Is Work Abroad for Me

An international work or research experience will be both challenging and rewarding. Workplace culture and norms will be different from what you are used to. While working abroad, be mindful of expectations regarding workloads, timeliness, and supervisor/employee interactions. Depending on where you go organizations may be less task- and goal-oriented than in the U.S. You may find a generally slower pace of work and life in many regions of the world.

The following qualities can help ensure you have a productive and successful work experience abroad:

- Willingness to engage, listen, and observe
- Willingness to work collaboratively with your supervisor and host organization. How can you be helpful to them? What can you learn?
- Humility
- Flexibility and tolerance for cultural differences
- Independence
- Ability to cope with feelings of loneliness, isolation or homesickness
- Responsibility for your own safety, health and welfare
- Sense of humor
- Ability to tolerate personal and professional setbacks
- Ability to tolerate ambiguity and lack of (or different) structure in your everyday environment

Rewards and Benefits of Working Abroad

While the challenges may be greater than for study abroad, so are the potential rewards. Students and graduates who have worked, interned, volunteered or conducted research abroad have reported many rewards including:

- Increased confidence and competence
- Deep understanding of the host country’s culture (though you may need to reflect and read on your own to conceptualize this understanding)
- Immersion in and faster acquisition of a foreign language; some programs include an intensive language component at the beginning
- Insight into possible career choices

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