



## International Work Experience/International Co-op Work Term Guidelines for MRU Students

*(Local Canadian students going abroad to complete Work Term/Co-op/Practicum placements)*

### Working Abroad

Incorporating an international work experience into your university studies can be one of the best things you can do for yourself. There are few better ways to broaden horizons, learn about you, get a glimpse of the 'big picture' and become a part of the global community of the business and information world. Not only will you learn from the work experience, but you can also benefit personally from the cultural experience and from learning another language. Not all work abroad experiences are as dramatically life changing, but any opportunity to learn more about the world by living and working in a new place and getting to know another culture is a pretty good start.

### Where to start – Self Evaluation

The number of job possibilities around the world available to students, once you start looking, can be overwhelming and it helps to have a sense of what you would like to do. A good starting point is to do a bit of self-analysis to determine what type of opportunity is best for you. How adventurous are you? Can you be flexible and adaptable? Can you be organized if you need to be? Where would you like to, or be willing to go – and for how long? It's also important to sort out what your expectations are. Is this purely an opportunity to travel and experience another culture? Are you hoping to develop or improve your language skills? How important is the salary and the job's relevance to your field of study? Often it's a process of elimination. Where do you not want to go, and what do you not want to do? Ask yourself "What is my ideal work-abroad experience? – What would I really like to be doing and where?" Some of the hardest people to place are the ones who say "I want to go anywhere or do anything, I don't care."

Here are some practical questions to ask yourself as you begin to plan for this experience:

- ◆ *What skills can you offer? Interests and hobbies?*
- ◆ *What experience or professional qualifications do you have?*
- ◆ *What are your career goals?*
- ◆ *Do you speak a second/third language?*
- ◆ *How long are you prepared to go for?*
- ◆ *What salary do you require?*
- ◆ *Are you healthy?*
- ◆ *How well can you adapt to new situation?*
- ◆ *Have you traveled before?*

### Start now

Don't be fooled. Organizing a work abroad semester can be an involved process and can take up a large time commitment. Students should allow themselves **six months to a year** in order to properly research their options and to prepare adequately for a successful international work experience. In addition to informing your Faculty contact and making contact with potential international employers, you must become aware of the process and fulfill the requirements of relevant immigration and University documentation (i.e., work visas, travel documentation, acknowledgement of responsibility and liability) by appropriate deadlines.

The Office of International Education (EB3021) at Mount Royal University  
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## Tips for Getting Started

### Self Assessment

Be honest. Are you ready for this experience? How do you cope with the uncertainty of travel? What is right for you, and what would you like to achieve? Remember...international is NOT for everyone.

### Make a Plan

List all of your options. These might include: volunteer positions, internships, summer jobs, etc. Contact people you already know who might be able to help you with your search. Get some preliminary information about all the options on your list.

Refine your list to the two or three most likely options and start gathering more detailed information about each one. Consider things like: language requirements, travel costs, health, regulations, visa requirements, accommodations and living arrangements.

### Educate Yourself

Start cultivating your knowledge of world affairs and of the country you plan to live in. An excellent website for this is [www.intercultures.ca](http://www.intercultures.ca)

### Create an International Resume

When creating an international resume there is no one fixed/standard format. Rather, successful applicants will often have to familiarize themselves with the standards of the targeted country. Does the recipient use British or American English? Potential employers unfamiliar with your Canadian variation may just assume that the resume contains errors. Have someone from the county in question review your resume to ensure that it is culturally friendly to your employer and easily understood.

In North America, providing personal information may be considered unprofessional. In other countries, however, it may be a standard requirement. Not providing the necessary personal information, may result in your resume being passed over. Find out whether your resume should have a personal section, photograph or what other information it should include.

**Please note:** In Career Services, there is a reference book entitled *The Global Resume and CV Guide* by Mary Anne Thompson. It gives great advice on resume writing by country and it also gives some cultural hints and tips for interviewing.

In addition, please check *The Big Guide Online to Working and Living Overseas* at: [www.workingoverseas.com/mtroyal](http://www.workingoverseas.com/mtroyal) to learn about international IQ and resume writing techniques.

