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Welcome and Program Overview

Congratulations on your acceptance to ACM Amsterdam: Sciences, Global Health, and Interdisciplinary Studies in Amsterdam. We advise students to review the Semester in Amsterdam website to familiarize yourself with VU Amsterdam and the Semester in Amsterdam program; however, the website’s information is for all international students and may not have information specific to the ACM Amsterdam program at VU Amsterdam. Please refer to this handbook first.

This ACM Amsterdam program handbook is intended to help prepare you for your semester in Amsterdam and to give you an initial sense of what to expect academically and personally while you are there. It is revised each year based on comments from the previous program participants to include more current information and contains details on various logistical arrangements for your trip. It is, in effect, a reference tool that provides you with the information you need as you make arrangements to participate in the program. It is important that you read it carefully and raise any questions you may have with the ACM Off-Campus Program Coordinator, whose contact information is listed at the end of this handbook.

The VU International Office, specifically the Semester in Amsterdam team, in conjunction with the ACM staff are ready to help you in any way they can. Semester in Amsterdam will work with you to choose and register for your courses, arrange accommodation, and ensure safety and support during your time enrolled at VU Amsterdam. They are always willing to provide assistance or advice. We hope you will learn a tremendous amount about Amsterdam, form lasting friendships, and come to love the Netherlands and its people. May your experiences in the Netherlands be memorable and full of gezelligheid!

Amsterdam, the capital city of the Netherlands, is a historic city with a modern and creative feel.

Several hundred years ago, Amsterdam established the most influential stock exchange in the world. Today, the city’s infrastructure continues to expand, opening up opportunities in business and tourism. With its architectural and cultural charm, you’ll soon see why it’s no surprise that Amsterdam attracts millions of foreign visitors every year, including 92,000 students from all over the world.

Dutch is the official language in the Netherlands. Although English is also widely spoken, and the majority of your classes will be taught in English, you’ll be able to engage with the culture on an entirely new level by taking a semester-long Dutch language and/or culture course.

Amsterdam exemplifies the Dutch word, gezelligheid. The Dutch use this special term, gezelligheid, to describe a cozy, pleasant, and friendly feeling or environment. Though almost impossible to translate into English, you’ll experience gezelligheid throughout the city as you begin to explore and experience Dutch culture.
In Amsterdam, time slows down and you will feel a sense of intimacy and belonging to your surroundings. You will soon see that this relaxing, pleasant way of life can be found in every interaction and on every street corner.

While living in Amsterdam, you will be able to take advantage of the multitude of cultural and outdoor opportunities the city has to offer. Imagine study breaks spent cycling along beautiful canals, relaxing in Vondelpark, or visiting daily open-air markets. A stroll through Amsterdam’s unique neighborhoods will show you a variety of historic architecture and vintage shops, cafes, and art galleries. On weekends, you can expand your knowledge of Dutch history and culture by visiting Amsterdam’s famous Van Gogh museum, Anne Frank House, or Rijksmuseum.
Fall 2017 Calendar

*Fall 2017 dates are finalized by VU Amsterdam in June/July. Below you will find Fall 2016 dates. Fall 2017 will most likely mirror these dates. Once we have the finalized dates they will be updated in the handbook, on the website, and conveyed to you via email.

**August 18 – December 23, 2017**

- **August 18:** Students Arrive in Amsterdam
- **August 18-September 4:** Arrival and Introduction
- **September 4:** First Day of Classes (Period 1)
- **September 4-October 20:** Period 1 Classes
- **October 23-27:** Exams (Period 1)
- **October 30:** First Day of Classes (Period 2)
- **October 30-December 15:** Period 2 Classes
- **December 18-December 22:** Exams (Period 2)
- **December 23:** Students depart
Academics

Learning Goals
The ACM Amsterdam: Sciences, Global Health, and Interdisciplinary Studies program offers you an immersive cultural and academic experience in a university setting and is designed with the following learning objectives:

- Strengthen your liberal arts education through the international and interdisciplinary approach of the VU curriculum;
- Advance your understanding of how issues in the fields of earth and life sciences and global health require international collaboration;
- Develop an understanding of the history of The Netherlands and current social, political, economic, and cultural forces that support the country's leading role in the European community.

When you complete the program, you will be able to apply knowledge and skills gained from courses offered in the VU curriculum; practice research in an intercultural and international environment; and identify some of the ways that The Netherlands participates in and contributes to both European and global movements.

Academic Overview
All students will take 15 to 18 credit hours. This includes three to four electives divided among the two periods, a choice of either Discovering Dutch or Imagining the Dutch, and an option to do a semester-long independent study project (ISP). In most fields, two courses are offered in Period 1 (September - October) and two courses in Period 2 (November - December).

Students can choose to take the ISP course in addition to their 4 elective courses OR in place of one of their elective courses.

Course Load Options:

**Option 1 (15 credit hours):**
4 electives (2 per period)
1 Dutch Language/Culture Course

**Option 2 (15 credit hours):**
3 electives (divided among the 2 periods)
1 Dutch Language/Culture Course
ISP

**Option 3 (18 credit hours):**
4 electives (2 per period)
1 Dutch Language/Culture Course
ISP

This program is specifically designed for students interested in the Earth and Life sciences to take courses within their major. Students can concentrate their study in the below listed minors or they can choose their electives from the 300 VU Amsterdam courses offered in English. The independent study course is taught by the visiting faculty director.
Students will also have the option take the visiting faculty director’s course taught in the VU Amsterdam honors college. There are some academic requirements associated with enrolling in the honors college. *Students are evaluated holistically, but there is a 3.5 minimum GPA.*

*Some exceptions are made on a case by case basis, so please contact ACM if you do not meet the minimum GPA requirement.*

Course lists for the minors are published well in advance, so students can communicate with an advisor in the VU Amsterdam International office during the application process and finalize their course choices shortly after they are admitted to the program. Please email semesterinamsterdam@vu.nl

The combination of courses and an optional independent study project/course allows students to experience both the discussion-based style of teaching and independent work that is common at ACM and other American liberal arts colleges.

Please visit the Registration Section of the handbook for instructions on applying to VU Amsterdam.

**Academic Courses**

**Elective Courses at VU Amsterdam:**
Faculty: VU Amsterdam Faculty
3 semester credits per course

Students register for 2 elective courses per period, choosing from VU Amsterdam courses, which includes the course offered by the ACM Visiting Faculty Director, Dr. Tim Tibbetts. ACM students have the option of choosing a set combination of courses in one specific field, known as a minor. Minors are organized in 10 fields in the Earth and life sciences (considered Natural Sciences on some campuses in the U.S.), and some fields are divided into two tracks. Science minor course offerings can be viewed here.

**Earth and Life Sciences Minor Options:**
- Biomedical and Health Interventions
  - Global Health Track
  - Interventions Track
- Biomedical Topics in Health Care
- Biomolecular & Neurosciences
  - Biomolecular Sciences Track
  - Neurosciences track
- Brain and Mind
- Earth Surface
  - Earth Sciences track
- Evolutionary Biology and Ecology
- Global Health
- Solid Earth
- Five Big Issues in Mental Health

You can also choose a non-science minor and concentrate your courses in those disciplines or take courses across various disciplines. Students can also take any courses from the general curriculum that are taught in English.
Courses are organized within seven “Faculties” which is the U.S. equivalent to a department or college depending on the U.S. institution you attend. See the course catalog for undergraduate students for a full list of English-taught courses.

Faculties at VU Amsterdam:

- Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences
- Faculty of Behavioural and Human Movement Sciences
- Faculty of Sciences
- Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
- Faculty of Social Sciences
- Faculty of Humanities
- Faculty of Law

In addition to minors in the Earth and Life Sciences (natural sciences), you can also choose to concentrate your courses in other minor programs. Please take a look at the full list of minor options.

