

The background of the cover features a photograph of students in a classroom. On the left, a group of students is seated at desks, with one student in the foreground using a yellow highlighter. On the right, a close-up of a young woman with blonde hair is shown, focused on writing in a notebook. The image is split vertically, with the left side having a dark blue overlay and the right side being lighter.

Student Handbook

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Welcome

Welcome to GT Educational Center!

Our mission is to provide quality education and outstanding services so as to help students reach their highest English language learning potential for academic, professional and/or personal success.

Your study abroad experience should be one of the best of your life. You will experience a new way of life, a new culture, new people, and a whole new world. Above all, you will gain the English knowledge necessary to be successful. However, adjusting to new surroundings can be difficult. The information in this handbook is designed to help you with this sometimes-difficult change and inform you about your responsibilities as a student in the US and your student status.

GT's knowledgeable staff is here to answer any questions you might have.

Remember: it is your responsibility to keep up your authorized F-1 student status. This handbook is a great start. You can also begin by reading page three of your I-20 form. If you follow the instructions you find there and in this book, you will be well informed. If you ever have any questions regarding your status, please visit our international student office and we will answer all your questions to the best of our ability.

We encourage you to come to our office(s) with questions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any part of student life, from visa/status question to cultural understanding, the office staff is here to support you. Many questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.gt.edu or reading this handbook and our course catalog. Questions about GT programs can also be answered at our office.

GT Educational Center reserves the right to change all part of this handbook and the policies and classes contained herein, without prior notice.

Important Forms, Immigration Documents and Terms

Throughout this manual you will come across many abbreviations. Many are about important documents and your status. This is a list to help you understand these abbreviations:

Government Terms:

USCIS - United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

DHS - Department of Homeland Security

DOS - Department of State

ICE - Immigration and Customs Enforcement

SEVIS - Student Exchange Visitor Information System

DSO - Designated School Official

CBP - Customs and Boarder Protection

Documents and other:

COS - Change of Status

I-134 - Affidavit of Support Form

RCL - Reduced Course Load

I-539 - Change of Status Form

I-20 - Certificate of Eligibility for non-immigrant (F-1) Student Status

D/S - Duration of Status

Status - Non-immigrant F-1, refers to legal student status

GT Terms:

GT - GT Educational Center

Program - A set of courses , normally the length listed on

the form I-20.

Course - Part of program for which you registered, sometimes there is only one course in a program.

Passport

Immigration regulations state that you are responsible for keeping your passport current at all times during your stay in the United States. Your passport can be revalidated or renewed through your embassy or consulate.

Visa

The visa is a stamped (or pasted-in) approval made in the passport by a US consulate or embassy official outside the US. It indicates that all requirements have been met for entry into the US. The number of entries allowed within a specified period is indicated on the visa stamp and can vary from country to country. A valid visa is essential for entering and reentering the US. However, the visa does not determine the length of time you may remain in the US. Canadian citizens are not required to obtain a visa to enter the US.

I-20 Form

Certificate of Eligibility for non-immigrant F-1 Student Status This form is used when applying for an F entry visa stamp at a US consulate or embassy in your home country and is used at the time of entry to the US. Upon arrival to the US an immigration officer will stamp the I-20 and return it to you. This form is also used when applying for a change of status (to F-1) while in the US. This form will then be sent with the rest of your documentation to a USCIS service center for approval. The I-20 Form indicates the length of your authorized stay in the US and should be kept with your passport and I-94 card. You must keep the original I-20 form and any additional I-20 forms that are issued to you. The GT staff (DSO) will note any validation for reentry or transfer of school on your I-20. Your I-20 Form is only valid if you do not disobey your status, should a violation occur, your record will be terminated and your I-20 will no longer be valid, and the dates reflected will not be accurate!

I-901/SEVIS receipt

The form I-901 must be completed after you have been entered in SEVIS and have been issued the I-20 Form by your DSO. The I-901 form is electronic and can be found online www.fmjfee.com. There is a mandatory fee associated with this form, also known as the SEVIS registration fee. For current fee prices, ask at our office. The receipt you get after completing this I-901 form and paying the fee is extremely important. You will need this receipt when you present your documents at a US Consulate or embassy when applying for your visa. This receipt is also required to be included with your change of status application, if you are applying from inside the US.

