

BOSTON COLLEGE

Exchange Student Handbook



Office of International Programs



Dear Exchange Students,

We are delighted that you have chosen to attend Boston College as an exchange student. We value the partnership that we have developed with your home university and look forward to welcoming you as a representative of your institution. Your presence will add a significant element to the international dimension of Boston College, and we hope you will take advantage of every opportunity to share your culture with our community.

This handbook is intended to give you the vital information you will need to prepare for your trip to the United States and your first days in Boston. The information included here is not meant to be comprehensive but rather to inform you of the things you need to do in order to make a smooth transition from home to Boston College. Please read everything carefully and feel free to contact us with any questions you might have. We are committed to making your stay with us as rewarding as possible.

At the Office of Global Education, we want to provide you with a hassle-free transition. We work closely with numerous offices on the Boston College campus. One of those offices is the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS), which is responsible for international student services on the Boston College campus. This office issued your visa documents and will work with you on any immigration related matters. Please pay close attention to materials you receive from the Office of International Students and Scholars, especially since they are experts on immigration matters and will be responsible for helping you maintain your legal status in the United States.

As an exchange student, you are given the opportunity to study at Boston College for a semester or academic year as part of your academic program at your home university. Please note that it is not possible to transfer to Boston College to finish your degree. Boston College has a variety of graduate programs that will welcome your application once you have received your degree.

Please visit www.bc.edu for detailed campus information. For information on the Office of Global Education see www.bc.edu/international.

We wish you all the best as you begin to prepare for your upcoming trip to Boston. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Pickener".

Larry Pickener
Director, Office of Global Education
Associate Director, Education Abroad

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Welcome to Boston College

The Office of Global Education (OGE), located in Hovey House at 258 Hammond Street, is your primary contact while you are studying at Boston College. The exchange program that brought you here is administered jointly between the OGE and a comparable office at your home university. In addition to admitting you to Boston College, we pre-register you for courses, assist with housing selection, and support you throughout the duration of your time at BC. We also maintain regular contact with our counterparts at your home university. Please feel free to come to us with any questions or problems before, during, or after your semester or year at Boston College.

The OGE works alongside numerous offices on the Boston College campus to ensure that you have the same access to facilities, services, and opportunities as all other BC students. Other offices that you may come into contact with include: the Office of International Students and Scholars, Student Services, Health Services, Residential Life (which encompasses the On-Campus Housing Office and Off-Campus Housing Office), and various academic departments.

Checklist

Before you leave home

Apply for F1 visa from local US Embassy or Consulate

Make travel plans for arrival and departure from BC
Secure on-campus or off-campus housing
Set up your Agora and BC e-mail account
Pay BC bill
Arrange medical and dental checkups for necessary vaccinations/prescriptions
Complete the MANDATORY [health form](#)

At Boston College

Check in at the Office of International Students and Scholars
Check in at the Office of Residential Life to pick up keys
Attend the OIP Exchange Student Orientation and the OISS International Student Orientation

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Getting Started

Visa process

As a participant of an exchange program to Boston College, you will be entering the United States either on an F-1 student visa. To apply for a student visa you will need:

- Certificate of Eligibility Form I-20 for F-1 visa
- A passport valid for at least six months after your scheduled return to your home country • Proof of funding, such as a letter from your bank

With these items, you must apply to the appropriate Embassy or Consulate General of the United States in your home country. The State Department provides estimated visa appointment times on this [page](#). Make sure to complete the items on the bottom of pages 1 and 3 of your I-20 before applying for your visa. For further information, refer to the visa documentation supplied by the Office of International Students and Scholars. It is important to understand that as an exchange student on a non-immigrant F-1 visa, you are required to be enrolled as a full-time student for the duration of your participation on the exchange program.

Orientation

The mandatory OGE Exchange Student Orientation will take place on **Wednesday, August 23**. The OISS International Student Orientation will take place on **Thursday, August 24**.

Travel Plans

As an exchange student, it is your responsibility to arrange for your arrival to and departure from the United States. Please refer to the [Academic Calendar](#) for important dates.

If you are living on-campus, you should plan to arrive at Boston College on a weekday (Monday Friday) between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, when university offices are open to assist you.

On-Campus Housing staff may be available on the weekend prior to the start of the semester. If

you are planning to live off-campus and have not secured housing prior to departure, you should arrive as early as possible (5-7 days) to look for housing before the beginning of orientation.

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Also, please be aware that the following immigration regulations are in effect for all F-1 students:

- New international students will not be permitted to enter the US more than 30 days before the start date of their program as indicated on the I-20 or DS2019 form.
- Upon completion of studies (i.e. the end date listed on the I-20 or DS2019), F-1 students are permitted to remain in the US for 60 days.
- Additional immigration information is available on the [OISS website](#).