There are several benefits to concentrating your elective courses in one of the earth and life sciences minors or the other available minors.

- Students gain specialized knowledge in the chosen field of study
- Students can immediately finalize their study plan, because courses within the minor never conflict in the timetable. This means that once you are accepted to the minor program you are guaranteed to be able to follow all courses in the minor
- Students will take all their minor courses with the same Dutch and international students, thereby increasing the likelihood of cross-cultural interactions and friendships.
- Minors show a focused area of study, so you can list them on your CV.

American Environmental Thought
Faculty: Dr. Tim Tibbetts, Monmouth College
Elective course, 3 semester credits

This course traces the rise of environmentalism in the United States, starting with Thoreau and extending to Abbey and Steingraber. While international students may be well-versed in the roots of environmentalism in their own countries, the situation in the United States points out idiosyncrasies of history and culture. The focus turns to achieving environmental sustainability and the challenges this presents. The United States is behind many G8 industrialized nations in terms of its progress toward sustainability and embracing environmentalism. Legislative progress has been made such as the Environmental Protection Agency’s work on the Endangered Species Act and Clean Air and Water Acts, based on clear scientific evidence. However, resistance remains as evidenced by the persistence of climate change denial. Global progress toward sustainability relies on understanding the environmental mindset of America.

Independent Study Project (ISP)
Faculty: Dr. Tim Tibbetts, Monmouth College
Optional course, 3 semester credits

Students have the option of enrolling in a semester-long independent study project (ISP) during their time in Amsterdam, under the direction of the visiting faculty director. There are countless topics to
explore over the course of your time in the Netherlands. Projects may be conducted in a wide variety of fields, and the ISP is an excellent addition for students interested in the social sciences and humanities. ISP topics in the Earth and life sciences are possible, although use of laboratories and equipment at VU Amsterdam cannot be guaranteed.

Topics are linked to the program location and are expected to emphasize research in the community, including interviews and observation. Students also have conducted projects in the arts that reflect their experience in the host culture. At the end of the program, students typically present their projects to the group. Students are encouraged to formulate projects to fit their individual interests and/or their program of study at their home campus.

If you plan to study human subjects, you will be required to prepare and submit several documents outlining your research plan to ACM’s ethical review committee. Your professor will help you through the ethical review process for student research.

*Students choose One of the following semester-length Dutch language and culture courses:*

*Discovering Dutch is more language focused; whereas, Imagining the Dutch is entirely culture focused*

### Discovering Dutch:
Faculty: VU Amsterdam Faculty  
Required, 3 semester credits per course

In the course, you will learn to speak and understand the Dutch language at a basic level. The course is very interactive in nature. Part of the lessons will take place in the digital language lab; lecturers will personally coach you. In four additional workshops, you'll also learn about Dutch culture and society and will explore some of the highlights of Dutch history. We also will discuss the stereotypes that exist about the Netherlands and place them within a historical context.

### Imagining the Dutch: Themes in Dutch Culture:
Faculty: VU Amsterdam Faculty  
Required, 3 semester credits per course

In recent years, there has been an international revival of interest in national history, Dutch writing, and historical writing, both among historians and the public in the Netherlands. Several important questions arose, such as: Who are the Dutch? What is the Netherlands? What is typically Dutch about Dutch history? And how should we deal with these questions from a historical and academic perspective?

The lectures of the course focus on themes and periods in Dutch modern history and will cover a wide range of topics such as the history of Dutch polders, democracy and ‘pillarization.’ Central to the lectures is the question, how unique or common Dutch history actually is, by focusing both on important events and periods in the history of the Netherlands, as well as on concepts and on debates in Dutch historiography.

**VU Academic Policies & Academic Culture**

**Learning Environment**
Your courses will be taken with classmates from the Netherlands and around the world. This opportunity to exchange viewpoints and perspectives will be an enriching addition to your academic experience. You will notice that
VU Amsterdam courses encourage students to actively participate in discussion-centered coursework and incorporates interactive small group work. In these courses, you’ll find many similarities to a liberal arts education, but you will need to take more responsibility and initiative in working outside of class than you may be accustomed to on your home campus. You may also find that the teaching style varies from what you are accustomed to on your home campus, but it’s important to take this as an integral part of the study abroad experience. At on-site Orientation, you will receive more information on expectations, and the student’s experience adapting to Dutch academic culture.

**Studying at VU Amsterdam: What is expected of you?**
- Be an active learner and critical thinker: ask questions, participate, and share your opinion
- Be present and on time: 100% attendance policy
- Be prepared: less lectures, more self-study
- Be accountable: take responsibility. You will not be excused from mistakes which are your fault.
- Be transparent: always mention your source of information

**Studying at VU Amsterdam: What can you expect?**
- High level of classroom interaction
- Independence and active learning
- Importance of rules
- Relative lack of competition
- Brutal honesty
- Social equality
- No grade inflation or scaling

**Policies and Procedures**
The Dutch timetable can be challenging as courses and schedules are not finalized until June/July, just a few months prior to the start of the Fall semester. When registering for classes please be sure to select two course options per period, as there may be scheduling conflicts once the finalized schedule is posted.

While you will be expected to follow ACM’s academic policies and code of student responsibility, you are required to adhere to VU Amsterdam’s academic culture and policies. Dutch education emphasizes responsibility; the student is responsible for their own learning. Studying and learning is a more independent practice in the Netherlands, there will be little to no follow-up or progress checks throughout the semester. VU Amsterdam has a 100% attendance policy; however, individual professors may make an exception provided there is documentation (sickness, emergency, etc.). **Please be mindful that faculty reserve the right to un-enroll a student in the course even after just one absence. They may not notify the student if they decide to take this action. Please attend all classes and communicate with your professor so this does not happen to you.**

**Exams**
Exams are offered at **ONE** single time per period or semester. **There are absolutely no exceptions.** Mark it on your calendar when you find out the date, and **DO NOT MISS IT.** The exams are taken in large lecture halls, not in your regular classroom. On-site orientation will provide more details on exam procedures and the possibility of a re-sit.

**Required Self-Study Hours**
Students are required to put in weekly “self-study” hours (approximately 6 per class per week). This is in addition to any homework or assignments that you may have. More information on “self-study”
hours is shared at the start of the semester. It is important that you take this allotted time seriously as the effort you put in weekly will be reflected on the final exam. It is important to keep in mind that self-study is an integral and required component of the courses, not an optional addition to the course.

Confidentiality
Dutch privacy laws are very strict. VU Amsterdam cannot share with ACM or the visiting faculty director any information should you be struggling academically or encounter health problems. They must have the student's permission to do so, therefore it is the students responsibility to share with the visiting faculty director and/or ACM should they be having trouble academically, physically, or emotionally. The ACM is here to help and support you, so please communicate any challenges with us.

Scholarships
VU Amsterdam offers several scholarships to students participating in their semester program. If you are interested in applying to one of these scholarships, please be sure to apply by March 20th. There are three scholarships offered 2,500 Euros each—blogger scholarship, photographer/videographer scholarship, and a diversity scholarship. Please see the VU Amsterdam Scholarship website for instructions on how to apply. Selection is based on the motivation letter (cover letter), the quality of previous education, the student’s past academic performance, and the best fit for the specific scholarship requirements.
Credits and Grades
ACM recommends a total of 15 to 18 semester credits, as shown in the course descriptions, for your academic work in Amsterdam. This translates to 24-30 ECTS according to the Dutch System. Before you leave your home campus you should find out from your registrar exactly how many credits you will earn and what graduation requirements they will meet. Different colleges have different policies about credit, and it is your responsibility to inform yourself about pass/fail options and how your program credits will appear on your transcript. You should also discuss your plans with your advisor and academic department, particularly if you want your work in Amsterdam to fulfill a requirement or serve as the basis for an honors or senior project.

