

What's Next: New Opportunities at Mid-Career Checklist

This list contains some suggestions for issues you may wish to consider at three stages. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to offer ideas as starting points for your own planning.

Before You Go

Personal Considerations

- Set aside time to prepare for being away
- Organize a “road map” of where you’re going
 - Things to see and do in your temporary home base
 - What do you want to achieve (relevant for both personal and professional goals)
- Organize your health information, health insurance coverage, and emergency numbers
 - Contact your providers and discuss your plans and confirm related insurance coverage
 - Arrange immunizations as needed
 - Gather medical information (including immunizations) to carry with you
 - Enter contact information for providers in the essential information you will carry along on your travels
 - Develop a list of telephone numbers and emails needed in the event of an emergency (e.g., family, health providers, insurance providers, travel agents)
 - Provide your travel plans and emergency numbers to family and friends
 - Obtain any necessary refills for your chronic medications
- Dependent care
 - Arrange child care or school placement plans for your dependents
 - Work with hosts in the location where you will be living to identify schooling options (e.g., local schools, International schools)
 - Gather school documents (transcripts, record of school level) for dependents
 - Arrange for pet care, as needed (consider pet vaccinations and insurance)
- Organize how your home will be cared for
 - Arrange for someone to check on your home or live in it
 - Secure rental permission, if needed, in your municipality
 - Make arrangements for yard care, snow removal, cleaning, as needed
 - Arrange with friends, neighbors, or others to check on your home and provide you with regular reports
- Organize/secure your home before departing (depending on whether it will be occupied)

- Arrange for your mail and newspapers (forward or hold, someone picks up, or other options)
- Consider buying and setting timers to turn lamps on and off
- Inform your alarm company, and if applicable, provides names and contact information of who will be caring for your home while away
- Consider whether to turn off gas/water
- Check and lock all doors and windows, and close blinds/curtains immediately before departure
- Organize your finances
 - Arrange bill paying processes and automatic deposits
 - Plan for emergency funds
 - Check on banks and withdrawal options if you will be in another country
 - Check on currency exchange rates
 - Exchange some money into local currency (if travelling internationally)
 - Review options for local banking, if needed, at the location where you will be
 - Look into tax implications related to your travel, moving costs, living costs, and the sabbatical
 - Contact credit card providers and arrange for out-of-country use
- Ensure your cell phone plan has international coverage (if applicable)
- [Review the Non-Education Abroad Pre-Departure Checklist for International Travel](#) (if applicable)
 - Secure International travel insurance
- Ensure all family members have current passports and visas
 - Check that expiration dates are at least 6 months after your return
 - Check on visa requirements where you are travelling
 - Check visa rules about entering and exiting your country for personal or business travel
- Reflect on your expectations about personal rejuvenation and how you will meet those expectations

Professional Considerations

- Research/scholarship issues and processes
 - Approval for use of animal and/or human subjects: Check to find out if you need to make any revisions in regard to doing your work in your sabbatical location
 - Access to data, resources: arrange for any data you need with you, check security protocols
 - Laboratory issues: consider what arrangements are needed if you have a laboratory (e.g., what to draw down, hibernate, or other options)
 - For grants involving international research, visit the [Office of International Research Collaboration](#)
- Graduate students, postdocs, lab technicians, others you supervise

- Determine, set, and communicate expectations for yourself and your students before departure
- Arrange for regular meetings, communication, or meetings (at conferences, your new locale, or online)
- With student advisees, arrange for ways to stay in contact and/or arrange temporary advisors
- For those in labs, ensure emergency procedures are well understood (including a local point of contact for emergencies)
- Discuss how you will handle doctoral defenses and graduation, if any of your graduate students will finish during your absence
- Annual review expectations
 - Discuss with your Chair expectations you should plan to meet during your leave
 - Discuss with Chair what expectations you should expect to meet upon your return
 - Review the guidelines for the leave/ sabbatical report you must submit upon your return
- Plan for networking options in your new locale
 - Look into whether there are MSU colleagues and/or alumni with whom to connect in your new location
- Print new double-sided business cards
 - Include MSU contact information on one side and your new contact information on the other
- Decide how accessible you want to be while you are gone
 - Consider an automated email or telephone response
 - Set journal review/availability dates
 - When making arrangements, consider time differences
- Plan for unexpected situations
 - Develop a “back-up” plan if your research plans don’t go as planned
 - Make sure all family members understand how to handle emergencies.
- Booking Travel
 - Check out [Travel at State](#) to book travel associated with MSU

While You Are Away

Personal and Professional Consideration

- Savor the experiences you are having
 - Seek to develop new skills and knowledge
 - Incorporate fun and adventure into your experience
- Decide how to communicate with friends and family
 - Some people provide a regular blog to keep others informed

- Consider providing regular updates (e.g., monthly or quarterly emails, Zoom meetings) to Chairperson, Dean/Director, others
- Keep a careful record of expenses (including receipts) for use with tax documents
- Decide on a systematic way to record your personal and professional experiences (e.g., photos, blogs, mementoes) that is consistent with your annual review and promotion expectations
- Check in periodically with those watching your home

When You Are About to Return

Personal Consideration

- Check in with renters to make arrangements for your return
- Discuss your experience with your College Public Relations staff who may want to publicize it in social media, MSU Today, or elsewhere
- Consider the issues that can be associated with major transitions (e.g., emotional, physical issues)
 - Reverse culture shock is possible even if you are not out of state or country
 - Be prepared for questions (e.g., people may ask how you are handling being back. Some may say, “I didn’t think you would come back!” or “Are you sad your sabbatical is over?”)

Professional Consideration

- Prepare to be patient with the process of re-entry
 - Look forward to greeting friends and colleagues, and explaining your experiences
 - Recognize that some of your interests may have evolved
- Prepare and submit the required post-sabbatical report
- Check in and get ready for teaching and administrative responsibilities
 - Set up a meeting with your department administrative assistant and financial officer. What online reporting mechanisms have changed, etc,
- Optimize the benefits of your experience
 - Consider post-leave publication, outreach, and publicity
 - Work on research and scholarly articles related to your experiences, and explore relevant professional publication outlets
 - Consider opportunities to share your experience with colleagues (departmental, college, campus wide)
 - Consider ways to share your experience with the larger public through local, state, and national media, blogs, etc.
- Find ways to stay in touch with the colleagues and friends you made while on leave