



#ExperienceWorks

## Questions to ask when researching international opportunities

Many of these opportunities are organised by agencies, gap year providers and voluntary work organisations. Most of these will be excellent, but don't assume that they all are.

The organisations advertising on MyCareerHub meet the Careers Service's minimum standards. These standards are intended to provide assurance that the organisation is legitimate and that the opportunity costs and policies are clearly explained. We check that the organisation's **contact details** are supplied and information is provided on its **legal status** (e.g. charity, non-profit, registered company) and on the student's **employment status** (with the organisation, or by a third party). We require that information is provided on the **support policy**, and on **financial arrangements**:

- Fees: application fee, deposit, programme fee, fundraising requirement
- Subsistence: meals, accommodation, work-related travel – is this included?
- Costs relating to travel, visa, insurance, medical expenses
- Pay – is it a paid opportunity or not?
- Refund policy

We make no judgement about the values of the organisation or the experience it provides. If, for example, an organisation does not offer refunds we will still advertise on its behalf – as long as this fact is made clear. **It is up to you to reach your own conclusion about whether the opportunity offered is right for you.**

Before you commit yourself, sign anything or hand over cash, **do your own research**. If the organisation is not on MyCareerHub, look – or ask – for information on the points above. The following will give you ideas for supplementary questions.

### Student testimonials

---

Look for up-to-date student testimonials, especially from alumni from University of Edinburgh and other UK universities. Try Googling, as well as looking at the organisation's own website. Is the organisation willing to put you in touch with previous clients?

We monitor organisations on the basis of student feedback, so if you have concerns about an organisation, please let us know.

### About the organisation

---

- What is the main purpose of the organisation? How many people work for it?
- How long has the organisation been running programmes?

### Support

---

- Will a representative of the organisation be on site or nearby? Will they speak your language (e.g. English)?
- How often will you be in contact with them while on placement?
- Will you be offered an induction or briefing before you start work? And training?
- What kind of insurance is provided? Do they hold domestic and foreign liability insurance? Does it cover personal injury? And repatriation if you become ill? Have you seen a copy of the policy to check the cover?





## Travel

---

- Is it safe? How volatile is the local political situation? Always check the [FCO travel advice](#) before booking travel.
- What are the travel arrangements? Do you have to organise and pay for it yourself?
- Will you be travelling by yourself or in a group?
- Will you be able to transfer your return ticket if you need to come home early?

## Daily life

---

### Accommodation

- Do you have the address of where you will be staying?
- Have you been given a clear idea of the standard of accommodation? Was it checked recently?
- If you're staying with a local family, are they being paid? What do they hope to get out of having you to stay?
- How far are you from where you will work? How far from the nearest town?

### Work

- What hours will you work and how much free time will you have?
- What activities will you do on a day-to-day basis?
- Do you need any particular skills for the project?
- Will you be given any support materials – or expected to take your own?
- If you're working with children (or any other vulnerable group) does the organisation do background checks?

## Values

---

- If you are paying, find out where the money goes. How much goes on travel, accommodation, administration? Is it good value for money?
- Who is the organisation benefitting?
- Are the interests of the local people being served? Will your activities be welcomed by them? If so, in what way?

**If the answers to your questions are vague or unsatisfactory you may want to reconsider your choice. Ultimately, however, it is for you to decide – based on your research – whether the opportunity will meet your requirements.**

## Three Golden Rules

---

- Make sure you understand, and are comfortable with, **all** the costs associated with the opportunity.
- Look for feedback. If still in doubt, ask the Careers Service if they have come across the organisation before.
- Get everything in writing.

March 2017