At the end of the program (provided that you do not have any outstanding financial or student life obligations to ACM and the program), grade recommendation forms will be sent to your college registrar, and the 15 to 18 semester credits will be converted into your college’s credit system. If you plan on graduating in December, you will need to inform ACM so we are able to get your grades to your campus.

In order for your academic progress to not be impeded by a semester off campus, be sure to consult your registrar about registration and housing for the spring term following your return. You will likely be able to do that via your school’s on-line registration process, but you will want to confirm the arrangements for doing so before you leave campus.

Grade Conversion
The grading system in the Netherlands is different than the US. It is on a number system from 1-10. 10 is the highest and very rare for a student to achieve. Most students get 7-8 and that is considered very good; however, this requires focus and diligence. Your U.S. grade will be calculated based upon the Dutch grade you receive. Please see the below grade conversion chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5-8.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>D-F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected Participation
You are expected, unless excused to attend all ACM classes and events. As a general rule, students will not be excused from ACM activities to attend to visitors or to travel. As a courtesy to your fellow students and the program director, be sure to attend all ACM planned activities. Attendance on field trips organized by Semester in Amsterdam and the VU international office is highly encouraged, but not required. The orientation organized by Semester in Amsterdam is mandatory attendance and will serve to be very useful as you transition to your academic and daily life in Amsterdam. Those who participate fully in the program will benefit culturally, socially, and academically. Keep in mind, neither visitors nor traveling may take precedence over your academic responsibilities. You are expected to attend every class session, including the Independent Study Course (should you choose this option), Dutch Language/Culture Course, and the electives you choose at VU Amsterdam.
Housing & Meals

**Student Apartments**
Students will be staying in student apartments called, De Boelelaan just a five-minute walk from the tram stop De Boelelaan/VU and the VU Amsterdam campus. Directly across from the student apartments is the Zuidas business district. You will also be able to take a short tram ride to Uilenstede, a second student campus, where you can shop at the grocery store, hang out in the cultural center, or work out at the sports center.

Students will have a private room with a shared bathroom and kitchen. These facilities are typically shared with 5-7 other students. Floors will be a mix of Semester in Amsterdam students—both from the U.S. and other countries as well as international exchange students. This is done to facilitate cross-cultural contact and international friendships. Since each student will have a private room, there will be no housing or suitemate preferences. However, if you require a specific accommodation due to physical, social, or emotional needs, please indicate that when you go over your medical history form with the Assistant Director, Emily Gaul.

The floors are co-ed, and all residents share the same bathrooms regardless of gender identification. Rooms will include furniture, kitchen utensils and materials, and a linen pack. Some students choose to bring additional linens or purchase them once in Amsterdam.

The student apartments are located on the first floor of the De Boelelaan apartments with permanent residents on the remaining floors. Please be respectful and cognizant of your neighbors—this is not a dormitory.

**Meals**
Students will be responsible for cooking/preparing their own meals or dining out. It is estimated that students should budget 300-500 euros a month depending on how often you go out. There are several dining options on campus including an affordable, cafeteria style dining hall in the main building.
Campus Life

Classes and offices are housed in two main buildings—the Main building and science building. The Main Building houses the library, cafeteria, study areas, as well as the International Office, Green Office, Student Service Desks, and other event spaces. The campus has a modern feel with many funky and innovative meeting spaces. Due to the university’s sustainability initiatives, there are many green spaces on campus. In addition to these spaces, students can choose to study or work on projects in the multi-level library in the Main building. The campus has a cafeteria, several coffee shops and restaurants, as well as a small grocery store. There is a bike shop in the basement of the Main building where students can buy or repair bikes.

Students can attend events at the Griffioen Cultural center focused on film, music, and dance. The center also offers a wide range of classes at a reduced price for the students. Students can also stay active by utilizing the Sports Center which offers group classes and a gym. There is an affordable membership fee for students. On the campus grounds, there is a basketball field, a volleyball field, and tennis tables, which are free to use at any time throughout the day. If you are interested in art, the Main Building has a permanent exhibition which showcases artwork and there is an art route throughout the public areas on campus. VU Amsterdam also hosts several campus-wide festivals throughout the year for students.

IT and study facilities
Free WIFI is available for all students and employees on campus. There are several computer rooms, a notebook study room and internet work spaces to study comfortably and quietly. All faculties have their own study and computer rooms, often combined. Students can also study in the faculty libraries. The buildings are generally opened from 7AM to 11PM on weekdays and from 8AM to 6PM during the weekend.

International office
The International Office is located on the ground floor of the main building. It provides support to incoming and outgoing students in order to help make the transition to a new country easier. Students are supported in finding accommodation, with immigration matters and in applying for scholarships. The International Service Desk is open on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday between 12 and 2PM for any general questions you may have. Keep an eye on the International Office Facebook page for the latest news, promotions and activities.
Getting Around

Amsterdam has a wide variety of transportation options including busses, trams, metros, trains, taxis, boats, and ferries. However, it is extremely common to travel in the city by foot or by bike

**Bike Transportation**
VU Amsterdam partners with “Bike Boys” which offers rental bikes for €125. You can also choose to purchase a bike the average cost for a second-hand bike ranges from €80-150 depending on the quality. It is possible that when purchasing a second-hand bike you may encounter a stolen bike. In orientation you will receive guidance on determining whether or not it is a stolen bike as purchasing a stolen bike is illegal.

**Public Transportation**
The Semester in Amsterdam program provides an OV card pre-loaded with 5 euros upon arrival. This will be enough to get you through the first day or two on site. Public transportation in Amsterdam uses a “check-in, check-out” system. It is recommended that you use the OV-chipkaart provided, which is a re-loadable card to which you can add money. Check in and Check out scanners are located in the train stations and metro platforms, not on the metros and trains themselves. Scanning stations for buses and trams are located on the vehicles themselves near the doors. A one hour tram pass costs €2.90. If you forget your OV card, you can buy one hour tickets on the tram for €2.90. You cannot buy tickets on the metros. You can reload the OV card in the station or link it to your bank account to automatically reload. Eleven of Amsterdam’s 16 tram lines stop at Centraal Station, located in the city center, and fan out to the rest of the city. Students can expect to spend €50 to €100 per month on public transportation depending on how often they choose to use it.

**Other Transportation Options**
The metro and bus primarily serve the outer districts of Amsterdam. Fares are the same for the metro, bus, and tram. The trains run frequently from Centraal Station and serve domestic destinations such as Haarlem, Leiden, and Delft. **You must have minimum €20 on your OV card to check into the trains. You risk a high fine if you ride public transportation without checking in.** There are also Eurolines that connects with all major European capitals. Taxis are very expensive and not very efficient given Amsterdam’s windy maze-like street system.
Meeting People

Field Trips/Social Activities
ACM students are encouraged to participate in the social activities organized by Semester in Amsterdam and the VU Amsterdam International Office. The two offices organize a variety of programs including city tours, field trips to nearby cities, excursions to museums, meet and greets, dinner parties, museum tours, and group outings. If you are interested in being part of the Semester in Amsterdam Social Program please read more about it [here](#) and sign up to participate!

There is also the International Student Association which organizes more informal activities. ACM students have the option to pay 5 euros at the start of the semester (during orientation), which allows you to participate in most of their activities.

