

**COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS
STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM**

**PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST
2009-2010**

These guidelines are intended as general information to help students prepare to study abroad through one of Holy Cross's academic year, semester, or summer programs. As no two programs are exactly alike (for example, some provide home stay accommodations while others provide rooms in residence halls or off-campus housing), you may find that not each and every one of these guidelines apply to you. Most will, however, so do read the document carefully.

I. PREPARATION

Contract & Waiver:

- If you have not signed and returned the **Study Abroad Contract and Acknowledgement and Release** form to the Study Abroad office, you need to do so immediately!
- Remember, the Contract stipulates, among other things, that: (a) you cannot shift exam dates (even if the professor is willing); (b) a student enrolled in a two-semester program who wishes to return after one semester will forfeit all credits earned abroad and all program fees; (c) you must speak with a member of the Study Abroad office staff and the program director at your host institutions before dropping a course.
- Information on the **Waiver of Insurance** is in the **Pre-Departure Manual** that will be mailed to your home. The form is available online if you have not already submitted one: <http://www.holycross.edu/assets/pdfs/waiver.pdf>.

Health Clearance:

- **Forms A,B,C** should be downloaded from the Study Abroad website at the "Course Approval and Other Forms" link, completed and returned to the Study Abroad office. Deadlines: for academic year, fall semester and summer programs MAY 1; for spring semester programs October 15.
- Be sure Form C is filled out completely and signed with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of ALL PROVIDERS (primary care physician, mental health professional, specialist).
- Check that your medications are legal in your host country.
- Take all prescriptions for medications, eyeglasses and contact lenses with you. If possible, take a spare pair of glasses or lenses.
- Some prescription drugs in the U.S. are available over the counter in other countries, but you must know the medical name, not the brand name (e.g., not "Tylenol" but "acetaminophen"; also called "paracetamol" outside North America).
- Check with your physician and with the Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov) for information on immunizations and vaccinations that are recommended or required for your destination.

Passports:

- Reconfirm that your passport is valid for six months beyond the expected date of your return to the U.S. and make sure your passport is signed.
- Make copies of the passport information pages in case your passport is lost or stolen. Give one copy to your parents, one copy to Study Abroad and take two with you: leave one in your room and carry another with you when traveling.
- Scan your passport onto your computer: save as a file and email the file to yourself.

Flight Reservations:

- You are responsible for booking your own flight. Students enrolled in a recognized Holy Cross program abroad will receive a credit towards the fare on their HC account. The amount of the credit is based on current fares. If the ticket you purchase is less than the credit, you keep the difference; if it is more, you are responsible for the difference.
- Book as soon as you know your university course schedule.
- In order to obtain a visa, you must book a round trip ticket, not one way. For academic-year programs, the airline company will likely not be booking flights as far in advance as your required return date at the end of your last exam period. If you are coming home for Christmas, book that return. Otherwise, take the latest date the airline will allow and you will have to change your return flight.
- Accordingly, you must book through a travel agency such as STA TRAVEL that allows you to change or cancel your flight, usually for a fee. Make sure the return date is changeable (again, for a fee). Even if the fare is slightly more than online discounted fares, this low-fee-change policy is essential and worth the difference.
- Send one copy of your itinerary to Sandy Shook in the Study Abroad office, one copy to the International Office at your host institution and, if applicable, one to your host family (see below). As always, print a copy for yourself and keep it in your study abroad hard copy file.

Visas:

- With few exceptions (Italy), students are responsible for obtaining their own visas.
- Begin as soon as possible; the process can take much longer than advertised, especially if there are complications. (However, for most countries you cannot apply more than 3 months before departure date.) Instructions are available on the Embassy or Consulate website. Contact our office if you have questions.
- Students who will study in France have to pre-register at usa.campusfrance.org
- Spain renews student visas in the host country 90 days after entry.
- Make copies for yourself of all documentation you use to apply for the visa.
- If you pick your visa up at the Consulate, take your copy of the documentation with you. When you receive your visa, **CHECK THE DATES** and make sure they cover the entire time of your stay abroad. If you pick up your visa at the Consulate, **CHECK THE DATE ON SITE BEFORE LEAVING** the Consulate. If the dates are incorrect, point this out at the Consulate and show them your documentation. Do everything you can to get this taken care of at the Consulate on the same day. Be polite, but point out that you filled out the information correctly.