I-94 Number/Card

You must obtain your I-94 admission record online: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>

Your information should be available online within 5 days. Your I-94 Admission record contains a unique eleven-digit number, which the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) use in their database to record your stay. When you present your documents to the officer upon entry into the US, the officer will review them, stamp them, and return them to you. They will use the information to enter your admission information into the database, from which you will obtain the record/number. Keep the I-94 record throughout your entire stay.

If you need any assistance getting your I-94 admission information from the website above, stop by the office and we will help you.

Sometimes, your information can be entered incorrectly and can prevent you from getting access to your I-94 record online. In such an instance, you will need to physically go to a CBP (Customs and Boarder Protection) Deferred Inspection Site to retrieve the I-94 information. The Chicago site is located at:

U.S. Customs and Boarder Protection:

536 S. Clark St., Suite 1035

Chicago, IL 60605

Phone: 312.834.0908

Hours: Monday-Friday 8am-3pm

General Immigration Info and SEVIS

As a student of GT, in F-1 non-immigrant status, your primary purpose for being in the US is to study full time. F-1 students must comply with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations while in the United States. Be sure to read the *Instructions to Students* on page 2 of your I-20 if you are in F-1 status. By following those instructions and the

information below, you will have all the tools to maintain legal F-1 status in the US and be able to take full advantage of student status benefits. If you have any questions please visit our office to discuss your situation.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System or SEVIS is an Internet based system monitored by ICE. Your I-20 form is issued from SEVIS and your SEVIS record contains your status information. Each entry into the country and exit from the country will be recorded through the bar code on your I-20. At the beginning of each term you will have to be checked into the system as being present and enrolled full-time by GT. It is very important to properly maintain your F-1 status. Should you neglect to do so, your SEVIS record will have to be terminated and you will be out of status!

Your SEVIS record must be updated if you change your address, change your status, or apply for any kind of authorizations such as work or RCL. It is your responsibility to inform your DSO about these important changes so they can update your SEVIS record. Failure to do so is a violation of your F-1 status. For the duration of your studies in the United States you will be tracked by SEVIS.

Your Designated School Official, or DSO, is the person designated to work with SEVIS and is knowledgeable about student/F-1 status and immigration procedures. Your student advisor will likely be your DSO. It's a common misconception that DSOs work for the US government; this is NOT true. It is important to consult with your DSO if you have any questions or concerns about your status; they are here to help you.

Maintaining Legal Status in the US

Keep your passport valid at all times.

Contact your embassy or consulate in the US if your passport expires within 6 months or you need to replace a lost or stolen passport. Your country's governmental representatives in the United States are responsible for issuing passports to their citizens.

Keep GT and Immigration informed of any address changes.

You must inform GT within 10 days of any address changes – it's the law. Once you have informed GT, a DSO will update your file in SEVIS. Once your record in SEVIS is updated, it is considered sufficient and you will not have to inform immigration of your address change. If you are in the process of applying for a change of status to an F-1 (or other), you must inform the service center directly. We also recommend that you submit a form AR-11, which can be obtained at the office or at www.uscis.gov. It is considered a violation of status if you do not inform GT of any address changes in a timely manner.

Keep your SEVIS record up to date at all times. This includes your permanent home address in your home country, your US address, your legal name, your country of citizenship, your financial resources, etc.

Because you are not a United States citizen, you must adhere to the laws and guidelines that govern your visa status. Failure to do so can result in your inability to: 1. take advantage of your F-1 benefits 2. Remain in the United States. Enforcement of United States immigration laws is the responsibility of Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE]. ICE is a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and has its headquarters in Washington, DC.

Accept only authorized off-campus employment.

The USCIS considers unauthorized employment to be one of the most serious violations of F-1 status. If you refer to your I-20 you will see the statement, "Warning-a non-immigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation." It is very important, therefore, that you consult with GT before you accept an offer of employment or begin work, unless it is work on campus. GT will advise you if it is possible for you to work, and if it is, assist you with the appropriate paperwork. Please keep in mind that it is illegal to begin work in anticipation of being granted permission to do so; you must have permission first.

Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay in the United States.

With the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996, severe penalties were introduced for overstaying one's immigration status in the US. Depending on the length of the over stay, you can be denied re-entry to the United States for up to 10 years. Those in F-1 status are granted permission to stay for the time reasonably required to pursue a full course of study in any particular program, and any periods of practical training, plus 60 days of grace to depart the US or apply to for a change of status. This is known as duration of status [D/S].

