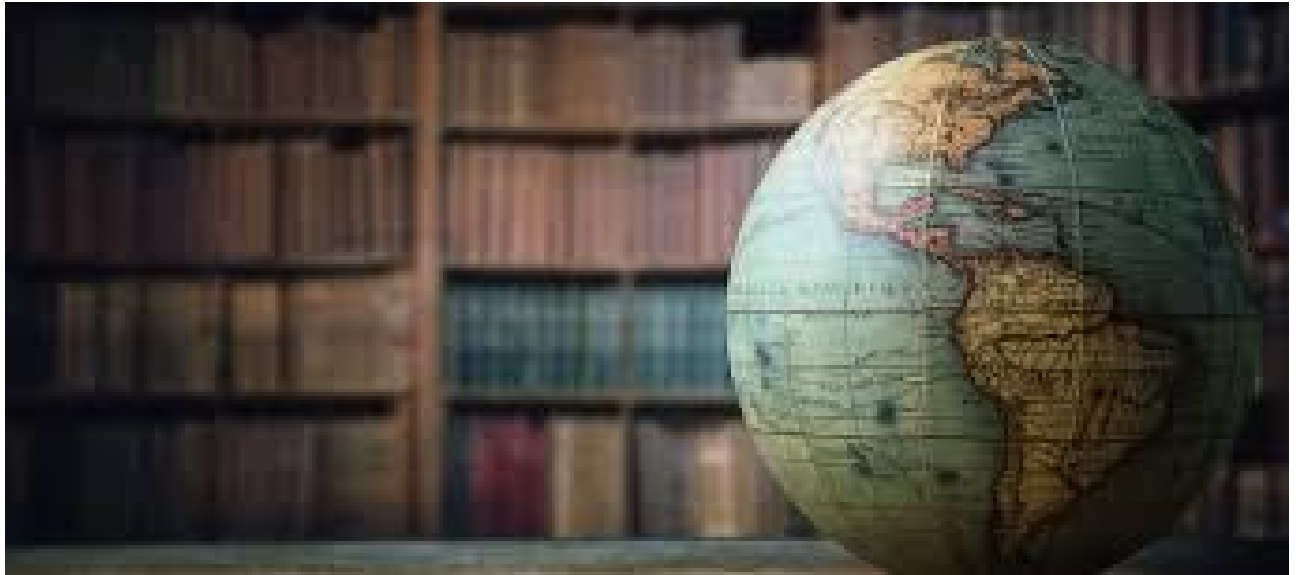




# Albion College



# Off-Campus Programs Handbook

*Prepared by*

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## **FOREWORD**

Congratulations! By choosing to go on an off-campus program you have shown an interest in enhancing your liberal arts education and broadening your personal horizons through a greater knowledge of the world and its people.

As an Albion College student, you are expected to follow the highest standards of integrity in your studies and in your personal conduct. This is even more important for the student who is participating in an off-campus study program. You will be an ambassador for Albion College and for the United States.

Common sense, good manners and an exceedingly large amount of tolerance and open mindedness are prerequisites for every student who wishes to study off campus. Albion College expects all off-campus participants to abide by all the rules and regulations set forth by the individual program director, university, or housing facility.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you get ready for this experience that many have called “the best part of my education at Albion College.” This booklet intends to provide you with some important information that will make your sojourn abroad easier and more enjoyable. While this guide cannot possibly cover everything you need to know about studying abroad, we hope you will find it useful.

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## **BEFORE YOU GO**

At the general orientation for all students going on off-campus programs, you will receive information about things to do on campus before you leave so that your return here after your program will be as painless as possible. Here is a checklist of things to be done at Albion before you leave.

Have you:

- Arranged with Residential Life for your residence hall room on return?
- Told the Registrar which courses off campus will be for grades and which for CR/NCR (if you know this information already)?
- Arranged your financial aid, including mailing of loan or scholarship checks while off campus? Or, do you need a durable power of attorney for your loan check?
- Taken care of forwarding your mail, i.e., told family, friends, magazine subscription services, etc., that you'll be off campus?
- Communicate the best way to stay in touch. Meaning people will continue to try to use your cell number if you don't give alternate instructions.
- Arranged with Campus Safety for a parking space after you come back?