Host Families:

- As soon as you receive information about your family, send a hand-written letter of introduction in the host language.
- Include a photo of yourself and, if you wish, your family.
- Include your flight information (arrival date, time, and location). If you are arriving in your host city by train, supply that information instead.
- Bring a “housewarming” gift—preferably something local from your hometown or region.
- Upon arrival, be respectful of cultural differences and practice environmental responsibility (conserve heat, water and electricity).
- Do not invite friends over without the family’s permission.
- Clarify and respect the rules governing use of the kitchen/refrigerator, telephone, etc.
- Internet may not be available in your home.
- Inform the host family well in advance if you will miss a scheduled meal.
- If something comes up suddenly, call and let them know and apologize for the short notice.
- Give your host family your contact information and itinerary when traveling.

Packing:

- LESS IS MORE! Travel light. Many items can be purchased abroad.
- Excess baggage fees add up when you change from International to National flight limits.
- Students on certain programs (e.g., Oxford, Australia, St. Andrews) should pack one “semi-formal” outfit.
- Rain gear.
- Good walking shoes, not (only) flip flops.
- Make sure that your electrical appliances (e.g., hair dryer) operate on the host country’s electrical current. You can purchase a dual current hairdryer here or get one overseas.
- Laptop computers are dual current.
- Purchase at least one electric plug adapter from a travel store (also available abroad, in most countries). You need an ADAPTER, not a CONVERTER.
- Field binoculars are great for sightseeing.
- Take six passport-size photos.
- Take along your copy of the **Pre-Departure Manual**.
- **CHECK YOUR HOLY CROSS E-MAIL DURING SUMMER.**

Computer?

- To take a laptop or not? Most students do, but there are computer labs at most host institutions
- If you take a laptop, take or buy electric socket adapters (not a “converter”)
- If you take a laptop, try to have a valid tech support plan and note the general INTERNATIONAL call-in number. See if there is a specific contact number for your host country. If so, take both (you may be on the road when something happens).
- In general, it is best not to travel with a laptop. Make sure it is secure (not in plain view) in your room abroad while you’re away.

- Check your parents' homeowner's policy *before you leave* to see if your laptop is covered abroad for theft and whom you should contact in the event of theft.
- Keep a copy of the serial number and other identifying information separate from your computer.

Telephones:

- Unless you have a tri-standard phone that accepts sim cards from other countries, purchase a cell phone in your host community—they have “cards” or “chips” also for traveling to other countries. Contact returning students about buying their used phones.
- For outgoing international calls, it is best to use phone cards which are sold, depending on the country, in tobacco stores or post offices, lottery stands, etc. For most incoming international calls on most cell plans, the call is free after initial connection fee. Check with your provider.
- Your **International Student Identification Card (ISIC)** offers good rates.
- Use your **Holy Cross Calling Card** to reach Holy Cross for free.

Banking and Money:

- With few exceptions (Trinity/Dublin, Bamberg) it is no longer necessary to open a bank account in the host country.
- Carry a credit card (with 4 digit pin; AmEx should not be the only card) and ATM card.
- Make sure your bank knows that you will be abroad, in which countries and for how long.
- Check on international fees for cards and shop around for the best deal (e.g., no interest fees, no or low transaction fees or user fees). Students should be able to negotiate reduced fees.
- For added security, try to get a credit card and ATM card that display your photo.
- For both cards, determine before you leave home how you can replace the cards overseas if lost or stolen.
- Write down the INTERNATIONAL emergency contact numbers for the cards and the actual card numbers on a separate sheet of paper and keep in a safe place. Keep a copy with you when traveling (separate from cards themselves). You can also email this information to yourself and save the email.
- Take about \$300 in local currency with you. Your bank can issue the foreign currency or direct you to another bank.