Student associations
There is also the International Student Association (ESN VU Amsterdam) which organizes more informal activities. ACM students have the option to pay 5 euros at the start of the semester (during orientation), which allows you to participate in most of their activities. This is an organization for all international and Dutch students at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. It brings together students from around the world to introduce them to the university, to Amsterdam and to make them feel at home. ESN VU Amsterdam organizes a host of activities, including cocktail parties, weekly get-togethers (borrels), weekend trips and social gatherings every two weeks.

Communication
Mail
Students can have their mail sent to their personal address at De Boelelaan, which you will receive upon arrival. There are mailboxes in the lobby of their building.

Shipping
There are high import taxes charged for mailing parcels internationally as well as a standard 35 euros administrative charge for DHL, UPS, FEDEX, etc.

Computers
If you have a laptop, we recommend that you bring it with you. You will need to be sure that your computer is insured, as ACM does not provide insurance coverage for students’ personal property. Keep in mind that it is best not to travel about with your laptop in Amsterdam with the same confidence you would at home. If you travel outside of Amsterdam, it is highly recommended that you leave your computer in your apartment in Amsterdam as hostels and other accommodations may not be as well-secured.

Cell Phones
Phones and SIM cards can be purchased at most local telephone stores. If you have an unlocked smart phone, you can switch your U.S. SIM card for a Dutch SIM card. All students receive a Dutch SIM card at orientation with online instructions on where and how to set up your phone plan. If you would like to take a look at your plan/pay as you go options ahead of time, please visit the [Lebara](#)
To call the U.S. from the Netherlands, dial the international calling code (00) + country code (1 for the U.S.) + 3-digit area code + 7-digit number. To call the Netherlands from the U.S., dial the international calling code (011) + country code (31 for the Netherlands) + number. When making international calls, remember to account for possible time zone differences.

Handling Money

Money
The amount of money you’ll need in Amsterdam depends upon your plans, tastes, and habits. Past participants spent between $2,000 and $4,000 (including food for lunch), but as the exchange rate fluctuates, you might have to adjust your budget. Nearly all students spend more than they think they will. Your major daily expenses will include meals, transportation, and personal necessities. (For information on how much you can expect to spend on daily expense and personal needs please see the Cost Information Sheet on the ACM website.)

You’ll need more money if you plan to travel on your own before the program, during the program break, or after the program, or if you plan to buy a lot of gifts and other things to take home with you. Be sure to budget for the cost of your travel accommodations and meals during the program break.

Credit and Debit Cards
Using debit and credit cards is the safest and most convenient way to handle your money while you're abroad, and it is recommended that you bring one of each type. ATMs on the PLUS and CIRRUS networks are available throughout Europe, and can be used to withdraw currency from your American account. ATMs almost always offer better exchange rates than banks and currency exchange offices. It is advised that you withdraw money from the ATM located inside the bank during banking hours, in case of a problem. Take out large amounts less frequently rather than withdrawing small amounts more frequently in order to minimize ATM fees.

Most places in the Netherlands will only accept credit cards with a “chip and pin”, not the older version of U.S. credit cards that only have the metal strip.

The Semester in Amsterdam staff will help you set up a Dutch bank account during orientation, should that be the option you choose. This account will allow you to withdraw money and “pin” when making purchases. “Pinning” works much like a debit card, meaning you enter a four-digit pin code to finalize your purchase. If you choose to use a bank card from the U.S., please be aware that they may not be accepted everywhere including the OV-chipkaart loading stations or small shops/restaurants. International transaction fees might apply.

Before the program starts, inform your bank and credit card provider that you will be spending a semester in Amsterdam so that they won’t block activity on your card, thinking it was stolen. In the unfortunate event that your card actually is lost or stolen, make sure you know the procedure for blocking its use and obtaining a new one while you are overseas. You should also ask about the fees that you will be assessed for using the card abroad.

While ATM and debit cards are the best means of obtaining currency, for extra caution—ATM and debit cards can get lost, stolen, or eaten by cash machines – you might also bring along a credit card and some dollars in cash —perhaps $100 to $200; please keep this money in a hidden place at your
apartment. Traveler’s checks are not recommended. As of November 2016, 1.00 U.S. Dollar equaled 0.94 Euros.

Cash
All airports will have ATMs, and for a fee you can withdraw some cash as soon as you arrive in Europe; this is probably the smartest option in terms of getting a good exchange rate. If you decide to buy euros in the U.S., buy only enough to tide you over for the first few days. Foreign currency can be purchased in the U.S. at any bank with an international banking department and at some airports. Don’t keep more than €50 in cash in your wallet at a time.

Please note that for all Euro currency, the front side is uniform but the back side may have different designs based upon where the money was produced.

Preparing to Go and Arrival

Registering for Classes
When registering for classes please be sure to select a second choice option for each of your electives, as there may be scheduling conflicts once the finalized schedule is posted. We suggest you discuss both these options with your home campus and academic adviser(s) to ensure that you are meeting your home campus requirements.

The VU Amsterdam staff is available to do two advising Skype sessions with each ACM student. One will take place upon acceptance into ACM’s Amsterdam program, and the other once you have submitted your VU Amsterdam application. Some advising sessions make take place as a group. More
information about setting up these sessions will be communicated to you in our pre-departure emails and on the pre-departure checklist. You will be contacted to set up an advising session with VU Amsterdam in the 2 weeks following your acceptance into the program.

When independently looking for course options, please review the listed target audience, entry requirements, and recommended background knowledge to determine if the class will be a good fit for you. You can also discuss this during your meeting with the advisors at VU Amsterdam. If you are unable to attend a virtual Skype Advising session, please email semesterinamsterdam@vu.nl to ask specific questions about your course plan. There are several helpful tips on VU Amsterdam's website.

**Forms to ACM**
You will need to provide ACM with several forms by **March 29th**, please email them to OCS@acm.edu:

- A copy of your passport (JPEG format)
- **VU application form**
  1. Only choose courses in Period 1 and Period 2
  2. ACM already has your transcript on file
  3. Choose Discovering Dutch or Imagining the Dutch as your 3rd course for Period 1 (it lasts 14 weeks)
- Two passport size photos (JPEG format)

**If you are applying to the Honors College to take the visiting faculty director's course, you will need:**
- A motivation letter

You will be required to submit a $50 deposit by **April 13th** in order to confirm your spot on the Fall program. Please submit your ACM Medical form (which requires the signature of a medical professional) by **July 1st** to ocs@acm.edu. Flight information should be submitted by July 15th via email and online form. All other forms are due on **May 1st**. Please reference the accepted student checklist for Amsterdam for a month by month pre-departure guide. The accepted student webpage includes links to all required pre-departure documents including and in addition to those listed above. On that page, you will also find several program specific resources for your reference.

You may be asked by the visiting faculty director to provide more information about your proposed independent study project. Please watch your email for information regarding forms and deadlines.

**Pre-Departure Orientation & Communication**

**Skype Q&A Sessions**
A pre-departure skype Q&A session will be offered in the months preceding the start of the program. Participation details will be sent out on May 1, and the skype Q&A session will be offered on July 11th from 9:30am to 10:30am. This is optional, but is highly recommended as it is a chance for you to “meet” your peers via video conference and an opportunity to follow up on any of the material you received from the canvas pre-departure modules.

Please note, that you can reach out to the Off-Campus Study Coordinator, Marlee Stein, for any program specific or individual questions prior to the start of the program. She is happy to speak to you via phone or email. If you have specific health, safety, or medical concerns, please reach out to Emily Gaul, Assistant Director.
Canvas Site
ACM has created a canvas site outlining general ACM policies, personal goal setting, and location-specific details regarding living arrangements, culture, academics. The site is organized by subject-specific modules that you will be required to complete. Please review the content and complete the assignment connected with that given module. You will need to work through all the pre-departure modules by June 15th. Log in and enrollment details will be sent to you via email in mid May.

