

Frequently Asked Questions

- ***Do I need a visa to travel to Costa Rica?***

U.S. citizens do not need a visa to travel to Costa Rica. U.S. citizens with a valid passport (see *Current Passport Holders* link) can stay up to 90 days. If you are considering staying for more than 90 days, a valid passport will be required and you must file for a stay extension at the Immigration Department of Costa Rica. Or, you may exit Costa Rica and re- enter. Most tourists visit Nicaragua or Panama – Costa Rica’s neighboring countries – for three days and come back into Costa Rica. There is a \$20.00 U.S. fine if you overstay your permitted length in the country. In addition to a valid passport, you will need a pre-paid airline ticket to exit Costa Rica or proof of financial resources (\$400.00 US- \$1000.00 US in cash, traveler checks, and/or ticket (either to return to your home country or to go to another country).

- ***Do I need to be fluent or proficient in Spanish?***

No, you do not need to be fluent or proficient in Spanish to student teach in Costa Rica. Knowing a few words before you leave and actively learning more while you are there will definitely contribute to a more positive experience. It will also help make your experiences with locals richer and your travels easier. The schools you will be interning at are bilingual or hold classes in English.

- ***What is the homestay like?***

Unique to this internship, is a stay with the Saboría or Vargas family, both of which have hosted OSU students for nearly a decade. There is no better way to experience *Pura Vida!* Enjoy home-cooked meals and learn about Costa Rica from locals. As part of your pre-departure meetings, you will learn more about your host family as well as tips for a positive homestay experience. Contact former student teachers to directly hear about their homestay experiences.

- ***If I’m student teaching abroad, will that put me at a disadvantage or delay when looking for a job?***

On the contrary, experience gained while abroad is beneficial for any position, teaching or otherwise. Students who spend time abroad return with new perspectives on cultures, languages, and global issues. Not only do students return with newfound appreciations, a willingness to learn and engage with the world, and new friends, but they also benefit from increased confidence, personal development, and unparalleled life experiences. These are all assets to any employer as well as for graduate school. Recent studies indicate that employers overwhelmingly consider an overseas study experience as a positive experience on a resume. Also keep in mind that teachers with international experience, particularly with non-native English speakers, are in high demand across the state and country.

- ***If I student teaching abroad, will I still be certified to teach in Oklahoma state?***

Candidates who teach abroad in the teacher certification program and successfully complete the class will be eligible for recommendation to certify with Oklahoma State Department of Education. The certification process is no different for a candidate who student teaches abroad than it is for a candidate who student teaches in Oklahoma. Students must complete and meet the same requirements. Students will be evaluated by their mentor teacher and one personal

visit by a university supervisor. The university supervisor will be in contact with the student and the mentor throughout the student teaching semester. It is important for students to remain in contact and meet all required deadlines while student teaching abroad. Communication is very important to understanding and meeting all requirements of the Professional Education Unit and State of Oklahoma.

- ***Once I arrive in my host country, what kind of support and assistance is available to me?***

Before leaving, you will need to attend several mandatory preparatory meetings. These meetings will address things like communication, culture shock, packing suggestions, safety, traveling tips, and emergency protocols. You will also receive a list of people and their contact info. This list is part of your support team; people you can reach out to with questions or difficulties throughout your internship, and with whom you are simultaneously expected to keep in touch with. This holistic support team consists of faculty, staff, advisors, and professionals who collaborate to address your wellbeing, safety, academic performance, and all-around experience during your time abroad.

When you arrive in your host country, the COE and OSU communities are right there beside you. You will be expected to uphold the same level of professionalism and communication as if you were in Oklahoma. That includes efficient time and project management, meeting deadlines for assignments (prompts), regular check-ins with faculty and staff, upholding appointments (Skype, WhatsApp), continued communication, and being a professional and positive ambassador for the College of Education and Oklahoma State University.

- ***What about when I return to OSU?***

When you return to OSU, members of your support team will want to meet with you to hear about your experiences and to help you re-integrate. Reverse culture shock and a period of adaptation are normal; your support team will continue to be there to assist you, provide resources, and help you prepare for the future.

- ***What else do schools require?***

As part of your application, you will need to read and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) attesting that you agree to uphold the rules and regulations of the internship program, the College of Education, Oklahoma State University, your host institution, and host country. In addition, several schools conduct drug testing for employees and student teachers. Student teachers must meet all requirements put out by the Professional Education Unit. Each school will also have specific attire and behavior expectations.

- ***I'm hesitant/worried. Are there students who have gone abroad that I can talk to?***

Yes, contact the international studies coordinator to be put in touch with previous interns who have student taught abroad. There is nothing like hearing it from someone who has already been there to give you first-hand tips and pointers.

- ***My parents/ partner/ family members are concerned. Is there someone they can speak with?***

Yes, parents and family members will be invited to join students for the mandatory pre-departure meetings. If those dates and times are not convenient, they may also contact the

international studies coordinator to set up a time to discuss any concerns in person or over the phone.

- ***This process can feel overwhelming. What should I do?***

There are a lot of moving parts to this process. Going abroad is a big step, and we recognize that. Know that the COE community is here to guide and support you before, during, and after your time abroad.

A proactive next step might be to make an appointment and meet with a faculty member or the international studies coordinator to address your concerns. We are here to help and to guide through this process. Come talk to us!