

WUHAN



Let me share with you some information about my placement! I've had a year at Wuhan at a university (WHPU) or 武汉轻工大学 (WuHan QingQong DaXue - Direct translation: Wuhan Light Engineering University).

I hope this guide can paint a picture of what it's like to work at my university in case you're interested in working here as well, or at the very least it can build your knowledge about what it's like to work at a Chinese university.

I hope this answers any questions you could have about working here.

Teaching

First up, let me tell you about the core part of the job: teaching. Let's do this in dot points.

- *There will be ten to twelve other foreign teachers at this university. This is average amount - some universities have one foreign teacher some bigger ones have twenty to thirty.
- *There is also one German teacher at our college because the university has a beer science major and these students have the opportunity to go to Germany.
- *You will be teaching Oral English. It's also called Speaking English or Conversational English.
- *You will have a teaching assistant from the Foreign Languages Department. They are your liaison with the department - they will give you your timetable and you can ask them questions about classes and expectations.
- *You will teach freshman and/or sophomore. They will be around 17-20 years old. It isn't necessary for junior and senior to learn English (unless they have a second major or English).
- *Class size is around 20-30. If your students have poor attendance then this could be much less!
- *You will either have a weekly timetable - where you see your students once a week - or a fortnightly timetable - where you see your students once every two weeks.
- *You probably won't get your timetable until the weekend before class starts.
- *You will be provided with a book to follow. It isn't a very interesting text. Feel free to teach things in your own way and make class fun. Your students will very much appreciate it.
- *Half of the students grade comes from their final exam and half comes from their class work throughout the semester. You can decide whether this comes from attendance, participation, mid-terms or homework.
- *It is best to assume you will have no PPT facilities. Many classrooms in the schools do have the technology but it is not deemed necessary for Oral English. There will be a chalkboard and ample white and coloured chalk. It's nice to bring it back to basics and not have to worry about creating many PPT's.
- *Maybe you will have someone sit in on your classes, if not, students may be asked for feedback. Apart from this, there is quite a lot of autonomy in how you run your classes.

Hours

You will teach a maximum of 16 hours. This is a maximum of 8 "big" lessons (2x45 minute blocks

with a 10 minute break in the middle). If there are more foreign teachers hired that semester you will have less classes.

There are two "big" morning classes 8-9.40, 10.10-11.50 and two "big" afternoon classes 2-3.40 and 3.50-5.30.

Housing

You will be provided with your own two bedroom apartment with a kitchen, laundry, bathroom and western toilet. It is furnished and you will have basic cooking facilities.

Half of the foreign teachers live on Changqing Campus. The advantages of living on this campus is that it is on a busier campus, it has a "homier" feel, there are more restaurants and shops around and it's closer to a metro stop. Disadvantages include that the apartments are much older and much more lived in.



The advantages of living in Jinyin Campus apartment are that they are rather new and much more well kept. Also, it's on a newer campus, a greener campus, quieter campus which has a brand new dining hall and it's a quieter. Disadvantages are that it's less community like, and further from a metro station.

Transport

Changqing campus is a ten or fifteen-minute walk from Changqing Huayuan (Changqing Garden) Metro Station on the pink Line 2. It is currently the second one in from the terminal station.

Jinyin campus is three bus stops away from Jinyintan metro station. The buses run frequently. It's currently the terminal station of the Line 2 but soon this line will be extended to reach the Wuhan Tianhe Airport.



Wuhan is divided into three districts which are separated by rivers. WHPU is in Hankou. It will take 20-25 minutes to reach the end of Hankou on Line 2. To go to the end of the line to busy Guanggu (Optics Valley) it will take just over 50 minutes so make sure you get a seat!

Wuhan is drastically becoming more intra-connected as the city prepares to open 25 more metro lines. They are being constructed at an unbelievable rate.

Taxi's begin at 10 yuan and are very affordable if you split the cost between your friends. Driving apps like Didi and Uber are even cheaper if you have someone who can speak Chinese to the driver.

Best way to explore China from this location

Wuhan is called the gateway to nine provinces. You can get to many destinations around within six to eight hours. Although the international airport is a tiny little building, the domestic terminal is large and bustling. In fact, the airport is undergoing redevelopment and expansion at the time of writing.

WHPU is only a few stops from Hankou Railway Station - one of the three major train stations of Wuhan - making it very convenient for train travel. You can return from your journey and be back at your apartment within 30 minutes of the train arriving! Wuhan Railway Station in the north of the city, and Wuchang Railway Station in Wuchang, are connected by metro.

