



# Somerset College

## INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND EXCHANGE: GENERAL INFORMATION

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### INTRODUCTION

Somerset College is proud to offer students the exciting opportunity to explore international academic programs and exchanges. Our collective desire is to create and sustain a South African and international experience that is educational valuable and culturally enriching.

## OXBRIDGE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Oxbridge Academic Programs have been built on their founding principles of imaginative teaching, experiential learning, and cultural enrichment, combining the privilege of working in the world's best academic facilities with the excitement of living in some of the most fascinating cities in the world. The various programs have been welcoming intellectually adventurous students for over 30 years.

Somerset College enjoys the privilege of being able to encourage students to apply for the highly prestigious Oxbridge Academic Programs.

## UNITED KINGDOM

**The Oxford Tradition** is an academic program for students in grades 10-12 held in Pembroke and Corpus Christi Colleges, Oxford University, England. There are around thirty courses available, as diverse as Archaeology, History, Medical Science, Law and Society, and Journalism.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/TheOxfordTradition/TheProgram.aspx>

**The Cambridge Tradition** is an academic program for students in grades 10-12 held in Jesus College, Cambridge University, England. There are nearly 30 courses available, as diverse as Architecture, Criminology, English Literature, Photojournalism and Zoology.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/TheCambridgeTradition/TheProgram.aspx>

Together with program administrators, including Program Deans and Activities Directors, students participating in these Oxford and Cambridge Tradition Programs enjoy a daily schedule that combines intellectual and curricular adventure, cultural enrichment, guest speakers, field trips, activities and sports – all in a safe, supervised environment.

**The Oxford Spring Seminar** is a week-long academic program for students in grades 10-12, that provides students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in subjects that fascinate them, and to brush up on the skills required for university applications, all under the guidance of Oxford experts. Held in Pembroke College, Oxford, and organized in conjunction with the Foundation for International Education, it also provides students with the opportunity to design their own intensive, pre-college experiences.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/TheOxfordSpringSeminar/Program.aspx>

**The Oxford Summer Seminar** is a week-long intellectual immersion for students in grades 10-12 that enables small groups of dedicated students to plunge into the subjects they love and to brush up on the skills required for university applications, all under the guidance of experts from Oxford University. The Summer Seminars run for one week at a time. Students may opt for a Double Major, and attend for two weeks, taking two different Majors. The international faculty includes leading courses in Business, English Literature, History's Secrets, Math and Nature, Medicine, and Psychology. Students also take part in a series of Seminars – led by university admissions experts – specially designed to brush-up their learning skills and assist with their university applications.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/TheOxfordSummerSeminar/TheProgram.aspx>

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**The New York College Experience** is an academic program for students in grades 10-12 held at Barnard College of Columbia University in New York City. There are over twenty courses available, ranging from Advertising and Media, Fashion, International Business, Journalism, Medical Science, Musical Theatre, Politics and Human Rights, and more. The faculty includes academics from Barnard College, Columbia University, New York University, and other top institutions, and guest speakers represent the greatest minds of New York from the worlds of business, journalism, science, and beyond.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/TheNewYorkCollegeExperience/TheProgram.aspx>

**The College Experience in Boston** is an academic program for students in grades 10-12 held on the Harvard Law School campus at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There are nine courses available, ranging from American History, Computer Science, Government and Politics, International Law, Medicine, Neuropsychology, the Biology of Disease, Speech and Debate, and Economics. The faculty includes academics from Boston College, Boston University, Harvard University, Tufts University, and other top institutions, and guest speakers represent the greatest minds of the Boston area from the worlds of business, journalism, science, and beyond.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/TheCollegeExperienceinBoston/TheProgram.aspx>

Students on the New York and Boston College experiences enjoy a daily schedule that combines intellectual and cultural enrichment, activities, and sports. In addition, students have the opportunity to learn about American universities thanks to workshops with admissions officers from various institutions and college tours of several Ivy League universities. Safety and round-the-clock supervision is ensured by an experienced staff of program administrators.