Getting to BC

Airport Transportation

Boston Logan International Airport is the closest airport to Boston College. The university does not provide transportation to campus from the airport. The most common types of transportation used from the airport, are taxis, rideshare apps, and by the public transportation system called the “T”.

Taxis

Taxis can be found at the ground transportation area outside each terminal. Fare to downtown Boston will be about \$35, and to Boston College will be about \$50, depending on traffic and the time of day. For good service, it is customary to tip about 15% in addition to the fare.

Rideshare Apps

Once you collect your luggage from baggage claim, follow signs marked Ride App/TNC. Request a ride on a rideshare app; Uber and Lyft are commonly used. Customers using a Ride App service may only be picked up in areas designated for Ride App vehicles. The designated pick up areas are all located in Central Parking.

Public Transportation

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, or MBTA, operates Boston's mass transportation system. This system is the oldest in the U.S., and includes buses, trains, and subways lines known as the “T.” To get to campus, you can take the Silver Line to South Station, transfer to the Red Line to Park Street, and transfer again to the Boston College Green Line (also called the "B Line") outbound train. Stay on the "B Line" outbound train to the final station. For a faster route, you can pay for a Logan Express bus from the airport to Hynes Convention Center station. At Hynes, transfer to the Green Line B to Boston College Station. It will cost \$2.75 for a one way trip on the “T.”

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The Agora Portal (<http://portal.bc.edu>) is a central place where a wide variety of information and services from multiple sources, such as Academics and Courses, Account and Personal Info, and Common Services, are accessible.

BC students who are based in, or travel to, OFAC-sanctioned countries or regions will no longer be able to use Duo (two-factor authentication); Zoom (teleconferencing); or Canvas (learning management system).

Setting up your Agora Portal account

1. Go to <http://portal.bc.edu>
2. Use your BC username and password (refer to email)
3. If prompted for a local address, use the Boston College address:

140 Commonwealth Avenue
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

(Your password should be something written down in a secure location that you have access to or that you can remember as you will need it to login each time.)

Setting up your Boston College Gmail account

As a student at Boston College, you will be able to access your new Boston College email account through BC Google Apps for Education at g.bc.edu. Learn more at www.bc.edu/email. You may also access your email through the "My Services" tab at the Agora Portal.

1. Go to <http://portal.bc.edu>
2. Under 'Account and Personal Info,' click 'Change Secondary Password' and follow the listed guidelines to create it. In some cases, it may take up to 12 hours for the password to take effect.
3. Once you have set your password, ensure you are able to access your BC Gmail account.

Boston College uses email as its primary means of communicating with our students. Please check this account regularly for updates as you will receive official notifications from Boston College through this school email.

* Need help? Contact the Help Center at 617.552.HELP, help.center@bc.edu, help form, or live tech support chat (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm).

Setting up your Duo Mobile (Two-Step Authentication) **If this is not set up you will be locked out of your account**

In response to the increased number of phishing scams impacting the Boston College community, Information Technology Services has implemented a high-security login process for accessing certain secure services that requires two steps to verify the identity of the person logging in. Instructions [here](#).

Finances & Medical Insurance

Estimated Expenses

When estimating the costs of your studies and living in Boston, be sure to budget for housing, meals, transportation, books, entertainment, and any travel you plan to take beyond the local Boston area.

Fall 2022

Fees \$650
Insurance \$1,627
Books/Supplies \$1,100
Personal \$2,750
Housing \$7,996

Total: \$14,123

AY 2022-2023

Fees \$1,300
Insurance \$3,712
Books/Supplies \$2,200
Personal \$5,500
Housing \$15,992

Total: \$28,704

** Personal expenses do not include vacation travel.*

My Bill

My Bill, accessed through the Agora Portal, is Boston College's electronic student account billing and payment system. You can view and pay your student account bill online among other services. Students, third-party payers and guests can access the BC Bill. Please refer to this [page](#) for more information on how to activate your account and set up an authorized payer profile. Your bill must be paid prior to your arrival to BC. Students will not be able to make changes during the add/drop period if they have a financial hold.

Flywire

Boston College provides an international wire payment service with Flywire, which allows international students to pay student bills in their home currency (in most cases). The posting of the payment into your Boston College account will be fastest with Flywire and you will be notified via e-mail when it is received. **Make sure to include your Eagle ID numbers when submitting a payment through Flywire.** Please visit www.flywire.com/pay/bc for more information on how to begin the payment process.