To get the most out of your experience abroad, it is highly recommended that you think of how you can integrate what you learn back into your academic program here. Can you do some research overseas that can be useful for papers you'll need to do when you return? Can you arrange to take courses when you return that will enhance knowledge gained abroad or that will offer you opportunities to write about what you have learned? Think about all this now, before you go. While you are on your program you may learn many things that you can integrate into your academic program at Albion.

As you go through all the preparations to go abroad, you will experience many different emotions. Students typically are very excited about traveling and are looking forward to the trip, which is to be expected. However, you may be surprised to hear that many students become anxious, especially in the last days before leaving. This anxiety could be about leaving home and missing family and friends. However, studies have shown that there could be many other things that worry students, especially about the place where they are going. For example, students may have concerns about housing, course work, food, climate, language, health, having sufficient money, interacting with new people, unfamiliar currency, adjusting to new customs, extra-curricular travel while abroad, and local transportation.

These feelings are normal. They are a part of the study abroad learning process. Being aware of your feelings, sharing with others, and preparing well for your experience are strategies to make you feel more relaxed. Reading all you can about the city and the country where you are going, downloading maps, practicing language skills, taking care of major details before leaving Albion - all of these will make a difference.

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS

A **passport** is a travel identification document issued by your country of citizenship. You need a passport to travel anywhere outside the United States. Start the passport application process as soon as you have decided to study abroad. The U.S. Department of State website, [www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html), is an excellent source of information.

If you have a valid passport, make sure it is valid for six months after your return to the U.S. If your passport will expire before then, you need to obtain a new passport. If you obtained your current passport before the age of 16, you cannot renew it by mail and you must re-apply in person.

***Travel tip:** Make two copies of the ID section of your passport, one to put safely away in your luggage and another to leave with someone at home, in case yours is lost or stolen overseas.*

Some countries require that persons travelling within their borders obtain a **visa, immigration registration, or other approvals**. The visa is issued by the consulate of the country one wishes to enter. Items needed for visa applications vary from consulate to consulate, and the embassy website is the primary source of this information. Your study abroad program will also provide country-specific details on visas and immigration registrations. The CIE is also available when you need additional assistance.

Several countries require an in-person interview at their consulate, and there is often a visa fee. Some require background checks, others involve a multi-step process. Some visas must be shown in order to board your flight from the U.S., others are acquired in-country. Do not postpone handling your visa application.

NOTE: If you ever need to mail passports and other important documents, do it by registered mail. This is the safest and most reliable method of mailing.

## HEALTH PREPARATIONS

Visit your doctor this semester to learn about taking prescription medications abroad, required immunizations, and common preventive procedures like a tetanus booster, an MMR booster, a TB test and hepatitis shots. A healthy mind and body are necessary for a successful study abroad experience. Here are some items to consider.

- If you are experiencing any physical or emotional problems, address them before leaving for your program. Seek professional advice now- study abroad will not make your problems go away, and in some cases can make things worse.
- If you are having any physical or mental health problems, it is in your best interest to disclose them to your program. Your program will take the necessary steps to make sure the services you may need will be in place.
- If you anticipate any dental work, get it done before departure.
- If you need an eye exam and new contacts or lenses, see your eye doctor. If you wear glasses, take along an extra pair and the prescription.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) website, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), provides information about special vaccines by country, and has a special webpage, [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel), to further research health and safety tips for students studying abroad.

Additional suggestions:

- Bring any prescriptions you may need written in generic terms.
- Take enough prescription medicine to last your entire stay abroad. Have your prescribed medicines clearly labeled in their original containers and carry the prescription to verify their content and legitimacy. There have been reports of travelers who have been detained at borders because they did not comply with these requirements.
- Pack a small first aid kit, with items such as Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, painkiller, antidiarrheal medicine, sunburn ointment, sunblock, etc.
- Know your blood type.
- If you have an ongoing medical condition that requires monitoring and care, such as allergies or diabetes, take precautions to manage your illness overseas. Check with the embassy or consulate of countries you intend to visit about restrictions on bringing in syringes.
- Take medical records, dental records, EKGs, and x-rays if you have any condition where these records might be needed.

