

**School of International and Public Affairs  
Columbia University  
Office of Career Services**

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**CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

***Description of the Field***

International education encompasses a wide range of careers involving the promotion and support of educational exchange and international understanding. International education professionals work in colleges and universities or in other organizations that provide programs, services, and funds (including governmental agencies, non-governmental/nonprofit organizations, foundations, and private firms). Many colleges and universities have study abroad offices, which assist U.S. students with overseas study programs, as well as foreign student offices to assist international students studying on campus. Some also have academic programs focusing on international studies/relations that employ advisers and administrators. Numerous organizations administer exchange programs for high school students, sending U.S. students abroad and bringing foreign students to the U.S. Some also offer professional exchanges for adults.

***Typical Entry-level Positions & Salaries***

Entry-level positions for those graduating with a bachelors or masters degree typically involve administrative and programming responsibilities, as well as counseling/advising. Job titles might include: program coordinator, educational assistant, foreign student advisor, study abroad advisor, admissions officer, or academic advisor.

Depending upon education and experience, salaries range from low-to mid-\$20,000 to low-\$30,000. A good method of obtaining experience while in school is by working at your institution's international student or study abroad office as a work-study or intern.

***Career Paths and Entry Salaries***

Career paths in the field of international education are varied. To advance, people might work in a progression of positions within a particular organization or switch to similar work in another organization. They might also broaden their experience by working in several functional areas within international education. People benefit from developing a diversity of experience, permitting not only flexibility in job possibilities, but also qualifying themselves for management positions involving a variety of functional areas.

For example, one might work within an international exchange organization assisting with the coordination of high school exchanges, then work at a college study abroad office and/or international student office, positioning themselves to perhaps oversee an International Center or Education Abroad Program.

***Demand***

International exchange in education has experienced dramatic increases in recent years. There are numerous organizations dealing with various aspects of international exchange, and almost every college now has offices that assist international students and offer study-abroad programs. Consequently, the demand for international education professions has increased as well. On the other hand, due to the popularity of international careers as a whole, and the appeal of working in international education (intercultural environment, diverse and interesting responsibilities, sometimes overseas travel), the competition is intense.

### ***Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field***

Required qualifications vary depending on the particular position, but most may be expected to include some or all of the following:

- bachelors degree required; masters degree preferred, sometimes required
- overseas study and/or work experience (not just travel)
- sensitivity toward ethnically and culturally diverse populations
- proficiency in a foreign language
- knowledge of foreign educational systems, or US immigration rules and regulations
- work experience in some aspect of international education/exchange often preferred
- programming and/or counseling experience
- strong oral/written communication skills, interpersonal skills

### ***Sample Groups of Employers***

#### ***Universities and colleges and International exchange organizations***

AFS	International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)
American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS)	Rotary International
Council for International Exchange of Scholars	World Learning
Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)	Youth for Understanding
Institute of Int'l Education (IIE)	

#### ***Research/support organizations***

American Council on International Intercultural Education	Government Agencies
American Studies Association	Dept. of Education
Business Council for Int'l Understanding	Dept. of State
The Asia Society	U.S. Information Agency
	USAID

### ***Future Challenges to the Profession***

Particularly among universities and colleges, while voice is given to the importance of international education, the dollars to expand and enhance programs are often not forthcoming. The case for ranking international education/exchange high on the list of institutional and national priorities must be made through continuous advocacy for internationalization.

Challenges constantly arise from developments in regions throughout the world. The current concern regarding acts of terrorism directed towards Americans might impact both student interest and parents willingness to send their children abroad. Instability in a country or region might disrupt programs or cause participants to be recalled. The Asian financial crisis has affected the ability of many international students to continue their studies abroad as the unfavorable exchange rate dramatically increases the cost of their programs.

### ***To Obtain More Information***

Associations:

NAFSA: Association of International Educators (202) 462-4811; e-mail: [inbox@nafsa.org](mailto:inbox@nafsa.org); [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org)  
 SIETAR: International Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research (202) 466-7883;  
 e-mail: [SIETAR@compuserve.com](mailto:SIETAR@compuserve.com); <http://aspin.asu.edu/~sietar>

Directories:

International Exchange Locator: A Resource Directory for Educational and Cultural Exchange

Job Resource Materials:

NAFSA Job Registry; International Educator magazine; Chronicle of Higher Education

\*For more information, visit: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/sipa/OCS/Resources/LINKS/ielinks.html>.