“What to know before you go...”

Fill in the following for your host country. If you’re going to multiple countries then try to fill out for each of them. You can use a smartphone but put an asterisk (*) next to answers that required a Wiki-assist.

Country: _______________________________

Name(s) of political leader(s): _______________________________

Names of major political parties: _______________________________

Type of government: _______________________________

Year of independence and circumstances: _______________________________

Recent conflicts and, if applicable, role of US in those conflicts: _______________________________

Local media front page headlines now: _______________________________

Major religion(s): _______________________________

Current economic climate: _______________________________

Local currency and its conversion to the US dollar: _______________________________

General attitude toward the US government vs. US culture: _______________________________

General attitude toward the US government vs. US culture: _______________________________

Most well-known cultural export: _______________________________
“Looking ahead to next semester, I’m feeling...”

I’m excited about: ____________________________________________________________

I’m nervous about: _____________________________________________________________

I’m feeling uncertain about: ___________________________________________________

Next semester I’m hoping to learn in class about: ________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Next semester I’m hoping to learn outside the classroom about: ________________

________________________________________________________________________

I want to try: ________________________________________________________________

I hope to avoid: _______________________________________________________________

I plan on remembering this semester by: _______________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Leaving Bowdoin makes me feel: _____________________________________________
“Ain’t no mountain high, ain’t no valley low”

Think ahead to the coming semester, what are the issues or events that might trigger some low points or create some high points for you during your time off-campus? Think also about strategies you can use to cope with the low points.

Potential High Points:

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Potential Low Points:

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Strategies for coping with low points:

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“What would you do if...”

A lot of situations can arise when off-campus. As a group, you will be assigned to two of the following case studies. Read one at a time and for each discuss what you would advise the student to do.

Case Study 1: You’re a Government major studying in Istanbul, Turkey. You’re in the city center after class studying with your language tutor, a local Turkish student your age, at a café when you hear on the TV that protests have begun 5 minutes away from the café. Your Turkish tutor leaps up and says he wants to check it out. You’ve been reading about last year’s protests and you’re interested in seeing it for yourself too but you’d heard on the news the military might be getting involved.

• What do you do? Where do you go?
• What information do you reference in order to make your decision?

Notes:

Case Study 2: You've been living in your host family for about a month now and they have been very hospitable. The room they provided is great and they make sure that you are happy with the meals they make and food they provide. Despite this, you are having a hard time adjusting to living with a domestic maid in the house who cleans up after you and the rest of the family. She’s talked to you a bit about how her children live far away in the rural part of the country and how she can't often make the trip because she doesn't have enough money to buy the bus ticket home. You are unsure if she is being paid fairly but also feel uncomfortable inquiring with your host parents, who have mentioned to you that you should be spending more time making friends at the university then spending time in the kitchen talking to the maid.

• What do you do---do you take an action or just continue to listen?
• How do you square your feelings for both your host family and the maid?

Notes:
Case Study 3: You feel comfortable in how you dress and present yourself, but you've also noticed that some outfits do elicit more stares and comments on the street. Just when you think you have become used to the stares and comments, you'll have a day when you just feel fed up. You can't even walk to the university without multiple comments about your physical appearance and clothes. Some of the comments are harmless, albeit still annoying, but some are graphic and unsettling. When you first arrived, you’d sometimes respond to the groups of men making comments, but they’d laugh you off and slap each other on the back. More recently, you've just begun to ignore them, but that doesn't feel quite right either.

- Who can you talk to about this?
- What might be the best way to deal with this situation?

Notes:

Case Study 4: You’re studying in the UK and loving your classes, British friends, and most of all the amount of time you have to travel! Since you only have two lectures once a week you’ve spent a lot of weekends out of town. There have not been many assignments for your classes, but you’re keeping up on reading pretty well while waiting in airports and train stations. Then it hits you: you are one month away from your final exams, each worth 75% of your grade in that class! Your British classmates say it’s completely normal for a class to be based almost entirely on one exam or essay, but you’re freaking out. You’re not sure how to study for the exam and if you fail there’s no make-up option.

- How do you prepare for the exam? What resources are available to you?
- How could you have prevented this end-of-the-semester panic?