## **INSURANCE**

Albion College provides foreign travel accident and sickness and emergency travel assistance services for students studying in international locations. The foreign travel coverage includes accidental death and dismemberment, emergency injury or sickness, emergency medical evacuation, emergency family travel, and repatriation, and is supplemental to the student's insurance no deductible applies for services. Emergency travel assistance services include direction, via an international phone line, to appropriate medical facilities, assistance with lost tickets and documents, etc.

It is advised that you have an adequate major medical health insurance policy that will provide coverage while you are off campus. If your insurance is through a managed health care system (HMO or PPO), carefully check the requirements and eligibility rules for care outside your area, especially abroad. You will want to ask your insurance company at least the following questions:

- How do I pay for medical expenses, prescription drugs, hospitalization, etc., overseas?
- If I do have a medical problem while abroad, how do I reach the company? (800 numbers do not work from overseas.)
- May I have an insurance card and claim forms to carry with me?

- How will my medical expenses be handled since I will be out of my managed care territory? (If you are in a managed care program.)
- What are the applicable deductibles?
- What are the applicable co-pays?
- What are the exclusions?

Some programs require students to purchase an additional health plan policy. It is best to ask your program for more details about insurance coverage/requirements. Sometimes this depends on the length of your stay and/or country.

**EXCLUSIONS:** Skydiving/parachuting, hang gliding, bungee jumping, mountain climbing, pot-holing, zip-lining, and motorcycle riding are not covered by Albion's foreign travel insurance.

### **PRE-DEPARTURE TRAVEL HINTS**

There are various ways of arranging travel to the country of your destination. You can make your own arrangements, work through a travel agent, or go with a group. If this is your first trip abroad, it may be a good idea to travel in a group—either with other Albion students who are going to the same destination or with a group flight arranged by the program you will be attending. If you book travel online, please read all information carefully and remember that the cheapest flights may not be the most convenient or wisest investment of your money. Always check international flight luggage restrictions and fees and be aware that there may be different luggage restrictions for in-country flights. Familiarize yourself with policies regarding liquids and carry on luggage. While traveling in Europe, you will find that trains are dependable, efficient, and convenient. The European rail network is as extensive and accessible as the U.S. highway system.

### **TRAIN TRAVEL**

If you are planning to tour several countries and explore a number of different cities, look into the various types of rail passes. Any travel agent can advise and give you details on the **Eurailpass, Eurail Youthpass, Britrail** and other travel passes. Note: These passes must be bought in the U.S. before you leave. Online purchase is also available.

Please note that sleeping cars are usually expensive, must be reserved in advance, and are not often used by traveling students. If you travel at night, be cautious about falling asleep. Sleeping passengers on overnight trains can be easy targets for thieves. If you travel by day, don't hesitate to take along your own sandwiches, a bottle of lemonade, etc. Many people do this, as eating in the dining cars is expensive.

Most trains in Europe and in some Latin American countries have first and second class carriages and smoking and nonsmoking compartments. Most express trains have restaurant or buffet cars.

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT I.D. CARD**

You may want to consider purchasing an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). It is widely recognized as proof that the bearer is a bonafide full-time student. The ISIC card is very useful for discount prices into entertainment events, museums, and for lodging. It also includes very limited accident and health insurance, medical evacuation, and repatriation benefits. You can purchase it online at <http://www.myisic.com>.

### **LUGGAGE AND WHAT TO BRING**

The wise traveler brings only the amount of baggage he/she can carry alone. A good rule of thumb is that you should be able to carry everything around the block, fit it into a bathroom stall, and be able to lift all of it over your head. Leave 20% of your luggage free for souvenirs upon your return. With careful planning you can eliminate nonessentials and make your travel and arrival much easier.

