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So, You Want To Teach Abroad?

by James A. Pope, University of Toledo

A number of factors have led to an explosion of North American-style business degree programs taught at universities around the world. The breakup of the Soviet empire and the entrance of many of its former satellite states into the EU, the economic blossoming of China and India, the funneling of oil money in the Arab Gulf states into internal development, the rationalizing of European higher education which makes it similar to the U.S. model (Bologna, 1999), and the growth of EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development) and their EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System) accreditation (EQUIS, 2007) have generated interest in and demand for managers trained in English for a world of global competition.

The Upsides

Teaching abroad can be beneficial from a number of points of view. From a personal perspective, it gives you the opportunity to travel and even work abroad. When you are teaching for a school in another country, you normally get help in finding a place to stay, learning your way around, and having someone with whom to socialize. In some countries, you may even have someone to drive you around and cook your meals. The degree of attention you get depends on the cultural differences between the U.S. and the host country, and their desire to have you there.

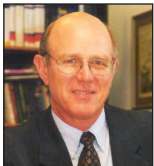
From a teaching point of view, you learn to deal with students in different cultures, with different expectations, different grading systems, and different schedules. You may teach in a country like the Netherlands where the students come from around the world. A recent class of mine had students from the Netherlands, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Taiwan, the Czech Republic, Denmark,

China, Surinam, and Indonesia. A recent class in Germany, where one normally does not encounter a variety of student nationalities, had one German, one Serb, two Dutch, one Pakistani, three French, three Spaniards, and five Colombians. You gain experience in other countries and cultures that you may bring into your classes in the U.S. No matter what you teach, you will see, hear, and read things which you would not normally experience in the U.S. that you can bring into your classroom. For example, I discovered that the *International Herald Tribune* each Monday publishes a day-by-day list of the names of countries that have holidays in the following week. I cut out several of these, scanned them, put them on a slide and used them to illustrate one of the problems that can arise in global supply chains (i.e., every day is a holiday somewhere in the world). I was in Germany when they switched from the DM to the euro and got to see some of the logistical problems in making the switch as well as the effect of the change on everyday life.

In terms of research, you will see a myriad of possibilities and meet colleagues with whom you may collaborate on research projects. You will learn different research expectations (for example, the Germans like to publish monographs and count them in their annual reports even though they may have printed only a few hundred copies). You will learn different approaches to disciplines (e.g., Informatics vs. MIS). You will find new sources of data.

The Downsides

Although the eager traveler finds it hard to imagine, there are downsides to teaching abroad. The primary one is that those who are not so interested in this activity do not value it. If those people happen



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to sit on committees evaluating you for raises, promotion, and tenure, you may find that some will actually downgrade you for these activities.

Another downside is scheduling. Most of us have faculty appointments and are expected to teach every semester. Unless the teaching abroad is a program through your home university, scheduling may be difficult. While summer seems to be the logical time to teach abroad, many overseas schools do not meet in the summer, just as we don't. Their students often are in internships or participating in independent projects (or traveling abroad themselves). You have two choices in this situation. The first is to find a full-time position abroad and either quit your U.S. job (probably not a good idea for most), or take a sabbatical or leave of absence for a year or two. The other choice is to fill in the downtimes in the U.S. schedule. European schools, for example, typically are in session until early to middle June, while our schools on semesters typically finish in early May. Teaching a short or concentrated course in May is a possibility. In addition, our holidays are not always their holidays. Thanksgiving, for example, is a U.S. holiday (at least the late November version). Sometimes you can squeeze in a couple of weeks during Christmas break, especially in non-Christian countries. Fall and spring breaks (if you have them) are other possibilities.

If you must miss a class or two at your home campus to teach abroad, be sure to get the permission of your chair and/or dean. And, make sure someone is not going to penalize you for doing so. Don't present it as just an opportunity for yourself. Present it as exploring possibilities for all faculty to teach abroad and developing study abroad opportunities for your students.

Faculty members have many reasons for not wanting to teach abroad. They range from the house, to the pets, the kids, the violin lessons, and so on. Life is a trade-off. Will your kids gain more from one or two violin lessons than from several weeks in another country? From personal experience, I have found that children after eight or nine years old will

retain clear memories of their experiences abroad.

The Finances

You will probably not get rich teaching abroad. Sometimes you can make a lot of money if you teach for several years in areas such as the Middle East, but normally the pay scale is modest. Most U.S. professors can make more money teaching summer school in their home universities than teaching abroad. To some of us, however, staying home and teaching the same students is less attractive than traveling and teaching different students even with less pay.

Countries and schools have different schemes for compensating visiting faculty. Most have a stipend. Others will pay some or all of your living expenses. Some have complicated schemes to work within local rules. At a school where I have taught in the Netherlands, they pay a stipend, transportation up to €1000, and my hotel. That's it. At a school in Germany where I have taught, they pay a stipend for teaching, a per diem for food, a flat rate for hotel, travel up to €800, a stipend for making up the final exam, and a stipend for grading the final exam. In the end, the two come out about the same.

Make sure you know the rules. What are their rules for payment and reimbursement? What forms do they require? What receipts? When do they pay? One school I have taught for pays one lump sum only after the final grades have been submitted. Another will pay expenses immediately, but waits for the grades before paying the stipend. Who is responsible for your being paid? If there is a problem, you need to know who to contact.

The fact that they have paid for all or part of your transportation, however, can be leveraged into additional travel before or after you teach (if the schedule allows). Plus, the money you have earned gives you the currency of the country without dealing with exchange rates.