Notes:
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Case Study 5: After months of anticipation and hours of travelling you finally arrive in your host country. Instantly you feel out of place. When asking for directions to the orientation hotel, the airport info desk person doesn’t make eye contact or smile. Getting your ticket for the subway people cut ahead of you in line, then you spend the ride with people pressed up against you giving you hardly any personal space. Walking the final blocks to the hotel you trip and fall in the street, dropping all of your luggage. No one stops or offers to help you, pedestrians just walk past like you don’t exist. You get a lump in your throat. You feel alone and unwelcome. You’re feeling like you’ll never fit in and you wonder if you should just turn around and fly home.

- What did this series of events make you feel about the host culture?
- How might you move past this first impression? How could you try to understand why people behave the way they do in your host country (and your home country)?

Notes:

Case Study 6: You are 24 hours away from boarding your return flight home after your semester off-campus and you just can’t start packing your bags. Although you are looking forward to seeing your family, you have the inclination that your family and friends might be more excited to see you than you are to see them. Just as you’ve begun to master the public transportation and you’ve made your first real local friend, you have to leave. The semester was just an amazing experience and you almost feel more overwhelmed than when you first arrived...with new interests and new questions.

- How might you prepare for your return back home? How will you continue the connections you made abroad?
- How are you going to make sense of your time abroad---personally and academically?

Notes:
Case Study 7: What a change to leave Brunswick, ME and finally be in city, Berlin, with actual nightlife! Not only are there lots of places to go, but drinking is legal in Germany. A big group from your program heads out together on Friday night of your first weekend. At midnight the group is finally ready to head home, but one guy insists the party isn’t over. He says he’s going to another club he’d heard about and he’d go alone if he had to. You’re worried he’s had too much and the other club is in a part of town no one had been to before. He doesn't speak much German yet, but her insists he's just doing as the locals do.

- What steps do you take as an individual and as part of the group that night and in regards to future nights out?
- How do you negotiate feelings of responsibility to yourself and to others?

Notes:

Take advantage of having an OCS alum at your table and ask them anything you’d like about the semester to come. Here are a few suggestions our seniors came up with but feel free to ask whatever is on your mind!

Packing:
- What should I bring? (Clothes, electronics, bedding, first-aid kit etc.)
- What should I leave at home?

Getting around:
- What travel companies do you recommend going with? Any to avoid?
- How does public transportation work there? Are there student discounts?
- Are there any places I should definitely try to visit?
- How did you find safe, but inexpensive, accommodation while traveling?

Money:
- How much money did you spend outside the program?
- How did you access your US bank account?
- Did you have a local bank account?
- What’s the best way to exchange currency?

General:
- What was the weather like?
- Where did you do laundry?
- How did you adjust to a different academic setting?
- Can you recommend any movies or books to get a sense of the culture?
- What are things you wished you’d done?
- What was it like being a US American there?

Your questions:

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“Setting Goals”

Why are you leaving Bowdoin to study off-campus? What are you hoping to get from your time away? If you’ve thought about these things ahead of going you’re more likely to have a fulfilling experience. So take a few minutes to think about what you’re hoping to get in the following areas.

Read through the following and check of your goals:

- To take courses not offered at Bowdoin
- To expand on coursework previously taken at Bowdoin
- To progress in language study
- To get research opportunities (eg field based, archives, prep for Honors Project)
- To engage in the Common Good elsewhere
- To be inspired
- To learn more about my heritage
- To develop increased understanding of global systems (eg economies, governments, NGOs, etc)
- To adapt to diverse cultures and beliefs
- To get significantly out of my comfort zone
- To gain a new perspective on my own culture
- To expand career opportunities
- Other: ___________________________________________________________

Questions to think about:

What challenges do you anticipate in achieving your goals? How will you meet these challenges?

How will accomplishing these goals impact your return to Bowdoin and, possibly, your life after Bowdoin?
“Strategies for Interacting with Host Families”

Whether or not you have a homestay, you will probably have an opportunity to visit the home of a local person or family during your travels. In order to prepare for your homestay or visit, take a few moments to focus on the following items. While some of these things may seem very minor, feeling prepared and comfortable will help you increase your confidence that you will make fewer mistakes and lessen the chance of offending your hosts.