When beginning to pack, consider the following:

1. Each piece of luggage should be small enough to go up narrow stairways.
2. Duffel bags are less expensive, not easily damaged and easy to store in your room. Buy a padlock for it. However, do not try to send a padlocked bag through airport security unless you use a TSA approved lock. Other locks will likely be cut off by the next time you see it.
3. Consider that you will be traveling on trains/ planes/ buses where your luggage has to fit the luggage rack, and must be shifted around (by you). A large enough bag to hold items for two-week vacation, but light enough to be carried, is essential.
4. Put labels inside all of your luggage and also on the outside. Glue labels on securely and use wire for tags; otherwise they come off in transit and then luggage cannot be forwarded.

Consult with those who have been there before you and find out what kinds of clothing are most advisable to bring. Consider that heating and air conditioning is not the same as what you may be used to. Bring layers of different weight clothing, and at least one formal outfit for special events. Some students purchase clothes upon arrival at their study abroad destination, as they may be affordable and help them to better fit in with the local culture. Returnees sometimes say that normal dress is more upscale than on the Albion campus. Remember also that you will be doing more walking and therefore will need comfortable, sturdy shoes that resist surfaces such as cobblestones.

Electrical appliances are best left at home, primarily because the voltage in foreign countries is different from the US, and landlords/landladies frown on the steady use of



electrical current. Also, on some programs you will be charged for electrical consumption.

Other useful items to pack include:

- Journal
- Small first-aid kit
- Good language dictionary
- Camera
- Towels and face cloths
- Zip closure bags to protect bottles and tubes from leaks
- Money belt/holster
- Small flashlight
- Batteries
- Sunglasses
- Gloves, scarf
- Bathrobe and flip-flops for community showers and youth hostels
- Fold-up umbrella
- Photos or photo album to share
- Your preferred over the counter medications (in original containers)
- Prescription medicines and prescriptions
- Your preferred toiletries (including dental floss)
- Bicycle lock and chain

## **COMMUNICATION**

**Phone Calls Overseas:** Many students report that getting a sim card in your host country and placing that card into your unlocked phone is much easier and often cheaper than buying a brand new phone or buying an international plan.

A cell phone gives you instant access to your program and vice versa in case of emergency. Check with your program coordinator for more information. Often cell phones are provided and/or required.

If you need additional information about phoning to and from overseas, consult the CIE office. You can also contact your telephone service provider for information about international calling plans and rates.

**Skype, WhatsApp, Facebook calling, Facetime or Google Chat:** Many students and parents have found that these wifi based options are the easiest way to contact friends and family while abroad.

## **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Due to fluctuations in the exchange rate, it is important to understand the mechanics of carrying and exchanging money overseas.

An **ATM card** is very useful and many travelers consider the ATM to be the best method of obtaining funds. Generally, the service fee is low and you get the best exchange rate for the day.

In many countries you can use a **VISA** or **MasterCard credit card**. Cards must have the microchip for most places in Europe. Check to see what service charge your credit card company will add to your purchase price abroad. It is important to discuss money questions with other students who have participated in the program before you. If you plan to stay for more than one semester, you might consider establishing an account with a local bank. Your study abroad program will advise you on this.

**Travel tip:** *Be sure your personal identification number (PIN) for any credit cards or ATM cards will work abroad. Also, notify your bank and credit card company that you will be abroad and the specific countries you will visit.*

If you are wondering when and where to **exchange dollars for foreign currency**, you can check with your local bank. Some local banks either sell or can obtain foreign currency for you. They also will advise you on how to take money with you and how to send money to a foreign country. You may want to consider having at least a small amount of the foreign currency on you when you arrive to cover arrival expenses, especially if you will arrive during a weekend. On the other hand, most airports have currency exchanges or ATMs where you can handle an initial money exchange. The exchange charge or service fee for the transaction may be a little higher than at a foreign bank, but it may be more convenient than acquiring foreign currency in the U.S. You will need to have your passport with you each time you exchange currency.