If you need to remain in the US for a program of study beyond the date authorized on your

I-20 (see item 5 "...and complete studies not later than [date]."), you must request a program extension through GT.

Leave the US, begin another degree, or change to another immigration status within the appropriate time period allowed once you have completed your studies.

If you are an F-1 student, you are permitted to stay in the US for 60 days beyond the completion date of your studies. In view of serious consequences for overstaying [staying beyond the allowable time period], it is essential that you do not let your I-20 expire while you are continuing your academic program and that you do not remain in the US beyond the duration of your status. If you do not intend to leave the US after your 60 day grace period ends, you will either need to begin a new academic program, or change to another status. These arrangements must be made within the 60 days following the end of your academic program.

The 60 day grace period does not apply to students who withdraw from class mid-session. You must notify the office before withdrawing from classes. Students who are authorized withdrawal mid-session will have 15 days for departure. Students who fail to inform the office of their withdrawal will be considered out of status and must leave the U.S. immediately-no grace period is allowed.

Get your I-20 signed by a DSO before traveling outside of the US.

Each DSO signature is valid for one year.

Maintain full-time enrollment and normal academic progress towards program completion.

You must be enrolled for a minimum of 18 class hours per week each term. A student is maintaining full time enrollment if they attend the course required hours per week.

70% attendance is required. If a student falls below 70% attendance they will be dropped from the course and be considered out of status.

A student is considered to be making normal progress towards the completion of their program if they successfully complete (pass) each course. If a student fails a course, they must repeat it. More than one failure in a course of study is considered poor progress. Poor progress may result in expulsion from school and consequently the termination of your student status.

Students who are making poor academic progress may be required to attend an advising session.

If you are having a hard time passing your class, speak to an advisor and we'll do our best to assist you. Tutoring is also available. See the student services section of this handbook for a list of services.

Travel Outside of the US

Many foreign students like to travel both in and out of the country during their stay in the United States. If you decide to travel outside the country, **you must have a DSO sign your I-20 authorizing re-entry before you leave.** Each signature is valid for one year. Your I-20 Form is of the very important importance when traveling outside the United States. **Keep this with you when traveling at all times to avoid serious complications.** Never throw away your GT 1-20, even if you graduate or permanently leave the school. You may need to produce every I-20 that you ever had, if transferring or applying for a different status.

Never pack your I-20 in a suitcase when traveling.

Do NOT take even a brief trip outside the U.S. unless your documents are in order. Specifically, you must be sure your I-20, Visa, and passport are valid. You will also be given a Form I-94 on the plane. It is an arrival/departure record. Be sure to fill it out and keep it in your passport until you leave the country. Failure to travel with these items could prevent you from being readmitted to the country.

U.S. immigration laws are very strictly enforced, so please contact the GT international office. Failure to follow immigration regulations could endanger your future benefits. In extreme cases, individuals have been deported for failing to maintain their F-1 status.

Lost or Stolen Documents

I-20 – If your I-20 Form is lost, contact GT during office hours for instructions on how to obtain a replacement.

Passport – If your passport is lost, contact your embassy or consulate about getting a replacement. There will be a replacement fee for Lost or Stolen Passports.

F-2 Dependents

A dependant is a person whose status depends completely on another person. Only the wife or husband and unmarried minor children (under 21 years old) of an F-1 student are eligible to enter the United States in F-2 dependent status. Each dependent must receive their own I-20 if they wish to obtain an F-2 visa and enter the U.S. in F-2 status. Dependents who are changing their status in the US must also obtain separate I-20s.

An F-1 student wishing to bring dependents to the U.S. during their studies, must provide additional documentation to have a dependent I-20 issued. This is also required for dependants of F-1 students wishing to change their status to F-2. F-2 dependents may remain lawfully in the U.S. as long as the F-1 student is maintaining F-1 status. However, dependents may not accept any type of employment in the U.S. The F-2 spouse may not engage in full time study, and an F-2 child may only engage in full time study if the study is in an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through twelfth grade). F-2 dependents may engage in study that is vocational or recreational in nature (e.g. sports or music/art class).

Working in the US

Working without permission from the USCIS is one of the most serious violations of the F-1 status. If you refer to your I-20 you will see the statement, "Warning-a non-immigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation." It is very important, therefore, that you consult with GT before you accept an offer of employment or begin work, unless it is work on campus. GT will advise you whether or not it is possible for you to work, and if it is, assist you with the appropriate paperwork. Please keep in mind that it is illegal to begin work in anticipation of being granted permission to do so; you must have permission first.