Greetings and arrival
• What is the expected greeting? A handshake, hug, bow, or simply words?
• What is an appropriate time to arrive? At exactly the invited time, early, a few minutes after the stated time, or hours after the stated time?
• Should you take your shoes off at the door? If so, are you expected to bring indoor shoes to wear? Go barefoot? Or wear something provided by the host?
• How should you be dressed?

Gift giving
• Is a gift expected? If so, what is appropriate?
• What can you bring from your home culture that would be a nice gift?
• Are certain numbers or colors considered especially good or bad luck?
• Does a gift need to be wrapped? If so, should you encourage your hosts to open the gift in front of you?
• What is the appropriate way to thank someone for a gift?

Food and meals
• If invited for a meal, should you bring something? If so, what is appropriate to bring?
• Are you expected to help prepare for meals?
• Do you sit down or wait to be invited to sit in a certain place?
• What signals the beginning of a meal—an invitation to eat, a saying, a prayer? Are you expected to participate? Initiate?
• Are you supposed to serve yourself or wait to be served?
• Are you expected to eat everything on your plate or to leave something?
• Are there certain rooms or areas where food and drink are not allowed?
• If you are a long-term guest, is it OK for you to buy food for the family? What about food for just yourself?
Toilet, bath, and shower
Our experience is that this one room (or two if the shower/bath is separate from the toilet) can be the biggest source of irritation in a homestay. This misunderstanding is typically centered around how often one bathes (often criticized as too often) and how long one takes in a bath or shower (too long). Spending a few minutes talking to your hosts and others can help you prepare for your hosts’ expectations. Consider discussing these questions:

• What is the best time to take a bath or shower?
• How long is it OK to spend in the bath or shower?
• How does the faucet work?
• If the bath is viewed as a family tub or communal place, should you wash up before you get into the bathtub? Are others expected to use the same bath water after you’ve finished?

Common courtesies
These general questions can help you understand what your role is as an extended guest in someone else’s home.

☐ Will you be asked to follow a curfew?
☐ Is your room considered private and your own, or can others enter and use your things, even when you are not there?
☐ Are you expected to be home for all meals? If you are going to miss a meal, what should you do?
☐ Is it OK to bring your own guest to a meal?
☐ Does your host family expect to know where you are each day and what you are doing?
☐ Are there any special rules about using certain areas of the home? For example, an area that is open only to the family? To servants?
☐ Are there certain items you should ask permission to use, such as the phone or television?

Departure
• How long does a meal last and how long is it appropriate to stay after the meal is completed?
• If you are a long-term guest, are you expected to do something special for your family upon departure, such as give a gift or take the family to dinner or prepare a meal?
“International Perspectives on the U.S.”

Some international students at a U.S. university were asked to comment on their first impressions of life in the U.S. This will give you a sense of what “outsiders” notice about life in the U.S. and how they may view you, knowing you are a U.S. American.

Japan
“One of the things that I found interesting or odd about U.S. Americans after I came to the United States is that they seem to be busy all the time and proud to tell people how busy they are. I sometimes felt as if they were implying that they were too busy with other things to be bothered with me. They seem to be very friendly and easy-going, but you have to make an appointment for whatever you do with them, even going out for coffee with friends sometimes. Otherwise, people would leave you saying, “I gotta go.” It took a while for me to get used to it.”

Mongolia
“I have very positive thoughts about U.S. Americans. First of all, they are very friendly. Even if they are in a bad mood, they do their best to be friendly. Second, I think U.S. Americans are very good communicators. Talking with others and sharing information all the time seems to be important for them; however, they are forgetful. They ask you a question and you give them an answer, but when you see them again, they ask you the same question again.”

Iceland
“They are incredibly loud and take up a lot of space in public places. The sound level at an American restaurant is as high as a cliff full of birds in my country of Iceland. It is hard to pass Americans on the sidewalk because they usually take up half the space themselves just by the way they walk and swing their arms”

Korea
“Americans are polite to strangers in general; however, that politeness is often superficial. Americans love food...lots of food. They love eating out. Restaurants are serving more than enough food to the customers and wasting more than what is needed to feed the starved people in extremely poor countries.”