**Travel tip:** *Try to get rid of your excess currency, especially coins, before leaving a country. Exception: You can use Euros in the 19 Eurozone countries of the European Union.*

In an emergency, Western Union is still one of the quickest, though most expensive, ways of **sending money abroad**. You can also have your parents or local bank forward money to a nearby American Express Office. Local banks also send bank drafts in dollars overseas. This method is a good and inexpensive way of sending money abroad when the time factor is not crucial.

## **AFTER YOU ARRIVE**

### **JOURNALING**

Keeping a journal is a consistent, systematic way to record your experiences abroad. A journal is not just a list of things you did and places you went. It is a way to reflect every day on what is happening to you. Since you clearly cannot write about everything you see and do, you may want to pre-select your topics. Professor Nancy Nicodemus from Hope College, in her booklet “The Travel Journal: An Assessment Tool for Overseas Study,”

suggests that you select categories or create chapters for your journal. For example, you can divide your journal into different chapters: descriptive (art/architecture, food/drink, people, etc.), narrative (stories), and expository (assumptions, realizations, quotations, questions, etc.). She also advises that you:

*“Buy a sturdy, handy sized, hardcover journal, one you can comfortably carry with you...Put your name, address, telephone and passport numbers inside the front cover. Decorate the cover with stickers as you travel, making the outside as well as the inside distinctively yours. Then,*

- *Carry it with you everywhere*
- *Make a concerted effort to write in it daily*
- *Give date and setting for each entry*
- *Remember to brainstorm, recreate with specifics, and reflect in each entry*
- *Enjoy it, both while you’re creating it and forever after.”*

If you are on an **internship program**, you will want to keep a reflective journal of your internship experience. Each day you will note what you did at work and what you learned, and then reflect on what it means. After your internship, you will have your journal entries to measure your progress and use when you apply and interview for future jobs.

Remember, if you want to earn **Global Studies Credit** for your international off-campus experience you need to do two things: (1) Keep a journal about your experiences. This can be observations about cultural differences and similarities, things that were confusing until you figured out the appropriate cultural lens for understanding what was happening, interesting places or people that you met--basically reflections about negotiating a different cultural personally, academically, socially, and work-wise (if you're doing an internship). (2) When you return from your program, give the journal to the CIE Office for review and verification with the Registrar's Office. Journals must be submitted by mid-term of the semester following your off-campus experience, and will be returned to you.

## **YOUTH HOSTELS**

Youth Hostels are inexpensive accommodations in many European countries. They are reasonable in price, and often a good way to travel with other young people from all over the world.

If you are considering youth hostels, [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com) lists currently operating youth hostels in various countries, along with information as to their size, what kinds of accommodations are offered, whether meals are served, closing times, and much more.

## **EMBASSY**

If your passport is lost or stolen, notify local authorities and the American Embassy or Consulate at once! After they verify your identification, the embassy or consulate will either issue you a new passport or a temporary passport, depending on the urgency of your travel plans.

Some students, particularly those who enroll directly in an overseas university, should register their presence in the country of study with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate using their Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). **STEP** is a free, confidential service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. You can register online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. This information will enable the U.S. Department of State to assist you in case of an emergency or contact you during a crisis situation. It may only be used by U.S. citizens.

### **IMPORTANT LEGAL MATTERS**

You are a guest of the country where you are studying or traveling. You must obey all the laws and regulations of that country. The State Department cautions, “While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.” If you are arrested and/or detained abroad, a consular official can visit you and inform you of your legal rights and provide you with a list of reliable local attorneys and physicians. At your request and expense, s/he can notify your family or friends of your plight. S/he can also forward personal letters to and from arrested citizens. The consular official can arrange supplementary purchases of food and clothing (using your funds), schedule appointments with doctors and dentists, and obtain permission for visits from friends and family.

However, government funds cannot be used to pay for supplementary purchases or legal and medical fees. If you are broke as well as detained, the official can contact your family, local benevolent organizations (if any) or organizations in the U.S. to request emergency funds. Finally the consular official tries to ensure equal treatment under national laws during all phases of the legal procedures against you.

In case of illness or accident, embassy or consulate people can make sure you are in an approved hospital, check on fairness in billing procedures and explain payment options to you. For small problems, the embassies provide lists of English-speaking doctors.