Passport and Visa

Passport
You will need a valid passport. Make sure that your passport is valid at least six months from the day you board the plane to return home. If it expires during that time, you should renew it immediately. Passport information is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

As a precaution against a lost or stolen passport, ACM recommends that you make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport. Carry this information separately; having this information easily available can make the replacement process both quicker and simpler. Keep your passport separate from your wallet in a money belt or other concealed carrier—if you lose your wallet, you won't have lost your passport as well.

Visa and Residence Permit
All visas are processed by VU Amsterdam's visa team. If you are a U.S. student, you may enter the country on a tourist visa. Upon your arrival in Amsterdam, the university international office will help you register with the municipality and make an appointment at the immigration center downtown. Your residence permit and visa will be ready for pick-up a few weeks later from the town hall. If you are an international student, please contact the ACM to discuss your individual situation. As an international student, you may be required to apply for a student visa in the U.S. More information will be shared with you closer to the deadline. These forms must be submitted before May 31st.

The cost of the entry visa is covered by ACM.

- A scan of your ENTIRE passport (all pages that have been stamped)
- VU Antecedent Certificate and Tuberculosis form (more details included in form)
- Proof of Financial Means – this can be a bank statement or a financial aid award letter that indicates you have at least 900 euros (or $ equivalent) per month of your time there. This must be signed and notarized. It can also be an affidavit of support from an individual willing to financially support you during your time in the Netherlands. Proof of financial means template form and more information can be found here.

Travel Arrangements
You should make your travel arrangements as soon as possible after you accept the offer to participate in the program: keep in mind that earlier reservations are likely cheaper. You will need to arrange to fly from your home to Amsterdam. You should fly into Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. Please reference the schedule above for specific dates. Once you have purchased your flight, please make sure to fill out the flight information pre-departure form and send us a photo, pdf, or word document of your complete itinerary to ocs@acm.edu.

ACM has set up a special arrangement with STA Travel. STA Travel is one the world's largest youth and student travel agencies. They work specifically with youth (under 26), students, and teachers to
provide discounted and flexible flights. ACM students have access to dedicated phone line that will connect them with a specialist who can recommend flights. Please contact STA at 1-800-708-9758.

Special Notice: Please do not book your flights through Germany. Since you will be traveling to the Netherlands only on a tourist visa (then later applying for a residence permit), you may encounter complications due to new German policies. **U.S. students, who wish to obtain their residence permit upon arrival in the Schengen State, should book a different flight or avoid transiting through a German airport.**

**Arrival**
Students will arrive on Friday, August 18, no later than 1:00pm to Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport. You must arrive on this day to guarantee access to your housing. Students have the option of using **Tinker Taxi**, a free airport pick-up and drop-off. Arrivals after 1:00pm to the Amsterdam airport must arrange their own transportation from Schiphol Airport to De Boelelaan. You will be arriving two weeks before the start of classes.

If you plan to arrive earlier than Friday, August 18, you may do so; however, you are required to arrange your own housing and transportation from the airport should you arrive prior to the official program arrival date.

**Orientation**
As an ACM Amsterdam student, you will participate in a private arrival and orientation program offered in combination with the general introduction program for all international students attending VU Amsterdam including exchange and full-degree students. Approximately 1,000 students will be in attendance. Events are sponsored by several different offices and campus groups.

Orientation includes social meet and greets, events throughout the city, walking tours, a day trip to Efteling Theme park, a campus party, and several workshops to orient you to the Dutch education system, culture, and language. During orientation, small groups of international students will be paired with Dutch students (The Buddy System); together these groups will arrange informal social activities such as potlucks and karaoke nights.

When available, the Fall 2017 orientation schedule organized by **Semester in Amsterdam** will be posted in the resources section on the accepted student webpage. Acm.edu/acceptedstudents.

**Preparing to Go Checklist**
Please use the checklist below to ensure you have completed all the recommendations from the previous section.

- Call your bank and credit card company to notify them that you will be using your card in the Netherlands and perhaps parts of Europe should you choose to travel.
- Make copies of important documents and give to a trusted family member
  - Passport
  - CISI Insurance Card
  - All credit/debit cards
  - Flight confirmations
- Contact your cell phone carrier to determine what options you have overseas
- Talk with your doctor about bringing a supply of your daily medications
- Make sure you have between $100 and $200 US Dollars to bring with you
Packing Considerations

What to Bring
Packing can seem like an overwhelming task, but using common sense and the following checklists can make it much less daunting. If you see something on the list you can do without or would never use in the U.S., don’t bring it! Use your own judgment.

Don’t forget to leave some extra space for things you’ll buy when you’re abroad. Airline luggage restrictions can be strict and you are likely to be charged for excess luggage. Check with your airline to find out what the exact limitations are regarding the number of pieces of luggage you can take and restrictions on the weight and dimensions of your luggage. When you pack your bags, include your name and the program address inside each bag in case it gets lost. If your bags are damaged or missing when you arrive, file a written report with the airline before leaving the airport. Remember that when you travel you may want to use a large backpack or duffel bag, rather than a suitcase.

We strongly recommend that you carry your money, passport, and any valuables in a money belt/necklace beneath your clothes while you’re traveling. You can get one for about $20 at specialty travel shops or stores like Target or Wal-Mart. It’s an unfortunate truth that petty thieves and pickpockets are common in larger European cities, especially on trains and in train stations. Do not presume that you will be immune to this, and do take precautions to prevent it.

Pack in your carry-on luggage anything you’ll need immediately upon arrival. Check the Transportation Security Administration website for the latest carry-on luggage restrictions (www.tsa.gov). Never put prescription drugs or valuables in your checked luggage.

Clothing
Students coming to Amsterdam are advised to pack clothing for all weather types: sun, wind, rain, snow. Appropriate wind and rain gear is particularly important. Amsterdam can get extremely cold in the Winter and many people living in Amsterdam travel by foot or bike, even in the Winter months. We recommend you bring a Winter coat for your time in Amsterdam. Past participants emphasize the need for warm clothes. A light fall jacket, winter coat, and scarves and gloves are recommended. Bringing a pair of warm socks or slippers for the student apartment is recommended as well.

Bring clothes that will layer well and adapt to different seasons and situations. If you know you’ll wear something only once or twice during the semester, leave it at home. You save some space in your luggage if you tightly and smoothly roll your clothes instead of folding them (your clothes will arrive in a more wearable condition, too).

Comfortable walking shoes are essential; rubber soled gym shoes are best. Sweaters are versatile for traveling—they work with jackets on frigid days or without jackets on mild ones. Bring your jeans. You should have casual clothes for everyday use and one or two dressy outfits for special occasions. Bring an umbrella; however, you could also purchase that in Amsterdam.

Typical student dress in Amsterdam is casual, but not sloppy. Dutch and international students dress in a more sophisticated style than students on most U.S. campuses. Bring what you need, and remember you will buy some things in Europe. And don’t forget that you will want room in your luggage to get your purchases home with you.
Personal Items
It isn’t necessary to bring a full semester’s supply of toiletries and/or other personal care items. Participants recommend bringing travel sizes when possible, since smaller products conserve space in your luggage. (Don't forget the 3-1-1 rule for carry-on luggage: 3.4 oz (100ml) containers of liquids or gels; 1 quart-sized, clear ziplock bag; 1 bag per passenger.) You could plan to bring a two-week supply of the toiletries and personal items you’ll need in Amsterdam (e.g. shampoo & conditioner, soap, moisturizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, tampons/pads, etc.). You can then buy more once you start to get acquainted with the city; and most major American brands are available in Europe.