## EUROPE

**L'Académie de Paris** is an academic program for students in grades 10-12 held in the Lycée Notre Dame de Sion, a top independent school in the heart of Paris, France.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/LAcad%C3%A9miedeParis/TheProgram.aspx>

**La Academia de Barcelona** is an academic program for students in grades 10-12 held in the Residència Universitària Josep Manyanet, a university residence in an upscale residential area of Barcelona, Spain.

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Programs/LaAcademiadeBarcelona/TheProgram.aspx>

There is no French or Spanish language requirement for these programs, as more than half of the twenty or more courses offered are taught in English. Whatever their priorities though, students come away with a new understanding of the subject matter as well as an expert familiarity with either Paris or Barcelona.

## OXBRIDGE APPLICATION PROCESS

All Oxbridge Academic Program applications are made privately by individual students and their parents and do not require an exchange arrangement or school selection. The process is according to availability and it managed directly by the Oxbridge Academic Program coordinators. The application is done online with the process, dates and costs detailed in the brochures and website.

Oxbridge Academic Program Brochure 2017:

<http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com/Portals/0/Docs/Brochures/Oxbridge%20Academic%20Programs%202017.pdf>

Oxbridge Academic Program Online Application:

<https://www.oxbridgeprogramsdb.com/oxbri603/>

## EXCHANGE PROGRAM

To be selected for the Exchange Program, Grade 10 students are invited to apply through a process of that starts after the Grade 10 information evening.

**All Grade 10s will be sent specific instructions when applications open in February.**

Interested students will be given an opportunity to sign up via email. They will then be sent a link to a **Google Form** that must be completed by: **Wednesday 15 February 2017.**

After all complete applications have been received, all applicants are **invited to interviews** with the Exchange Coordinators and key members of staff in the week of **20 – 24 February 2017.**

While the interviews are running, the Exchange Program coordinators are 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 coordinators also regularly meet with a diverse range of Somerset College staff concerning each applicant. These include the Head of school, deputies, grade heads, tutors, boarding house staff (where applicable), and any other interested and insightful parties. Disciplinary and academic records are also consulted.

Successful candidates are announced and given a firm offer of a place in the program usually about the end of Term 1 (but dependent on partner schools). **The program aims to place approximately 8 candidates**, yet the final placements will depend entirely on the available and shared interest of partner schools. This means that not every student who applies will be offered a place in the programme.

## CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS TO CONSIDER IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

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 there is the possibility of disappointment. That said, there are multiple criteria and requirements in considering exchange candidacy.

The following represents an indication of the character, values and traits for successful candidates:

- Maturity of character and ambassadorial role model.
- Clear personal motivation and clarity of purpose.
- Shared support from Tutor, applicable Grade, Academic and School Heads.
- Regular and committed winter and summer sports participation.
- Cultural and club participation and contribution.
- Responsible attitude and no serious disciplinary issues at school or reported to the school from social activities.
- Consistent academic achievement and stability with no subject below 60%.
- Hosting availability and parental support.

## EXTENT OF EXCHANGE

The Exchange Program involves a relationship between the College and about eight schools throughout the world. In the recent past we have sent our exchange students to schools in Canada, 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 irregularly every few years.

Every year we receive students from various partner schools for about six weeks during our third term (mid-July to mid-September). These visiting students are immersed as fully as possible into the academic, cultural and sport program of Somerset College. We host our visitors during the 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 exam term.

During their stay in South Africa the students are each hosted by a Somerset College family. Boarders can certainly apply for the program but must be aware that there is the added requirement that our Boarding Houses have sufficient space to host the visiting students.

We prefer to send our students during the fourth term. However, the final dates and duration of exchange will be finalized by the schools and with parental agreement.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The reality is that the Exchange Program is an expensive undertaking - in terms of commitment, time and money. With the current economic climate and fluctuations in exchange rates, offering an estimation is very difficult. Exchange is comparable to overseas sports and subject tours and once all costs are included (daily hosting and living expenses, spending money, flights and travel, visa fees, communications, travel and medical insurance, school activities and events, extra tours and entertainment, and miscellaneous expenses) the final costs can exceed R60 000.

## SCHOOL FEES

It is also important to note that all Somerset College school fees are still applicable during the exchange program. Somerset College students who go on exchange are not offered a rebate on College fees, but no school fees are paid by incoming students. This is because this school fee arrangement is reciprocated for our students when they go overseas. Boarders also carry on paying boarding fees while they are absent; their partners are not charged boarding fees for the time they are here.

