Preparing for Study Abroad

- Students can maximize their study abroad experience by learning about their host country, its history, and culture. Students may want to go to Encyclopedia Britannica [http://www.britannica.com/](http://www.britannica.com/) for a summary of Utrecht and the Netherlands. Another useful site is: [www.economist.com/countries](http://www.economist.com/countries). Please refer to the suggested readings and websites provided at the end of this document for additional information.

- Students should know what is happening in the news in their host country: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/](http://www.dutchnews.nl/)

- Encountering and adapting to a different culture is an intricate component of studying abroad. Students are strongly encouraged to use the following websites to learn about intercultural communication before you leave home: [http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/](http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/) and [http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/educators/enrichment/culturematters/index.html](http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/educators/enrichment/culturematters/index.html).

- Customs and traditions in the Netherlands will be different than the ones found in the United States and at Boston College. To learn a little about the local customs and traditions you may want to consider the following questions: What type of government does the Netherlands have; what are the national sports; what are some of the popular TV shows; who are some of the biggest celebrities in the Netherlands; what music is currently popular; how do you order food in a restaurant; what is the policy regarding tipping? In addition, students should review the below site for information regarding the Netherlands customs and traditions: [http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/netherlands.html](http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/netherlands.html)

- Students and their parents/legal guardian should refer to the Office of International Programs website for more information regarding the abroad experience: [www.bc.edu/international](http://www.bc.edu/international). In addition, all students will be given the Boston College Study Abroad Handbook prior to departure. Students are expected to attend the mandatory pre-departure orientation held at Boston College. At the orientation, students will have a chance to learn more about their host country/city from their advisor and former study abroad students. Finally, additional student and parent information can be found at: [http://www.studyabroad.com/guides/index.html](http://www.studyabroad.com/guides/index.html)
Contact Information

- University College Utrecht
  Utrecht University
  College Hall, room 016
  Campusplein 1 PO Box 80145,
  3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands
  Telephone: +31-30-253-9900 Fax: +31 30 253 9905
  ucu.admissions@uu.nl

Travel Information

- Students enrolled in Boston College programs make their own flight arrangements, often using student travel agencies such as STA Travel (www.statravel.com). The student agencies generally offer competitive rates. After arrival at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport, students can take a train to Utrecht Central Station. The train station is part of Schiphol Plaza, just follow directions for ‘trains’. Train tickets are available from the yellow ticket machines near the platforms at Schiphol Plaza or from the ticket offices. There is a direct train to Utrecht every 30 minutes and the journey takes about half an hour. Buy a one way ticket (enkele reis) to Utrecht Central Station (approximately €7,80). When in doubt, you can always ask someone at the ticket office. For journey advice and time tables check: http://www.ns.nl/.

Utrecht will provide additional details regarding arrival.

- Passport: Students must have a US passport valid at least six months beyond your estimated return date. Students may apply for a passport at any major US post office. For more information regarding passports, please visit: http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

Students will also need appropriate immigration documentation when they enter the Netherlands. Appropriate immigration documentation includes: 1) original acceptance letter from Utrecht; 2) Evidence of sufficient funds to maintain yourself for the duration of your stay (such as a bank statement); and 3) Round-trip airline ticket.

- Residence Permit: Upon arrival in Utrecht, all students must register at the Immigration Office to apply for a resident permit. The below details are for holders of a US Passport:
  - Valid passport
  - One Dutch passport photograph
  - Proof that of payment of the legal fee of € 433 for the residence permit or a Mastercard/VISA/Dutch bank card (PIN) to pay at the time of your appointment.
  - Proof of Health and Liability Insurance coverage (BC HTH insurance works-details provided further down)
  - Proof of ability to finance study

Utrecht will provide students with details in their acceptance package.

- There are no immunizations required for students studying in the Netherlands.

Academics

- Term dates:
Fall Semester: August 27, 2012- December 14, 2012*
Spring Semester: TBD

* An orientation will take place prior to the start of term. The orientation dates are not yet known, though they typically begin 5-7 days before the term.

- Course information for Utrecht is available at:
  http://www.uu.nl/EN/faculties/universitycollege/studying/courses/Pages/Courses.aspx

- The academic system at Utrecht is different than what students find at Boston College. Students will take a total of 30 ECTS (credits) per semester. Courses are less structured than courses at Boston College. Students are expected to do much more independent reading. Student’s grades will be based on a limited number of assignments.