Immunization Forms

It is very important that you complete the **MANDATORY** [health form](#). Follow these steps to submit the documents:

1. Go to the Agora Portal and sign in using your BC username and password
2. Under 'Other Services' click on 'Health Services'
3. Click on the upload icon and upload the forms to their corresponding line item in the drop down menu (Note: the drop down menu is below the list of documents available to upload).
4. Click select file, choose the file you are uploading and hit the upload button for each file. The uploaded documents will appear at the bottom of the page under 'Documents Already on File'.

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5. *Most Important Final Step: Once forms have been uploaded, go to the top of the page and select the immunization link. Enter the dates of all of your vaccines as indicated on your form. Once you have entered all of the vaccine dates, click the submit button.

Boston College will require all new undergraduate and graduate/professional students who plan to participate in activities on campus during the 2022-2023 fall semester be fully vaccinated and have their first booster (within six months of eligibility following the second dose of the original vaccination series) against COVID-19, and upload proof to University Health Services by August 15. Those students who will not be eligible for their first booster by August 15 should contact UHS to discuss the timetable for their booster (six months after last dose). You can read more about BC's COVID-19 policies here:

(<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/sites/bc-forward.html>) Additionally, please acquaint yourself with the recently updated requirements for air travel to the U.S.:

(https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/covid-19_testing_required_US_Entry.html)

Failure to submit the forms on time will result in a hold on course registration and an administrative late fee. Please contact the UHS Office at uhs@bc.edu with any questions.

Medical Insurance

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires all full-time students (American and international) attending colleges and universities in Massachusetts to subscribe to a US-based insurance plan. You will be automatically enrolled in the BC medical insurance upon your admission to the university. **BC medical insurance is mandatory and cannot be waived.** You can find information on costs and coverage [here](#). Students living on campus will also have an additional Health Services Fee.

At Boston College

Together as a campus community, we work to make Boston College a more welcoming, inclusive place for all, where diversity is celebrated and everyone has the opportunity to make use of resources as necessary to address concerns related to health, safety, and well-being. The Division of Student Affairs will be instrumental to your inclusion and cultural adjustment on campus and is dedicated to promoting student learning, health and wellness, leadership development, and engagement. The division's staff supports the holistic growth of students in aspects of their personal, professional, social, and spiritual lives. We are all here to serve you, the students of Boston College.

Cultural Adjustment

Once in the U.S., 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 U.S. culture, prior experience abroad, and your expectations. Culture shock is a normal part of study abroad. It shows that you are experiencing the differences between your home 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. Some suggestions for dealing with culture shock include:

- Embrace U.S. cultural experiences 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 at BC; 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 the U.S.;
- Maintain a support structure with others, particularly those going through a similar experience. However, do not retreat into a "clique" of other people from your home country to avoid the discomfort of culture shock;
- Keep a journal. Record your impressions of new experiences and the transformations that are occurring within you.

Remember that insight during your time in the U.S results from sustained and direct contact with the culture, not from observation at a distance. As you overcome culture shock, you will be able to approach life in the U.S. with understanding and enthusiasm.

If at any time you feel overwhelmed, lonely, or are struggling to cope with day-to-day activities, BC can often provide local counseling services. Do not hesitate to reach out to talk to someone.

For some students, culture shock becomes more serious. If you are concerned about your mental and/or physical status, do not hesitate to seek help. On-site staff can assist in helping you find medical treatment.

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Boston College Buddy Program

The Office of Global Education (OGE) BC Buddy Program matches international exchange students with Boston College students to connect, share, learn, and build relationships for an increasingly interdependent and culturally diverse world. The program offers a peer network for exchange students as they adjust to campus life at Boston College as well as an opportunity for BC students to learn about cultures, languages and countries abroad. These encounters encourage all participants to reflect on and gain a deeper understanding of their own culture through new perspectives. If interested, apply [here](#) by May 21, 2022.

Diversity and Inclusion

Attitudes toward women, the LGBTQ+ population, disabled people, and various ethnic/racial groups vary worldwide. Customs, beliefs, laws, facilities, and social practices relating to these populations may be different than in your home country. At Boston College, we are committed to treating all people with equal respect.

To prepare for the cultural differences you may encounter, it is recommended that you:

- Speak with people who have traveled to or lived in the U.S.
- Visit the BC website for further information on diversity and inclusion.
- Research the United States. Many student travel guides have sections pertaining to diversity and inclusion.
- Visit the OGE website and the Office of the Dean of Students website (http://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/subsidiary_offices/GLBTQ.html) for further information on LGBTQ+ resources for student support.
- The Thea Bowman AHANA (African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American) and Intercultural Center at Boston College is dedicated to supporting students, with a particular focus on AHANA, multicultural, and multiracial students in navigating college life (<https://www.bc.edu/offices/ahana.html>).

