



Hamilton

*Hamilton College
Academic Year (or semester) in Spain
Academic Year / Fall 2026*

MAIN BULLETIN

Welcome to the Hamilton College Academic Year (or semester) in Spain (HCAYS) program! We are confident that your stay in Spain will prove to be a rich, exciting, and positive experience.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ AND RE-READ THE ENCLOSED INFORMATION AT LEAST TWICE. THIS BULLETIN CONTAINS A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION AND REQUIRES A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF ACTIONS ON YOUR PART, MANY OF WHICH MUST BE UNDERTAKEN IMMEDIATELY. CHECK THIS DOCUMENT THOROUGHLY BEFORE CALLING IN ANY QUESTIONS TO THE HCAYS OFFICE. WE HAVE TRIED TO ANTICIPATE MANY OF THESE HERE.

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I. OFFICE ADDRESSES and STAFF INFORMATION

Hamilton College Academic Year (or semester) in Spain: Clinton Office

198 College Hill Road
Clinton, New York 13323
Tel: 315-859-4022
Fax: 315-859-4222
<http://www.hamilton.edu/spain>
hcays@hamilton.edu

2026-27 Personnel

Yin Zhang, HCAYS Senior Coordinator
hcays@hamilton.edu
Tel: 315-859-4519

Hamilton College Academic Year (or semester) in Spain: Madrid Office

Hamilton College Academic Year in Spain
Calle Castelló, 128
28006 Madrid
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Fax: 81.052.9341

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cjensen@hamilton.edu
Cell: (+34) 649 482 931

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vsoto@hcays.es

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icamara@hcays.es
Cell: (+34) 650 777 958

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

ACADEMIC DIRECTOR

Edna Rodríguez-Plate is an Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies at Hamilton, where she teaches an array of classes, from Hispanic film to Caribbean culture and literature. Having been at Hamilton since 2008, Professor Rodríguez-Plate has served as the General Director of HCAYS, has been the Chair of the Hispanic Studies department, and has also served as the Resident Director in Madrid many times. She also has experience with study abroad programs beyond Hamilton, having led other programs in Salamanca, Galicia, and Sevilla, before joining HCAYS.

Professor Rodríguez-Plate is the author of *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban Cultural Identity*, and has published a number of articles on Cuban film and Caribbean literature. She has presented her research internationally as well as locally.

When she is not at Hamilton, she enjoys spending time watching films, doing martial arts, and practicing Qigong.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

Néstor Rodríguez is a poet, essayist, and literary scholar. He has published five poetry collections: *Animal pedestre* (San Juan, 2004), *El desasido* (Mexico City, 2009), *Limo* (Rio de Janeiro, 2018), *Poesía reunida* (Santo Domingo, 2018), and *Ojo de agua* (Toronto, 2021). As a scholar, he has written widely on Latin American cultural production and is the author of two academic books and two collections of essays.

Prof. Rodríguez has taught Spanish language as well as undergraduate and graduate courses in Latin American literature for over two decades in the United States and Canada. He has also held multiple administrative positions, including directing academic programs and coordinating a summer-abroad program in Puerto Rico.

In his free time, he enjoys reading poetry, cooking, and taking long walks.

FACILITIES: HCAYS

The program headquarters is nestled in one of the most beautiful, safe, and sought-after neighborhoods in Madrid, El Viso, in the Chamartín District. This neighborhood, built between 1933 and 1936, is part of the renowned rationalist architectural design movement. Our building was fully renovated in 2015, yet the facade remains the same, as it is protected for its historical value. Our neighborhood has all the conveniences of being near the heart of the city center, but our building is on a quiet street with trees. It has excellent transportation options, with six different metro stations nearby (lines 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10). We are located only minutes from Calle Serrano, the most exclusive shopping district in Madrid. We are surrounded by many cafés and restaurants, and by local Spanish students, who study at the IE Business School. We are steps away from the Museo Lázaro Galdiano and the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, and within walking distance to Museo de Arte Público, Museo Sorolla and the Fundación Juan March.

The contact information of the HCAYS Centro is:

Hamilton College
Calle Castelló, 128
28006 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (+34) 91 535 7899

This is the address you should use to receive mail in Spain. Please be warned that, due to strict Spanish customs policies, you should not receive packages. Make sure to share this information with friends and family.

III. TRAVEL TO MADRID

A. MEETING AT THE CENTER

The first meeting at the Center will be **on Tuesday, September 1, at 10:00 a.m.**

You will receive the address and contact information of your host family shortly. **We strongly encourage you to write to your host family before your arrival to introduce yourself.**

PLEASE NOTE: If you have any last-minute travel changes, you must contact Isabel Cámara in Madrid to verify your arrival at: (+34) 650 777 958 or icamara@hcays.es.

B. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

TRAVEL/FLIGHTS

You are responsible for your own travel to Madrid, and the transportation from the airport to your homes in Madrid. You can take a TAXI (33 Euros fixed rate—reimbursable with receipt) to your new *casa española*.

When you arrive at your homes, you must notify the Administrative Director or Isabel Cámara by telephone or email. You may call the HCAYS office (915 357 899) or their cell phones (listed above) to let one of them know that you arrived safe and sound in Madrid! You will have the rest of the day to rest and get to know your Spanish families a little better and have them help you with any questions or doubts you may have.

C. PASSPORTS

If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately. If you already have a passport, check that it does not expire within 6 months of the program end date. If you need to renew your passport, do so immediately. Information on U.S. passport applications renewal can be found at: www.travel.state.gov

If you have renewed your passport since your HCAYS application, you must update your passport information and upload a copy of your new passport in your online study abroad account. If you have any problems uploading your new passport, please email a copy to the Program Coordinator at hcays@hamilton.edu.

Make sure your passport is *signed* before uploading a copy to your online study abroad account.

D. SPANISH STUDENT VISA

HCAYS students attending schools in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware are eligible to apply for the visa through HCAYS as a part of a group application.