WHPU is very close to the Tianhe airport. Currently there is no metro connecting but it's soon to open. A taxi currently is no more than 100 yuan (including the toll fee). The worst taxi drivers wait at the international terminal so make sure they start the metre.

Specific packing tips

Wuhan gets cold - bring your winter coat and thermals! Wuhan also gets stupidly hot - bring your summer clothes. I noticed here females dress more conservative here during summertime - so I feel more comfortable here to wear t-shirts and longer skirts than say a tank top and short shorts. There is no specific dress code for teaching but neat casual is assumed.

Also it's good idea to bring something more formal because I'm sure you'll be invited to an event which would call for it.

Wuhan is becoming more internationalised but is still far behind Beijing and Shanghai therefore if there is a particular product you love from home then bring it because it would be hard to find here.

Facilities

Washing is in your own apartment. There is a water delivery service. Dining facilities on campus. There is a gym on Jinyin Campus open in the evenings which has ping pong and badminton facilities (free for teachers or you pay a small fee if you play with a student) and there are ample outdoor basketball courts scattered around campus. On Changqing campus there is also a gym yet you must pay membership.

The Little Yellow Bus (Xiao Huang Che) drives you between the two campuses for 1 yuan if you need to go to the other.

Eating

It's common understanding that Changqing campus has better restaurant choices. Just outside the gate are some canteens which offer a giant variety of good food. Students and other teachers can show you the favourites.

Between the two campuses is the AEON mall which has International Restaurant Street in it and it has many more restaurant on the upper floors. There are Japanese restaurants, Korean snack shops, Korean BBQ, Dairy Queen, Pizza Hut, KFC, McDonalds, steakhouses, Sichuan food, a Lanzhou noodle house, Sichuan cuisine restaurant and noodle restaurants. There is a lot of variety. Meals are maybe 30-40 yuan each after splitting the bill. AEON also has a big supermarket if you want to cook yourself but avoid going there Tuesdays because it's sales day and it's crazy busy.

At Jinyin, there is the brand new dining hall. The top floor is better than the bottom floor. Outside east gate there is a popular Muslim beef noodle shop and a great re gan mian stall. You can also find baozi as well as some other small restaurants. In the evenings there are some food stalls, but many more in summer than winter. Dumplings, fried rice, malatang and congee are often available.

To eat at the canteen you need a dining card which you will receive shortly after you arrive. You can add money to this from a machine at the canteen which comes from your bank account.

Helpful people

If you need help then you can ask your waiban for emergencies, paperwork and important issues. Currently the waiban is Jessica and she is amazing. There are also student assistants hired by the international offices who are around to help you with day - to - day situations like visiting the bank, or the police station, or places where you need a Chinese speaker! For very simple things you can ask your students - they are very knowledgeable and willing to help! Your teaching assistant can answer questions about classes.



Opportunities for Mandarin lessons

The school offers free weekly Mandarin lessons for the foreign teachers. It is taught by the student assistants. It's a good system because it is good experience for the student assistants and the foreign teachers can improve their Chinese. It's also a good way to keep in touch with the other teachers.

5 Best Things about the Placement

1) Location. Most of the universities are in Wuchang and many are really far out of the city. Wuhan Polytechnic is not only near the metro but it is in wonderful Hankou which has everything you need. It's near a metro stop currently and in the future, it is going to be more conveniently located because its own metro stop is in construction.

2) A Fair University. Sometimes there are stories of organisations in China pushing the limits of the employee contract or even breaking their end of the deal, however, this was never experienced by

me at my school. They stick with the contract and never demand anything more that was in the contract.

3) Many other foreign teachers. This has the benefit that you aren't in isolation and there are friends around if you want company or if you need assistance. It also means that the school is very experienced in working with foreigners.

4) Living conditions. When I first saw my apartment I was relieved. It is was furnished and very liveable. Two air conditioners, a spare bedroom, basic cooking things and my own washing machine. It was a good basic set up. Because it's China, things break, but if you ask a student assistant they can arrange a maintenance worker to come over and fix things and it's very timely. (Be warned: the hot water is solar powered so as the weather changes be determined to work out how to change the settings on the outdoor water boiler to turn off automatic solar to manual water boiling).

5) The people. Maybe this is for every university in China but the biggest impression on me when I've left this place will be the students. The students are incredible if you get to know them.



So, I hope this paints a picture of what it's like to work at WHPU! I'm lucky I got to work here - I've had a fantastic experience and I fully recommend it. If you're just looking for information about universities then I hope this has helped you too.

By Jennifer Roman, Teacher in Wuhan (2015-2016)