Dear Summer Study Abroad Participant,

Congratulations on your study abroad plans for the upcoming summer. I hope that your international experience will contribute profoundly to your development as a person, a scholar, and a global citizen. Boston College hopes for no less.

We have compiled this handbook to provide you with information that you will need to prepare for your experience abroad. While you will also receive information directly from your professor or on-site coordinator, please review this handbook now and share the information with your parents. We have drawn upon years of experience to provide, in very short compass, information on everything from visas and health to packing and cultural preparation.

While increasing numbers of Boston College students have already had significant international travel experience, relatively few have had a sustained experience of living, working, or studying abroad. This poses great and exciting challenges and promises to pull you far beyond your normal comfort zone. Please welcome that challenge. Resist the temptation, so ready at hand, to retreat into the electronic cocoon afforded by current technology.

How might you make the most of your study abroad experience? Work to integrate into your host environment. Keep in mind that the transition into your new setting will not be seamless, and you may not have the same services that are available at Boston College. Take advantage of the strengths of the host community and try to live as the local students live. Do volunteer work in the local community or set up informational interviews with local companies...do whatever it takes to meet local students and residents. Try, as best you can, to live in and with the community which will be your home for a few weeks. Don’t settle for being a remote bystander.

And if you face difficulty or experience confusion, let us know. Our office, and Boston College at large, is always ready to help.

Best wishes,

Dr. Nick Gozik
Director, Office of International Programs
# Table of Contents

## Pre-Departure Checklist
- Travel Documents: 5
- Travel Arrangements: 5
- Finances: 6
- Medical Insurance: 6
- Health Preparations: 7
- Pre-Departure Research: 8
- Communication: 10

## Travel Preparations

### AT Boston College
- Final Confirmation: 11
- Withdrawal Policy: 11
- Finances: 12
- Academics: 12

### After Arrival Abroad
- Cultural Adjustment: 13
- Safeguarding Documents & Valuables: 14
- Obeying Local Laws: 14
- Street Smarts: 15

### Golden Rules for Study Abroad Success: 15

### Student Responsibilities for Study Abroad: 16

### OIP Contact Information: 17
PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

TRAVEL PREPARATIONS
☐ Apply for a passport and visa if needed
☐ Make travel arrangements
☐ Plan your finances
☐ Arrange medical and dental checkups
☐ Obtain necessary vaccinations and prescriptions
☐ Register online for HTH medical insurance
☐ Make a packing list
☐ Conduct pre-departure research

AT BOSTON COLLEGE
☐ Submit the following forms: Final Confirmation and Clearance; Responsibility, Insurance and Release Agreement; Emergency Contact Information; and Permission to Share Information
☐ Attend summer orientation session
☐ Email flight information to summerabroad@bc.edu
☐ If necessary, obtain BC course approval for major, minor and core requirements

ON-SITE SAFETY PLANNING
☐ Read health, safety, and travel recommendations for your destination
☐ Make copies of all important documents (leave one set at home)
☐ Purchase a money belt or neck pouch
☐ Share your travel itinerary and contact information with family members

CONTACT THE OIP WITH QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK
TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

PASSPORT AND VISA
To study abroad, your passport must be valid for at least six months after your US return date. Visit www.travel.state.gov for passport and visa information. If your host country requires a visa, your OIP advisor will provide you with further details on the application process. Non-US citizens will be responsible for checking with their respective consulates about passport renewal and visa procedures. Students are responsible for being in full compliance with all host country regulations. Keep copies of all application documents you submit.

If you travel through other countries en route to your final destination, even if you just switch planes, you may also need a transit visa. Verify this before departure.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS
You are responsible for your own travel arrangements. If you arrive before the start of your program, book accommodations for that time. Youth hostels are a less expensive alternative to hotels. Have an alternative way to secure /lock your belongings, as hostels may not have lockers available. Most rail and airline passes must be purchased in the US before departure. Read all guidelines and restrictions before purchasing airline tickets and passes.

HELPFUL WEB SITES:
www.statravel.com
www.kayak.com
www.hostels.com
www.raileurope.com
www.hiusa.com
TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

FINANCES

• In most countries you can use credit, ATM, and debit cards. Your ATM card must have access to international networks (e.g., Cirrus, Plus). If you have a PIN with letters, know the corresponding numbers. Some vendors and ATMs require a special ‘chip’ card for transactions, making it impossible to use your card in some situations. Keep backup currency on hand. Check your bank’s overseas fees before leaving. Get a credit card PIN for possible cash advances.

