

BOSTON COLLEGE



SUMMER HANDBOOK

Office of International Programs



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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nick J. Gozik'.

Dr. Nick Gozik

Director, Office of International Programs

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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 GeoBlue medical insurance
- Make a packing list
- Conduct pre-departure research

AT BOSTON COLLEGE

- Attend summer orientation session
- Complete Google Form with travel information

ON-SITE SAFETY PLANNING

- Read health, safety, and travel recommendations for your destination
- Make copies of all important documents (leave one set at home)
- 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 ARRANGMENTS

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 air- line passes must be purchased in the US before departure. Read all guidelines and restrictions before purchasing airline tickets and passes.

HELPFUL WEBSITES:

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 GeoBlue Worldwide Insurance plan for the duration of their program. You are required to register for GeoBlue medical insurance (www.geobluestudents.com) after receiving your insurance certificate number.
- For a comprehensive description of the GeoBlue Worldwide Insurance Services, visit the GeoBlue portal (www.geobluestudents.com).
- A GeoBlue fee will be placed on your BC bill.
- If you plan to be abroad before or after the GeoBlue coverage dates, you are able to extend your GeoBlue coverage through their website.
- Keep in mind that GeoBlue does not cover you within the US.
- You will be provided with a GeoBlue membership card. Carry this card at all times. You will need the card if you seek medical treatment abroad.

TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

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.

Visit the following websites for details:

www.state.gov (U.S. Department of State)

www.cdc.gov (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

www.geobluestudents.com (GeoBlue 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 GeoBlue website (www.geobluestudents.com) for information on prescription benefits. Do not pack medication in checked luggage.

TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

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 occurring in both the US and your host country while abroad.

HEALTH/SAFETY

- www.state.gov (US Department of State)
- www.geobluestudents.com (GeoBlue 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

TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

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)

WOMEN/GLBT/DISABLED/AHANA STUDENTS

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.

TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

COMMUNICATION

- You should have access to a cell phone while abroad and the number should be shared with your faculty leader and on-site coordinator.
- 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, though many providers offer temporary international plans, which are worth looking into in advance of your departure. 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. It is essential that you read all correspondence and respond in a timely manner as necessary.

AT BOSTON COLLEGE

STUDY ABROAD WITHDRAWAL POLICY

You must 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.

By turning in the Final Confirmation and Clearance forms online, a student commits to participate in a summer program abroad and is subject to a \$300 non-refundable program deposit, to be charged to the student's Agora account. The OIP will reserve a spot in the program and make any necessary payments on behalf of the student. Any withdrawal after the submission of Final Confirmation and Clearance Forms will result in a financial penalty of at least \$300, according to the fee schedule outlined below.

To withdraw from a program after turning in confirmation forms, a student must complete a withdrawal form and return it to the Summer & Internships Advisor. Depending on the date of withdrawal, the following fees will apply, to be charged to the students' Agora account in May.

WITHDRAWAL FEE TIMELINE FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS (EXCLUDING INTERNSHIPS)

February 27	\$300 program deposit
March 25	\$300 program deposit + 15% of the program fee
April 10	\$300 program deposit + 30% of the program fee
April 20	\$300 program deposit + 60% of the program fee
May 1	100% of the program fee

WITHDRAWAL FEE TIMELINE FOR SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

February 27	\$500 program deposit
March 25	\$500 program deposit + 50% of the program fee
April 20	100% of the program fee

AT BOSTON COLLEGE

FINANCES

Students will be billed for summer programs via their Agora account in early May, and payment is due prior to departure. Any questions related to billing should be directed to Student Services. For information on billing for non-BC students, please visit the Non-BC Summer Applicants section on the OIP website.

Four separate costs are billed to Agora:

- **Tuition** (consistent with BC tuition cost for a 3, 4, or 6 credit course)
- **GeoBlue international health insurance** (\$40-\$100 depending on duration of stay)
- **Program fee** (varies depending on location and included amenities, but all program fees include housing, group activities, and some group meals)
- **Enrollment fee** (\$45, a fee set by the university)

Students are responsible for coordinating and paying for their own travel to the program location and budgeting for meals and personal expenses not covered by the program fee. Details on individual program expenses are listed the program page found on the OIP website.

ACADEMICS

Students may take up to two summer courses abroad during their time at BC and have those courses count towards the graduation requirements as well as for major, minor or core requirements. Grades appear on transcripts and are factored into students' GPA as regular BC courses. To receive academic credit for a summer course abroad, you must 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 course approval form from your dean's office.

AFTER ARRIVAL ABROAD

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 difference 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 SHOULD 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.
- Take time for reflection by writing in a journal or blogging. Record your impressions of new experiences.
- 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.

AFTER ARRIVAL ABROAD

- 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 GeoBlue insurance card at all times.
- If you need assistance, notify your on-site contact, BC, and/or GeoBlue.
- Let relative know your travel plans. Contact them upon arrival

AFTER ARRIVAL ABROAD

IN AN EMERGENCY

If you encounter an emergency abroad such as a natural disaster, severe illness or injury, physical or sexual assault, or political disturbance, students should:

- Contact on-site staff immediately
- Contact the OIP at **+1 617-552-3827** during business hours (Monday-Friday 9 am - 5 pm EST) or the Boston College Police Department (BCPD) if outside of business hours at **+1 617-552-4444**. BCPD is available 24 hours/day and will contact the appropriate university personnel to assist you.
- Contact your family in the US/abroad

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Boston College takes all reports of sexual misconduct and discrimination very seriously, regardless of where such incidents occur. Cultural norms may mean that actions are interpreted differently in other countries. Regardless of these norms, you are encouraged to utilize BC support resources and report any incident of harassment or sexual violence.

The OIP works closely with BC's Title IX Coordinator to ensure survivors receive the privacy and support they need both overseas and upon their return to campus. 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. Your on-site coordinator and faculty program leader are always available as a resource, and you should not hesitate to contact the OIP 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. SANet resources are available to you while overseas and when you return to campus. Call +1(617)552-BC11(2211) for assistance.

“GOLDEN RULES” FOR STUDY ABROAD SUCCESS

- KEEP AN OPEN MIND
- GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE
- GET INVOLVED WITH SOMETHING LOCAL
- REMEMBER THAT THE WORLD KNOWS MORE ABOUT THE U.S. THAN THE U.S. KNOWS ABOUT THE WORLD
- COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERENT LAWS AND CUSTOMS REGARDING ALCOHOL USE. BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY.
- EXPLORE YOUR HOST CITY AND REGION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
- KEEP A JOURNAL OR BLOG

AFTER ARRIVAL ABROAD

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 all the academic and optional events and explore the local community in your free time;
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

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