



# EDUCATION ABROAD POSITIONS: JOB TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS

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## PROFESSIONALIZING EDUCATION ABROAD

As the field of education abroad continues to professionalize, The Forum's Data Committee has worked to respond to the needs of the membership by collecting and compiling data on the topic. In recent years, it has become apparent there is a need, in education abroad specifically and in higher education generally, for a common understanding of the complexity of the work of education abroad professionals and the titles that they hold. For example, these positions are not recognized within resources commonly used in higher education, such as CUPAHR (<http://www.cupahr.org>).

The Data Committee's work has produced baseline position descriptions for common roles within education abroad offices. It is intended as a resource for education abroad professionals and for senior international officers and human resource professionals to streamline and standardize the roles, functions, and expectations of staff in education abroad offices.

## DEFINING PATHWAYS TO OUR PROFESSION

The *Pathways to the Profession Survey 2008* (<http://www.forumea.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ForumEAReportPathways2008.pdf>) gathered critical information about titles, salaries, student advising load and common job elements for education abroad professionals. A central outcome of this survey was the addition of job titles to the Forum's education abroad [Glossary](#), and a strong report on job titles and salaries at the time. Further, these results enabled education abroad professionals to advocate for adequate resources and salaries comparable to other academic professionals. The 2008 data showed that there were dozens of titles being used for the same job functions. Variables such as organizational culture, size of the education abroad office, and type of advising portfolio further clouded the waters when trying to understand the core elements found in any one education abroad position.

Following up on *Pathways to the Profession*, the *2013 Institutional and Program Resources Survey* (<http://www.forumea.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ForumEA-PreliminaryReport2013Inst-Org-Res-Survey-pdf.pdf>) asked individual respondents to answer questions about their job titles and the education and experience they had in the field of education abroad. One important component of that survey was the question which asked participants to identify what percentage of their time at work was spent on each of 22 different functions. The results confirmed that positions in the field demand a broad scope of responsibilities and experiences, ranging from student advising and selection to risk management to budgeting and personnel management. At that time, the Data Committee and STAIR (Strategic Alliances, Infrastructure, and Resources) Working Group concluded that more in-depth research was needed into the job titles and responsibilities in the field of education abroad, and that the field could benefit from a reference document that outlined and standardized to some extent the varied roles found on campuses around the country. With that, the present project began.

## UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION ABROAD POSITIONS

Multiple factors influence a position's classification, and corresponding compensation, including position duties, scope of responsibility, education and work experience requirements, and considerations relative to the broader job market. It is important for the field to articulate the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively manage education abroad activities. This project, aims to provide standard language to assist members in describing education abroad positions and responsibilities to senior leaders and HR professionals.

The definitions in this document take into account:

- Operational activity
- Decision-making authority
- Planning scope (short-term vs long-term strategy)
- Influence on institution

## METHODOLOGY

Committee members collected examples of education abroad position descriptions at colleges, universities, or other sending institutions for the most common job titles as identified by the IPRIS survey. Job descriptions were collected from a variety of sources, including SECUSS-L postings, the NAFSA job directory, and the ForumJobs website. The focus on sending institutions rather than program providers was an intentional one reflecting the reality of resources at institutions of higher education and perceived need for this work voiced by Forum members from higher education institutions. The Committee then reviewed the position descriptions and identified common functions within each title. The titles researched include:

- Administrative Assistant
- Program Assistant
- Budget/Financial manager/coordinator
- Health & Safety manager
- Coordinator
- Advisor
- Program Director/Program manager
- Assistant Director
- Associate Director
- Director (Study Abroad, Education Abroad, could also be Executive Director)
- Dean (Associate, Assistant)
- Provost (Associate, Assistant)

Throughout this project the Committee was confronted with the realization that many functions within titles overlap. For example, functions performed within the position description for an Associate Director and an Assistant Director may be very similar or, indeed, nearly identical. Institutional contexts are also very different, ranging from one-person offices to highly decentralized universities and anything in between. Thus, position titles tend to be contingent upon the number of employees within the office, the senior positions and functions within the institution, the overarching organizational chart of the institution and whether the institution is public or private. As such, the position descriptions in this document have been created with the understanding that there will be a level of ambiguity in titles within an organization while focusing on ensuring that all *functions* are represented.

