

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A PROGRAMME

Not all the questions that follow are relevant to all activities. Inevitably, responses will vary from organisation to organisation. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Clear answers to many of the guideline questions will be contained in year out organisations published literature. However, appropriate use of the guidelines will help students and advisers to gather further information and to ensure that they choose well-structured programmes that are right for them – and, equally important, that they are right for the programme.

YEAR OUT ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR PROGRAMME

1. Look at who can take part and how they are selected:

Questions to ask:

- Age range of participants?
- Selection criteria - who are they looking for and what is the interview procedure?
- Choice of different programmes?
- Number of participants selected on each programme?

2. Look at who benefits from the programme?

Questions to ask:

- What will I gain from doing this?
- Will anyone else benefit from this placement apart from me ?
- Why are UK young people needed on this and who asked for us to do it?
- Will the programme continue after I have left?

3. What exactly will I be doing?

Questions to ask:

- How has the programme been chosen and checked out?
- Has a representative of the sending organisation had a good look?
- Are the host organisations paid to take me? Do they pay me?
- What exactly will I be doing?
- Will I be alone, who will I be placed with?
- What can I expect in terms of accommodation and food? You will need to be realistic here and expect local food - not mouth-watering culinary delights.
- What is expected of me? What will be my responsibilities?
- Do I have to sign anything? Is there a written agreement between me and the organisation?

MONEY & THE ORGANISATION LOW-DOWN

4. What's the cost?

Questions to ask:

- What is the precise programme cost and what does it cover?
- What is the recommended budget for extras?
- If I have to pay a deposit, is it refundable?
- When and how do I pay? What happens if I cancel?
- If I have to raise funds, does the organisation give advice?

5. The Organisation:

Ask how it operates. Make sure it is right for you in terms of type and length of programme.

Questions to ask:

- Why does the organisation exist? How long has it been around?
- Is it a partnership, private company, public company, registered charity, sole trader or other? Where is it registered?
- Examples of successful programmes and a chat to past participants can shed a lot of light very quickly and easily on whether you feel the programme is right for you.
- What if there is an emergency? Does the organisation have sufficient funds to cope with emergencies?
- What are the organisation's policies on Equal Opportunities?

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

6. Before you go:

Questions to ask:

- Who is responsible for travel arrangements? This includes travel visas and work permits!
- Who provides insurance and what is included in the cover? Health, possessions, cancellation and repatriation?
- What about inoculations and health precautions? Help and advice please!
- How about training and pre-departure briefing - do I get any of that?

7. During your placement:

Ask about support and safety whilst on your placement:

- Who is the person responsible for me at the programme location?
- Where is the nearest representative of the organisation?
- What if there is a major emergency - can somebody deal with this and get me home?
- If I have a problem with my placement, can I chat to somebody?
- What is included in the living arrangements? Who selects and checks out the accommodation?
- If staying with host families, are they paid or are they volunteers?

8. After your return:

Ask about Debriefing:

Questions to ask:

- Will the organisation have any contact with me when I return?
- Can my experience be of any use to future participants?
- Will I get a reference or certificate, indeed anything to prove that I was actually there and completed the programme?
- Will I be debriefed?

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

10 Things to do Before You Go

If you would like to check on the travel requirements for the country you are visiting for your placement and especially if you are planning a period of independent travel in your Year Out itinerary, then before you go the Foreign Office recommends that you:

1. **Get Insurance.** It can happen to you, so take out insurance. Make sure it's comprehensive and covers you for medical and repatriation costs as well as any dangerous sports or activities.
2. **Have Local Knowledge.** Read up on local laws and customs to avoid offending people or breaking local laws, however unwittingly. Check out the FCO Travel Advice on www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo. This checklist is for young travellers. The site also contains checklists for backpackers and women travellers.
3. **Check Visas.** Ensure you have the correct visas. If you plan to work outside of the EU, obtain a valid work permit before you go.
4. **Be Health Aware.** Check out what jabs and health care you need with your GP at least six weeks before you set off. If you're going to have sex, remember to stock up on condoms before you go and don't take any risks with unprotected sex, no matter how appealing it might seem at the time.
5. **Avoid Drugs.** When it comes to drugs, be aware of the consequences. Using drugs abroad can carry heavy penalties, including the death sentence; and being an Irish citizen won't get you out of jail. For further information and a downloadable drugs booklet visit www.fco.gov.uk/drugsinformation
6. **Be Careful with Alcohol.** If you are going to drink alcohol, know your limit. Accidents are more likely after using alcohol or drugs and as well as the pain and embarrassment, you're unlikely to be covered by your insurance.
7. **Be Vigilant.** Stay aware of what is going on around you and keep away from situations with which you do not feel comfortable. Be aware that drugs are sometimes used in rape and once added to a drink they cannot normally be detected, so try to keep your drink with you at all time
8. **Take Care of your Belongings.** Keep an eye on your belongings and lock valuables away. Be careful when you're out and about - the beach and crowded streets are favourite places to catch you unawares. Make copies of your tickets, passport, insurance policy (plus 24-hour emergency number), itinerary and contact details and leave one at home – just in case.
9. **Take Enough Money.** British consular staff can't send you home for free if you run out, so ensure you have a return ticket, or enough funds to buy one.
10. **Keep in Touch.** Consider taking a roam-enabled mobile phone with you and use e-mail to keep in touch. Leave details of your travel itinerary with your family and friends; tell them of any change of plan.

If you follow these steps, you can't go far wrong. This is not to say that you are definitely destined for a smooth ride, but at least you'll navigate the potholes with the confidence that you have at least done some groundwork.