• Some US banks have international partners that charge no ATM fees or reduced fees. Check with your bank about international partners.

• Leave copies of all bank cards in the US. Take the international customer service numbers of your bank with you.

• Notify your ATM, credit, and debit card banks before departure. Otherwise, they may think your cards were stolen once you use them abroad.

• Evaluate your program’s estimated cost. Prepare a budget. Bring about $150-$200 with you in local currency for arrival. You may have difficulties withdrawing or exchanging money at the airport and will want to make sure that you have enough for the first day. The recommended amount you will need varies by location. Do not bring travelers checks.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

• You must maintain your US-based medical insurance coverage while abroad. Overseas-based insurance plans are insufficient. Utilize a plan through BC’s insurance carrier or arrange coverage through another carrier.

• In addition, all BC students will also be enrolled in the HTH Worldwide Insurance plan for the duration of their program. You are required to register for HTH medical insurance (www.hthstudents.com) after receiving your insurance certificate number.
TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

• For a comprehensive description of the HTH Worldwide Insurance Services, visit the HTH portal (www.hthworldwide.com).

• An HTH fee will be placed on your BC bill.

• If you plan to be abroad before or after the HTH coverage dates, notify your advisor about extending your HTH coverage.

• Keep in mind that HTH does not cover you within the US.

• You will be provided with an HTH membership card. Carry this card at all times. You will need the card if you seek medical treatment abroad.

HEALTH PREPARATIONS

STUDENTS WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

• If you have a physical or psychological condition that requires ongoing treatment, it is strongly recommended that you notify the OIP and consult your physician or counselor about your plan to go abroad so that they can assist you in attaining arrangements that you may need. Seek their advice about your options and discuss your overseas medical care.

• Consider possible consequences of stress from cultural adjustment and reliance on different medical practices.

• You are strongly encouraged to inform on-site staff about any medical condition for which you may need special assistance. Do this prior to arrival.

CHECK-UPS AND VACCINATIONS

Have medical and dental exams before departure. Check that all of your vaccinations are current. Certain countries may also require or recommend vaccinations against specific diseases before departure.
TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

Visit the following websites for details:

www.state.gov (U.S. Department of State)
www.cdc.gov (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
www.hthworldwide.com (HTH portal)

PRESCRIPTIONS

Bring medications in their original labeled bottles. Take copies of all written prescriptions with generic names. When feasible, bring medication that lasts your entire stay abroad. Do not ship medication overseas, as customs may retain it. Visit the HTH website (www.hthworldwide.com) for information on prescription benefits. Do not pack medication in checked luggage.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

If you have a serious health condition or allergy, plan to wear a Medic Alert bracelet. It is also strongly recommended that you let on-site staff and travel companions know of your condition in case you have a medical emergency. Bring translations for your condition or allergy in the local language(s) where you will be traveling, so that you can explain in the event of an emergency.

PRE-DEPARTURE RESEARCH

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EVERYONE

• Research your host country using the internet, travel books, newspapers, magazines, and international news programs. Students should also read their OIP Program Fact Sheet.

• Talk with study abroad alumni, the OIP staff, BC faculty, and international or exchange students who have studied or lived abroad.

• Be informed and capable of discussing US history and current events while abroad.
TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

HEALTH/SAFETY:
• www.state.gov (US Department of State)
• www.hthworldwide.com (HTH portal)
• www.cdc.gov (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
• studentsabroad.state.gov (US Department of State)

COUNTRIES/CULTURES:
• www.onlinenewspapers.com (international newspapers)
• www.countrywatch.com
• www.worldatlas.com
• www.culturecrossing.net

RECOMMENDED GUIDES:
• Rough Guides series (www.roughguides.com/)
• Let’s Go series (www.letsgo.com/)
• Lonely Planet series (www.lonelyplanet.com/)
• Frommer’s series (www.frommers.com/)
• Culture Shock series
• Eyewitness Travel guides
• Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student’s Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use (R. Michael Paige et al., 2002)

The OIP Resource Room has student evaluations and books available.
Attitudes toward women, the GLBT population, disabled people, and AHANA students vary worldwide. Customs, beliefs, laws, facilities, and social practices relating to these populations may be different than in the US. Some countries are very progressive, while others are far more conservative. To prepare for the cultural differences you may encounter, it is recommended that you:

• Speak with people who have traveled or lived in your host country.

