment? The answers to your money questions may affect your choices.
- (3) It may be helpful to narrow down your geographic preferences from the entire world to a few countries or regions. Would a cross-cultural experience in any country be acceptable? Or do you have some preferences for a certain language, region, or country? Do you hope to tie your experience to career objectives? How does this affect the money issue?

Finding a teaching position abroad can be confusing and overwhelming. It is probably easier and safer to apply through a US based or affiliated organization, which are often associated with an American college or university. These organizations usually arrange placement and provide for logistical matters, such as housing and a work permit. A similar method is to apply through well known official programs associated with other countries. You can also write directly to overseas schools, sending a country-specific resume and cover letter, but keep in mind that chances of success are limited without visiting the country for an in-person interview. Unless you already have a connection with someone in that country who can help you, this method involves luck. Consider contacting CC Alumni who are already living in your preferred country. Come by the Career Center for more information on how to contact these possible mentors. Another option is to go to the country where you would like to work and apply in person for a teaching position. The major downside to this are the risk of not finding a position and the cost: airfare, housing (possibly paying up front the deposit of several months' rent), and the need to travel to a third country to get a work permit once you land a job, since you cannot apply for visas while “in country.” Without a program, the total up-front costs could easily be \$2,000 to 3,000 or more. This is something to consider when evaluating program fees, which may not be as much and involve less risk. We generally recommend applying through US-based organizations, verified official organizations in other countries, or programs with a well known and good reputation rather than looking for a job upon arrival in the country.

RESEARCH THE COUNTRY

You need to find out how safe your country of choice currently is and the rules concerning work and travel. There are official websites to gather this information. It is extremely important to research the culture and social conditions in the location of your potential employment. Read all the literature from the location. You should come to understand the economic and socio-political environment. Analyze what you learn and how it will affect you. In researching a country or conducting a job search, you may wish to contact alumni living abroad. Check the Career Center's Career Referral Network for the names of alumni volunteers who live abroad. Research and consider Visa requirements and restrictions.

COMPARE PROGRAMS

Cost. Programs vary widely in fees, services, and assistance they offer. When choosing a program, inquire about the following basic criteria: fees, salary, job placement, work permit, health insurance, housing, teacher training and materials, orientation, and level of on-site support. How much are the application and program fees, if any? What is included in this fee (transportation, airfare, housing, medical care, work permit, teacher training and materials)? Determine whether the cost of the program adequately matches what the program offers you. Compare costs with similar programs and locations.

Job placement. Find out the age group you will teach: elementary, high school, university students or adults. Where will you teach: a state school, private school, or for-profit language institute? Is placement guaranteed? Do you have a choice of location? Would you prefer a rural or urban area? Will you be the only English speaker or part of a network of colleagues? Which would you prefer?

Accommodations. Consider the living situation. Will you live with a host family, in a dorm, in an apartment, or at a volunteer work site? Will you be living in a city or in a rural community? How much will it cost? How far will you have to travel to work?

Salary. How much and how often will you be paid? Will it cover your cost of living expenses? Compare your salary with the cost of living in the area. Large cities, for example, are much more expensive than towns or rural areas.

Health insurance. Many programs do not include health insurance. However, you may purchase health insurance for additional fees or you may be covered by that country's socialized medicine. You should obtain an International Teachers ID Card (only \$22.00) which includes a very minimal health insurance policy and provides access to student-rate airfare prices. Consider special comprehensive coverage for educators.

Teaching materials, curriculum and on-site training. Determine what teaching materials, curriculum and training the program provides. If they do not provide teaching materials, can they recommend what to bring? Even if some training is provided, you may find it useful to obtain experience teaching or tutoring in the US.

Training and Certifications. Does the training include at least 120+ hours of coursework? Does the training include monitored hands-on teaching experience? Does the training program have a good word-of-mouth reputation? Does the training program have a placement center? Can you talk with a program graduate? Is the certification recognized nationally, such as TEFL or CELTA? Is TEFL or CELTA the right one for you? It should cost between \$1000 to \$1500 for a one month course. Avoid the on line or distance education programs that do not include hand-on experience if you don't already have some practical experience.

Teaching. Will the experience fulfill what you wish to accomplish? Do you have a sense of what the assignment will really be - class size, age and language level of students, availability of books, and classroom resources? Is there an expected methodology? Teachers should not be required to teach much more than 20 hours per week to allow for preparation time and personal time. Keep in mind that classroom size of 60 elementary students or even 300 university students is common. Do you feel more comfortable as a teacher or a teacher's assistant?

Support. Will you be supported in the program? Will there be someone available to you? Are there other ESL teachers who can support each other? How isolated will you be? Consider how much support YOU will need as a new teacher in a foreign country and culture.

Intercultural experience. What is the level of cultural immersion? How will you handle gender and social differences? Are you willing to live in and adapt to another culture for a good length of time? Consider such factors as the length of stay, language development, courses, and interaction with people of the host country.

Language. Is it a necessity to speak another language other than English? If so, do you already know how to speak the language or will you have to learn? Will you have the chance to learn? Do they offer language and cultural training?

Safety. Always consider your safety when choosing a country or program. Who will you be able to contact in-country if you run into problems? Does the program provide a contact and support? Is there an American Embassy there?

Visas. Find out which Visas you need? How difficult are they to obtain? How much does each Visa cost? How long can you stay in the country?

Immunizations. Find out which immunizations you will need and what the health conditions are in the country or region ahead of time.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This packet is meant to be introductory and not comprehensive in nature. Information and rules change quickly. Do your research! You can start by using the following links:

Working abroad information <http://www.coloradocollege.edu/library/Course/ID/LunchandLearnWorkAbroad.html>

Teaching ESL Resources <http://www.coloradocollege.edu/Library/Course/education/practicalESL.htm>

TERMS AND ACRONYMS

You may come across these in your search for programs and information.

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

ELD: English Language Development

EFL: English as a Foreign Language (used in Europe)

CELTA: Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and Royal Society of Arts, based in England. This is a specific, brand name TEFL certificate course.

ELT: English language teaching or training (used internationally)

RSA: Royal Society of Arts, part of the Oxford Cambridge RSA group which administers a variety of exams for lifelong learning. More information is available at <http://www.ocr.org.uk/>

TEFL: Teaching English as a foreign language (often used to refer to teacher education programs in EFL or TEFL certificate)

TESL: Teaching English as a second language (often used to refer to teacher education programs in ESL)

TESOL: Teaching English to speakers of other languages (a professional activity that requires specialized training. It is also the name of an association.)

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language (an exam administered worldwide to international students applying to US institutions of higher education)

UCLES: The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), an institution of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom. UCLES offers five main EFL examinations covering a range of abilities for EFL students.

NAFSA: Now the Association of International Educators