Pre-Departure Packet (Two copies will be mailed to your home by early summer):

- Use the **Press Release Form** if you want to inform your local newspaper that you will study abroad. Send it directly to the paper, not to our office.
- Use the **Internship Form** if you want to apply for an internship.
- The **Holy Cross Calling Card** allows you to call the Office of Study Abroad free of charge. Sandy Shook can connect you to your class dean, the Chaplain's Office, Counseling Center, etc.
- Use the **Flight Information Form** to inform our office of your itinerary, or you can e-mail this information to Sandy Shook.

- Note on Insurance: You must verify that your policy is valid overseas. Check coverages and make sure you and parents are comfortable with them. If so, you **MUST** return the completed **Insurance Waiver** that comes in your pre-departure packet. If you do not return the **Insurance Waiver**, you will be automatically enrolled in and billed for (ca. \$800) the Holy Cross insurance plan.
- **The Affidavit Letter of Enrollment** is an official letter stating you are enrolled in your specific program abroad. **Make sure that your full name appears on the letter, just as it does on your passport. If not, contact our office immediately.** Make copies and keep them in a safe place. Take the original with you when you go to the airport and through customs. Take copies in your luggage. **Do not lose.**
- **The International Student Identification Card (ISIC)** is recognized throughout the world. It provides: discounts for museums, trains, etc.; various types of insurance, including \$300,000 emergency medical transportation (jet ambulance); \$100 to buy items if your baggage is delayed more than 24 hours (save receipts); hospital and accidental medical insurance. It can also be used as a calling card. Read the ISIC brochure carefully.
- **The Pre-Departure Manual** contains a lot of valuable information. Read it and reread it, especially the essay “The 4 Stages of Your Study Abroad Experience.” Take one copy with you abroad. The other copy is for your parents.

Academics:

- Consult with your Holy Cross academic advisor and a Study Abroad advisor about which courses to take.
- If you need a course to count for your **major, minor, or concentration credit**, consult with the department chair or concentration director and try to get written approval beforehand. If you need a course to count for a **common area requirement**, you can get approval from the Registrar. Provide her/him with as much printed information as possible for each course. (Don’t waste the professor’s time in the meeting looking for the course description on the internet.) Don’t lose the approval; give a copy of it to Sandy Shook and keep a copy for your file.
- Remember, HC gives credit for “liberal arts” courses, not for pre-professional courses such as “business,” “marketing,” or “Case Law.” If in doubt, contact the Study Abroad Office before registering.

Grants and Fellowships:

- Don’t sell yourself short! Apply for as many as possible.
- Contact the Office of Distinguished Fellowships and Graduate Studies *before your departure* for information and advice on when and how to apply.

II. ARRIVAL AND GETTING SETTLED

Communication:

- Call home as soon as you can and let your family know that you arrived safely. Note, in advance, the time difference and ask your parents, should you arrive at a time when they are asleep, if they want to be awakened or want you to call when they are up.
- E-mail or call the Office of Study Abroad to let us know that you arrived.

- As soon as you arrive and have your phone, fill out and send the **Contact Information Form**, available on the HC SA homepage under the Course Approval and Other Forms link. Alternatively, you can send an e-mail to the Office of Study Abroad containing *your cell phone number, host university e-mail account, your mailing address. Don't forget!*

E-mail:

- Check your host institution AND Holy Cross e-mail accounts on a regular basis. You will get crucial information sent to both accounts throughout the year.
- Do not ignore e-mail from our office or from your advisors overseas. It is considered especially rude overseas not to reply to your advisors. If they ask a specific question, answer it. If they're just checking in, thank them for their concern. If they are inviting you to an event or meeting, respond—whether or not you can make the meeting.