Severe Economic Hardship Employment Authorization

Severe Economic Hardship Employment Authorization (SEHEA) is essentially off-campus employment authorization that is intended to address situations where financial need beyond the student's control arises, which was unforeseen at the time the F-1 student applied to the school.

This type of authorization is only to be applied for after all other acceptable employment opportunities have proven to be insufficient. It is difficult to obtain and require an interview with a DSO.

Examples of unforeseen economic hardship include loss of financial aid without fault by the student (consider the unemployment or death of a parent), substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial unexpected expenses. In order to apply for this you must have been in F-1 status for at least one full year. The application process with the USCIS takes 2-3 months and employment authorization is granted in increments of one year. The work done can be any type of work. It does not have to relate to your major.

GT encourages you to come to our office with questions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of student life, from visa/status question, to cultural understanding the office staff is here to offer support. Many answers to student question can be answered by visiting our website, www.gt.edu or through our course catalog. Questions about GT programs can also be answered at our office.

Reduced Course Load/Drop Below Full Course of Study

A student can attend class part time or not at all only if they are authorized for RCL (Reduced Course Load). International students must have DSO (Designated School Official) approval before dropping to RCL. If RCL is requested because of a medical condition, it must be discussed and documentation, from a licensed medical professional, must be presented **PRIOR** to the extended absence from study. RCL must be updated, if a student fails to discuss an RCL with a DSO, or fails to update an RCL **PRIOR** to its expiration they are likely to fall out of status. Documentation for a Medical RCL must specifically state that a student is unable to attend school and whether the student is unable to attend at all, or able to attend on a part time basis.

Students who do not return to a current session of enrollment because of an extended drop below a full course of study due to medical reasons, will be liable for the tuition for classes attended before the drop below full course (pro-rata weeks), per the GT refund policy. Students must be in good financial status in order to qualify for an authorized drop below full course. The student's enrollment will be extended, if needed, pending approval from a school official. Tuition payment schedules will be adjusted on a case by case basis. Tuition calculations will be based on the date the excuse was presented by the student to a school official or the date specified on the Drop Below Full Course of Study Request Form.

Transferring schools

Be sure you meet eligibility criteria before transferring to another school in the US.

First, you need to understand that you must keep the same SEVIS identification number if you plan to complete more than one academic program in the United States, or transfer to another school mid-program. Therefore, your SEVIS record will have to be transferred from institution to institution.

Transferring In

If you are transferring to GT from another school, you will have to request that your school transfer your SEVIS record to GT in SEVIS. When transferring, you will need to present all necessary documents and meet enrollment criteria before we can accept your record. When all documents have been presented and your record has been transferred, GT can then issue you an I-20 form.

In order to transfer to GT, you must be maintaining your F-1 status at your previous school and be able to provide documentation to that effect, as well as the financial and other documentation required for GT to issue you an I-20.

Documentation includes:

- Academic proof such as a High School diploma or transcript from a school
- Valid Passport
- Visa
- I-94 form/electronic record
- I-20 form(s)-all that have been issued since your arrival the USA
- Financial documents-proving that you have the financial resources to study with us.
- Transcripts from all schools attended in the USA

Transcripts are evaluated by the Director of Admission and must demonstrate progress consistent with GT standards. If you have two failing grades in a row or in an academic year, you may be ineligible for enrollment. You will need to present a letter explaining the reasons for your failure, why it is important for you to study English and how you will prevent such failures from happening again.

Upon acceptance, regardless of circumstances, you must meet with GT and complete the enrollment and registration procedure within the first 15 days of your record being transferred to us or you will be in violation of your student status.

Transferring Out

If you wish to transfer to another school from GT you must meet with a DSO to discuss your situation. In order to be eligible for transfer you must meet all of your financial and academic responsibilities to GT. You will also need to complete a transfer request form and present your DSO with acceptance documentation from your transfer school. A Transfer out fee may apply.

General Information and Policies

Admittance

GT Educational Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, national origin, handicap, age, sex, or marital status in admission to and participation in its educational programs, or in its employment practices.

All applicants must be 17 years of age or older and submit any academic proof such as most recent diploma or transcript

International students, at any particular time, make up the vast majority, if not the entirety, of our student body. See the enrollment section of this handbook for additional information and/or documentation requirements.