Electronic Items
Avoid bringing electrical appliances. If you bring an appliance from home, keep in mind that the voltage in Europe is 220. Some electronics, like computers, come equipped to convert to different voltages, but others like hairdryers, do not necessarily come with a converter. You will also need an adapter plug to change the shape of the plug for your appliance.

Essential Documents
- Passport
- Photocopies of visa materials submitted to VU-net
- Photo copy of passport, credit cards, and ID
- Flight Letter
- Printed copy of acceptance email

Cultural Norms and Expectations
Cultural Differences
By design, an off-campus program is unlike life on your home campus. In addition to everyday differences—what and when you eat, you may also encounter larger, more elusive cultural contrasts. A big part of living abroad is recognizing and integrating to your new cultural surroundings. As you meet and establish friendships with Dutch people and other international students, you might find that you need to adapt to different rules of etiquette and consider social and political perspectives you may not have heard expressed at home. Dutch culture is a very direct culture and you may notice this difference when speaking with your Dutch peers and professors. Dutch culture also places a strong emphasis on tolerance and diversity.

Adapting to new and different cultural practices and belief systems certainly doesn’t mean you have to abandon your own, but being aware of and attuned to cultural differences can help smooth the transition to life in another country. We encourage you to play the role of an anthropologist: observe Dutch culture and behavior on the street and in your classes and try to adapt. The Dutch come in all shapes, sizes, and attitudes, like any other group. You will encounter a discourteous, pushy, or aggressive person on occasion. Try not to take it personally. There will undoubtedly be days when you find it all overwhelming and crave the comforts of home—things you may realize you took completely for granted before. This is all a part of becoming attuned to the cross-cultural challenges of education abroad.

ACM ALUMNI ADVICE: Be patient with yourself and your peers as you go through the process of adjusting to life in your host country. Somethings will be different from what you’ve expected. Don’t be afraid to talk about any concerns and ask questions!
Cultural Adjustment

In the first weeks when you arrive on site it is not uncommon to experience challenges in adjusting to a different culture. You may be surprised, dismayed, and even feel anxiety at the cultural differences in a new location and the unfamiliar situations in which you find yourself. The on-site orientation program is intended to help ease this adjustment, and you will in all likelihood find yourself adapting to the new culture and situations in a surprisingly short time. You’ll also likely discover that being able to settle in and “learn the ropes” can give you an enormous sense of self-confidence.

Research has shown that many students go through a three-step adjustment process in acclimating to their host country. In the first stage (once they have gotten over any feelings of jet lag), they are likely to be excited and entranced by the novelty of being in a new location and delighted with most things around them. In the second stage once the initial euphoria has worn off, they may focus on the ways in which everything is different or “foreign.” The tendency is to highlight the differences and compare them unfavorably to things at home—the food is bad, the computer facilities are inferior, services are badly organized, etc. During the third stage, their view of home and their program location is more nuanced—they are likely to take a more analytic approach to both locations and to find good and bad things in each.

As a student studying abroad, you will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable at times, especially in the beginning, and likely hear your fellow students expressing similar responses. This is not unusual, and we anticipate that after a time these feelings of discomfort and insecurity will dissipate. It’s very normal for all students to experience challenges with cultural adjustment. You are not alone and we can help in many ways.

We encourage you to speak with the Program Director and other on-site staff about your concerns and to raise any questions about the host country and the new culture to which you are learning to adapt. In order to get the most out of the experience, please keep a positive, open attitude and be flexible in the various situations you encounter.

Host Country Information

History

The Romans were the early conquerors of what today is known as the Netherlands. Amsterdam started as a small fishing community around 1200. Amsterdam began to grow as the industrial center it is today when the country’s first railway opened in 1839. After WWI, Amsterdam remained the country’s industrial center. The 1920’s were known as the Boom years, but similar to the rest of the world, the Netherlands suffered in the world depression in the 1930s. At this time, many Jewish refugees fled to Amsterdam from Germany. The Jewish population became important contributors to the civic and commercial life in Amsterdam. A Jewish
presence in Amsterdam has existed since the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal in the 1580s. The Netherlands tried to remain neutral in WWII, but Germany invaded in May 1940. Only one in every 16 of Amsterdam’s 90,000 Jews survived the war.

The city’s growth resumed after the war due to U.S. aid and through the Marshall plan. 1962 to 1982 marked Dutch Society’s cultural revolution. Today, a complex political environment exists, most of which is due to a polarized debate surrounding current immigration policies.

**Economy**
The Netherlands has the 6th largest economy in the European union, a high trade surplus, stable industrial relations and moderate unemployment. The Netherlands serves as an important role as a European transportation hub. The main industries are food processing, chemicals, petroleum refining, and electrical machinery. They have a highly mechanized agriculture sector.

**People**
The Netherlands has a population of 17,016,967 people. Dutch society is distinctively multicultural. People from all parts of the world have been living in the Netherlands for decades, thanks to the country’s historical legacy of being a welcoming and tolerant place. The university is located in vibrant Amsterdam, which boasts the largest concentration of students in the Netherlands and English as a second language. Many Dutch citizens are bilingual or tri-lingual which contributes to their openness and acceptance towards diversity and differences. Residents in Amsterdam hail from over 180 countries. The city is therefore considered the world’s most diverse city, even more diverse than New York city!
Although the economy has struggled a bit in recent years, the Dutch still rank among the world’s most satisfied people.

Although Amsterdam is a small city with around 835,000 inhabitants, it has a diverse and bustling cultural scene offering over 350 music festivals per year, world class art ranging from van Gogh to Warhol to Banksy, as well as a booming cuisine culture with food from around the world. For shopping this is also the place to be. From top-end stores to small bargain and boutique type stores, you’re sure to find what you like in Amsterdam. Check out the [I Amsterdam website](#) for a full overview of sights and attractions.

**Geography**
The Netherlands is located in Western Europe and borders the North Sea between Belgium and Germany. The Netherlands is a small country, about twice the size of New Jersey. The country is located at mouths of three major European rivers (Rine, Maas or Meuse, and Schelde.)
Program Contact Information

ACM Chicago Office
11 E. Adams
Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60603

Phone: 312.263.5000
Fax: 312.263.5879
Emergency: 312.561.5911

Office Hours:
Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Marlee Stein
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mstein@acm.edu

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Tim Tibbetts
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VU Amsterdam International Office
HG OE-68, De Boelelann 1105, 1081 HV
Amsterdam, The Netherland

Kelly Donovan, International Student Officer
Phone: +31 (0)20 59 84356
Email: semesterinamsterdam@vu.nl

U.S. Embassy in the Netherlands
Lange Voorhout 102
2514 EJ The Hague
Telephone: +(31)(70) 310-2209
Emergency After-Hours Telephone: (070) 310-2209
Fax: +(31)(70) 310-2207

U.S. Consulate General Amsterdam
Museumplein 19
1071 DJ Amsterdam
Telephone: +(31)(20) 575-5309
Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +(31)(70) 310-2209
Fax: +(31)(0) 20-575-5330
Insurance, Health and Safety

While studying off-campus offers new educational opportunities, it can also present challenges and risks that are different from those on your home campus. Just as you prepare for a new mode of learning on the program, you should also think about living in a new environment that may contain new kinds of risks. You need to be aware of your health and your responsibility for monitoring new or ongoing medical concerns. You will not have the same support systems or forms of assistance that you have turned to on your home campus or in your home town. You will have days that are exciting and rewarding and also days where everything seems strange and exhausting. The visiting director, ACM, VU Amsterdam staff and counseling services, and new friends can all serve as great support systems. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare for your semester in Amsterdam.

For information about health and safety in the Netherlands as a whole, two very useful websites are those of the U.S. Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control. These can be found at:


https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/netherlands.html

(The Consular Information Sheet contains information about visa requirements, safety and crime, and road conditions among other things, while the Background Notes are more similar to an almanac entry, providing a summary of Dutch politics, history, the economy and basic statistics).

