The BCGS-ELP is a Columbia University-led program and takes place in cooperation with and on the premises of FU-BEST, located on the Campus Lankwitz at the Freie Universität Berlin.

Requirements

- Columbia University
  Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement (UGE)
  Spring 2022 Resources for Study Abroad, Travel Policy, and Recommendations: https://global.undergrad.columbia.edu/article/spring-2022-resources-study-abroad

In order to participate in study abroad, all students on BCGS-ELP will be required to:

- Comply with the vaccine mandate and be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to departure for their program.
- Abide by BCGS's Spring 2022 Travel Policy which prohibits travel outside Germany (details please see below).
- Adhere to established protocols for quarantine/isolation procedures, contact tracing and follow-up testing. Students will be responsible for any additional expenses related to quarantine, isolation, and testing.
- Follow local public health and institutional guidelines if they test positive for COVID or believe they have been exposed. Furthermore, inform Columbia Health via email at covidtesttrace@columbia.edu if they test positive for COVID while in Germany.
- Complete mandatory program prerequisites and post-acceptance materials and requirements, including Community Compacts, Participation Agreements, and Travel Risk Waivers.
- Comply with required program protocols, policies, and deadlines.
- Columbia participants only: Take safety training and get tested upon return to Columbia’s campus.

BCGS-ELP Spring 2022 Travel Policy

- BCGS-ELP is not permitting travel outside of Germany during the period of the program.
- Subject to individual program guidelines, and based on the current situation in Germany, travel within the country is permitted. Students will need to:
  - Enter all travel information into their Columbia ISOS profile at least 2 weeks in advance of their planned travel, including itinerary, lodging, and contact information.
  - Follow program protocols pertaining to independent travel.
- Personal travel plans should not interfere with regularly scheduled program activities. Students are advised not to make any personal travel reservations or purchases before the start of the program.
BCGS-ELP Spring 2022 Accommodation Policy

Students may choose between Student Hotel and Student Village only. Homestay and independent housing are no options for BCGS-ELP students, even though they are available by FU-BEST.

Understand Financial Commitments

Please understand any financial commitments you are making and if they are refundable, and if so up to what date. Examples include, plane flights, program deposits and visa fees. You could consider purchasing travel insurance. You should not expect to be reimbursed for airline tickets or other program related expenses should the program be cancelled.

Entry & Exit Requirements

BCGS is monitoring Germany’s entry and exit requirements, which includes the necessary visa documentation. All participants are encouraged to do so as well, given that travelers are required to book their own travel.

Individual Contingency Plans

Columbia-led and Columbia-approved programs are subject to pandemic-related modifications, and circumstances can change at any time, whether prior to the program start or after you have arrived onsite. This can result in unexpected changes including but not limited to:

- courses moving to an online or hybrid format
- field trips and other activities being rescheduled or cancelled
- modifications related to housing options
- the restriction of program and/or personal travel
- other travel and program modifications depending on local guidance and policies that you will be required to follow

Important to note is that BCGS-ELP students have to comply with all of the above, even if FU-BEST regulations state otherwise. BCGS-ELP policies supersede FU-BEST policies.

The current COVID-19 Preparedness & Contingency Plans of FU-BEST are stated below, non-applicable sections for BCGS-ELP students are crossed out, please also see: https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/fubest/health-and-safety/covid-19/index.html. As the pandemic situation evolves, they may be subject to change.

Spring 2022: COVID-19 Pandemic – Program Protocol

In order to ensure that the Spring Semester 2022 can be carried out safely and effectively for all involved, the following information and regulations will be considered applicable. Please be aware of this source of information as well: https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/fubest/health-and-safety/faq-covid_spring22/index.html

1. Arrival, check-in, and orientation
• Crossing the border and entering Germany will be subject to official German regulations. Participants are responsible to be familiar with these. This includes any testing and quarantine protocols for anyone not (acceptably) vaccinated.

• Please check the following sites:
  - https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/
  - https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus/current-information-for-travellers.html

• In case of a mandatory quarantine upon arrival or at any point during the semester, the affected participant(s) is/are expected to communicate clearly and frequently with program staff, so that effective logistical support can be rendered. Financial cost (extra rent, food, etc.) associated with any quarantine period is to be carried solely by the participant, not by the program.

• If the on-site Orientation Days cannot be (fully) carried out due to quarantine complications, an online orientation will be substituted. This would also be applicable to the start of instruction. See also under Nr. 2.

• Students should book flights that involve flexible cancellation conditions, in light of international travel uncertainties associated with the pandemic. Furthermore, we strongly recommend taking out travel/trip/semester cancellation insurance in view of current circumstances.