VISA APPLICATION PROCESS (Group Application for students attending schools in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware)

HCAYS will submit all the eligible student visa applications and required documents at a group appointment with the NY Consulate. **To prepare for this appointment, you must complete all forms in the online study abroad account by their due dates, including submitting or mailing some of these forms/materials and your passport to the HCAYS office.**

An HCAYS representative will then deliver all the applications and required documentation (including passports) to the NY Consulate. It takes *at least* 4 to 6 weeks for the Consulate to process a student visa. This means that **you will not have access to your passport during this time** and you must plan any personal travel accordingly! HCAYS has no control over this process and cannot guarantee the return of a passport by a certain date.

Once processed, the Consulate will notify HCAYS, and an HCAYS representative will return to the Consulate to collect all passports containing student visas. The HCAYS Coordinator will mail your passport back to you via tracked, overnight shipping.

REQUIRED VISA APPLICATION MATERIALS AND FEES

In order to complete your visa process, instructions are included in your online account on how to complete and submit the following required visa application materials:

- **National visa application:** Completed and signed. Please use the provided Visa Application Worksheet included in the online form to help you complete this application correctly. Incorrect answers can result in your visa being denied. If you have any questions about this application, contact the HCAYS coordinator.
- **Visa privacy form**
- **Original passport and copy:** The passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the program end date with at least two blank pages to affix the visa. Be sure your passport is signed. You will upload a copy of your passport and also submit or mail your original passport to the HCAYS office by the deadline indicated in your online account.
- **One printed ID photo**
- **Copy of your current student ID**
- **Medical Certificate**
- *Non-U.S. citizens only: Copy of Alien Residence Card (Green-Card) or residence visa valid in USA (except B1/B2).*

The following additional materials needed for the student visa application process will be created and provided by HCAYS:

- **Proof of Acceptance** to the program

- Official **Statement of Enrollment** verifying that you are a member of our program
- **Proof of Financial Means** (Financial Guaranty Letter)
- **Health Insurance:** A letter indicating that you have MAPFRE Health Insurance in Spain with a minimum coverage equal to 30.000€ or its equivalent in dollars.
- **Proof of Coverage** for “Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation in Case of Death” during the planning period of stay in Spain.

ACADEMIC YEAR STUDENTS NEED ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS:

- **Criminal Background Check with Apostille**

AY students need to get an FBI background check.

Note: The background checks are only valid for 90 days and must still be valid when you apply for the visa—they should then stamp it: “received on X date” to ensure its validity.

This process can take a significant amount of time and must be started as soon as possible. Delays can result in problems issuing an academic year visa.

- Visit the FBI Background Check website for complete information:
<https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/identity-history-summary-checks>
- Visit <https://www.edo.cjis.gov/> to begin your online request. Enter your email to begin the process. You’ll submit your email and receive an email back with a link that says “Click here to access your request” and a PIN that you’ll input. Choose the electronic/digital receipt of your FBI background check to ensure the quickest response.
- Fingerprint Options: You must be fingerprinted following the instructions provided on the FBI website linked above. This can be electronic or on hard-copy which is then mailed to the FBI. If your fingerprints are taken via an electronic/live scan device, get a hard copy. Fingerprinting is recommended to be done by a fingerprinting technician and may be available at your local police station. Be sure to ask what you need to bring with you to your fingerprinting appointment. The HCAYS coordinator can help you find the best choice for you.

Mail the fingerprint card and a copy of your confirmation email to:

FBI CJIS Division

ATTN: ELECTRONIC SUMMARY REQUEST

1000 Custer Hollow Road

Clarksburg, WV 26306

After you pay, you get another email from the same email as before (Criminal Justice Information Services) with the subject line: Identity History Summary Request Confirmation. The email is a receipt that has your order number, the payment verification code.

When you receive your FBI background check, tell the HCAYS coordinator ASAP, and the HCAYS coordinator will assist in getting the document an **apostille.**

AGAIN, MOST HCAYS STUDENTS APPLY FOR THE VISA THROUGH HCAYS AS A PART OF A GROUP APPLICATION. However, some exceptions are as follows:

- If you are a **non-Hamilton student** and you do not attend a college within NY, NJ, CT, PA or DE, you will need to apply for the visa independently at the consulate in your “**jurisdiction**.” Consult with the HCAYS coordinator (Yin Zhang, hcays@hamilton.edu) ASAP for more information on making a visa appointment and preparing for an independent application.
- If you are an **international student**, you will need to determine whether you are able to stay in the United States for the duration of the visa application process and which consulate you are eligible to apply through. If you will be traveling during this period or returning to your home country, you may need to apply in your home country.
- If you will be out of the United States during the visa application process (on another study abroad program, for example), you may need to apply for your student visa independently within the country where you currently reside/study. Contact the HCAYS coordinator (Yin Zhang, hcays@hamilton.edu) immediately to discuss the best option for your situation.

If you **cannot** complete the group visa application process for a valid reason that has been approved by the HCAYS coordinator, you **must** contact the Consulate responsible for your jurisdiction as soon as possible to learn the exact documentation necessary. **Check now** to see if you need to make an appointment to submit your visa application as these appointments tend to be booked quickly! Remember, the process from application to completion can take as much as 6-8 weeks!

Important: HCAYS does not assume responsibility for securing visas. HCAYS will add the **visa application fee** to your HCAYS invoice for those who participate in the group visa application.

Visit the Spanish Consulate Website for current consulate fees and processes:
<https://www.exteriores.gob.es/Consulados/nuevayork/en/Paginas/index.aspx>

E. GENERAL BAGGAGE INFORMATION

Please check your airline's baggage policy. Do not take more than **two items of checked luggage** and **one small carry-on**. Please pack only essential items. Do not plan to send luggage or trunks separately. Bring only what you can carry by yourself without help.

We recommend that students pack extra clothing for orientation in carry-on luggage, in case of delayed/lost luggage.

F. WHAT TO PACK

Students are urged to bring plenty of warm clothing. The fall and spring climate are generally very mild in Madrid, but November through March can be cold. We do not recommend bringing electrical appliances. If you must, you will need an electrical converter in addition to a plug adapter. In Madrid and the rest of Europe, voltage varies between 220 and 115, and the cycles are 50 (as opposed to 60 in the U.S.), which destroy devices such as hair dryers or beard clippers and can cause fires. Hair dryers and other small electronic appliances are readily available in Madrid. We recommend that you purchase these items once you arrive in Spain. It is cheaper, safer and less complicated.

