



Summer 2008 Internship FAQs

1) The Internship

- Q: What is the internship like?
- Q: What responsibilities have volunteers taken in the past?
- Q: How will I take care of lodgings and food?
- Q: Will there be other volunteers with me at the orphanage?
- Q: How many people have volunteered in the past and for how long?
- Q: Will the Olympics in Beijing affect anything?

2) Applying

- Q: What qualities are you looking for in a volunteer?
- Q: Do I have to know Chinese?
- Q: When is the application deadline?
- Q: When will I find out if I've been accepted?
- Q: I'm a graduating senior / graduate student. Can I still apply?
- Q: I'm an alum. Can I still apply?
- Q: I'm not a Harvard student. Can I still apply?

3) Preparation

- Q: I have never been to China before. How should I prepare myself?
- Q: How much are we expected to prepare beforehand?
- Q: When are the preparation workshops?
- Q: What are the children's expectations?
- Q: What will it be like once I arrive in China?
- Q: What will living and working in China be like?

4) Financial questions

- Q: What is the total cost involved?
- Q: What sources of funding have volunteers looked to in the past?
- Q: I need to earn money over the summer. Can I do that *and* volunteer?
- Q: What are the requirements for participating in HCC's internships?

More questions? Email us:

Annie Yao (Internship coordinator 2008) hcc.internships@gmail.com

Sherri Geng (HCC President, 2008) geng@fas.harvard.edu

The Internship

Q: What is the internship like?

The experience is different for everyone, given each person's personal background and the uniqueness of each site. Sites range from small care centers for less than 40 children to model state-run orphanages with hundreds of kids. Some are situated in major cities; others are not. Some have English-speaking staff; a few do not. We try our best to match you to an orphanage which suits your language skills, interests, and past experiences working with children.

It is important to remember that the internship does not always happen in a structured setting. This is what makes it both challenging and exciting. While you may be asked to teach English lessons, for example, you may also help out with menial chores. You may find that the staff is too busily engaged to attend to some kids thus overlooking some others, so you could go play with the children. You may find yourself playing guitar to the staff, teaching the kids how to sing an English song, or choreographing a dance. You may find yourself translating a medical document (with five dictionaries in front of you). You may even find yourself on the overnight train taking care of a newborn.

We prepare you for the trip and arrange for your stay. Once there, it is up to you to make the most out of your summer. This summer, we will continue offering the HCC-HK Polytech Program, which will involve 4 volunteers working at an orphanage in southern China after a week of preparation with students in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Volunteers will learn to provide care to children of various disabilities and keep a journal and write evaluations at the end. If you are interested in this program, please check the appropriate box on the application.

Q: What responsibilities have volunteers taken in the past?

Volunteers have taken on a wide range of tasks and assignments at the different sites. Some responsibilities are assigned by the orphanage, while others are initiated by the volunteers themselves. Some sites like Hope Foster Home have volunteer schedules and handbooks lying around, which outline a typical day for the volunteer (although there will be many atypical days). In Luoyang, volunteers mostly teach English and crafts, but because of the size and style of the site, there is much more flexibility in designing your own programs.

Past responsibilities have included:

- playing with younger children
- tutoring individual children
- translating for staff and teachers
- tutoring staff members in English
- helping staff to take the children on organized outings
- garden work
- office/administrative help

- arts and crafts
- soccer and other sports
- music lessons
- occupational therapy
- taking extensive care of individual children who have undergone surgery

Q: How will I take care of accommodations / meals ?

In most cases, we have arranged for volunteers to stay and eat meals at the orphanage. In the past, volunteers have also lived in orphanage-associated dormitories nearby. The HK-Polytech program might require additional stays at local hostels in Hong Kong. Some sites might ask for a small donation to cover food and lodgings for the entire summer. Oftentimes, volunteers prefer eating in local restaurants and vendors with other volunteers instead of at the orphanage.

Q: Will there be other volunteers with me at the orphanage?

It is very likely, depending on when and where you go. Summer is a popular time for many other volunteer organizations, such as Half the Sky or Doctors without Borders to travel to China to work with these orphans and disabled children. The amount of correspondence you will have with these other volunteers varies. In general, they will be spending a much shorter period of time at the sites than HCC summer interns.

Q: How many people volunteered in the past and how long did they stay?

For the summers of 2006 and 2007, a total of 22 Harvard undergraduate students volunteered at orphanages in Beijing, Saiqi and Luoyang. Some interns volunteered for half the summer (at least 5 weeks); others spent the entire three months.

Applying

Q: What qualities are you looking for in a volunteer?

We are looking for volunteers who love or want to work with children, who work well with other people, who are willing to adapt to the challenges of living in a different culture, and who are enthusiastic and perseverant in what they do (as it takes a good deal of patience to get to know a new place and new people!). We do not set explicit prerequisites — based on our past experience, an applicant's personality and interests make up a large portion of his or her qualification.

Q: Do I have to know Chinese to apply?

No — many past volunteers have had little or no language experience prior to beginning the internship, but had very rewarding experiences nonetheless. Many sites work with foreign volunteers all the time, so they will accommodate to English speakers. If you are assigned to a group, at least one person in your group will be fluent in Chinese.

Furthermore, the children actually learn English from you amazingly fast, just as you learn Chinese from them quickly too. However, knowledge of the language is helpful, as anywhere else, so it can be frustrating at first when you can't convey something you really need to. However, you will learn that there are many other ways to communicate than just talking, especially with children who are too young to speak anyway.

Q: When is the application deadline?

The deadline for submitting the application for summer 2008 is 11pm on February 2, 2008. You should E-mail the completed application document with your name as the name of the document to hcc.internships@gmail.com.

