

CAREER ISSUES AND STUDYING ABROAD

Studying abroad can be one of the most transformational aspects of the college experience. While travelling can be exhilarating, doing so may mean that you are out of the country when important career-related activities are taking place. For example, a senior who studies abroad during fall semester will be away during the peak of full-time recruiting, and a junior who studies abroad during spring semester will be away during the peak of summer internship recruiting.

Students in such situations should attempt to mitigate the conflict by taking additional steps prior to departing for their study abroad experience and remaining diligent in their search while abroad and upon returning. While there is no single approach that is effective for every organization or type of industry, the important thing is to be active and engaged to compensate for being away. Steps to consider include:

Prior to departure:

- Meet with a counselor from University Career Services (UCS) to develop a strategy and discuss concerns. Have your resume reviewed at this time.
- Determine if your study abroad program offers an internship component as an option.
- Proactively reach out to employers by attending information sessions, networking nights, industry panels and career fairs while still on campus. Discuss your situation with the employers of interest and inquire about the possibility of interviewing before you leave the country.
- Communicate with recruiting coordinators at organizations of interest, even if they do not currently have a position posted. Use Handshake to explore “expired positions” from previous years to find contacts. Reach out to those contacts to discuss your situation and take their recommendation on the best course of action for their organization.
- Network with UNC alums who work for organizations of interest to you. Use the Alumni Advisor Network system, other alumni databases on campus and the UNC Alumni groups on linkedin.com to locate alums who may be willing to help you with opportunities.
- Create a Skype account (skype.com) and familiarize yourself with this video conferencing platform, as it is sometimes used by organizations to interview students who are out of the country.

Once abroad:

- Inquire with your school abroad if a “Polycom” system is available (for better quality video interviews).
- Monitor organization attendance at career fairs and other on-campus activities via the UCS website. Reach out to those organizations to explain your situation and explore options.
- Continue to communicate with prospective organizations and network with alums.
- Perform informational interviews and job shadowing experiences with professionals while abroad.
- Network with UNC alums who live and work abroad in the country where you will be studying.
- As positions are posted in Handshake and other online sites (like indeed.com), communicate directly with organization and the network you have developed to explore interview possibilities, which may include telephone, Skype, Polycom or even interviewing with a local branch of the organization. Pay attention to whether or not the employers posting in Handshake indicate a willingness to interview students who are studying abroad (this is a required entry for employers who are doing on-campus recruiting)
- Update your resume with all new information related to abroad experience on an ongoing basis.
- Stay in touch with your UCS counselor to discuss issues or problems you are having.

Upon return:

- If you have not secured a position by the time you return from your abroad experience, do not give up.
- Approach organizations that do not have positions posted to explore the “hidden market” of opportunities.
- Meet with your UCS counselor to extend your search strategy and discuss updates.