Student Code of Conduct

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a way that fits the academic environment. This includes proper clothing and conducting yourself in a polite and respectful manner. Behavior that disturbs the educational process is not acceptable. Alcohol, smoking, illegal drugs, violence, bullying, harassment of any kind is not permitted on school premises. Other acts of misconduct include, but are not limited to, fraud, disorderly and/or threatening behavior and/or language use on school premises or organized activities towards students and staff of GT Educational Center, intentional or reckless damage to school property. Failure to follow school rules and policies is considered misconduct and can result in expulsion from school. Academic misconduct is taken very seriously and includes plagiarism, cheating, falsification of information. All students are required to follow the rules of this student handbook as well as the catalog.

Sexual and other Harassment

To harass means to trouble, torment, or confuse by consistently attacking, questioning, etc. Harassment does not have to be sexual but can be bullying, words, jokes, physical contact, threats and comments involving gender, age, racial slurs, and more. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to sexual advances, constantly asking for dates, physical contact sexual in nature, requests for sexual favors, etc. Students are to report any sexual harassment to the office immediately. Sexual harassment in higher education is illegal. Information on how to file a claim against a harasser can be found all over campus. Refer to the Illinois Human Rights Act 775 ILCS 5/1-101 et seq.

Copyright and Plagiarism

Copyright

Copyright is a form of protection given by U.S. law for original writing and other expressive works (songs, movies, computer software, art/painting, and more). The law applies to both published and unpublished works.

GT expects students to follow copyright laws. That means you must get permission from the author of the original work to use it in any way.

You can read about copy right laws here: <http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.pdf>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you use someone else's work as your own. For example, using part or a whole poem in your paper and not giving credit to the person who originally wrote it is plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered academic misconduct, which is grounds for expulsion. You can not use other person's words, ideas, theories, illustrations, whether oral or written, without acknowledging that person. Paraphrasing is also considered plagiarism. Paraphrasing can be taking a friend's paper and rewriting it in different words.

Leave of Absence

A leave of absence is an authorized and extended leave from school for one or more session of a program or term of enrollment. A leave of absence is allowed for up to five months before a student must re-test into a program. International students MUST obtain DSO approval prior to taking a leave of absence and that leave cannot exceed five months. All students must contact the office at least one week prior to the expiration of the leave of absence to register for the next session.

Student Placement

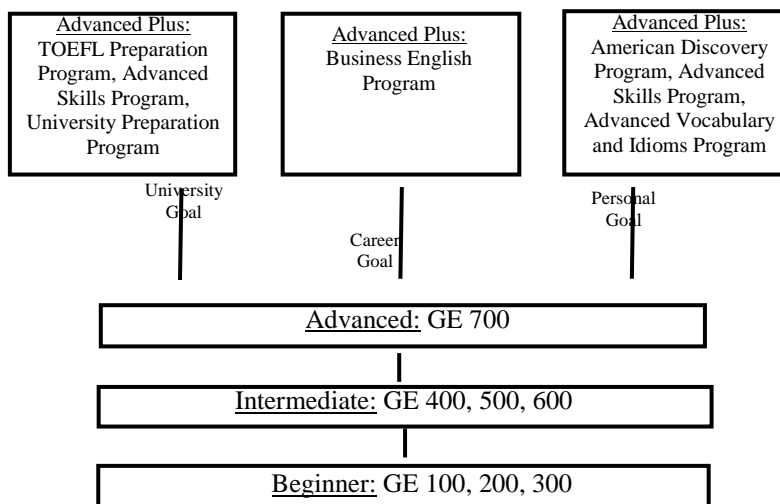
All new students are required to take a placement test before registration. The test, administered by the school, will check your level of English, in order to ensure proper course placement. The test consists of four sections including a grammar, reading, writing, and a speaking section. Students are informed of their results at the time of registration.

Placement Disagreements

If a student feels they have been placed incorrectly into a course, they must complete a request form, available at the office; meet with an academic advisor for additional assessment within the first two weeks of class. A letter of recommendation is often required from the instructor.

Program Flow Chart

Students progress from level to level as illustrated on this chart moving from bottom to top:



Enrollment/Registration

Completion of an enrollment agreement, stating selected course/program, with coordinating payment schedule (if applicable) is considered registration. GT permits late registration under special circumstances, please see the late registration section of this handbook for details about late registration.

Students are expected to register on time for their courses.