Q: When will I find out if I've been accepted?

We will hold interviews in early February, and you will be notified a week afterwards.

Q: I'm a graduating senior / graduate student. Can I still apply?

Yes.

Q: I'm an alum. Can I still apply?

Yes. Keep in mind, however, that priority will be given to currently enrolled Harvard students.

Q: I'm not a Harvard student. Can I still apply?

We are obligated to give priority to students currently enrolled at Harvard. If you are from another University, you should check the China Care Foundation website [<http://www.chinacare.org>] for volunteering opportunities.

Q: Will the Olympics in Beijing affect anything?

The Olympics will bring a lot more visitors to China, especially to the Beijing region. Thus, there will be more restrictions on our selection of volunteers to send to Beijing. The orphanages in Luoyang and southern China should not be affected. Children in the orphanages still need to your help and care.

Preparation

Q: I have never been to China before. How should I prepare myself? Will you be running workshops?

Yes. As past volunteers, we understand the stress that comes with international travel, and we will try our best to prepare you for the trip. We will hold workshops and discussion sessions in the spring semester dealing with topics such as visas, health issues, language, and safety awareness. We will brainstorm ideas together which you might be able to implement at your orphanage, and also discuss working with multiply disabled children, which many of you may be facing for the first time. We will also give you some background

on the history of international adoptions in China, the social situation and current conditions at the orphanages, and general advocacy issues. Past interns will also come in to speak about their experiences. There will be opportunities for social events to get to know your fellow summer interns.

Q: How much are we expected to prepare beforehand?

Different sites have different expectations for their volunteers. Some sites will tell interns what to do, while others will allow for more flexibility. While we have adopted a policy of encouraging interns to all design their own programs in the past, intern feedback and evaluations have expressed a desire to be better prepared for the types of work that they will *most likely* encounter in China. As such, this year's workshops will emphasize more training on practical activities to do with the children. Volunteers who go in groups, in particular, are encouraged to establish and distribute responsibilities and prepare lesson plans/art activities before they leave for the summer.

Q: What are the children's expectations?

Most of the children will have had prior experience in interacting with an international volunteer. However, this does not mean that they will have expectations of you. On the contrary, they will be excited and grateful by any activity that you plan to engage them in. While different children desire different things, the one expectation we notice that all of these children share is wanting someone to listen to them. Little kids are always excited to tell you gossip, show off what they've learned, or share some valuable personal possession with you.

Q: What will it be like once I arrive in China?

Arriving in a country that you have never been to before can be quite daunting. We will make our best efforts to prepare and plan all the travel arrangements and accommodations necessary beforehand, so the actual trip goes smoothly. During the workshops, we will cover important aspects of traveling in China, including local etiquette, common tourist traps, and safety issues. Most volunteers in the past spend a few days in large cities, such as Beijing, Hong Kong, or Shanghai, before they actually travel to their site—this will help adjust to life in China. Once dates for the internships are set, the sites' administration will be notified, and they will arrange for the pickup of the volunteers however necessary.

Q: What will living and working in China be like?

As mentioned above, the first few hours can be hectic. Our workshops will prepare you to handle the immediate pressures of living in China. Once you are at the orphanage, you will find that day-to-day living isn't as different as you would imagine, particularly if you are living amongst familiar faces. Cultural differences can be welcoming, amusing, or outright inconvenient, but with the proper preparations, most of the problems can be anticipated and addressed beforehand (How do I carry money around? How do I communicate with the US? What vaccinations/shots do I need?)

Financial questions

Q: What is the total cost involved?

HCC staff members are full-time Harvard students who coordinate internships on a purely voluntary basis. Administrators of the sites in China all welcome volunteers from Harvard because past interns have done outstanding and lasting work. There is no fee associated with the internship. However, you will be responsible for the cost of your flight to China (~\$1,200) and some minimal costs associated with room / board.

We suggest that you look into the many grants and fellowships available at Harvard for undergraduate travel / work in public service. A good place to start is the Harvard College Funding Sources website: <http://funding.fas.harvard.edu/>.

Fundraising will also be addressed in the spring workshops.

Q: What sources of funding have volunteers looked to in the past?

The first place that we encourage interns to look to for funding is Harvard grants. HCC will help you through the steps of looking for and applying for these fellowships and grants. We also help interns apply for funding from larger corporations, sponsors, relatives, and other acquaintances. Many volunteers have worked the first portion of summer before spending the second portion in China, and vice-versa. There are also several loans available for students who are doing international travel.

Q: I need to make money over the summer. Can I do that AND volunteer?

Of course. If you are a returning student, you may be interested in being considered to work for Jenzabar, a Cambridge-based Internet start-up company and one of Harvard China Care's sponsors. If selected, you will work at the company during the first half of the summer in order to fund your trip to China during the second half. If you are interested in this option, please check the appropriate box on the application.

Q: What are the requirements for participating in HCC's internships?

We ask that you commit to attending the workshops and all other internship related activities in the spring. You are also expected to participate in at least one HCC fundraising event during the school year. Returning students are asked to share their experiences with each other and with future volunteers. Interns who are returning to school might be asked to compile a presentation, along with the other members of the group, and share their experiences to all the summer interns.

In the past, volunteers have organized a toy/book drive in the spring and carried donated items to the orphanages in China. In addition, they have raised money prior to the trip, to be allocated as they see fit upon completion of the internship (for example, to sponsor a child's surgery, contribute to building renovations, or to purchase school supplies). While it is optional this year, it is highly encouraged.

Please direct anymore questions to Annie Yao (hcc.internships@gmail.com).