In contrast, most American-made laptop computers and smartphones can be used in Spain and the rest of Europe with a simple, inexpensive plug adapter—widely available in Madrid—as most models adapt themselves to the change of voltage. (For example, all Apple products only need the simple plug adapter.)

G. TRAVEL

EU SCHENGEN COUNTRIES

Schengen is an agreement between many European countries aimed at creating a common area without internal borders. If you enter Spain from one of the EU Schengen countries, and not from the US, you will have to declare your entrance into Spanish territory. This can be done at the Madrid airport, in any police station, or in the Dirección General Offices. You will have 72 hours to do so. For help or more information about this requirement, please ask our HCAYS Academic Coordinator at the Center on Orientation Day.

H. STUDENT ID CARD

Please make sure to bring your student ID from your home university.

I. ISIC CARD

HCAYS will provide each student with an ISIC student identity card. This ID certifies your student status and offers you supplemental health and accident insurance and discounts on museum entrance fees. The ISIC will be your Student Identity Card while in Madrid. More information about the ISIC card is available at www.isic.org or www.isic.es

IV. PROGRAM COSTS AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

<https://www.hamilton.edu/academics/offcampusstudy/spain/apply/expenses>

2026-27 Academic Year

Billable Costs

Program Fee*	\$74,700
Visa Application Fee	\$160

Program Fee: Approximately \$55,100.00 relates to tuition and \$19,600.00 to room and board. The program fee includes room and board, orientation trip, instruction and tuition, organized excursions, group entertainment and visits, MAPFRE and Blue Cross Blue Shield Global Solutions travel health insurance, and a Madrid monthly public transportation card. **Please note that personal travels outside Madrid and Spain are not included.*

Estimated Costs (Non-billable)

Passport	\$165
International Flights	\$1,200 – 1,600
Winter Break: Round-trip flight to return to the U.S. or independent accommodation in Madrid	\$1,300 - \$2500
Textbooks and Materials	\$500
Personal Expenses	\$2,800

2026 Fall Semester

Billable Costs

Program Fee**	\$37,350
Visa Application Fee	\$160

Program Fee: Approximately \$27,550.00 relates to tuition and \$9,800.00 to room and board. The program fee includes room and board, orientation trip, instruction and tuition, organized excursions, group entertainment and visits, MAPFRE and Blue Cross Blue Shield Global Solutions travel health insurance, and a Madrid monthly public transportation card.. **Please note that personal travels outside Madrid and Spain are not included.

Estimated Costs (Non-billable)

Passport	\$165
International Flights	\$1,200 - \$1,600
Textbooks and Materials	\$200
Personal Expenses	\$1,000

Payment Information: Academic Year and Fall semester charges and statements are released by July 15 with a due date of August 15. Spring semester charges are released by December 10 with a due date of January 10.

Hamilton Students: The Billing Office will bill Hamilton students electronically.

Non-Hamilton Students: The Billing Office will mail invoices directly to non-Hamilton students' permanent addresses and to the student's home campus. It is the student's responsibility to work with their home campus to determine their payment responsibilities. For more information about this process, contact the HCAYS coordinator and your home campus study abroad office.

V. FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid awards and scholarships will be subtracted from the main payment when received by the Program. (We will accept financial aid disbursements on your College's schedule, but we require this information in writing.) Consult the webpage for further details concerning what the fee covers, refunds, where to send payments, etc.

Those of you who hold transferable financial grants must notify us in writing of the amount of scholarship aid that you expect to receive this year. It is not the Program's responsibility to solicit this information from the granting institutions. You should write the proper authorities immediately, requesting that your scholarship be transferred to:

Hamilton College Academic Year (or semester) in Spain
198 College Hill Road
Clinton, New York 13323

All federal financial aid in the form of Federal Perkins Loans, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants or State Student Incentive Grants is transferable. Check with your financial aid office for further information.

All payments and matters of finance should be addressed to:

Hamilton College Business Office
198 College Hill Road
Clinton, New York 13323

Please be sure that the **Business Office** receives your HCAYS payment early or on time!

<https://www.hamilton.edu/academics/offcampusstudy/spain/apply/expenses>

VI. PRELIMINARY COURSE SELECTION

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

- a. Please be reminded that your HCAYS acceptance was contingent upon your successful completion of coursework for the current semester. **Be certain to have a complete transcript sent to us once you have received grades for your most recent semester.**
- b. All students must take four course credit units. One of them must be a language course. Spanish native speakers may request an exemption from this requirement by taking a course at a local university. Extremely advanced non-native speakers who spend the full academic year in Madrid are exempt from the language course requirement during their second semester.
- c. Please access the HCAYS website for the semester course listings and class schedule. Then complete the Course Planning form in your online study abroad account. Be aware that our courses have a limited enrollment of 12-16 students. If a course is absolutely necessary to fulfill any of your graduation requirements, please contact us immediately. As you complete the course planning form, please do not assume that the material of on course will necessarily duplicate that of another, which you have taken. We can provide you with additional

information to enable you to make an informed decision. Course offerings may change after the time you fill out your course planning form. We will keep you informed of changes in course offerings.

- d. Final registration for all courses will be completed by meeting with Professor Rodríguez-Plate before your departure. The courses listed on the planning form are not guaranteed. Students will register in the order by which course planning forms were submitted in the online portal, so it is important to submit your course planning form as early as possible.
- e. After discussing course credits and major requirements with your department, please have your academic advisor review your choices and sign the form in your online account. There will be a prompt in the Course Planning form for you to enter your advisor's email address and they will then receive an email prompting them to sign digitally. This process should also extend to careful planning of the courses you intend to take at your home institution when you return.
- f. We assume that courses unrelated to the Spanish-speaking world if required by your school or your major, can be taken after returning to the USA. If your entire participation in the Program hinges on taking a course unrelated to Spain or Latin America, please contact us right away. In addition, it is very important that you check with your home institution to find out the minimum passing grade to receive home credit.
- g. Credit systems vary from one academic institution to another. You are strongly urged to check carefully with your language department or school administration to verify that you will receive full credit upon your return. The Hispanic Studies Department at Hamilton College considers all of its courses taught in Spain to be 300-level courses. Students interested in having their HCAYS courses count toward a major or minor at their home institution should consult with the department chair prior to departure for approval.

