Choosing a Program

Use the U-M International Center web site as a starting point to find examples of established programs. Feel free to contact the Education Abroad Office at 734.764.9310 or ic-abroad@umich.edu [1] for advice and further information on programs, such as evaluations by U-M participants.

List Your Basic Criteria

Decide how you’ll go about finding a work, internship or volunteer abroad placement, through one of two means:

1. Use the assistance of a program. For most students and recent graduates we recommend using a program. Programs may offer varying amounts of assistance with matters including job placement, obtaining a work visa, pre-departure orientation, and onsite support.
2. Make your own arrangements. Making your own arrangements may be most suitable when you have connections through professors or other acquaintances. This is more likely to be the case for students in graduate and professional schools, though there are also some programs suitable for advanced students.

Decide whether you need academic credit or not. If you do, consider a study-internship or study-volunteer (service-learning) program which combines academic coursework with an internship or volunteer experience. Some departments and schools (e.g. German, French, Political Science, LSA) offer a course designed to complement an internship or volunteer-abroad experience. It's also possible to arrange for an independent study with a professor. If you want academic credit, be sure to consult with your academic advisor (and with your concentration advisor for credit in your major).

The following is a partial list of important considerations:

- **Duration** - length of time can range from a few weeks to a summer or semester, to two years
- **Location** - especially the choice between developed or less-developed regions, and its relationship to other factors such as costs and health and safety issues.
- **Health and safety** - see the [Department of State's travel advisories](https://travel.state.gov) [2] for assessments of these factors for every country. See [Global Michigan](https://global.umich.edu) [3] for U-M specific health and safety information.
- **Focus** - each type of work abroad (internship, volunteering, teaching, paid jobs, research) has its own distinctive focus and a greater or lesser degree of structure.
- **Eligibility requirements** - some programs require specific skills (e.g. engineering or foreign language competence), while others are open to generalists. Some programs are restricted to U.S. citizens.
- **Costs** - with very few exceptions there will be expenses for working or doing research abroad. Even
paid positions will usually have program fees or at least start-up expenses. The only programs that cover all one's expenses tend to be government-sponsored (either U.S. or foreign) and for a longer period of time, such as a year or two. So, you may need to do some fundraising. U-M offers funding opportunities for current U-M students. [4]

Check Out the Programs you are Considering

- U-M students should contact the International Center for advice at 734.764.9310 or ic-abroad@umich.edu [1].
- Check sites such as Transitions Abroad [5], GoOverseas.com [6], and Abroad101 [7] for participant reports.
- Request contact information of past participants from each program you're considering.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau [8] to see if there have been complaints about a program.

Source URL: https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/abroad/swt/work/choosing-program

Links
[1] mailto:ic-abroad@umich.edu
[4] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/abroad/swt/work/funding
[8] https://www.bbb.org/