FOUR STEPS TO

CHOOSING AN OFF-CAMPUS STUDY PROGRAM

STEP ONE: What is Important to You?

Use the questions below to evaluate your goals and preferences for an off-campus study semester. Understanding your goals is key to finding a program that will help you achieve them.

Academic Goals

- What is/are your intended major(s)? Do you want to fulfill course requirements in your major(s) while off-campus?
- If you have studied a foreign language, do you want to achieve mastery in it? Are you eager or willing to start studying a new language?
- Do you have academic interests outside your major(s) you would like to pursue?
- Would you like to be able to do research for a senior thesis or other project you can continue when you return to Colgate?
- Do you want to study one subject intensively, or take a variety of courses?

Learning Style

- Do you like to learn in a classroom setting, or are you interested in more field-based learning?
- Do you prefer a great deal of guidance (being told what to read, research, etc.) from your professors, or do you prefer more independent reading and research?
- Are you flexible and able to adapt to different learning styles?

Geographic Interests

- Have you studied a particular area of the world that intrigues you?
- Is there a country or region whose history, art, culture, politics, etc., especially attracts you?
- Are there issues in the news today you want to learn more about?
Personal Identity and Personality

- Are there historical or current factors in certain places that might affect your experience there?
- Do you consider yourself adaptable, flexible, and someone who enjoys a challenging environment? Or do you prefer more familiar, less challenging environment?
- Would you prefer a high level of support from your off-campus study program? Or are you comfortable with a high degree of independence? (For example, arranging your own classes, seeking out help when you need it, arranging your own housing, etc.)
- Do you want to avoid Americans and get to know local people as much as possible? Or would you feel more comfortable being with at least some Americans while you are abroad?

Career Goals

- What skills related to career do you want develop while off-campus?
- What activities might help your grad school applications or make your resume stand out? (Remember, Colgate does not give credit for internships on approved programs.)

Other

- Any other ideas or strongly held goals you have—include them all!

STEP TWO: Identify Possible Challenges

Once you’ve identified your goals, think about possible obstacles that might arise. The point is not to discourage you, but to help you think realistically about a program that will best meet your goals. Factors to consider include:

- Eligibility (Do you have the required GPA and language or other prerequisites for the locations or programs you are interested in?)
- Cost (Many programs and study groups will cost more than a semester at Colgate. Be sure you have a realistic budget in mind. Colgate financial aid is portable, and students who receive financial aid are encouraged to discuss this with Off-Campus Study and the Financial Aid office.)
• Medical Issues (Physical and mental health issues, learning and physical disabilities that could affect your study abroad should be identified early. You can find viable options, and Off-Campus Study is available to help).
• Job or Career Obligations (If you plan to work or intern the summer before or after you study abroad, consider when programs start and end, and when you need to be on campus to apply and interview for positions.)
• Athletic, Social and Other Commitments

STEP THREE: Prioritize

Now that you have written down your goals and possible obstacles, you can start setting priorities. Try ranking your top 3-5. Perhaps your priorities are location, affordability (cost), and taking a variety of courses are your priorities.

Remember that you are using this as a tool to start exploring your options, not committing to a final decision. Be honest with yourself.

Try to articulate your priorities in a sentence or two.

STEP FOUR: Start Researching Your Options, Be Flexible!

• Make an appointment with an off-campus study adviser to discuss your priorities and possible programs
• Take Study Group and Approved Program materials from the OCS library
• Research Colgate Study Group and Approved Programs online
• Talk to your academic adviser(s) and/or major department faculty liaison(s) about your academic requirements and possible programs
• BE PATIENT AND BE FLEXIBLE: You may not find “the one” program for you right away, and you may need to reconsider how some priorities go together. Perhaps the program your friends told you about that was your top choice won’t work given your priorities and needs. There a lots of great study groups and approved programs out there, however, and OCS advisers and faculty advisers can help you find a great off-campus experience that will meet your most important goals.