### **TRAVEL SECURITY**

Travel security involves more than simple awareness of terrorism. While the odds are greatly in your favor of having a trouble-free sojourn, you should nonetheless take precautions to avoid any problems related to crime, accidents or terrorism. Some tips on traveling safely:

- Attend the on-site orientation done by the personnel at your particular off-campus program. Pay close attention to their advice; they are the ones with the best information about local conditions.

- Be respectful of the country and community you are in. Try to engage with the community and population around you. If you are in a country where English is not the primary language, try to speak the local language as much as you can.
- Leave detailed travel plans with your program and family. This plan should include destinations and contact numbers where you can be reached 24/7.
- Stay informed. Read a newspaper, check the Department of State web site ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)), watch TV, listen to the radio.
- Be aware of your surroundings: don't walk alone into dark city streets late at night; be aware of where your valuables are as to avoid becoming a tempting target for pickpockets or thieves.
- Move respectfully within the culture.
- Stand close to the ATM machines or telephones when punching in your PIN or calling card number.
- When you go out, carry at least enough money for transportation and a phone call.
- Leave valuables at home; don't take anything you would hate to lose.
- Make two copies of passport identification pages, travel tickets, credit cards, ATM card, and traveler's check numbers; keep one copy with you in a safe place in your luggage, and leave the other with your parents at home.
- Arrange for appropriate insurance coverage, making sure the coverage extends to all the countries you plan to visit, and to lost or stolen items as well as to health and accidents.

Be aware of your surroundings and take the same precautions that you would at home, but don't forget that you have a whole four-five months in a new country! Take the time to immerse yourself in the culture and really enjoy the people, traditions, food, music, and other new things that are unique to your host country.

### **AVOIDING THE "I FEEL SO COMFORTABLE SYNDROME"**

During the first weeks at your program site, you will be super careful about safety and security issues. You will remember what you heard from us and you will absorb all the precautions outlined by your program. However, after a few weeks when you know your way around, you will start to feel very much at ease in your new surroundings. Feeling comfortable and at home in your new home is great but do not lose your watchfulness and common sense carefulness. You will become vulnerable once you stop paying close attention to your actions and surroundings.

### **A WORD ABOUT DRUGS**

According to the State Department, "Persons caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country are subject to the drug laws of that country, not those of the U.S.; as always, ignorance of the law is no excuse. In many countries, the burden of proof is on the accused to show that he or she is innocent of the charges."

Most nations make little or no distinction between hard and soft drugs when pronouncing sentences, nor do they necessarily take into consideration the quantity. Therefore, the best advice concerning the use of drugs while abroad is: Don't do it.

## **ALCOHOL**

As you are aware, alcohol is readily available in other countries and the drinking age often is lower than in the U.S. In other countries people often enjoy alcoholic drinks and cultivate an appreciation of fine beers, wines, and spirits. Some places have very strict laws about having alcohol in public view. Be wary of law changes.

## **STDs, HIV, AIDS**

STDs, HIV, AIDS are world-wide health issues. When you leave the U.S., you will not be leaving these serious health problems behind. Use common sense and take appropriate precautions. If you are sexually active, bring reliable contraceptives with you.

## **ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT**

You are a guest student at the university or program where you are studying. As a visiting international student, you are obliged to follow the rules, regulations, and procedures of the place where you are studying. The institution or program has the right to treat you as they would any other student. This means, for example, if a student is evicted from a university residence for breaking the institution's rules, there is nothing Albion can do to reverse that decision. We cannot tell another institution how to manage its program any more than a foreign program can tell Albion College how to run its affairs.

Your adjustment to the very different **academic environment** you may experience overseas could be the hardest part of your adjustment to life abroad. No matter which country you are going to, and no matter the setting for your study, it will likely be far different from what you are used to at Albion College.

Classes will be different, professors will be different, expectations for your study and success in your classes will be different. This is exactly why you wanted to go abroad to study in the first place, but coping with a different education system can be trying at times.