### Job Searching Resources to get you started

Jean-Marc Hachey's *Big Guide to Working and Living Overseas* is a great resource for students considering work abroad. Please check *The Big Guide Online to Working and Living Overseas* at: [www.workingoverseas.com/mtroyal](http://www.workingoverseas.com/mtroyal). This site provides job leads, job search resources and links to international employers to get you started in your work experience search.

Other helpful websites:

Check out MRU International website at: <http://international.mtroyal.ca>

Check out the Work/Study Abroad Network website hosted by the International Centre at Queen's University. [www.queensu.ca/quic/wsa](http://www.queensu.ca/quic/wsa).

[www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com)  
[www.workingtraveler.com](http://www.workingtraveler.com)

Look through various job publications and magazines: International Employment Gazette, International Employment Career Opportunities, Overseas Jobs Express, Transitions Abroad magazines, etc..

Research the materials in the International Education office (EB3021). Magazines, newspaper clippings, useful websites, and much more...all are available for MRU students looking for a great Work Experience.

Visit Career Services or the Library for more working abroad resources, and speak with faculty members who might be involved with international programs and research.

Contact the professional association in your field (see the Directory of Canadian Associations)

Write to the Canadian Embassy – Commercial Section in your host country and request a list of Canadian companies registered. You can also contact the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in your host country and request a list of Canadian companies who are involved in doing business in that country and ask for a list of events where you can network and meet new people - these addresses will prove valuable for an International work experience.

## Selecting and Evaluating Organization

Before selecting your work, consider the following about the organization with which you may be involved. Remember that not only should the program and organization be of high quality, but also they should fit with your Work Experience needs and expectations. Discuss your choices with your faculty contact as early as possible and ensure that you understand the program's academic expectations in regards to your Work Experience.

Select an organization that is well-known, that clearly advertises its function. It should also define the hazards, as well as the advantages, of working abroad. Many organizations are private enterprises and not officially connected with government, education or cultural exchange programs.

## Knowledge of organization

- ◆ What do you really know about the organization you are considering?
- ◆ How did you learn about it?
- ◆ What other information is available? Brochures? Information sessions?
- ◆ Can former interns be contacted about their experiences?
- ◆ Is your program advisor familiar with the organization?
- ◆ How is the organization funded: CIDA, other government, private or religious?

Remember, you can also contact the Better Business Bureau for information on particular organizations.

## Responsibilities / Benefits

- ◆ Who is responsible if complications arise and legal action is necessary?
- ◆ Is there a Canadian office or branch which would be subject to Canadian laws?
- ◆ Will accommodation be provided or will you have to find it yourself?
- ◆ Is health insurance available? If so, who pays? What is covered? Get details.
- ◆ Are long-term disability and life insurance available?
- ◆ Will you be repatriated at the organization's expense should you be seriously ill or die?
- ◆ Will you be repatriated at the organization's expense should there be a family emergency in your home country?
- ◆ What kind of health care is available in the host country?
- ◆ Inquire about work permit regulations: If you work, are there tax options? What are working conditions like?
- ◆ Who will take responsibility if some aspect of your work is done incorrectly – you or the organization? Does the organization take steps to ensure a safe working and living environment?

## Where can I work?

Just about anywhere! Country Travel Reports are available for every country of the world. Check out: Consular Affairs – Information and Assistance for Canadians Abroad - ([www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca))

These Country Travel Reports include information on security and safety, health, and entry requirements, as well as contact numbers for Canadian government offices abroad. If an unstable condition exists in a country, the Travel Report will contain information about this and will advise Canadians to avoid travel to the country or to a particular region of the country, and/or to leave. The website indicates the current state of advice for specific countries. This is subject to change. The fact that a country does not appear on the list does not mean that there isn't any risk.

The Office of International Education does not recommend traveling to and working in countries with travel advisory warnings. If the country you intend to visit is listed on the website with travel advisory warnings, you should reconsider your travel plans.

Remember to **check country visa requirements** if you are doing an independent search and not just responding to an ad. Also, keep in mind that international internships may be unpaid due to the difficulties associated in attaining work visas in other countries.

### What Next?

1. Talk to your Work Experience Coordinator/Co-operative Education Coordinator as soon as possible about your interest in doing an International Work Experience/International Co-op Work Term.
2. Your Work Experience Coordinator/Co-operative Education Coordinator will have you complete an "International Work Experience/International Co-op Work Term Declaration of Intent form" and will refer you to the International Projects Coordinator at the Office of International Education for MRU International Guidelines, Processes and deadlines.