B. COURSE REGULATIONS

No student may drop a course after the day of mid-semester, without incurring a grade of F. There will be no pass/fail (credit/no credit) in any of our courses. If a student wishes to request an exception, they must request it formally in writing as a proposal to the Director no later than the date stipulated by the Hamilton College academic calendar.

C. INDEPENDENT STUDY

Please note that we do not normally allow students to take an Independent Study.

D. PRIVATE LESSONS

The Madrid staff will gladly help search for professors for private classes (music, dance, studio art, etc.), but the program does not pay for these activities.

E. UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY OF SPAIN

It is important that all students have a solid understanding of Spanish history prior to their arrival. Thus, we ask that all members of the group try to purchase a book about Spanish history and culture, and read it before departure. This will help you to fully enjoy and understand the program's cultural immersion activities and frequent group excursions.

F. INTERCULTURAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Our course, *On-Site: Developing Intercultural Competence through Experiential Opportunities*, gives students opportunities to improve their interpersonal communication and Spanish competency through an academic internship in Madrid.

G. SPANISH UNIVERSITY COURSES

Studying at a local Spanish university is a fundamental part of the cultural and academic experience for HCAYS students in Madrid. In addition to courses offered at the HCAYS Center, students can enroll in one course at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) or at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). Some of the courses can be: anthropology, economics, international relations, literature, sociology and history. We help students navigate through the process of finding the course that best fits their needs and curriculum requirements. Additionally, the campus offers sports facilities, choir, bookstores, cafeterias and other extracurricular activities allowing students to be fully immersed in the Spanish language and culture.

If you are interested in the possibility of taking a course at one of these universities, please indicate this interest in the HCAYS Course Selection Form. Professor Rodríguez-Plate and Isabel Cámara will be contacting you with a preliminary list of courses that you will be able to choose from during the registration period.

Since it is impossible for us to guarantee classes at the local university which may be subject to cancellations, availability, and last-minute schedule changes, students who sign up for one of their courses must have a backup class at our Center.

VII. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

You will find a tentative calendar at the end of this document.

VIII. PRE-DEPARTURE MEETING

We will send a pre-departure Zoom meeting date and link to students.

IX. ORIENTATION

There will be an orientation at the Center where everyone will meet, and all questions will be answered. During this orientation, students will receive their health insurance card, student ID card, etc. This orientation starts on **Tuesday, September 1st, at 10:00 a.m.** During orientation, you will undergo an evaluation to determine the language course best suited to your learning process.

During this orientation, the program offers language classes at the Madrid headquarters (*nuestro Centro*), where you will quickly become accustomed to our strict **Spanish-Only Rule**.

Orientation also includes activities to help students immerse themselves in the Spanish culture. Some of these activities may include tours of Madrid, outings around the city, and group lunches. Spanish students accompany the HCAYS students during some of these activities for a more authentic Spanish experience. During the second week of the orientation, HCAYS takes the students on an academic excursion to a specific region of historical relevance to help them understand and adapt to Spanish culture.

A note about both orientation and regular classes: we suggest that you bring at least one standard-size course notebook. You will need this for the orientation. In addition, you should know that it is difficult to find regular lined notebook paper in Spain, since Spanish students prefer to use graph paper for their studies.

Both the orientation and all program excursions will include visits to sites, cathedrals, museums, and other historical places. But they also include tours about local economies and various cultural activities typical of each region. All HCAYS participants must understand that these activities are a mandatory part of the program's academic component. The HCAYS excursions are more elaborate and carefully planned than those of other programs. Because of this and our superb guides' services, almost all past students have found these trips to be immensely enjoyable and informative.

X. EXCURSIONS

Recent excursions that we planned during the academic year have included: Sevilla, Santiago de Compostela, San Sebastián, Palma de Mallorca, Valencia, Granada, and other locations.

STUDENTS MUST ATTEND ALL EXCURSIONS. Excursions are a key part of the Spanish study abroad experience. They offer the opportunity to fully immerse oneself in Spain's cultural diversity and learn about the history, customs, cuisine and art of every region of the country. Therefore, HCAYS expects all students to participate actively in our trips. If you are not able to attend one of the excursions, you must pay 500 Euros to cover the expenses caused by your absence. If you arrive late to an excursion, it is your responsibility to reach the destination on your own to join the group.

XI. INSURANCE INFORMATION

Hamilton College requires that all students maintain their Home or School Medical Insurance. In addition, as HCAYS students, you will receive MAPFRE coverage, medical insurance that will cover your doctor's expenses during your stay in Spain. Upon your arrival in Madrid, you will receive your MAPFRE health insurance card with all of the information regarding your coverage while you are a member of the HCAYS Program.

Through MAPFRE, you will be able to consult a doctor in Madrid (with the help of our HCAYS staff). **You will not need to pay out-of-pocket money for these medical visits or any co-payment.** You will simply provide your HCAYS MAPFRE health insurance card.

HCAYS will also provide coverage (BCBS Global Solutions) for "Emergency Evacuation and Repatriation in Case of Death." BCBS Global Solutions will also help you for some expenses that may not be provided by MAPFRE.

Ultimately, of course, you will be responsible for your health needs and for seeking the appropriate medical assistance.

XII. MEDICAL ADVICE

American immigration authorities do not require a smallpox vaccination certificate. However, many travel authorities continue to recommend inoculation against smallpox. Your family doctor may suggest other shots; we recommend updating all standard vaccinations. Students are strongly encouraged to bring a complete medical dossier to make available to doctors in Spain, program hosts, and the administration in the case of an emergency.

Please be sure to take any prescription medicines with you to cover your needs throughout your stay. You will not be able to receive any medications by mail. Spanish customs will keep them and return them to the sender. You will need a written explanation from your doctor for any prescription medications that you are planning to carry with you, as well as the composition or quantitative formula for any medicine prescribed. (This will prevent any unwarranted actions by the Spanish authorities.)