In many countries overseas,

- Professors of great academic renown will lecture to large groups of students, perhaps straight from a textbook that he or she has written.
- The professor may not ask for or even allow questions from the students.
- There may be no office hours for the professor.
- The responsibility for learning the material rests solely with the learner.
- You will have the following resources: class lectures, tutorials or labs, and a substantial reading list; sometimes these readings are presented to you in photocopied articles. What you will hear in lectures are names of authors, scholars, and the titles of their books and articles. After class it is assumed you will read what they said about the subject addressed in that particular lecture or class period. It is your synthesis of this material that will be tested during exams.
- There may be only one assessment of your performance in the course and it may come only at the end of the term, sometimes revealed to you only after you have left and come back to Albion.

- Part or all of your assessment may be papers. You may be asked to write a paper on a specific topic. Sometimes, you may not redefine the topic or select a different topic. ***Check with host country students, your professor or tutor, and the international office for guidance if you need it.***
- You may have fewer assignments during the semester, but these assignments may count heavily for your final grade.
- The final exam may count up to 100% of your grade.
- In some programs, you may not request a different exam date or time. The exam system does not allow for any variation or negotiation in the exam schedule.
- Grading scales can be lower than you have come to expect.

## **Grades**

Very often a foreign institution and an American institution have very different ways of judging students' work. Here are some important points you may find helpful:

- As a student on an off-campus program, you may choose to take some or all of your classes on a C/NC basis. However, C/NC requests must be submitted in writing to the Albion Registrar's Office no later than two weeks after your program's first day of classes. Courses that are taken C/NC will not be considered for major credit, or mode/category petitions.
- When you apply for graduate school, the graduate school will ask for original transcripts from every institution you attended, including the foreign university where you studied abroad. Thus, the grades you achieve abroad will appear on your graduate school application.
- Graduate schools see transcripts from foreign universities all the time. Graduate schools are often accustomed to the different grading systems around the world.
- ***A 50% can be a very acceptable grade in other countries.*** A "Pass" often indicates the student has achieved enough knowledge to advance to the next level. It does not have the American connotation of "just squeaking by."
- Very few students receive the top grades. For example, the French system uses a 1-20 grading system and the accepted grading logic is that "only God gets a 20."
- It is possible to do well in a foreign institution. Don't be afraid to reach out to other students about how to achieve good grade at your foreign university.

## **CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

Students going abroad can naturally expect that there will be a period of mental and physical adjustment to changed climate, food, different living habits and different comforts than at home. Your reaction to this adjustment is what is commonly called "culture shock." Culture shock is the normal feeling of disorientation due to trying to cope with a completely different environment from which one is accustomed.

Most reactions to culture shock are quite mild, and you might not even notice you are going through it. Loss of sleep, loss of appetite, homesickness, and irritability are a few of the possible symptoms of culture shock. In some people the reactions of culture shock can be quite strong, resulting sometimes in distressing hassles with host families or friends overseas, or even early termination of the program.

Valuable advice is available from those who have returned from your particular program. The old adage, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do,” is still valid. Watch for cues from your surroundings to help you over the first few weeks of feeling strange and unsure. Don’t be afraid to ask those around you. Good manners and thoughtfulness are not confined to a new culture. If you are polite and sensitive to cultural norms and you use common sense, you will encounter fewer social mishaps and embarrassing moments. Your host family and friends will understand, and will help you learn from these events. You will likely end up laughing about it with them and gaining a better understanding of the culture.

Try to learn about their new country in advance. You may feel more comfortable in the host country if you are knowledgeable about it. In turn, you may be asked often about U.S. culture. The better prepared you are the more able you will be to assimilate new experiences into a framework of understanding, thus optimizing learning experiences, achieving a deeper sensitivity to the new country, and reducing the effects of culture shock. It is important to understand that most of your learning will happen while abroad.

If you want to bring home a friend, ask your host family first. Don’t just bring an uninvited guest to dinner. And when in doubt – ask! You will find that people do not mind at all being asked about their customs and social rules. Friendships can take time to develop in some countries. To an American, Europeans may seem withdrawn. It may take longer to get to know a person well. However, don’t wait for people to come to you, take the initiative yourself.

