

Teaching Abroad: Finding the Right Program for You.

I. What should you be asking when considering a Teach Abroad program or position?

A. BASIC FAQ's (modified from teachabroad.com)

- Do you need to speak the local language?
- Do you have to go for a year or are there another schedule options?
- How much money does a teacher abroad make? How much can you earn?
- Where will I live and who arranges housing?
- Who will I teach? Adults? High School? Children? Private lessons or group?
- Is there a contract?
- What costs are typically involved? Do I have to pay for this experience?
- Do I receive TEFL training? Will I be certified as a TEFL instructor through this program?

B. EVALUATE PROGRAM RELIABILITY

In reviewing possible programs or coordinators for teach abroad programs, you want to have a good sense of the reliability and trustworthiness of the organization. Asking questions about the organization can help you determine their trustworthiness and the likelihood that you will have a positive experience.

How Much Does the Website Reveal About the Organization?:

- Who runs the program?
- Can you find a list of staff members or board of trustees on the website?
- Do they have contact information?
- Is there a history of the organization on the website?
- How long have they been in existence? (This does not mean a new program is a bad program.)
- Is the organization based in the U.S. or in another country?
- Is the organization a non-profit or for profit company?
- Where do they get their funding?

Does the Program Offer References?:

- Will they provide you with the names and contact information of former participants?
- Do they provide testimonials from U.S. colleges and universities?
- Who do they work with (national governments, NGO's, universities)?

C. SUPPORT & STRUCTURE

It is important to understand the work conditions and expectations before accepting a position to teach overseas. Not only do you want to know about the job itself, but about your living arrangements, support and services provided by the opportunity organizer.

Work Conditions

- How many classes/periods are you expected to teach each day?
- How long do they last?
- How many students are in each class?
- Who will evaluate you as a teacher?
- Will you have to participate/supervise/conduct extracurricular activities?

Support for teachers

- Do they provide an orientation when you arrive?
- What “in country” support is available?
- Is there a staff member or an office in the country and/or in the city/town you will be stationed?
- Do you receive their names and phone numbers prior to your arrival?
- What pre-departure information is shared before leaving the U.S.?
- Will you be picked up at the airport?
 - If not, have you been given specific instructions as to where you should go?
 - Which cab company you should use? Which bus?
 - Is the airport in the city of your location.
- Do they provide weekend and travel activities so that you can experience other parts of the country/city?
- What teaching aids are available? Are you expected to provide your own? This may vary from whether the school has a photocopier, film projectors, television sets/VCR/DVD players, overhead projectors – and even chalk.
- Ask what type of teaching aids you should expect to bring from home.

Housing

- Are you assigned a home-stay? If so...
 - Is the cost included or do you have to pay?
 - Do they provide your meals? How many?
 - Do you have diet restrictions?
 - Laundry service included?
 - Will you have your own room and/or bathroom?
 - How many living in the house? Other foreigners?
- Do they offer other housing for you?
 - Is the cost included or do you have to pay?
 - Dormitory, residence hall, apartments?
 - Are they co-ed?
 - Do you share a room with someone? Do you share a bathroom?
 - Do you have a kitchen?

- Do you have to find your own housing?
 - Look for reviews of reputable places
 - Do you need a kitchen? Would you like your own room? Would you like a roommate?
 - Make sure you understand the contract
- What happens if the housing arrangement does not work out? Can you change your place or residence?

D. KNOW THE LOCATION

A background knowledge of the country, region or city where you will be placed is an important part of preparing yourself for an experience overseas. You should feel comfortable (not unchallenged, but also not completely unprepared for the experience) and you should have knowledge about what is required of you to work overseas as well as the protections you may or may not have in the other country.

Visas:

- Do the organizers assist you in securing a visa?
- What documents are required by your host country?
(i.e. a bank statement, letter of invitation, police record, proof of insurance)

Legal Issues:

- Do you know how the legal system works in your host country?
- Is consumption of alcohol legal in your host country?
- Are there different regulations for females and males?
- How do locals and local laws deal with harassment and sexual assault (is it a cultural norm, are they supportive of victims, blame victims, prosecute, etc.?) How does the program provider assist you?
- How near is the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate?
- What are your program's specific set of rules to be followed, in addition to any local/national laws?