Once you have been registered for your medical insurance (see below), you will also have access to country-specific health and safety information on their website

Insurance
ACM will provide health insurance coverage for all students participating in its programs. This coverage is through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI), a company with experience in providing excellent service and health coverage to students abroad.

The policy with CISI provides a broad range of coverage for students’ medical treatment while abroad. Here are several key features of the coverage:

- Coverage for both medically-necessary office visits and hospitalization;
- No exclusion for mental disorders or alcohol-related accidents or illnesses;
- Coverage for prescription drugs (excluding preventative medications such as malaria prophylaxis);
- No exclusion for pre-existing conditions (except in the case of pregnancies beginning before the start of the program);
- Medical evacuation coverage; and
- No deductible.

The policy will cover students from the official arrival date through the official departure date for their programs. It covers you not only while you are in the host country, but also during any time you may travel away from the program site—e.g., during program vacation periods.
The policy, however, should **not** replace any coverage you have in the U.S., nor should you discontinue your U.S. American health insurance coverage—it provides only limited amounts of coverage for follow-up treatment of illnesses or injuries which begin while you are abroad and only provides for up to 30 days.

The cost of this coverage is included in your program fee, and ACM will handle your registration for the insurance. It is also possible for you to independently purchase supplemental coverage through CISI to extend the days that you will be covered by the ACM policy. (If, for example, you plan to leave early for the program site or do some traveling outside the U.S. after the program, you can purchase health insurance coverage for that additional time.) The cost of this additional coverage is approximately $40/month. CISI will e-mail students a welcome letter and an ID card a few weeks prior to departure; the welcome letter will describe how to log on to www.culturalinsurance.com to view the tools available to policyholders and to purchase any additional coverage. (You will need the ID number provided in the card and also a credit card to which the cost of the additional coverage can be billed. It is also possible to purchase the additional coverage by phone.)

CISI is a medical insurance plan and will not cover your personal property. Please consult your parents'/guardians’ insurance to ensure adequate coverage of anything you take to or purchase in The Netherlands.

**Health**

**Medications and Other Medical Preparation**

Health will be a special concern while you are living in an unfamiliar place without access to your regular physician or health service. In order to be sure that you will receive proper care from a physician who does not know you, you will have to provide an accurate and complete medical history. For allergies, ACM will need to know exactly what you are allergic to, what the reaction is, and the remedy you generally use. Any health information you provide to the ACM office is, of course, confidential. It will be released only to the program director.

If you have any pre-existing medical problems, bring a letter from the attending physician that describes the medical condition and any prescription medications (including the generic name). While vaccinations are not required to travel to the Netherlands, the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) provides a list of recommended vaccines and medicines for disease prevention.

If you take one or more prescription drugs regularly, you will want to be sure you can continue this medication while abroad. Speak with your physician about the possibility of obtaining a supply to take with you. (And please make sure to keep it in its original container in your carry-on luggage with a copy of the prescription.) We recommend that students bring a 6-month supply of their prescription medications because prescribing rules and drug availability vary all over Europe. If you cannot get a supply to take with you, you will want to verify that this medication can be obtained in the Netherlands. **You should not plan to have drugs (of any kind) sent to you while abroad.**

**Medical Services**

Good medical facilities in the Netherlands are widely available. VU has a medical/teaching hospital on campus. Due to the university’s close ties with this hospital, most students utilize this facility should they need medical care. ACM’s insurance provider CISI has certain “preferred providers,” but if students
choose to visit a “non-preferred provider” they can still be reimbursed for costs later by CISI. Pharmacies, known as an “Apotheek” are ubiquitous and can assist with emergency prescription needs.

**Psychological Counseling**
If you require regular sessions with a counselor, please include this information on your Medical History Form so that we can help to make arrangements in advance. Our staff and our partners at is experienced with the resources available in the Netherlands and the benefits available to you through our health insurance provider.

Counseling services are available on campus. The psychological and counseling department offers counseling sessions for VU students. There is an enrollment fee of 25 euros before the introductory appointment. After that, the student can go to a maximum of 5 individual counseling sessions. The psychological counselors at VU do not do therapy sessions as we know them in the U.S. (for disorders such as depression and anxiety). In those situations, we encourage students to go to their home doctor for a referral.

**Safety**
Amsterdam is a safe city, and the Netherlands is a hospitable and secure country. Like any place else in the world, however, there is some crime and random violence, but most of it is preventable or avoidable with appropriate caution. You should be especially careful when you first arrive in Amsterdam and everything is unfamiliar. VU staff and the ACM Faculty Director will provide you with more information during your orientation when you first arrive and can advise you about safety as you travel around Amsterdam.

While participating in the program, you will be living and studying as a foreign guest and will be expected to conform to the standards of Dutch society. Keep in mind that you are subject to all local laws and that if you violate local laws, even unknowingly you may face legal consequences. As a member of the ACM-sponsored group, your actions will reflect on the program and could jeopardize the position and legal status of the program. ACM has carefully cultivated good relations with people at VU Amsterdam and illegal or inappropriate actions can imperil both yourself and the program.

**Communication and Emergencies**
All students are required to have a mode of communication where the visiting faculty director and/or ACM staff can get in immediate contact with you should there be an emergency. The emergency phone number for the ACM is 312.561.5911. Please see all other contact information above.

Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)](https://step.state.gov) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

**Independent Travel**
You also need to be mindful of your personal safety as you travel independently on weekends or during the break. **You are expected to inform the director and your host family of any travel plans and your expected time of return.** You will be provided access to ACM’s Independent Travel Form to submit anytime you travel away from Amsterdam without program staff. This form allows ACM to contact you or provide you with resources in case of emergency or change to program itineraries. When traveling, always use your hotel safe and keep baggage locked and secure. Monitor media and local information sources and factor that information into any personal travel plans or activities.

ACM ALUMNI ADVICE: The #1 thing you can do to facilitate your own safety is simply to be aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts.
Crime and Random Violence
Amsterdam is a relatively safe city and the Netherlands is a hospitable and secure country. Like any place in the world, however, Amsterdam and other parts of Europe have some crime and random violence. The rate of violent crime in the Netherlands is low, tourists are often targeted by pickpockets, back snatchers, and other petty thieves who are especially active around train and tram stations, in the city center, and aboard public transportation. It is especially common when traveling to and from the Schiphol Airport. In large European cities, thieves and frauds often work in groups and may involve children. One thief distracts you, while the other robs you. Make sure to stay aware of your surroundings and belongings at all times. Avoid leaving valuables unattended.

We encourage you to travel with a partner or in a small group. Women need to be particularly careful, especially returning home at night. Please pay close attention to the VU Amsterdam’s health and safety recommendations shared during orientation. In your home country, you know what the potential danger signs are; you should take special care until you learn the comparable signs in Amsterdam.

There are several simple rules that can help you avoid being a victim of a crime:
- Familiarize yourself with the European monetary system and count your change.
- Put your wallet back in your purse or pack and close the purse/pack before leaving a shop.
- Carry purses and other bags across the body and hold on to them firmly; carry them away from the street side of the sidewalk.
- Never let your passport or your bags out of your sight
- Always be aware of your surroundings
- Travel in groups and never walk alone at night
- Carry only as much cash as you need.