We also advise you to have all necessary dental work done before leaving the USA. Bring your eyeglass prescription and/or an extra pair of contact lenses, just in case, as MAPFRE does not cover these services.

IMPORTANT:

Students with a history of emotional disorders are advised to carefully consider joining the HCAYS program. The new demands and personal responsibilities of a foreign setting inevitably aggravate such challenges. This is particularly evident in the case of students who have had an eating disorder. Recent withdrawals from the Program for psychological reasons—including breakdowns and panic attacks—attest to the fact that failure to heed this warning may lead to severe complications. If you, your parents, or your physician have not been entirely candid with us, please contact us immediately. THE ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, WITH THE APPROVAL OF HAMILTON COLLEGE, RESERVES THE RIGHT TO INSIST THAT A STUDENT RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES OR DISMISS THE STUDENT FROM THE PROGRAM DUE TO MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES. Should this occur,

the student CANNOT expect any financial reimbursement and will forfeit any academic credit for that semester in Spain.

Association of American Programs in Spain: Statement on Emotional Disorders:

“We, the Directors and administrators of the member programs of the Association of American Programs in Spain (APUNE/AAPS), with the support and concurrence of Dr. Marcos Broschi, Dr. Margarita Loewe, Dr. Manuel Fernández Criado and Dr. Juan Campos Avillar, and based on many years of accumulated experience, wish to remind students contemplating study in Spain that such an endeavor **REQUIRES MATURITY AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY**. The adjustment pressures and relative independence that accompany residence in another country are likely to **EXACERBATE RATHER THAN ALLEVIATE EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS**. The study abroad experience should not be thought of as therapy for those who have suffered emotional difficulties within their native environment.”

Virtually all students who have ignored this advice in the past have had to leave the program partway through the semester, losing a term of course credits and all the fees they paid. **PLEASE NOTE:** the program will not offer a financial reimbursement to a student who must withdraw for emotional or psychological reasons. Students who withdraw for emotional or psychological reasons prior to completion of the semester or year must cover all costs of sending their personal belongings back to their home address.

XIII. FOOD AND MEALS

The primary purpose of participating in the HCAYS is to experience Spanish culture fully. Thus, apart from medical, ethical or religious restrictions, students are expected to accept and participate in all aspects of Spanish cuisine, which is a significant part of the culture. If you wish to receive vegetarian or vegan meals during group travel or activities, you must indicate this to us immediately. The restaurants we will visit during our trips, starting with the Orientation, must be informed in advance of your dietary restrictions and allergies. “Vegetarian meals” are defined as those that exclude meat, fish, and poultry. If you consider yourself a “semi-vegetarian” (i.e. you can eat some, but not all, of these items), you may want to accept regular meals. At this time, you can simply refrain --with a smile-- from eating what you find unacceptable. Since we will have contacted the restaurants far ahead of time, once you have chosen to have vegetarian/vegan meals, you will be required to continue this status for the entire semester.

You will receive an email message from Isabel Cámara (Academic Coordinator) including a survey of allergies and dietary restrictions. Please make sure that you complete the survey prior to your arrival in Spain.

Please bear in mind that you should try to adapt as much as possible to the Spanish culture, and not the other way around. That is, you should avoid attempting to make Spaniards (families, professors, directors, cooks, friends, etc.) live by your eating and living standards and habits.

XIV. ATMs, CHIP-and-PIN & MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

The price of housing and meals is included in the cost of the program. You should budget for a minimum of \$500 per month for school supplies and personal expenses (dry cleaning, “tapas,” extra travel, etc.).

In recent years, the primary method for securing cash has been through the omnipresent ATMs. If you have an ATM bank card from your home bank, you may withdraw funds directly from any of the many MAC / PLUS (etc.) automatic teller machines available throughout Madrid. This way you will obtain the best exchange rate. **Please note: one ATM card should not be the ONLY way to get money; you should have other options to get money as an alternative plan.** You may also use a credit card but keep in mind that not all US credit cards are as widely accepted in Europe. You should contact your bank before arriving in Spain to resolve in advance this potential cause for frustration. Alert your bank about the fact that you will be withdrawing money from abroad for an extended period in order to avoid your account being blocked unexpectedly for security reasons.

Chip-and-PIN credit card information:

Below is a link to an article on the use of USA credit cards in Europe. Apparently, some businesses either are not informed that magnetic strip cards will work with their card readers, or they have explicitly chosen not to accept them for security reasons. Magnetic strip cards are almost never accepted at automated machines. Additionally, some American cards use a 6-digit pin, which is not recognized in Europe. **You should request a chip-and-pin card from your bank prior to departure to avoid any trouble.**

<https://www.bankrate.com/finance/credit-cards/will-your-credit-card-work-abroad/>

XV. CELL PHONE

It is mandatory to have a Spanish cellular phone number. Our staff will use this number to contact you, and you should use it to stay in touch with each other. Also, *be aware that 112 (the local emergency number in Spain, similar to 911 in the United States) ONLY works with a local phone number.*

Once in Madrid, you can ask permission from your hosts to use the home telephone for one local call upon your arrival. After that, you will not be able to use your host family phone. Please respect and obey the family rules for telephone use, particularly for out-going calls. You will receive information at the orientation meeting in Madrid.

You may bring your own smartphone and get a Spanish SIM card or eSIM. It is very important that your phone is “UNLOCKED.” (Check with your current service provider and explain that you will be traveling to Spain and you would like to use a local SIM while there. If your phone is not already factory unlocked, depending on your current provider’s policy and existing contract, they will unlock it.) Your Spanish host family will gladly help you purchase a Spanish SIM card.

HCAYS does not endorse any one cell phone company, but you may ask us for information and advice about different plans and options.

You are required to obtain your Spanish telephone number within three days after arrival. Once you have a Spanish cell phone number, please call or text Isabel Cámara (+34 650 777 958) as soon as possible.

Caution! Do not buy a cell phone or a calling card at the airport. Past students have been scammed. If you find it absolutely necessary to buy a Spanish SIM card at the airport, make sure that you are given a Spanish number (the country code for Spanish phone numbers is +34).