2. Student accommodation

• Students residing at the Student Village or Student Hotel will be subject to the pandemic- and hygiene-related policies and regulations in force at these locations, as communicated before and/or upon arrival. See the following websites: https://www.studentendorf.berlin/news/measures-against-corona-virus-covid-19-2/ (Student Village) and https://www.thestudenthotel.com/de/coronavirus/ (Student Hotel).

• Homestays feature policies and regulations developed jointly by the homestay hosts and the program in accordance with official hygiene and public health requirements; these are appended to this protocol.

• If a participant needs to be placed in quarantine upon arrival or after the semester gets underway, appropriate arrangements will be made, in accordance with the specific location where the student is living (homestay, Student Village or Student Hotel). Students housed independently would be required to make their own arrangements in this case, with assistance and advice provided by the program where possible. The program will ensure that all students in quarantine situations shall be able to continue and complete their academic work.

• If a participant is required to quarantine, this will normally be carried out at their chosen place of accommodation. In case that is not possible, the program will assist in setting up alternative quarantine arrangements, but will not carry financial responsibility. For students in quarantine, orientation sessions and/or course-work will be available online (live and/or recorded and/or self-directed). Students in quarantine in a homestay will receive breakfast and dinner as part of their fees (lunch expenses are not included), those in other housing options are responsible for their own food expenses. The program will cooperate with the Student Hotel and the Student Village on any logistical arrangements in this regard.
3. Public transportation and daily life in Berlin

- Pandemic-related policies and regulations in Berlin currently in effect (may) include: social distancing rules, wearing masks in public places (shops, public transportation, museums, etc.), personal hygiene directives, registration of personal data at restaurants, places of worship, etc. in order to facilitate contact-tracing, and so forth. Here are useful websites for up-to-date information: https://www.berlin.de/en/. Full information regarding official regulations can be found here: https://www.berlin.de/corona/en/measures/directive/ and https://www.berlin.de/corona/en/measures/. Corona-test information for Berlin is available here: https://www.berlin.de/corona/en/testing-facilities/. Should a vaccination option become available in Berlin during the semester, program staff will share the appropriate information with participants. For current Berlin information on this issue, please look at https://www.berlin.de/corona/en/vaccination/.

- Please note that the pandemic may cause restrictions with respect to events and activities involving larger groups of people, such as sports games, concerts, club life, etc. Access to various cultural activities and events is curtailed, restricted, regulated via online tickets only, etc. The program expects all staff and participants to act responsibly and in accordance with clearly announced regulations and policies with respect to the pandemic, both on- and off-campus.

- Beyond the broadly based, non-pandemic-related regular medical services available to participants, the program will provide referrals to students in need of specific, pandemic-related services, such as vaccination, testing or quarantine-related matters. For situations involving the pandemic, the primary referral will be to the local public health offices (Gesundheitsämter), which serve as central coordinating service points.

4. General campus rules and planning

- Based on Berlin authorities’ and university regulations, the program has put in place policies and arrangements to ensure proper hygiene safeguards regarding instruction and other activities in campus facilities. One of the key informational documents can be found here: https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/fubest/doku/COVID-19-Info-FU-BEST.pdf.

- Students are advised to limit their presence on campus as much as possible, focused on course sessions and other program-related activities. Subject courses will be limited to 19 participants maximum per course and will feature one weekly session, encompassing 2,5 hours on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday afternoon (1:30-4 p.m. or 4:30-7 p.m.). Experiential German language sessions take place on Monday and Thursday mornings (9-12). Intensive German language sessions take place on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings (9-12).

- Non-vaccinated participants are expected to be tested every day they come to campus. When possible, the program will offer an on-campus, supervised self-test option 30 minutes prior to a student’s first classroom session on a particular day. Other testing arrangements may also be considered, depending on evolving circumstances. Students who test positive will be sent into quarantine and connected with appropriate medical care (financially covered by program insurance and/or additional, personal insurance). Any student suffering from respiratory illness or problems (flu, cold, or cold-like symptoms) should not be on campus, even if he/she has not tested positive for COVID-19.

- Rules regarding social distancing, mask-wearing, and overall hygiene apply to all areas of the campus, including the classrooms. Faculty, staff, and students are required to wear masks during meetings, class sessions, and inside campus buildings.

- Should food/cafeteria facilities on campus be open during the program, everyone associated with the FU-BEST program will abide by any posted or announced regulations.

5. Academic policies

- The FU-BEST Academic Regulations (https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/fubest/doku/Academic-Regulations.pdf) remain in force throughout the program and semester. See course planning information under Nr. 4.
• Should general pandemic developments or an individual COVID-19 infection interfere with the conduct or completion of the semester, the program will ensure that all students or the affected individual participant, as the case may be, can continue his/her/their coursework and studies in order to complete the full semester, including the use of online resources and/or directed self-study. The program is under no obligation, however, to provide either a laptop or PC or to arrange internet access (the latter is particularly important for students opting to set up their own accommodation).

