



Guidelines for Credit and Non-Credit Volunteer, Internship Experience and Work (VIEW) Programs Abroad

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteer, internship experience and work (VIEW) programs and experiences abroad provide students with experiential learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom context. With the popularity and number of these offerings having grown significantly in recent years, member organizations have turned to the Forum to establish guidelines for best practices that can help inform the development of VIEW programs abroad and the vetting of VIEW program partners.

Organizations such as the [National Society for Experiential Education](#) and the [Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education](#) have developed guidelines for VIEW programs based in the U.S. However, when VIEW programs are part of education abroad, their international context raises different considerations. The hands-on, community-based nature of VIEW programs makes the intersection of U.S. higher education with international organizations even more complex than in other education abroad models. Whether or not credit is awarded for VIEW programs, they call for guidelines specific to education abroad.

The guidelines below are consistent with the Forum's [Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad](#), and address concerns and considerations specific to VIEW undergraduate learning experiences abroad, to ensure that they follow best practices of education abroad and experiential education in general. These guidelines have been developed to support the educational focus of work- and community-based experiences, whether credit-bearing or non-credit bearing, and to assure the safety and well-being of students and their hosts.

VIEW programs take place in a diversity of models: volunteer, service-learning, part-time and full-time internships, and professional work experience, all of which may be credit or non-credit bearing. These programs take place across all academic disciplines; they may be part of a single course or offered as full programs, lasting anywhere from a days to a full year. VIEW programs abroad may be part of the academic curriculum at an international host institution or education abroad program center; they may be faculty-led, hybrid, island, or field research programs.

These guidelines focus on best practices common to VIEW programs. VIEW programs that fall within the purview of education abroad share characteristics of applied learning and direct engagement in community or professional settings. Successful VIEW programs are partnerships that effectively manage and balance the interests of the multiple parties invested in the experience: students, home institutions, host institutions, facilitating organizations, and on-site host communities, organizations, and workplaces—while promoting transparency of process, clarity with regard to learning goals, students' health and well-being, and the ideals of reciprocity and mutual benefit.

The guidelines below use the terms 'VIEW program' and 'VIEW experience' interchangeably to mean volunteer, internship and work experiences of all types and duration, whether they constitute a full program, are offered as a component of a program, or are an individual experience. The common denominator is that these take place abroad, and contain an educational component, whether more formally academic or more broadly experiential. These guidelines cannot specifically address every possible configuration of program and experience; they are meant to be both aspirational and concretely applicable, offering the field of education abroad signposts for best practices in this rapidly evolving and expanding domain of activity.

I. VIEW Program Guidelines

Program Development

VIEW programs should articulate the value of the experience in relation to the education abroad organization's mission and goals, and describe how the VIEW program enhances and supports these.

In addition to the framing and articulation of the VIEW program within the context of broader academic, professional, and/or experiential goals, there are more concrete factors for organizations to keep in mind in the developing of VIEW programs and the vetting of potential partners.

For example, does the VIEW partner provide:

- a work environment and facilities that are adequate and appropriate to the scope and nature of the work at hand;
- a safe workplace, with protections against discrimination, harassment, and exploitation of the student;
- available staff to adequately supervise students;
- projects and tasks that are appropriate for a student;
- specific, structured job descriptions;
- onsite orientation and training;
- an openness to introducing students to other aspects of the work or volunteer location; for example, informational interviews with executives, partners, and social or community events
- assurance for delivering a high-quality VIEW experience?

In establishing terms with the VIEW provider, the following points should be addressed, so that they can then be communicated clearly to the students. These terms should be finalized prior to the beginning of the VIEW experience, with a written agreement between parties that includes:

- a timeline outlining dates for the application, a period for application review, the screening and interview process, and notification of acceptance, if applicable;
- start and end date;
- total hour requirements, with daily or weekly specified hours;
- additional fees and costs, if any;
- compensation, if any;
- organizational and/or reporting relationships, specifically, the appointment of a designated supervisor at the VIEW organization to support the student and manage the relationship;
- agreed-upon criteria for any performance reviews and evaluation;
- principal duties, tasks, and responsibilities of the student;
- confidentiality, non-disclosure and/or non-compete policies;
- an understanding and commitment that the primary purpose of the VIEW experience is learning, and that students not be asked to perform tasks beyond their level of training and skill;
- any other expectations of the VIEW host.