• Research your host country. Many student travel guides have sections pertaining to special interest groups.

• Be sensitive to cultural differences. Remember that you will be subject to your host country’s laws, even if you feel they are discriminatory.

• Meet with your OIP advisor if you have any concerns. All matters will be kept confidential.

COMMUNICATION

• Your US cell phone can work abroad if it is a world/tri-band phone. You must unlock it to use a local SIM card. Contact your provider to see what might be possible.

• Rates are high for using a US plan abroad. If it is not feasible to use your US cell phone abroad, consider buying a cell phone/plan in your host country.

• You can bring a US phone card or use local calling cards. Check with the provider about rates and how to make calls.

• Consider using Skype (www.skype.com) for international calls. You can pay for a subscription or deposit a certain amount in your account.

• Ask returnees or locals for advice. Some methods work better than others.
• Boston College will communicate with you via your BC email account. Be sure to check it while abroad. Also utilize Agora while overseas.

OIP FINAL CONFIRMATION
All students must complete the following forms:

• Final Confirmation and Clearance

• Responsibility, Insurance, and Release Agreement

• Emergency Contact Information and Permission to Share Information

If you submit the Final Confirmation and Clearance form after the due date, you risk losing your summer abroad course placement. Forms should have been sent to you with your acceptance letter from the OIP advisor.

• Once we receive your forms, the OIP will register and bill you for study abroad.

• You should continue to meet BC’s academic, disciplinary, and financial requirements until departure or risk losing final clearance to go abroad. You are responsible for all financial losses if you are not cleared to go abroad.

STUDY ABROAD WITHDRAWAL POLICY

• In the event that you must withdraw from your program, contact the OIP immediately at summerabroad@bc.edu.

• If you withdraw from a BC program after you have turned in your confirmation forms you may be charged a withdrawal fee AND other program expenses incurred. The schedule of withdrawal fee amounts can be found at www.bc.edu/international/overseasprograms/progsummer1.html#withdrawal.
FINANCES

• BC program participants are billed BC tuition and a program fee based on local costs. Participants are responsible for handling all other expenses. Visit the OIP website for estimated program costs.

• All students are also charged an HTH fee for participation in every summer abroad course.

• For all BC summer programs the tuition, program fee, and HTH fee will be charged to your BC bill. For more information concerning your BC account, contact Student Services.

• Visit the OIP website for details on study abroad scholarships, including the McGillycuddy-Logue grant.

ACADEMICS

Students may take one summer course abroad during their time at BC and have that course count towards the graduation requirements as well as for major, minor or core requirements. Although the summer course will count for academic credit, it will not be factored into the overall GPA. To receive academic credit for a summer course abroad, you must indicate your request for credit on your summer course application and receive at least a C- for the course.

• You are responsible for following all BC academic regulations while abroad.

• Summer courses have been pre-approved for certain requirements. If you wish to receive credit that has not been pre-approved for the course you are taking, it is your responsibility to obtain that approval. Contact the appropriate department or dean if you have questions about course approval.

• If you are making up for a deficiency then you must obtain a course approval form from your dean’s office.
CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

• Once abroad, you may face an adjustment period referred to as “culture shock.” The degree of shock depends on factors such as length of study abroad, your flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, degree of difference between your home and host culture, prior experience abroad, and your expectations.

• Culture shock is a normal part of study abroad, even during short-term programs. It shows that you are experiencing the differences between your culture and that of the host country.

• Symptoms of culture shock can include homesickness, depression, feeling lost and out of place, frustration, irritability, and fatigue. If you experience culture shock, remember that you are not alone. Contact program staff or BC if you need further assistance overcoming culture shock.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH CULTURE SHOCK INCLUDE:

• “Plunge” into your host culture and wrestle with the differences.

• Keep an open mind. We all have preconceived ideas and beliefs that come into question while abroad.

• Get to know others. Do not isolate yourself.

