



# Somerset College

## EXCHANGE PROGRAM: PROSPECTIVE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

### 1. WELCOME

Thank you for considering Somerset College as a potential destination for your international exchange program! Exchanges are arguably one of the most exciting aspects of life within a school – we certainly value the presence of exchange students within our school, who represent a wide range of cultures, interests and backgrounds.

The purpose of this document is to supply you with some general information of the Somerset College Exchange Program which may be useful as you consider you partner school destinations.

We look forward to your interest in sharing our extraordinary school, community and country.



## **2. INTRODUCTION TO EXCHANGE**

Started in 1999, the Somerset College Exchange Program is driven by our collective desire to create and sustain a South African and international experience that is educational valuable and culturally enriching. At its core, the exchange program aims to establish within our students: a respectful appreciation of their own and other cultures; a willingness to reflect upon themselves; a growing and mature independence; a grace for others; a sense of pride in our country; and finally to instill and encourage a leadership and ambassadorial ethic at this key stage of a student's high school development. It is with these principles that the exchange program offers successful candidates the rare and privileged opportunity to immerse themselves into the educational, cultural and family environments of our international partner schools.

## **3. OVERVIEW OF EXCHANGE PROCESS**

For a Somerset College student to be selected for the Exchange Programme, they undertake a rigorous application process.

All Grade Ten learners (15-16 years old) in the College are all invited to apply for the program. Applications close early in the year of exchange, usually in mid-February. The Exchange Program coordinators are then simultaneously in contact and negotiation with our partner schools, trying to ascertain interest in exchange with Somerset College for that year (interest varies from year to year).

The final number of positions for each year is determined by the number of selected students and, crucially, the number of reciprocated positions offered by partner schools. When the number of possible partner positions becomes clear, the coordinators start suggesting certain applicants for particular positions based on their applications and certain criteria, that includes (but is not limited to) academic stability; maturity; responsibility; ambassadorship (for school and country); adaptability; school and community involvement; a good track record; sociability; language ability and initiative.

At this point, approved candidates are given a firm offer of a place in that year's program, and sadly, others are informed that they have not been selected. The implication of such a rigorous and intensive application and placement negotiation is that not every learner who applies will be offered a place in the program. It is the mature reality of the exchange program that some applicants will be successful and others will be disappointed.

The program aims to place approximately 8 candidates a year, but the final placements will depend entirely on the available interest of our partner schools.

## **4. EXTENT OF EXCHANGE**

The Student Exchange Program involves a relationship between the College and more than ten schools throughout the world. In the recent past we have sent our exchange students to schools in Canada, Chile, Northern Ireland, England, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

As the program has developed and grown over the years, some partners have not been available; new places have become possible and some recur every few years. We are always seeking new opportunities to enrich our international relationships and provide a network of mutual opportunity for exchange candidates.

## 4.1 DURATION

Each year we receive one (or two) students from our partner schools for about four to six weeks during our third term (mid-July to mid-September). This timeframe is deemed to be sufficient time to immerse into and enjoy the full and enriching Somerset College experience, but also short enough to mitigate against extended homesickness or complacency.

We host our visitors during our third term because of the many activities here that should interest them: the Pops Concert, the Cederberg camp, the termly Music Concert, the Grade 10 Social and sporting derby days. Furthermore, Term 3 is not an examination term at Somerset College, relieving some of the academic pressure on students and hosts.

During their stay in South Africa the students are each hosted by a Somerset College family. Where applicable, some are hosted in the Boarding House, depending on space and whether the Somerset College exchange student is a boarder or not.

We prefer to send our students to their international partners during the fourth term. However, the final dates will be finalized by the schools and mutual parental agreement.

## 4.2 SCHOOL PROGRAM

Incoming exchange students are immersed as fully as possible into the academic, cultural and sport program of Somerset College.

Exchange students will be given the opportunity to select from the academic subject offering of Somerset College and will be given a customised academic lesson timetable. They will be required to fulfil the requirements of the subjects they select during their stay at the College. With this in mind, and as English is the medium of tuition at Somerset College, visiting students need to have a good understanding of the language and communicative ability in order to benefit from this experience.

There is also thriving and diverse cultural programme at Somerset College that exchange students are invited to participate in including, the opportunity to sing in the school choir, to join one of the school bands, or perform in the orchestra or one of the jazz groups. There are also opportunities created by the Drama and Art departments and the wealth of clubs and societies that welcome exchange student's international presence and participation.

Participation in sport at Somerset College is a compulsory aspect of immersing visiting students into the South African school experience. The College enters a large number of teams into the local leagues and there are plenty of practise and match opportunities for everyone. Most of our incoming exchange students come to the College in the third term and are encouraged to participate in the winter sports on offer, including Squash, Cross-Country, Netball, Rugby, and Hockey.

The school also offers international exchange students signature Somerset College outdoor education activities. These unique educational experiences include the Grade 10 Cederberg Camp, where students travel to the majestic Cederberg mountains and participate in a variety of activities over the course of a week. There are also tremendous opportunities to explore the beautiful of our winelands and Western Cape setting with our host families.

## 5. USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS:

The following contact details may assist you. Please do not hesitate to contact us for assistance.

**Exchange Co-ordinators:** Mr David Scott [d.scott@somcol.co.za](mailto:d.scott@somcol.co.za) Mr Coenraad Walters [c.walters@somcol.co.za](mailto:c.walters@somcol.co.za)

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## 6. CONCLUSION

Somerset College's greatest and most cherished exchange assets are our students and their parents - who offer an extraordinary vision of South African education, hospitality and home life. We therefore encourage all prospective candidates and host parents to earnestly discuss and sincerely consider the Somerset College Exchange Programme as we look forward to another year where all our students mark their mature and purposeful approach to senior high school and flourish in the unparalleled experience of exchange.

But above all, we hope to welcome you as part of the Somerset College and South African family.



*Some highlights of the Somerset College Exchange Program from previous years.*