#### CONFIRMED Work Experience/Co-op Work Term

International Education meets with student to discuss travel documentation, logistical process, deadlines, responsibility and liability issues, mandatory orientation, etc..

*Administration meeting*

#### STUDENTS RESEARCHING INTERNATIONAL Work Experience /Co-op Work Terms OPPORTUNITIES

Come and visit MRU International Education in EB3021 for up-to-date copies of work abroad resources and links to get you started.

*Researching opportunities*

3. The student will need to ensure that he has received a copy of the International Work Experience Pre-Departure document, which includes a pre-departure checklist, and a booklet: *Ready, Set, GO! An Interactive Pre-Departure Workbook for Students Going Abroad*, along with other important information and forms.
4. The student should communicate all work placement questions with their Work Experience Coordinator/Co-operative Education Coordinator.
5. The student should communicate all logistical questions to International Education (i.e., working visas, travel questions, liability issues, healthcare insurance, etc.)
6. The student will have to attend a mandatory full day Pre-Departure Orientation Workshop hosted by the Office of International Education.
7. The student will be assigned a Work Experience Advisor for the duration of the work term.
8. The student will report to a Work Experience Coordinator/Co-operative Education Coordinator and will also maintain regular contact with The Office of International Education via e-mail. The student will also be expected to complete all academic requirements of work experience and to submit regular reports depending on the arrangements.
9. Upon return to MRU, the student will participate in a Work Experience presentation to your Program Advisor and a Re-Entry Debriefing Session with all returning exchange students hosted by The Office of International Education.

## Important MRC Contacts for your International Work Experience:

Accounting:	Ronak Davé	<a href="mailto:rdave@mtroyal.ca">rdave@mtroyal.ca</a>
Arts:	Anneliese Belanger	<a href="mailto:abelanger@mtroyal.ca">abelanger@mtroyal.ca</a>
Non-Profit, Entrepreneurship, International Business:	Don Christie	<a href="mailto:dchristie@mtroyal.ca">dchristie@mtroyal.ca</a>
Child Studies and Justice Studies:	Deepa Mehdwan	<a href="mailto:dmehdwan@mtroyal.ca">dmehdwan@mtroyal.ca</a>
Computer Information Systems and Business:	Martha Taylor	<a href="mailto:metaylor@mtroyal.ca">metaylor@mtroyal.ca</a>
E-Publishing, Technical Communication, Info Design:	Jennifer Sanford Holm	<a href="mailto:jholm@mtroyal.ca">jholm@mtroyal.ca</a>
Financial Services:	Vance Koberstein	<a href="mailto:vkoberstein@mtroyal.ca">vkoberstein@mtroyal.ca</a>
Human Resources:	Wanda Smith	<a href="mailto:wsmith@mtroyal.ca">wsmith@mtroyal.ca</a>
Environmental Science:	Tatiana Reynolds	<a href="mailto:treynolds@mtroyal.ca">treynolds@mtroyal.ca</a>
Insurance and Marketing:	George Cooper	<a href="mailto:gcooper@mtroyal.ca">gcooper@mtroyal.ca</a>
Interior Design:	Heather Hanley	<a href="mailto:ghanley@mtroyal.ca">ghanley@mtroyal.ca</a>
Supply Chain Management	Jennifer Sainz	<a href="mailto:jsainz@mtroyal.ca">jsainz@mtroyal.ca</a>
International Education:	Kyla Sinclair	<a href="mailto:ksinclair@mtroyal.ca">ksinclair@mtroyal.ca</a>
Journalism:	Chad Wilson	<a href="mailto:cwilson@mtroyal.ca">cwilson@mtroyal.ca</a>
Policy Studies:	Carol Peters	<a href="mailto:cpeters@mtroyal.ca">cpeters@mtroyal.ca</a>
Public Relations:	Cindy Drummond	<a href="mailto:cdrummond@mtroyal.ca">cdrummond@mtroyal.ca</a>
Sport & Recreation:	Lannie Anderson	<a href="mailto:lcanderson@mtroyal.ca">lcanderson@mtroyal.ca</a>