XVI. HOUSING IN SPAIN

The Housing Information that you have completed through your online study abroad account helps us to assign lodging suitable to your needs and desires. We appreciate your candor and reiterate that this information will be kept strictly confidential. **Please submit this information as soon as possible. The deadline to submit this information is April 15, 2026.**

We would like to share several concepts with you concerning your lodging in Madrid:

1. Please keep in mind that, by staying with a Spanish family, you will be entering into, and participating in, another culture. You will find that Spaniards have different values and ways of life than Americans. Spaniards are frugal with water and electricity; their meal schedule will be radically different from what you are used to, etc. You must be psychologically prepared to be accommodating and courteous.
2. You need to be punctual to all meals. This is fundamental, and you should always let your Spanish family know if you will not be having meals at home. You have the freedom to come and go because you will be given a set of keys, but courtesy is always expected. If the keys are lost or stolen, you will need to pay for the cost of a new set of keys. You will be treated as an adult. Clear communication with your host family and our Coordinator for Student and Housing Services is crucial for excellent understanding.

Any questions or concerns should be brought into the open immediately. A few of you may have to bend your daily habits in order not to offend your hosts. Neat attire is expected. If you are sloppy, disrespectful or unclean, your family will simply not understand it. Students in the past have benefited from the cordial relationships we have nurtured over the years with these very special families. We expect you to be considerate and to enjoy the benefits as well. In all contacts with your family, bear in mind that cross-cultural living requires compromise, communication, flexibility, and understanding.

3. A customary way of introduction to your new family is to present them with a small gift. Items that have been successful in the past include food products that are not available in Spain and other typical American products (for instance something from your hometown).
4. Most families will not have members your age, but some will. We continue to seek out families with student-age offspring; however, our main criterion is the personality and suitability of the *family*. Please keep in mind that some of our host “families” are women who live independently. We have retained some hosts who live alone, because of glowing, enthusiastic reports from past students. You may or may not have an HCAYS housemate. All students are placed in a single room.

5. Living with another student from your home institution is generally not allowed, for two reasons: (a) this tends to lead to cliques within the group, with some members being left out, and (b) it makes it much more difficult to adhere, with unwavering consistency, to the Program's main directive: the constant use of Spanish. Our experience has been that, psychologically, it is much easier for students to avoid speaking English if they begin their year in a homestay with someone they have not known before. If there is an overpoweringly urgent reason why you feel you must share a host family with someone from your home school, please let us know.
6. In general, we will try to fulfill your housing needs. However, we are also obligated to accommodate the families' requests, including their preferences for men or women, one- semester or yearlong students, etc. as well as conflicting student petitions.
7. Families will provide Internet connection at home. However, sometimes technology fails. If you are temporarily unable to connect to any form of technology at any point, either at the Center or in the home of your host, this is completely out of our control, and you will need to wait patiently, or use other resources (i.e., cafés that provide Wi-Fi), until the host or Center connections are re-established.
8. If for any reason you have problems with your family, please contact Christine Jensen and the Administrative Director, and speak openly with them. We can only help you if we know that there is a problem.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Late Submission of Housing Information will be processed without reference to personal preferences or requests. It is to your advantage to remit this information quickly by April 15, 2026.

XVII. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Every organization needs some regulations in order to function effectively. The administration of the Program has tried to minimize these, since we plan to treat you as serious and mature adults who do not need a written rule for every occasion. Nevertheless, for your own protection, and to support the goals of the Program, some guidelines are necessary. We include these here so you can fully understand in advance what these regulations are:

1. YOU WILL SPEAK ONLY SPANISH, ALL THE TIME, WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP, HOUSEMATES, ETC. This is the Program's most important regulation and constitutes the very backbone of its philosophy. This will be particularly difficult when you meet other American students from other programs who will--almost inevitably--be speaking English. **Only in the case of an emergency should you consider reverting to English. Students who do not remain firm in this respect should not be in our Program.** We reserve the right to expel any student who does not conform to this rule.

Technology such as e-mail, WhatsApp, X, Instagram, Zoom, FaceTime, etc., have made communication with (non-Spanish speaking) family and friends more accessible than ever. We understand the need to contact your community in English; however, the **HCAYS forbids this activity at the Center or during any official HCAYS activity.** We expect all students to obey this rule as part of our honor code.

2. STUDENTS MUST ATTEND CLASSES REGULARLY. Only a serious excuse should prevent you from completing daily preparations satisfactorily and from being present at every class. Our professors have been advised that you are an extremely hardworking group, and they will expect you to be serious, conscientious students. There are no compromises allowed to this rule. Your final grade will suffer due to absences or tardiness.

3. SINCE THE PROGRAM WILL BE LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU, WE REQUIRE:

- That you notify the Administrative Director whenever you leave your family lodging overnight. There is a Google survey that you will be required to fill with your name, destination and dates before your departure.
- That you do not plan to own or drive a motor vehicle, including Vespas, while a member of the Program. The reasons for this are many: you would need a Spanish or International Driver's License for more than a limited stay in Spain; the hazards of driving in Europe are much greater than in the USA; and since you are under 21 (in most cases) and without parents present, the economic and legal responsibility cannot fall on the Program in the case of a mishap.
- That you not engage in any extreme sports, such as free climbing, skydiving, open water swimming or jet skiing.

4. ILLEGAL DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ABUSE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

Hamilton College reserves the right to dismiss from Hamilton College Academic Year in Spain any student who violates the laws of the host country, including those relating to the use, possession or distribution of drugs or alcohol.

PLEASE BE INFORMED THAT, BESIDES THE SPANISH-ONLY RULE, the single most important regulation concerning personal behavior relates to the use of alcohol and the consumption of alcoholic beverages in the hotel rooms while the group is on an orientation or academic excursions. Any student who drinks in a hotel room or otherwise abuses the use of alcohol while on such trips will be automatically expelled from the program.

Excessive or inappropriate use of alcohol and/or bringing alcohol into the host family residence are strictly prohibited. Any student who violates this rule will be subjected to disciplinary action, such as expulsion from the program. Illegal drugs use at any time or place, including host family residence, will not be tolerated, and HCAYS reserves the right to immediately dismiss students who violate this rule.

