

Non-IU internship vetting guide

Before considering a non-IU internship abroad, make sure to check internship programs offered by the Office of Overseas Study (<https://overseas.iu.edu/programs/iu/ovst/internships.html>), as well as through your major department. These programs have been vetted by IU for quality, on-site support, and participant safety. If you do not find a suitable option, then follow the guidelines below to help you evaluate the quality of a non-IU internship program. Graduate students should contact the IU Office of the Vice President for International Affairs for guidance.

Program Background Information

When researching non-IU internship programs, it is important to find out as much as possible about the organization that administers the program. Larger and longer-standing organizations are typically more organized, have better infrastructure to find good internship placements, provide better support for students while they are abroad, and have deeper connections to the communities in which they operate. As you explore a potential non-IU internship program, make sure to consider the following questions:

- How long has the organization been in operation?
- How many students have been placed by this organization in its history?
- Does this organization have any affiliations with other institutions listed on their website?
- How long has this organization been operating in this particular location?
- Where else does this organization have programs?
- Can you see student evaluations or contact a returnee? What is their feedback on the program?
- Does the organization have a presence on social media with posts, pictures, and student testimonials?

Program Details and Cost

When choosing between programs, it is important to understand what is and isn't included in each program's fees. Often, the published fees do not include essential components to interning abroad, such as flights, meals, and health insurance that provides appropriate coverage abroad. Before selecting a program, make sure that the following items are either included in the program fee, or that you have found an estimate of the cost for the specific location where you will be living.

- Housing (cost may vary significantly when multiple options are provided)
- Meals (inclusion often varies by housing type, with one or more meals per day not covered in the program fee)
- International airfare (prices fluctuate – often rising as the date approaches)
- Local transportation
- Health insurance (if insurance is not included, you should inquire about which insurance provider the program would recommend)
- Program excursions

Academic Credit

Not every program is able to offer academic credit, and not all foreign credit is accepted by IU. If the program offers academic credit, find out the organization's school of record that issues the transcript and confirm that it is listed in IU International Admission's Credit Transfer Service (<http://cts.admissions.indiana.edu/>). If it is not listed, or if the program does not offer credit, you should inquire with your academic advisor about whether your department can offer direct IU credit for the international internship (they may require additional steps to complete this process; IU tuition fees would apply). IU cannot process internship credit without departmental approval, so it is important to discuss this with your academic department well in advance of your internship. If you wish to fulfill an internship requirement for your major, you must seek approval from your major department.

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On-Site Staff and Services

It is important to understand who provides which services before arrival and on-site. Consider how the organization will assist participants in obtaining a placement, prepare for departure, and address questions and/or concerns upon arriving on location. We suggest reviewing whether you will have access to the following services:

- Pre-departure guidance and advice, which may include formal materials such as a handbook or a contact person you can email with questions ahead of time
- Support with the visa application process (if applicable)
- Pre-arranged housing or support finding housing
- Access to on-site support staff
- Contact numbers for question and concerns, both during business hours and 24/7 emergency assistance
- Staff assistance in the event of workplace problems (i.e. harassment, forced overtime, etc.)

Safety and Security

Participating on a program that provides appropriate safety and security information and on-site security measures is essential to a positive experience while interning abroad. While all IU-sponsored study abroad programs have been vetted for adequate safety and security protocols, non-IU programs may vary in the level of support provided to participants. In addition to the access of on-site staff, look for the amount and quality of safety resources that are provided, specific to your location:

- Pre-departure orientation with location-specific recommendations for safety and security precautions
- On-site orientation with tips for staying safe (i.e. dangerous neighborhoods to avoid or recommended taxi companies)
- Predetermined safety and security protocols in the event of a natural disaster or other local emergency situation

Note that IU does not support students who study or work abroad in locations under Level 3 or Level 4 Department of State Travel Advisories (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>).

For students considering medical internship placements, consider completing the Global Ambassadors for Patient Safety workshop through the University of Minnesota: <https://healthcareers.umn.edu/courses-and-events/online-workshops/global-ambassadors-patient-safety>

Placement Process

You will need to understand how the staff with the organization arranges for students' internship placements. Consider the following aspects of the placement process:

- How placements are determined
- Who coordinates placements
- Do students get interviewed by their potential supervisor?
- Timeline for notification of participants about their placement site
- Whether a placement in a desired field can be guaranteed and, if not, how accommodating can they be in finding a suitable option
- Whether internships are paid or unpaid
- Access to information about workplace culture and expectations ahead of starting a placement
- Any necessary visa requirements you should be aware of in advance (i.e. having a placement finalized before arrival)
- Skills or abilities that your placement site will expect you to have in advance (language proficiency or familiarity with computer software)

Staff at Indiana University can only provide documentation that attests to your student status. Indiana University will not sign formal contracts or agreements with host employers overseas. You should check with your host employer to find out if a letter of enrollment at IU is sufficient in lieu of a signature on a formal contract. You can find a self-service tool on the Student Central's website to provide proof of enrollment: <https://studentcentral.indiana.edu/transcripts/enrollment-verification.html>

This guide was adapted from resources provided by Global Experiences.