Germany
“Americans are very patriotic, almost nationalistic. Americans are convinced that theirs is the best country and that other nations need to learn and absorb the American belief system. There is little if any introspection and reflection of what can be learned from others. Even though the U.S. stands for freedom of speech, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, its core values continue to reflect the white, male, Christian thinking of the Founding Fathers.”
“Video Series Trivia Quiz”

How well did you watch “The (almost) everything you need to know about OCS pre-departure” video series? Test your knowledge now! Mark your answers and we’ll go over the answers as a group.

1. How many Bowdoin credit units will transfer back following one semester of study off-campus? *(Remember: 1 class at Bowdoin = 1 Bowdoin credit unit)*
   - Zero
   - One Bowdoin credit unit per class taken abroad
   - Maximum of four
   - Unlimited

2. Can classes taken off-campus count for distribution credit?
   - Yes
   - No

3. How many classes must you enroll in?
   - Three
   - Four
   - Five
   - Variable. Take how ever many the institution’s full load is (OCS will provide this number)

4. Do grades from classes taken off-campus appear on your transcript?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Sometimes

5. Do grades from classes taken off-campus factor into your GPA?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Sometimes

6. Bowdoin only transfers credits for liberal arts classes. Circle only the classes that would be credit worthy and leave the non-credit worthy classes unchecked.

- "Maori Studies"
- "International Management & Leadership Techniques"
- "Geology of Greenland"
- "Swahili for Beginners"
- "Central American Economics"
- "New Zealand Sport & Leisure Culture"
- "Spanish Business Practices"
- "20th Century Brazilian Poetry"
- "China’s Approach to Marketing & Communications"

7. Does Bowdoin allow you to take an internship for credit off-campus?
   - Yes
   - Never
OCS Pre-departure Kickoff Event

Sometimes, but only in rare circumstances and with pre-
approval

8. How can you verify if the classes you sign up for off-campus are general credit worthy?
- You can only take the classes specified on your yellow OCS application submitted in February
- You can take any class but you'll only find out upon return to Bowdoin if it'll be awarded credit
- Before registering for anything be familiar with academic credit policies in the handbook. In addition, submit an online course notification form (emailed by OCS at the start of the semester) and OCS will review your selection

9. If you have a learning accommodation at Bowdoin, can it be accommodated abroad?
- Yes, always
- No, never
- Sometimes, depending on the host institution/program. Normally requires advance notice and supporting documentation from the Dean's office

10. Do you pay Bowdoin tuition for the period your study off-campus?
- Yes, you pay full Bowdoin tuition and fees
- Yes, you pay quadruple tuition and fees
- No, you don't pay Bowdoin anything
- No you don't pay tuition, but you do pay a $1000 administrative fee to Bowdoin

11. Does OCS book your flight(s)?
- Yes, we are first and foremost travel agents, and only secondly student advisors
- No, this is up to you!

12. Can Bowdoin's Health Services fill out my medical form and serve as a travel clinic?
- Yes, any time of day or night
- Yes, but appointments are limited
- No

13. Do you need to have insurance while off-campus?
- Yes, because medical emergencies happen
- No, while abroad I'll be invincible
OCS Pre-departure Kickoff Event

14. How long should your passport be valid for AFTER the program end date?
   - At least 1 day
   - At least 1 month
   - At least 6 months
   - At least 1 year

15. Does OCS arrange your international student visa?
   - Yes, we are visa experts and can get you into any country in the world, including Atlantis, Narnia, and Middle Earth
   - No! Come to us for common sense advice, but go to your program for the best info

16. Generally, when should you obtain a student visa?
   - Whenever
   - Do you mean a student MasterCard?
   - Within 90 days of the program start date because they expire after 90 days

17. What kind of ticket should you book?
   - One-way and figure out your exit strategy when you get there
   - Round-trip because countries want proof visiting students will be returning home
   - A Willy Wonka's Factory Golden Ticket

18. What are the three, mandatory online forms you must complete while off-campus? Check all three.
   - Address notification form
   - Course notification form
   - Post-program evaluation
   - Daily meal journal notification form (required for students in Italy and France)
   - Captain's log notification (required for students on SEA semester)
   - Notification of natural wonders conquered

19. How are you feeling about your upcoming semester off-campus? Circle all that apply.
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☐ Excited
☐ Anxious
☐ Sad to leave Bowdoin

☐ Honestly, a little scared
☐ Impatient
☐ Happy to leave Bowdoin

☐ Grateful
☐ Uncertain
☐ Other: ____________