Academic Expectations

Exchange students take classes alongside their Boston College counterparts and choose courses from the regular BC offerings. They are required to maintain full-time status for the duration of their participation on the exchange program and must be registered for a total of 12 to 15 BC credits at all times. Students are expected to attend classes regularly, take tests, and submit papers and other work at the times specified by the professor on the course syllabus. Professors may

include, as part of the semester's grades, marks for the quality and quantity of the student's participation in class. Students have a responsibility to maintain high standards of academic integrity by taking responsibility and receiving credit for their own work.

Personal Safety

Pay close attention to all health and safety information provided by Boston College, and ask trusted locals for safety tips and information on where you should and should not go. Familiarize yourself with local health, safety, and travel recommendations. Be careful with bank card numbers, receipts, and PINs. Secure your belongings, at home or when traveling. Leave your passport and visa in a secure place when you are not traveling, and carry a copy with you at all times.

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Students have the option to purchase personal property insurance through BC. For more details, visit: <http://www.bc.edu/offices/reslife/lifeinhalls/communityexp/property-insurance.html>.

Alcohol and Drugs

It is your responsibility to be aware of and follow the laws of the U.S., including those related to alcohol and drugs. The possession, use, consumption, manufacturing, sale or distribution of drugs, including marijuana, by students or employees is prohibited. All exchange students are expected to observe Boston College student conduct policies regarding the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Sexual Health

Relationships vary by country and may be different from what you consider “typical” romantic and friendly relationships from home. It is helpful to learn more about your host culture and the dating/relationships customs that are common in Boston. You should behave in a way to keep yourself and others safe. Do not take drinks from people you do not know, do not leave parties or bars with people you do not know, and look after your friends. In sexual encounters, use protection and practice safe sex.

Sexual Assault

Boston College takes all reports of sexual misconduct and discrimination very seriously, regardless of where such incidents occur. You are encouraged to utilize BC support resources and report any incident of harassment or sexual violence. The OGE works closely with BC's Title IX Coordinator to ensure survivors receive the privacy and support they need. In the case of an incident of sexual assault, get to a safe place, seek medical care if necessary, and take time to decide how you wish to proceed, i.e. reporting the incident to the local authorities, reaching out to BC, or speaking with someone you trust. You should not hesitate to contact the OGE directly as needed. Any student who is a victim of sexual assault is strongly encouraged to utilize the services of the Sexual Assault Network at Boston College, a 24-hour/7-days-a-week private and anonymous resource that is staffed by advocates who are trained to listen, provide options, and support the survivor. Call 617.552.2211 for assistance.

Contact Information

Location: Hovey House, 258 Hammond Street

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday, 9am – 5pm

Web: www.bc.edu/international

Tel: 617.552.3827 Fax: 617.552.0647 Email: oiexchange@bc.edu

*For emergencies outside of office hours, call Boston College Police Department: 617.552.4444
(24 hour emergency number)*

Office of Global Education Staff

Larry Pickener (Interim Director)

Email: larry.pickener.1@bc.edu

Elizabeth Ryba (Exchange & Program Manager)

Email: rybae@bc.edu

Christina Hatzipetros (Associate Director Health & Safety and Communications,
Advisor for Asia, Middle East & North Africa, Russia, Southeast Europe, Ocean,
domestic programs and scholarships)

Email: christina.hatzipetros@bc.edu

Office of International Students and Scholars

Contact: Immigration

Web: www.bc.edu/offices/oiss

Email: bcis@bc.edu

Phone: 617.552.8005

Fax: 617.552.2190

Office of Residential Life

Contact: On-Campus Housing, Off-Campus Housing Advice

Web: www.bc.edu/offices/reslife

Email: reslife@bc.edu

Office of Student Services

Contact: Billing, Medical Insurance, ID

Web: www.bc.edu/offices/stserv

Email: studentservices@bc.edu

University Health Services

Contact: Immunization, Health and Wellness Issues

Web: www.bc.edu/offices/uhs

Email: uhs@bc.edu

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University Counseling Services

Contact: Personal Counseling

Web: www.bc.edu/offices/counseling

Additional Boston College Resources:

Boston College Police Department (BCPD)

Phone (non-emergency): 617.552.4440

Phone (emergency): 617.552.4444

SANet (Sexual Assault Network)

Phone (anonymous hotline): 617.552.2211

Title IX Coordinator

Phone: 617.552.3280

Email: TitleIXCoordinator@bc.edu

Women's Center

Phone: 617.552.3489

Email: women@bc.edu

Mission and Ministry

Phone: 617.552.1603

Office of Campus Ministry

Phone: 617.552.6592

Email: ministry@bc.edu

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