Motor Vehicles
You may not acquire or operate any kind of motorized vehicle while you are a participant in the ACM program, including motorcycles, motorbikes, or scooters. You will probably find, as do a great many residents of Amsterdam, that public transportation and walking are the most efficient means of getting around.
Alcohol and Drug Use

Alcohol
One significant area of difference between Amsterdam and the U.S. has to do with consumption of alcohol. While there is not the rigid enforcement of a drinking age in Amsterdam, you will also find that the Dutch rarely drink to become intoxicated. Rather, alcohol is consumed in moderation on social occasions and with meals. Public drunkenness and rowdy behavior are frowned upon and will likely serve to identify you as an American thus potentially singling you out for further unwanted attention. Please keep in mind that your judgment is likely to be impaired with alcohol, and that you may lose the ability to evaluate situations with the same caution and sensitivity you would normally use.

Drugs
Despite the common misperception that marijuana and hashish are controlled substances in the Netherlands, possession of more than 5 grams is a misdemeanor that can still result in a fine. “Coffee shops” are often frequented by petty criminals who prey on tourists under the influence of drugs. Students who frequent coffee shops can fall victim to pickpocketing, identity theft, sexual assault, and other crimes. Marijuana and other drug use can be very dangerous and can result in health implications and academic or legal consequences. It is illegal to take any controlled substance, such as marijuana, into or out of the Netherlands.

Any accusation of an ACM student regarding drug possession or use could have severe repercussions on the program, the staff, and the students. Therefore, the possession or use of any illegal drugs may result in immediate dismissal from the program.

If you are arrested because of suspected involvement with drugs, the ACM program staff and American Consulate or Embassy will be able to do very little to help you. It is particularly important that you realize that ACM cannot function in a foreign country in the same way that your home college may function in dealings with civil authorities. In short, in case of trouble there is little ACM can do to insulate you from the effects of European laws. If you are arrested on a drug charge, you may or may not be allowed consultation with the American Consulate.

ACM Program Policies

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) is a consortium of 14 residential liberal arts colleges in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Colorado. ACM programs reflect the academic standards and policies of its member colleges, and the standards and policies in the paragraphs which follow are applicable for all ACM off-campus study programs.

The ACM Off-Campus Study Program mission begins:

Our programs’ academic standards and curricula are rooted in the liberal arts. They emphasize the interdisciplinary educational approach, intimacy of small classes, focus on independent research, and discussion-based learning that characterize liberal arts education at ACM colleges. The programs accelerate and deepen students’ scholarly and personal growth through structured interactions between selected topics and distinctive locations. They offer educational experiences unlike those found in conventional classrooms.

You and all ACM students play an essential role in ensuring that the scholarly and personal growth sought as an outcome of this mission is accomplished in a dignified and respectful manner in conjunction with the people and customs of the host culture. As guests in the cities and countries of our various programs, all students are subject to the same laws and regulations as their host citizens and are responsible for knowing both ACM policies and local laws.
The ACM Code of Student Responsibility and its subsidiary policies exist to facilitate the educational process for you and the other students and to ensure a safe, fair, and successful experience for all students, staff, and faculty. While enrolled in an ACM program, your home campus may also choose to hold you accountable to their code of conduct. If enrolled in a host institution during their off-campus study experience, students will also be subject to the policies of that host institution.

**ACM Code of Student Responsibility**

The ACM Code of Student Responsibility reads as follows:

I understand that I am required to comply with all policies and procedures of the ACM including policies outlined here as well as program-specific rules introduced during the on-site orientation. My participation in an ACM program represents my college and the ACM consortium at all times. I know that my behavior must respect the values and norms of the host community while promoting the safety and wellbeing of other students and my program’s faculty and staff. I will strive to ensure that my behavior supports the educational nature of the ACM at all times.

Studying off-campus during your college career can be both very exciting and very challenging. Many students return to their home campus feeling dramatically changed, eager to embark on a new academic or career path, or with a clearer understanding of who they are as an individual. Off-campus study is a privilege; an option within higher education that not all students can select as a part of their collegiate experience. It often creates lifetime memories and presents multiple prospects for personal growth. In order to protect this opportunity for all students, however, ACM has instituted some policies and to ensure it remains accessible to the greatest possible number of students.

Please note that these policies and procedures comprise guidelines that can be changed by ACM at any time in its discretion. It is not and should not be construed as a contract, either express or implied.

**ACM Policies and Procedures**

On our website, you will find the following ACM policies and procedures for which you are expected to adhere to:

- ACM Code of Student Responsibility
- ACM Policy on Academics
- ACM Housing Policy
- ACM Policy on Alcohol and Drugs
- ACM Policy on Sexual Harassment
- ACM Policy on Dual Relationships
- ACM Policy on Sexual Assault
- ACM Policy on Non-Discrimination
- ACM Student Conduct Procedures
- ACM Policy on Tuition, Program Fees and Refunds
- ACM Policy on Health and Safety Notification
- Off-Campus Study Contract
- ACM Photograph and Video Release
- Evaluations and Surveys

Please read through these closely before signing the ACM Comprehensive Release form (this is included on the accepted student webpage). These policies were designed with your health and well-being in mind. They are intended to support you, your peers, and the entire off-campus study community as you develop personally, professionally, and academically on your Off-Campus Study Program.
Personal Information “Opt-Out” Form

In accordance with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, a student’s education records are maintained as confidential by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) and, except for a limited number of special circumstances listed in that law, will not be released to a third party without the student’s prior written consent. FERPA regulations do allow the ACM to release limited “directory information” at any time, without obtaining the prior consent of the student. The ACM does not provide directory information to third parties for commercial purposes. Provisions of FERPA allow the institution to define certain classes of information as “directory information,” and the ACM has determined that the following student information is considered directory information:

- Name
- College/university
- E-mail address
- Off-campus study program
- Semester/term of off-campus study
- Awards, honors

Additionally, throughout the duration of ACM off-campus study programs, ACM representatives may take photographs, make video or audio recordings, or write articles about program participants and/or activities that involve program participants. Many student participants and associated faculty and staff may also take photos and videos, write articles, or maintain blogs for their own personal use, which they frequently share with the ACM. The ACM also shares short excerpts of student work, such as titles and overviews of projects and brief research abstracts. These images, recordings, excerpts, and accounts are regularly collected for the primary purpose of highlighting and showcasing the ACM via our website, posters, brochures, and other educational marketing materials. (Note: The ACM will never publish full accounts of student projects or research or use student photographs, video, or audio recordings without specific permission from the student in question.)

If you do not want the ACM to release your directory information, use your likeness in photos or recordings, or share excerpts of your work without your prior consent, you may choose to “opt-out” by making a copy and signing the form below. Requests can only be made via this form, which must be completed and returned to the ACM prior to participation in the program, to be applicable to that semester/term and for subsequent periods of time. Students wishing to reverse this decision may complete and submit the revocation section of the form below.

I request the withholding of the following personally identifiable information, associated with my participation in an off-campus study program through the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM). I understand that upon submission of this form, the information checked will not be released or used for ACM promotional purposes without my written consent or unless the ACM is required by law or permitted under FERPA to release such information without my prior written consent; and that the checked information will not otherwise be released or used from the time the ACM receives my form until my opt-out request is rescinded. I further understand that if any of the information checked below is released or used prior to the ACM receiving my opt-out request, the ACM may not be able to stop the disclosure of this information.

**CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY:**
- [ ] Name
- [ ] College/university
- [ ] E-mail address
- [ ] Off-campus study program
- [ ] Semester/term of off-campus study
- [ ] Awards, honors
- [ ] Use of likeness in ACM recordings (photos, video, audio, written articles)
- [ ] Use of short excerpts of student work (titles, overviews, and abstracts)
- [ ] All items listed above

______________________________________ ______________________________   __________________
Name (please print)  Signature          Date

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**RESCISSION OF OPT-OUT REQUEST**
I, the above named student, hereby rescind my request to opt-out from the release of the information indicated above.

________________________________________________________  ___________________________________
Signature      Date