## PREPARATION Timeline

*Note: You are personally responsible for organizing your international Work Experience/Co-op Work Term, including details of transportation, work visas, medical insurance, academic registration, packing, accommodation, and finances. The following timeline is a guide for the “must do’s”. Keep in mind it is better to do things early.*

### Six to eight months prior to departure

- Research international work opportunities
- Attend a work/study abroad information session
- Create an International Resume
- Speak to your Work Experience Coordinator about doing your DFS abroad and complete a declaration of Intent form
- Make appointments with the Travel Health Clinic to determine if you will need any inoculations for the countries you will be visiting.
- Contact Financial Assistance if you are applying for a student loan, to ensure all paperwork is in order for the time you will be away from MRC.
- Read student DFS reports written by past participants (located in International Education, EB3021)
- Make sure you have a valid passport (valid for at least an additional six months after your return date)

- Think about your budget. Do you have a realistic idea of how much it will cost to travel to, live and work in the host country? Do you have adequate funds? You will be required to complete a budget worksheet as part of your final paperwork to be submitted to the Office of International Education (see below)

### Three months prior to departure

- Meet with the Office of International Education to receive information on processes and paperwork.
- Submit final paperwork to Office of International Education by appropriate deadline (includes program registration form, participation agreement and acknowledgement of responsibility and Liability Waiver).
- Register your DFS course at MRC and pay your fees.
- Participate in mandatory work/study abroad pre-departure orientation

- Obtain work visa from host country’s consulate/embassy here in Canada
- Get more details on the mandatory medical insurance policy (StudentGuard) from the Office of International Education and confirm how you will be enrolled.
- Meet with your Faculty Program advisor if there are any questions regarding your academic plans, and ensure you have your advisor’s contact information.
- Arrange travel to the host country and forward a copy of your itinerary to the Office of International Education.
- Speak to your financial institution to determine the best ways to transfer funds to the host country and to travel with money (e.g. traveler’s cheques, bank card, credit card, etc.). Be sure to confirm your debit card PIN, and to address any other money-related questions.

### Four to six weeks prior to departure

- Read more about the host country. The latest news can be found on the internet or in local and international newspapers – keep an eye on the news.
- Obtain a travel guide for the host country and any other countries you intend to visit while away.
- Ensure that you have made accommodation arrangements or that you have details about accommodation, if this has been pre-arranged by your work placement.
- Get an International Student ID Card (ISIC), available from Travel Cuts.
- Pick up a few inexpensive Canadian or Alberta gifts to give to new friends overseas.

**One to two weeks prior to departure**

- Exchange \$100 CAD into foreign currency and/or traveler's cheques.
- Make two sets of photocopies of your passport, visa, traveler's cheques and credit cards – give a copy to a responsible family member or friend, in case these

**References**

- Verge Magazine, Vol 2 Issue 1 Fall 2003, page 14
- Queen's University, Education Abroad series, no. 8
- Simon Fraser University – Student Exchange Manual, page 4

documents are lost or stolen while you are away. Keep a copy with you as well, but not with the original documents.

- Check DFAIT travel advisories for the most recent information on the host country – [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)
- Ensure you have paid your MRU tuition and fees for your Work Experience. If you will be away for two semesters, make arrangements for tuition payments for the second semester.
- Ensure that you have completed all necessary paperwork and requirements for the Office of International Education, prior to departure.

**Upon arrival in the host country**

- Check in with your employer
- Ensure you know where to go for medical assistance, banking, general assistance, etc..
- Contact family and friends at home (call or email).
- Register on the DFAIT website: [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)
- Email International Education to tell us that you have arrived ([bstamand@mtroyal.ca](mailto:bstamand@mtroyal.ca))

**While on Work Experience/Co-op Work Term in the host country**

- Maintain regular contact with your Faculty contact, your Work Experience Coordinator and with International Education while abroad.
- Keep a journal

**Upon your return to MRU**

- Complete a work/study abroad Personal Report (guidelines distributed at the pre-departure orientation) and submit to the Office of International Education within one month of your return to campus.
- If you obtain a scholarship through International Education, make sure to bring receipts for all expenses incurred during your Work Experience/Co-op Work Term abroad.
- Participate in the Re-Entry Debriefing session (one held each term) and volunteer at the Office of International Education!