Customs and norms vary greatly by country and region. Studying and traveling abroad can be one of the most exhilarating learning experiences of your life. No matter how much you have read or how many people you have talked to, you are bound to run into unfamiliar behavior and customs. Knowledgeable student travelers recommend handling culture shock with preparation, moderation, adaptability, and a good sense of humor.

## **REENTRY**

Practically every Albion off-campus returnee has said it, and studies have backed them up, that coming back home can be the most difficult part of your adjustment in the entire study abroad experience. Some studies suggest that those students who have adjusted the best overseas may be the ones with the most stressful readjustment to life back home.

How can this be? After all, you’re coming home to the place where you grew up and your family is, the campus where you’ve spent your academic life, where your friends are, where everything you know is. How can it be hard coming back home?

In most cases, you have changed tremendously during your study abroad experience but your friends and family, while they may have changed, haven’t experienced the same things. You may want to talk about the wonderful food you had in France and they’ll want to go to Charlie’s for pizza. You want to launch into a description of the cultural events you went to in London and they’ll watch TV. You’ll talk a lot about the sites of Rome and they’ll yawn.



Also, you'll be readjusting to the campus routine. Your campus life, Baldwin food, and friends who have stayed on campus. You may find yourself frustrated by seemingly small things, just as when you first went overseas. Be prepared for a certain amount of frustration on returning to home life and to the college routine.

The CIE will help with reentry activities and opportunities to share with others about your experiences. You will be invited to participate in the orientations of those coming after you. There will be ways for you to relive your experiences and relate them to others.

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Congratulations once again on your acceptance to an off-campus program. You are about to embark on a great experience—many have called it a “great adventure”—and with the proper preparation and attitude, you will be prepared for all the challenges and rewarding experiences you will face on this adventure. In so doing, you will find that you will grow and develop as an educated and responsible person of the global community.

We hope this booklet will prove useful to you in facing these challenges off campus. No book could ever encapsulate any and all experiences that a person could have on an off-campus program. In that spirit, we'd like to ask your help. Jot down your suggestions for inclusion in future issues of *Going Abroad from Albion*. Let us know what you experienced and what future students of Albion should know before they go abroad.

*Bon voyage* and have a great off-campus experience!

## USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

- Insight Guides. Easy to read, some photos, great articles on places to go and things to see. [www.insighttravelguides.com](http://www.insighttravelguides.com)
- Let's Go guides. Harvard University students. For Europe, some individual countries. Excellent information on student budget travel.
- Fodor's Guides/Fodor's Budget Guides. For Europe, Latin America, Asia, etc. [www.fodors.com](http://www.fodors.com)
- Lonely Planet guides. Available for most countries. [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)
- Hostelling International. For Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific. [www.hiusa.org](http://www.hiusa.org)

## IMPORTANT WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT

### **Travel information, consular information sheets, travel warnings and alerts:**

- U.S. Department of State Country Specific Information  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports.html>
- U. S. Department of State for Students Abroad  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>

### **Health issues and immunizations:**

- Centers for Disease Control  
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>
- World Health Organization  
<http://www.who.int>

## **PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST**

1. Passport. Copies of ID pages for you and your parents, two extra passport photos.
2. Immigration/border letter (“To Whom It May Concern”) from the CIE. Copies for you and your parents.
3. Acceptance letter from program/university (not all programs send this). Copies for you and your parents.
4. Visas (if required).
5. Airline tickets. Copies of airline ticket for you and your parents.
6. Money: cash, and/or traveler’s checks and/or credit card, and/or ATM card.
7. 6 ID photos for various uses overseas (depending upon suggestions from your program).
8. Medical and health insurance information, medical and health insurance card, claim forms, EIIA travel insurance card.
9. Health precautions: prescriptions for medicine, over the counter drugs, eyeglasses/contact lenses, allergy tags, etc.
10. Materials from your off-campus program: brochure, orientation papers, contact information, etc.
11. Arrangements for receiving money from home.
12. Arrangements for contacting you on program if necessary.
13. Journal.