Internet Access:

- Internet access may be more limited than you are used to at home or at Holy Cross.
- In general, although you need to stay informed, it is good to “unplug” significantly from your regular contacts and from most, if not all, on-line entertainment. Make time to seek out new friends and experiences. Do not use the internet as a crutch to avoid immersion in your host country. Parents also need to give their young adults abroad the space they need to immerse themselves in the host culture.

Academics:

Course Approval Form (CAF):

- Once you are certain of the courses you will enroll in, fill out an online **CAF** for each course you are taking. This form is available online from the Holy Cross Study Abroad homepage. You **must fill out a CAF even if you received pre-approval for the course.**
- Provide as much information as possible: detailed course description, syllabus, types of assignments, etc.

Class Attendance:

- Class attendance abroad is **MANDATORY**, just as at Holy Cross.
- Local students' attitudes toward coursework and their study habits may differ from those of Holy Cross students. They may pretend not to work when, in fact, they really are.
- Consequences of poor performance are worse for Holy Cross students than for local students. (Holy Cross students cannot, in many instances, retake a final exam or retake a course).
- You should exhibit the same work ethic abroad as you do at HC
- You must take your exams at the regularly scheduled time; you may not change the date, even if the professor is willing, even for an internship. We want you to immerse yourself in the host country, not remain the “ugly American” for whom special favors are granted.
- If tutorials have been arranged for you by the program director, be sure to attend regularly.

Independent Cultural Immersion Project (ICIP):

- Get started early by meeting with the ICIP advisor. You should be fully engaged in your ICIP within one month of arrival.
- Choose an activity that will immerse you in your host community: an internship, community-based learning (a different way of thinking about “volunteerism”), or by following your passion—a sport, a hobby, a musical instrument, etc.
- Your ICIP will be evaluated and graded by the advisor. Each year, the Study Abroad Program presents an award to the graduating senior with the best ICIP.

Travel:

- Travel is an important and exciting aspect of study abroad, and you will have many opportunities to travel, but remember that your priority is *study* abroad, not *travel* abroad.
- Train and air travel is fairly cheap if you take advantage of discounts.

Get to know your host city and host country first:

- If you rush to other destinations (Paris, Rome, Oktoberfest), you won’t meet people in your new “home” or get to know your surroundings.
- Plan your first outings within your host country: getting to know your host country better will help you avoid being seen as the ignorant “ugly American.”
- Plan to travel to more distant destinations during vacation periods.
- Rather than return home over Christmas/Hanukkah, consider having a family member or friend spend the holidays with you abroad.

Travel Rules:

- Never travel alone, and be aware of your surroundings.
- Always inform your host family of your travel plans before you leave.
- Use the **Overseas Travel Itinerary Form** available on the HC Study Abroad homepage (Course Approval and Other Forms link) to inform the Office of Study Abroad of your plans. Fill out all the contact information.
- Inform your on-site advisor and your parents.
- Don’t eat street food (particularly in developing countries).
- “Wash it, peel it, cook it, or forget it.”
- Inform your parents, your Program Director at your host institution, and our office of your travel plans. Include contact numbers.

Health and Safety:

- Think before you act: don’t take unnecessary risks.
- If you become sick, notify your host program director AND our office immediately, using your Holy Cross Calling Card.
- If you know that another Holy Cross student in your group is sick or missing, notify our office immediately, using -mail or your Holy Cross Calling Card. We would rather receive 10 calls than none!
- In most foreign countries you can purchase and consume alcohol legally. Be a responsible consumer. You represent not just yourself, but your family and Holy Cross, as well as every Holy Cross student who will attend your host institution in the future.

You have a vital role to play in helping us to maintain good relations with our partner schools abroad.

Stay in Touch:

- Contact the Program Director at your host institution AND the Office of Study Abroad whenever an issue or a problem arises.
- Send us an occasional e-mail and tell us about your courses, experiences and impressions of the world beyond the U.S.

Bon voyage!
The Office of Study Abroad