Initial Registration

From Abroad

International students coming from abroad are required to report to school no later than the start date on their form I-20. Students are required to complete an enrollment agreement and provide copies of their entry documents including:

- Form I-20
- Visa
- I-94 number
- Any additional documents associated with entry to the US

Students are able to enter the country up to 30 days prior to the start on their I-20. Students are encouraged to contact the school upon their arrival. We do not recommend waiting to contact the school.

Students who have not completed their placement test will do so at the time of their initial registration. A necessary orientation is also provided for all students arriving from abroad. Details on orientation time and date will be made available to the students via email.

If you fail to register on time, you will be considered a No Show and terminated in SEVIS.

Changing Status

Students changing their status are required to inform the school of their approval (or denial) within 30 days of the notice date. Late registration is only permissible to COS students in cases where the approval notice is received past the class start date.

Transferring

When transferring, you will need to present all necessary documents and meet enrollment requirements before we can accept your record. Review the Transferring section of this handbook. When all documents have been presented and your record has been transferred, you can then complete your enrollment and be issued an I-20 form.

Regardless of circumstances, you must meet with GT and complete your registration within the first 15 days of your record being transferred to us or you will be in violation of your student status. At the time of enrollment/registration we should already have the necessary documentation that you have submitted during the application process.

Continuing/ongoing Enrollment

Students are required to inform the school of their future plans before the class end date whether you are registering or not. Students wishing to continue or extend their program are required to register for the next session or program of study. You will have 7 days after your class end to complete the registration process after letting us know of your intention to continue your studies with us. You need to present updated financial documents when extending their program.

If you have any questions, talk to an advisor/admissions administrator.

If you do not register for the next session or inform us of your plans to transfer or otherwise, you will have 30 days from your class end date to leave the country. We ask that you please inform us of your departure plans.

If we don't hear from you, and you have completed your enrollment agreement, you're I-20 may be shortened. A student's program is shortened when the student's I-20 shows dates that exceed the student's last class date. In this case a new I-20 will be issued to reflect the actual date of completion. The student's record will then be automatically completed 60 days after the end date (last day of their class) and the student will be considered out of status.

Tuition should be paid in full at the end of the registration period. If you have not finished payment on your final level of study three weeks before its commencement, you may be expelled from school for failure to meet financial requirements

Late Registration

Late registration is considered enrollment past the start date of class, but not past 20% of class completion. 20% is equivalent to 36 hours of instruction in any 180 hours course. Upon completion of registration, the Enrollment Agreement serves as Confirmation of Registration and a copy is available to students. First time registration can only be completed after completion of a placement test, administered by the School.

You can register late if:

The classes started less than two weeks ago/ 20%

You were unable to register on time because of unique circumstances, such as:

You entered the country late

Your COS was approved past the main start date

You were dropped below a full course of study, for medical or other unforeseen circumstances.

Students registering late must note that attendance is calculated from the beginning of the course. It is the students' responsibility to make up the missed work and monitor their attendance to ensure compliance with the school's attendance policy. Students should meet with their instructor and discuss what they have missed and how they must make up the missed work. Students progress will be monitored and struggling students will be required to meet with the Director of Education for an Academic Advising Session.

Attendance

All enrolled students are expected to attend each class. Absence from 30% of the overall required class hours will result in dismissal from the course. Arriving late or leaving class early is classified as inappropriate behavior. Attendance will be recorded in 50-minute increments. Absence of 15 consecutive days will result in automatic dismissal from school. Reduced course loads must be pre-approved and documented. International students who fail to inform the school of

their intent to withdraw from school and get automatically withdrawn will have their records terminated in SEVIS and consequently will be out of status. Such students must consult the “maintaining legal status in the US” section of this handbook or contact the office for additional information.

Withdrawal, Dismissal, and Canceled Classes

GT Educational Center allows student withdrawal from program/courses at any time. All students withdrawing from courses must complete a withdrawal/cancellation form, available at the office. The form must be brought to the office in person, sent via email or regular mail. International Students must meet with a DSO and have DSO approval for withdrawal or cancellation of enrollment. International students may face serious consequences if they fail to cancel or withdraw from class, please read the Maintaining Legal Status in the US section of this manual. Upon processing the withdrawal, the tuition charge will be reduced according to the Tuition Refund Policy. GT reserves the rights to dismiss any student whose conduct or attendance does not meet the school’s standards. A student may be dismissed if he/she has been absent from more than 30% of the required classes in the applied course, or has been involved in conduct disruptive to the educational process or to the school property, or has not made tuition payments as agreed. An international student who has been dismissed by the administration will be reported to SEVIS (Student Exchange Information System) and may result in the loss of F-1 status. A code of conduct and visa compliance information can be found in this handbook. A refund is based on the student’s date of withdrawal/cancellation notice, excludes the application and other applicable fee and is calculated according to the refund policy.