5. HONOR CODE: Any form of academic dishonesty--cheating, falsification, forgery, misrepresentation, or plagiarism; or breaking the Spanish-only rule -- is a serious offense in our academic community. In HCAYS, such dishonesty will result in removal from the course, separation from the Program, or both. It is essential, therefore, that you understand the standards of academic honesty.

Work submitted in courses must be your own. You may consult friends or native speakers about a limited number of specific problems, but your work may not be corrected or rewritten by others. The use of ChatGPT, or any other forms of AI to complete your work in Spanish is prohibited. Exceptions to this rule must be made explicitly by the instructor and/or Faculty Director, and must apply to all students. The submission of one piece of work in more than one course without the explicit permission of the instructors and Faculty Director is prohibited. You are strongly encouraged as well to ascertain the format in which individual faculty members expect and will accept quotations from secondary sources.

Plagiarism is a violation of intellectual honesty. The habit of intellectual honesty is the foundation of an academic community. Effective evaluation of student work and helpful instruction can take place only in an environment where intellectual honesty is respected. Plagiarism represents a failure to acknowledge the source of ideas or phrases gained from another person and used in any paper, exercise, or project submitted in a course. In all cases, the Directors reserves the right to suspend a student whose academic work or social conduct warrants such an action. Be aware that Google, Wikipedia, and ChatGPT are not legitimate academic sources for your bibliographies for course work, neither at your home campus, nor in Madrid.

While a glance at the above might suggest a rather rigid structure, we are sure that you will find, as have all of our students in the past, that you have great independence. Living abroad, in fact, requires considerable maturity and responsibility on the part of the students.

The Administrative Director reserves the right to suspend from the program any student who does not comply with these rules or who is physically aggressive or destructive of property, or violates the dignity or rights of others, disrupts the educational function of the Program, or is otherwise detrimental to its operation, or who demonstrates an inability to participate constructively in the Program. The final decision concerning dismissal is made by the Administrative Director in consultation with the Dean of Engaged Education, the Faculty Director and the Hamilton College Administration.

The Administrative Director is responsible for disciplinary action. Upon the first instance of violation of these rules, s/he will issue a written warning to the student's home institution and place the student on probation within the HCAYS program if s/he judges that the circumstances do not warrant immediate dismissal. Expulsion is accompanied by a notification to the student's home institution and parents.

XVIII. DIRECTOR AVAILABILITY

The Administrative Director (AD) will attempt to be available at all times in case of emergency. However, AD is not responsible for your welfare to the extent that AD must remain by a telephone 24 hours a day. You will be given emergency, police, and medical telephone numbers that you should keep on your person—preferably stored in your cell phone contacts as well—whenever you leave your Spanish home.

XIX. CHANGE OF STATUS (Regarding Fall to Year or Year to Fall students)

Please be aware that anyone who wishes to change from one-semester to yearlong status must let the Directors know, in person or in writing. Students who wish to switch must have their request approved by the Program Committee. If you are a Fall semester student and you plan to stay for the year, you will need to apply for a visa extension while in Spain. The process for this may be time consuming and thus, you will need to let us know by no later than October 15th. During the extension period, you will not be legally permitted to travel outside Spain.

XX. FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING MADRID

Finally, we would like to take a moment to clear up common misconceptions concerning Madrid and to advise you beforehand about several other potential problems.

It is very important that you realize ahead of time that you will be entering a different culture and a different social milieu; you must not expect to find all the conveniences that American universities provide their students. In particular, you must be prepared to deal with the following:

1. Computer availability. Hamilton College provides a number of computers as well as a printer and a scanner in our Center for the sole use of HCAYS students. Also, all of the host families have internet connections. This will help you to do research for your classes. There will be several outlets available for laptop connections at the Center as well. Feel free to bring your laptop. There is Wi-Fi at the Center. However, sometimes technology fails. Be aware that if you are unable to connect to any form of technology at any given time, either at the Center or in the home of your host, this is entirely out of our control, and you will need to wait patiently, or use other resources, until the host or Center connections are re-established. Please note that Center's hours of operation follow the standard local office hours.

2. Technology for personal (non-emergency) use. Please be conscious of your carbon imprint! You may print at the Centro but please be considerate of the amount of paper that you use.

3. Libraries. The Center has a very small library. It has the books students will need for their classes, hours of operation are limited. However, students will also have access to public libraries in Madrid.

4. Professors. Our group of professors is extraordinary. Be aware that some of them will not be available to you outside the class to the extent that American professors are. In many cases, they are on their way to other obligations immediately following class, and student consultations must be arranged ahead of time. An email address or telephone will be provided.

5. Sports. Spanish students do not live on campus and the idea of extracurricular, intramural activities do not exist. Gyms and health clubs are available, and their membership fees vary. It will be up to you to search around to see what opportunities may arise at that particular moment. Students who sign up for courses at the local universities will have full access to their sports facilities.

6. Part-time jobs. Spanish labor laws prohibit the hiring of international students (non-EU nationals). Even for EU nationals who are not from Spain, the permission to work is contingent on obtaining specific documents.

7. Public transportation. Students should expect to use public transportation on a daily basis to travel to class and other activities; they should budget accordingly. It is impossible for the Program to provide most students with housing within walking distance to the Center, nor can it pay for students' daily transportation. **However, the Program will provide every student at the first orientation meeting with a free Madrid public transportation card valid for the first 30 days.** Madrid has an excellent and inexpensive public transportation system. There are monthly passes for the metro and bus, which are very convenient and inexpensive for those students planning to use public transportation regularly. The monthly pass costs 10 euros a month. For more information please visit: <https://www.crtm.es/>

8. Petty crime. While Madrid is considerably safer than many other European or American cities, petty thefts (purse snatching, pickpocket activity on crowded buses and subways, etc.) do occur. The initial orientation in Madrid will include a talk about this possibility, with many specific suggestions about how to minimize, if not eliminate, the chance that you might fall victim to such an occurrence.