E. KNOW YOURSELF

Before embarking on any long-term international experience you should ask yourself hard questions about your own personality, needs, health and wellness. You do not want to set yourself up to fail because you did not take these factors into account before you signed up to spend a year abroad. Not all locations are good matches for all people. You need to be honest with yourself about your needs so that you can choose a program where you can live and work successfully, despite the challenges you will face. Many of the questions below should be followed by a simple question of yourself "Am I comfortable with the answer here or will this make my time there difficult to manage?".

Health Issues

- How is your health? Be honest about any conditions or needs which might impact how you will be able to adapt to the location where you hope to travel.
- Do you have any dietary restrictions?
- Any medical conditions that need monitoring?

- Is the program organizer able to assist in these situations?
- Will your prescription drugs(s) be legal and/or available abroad?
- What are the general sanitary conditions in your host country?
- What vaccines/immunizations are required or recommended?
- Does the program include insurance as part of its program fee?
 - Does it cover you while you travel? When does it start/end?
 - Is there any out of pocket expense?
 - Is medical evacuation or repatriation included?
- Will a translator be provided if needed during a doctor visit or hospital stay?
- What is the typical cost of medical services?

Living Conditions & Your Attitude:

- What is the general quality of facilities like hospitals, public transportation, etc?
- What modern conveniences does your host country/town/village offer
(i.e. internet connections, microwaves, cell phone service, air conditioned housing, stores)?
- How comfortable are you with less advanced or high tech environments?
- How comfortable are you with cultural difference?
- Is this a location very much like home or very different from it?
- How easy is it for you to adapt to new locations, lifestyles, languages, expectations, etc.

Teach Abroad Checklist ...

Pre-Application...

- _____ I have researched the cost of the program and what the cost covers.
- _____ I know where the program is located and where the abroad program office is located.
- _____ I understand what support services are available through the program in the U.S. and abroad.
- _____ I know who is in charge of health and safety for the program.
- _____ I have spoken with students/former participants who have been in the program.
- _____ I know about how much money I will need to live.
- _____ I know about how much I will be paid.
- _____ I am aware of what kind of facilities are involved with my program (housing, teaching location).
- _____ I understand what services and activities will and will not be provided for me by the program.
- _____ I know the procedure to securing any required travel documents (passport, visa, medical documents, proof of insurance, etc.)

- _____ I know what type of housing will be available to me. And what my options are if they do not work out. I know whether I will be living in a co-ed dorm/apartment and whether I will be sharing or living alone.
- _____ I have not been influenced by how great the website looks!
- _____ I have done my research and am confident in my next step!
- _____ I know who to contact in the country and in the United States in case of an emergency or other issue.

Post-Application...

- _____ I have researched the general quality of the facilities such as hospitals, shopping, communications and transportation.
- _____ I know what modern conveniences the location offers (internet, cell phones, heated/air-conditioned classrooms).
- _____ I am familiar with the health care system of the country, including the quality of facilities and the cost of services.
- _____ I know what my personal insurance policy does and does not cover.
- _____ I know how to get to my final destination if I am not picked up at the airport.
- _____ I have been provided pre-departure materials.
- _____ There is an on-site orientation upon my arrival.
- _____ I will be given contact information for other program participants in the same country/location.

Program Search Engines

These are good places to begin a search for possible Teach Abroad programs and placement organizations.

- Go Teach Abroad - <http://www.goteachabroad.com/>
- Go Abroad - <http://www.goabroad.com/teach-abroad>
- Studyabroad.com - <http://www.studyabroad.com>
- Linguistic Funland- <http://www.linguistic-funland.com/tesljob.html>
- Dave's ESL Café – www.eslcafe.com/joblist
- International Schools Services – www.iss.edu

Specific Program Websites

The programs on this list are known to Augustana, usually through past participation by Augustana alumni. We believe that each of these programs are reliable opportunities, though some are competitive and others require that you pay a program fee in order to gain teaching experience overseas, similar to a study abroad program.

CIEE – www.ciee.org/teach/

Greenheart Travel – www.cci-exchange.com/travelabroad/index.aspx

AEON – www.aeonet.com – educational programs in Japan

French Embassy- Teaching Assistant Program: <http://highereducation.frenchculture.org/teach-in-france>

Government of Spain- Teaching Assistant Program <http://www.mecd.gob.es/eeuu/convocatorias-programas/convocatorias-eeuu/auxiliares-conversacion-eeuu.html>

American TESOL Institute – www.tesolcoursethailand.com

Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/types-of-grants>

TEFL International – www.teflcourse.net

TEFL Prague - www.teflworldwideprague.com