

Dear Applicant,

Please read the message below very carefully, as it contains important information about your Samford Abroad program application.

Happy New Year! Since we are through the holidays, I wanted to reach out to give you an idea of what to expect and what you will need to do to prepare for the possibility of studying abroad this fall. We are looking forward to multiple meetings of the Samford University International Travel Advisory Committee, which is tentatively scheduled for its first meeting during the first week of the spring term. This is the committee that will determine the viability of 2021 Samford Abroad programs.

The first, and most important thing that you should do right now is to make sure that you have a valid passport. **A valid passport is defined as a passport with at least six months of validity remaining after your expected return to the US.** Please note that passports issued to minors are valid for only five years, so if you got a passport in high school it is very important that you check the expiration date. Per the Passport Agreement that you signed as part of your application, **you will need to have a valid passport at the time of program acceptance.** Current passport processing times for normal service are advertised at 10-12 weeks, so if you did not proceed with your passport application or renewal previously, I strongly recommend that you apply immediately. We will need to have a valid passport to book your travel. Additionally, you need your passport in hand to apply for your visa that is needed for your international internship. Remember, passports issued to adults are valid for ten years, and you will need your passport if you plan to travel outside the US at any time in the next ten years. So, even if your program does not move forward as planned, having the passport just means you will be ready to go as soon as travel normalizes.

The second thing you should do right now is begin discussing with your family to determine whether you will commit to your program if the program moves forward and you are accepted. If the committee determines that your program is viable and will move forward, then we will need to act quickly to get rosters finalized. We will have to quickly arrange flights, work through immigration requirements and visa applications, and take care of other program logistics and will need a finalized roster as soon as possible. Because of this, I anticipate that you will be given just a few days to either commit to your program or decline your acceptance. Our goal is to issue acceptances for the fall 2021 semester by March 1st. However, this date is tentative. We are trying to give as much time as possible for the situation with the pandemic to improve, while balancing the need to move forward with planning and immigration requirements for your internship program. **You will be notified of a decision on your application via your Samford email. If you do not respond to your acceptance in the specified time frame, we will move to the next person on the waitlist.** So, I am encouraging you to be prepared with your decision and to monitor your email closely for communication from us, so you do not miss the notification.

Since we normally accept students much earlier than March for the fall semester program, we will have a lot of material to cover with you in a shortened period of time to ensure you are prepared for the semester in London. As such, **please reserve Thursday convo (10am) for pre-departure sessions, starting on March 11 through the remainder of the semester.** It is likely that we will have a pre-departure session for each and every one of the remaining Thursday convo times during the spring semester. Attendance at these sessions is a condition of participation in the semester in London

program. You will be provided a more detailed schedule of the pre-departure sessions in the first session on March 11. I anticipate the sessions will all be virtual but that is not yet fully determined.

Of course, the possibility remains that the International Travel Advisory Committee will cancel the program you have applied for. If this occurs, please note that our office is committed to providing an early opportunity to apply to a future program for students who have applied to programs that have been cancelled due to COVID-19. If you were accepted and committed to a program in 2020 that was canceled, we will continue to offer conditional acceptance for a future program.

Because we have upcoming program departure dates ranging from May to your departure in late August, I anticipate that the committee may make decisions on a chronological basis. It is possible we will receive a decision on May programs first, then June programs, then July, then Fall semester. Decisions may also vary depending on conditions and requirements in the destination country. It is important to note that some destinations are still not permitting travelers from the US, so this may impact the viability of your program.

I think you should also be aware of new requirements that may exist due to the pandemic. **Program participants may be required to provide proof of vaccinations and/or negative COVID-19 test results.** These may be entry requirements of the destination country or they may be requirements of Samford. I do not know of any specific requirements at this point, but I want to prepare you for the possibility that vaccination against COVID-19 may be a condition of participation in your Samford Abroad program.

Thank you for taking the time to carefully read this email. I know it's a lot of information, and that there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding international travel due to the pandemic. I'm hopeful that we will be able to return to studying abroad soon! In any case, I will keep you posted on any developments, and please feel free to email me with any questions.

Warm regards,

Jill

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