

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE

Spring 2012

VISA INFORMATION

Student Visas: Once you have been admitted to the English Language Institute and have provided satisfactory proof of financial support, ELI will send you Form I-20. You will need to take this document, together with your letter of admission and your financial support documents (bank statements), to the nearest U.S. Consulate to apply for your visa. Contact the U.S. Consulate in your country for further information on visa application requirements and procedures and the time normally required for processing. Please apply for your visa as early as possible.

Entering the United States: At the U.S. port of entry, you will need to show the documents that you presented at the U.S. Consulate to an official of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). You should then be issued *Form I-94* and *Page 3 of the I-20* with a DHS stamp on the top. Check that you have these documents before leaving the DHS desk.

If you receive I-20 forms from several different schools, it is **very important** that you enter the United States with the I-20 of the school you really want to attend. This will avoid potential problems with the Department of Homeland Security.

Requirements: F-1 students must register for a full course of study (20 hours per week at the ELI or a combination of academic and ELI courses equal to full-time). You are required to attend classes at the school that issued the I-20 used for entry into the United States. You may not normally transfer to another school until one semester of study has been completed.

ARRIVAL IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA

Washington-Dulles International Airport: Dulles Airport is located about 15 miles northwest of George Mason University. Most flights from overseas land there. There is a Foreign Visitors' Desk just outside the Customs Hall. The easiest means of transportation between Dulles Airport and Fairfax is the Dulles Flyer Taxi Service. Cost is approximately \$40. A foreign currency exchange office is located in the airport.

Washington National Airport: National Airport is mainly used for domestic flights. It is located about 15 miles to the east of George Mason University. A Travelers' Aid Desk and a Foreign Currency Exchange can be found at the airport. Taxis are available to take you to the university at a cost of about \$40.

HOUSING INFORMATION

Residence halls on campus have limited space available for Spring 2012 semester. Off-campus accommodations are available. If you plan to live off campus, you may want to check the website for off-campus housing: <http://och.gmu.edu>. If you need further information about housing and meals on campus, contact Program Coordinator Tania Vega-Morales in the ELI Office (703-993-3660).

Temporary Accommodation: If you have not made housing arrangements before you come, you should plan to arrive a few days early. The following motel is recommended as it is near the CUE Bus stop that will take you directly to the university. (A discount is available if you inform the hotel clerk that you are a GMU student.)

Comfort Inn, 11180 Main Street, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Telephone: (703) 591-5900

MONEY

It is recommended that you bring enough money with you to cover your first month's expenses. Traveler's checks in U.S. dollars are the most convenient and safest form of currency. Credit cards are widely accepted for many expenses.

The following estimates are a guide to some of the expenses you may have at the beginning of your first semester:

Temporary accommodation plus meals for five days	-----	\$600-700
Tuition/fees	-----	\$6200 (fall/spring) \$4300 (summer)
Health Insurance	-----	\$972 (spring/summer)
Room and Board	-----	\$3,500 (for 1 semester)
Books	-----	\$200-250 (for 1 semester)

HEALTH

In the United States, most strong medications require a doctor's prescription. You should bring with you sufficient supplies of medications for any conditions you have.

WHAT TO BRING

In Washington, D.C. you will experience hot, humid weather in the summer and cold, dry weather in the winter. You will need appropriate clothing for each season. If you are coming from a country that does not have such a wide range of climatic conditions, you may find it easier to purchase seasonal clothing once you arrive. Reasonably priced clothing can be purchased at locations close to the university.

Dress on campus is generally very casual with an emphasis on comfort. GMU has a very large and active international community so you are encouraged to bring your national costume with you. There are a number of occasions, especially during International Week in April, when you may wish to wear clothing that reflects your culture and heritage.

Remember to bring all personal documents including your driver's license, medical records, and academic records. You may also wish to bring a few items typical of the crafts or handiwork of your country to use as small gifts.

We look forward to meeting you in January!