Student Outreach, Placement, Training, and Supervision

In communications with students prior to departure, VIEW programs should ensure that materials communicate:

- an accurate description of the VIEW program and any associated additional costs;
- an accurate description of the distance between the VIEW location and student housing, and the means and cost of transportation;
- deadlines and timetables for the VIEW placement: application, interviews, confirmation of the placement, start and end dates;
- to the extent possible, the terms of the VIEW placement, including learning objectives and requirements for the granting of academic credit.

In identifying placements and opportunities for students, VIEW programs should ensure the best possible match between the placement and the student's goals, knowledge, skills, and competencies (including target language).

In confirming placements with students, VIEW programs should provide the following information:

- name and description of the host organization, and its context (cultural, economic, community);
- scope and nature of assigned responsibilities;
- respective responsibilities of the home institution or education abroad organization, the VIEW experience provider, and the student;
- primary contact on-site;
- required time commitment (hours per day, number of weeks);
- requirements and competencies that will impact the student's success in the placement (skills, academic background, and language ability);
- expectations of professionalism and appropriate conduct;
- expectations of the student's obligation to act within the limits of their knowledge and competencies, and within the role prescribed for them;
- learning objectives for the internship and requirements for the receipt of academic credit;
- any other policies and procedures that govern the VIEW placement.

In supervising students' VIEW placements, education abroad organizations should ensure that:

- faculty working with VIEW programs are effectively trained to oversee them, monitor student performance, maintain ongoing communication with the student, and, if applicable, evaluate the VIEW experience for credit;
- the organization maintains open channels of communication throughout the experience with the faculty, the host organization, and the student;
- there is a mechanism for evaluation of the VIEW partner;
- there is a mechanism for evaluation of the VIEW faculty member;
- student learning objectives are being met;
- there is a clear distinction between the learning role and the work or service role of students, and that the education abroad organization is prepared to anticipate or navigate any conflicts that might arise between these roles;
- the VIEW environment is safe and non-threatening;
- the student is being adequately supervised, and offered feedback when it is helpful and appropriate.

Academics, Courses, Grading Criteria

VIEW programs should provide clear and detailed information on:

- learning goals, intended outcomes, and the connection between experiential and academic components;
- any academic or linguistic requirements for the placement;
- if applicable, credit hours awarded for the VIEW experience, the number of work hours required to be awarded credit, and how hours are verified;
- requirements for the successful completion of the academic component, if applicable;
- any other policies or procedures governing the VIEW program.

Ethics, Integrity, Professionalism, and Reciprocity

All VIEW programs should seek to uphold the highest standards of ethics, integrity, and professionalism among staff, faculty, students, and partner organizations. VIEW programs should also aim to create relationships of reciprocity and mutual benefit between organizational and community partners.

This includes but is not limited to:

- ensuring that students are well-versed in principles of academic integrity as they research and write papers associated with the VIEW program, and that they provide credit and acknowledgement for local authors and contributors;
- ensuring proper Institutional Review Board (IRB) review if and when VIEW programs include any element of research involving human subjects;
- training students to be aware of and comply with policies internal to the organization and applicable to the work at hand, such as licensing, research ethics, data privacy and security;
- training students to be attuned to the risks of imposing their own cultural values when engaging with low-resource communities in different cultural contexts;
- in program development, considering the impact of the program and student presence on local and organizational resources, economics, and social/cultural/political power hierarchies;
- developing student awareness that an organization's or community's resources may be limited, so that students are respectful of the resources they are using;
- offering students additional training that might be appropriate for work with vulnerable populations;
- establishing processes by which any research results, final reports, or audio/visual products are distributed to community partners, when possible in the local language.

Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management:

The Forum on Education Abroad's Standard 8 on health, safety, security and risk management applies equally to VIEW programs. In addition, VIEW programs should:

- provide clear information on any potential health and safety risks specific to the context in which students will be working;
- review relevant individual student health information prior to the arrival on site, to identify any special considerations or accommodations that might need to be taken into account in the placement process;
- clearly articulate policies and practices that protect the health and safety of students in organizational or community settings in the event of an outbreak of disease or other health/safety risks;
- educate students on their personal responsibility for their own physical and mental health and safety while abroad, on available resources to support their health and safety, and on their right to decline when asked to perform activities outside their scope of training or their abilities.

II. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VOLUNTEER AND SERVICE PROGRAMS ABROAD

Volunteer or service programs are placements abroad in which students engage with the local community in a structured, unpaid capacity. The activity of a volunteer or service program is designed to fill needs present in the on-site community, and should be developed based on an analysis of host community needs. [A well-known set of tools and methods for assessing community needs is the Peace Corps "Participatory Analysis for Community Action" (PACA), see <http://files.peacecorps.gov/library/M0086.pdf>].