- Boston College course approval information will be found at:
  http://www.bc.edu/offices/international/advisingservices/academics/courseapproval.html

- Information about transcripts and grades is available at:
  http://www.bc.edu/offices/international/advisingservices/academics/transcripts.html

Housing

- Housing and board fees will be paid directly to Utrecht and costs will vary according to the type of accommodation. UCU has multiple residence halls. Each hall is divided into different units. Between 6 and 12 students live in a unit, in which they have a private room and share a living-room, kitchenette and one or more bathrooms. The units are a mix of different genders, ages, and nationalities. Rooms vary in size between 12 and 20 m² and are comfortably furnished with at least a bed, a desk and a wardrobe. Most rooms are single, although some double rooms are available. While smoking is prohibited in all main campus buildings, students can express a preference for a smoking or non-smoking unit. Students are encouraged to eat in Dining Hall but kitchenettes are fitted with basic cooking appliances. Bathrooms are fitted with a shower, a toilet and a wash basin.

  During the semesters all students are on a full board plan, allowing them to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner five days a week. On Saturdays and Sundays brunch and dinner are served. All meals are prepared and served in Dining Hall.

- Local Transportation: Information regarding travel in and around Utrecht can be found here:
  http://www.uu.nl/EN/informationfor/internationalstudents/arrivingandliving/gettingthere/Pages/default.aspx

- Boston College students are encouraged to participate in activities sponsored by the host institution. The University College Student Association (UCSA) strives to enrich the non-academic life of all students with social and cultural activities. Established in the first year of UCU’s existence, the UCSA now consists of about 30 committees and teams that organize activities (including the introduction week), workshops, parties, performances and trips throughout the year. In addition the UCSA publishes the campus newspaper “Boomerang”, runs the college bar, organizes a yearly formal ball, and organizes sports
events, dance and music performances, photo exhibitions and much more. All students are invited to join one or more of these committees. Website: http://ucsa.nl/

Additional information regarding UCU facilities can be found here: http://www.uu.nl/EN/faculties/universitycollege/campuslife/Pages/RecreationalFacilities.aspx

- Cell Phones: Students may purchase pre-paid cell phones upon arrival (these do not require a contract).

**Wellness, Health and Safety**

- Make sure that you have had any required or recommended vaccinations for your travel destinations by consulting the Centers for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov.

- HTH Worldwide Insurance Services is an emergency health and emergency services provider. All registered BC students are covered by our blanket policy while living and traveling outside of the United States. For more information, visit the following website: http://www.bc.edu/offices/international/travel-health-safety.html

- Students are advised to visit the U.S. State Department website: http://www.state.gov/ for important travel information including travel advisories.

- Adjusting to a new culture and environment can be stressful. Students will have a smoother transition by making sure that they prepare to remain healthy. The following are some websites that provide important information and advice about how to have a healthy and safe experience abroad:
  - http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/cultureshock-stages.html

- Be sure to visit the OIP website for additional information about Health and Safety: http://www.bc.edu/offices/international/travel-health-safety.html

- BC emergency contact information:
  - Office of International Programs: (617) 552-3827 (Monday to Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.)
  - Boston College Police Department: (617) 552-4444 (outside of normal business hours)

- Alcohol and Drugs: In many cultures, alcohol consumption is an acceptable part of the culture and people are taught to drink in moderation at home. Many countries have a lower drinking age than the U.S. while other countries have drinking and drug abuse laws that may be more severe. Students are subject to the laws of their host country, so if you choose to drink alcohol abroad, always drink responsibly and be knowledgeable about your host country’s laws by visiting: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html#drug_offenses

**Finances**
The OIP website provides information about estimated expenses for study abroad: 
http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/international/pdf/2012-2013%20estimated%20student%20budget%20w%20housing%20June%202012.pdf

Scholarships and Financial Aid information can be found at: 
http://www.bc.edu/offices/international/financesawards/Scholarship_Opportunities.html

The best way to access funds from the US is with an ATM, credit, and debit cards (also give the best exchange rate). Students who use an ATM, credit and/or debit card abroad, should contact the appropriate bank before leaving United States. Please inform the bank that you will be overseas for an extended amount of time as some banks may question foreign transactions. In addition, banks may have additional fees if a card is used overseas. It is advisable to have some funds in traveler’s checks as a back-up method as well as a small amount of local currency on hand when students arrive.

Returning to BC

- Complete a Program Evaluation. Upon completion of your program OIP will e-mail the link to the evaluation.

- Mentor an exchange student from abroad by e-mailing: oipexchange@bc.edu

- Volunteer for Discovery Night, Pre-departure Orientation, Re-entry seminar by contacting Larry Pickener (Pickener@bc.edu).

References

- The Rough Guide and Lonely Planet series on The Netherlands
- Netherlands Board of Tourism: www.holland.com
- Utrecht Tourist info: http://www.utrecht-tourism.com/
- Schiphol airport: www.schipol.nl
- Utrecht University College Abroad web site: http://www.uu.nl/EN/faculties/universitycollege/Pages/default.aspx