Essentially then, parents continue to pay for their own child's school fees and the overseas parents pay for their child's school fees and thereby the associated costs of exchange school fees are offset equitably.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC WORK

Grade 10s applying for the Exchange Program should be aware of the following regarding their academic progress:

- Exchange is an exceptional endeavor. It therefore requires exceptional students to make exceptional efforts to enjoy the exceptional experience. However, it is also an **optional** endeavour and it must be clearly understood that the onus is on the students regarding all school and academic work. Exchange is not a holiday.
- Academic stability is paramount. Only students with **consistent evidence of academic achievement** will be considered for exchange. No subject may be below 60% and even further stringency will be applied to subjects that have proven difficult to catch up in the past such as Mathematics and the Sciences.
- **Students are responsible** for liaising with their respective teachers to identify what will be/has been missed and then to catch up on any work necessary to be ready for their Grade 11 year. Experience has taught us that Mathematics and Science appear to be the biggest challenges in this respect, and if students take these subjects, **they will have to put in extra work, in their own time, to be ready to start Grade 11.**
- Teachers will communicate expectancies and assist in their capacities but **cannot be expected to re-teach an entire term's curriculum** to individual students.
- Exchange students will be expected to take part, to the degree that they can, in the full academic and school program of their exchange school. However, **students are responsible for asking teachers** to indicate those key areas of Somerset College's curriculum that will need to be studied while away.

## EXAMINATIONS AND REPORTS

- **All exchange students WILL write the November examinations, unless they are overseas at the time of examinations.** Students that return mid-examinations or are away immediately prior to the examinations in the fourth term will still write the examinations they are here for, but only as practice (an academic consolidation exercise).
- Exchange students **do not receive a full report** for their exchange year as they will miss a proportion of an academic term. Their reports are modified to discount the time that they were away.
- Exchange students who miss Term 3 will not receive a Term 3 Report. Students who miss Term 4 will not receive an end of year report.
- In considering Somerset College academic work and merit awards, no student will be prejudiced for participating in the exchange program and applicable issues will be addressed as they emerge.

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Once a student has been offered a particular place in the program, the coordinator will facilitate contact between the two families, however the students are encouraged to pre-empt this through available technology and social networks, e.g. Facebook, Skype, etc. Thereafter the families should remain in close direct contact and discuss aspects such as:

- The exact arrival date and departure date for both exchange partners within the parameters set by the two partner schools (this might influence the exact price of the flight).
- Payment for specific events during the exchange visit. For example, it may be the most practical for students to take/bring money on a credit card to pay the host family for various activities and costs. However, as a host family, living costs are the responsibility of the host family and extra activity costs are at their discretion and are to be negotiated with their partner family. For example, both families can agree that all expenses incurred while the students are in their care will be covered.
- Social and disciplinary parameters are an area of critical importance. Parents are responsible not only for their own child, but also their exchange partner. Host families therefore maintain authority and discretion for the duration of exchange. Parents are therefore encouraged to exercise their parental discretion as if all students were their own regarding behaviour, discipline, illness and general conduct. Moreover, host families in other countries may not realise the limited scope of public transport in South Africa or the nature of our internet infrastructure. As such, Somerset College learners will definitely discover greater degrees of independence in such terms as moving around international cities without adult supervision, but foreign students must also be informed and guided in terms of the realities of South Africa.
- Somerset College and partner schools also do not cover foreign students in their school insurance policies. Therefore travel insurance is essential for all exchange students and partners and the onus is on the parents to arrange suitable cover for the duration of exchange.

The **parents of the Somerset College exchange students** are therefore responsible for arranging:

- flights to and from the overseas country;
- visas and other documentation required to enter that country (this often includes an unabridged birth certificate, and parents should not wait for final confirmation of a place in the Exchange Programme before applying for one, as it can take exceptionally long to obtain one);
- completion of all forms required by Somerset College and the partner school overseas;
- arrangements regarding pocket money and payments for specific expenses;
- any other matters regarding the specific exchange that the schools cannot undertake.