• Find a “cultural informant,” such as a local person with whom you can discuss your frustrations and encounters with difference.

• Learn as much as you can about your host culture.

• Maintain a support structure with others, particularly those going through the same experience.

• Keep a journal. Record your impressions of new experiences and the transformations that are occurring within you.

• As you overcome culture shock, you will be able to approach life in your host country with understanding and enthusiasm.
For some students, culture shock becomes more serious. If you are concerned by your mental and/or physical status, do not hesitate to seek help. Onsite staff can assist in helping you find medical treatment.

SAFEGUARDING YOUR DOCUMENTS/VALUABLES

- Keep your passport and visa in a secure place. Carry copies when not traveling. Leave copies in the US.
- Be careful with bank card numbers, receipts, and PINs. Exercise caution at ATM machines.
- Handbags, backpacks, coats, and back pockets are prone to theft. Watch your belongings, especially on public transport. Be aware of ploys to distract your attention and rob you. Use luggage locks. Always secure your bags.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash or all of your money in one place. Use a money belt or neck pouch when traveling. Do not count money in public.
- Secure your belongings in hotels and hostels. Do not leave valuables lying around. Consider using a public locker if there is no safe place for valuables.
- If mugged, do not struggle with the perpetrator. Your safety is worth more than your belongings.

OBEYING LOCAL LAWS

- Remember that you are a representative of the US. and BC. Learn the local laws and obey them.
- Laws and legal proceedings vary worldwide. You are subject to the laws and legal system of the host country.
- Illegal or unacceptable behavior may result in BC disciplinary sanctions. The OIP and on-site staff can dismiss you from the program if necessary.
STREET SMARTS
- Be aware of your surroundings. Walk confidently. Stay in populated, well-lit areas. Travel with friends at night.
- Pay attention to the local health, safety, and travel recommendations.
- Avoid checking your map on the street. Go into a café or shop.
- Blend in with the local culture in terms of language, behavior, and dress (for example, do not wear clothing with university logos).
- When crossing streets, remember that in some countries vehicles drive on the left side of the road.
- Do not drive while overseas. Use caution when riding in vehicles. Driving behavior and laws vary by location. Abide by local laws.
- Know the local phone system, emergency numbers, and how to say “help.”
- Avoid demonstrations or large political gatherings.
- In some locations, exercise caution with water and dairy products. Avoid raw or undercooked food. Be wary of food available at street vendors.
- Carry your HTH insurance card at all times.
- If you need assistance, notify your on-site contact, BC, and/or HTH.
- Let relatives know your travel plans. Contact them upon arrival.

“GOLDEN RULES” FOR STUDY ABROAD SUCCESS

- KEEP AN OPEN MIND
- GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE
- GET INVOLVED WITH SOMETHING LOCAL
- COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERENT LAWS AND CUSTOMS REGARDING ALCOHOL USE. BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY.
- EXPLORE YOUR HOST CITY AND REGION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
- KEEP A JOURNAL
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STUDY ABROAD

As a study abroad student, you are expected to:

1. Educate yourself about, and fully integrate yourself into, your host country’s culture; fully participate in host university-sponsored events and become integrated with the local community;

2. Be an exemplary BC ambassador to your host country and university by taking full responsibility for your personal conduct and academic performance;

3. Learn about and obey the local laws and customs of your host country, and understand their implications for you as an individual;

4. Maximize your personal safety by taking all reasonable precautions, safeguarding your belongings, and keeping emergency contact information at hand;

5. Be aware of any existing disabilities, chronic illness, or mental health issues and share that information with your OIP advisor who can help you plan for a safe and healthy experience;

6. Consider host country culture, attitudes, and laws regarding personal relationships, sexuality, race, religion, gender, etc.;

7. Achieve your own study abroad goals by carefully reading all program materials and responding in a timely manner to communications from the OIP, onsite staff, and program provider.
OIP CONTACT INFORMATION

LOCATION: Hovey House, 258 Hammond Street
HOURS OF OPERATION: Monday-Friday 9-5
TEL: +1.617.552.3827 • FAX: +617.552.0647 • EMAIL: oip@bc.edu

Call the OIP during business hours. For emergencies outside of office hours, call Boston College Police Department at +1.617.552.4444 (24 hour emergency number)

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