• If pandemic-related developments, such as a renewed lockdown, impact the program in its entirety, arrangements will be made for all students to complete the semester via online instruction. The program will make every effort to enable participants to remain in Berlin and complete the semester successfully on-site, most likely via online instruction (but please note the point made previously regarding internet access, laptops/PCs as well). If the situation necessitates students’ departure from Berlin in order to return home, FU-BEST will render logistical and organizational assistance.

6. Field-trips in Berlin

• These program field-trips, if they can be carried out for a particular course or for the program as a whole, are subject to the rules and conditions addressed under nrs. 3 and 4.

7. Multi-day excursions

• The program will endeavor to carry out the excursions as planned. Travel will take place by bus and/or train, subject to all pandemic-related measures that the companies running these busses or trains have put in place. Lodging at the excursion locations will also be adjusted and managed, both by FU-BEST and by the lodging facilities themselves, in accordance with pandemic-related requirements. The program and its participants will be required to observe whatever regulations are in place at these various sites.

• Every participant in these activities must carry evidence of full vaccination or be able to show a negative test result not older than 24 hours prior to departure.

• Should a virus infection occur during a multi-day trip, as shown by a positive test result, the participant(s) in question shall return home to Berlin immediately, enter quarantine, and seek medical assistance. If a COVID-19 infection prevents a participant from joining the entire multi-day excursion, he/she shall receive an excursion-refund from the program.

• Should a multi-day excursion, with overnight stays, not be possible, the program will substitute a series of daytrips to nearby destinations focused on Fridays. Here as well, every participant must carry evidence of full vaccination or be able to show a negative test result not older than 24 hours prior to departure on the daytrip.

8. Insurance

• Each participant is enrolled in German medical insurance (https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/fubest/health-and-safety/insurance/index.html ) as part of the program. However, medical conditions that already existed before the start of the program are not covered by the insurance issued through the program. This also means that costs related to a COVID-19 infection diagnosed within the first two weeks of one’s stay in Berlin will not be covered by the program’s insurance (due to the incubation period associated with the virus). All participants are urged to retain medical insurance coverage back home during their time in Berlin as well.

9. BCGS Communications Protocol for Positive COVID-19 Cases

If a student tests positive:

● They must inform the FU BEST Program Manager or Academic Director and the BCGS Resident Director.

● The Resident Director informs Columbia University’s Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement (UGE).
UGE informs student’s home school so they are aware of interruptions to the student’s participation in the program and to support student wellness during the isolation period.

- If the positive result came from a rapid antigen test, the student needs to contact a local practitioner or public health department of the district in which they live by phone (Berlin Corona Hotline 030-90282828) and request a PCR test at one of the certified testing centers to ensure that the results are accurate. If confirmed positive, the local public health authority will be informed and will take the necessary steps of contact tracing, testing, and quarantining.

- The student is not allowed to conduct activity in person on campus and should quarantine themselves in accordance with state regulations. If students are fully vaccinated and boosted, as well as masked and socially distanced in class, they will likely not need to quarantine even if exposed but the decision is up to public health authorities.

- The student informs Columbia Health via email at covidtesttrace@columbia.edu of any confirmed COVID-19 infection.

- The student can return to campus only after the end of quarantine and an additional 48 hours with no symptoms and negative test.

SARS-CoV-2 Preparedness

FU-BEST adheres to the SARS-CoV-2 (commonly referred to as “coronavirus”) preparedness and response guidelines published by Freie Universität Berlin, based on §33 and §36 of the German Infectious Diseases Protection Act (IfSG) and specific recommendations by the Robert-Koch-Institut (federal agency for disease control and prevention) and the BZgA (federal center for health education).

Please see this PDF and this website of Freie Universität Berlin for further information.

COVID-19 Contingency Plans for the Spring 2022 Semester

The safety and well-being of our participants remains our top priority at Freie Universität Berlin European Studies Program (FU-BEST). As we plan to run the Spring Semester 2022, featuring on-site instruction and a meaningful study abroad experience for our students here in Berlin, we are nevertheless preparing for different scenarios connected to further developments regarding the containment of COVID-19 in Germany and the United States.