Dealing with the finances can be tricky. One way of approaching it is to open a bank account abroad in a country where you are teaching. It is best if the

account is in a hard currency such as the euro or Swiss franc. This does two things. One benefit is that this protects you from short-term fluctuations in exchange rates (you can determine when to repatriate your funds), and it allows you to avoid some very steep fees for transferring money to the U.S.

Opening a bank account in another country generally requires you to have an address in that country. With the help of your hosts, you should be able to use the address of the school or even the hotel where you are staying to open the account. Once the account is open, you may change the address to wherever you like (such as your home address in the U.S.). Most banks allow Internet banking these days, so managing a foreign account from the U.S. is not a lot of hassle. There are differences in how they operate, however, so be very clear on these. If you do open an account and it has a balance of over \$10,000 at any point during the year, you must file a form TD F 90-22.1 with the Department of the Treasury each year, separately from your income tax return. (Turbo-Tax prompts you and has the form.)

Keeping the money abroad gives you a hedge against exchange rate fluctuations and allows you to do other traveling without worrying about the exchange rate. If you do want to repatriate funds, be sure you understand clearly the procedure and fees involved. Often the fees are negotiable, so don't always take the first offer. One colleague thought the fees were too high, so she bought travelers' checks in euros and brought them home and deposited them in her U.S. bank. Another way is to use the ATM card for your account abroad to draw cash from an ATM in the U.S. The fee is typically one percent or less (try to find an ATM that does not charge for transactions).

You should also be clear on the tax implications of your teaching abroad. The U.S. has tax treaties with a number of countries which allow you to avoid taxes in the host country as long as you pay taxes on your income in the U.S. The easiest way to do this is to declare the income on an IRS Schedule-C. This also

allows you to write off many expenses which are not reimbursed.

Finding a Position

There are a number of ways of finding a position abroad. Personal contacts are a good way. At professional meetings, there are always faculty from abroad attending the meetings. Simply introduce yourself and ask if they hire faculty for short-term teaching assignments. Ask colleagues in the U.S. who have taught abroad about possibilities and to keep you in mind if opportunities arise. Contact schools directly. Pick a place you would like to go and search professional organizations such as AACSB and EFMD for member schools there. The traditional way is to go through an exchange service (such as the German Academic Exchange Service) or even the Fulbright route. The international office at your home university should be able to help you with these options.

Once You Have the Position

Be very clear on the expectations, rules, and regulations of the host school. There should be a contact person who can explain it all to you. Grading schemes vary widely, so learn them well. Many are numeric systems. In Germany, a '1' is a top grade, while in the Netherlands, a '10' is the highest. Some places require you to grade on a curve, others forbid it. There may be more administrative intrusion into the grading process. Someone may read your final and make suggestions for changes. Or someone may suggest changes in the students' grades to bring them into line with their distribution expectations.

Typically, students will have fewer opportunities to earn grades in a course abroad. Having the entire grade based on the final exam (nearly always an essay exam) is not unusual, although most American faculty are not comfortable with that. Other aspects of the course and exam which U.S. faculty typically decide themselves may be proscribed by the rules. For example, one school where I taught did not allow open book exams. The exact length of the exam may also

be set by the rules. The best advice in all these cases is, "When in Rome..."

If you use a text, try to find one with an international edition (these are normally cheaper). Your local publisher rep is unlikely to be helpful since they do not like American students buying or even knowing about international editions. A book I used in India cost \$110 in the U.S. and \$8 in India. In many schools abroad, the students do not buy books--all information comes from the professor. A more recent option is the digital versions of the texts such as those available through Zinio. These texts are typically cheaper than even paperbacks, and can be downloaded from anywhere in the world. If the publisher will allow you to download a "desk copy," you can avoid carrying textbooks around the world.

What are the attendance requirements? Who gives and grades the exams? How much are you expected to make yourself available to students? Will they give you an office, access to a computer and the Internet? What is their IT infrastructure? May you use it? Do they use course software that would allow you to load materials for your students before your leave the U.S.? Should you bring along your own laptop? What paper sizes do they use? If it is a European school, they will use A4 size paper, so don't send them syllabi and other documents in letter format.

Personal Matters

On a personal level, be sure you know the requirements for entering the country—visas, medical exams, immunizations, etc. Check with your medical insurance carrier to be sure you are covered while out of the country and ask what documentation is needed if you must submit a claim. Make sure everyone with whom you are traveling has a valid passport and that your debit and credit cards will not expire while you are away. Notify your credit card companies that you will be traveling abroad, otherwise they may freeze your accounts when they see charges from overseas. If you have a GSM mobile phone, take it with you and buy a pre-paid SIM chip in the country where

you will be. If you don't have one and plan to travel regularly, get one. Know the U.S. rules on what you can bring back with you. Above all, have a good time and enjoy the local food and culture.

Resources

AACSB, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, www.aacsb.edu

EFMD, European Foundation for Management Development, www.efmd.org

EQUIS Standards and Criteria. (2007). European Foundation for Management Development, March.

The European Higher Education Area. (1999). The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, www.europaeum.org/content/view/58/65

Fulbright Program, through the IIE, International Institute of Education, www.iie.org

German Academic Exchange Service, www.daad.org ■

Future DSI Annual Meetings

November 14-17, 2009
New Orleans Marriott
New Orleans, Louisiana

November 20-23, 2010
San Diego Marriott Hotel and
Marina
San Diego, California

November 19-22, 2011
Boston Marriott Copley Place Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts

November 2012
San Francisco Marriott
San Francisco, California