Volunteer and service programs abroad require cooperation and communication between the home institution, the organization facilitating the program, and the host community. Volunteer and service programs abroad are often located in developing communities; building and managing these programs requires sensitivity to the dynamics of student volunteers from cultures of privilege working in communities of scarcity. In practical terms, attention must be paid to the program's use of resources and its impact on the local community, and to understanding and respecting local cultural and societal norms and values.

Volunteer and Service Program Development

Program development should consider the following:

- Prioritizing the needs of the community, as opposed to the external values and priorities of the program;
- Ensuring that initiatives and projects provide sustainable benefits to the host community;
- Minimizing harmful effects, and evaluating potential harmful, unintended consequences by asking such questions as:
 - Will the program take away the livelihood of locals or duplicate existing services or resources?
 - Will the program result in the extra use of limited resources?
 - Could the host community become dependent on the services and/or resources provided by volunteers?
- Ensuring proper IRB review and/or approval where there is any element of research with human subjects;
- Providing fair compensation for all direct and indirect costs associated with the program and its projects, such as transportation, housing, food, clean water, translators and other staff, supplies, electricity and other fuel;
- Working with local experts who have knowledge of host community resources, values, customs, and opportunities, particularly when the home institution or facilitating organization does not have in-house expertise in the area;
- Developing an appropriate mechanism for evaluating outcomes and local impact.

Culture, Values and the Host Community

Volunteer and service programs have an ethical obligation to respect the host community's cultural norms and values. To facilitate this:

- Marketing materials for the program should portray the host community with dignity;
- Students should receive training that explains the appropriate nature, scope and limitations of their volunteer activity, and the parameters of what the home institution or facilitating organization considers to be appropriate relationships with members of the host community;
- Student training should emphasize sensitivity to the risks of imposing their own values when engaging with low-resource communities in different cultural and societal contexts.

III. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS ABROAD

Internship Programs Abroad provide professional experience with a primary purpose that is educational. Internships provide students opportunities to gain skills and content area knowledge while immersed in a professional or work context. The practical learning enhances, but may not be necessary to, the student's academic degree or future career or educational goals. Internships involve the structured, guided accomplishment of assigned projects and tasks, and an assessment of the students' reflection on the experience. Academic credit may be awarded based on the evaluation of the completed projects and tasks, and the grading of the internship project assignment. The internship host, the home institution, and/or the organization facilitating the experience should work together to ensure that the internship experience satisfies established learning goals. Internships may be full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, credit or non-credit, academic or co-curricular.

Monitoring and Supervision, Training in Professionalism

Internships are supervised and monitored indirectly by a party other than the home institution. For this reason home institutions and education abroad programs should ensure that:

- Faculty working with internship providers are trained to oversee internships, monitor student performance, provide ongoing communication with the student during the internship, and evaluate the internship for credit;
- Internship providers and work site staff are trained to oversee, monitor performance, and evaluate internships according to agreed-upon criteria;
- There is a mechanism for the evaluation of the hosting company/organization facilitating the internship.

Credit-Bearing Internships

When internships abroad are credit-bearing, home institutions and education abroad programs are responsible for their respective roles in ensuring that internships:

- Are integrated into students' overall academic degree plan;
- Establish clear criteria for the awarding of credit;
- Have a clear syllabus or internship plan, including criteria for evaluation;
- Distinguish explicitly between academic and co-curricular internships, if applicable;
- Provide the opportunity for student reflection on the internship experience.

IV. WORK PROGRAMS ABROAD

Work experiences provide a student paid practice in a chosen profession or career towards which the student has already carried out substantial coursework. The work experience is often a requirement for a degree, certificate or other credential. The student brings to the work experience specific knowledge and skills already gained in an area of professional practice that are necessary to successfully complete the work experience. The primary purpose is the educational value of the work experience itself, and it is usually conducted more independently of the home institution than an internship. The work experience provides an opportunity to enhance skills and develop a professional network with the full responsibilities of the 'real world' setting of a chosen career. The hosting work site provides the primary structure, and, when applicable, credit is provided based on an evaluation of the work experience.

As defined above, work experiences abroad share many of the characteristics of internships abroad. They are distinguished from internship programs in that the home institution and facilitating organization typically have no say over the activities that make up the actual work, and no direct supervisory role.

To the degree to which the home institution or facilitating organization has management of on-site activity, the guidelines and same considerations of internship program development apply to work experiences abroad.

When work experiences abroad are purely professional, non-academic experiences, they fall outside the purview of the Standards and guidelines for the field of education abroad.