## JOB CLASSIFICATIONS AND DIMENSIONS

### **Administrative Assistant**

The Administrative Assistant is traditionally the first point of contact for walk-in or telephonic communication in an office of Education Abroad, Study Abroad, or International Education. This individual's position can range from truly entry-level functions as listed below, or, in the case of a smaller office, manage many of the tasks of a Program Assistant. This position, however, does not include any student advising on individual program options or academic requirements.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Administrative Assistant role:

- Answers phones and schedules meetings;
- Sort and distribute mail;
- Provide clerical support to office;
- Manages files;
- Manages office supplies;
- May include: database entry, website maintenance, answering general study abroad inquiries.

### **Program Assistant**

The Program Assistant position often takes the role of a higher level Administrative Assistant in offices with no entry-level support staff. It is rare to have both a Program Assistant and an Administrative Assistant in a small office. This position does not usually include any student advising on individual program options or academic requirements.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Program Assistant role:

- Office reception and answering general inquires;
- Maintain database records and student files;
- Oversee submitted application materials;
- Update websites and promotion materials;
- Maintain office email account;
- May include: oversight of office accounts and payables, ordering ISIC or iNext cards, answering general study abroad inquiries.

### **Coordinator**

This position works primarily with administrators, faculty, and host programs in managing the details for international education activities and programs. Program coordination includes: management of on-site logistical arrangements; budget development; development and updating of program materials; working with faculty and academic units and with overseas partner institutions; facilitating course approval process; responding to health and safety issues and emergencies on programs; creating and maintaining program information.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Coordinator role:

- Report to mid-level staff in EA office;
- Collaborate with faculty and departments in preparing budgets, itineraries, and communicate to faculty program policies, procedures, deadlines, etc.;
- Coordinate program logistics with travel agents, vendors, other external parties, and with business offices (i.e. for invoice payments, faculty cash advances, etc.);
- Serve as a primary and emergency contact for program and on-site faculty leaders;
- May advise students.

### **Advisor**

This position is the primary point of contact for students before, during, and after the student abroad experience. In addition to working directly with students, the advisor may facilitate administrative procedures relating to student participation, including program applications, visas, financial aid, and other processes. In larger offices where there is more than one Advisor, the Advisor(s) may have a regional or programmatic focus.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Advisor role:

- Report to mid-level staff in EA office;
- Provide advising for programs to students before, during, and after the experience (including pre-departure process, orientation, and reentry programming), utilizing knowledge on specific programs/countries (program details, application process, familiarity with the systems of higher education, culture, and health & safety issues);
- Conduct information sessions, campus recruitment, study abroad promotion and other outreach activities;
- Produce print and electronic promotional/marketing materials;
- Work with key faculty and relevant offices such as admissions, registrar, financial aid, student life, and career development to promote and facilitate international education.

## **Health and Safety Director**

This position is responsible for the development and management of a comprehensive travel preparedness and response strategy to promote and protect the well-being of the organization/institution and its students, faculty, and staff. This position develops best practices on global health and safety management and provides expert advice to University leadership, committees, program leaders, and individual faculty, students, and staff.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Health and Safety Director role:

- Report directly to Academic Affairs Senior Staff; President's staff;
- Lead a collaborative strategy with participation and support from a range of campus stakeholders and serve as the primary spokesperson on matters of international health and safety;
- Establish practical and effective international health and safety standards, policies, and guidelines for programs and activities;
- Monitor global events and proactively assess and analyze risk at locations worldwide to make recommendations on risk management protocols;
- Create general and specific emergency plans, oversee emergency response, train emergency responders, and directly manage complex emergencies;
- Share 24/7/365 coverage for international emergencies;
- Design training for program organizers and leaders, including training for high-threat situations;
- Provide guidance and content for local training and pre-travel orientation programs.

## **Program Manager**

The program manager role typically has the lead responsibility for developing and managing one or more programs within the portfolio offered by the institution or organization. Key constituents for this position are often faculty and external partners as opposed to students, although this position could have a small amount of student advising.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Program Manager role:

- Report to mid-level staff in EA office;
- Develop and manage programs;
- Develop and deliver orientations and related programming;
- Develop marketing plans and conduct outreach efforts;
- Provide student support, including resolving student health and adjustment issues, academic issues, and other onsite concerns;
- Manage financial functions such as budget, billing, accounting, and enrollment management;
- Provide risk and crisis management;
- Conduct program evaluations.