The following matrix depicts our contingency strategies for situations arising at various points in time between students’ financial commitment to the Spring semester in mid-November 2021 and its completion in May 2022 (some may at some point be in effect simultaneously).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>FU-BEST Solution</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign nationals are not allowed to enter Germany to pursue study abroad</td>
<td>Spring Semester needs to be cancelled; full refund of fees paid to the program will be issued to all participants</td>
<td>Anytime between mid-November and start of Spring Semester (Jan. 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut-down of public life and campus closed off for the duration of the Spring Semester or substantial parts thereof</td>
<td>Spring Semester needs to be cancelled; full refund of fees paid to the program will be issued to all participants</td>
<td>Anytime between mid-November and start of Spring Semester (Jan. 31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Travelers entering Germany are required to undergo self-quarantine. Program orientation and instruction will be held online for first two or three weeks, FU-BEST assists with provision of food and necessities in program-mediated housing during self-quarantine (costs to be borne by participant). At start of Spring Semester (Jan. 31 through mid-February)

Instruction will go online, certain program elements (excursion, course field-trips, volunteering etc.) will be cancelled; partial refunds might be issued if still feasible at that point. Anytime between start of Spring Semester (Jan. 31) and end of Spring Semester (May 20)

Instruction continues to take place on-site, group events will be modified, where possible, or cancelled, where necessary. Anytime between mid-November and end of Spring Semester (May 20)

Please note:

- All FU-BEST participants are covered by German health insurance and with housing (if program-mediated) for the whole duration of the semester. However, since the program’s health insurance does not cover Coronavirus infections acquired before participants’ arrival in the Schengen zone (i.e., infections that would cause participants to be tested positively during the first two weeks after their arrival), all participants are urged to maintain their insurance policy back home simultaneously.

- Once the semester has started, instruction will be offered on-site or online until the program has to be cancelled in its entirety by Freie Universität Berlin.

- In case of a high number of program cancellations by admitted students between now and mid-June, a reduction of our subject course portfolio might result and students’ course enrollment may have to be re-evaluated and adjusted accordingly. Should this be necessary, participants will be informed immediately.

Adapted Refund and Cancellation Policies for the Spring 2022 Semester

The following adapted refund and cancellation policies are in effect for the Spring 2022 semester:

A) A full refund of all fees paid (minus bank fees) is issued in case that*: 
   - The student is not allowed to enter Germany to pursue short-term study abroad because of current state of residence
   - The student’s visa is denied or revoked before or after semester start
   - The entire FU-BEST semester has to be cancelled by Freie Universität Berlin before semester start.

B) A partial refund of fees paid (minus bank fees), as far as still possible at the point of cancellation, is issued in case that*: 
   - The entire FU-BEST semester has to be cancelled by Freie Universität Berlin after semester start.
   - The semester continues to be offered but as an online program with certain program elements (e.g., the weeklong excursion) cancelled.
FU-BEST Program SARS-CoV-2 Preparedness

FU-BEST adheres to the SARS-CoV-2 (commonly referred to as “coronavirus”) preparedness and response guidelines published by Freie Universität Berlin, based on §33 and §36 of the German Infectious Diseases Protection Act (IfSG) and specific recommendations by the Robert-Koch-Institut (federal agency for disease control and prevention) and the BZgA (federal center for health education).

Preventative measures on campus

Students, faculty and staff are required to...

- ...avoid close contact to others and keep physical distance of at least 1.5 meters.
  This will be implemented by staff and faculty in FU-BEST offices and classrooms, and generally in all campus facilities.

- ...wear a cloth face cover when around others.
  It is possible to spread COVID-19 without feeling sick. The cloth face cover is meant to protect others in case the person wearing it is infected. Wearing a face cover does not negate the physical distancing guideline.

- ...follow general personal hygiene guidelines.
  This includes washing one's hands often with water and soap for at least 20 seconds especially after using the bathroom, blowing one's nose, coughing, sneezing etc. Using hand sanitizers is generally useful if washing one’s hands with water and soap is not possible at the moment. Such dispensers are easily accessible in all university facilities and bathrooms on campus.

- ...employ cough and sneeze etiquette by using the inside of their elbow or covering their face with a tissue.

Students, faculty and staff with signs of a fever and/or presence of other respiratory tract symptoms (dry cough, shortness of breath, sore throat etc.) are not allowed on campus. Those affected will have to contact local practitioners or hospitals for further guidance (contacts are provided by FU-BEST staff).

Frequently touched surfaces in FU-BEST classrooms (door knobs, tables etc.) are cleaned and disinfected before each session. Bathrooms are cleaned daily.

FU-BEST classrooms will be ventilated multiple times a day, at least once per hour, to minimize airborne transmission (i.e. via aerosols).

Fact sheets and posters in crucial locations (entrances, hallways, bathrooms etc.) remind students to adhere to the guidelines listed above.

Preventative measures off campus

Accommodation

Our housing partners (Student Village, The Student Hotel, host families) are required by law to adhere to the basic rules and procedures outlined in the German Infectious Diseases Protection Act (IfSG). We have vetted our partners regarding their compliance with basic physical distancing rules and hygiene guidelines.

Off-campus events

FU-BEST students and staff will have to follow the rules and guidelines posted by the local establishment in Berlin or locations relevant to the week-long excursion (museums, memorials, hotels/hostels, transportation via bus/train etc.). FU-BEST staff will inform students in advance should certain guidelines exceed the usual measures and require additional preparations.