Here are two suggestions to avoid complications from lost or stolen documents:

- Make a color copy of the main information page (the one with your picture) and of the visa page in your passport. When going out, just carry the copies and leave your original documents in a safe place at home. Make certain your passport number is legible. Bring two extra passport photos. This will help you to replace your passport quickly. Even before contacting your embassy or consulate for replacement, notify local police of your loss.
- If you plan to take any credit cards, as well as any ID, make two copies of each. Leave one copy at home so that you can replace them or stop payments on the cards if needed.

9. Spanish peers. In order to meet Spanish students --indeed, in order to truly come to know the city of Madrid-- you must be prepared to be proactive. Some families will have offspring your age who can facilitate introductions to other Spaniards. The Center will provide certain activities where you can also meet Spaniards your age.

10. Students can take advantage of the Madrid University system, not only by taking a course there, but also by using its facilities (library, sport and cultural centers, cafeterias, etc.). It will be up to you to take the initiative so you can enjoy the rich opportunities that lie there.

XXI. CULTURAL REIMBURSEMENTS

On "Día de reembolsos culturales," you may present receipts from extracurricular Hispanic cultural activities for full or partial reimbursement by the HCAYS. You must present original receipts to the Academic Coordinator (copies are not accepted) and the cultural activities must be related to some aspect of the Hispanic world. There is a maximum of 200 Euros per student/per semester. You will receive more details during the orientation in Madrid.

There may be mandatory class activities or extracurricular activities while traveling with the HCAYS program. In these cases, you will be reimbursed 100%.

XXII. CONCLUSION

Let us end by insisting that you must READ and REREAD the entire Bulletin. This concludes the information we want to share with you for the moment. Make certain to return all the required forms to us as soon as possible. Do not jeopardize your participation in our Program through procrastination. Please consult carefully the Summary which follows.

The Office of Global Learning on the Hamilton College Clinton, NY campus office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time. If you have questions, please contact the HCAYS Coordinator at hcays@hamilton.edu.

Because of the number of factors involved, it is extremely important that you keep in close touch with us between now and the day of departure.

Meanwhile, we send you best wishes for a successful semester.

Sincerely,

Hamilton College Academic Year (or semester) in Spain

This BULLETIN is also AVAILABLE ONLINE:

<https://www.hamilton.edu/academics/offcampusstudy/spain/about/information>

Please share this Bulletin with your families.

APPENDICES

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN:

1. Send HCAYS the required materials for the visa process if you are eligible for the group visa application. If you have questions or concerns about any part of the visa process, contact the HCAYS coordinator immediately at hcays@hamilton.edu
2. If you have a renewed or new passport, please register your valid passport number, date of birth, and country of issue through your HCAYS online study abroad account. This is a requirement for your MAPFRE Health Care in Spain.
3. Complete any remaining forms in your online study abroad account by the posted deadline.
4. Notify us if you wish to declare any allergies or dietary restrictions.
5. Make arrangements for the remaining payments to arrive according to the outlined schedule.
6. If appropriate, make arrangements for outside Financial Aid to reach Hamilton College.

CALENDARIO 2026-2027

Otoño

Agosto

- **Lunes 31** - Entrada en alojamiento con familia anfitriona

Septiembre

- **Martes 1** - Reunión de orientación obligatoria en el Centro HCAYS
- **Del miércoles 2 al viernes 4** - Clases de orientación en el Centro HCAYS y consultas de matrículas
- **Del lunes 7 al viernes 11** - Viaje de Orientación
- **Lunes 14** - Inicio de clases
- **Jueves 17** - Día de reembolsos culturales
- **Jueves 24** - Primera actividad cultural

Octubre

- **Lunes 12** – Fiesta Nacional – Centro cerrado
- **Viernes 16 al domingo 18** - Viaje académico
- **Jueves 15** - Día de reembolsos culturales
- **Miércoles 28** - Segunda actividad cultural

Noviembre

- **Lunes 2** – Fiesta de todos los Santos – Centro cerrado
- **Lunes 9** - Fiesta de la Almudena - Centro cerrado
- **Viernes 13 al domingo 15** - Viaje académico
- **Jueves 19** - Día de reembolsos culturales
- **Viernes 20** - Tercera actividad cultural

Diciembre

- **Lunes 7** – Fiesta de la Constitución – Centro cerrado
- **Martes 8** - Fiesta Día de la Inmaculada Concepción - Centro cerrado
- **Miércoles 9** - Exámenes finales y espectáculo de flamenco
- **Jueves 10** – Exámenes finales, reembolsos culturales y cena de despedida
- **Viernes 11** - Centro HCAYS permanecerá cerrado
- **Sábado 12** - Salida del alojamiento con familia anfitriona

Primavera

Enero

- **Lunes 18** - Entrada en alojamiento con familia anfitriona
- **Martes 19** - Reunión de orientación obligatoria en el Centro HCAYS
- **Del miércoles 20 al viernes 22** - Clases de orientación en el Centro HCAYS y consultas de matrículas
- **Del lunes 25 al viernes 29** - Viaje de orientación

Febrero

- **Lunes 1** - Inicio de clases
- **Jueves 4** - Día de reembolsos culturales
- **Viernes 19** - Primera actividad cultural
- **Del viernes 26 al domingo 28 de febrero** - Viaje académico

Marzo

- **Jueves 4** - Día de reembolsos culturales
- **Miércoles 10** - Segunda actividad cultural
- **Del 19 de marzo al 29 de marzo** - Vacaciones de Primavera

Abril

- **Jueves 1** - Día de reembolsos culturales
- **Del viernes 9 al 11** - Viaje académico
- **Viernes 23** - Tercera actividad cultural

Mayo

- **Lunes 3** – Fiesta de la Comunidad de Madrid – Centro cerrado
- **Del martes 4 al miércoles 5** – Exámenes finales y reembolsos culturales
- **Jueves 6** - Espectáculo de flamenco y comida de despedida
- **Viernes 7** - Centro HCAYS permanecerá cerrado
- **Sábado 8** - Salida del alojamiento con familia anfitriona

**HCAYS se reserva el derecho a modificar fechas y viajes en caso de necesidad*