## **Assistant Director**

The Assistant Director role often serves in a functional leadership or coordination role for the office. This means that s/he may spearhead a particular aspect of the education abroad office's work, e.g., marketing/outreach, central administration/operations, technology, office liaison, etc.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Assistant Director role:

- Report directly to senior staff in Education Abroad office;
- Provide advising to students on all aspects of education abroad participation;
- Program management and daily administration;
- Develop and deliver orientations and related programming;
- Implement best practices in his/her area of responsibility;
- Supervise junior and/or student staff;
- Conduct program evaluations;
- Manage functional area and program budgets.

### **Associate Director**

This senior role often plays the deputy role to the Director, and may lead the office in the absence of the Director. In smaller offices, the Associate Director position may be a promotion for the Assistant Director (see below) based upon longevity and expertise.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Associate Director role:

- Provide leadership regarding policies, procedures and staffing of the office and serve as a supervisor to office staff;
- Play a role in program and policy development, in addition to program management and advising;
- Play an increased role in faculty and partner engagement and in educating/training the community on best practices in education abroad;
- Engage in strategic planning and risk assessment/management;
- Serve on internal university committees, and when feasible, serve on committees in the field;
- Plan and conduct program evaluations;
- Develop and manage office and program budgets.

### **Education Abroad Director (or Study Abroad Director)**

The Director of Education Abroad provides overall leadership for and management of a university or college education abroad office and its services. The Director is often expected to serve as an advocate for education abroad on campus and traditionally reports directly to academic affairs leadership or unit Dean. Depending on the size of the office and institution, the position responsibilities of the Director are quite diverse, and may include personnel supervision. In some instances, Directors of small education abroad offices may also advise students. However, student advising should not be considered a major area of responsibility for a Director as titled position.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Director's role:

- Lead the office or center and the organization in strategic planning and policy development for education abroad;
- Lead program development and evaluation;
- Oversee crisis and risk management;
- Oversee financial/budget management for the office;
- Manage and oversee cross-campus collaboration with faculty, academic units, and administrative offices on education abroad initiatives and best practices in education abroad

### **Dean – Associate or Assistant**

The Dean position is a leadership position which commonly has responsibility for or oversight of the functions typically fulfilled by the Director of Education Abroad. The scope of responsibilities for this position is highly dependent on the size of the institution and its organizational structure. This position could also be considered as Executive Director.

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Dean role:

- Report directly to an academic school or to the academic affairs leadership [Provost, Chief Academic Officer, Dean of the Faculty];
- Have academic credentials or faculty status;
- Hold permanent standing on campus-wide committees related to academics and/or student affairs
- Engage in the university's wider internationalization efforts such as fundraising, alumni relations, and faculty internationalization;
- Responsible for other international units, or other international functions such as international admissions, international internships, and faculty-led programming;
- Responsible for curricular advising [for cohorts such as exchange students] or the authority over the awarding of transfer credit for study abroad.

### **Provost – Associate or Assistant**

The Provost (also called the “Vice President for Academic Affairs”) generally reports to the President and oversees the academic side of the institution, providing high-level vision and strategy. In some institutions, there may also be an Associate (or Assistant) Provost charged with overseeing the international direction, strategy and operations; this position can be roughly equivalent to the “Senior International Officer.” Associate Provosts (and in some institutions, Deans) report to the Provost and work closely with the individual schools and departments. The SIO title is rarely used directly, though organizations typically designate someone with this responsibility. (A recent search of *Inside Higher Ed* revealed no positions with this title.)

Characteristics and job responsibilities common to the Provost role:

- Identify academic priorities and develop strategies; visionary and strategic;
- Develop academic mission: Assess and improve educational quality and effectiveness; develop, coordinate and implement curricula and instruction; foster innovation and develop new opportunities;
- Advise the president on academic matters; serve as spokesperson for deans and faculty to the president;
- Foster development of administrative and faculty talent (including hiring, promotion and tenure); support and lead deans and faculty; build consensus and trust;
- Foster a campus-wide culture of inclusion;
- Facilitate institutions’ research endeavor;
- Strategically develop, enhance, deploy and align institutional academic resources;
- Advocate for and represent the institution; stand in for the President when necessary;

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