A student who has been dismissed can apply to reenroll.

A Student has the right to cancel or terminate the Registration/Enrollment Agreement at any time.

GT reserves the right to cancel or postpone any course because of low or insufficient enrollment. When this occurs, the School will attempt to notify students before the first class meeting and a complete refund will be mailed or given personally, if any payments were made.

Grading, Evaluation, and Certification

Certification

GT grants a Certificate of Completion to those students who have satisfactorily completed a course and/or program of instruction and have met all financial obligations to the School.

Grading

The final grade is based on a 100-point scale and consists of:

Points	Grade	Progress Rating	Action
90 – 100	A	Excellent Progress	Move to next level
80 – 89	B	Good Progress	Move to next level
70 – 79	C	Satisfactory Progress	*Move to next level or optional repeat
60– 69	D	Failing. Minimal Progress	**Must repeat
59 or below	F	Failing. No Progress	**Must repeat

*students can choose to repeat a course for which they received a grade C only once in a program or academic year, if the program is shorter. Based on course availability.

**You can only receive a failing grade twice in a program or academic year, whichever is shorter, in order to continue enrollment with the school. Failure to make progress may result in expulsion from school.

A grade C or higher, that represents the satisfactory achievement of each skill set of your learning outcomes, is required in order to receive a certificate, pass the class, and/or to move on to the next level/course. Course End Progress Report cards give you a detailed explanation of your achievement in a particular course at the end of the session.

A list of student learning outcomes is available on the course syllabus of each class.

GT certification is not transferable to institutions of higher education for course credit. GT has articulation agreements with selected institutions of higher education, who offer TOEFL waivers to students who have completed a particular course of study at GT. Completion requirements vary from school to school. A list of institutions can be found on our website: www.gt.edu or by visiting our office to inquire.

Academic Probation

Students struggling academically are strongly encouraged to seek academic advising. A first time failing grade will result in academic probation, involving close monitoring of the students progress the following session. Academic advising is mandatory for students on academic probation, struggling for the second session. Failure to make progress for the second session is considered failure to make progress and may result in expulsion from school.

Grade Distribution

Ongoing course grades can be checked weekly during the term by logging in to the following web-site: www.engagepro.com . Final grades will be published on the engagepro site 5-7 days after the course ends.

Details on how your grades are calculated can vary from course to course and are available on your class syllabus. The syllabus is made available to students at the start of each session by the instructor.

Student Evaluation

Students are evaluated by measures including, but not limited to: tests, quizzes, assignments, presentations, etc. Students' work is reviewed regularly and a mid-term evaluation is conducted by the instructor each session. A comprehensive final exam is taken by students at the end of each session. Final grades are compiled using a percentage system. Exact percentages are available to students on their class syllabus, given to students by their instructor(s) at the start of each session. Course End Progress Reports are also given to students with an explanation of student's learning outcomes achievement.

Students struggling academically are strongly encouraged to seek academic advising. Academic advising can be mandatory for struggling students, particularly in cases where the student is struggling for the second session in a row.

Grade Appeals

A grade appeal will be considered only if there is valid basis and evidence. Course grades, assigned by instructors, are presumed to be correct. It is the responsibility of the student who appeals an assigned grade to demonstrate clerical error, bias, or personal opinion on the part of the instructor in the assignment of the grade; otherwise, the judgment of the instructor is final and the grade becomes a part of the permanent student record of the school.

A student who believes that a course grade has been assigned unfairly or improperly must follow the proper steps in the appeal process, observing the time limits for their completion.

The student should first contact the instructor involved to communicate concerns and review the grading procedures used to determine the grade. If the student and instructor are unable to resolve the issue, the student has the right to file a grade appeal form, which can be obtained at the office. The form is reviewed by the Director of Education or Curriculum Coordinator for further action. A student interview and/or reassessment might be required. Upon review, the director or coordinator will inform the student of their final decision in writing.

The issue will be resolved as soon as possible but no later than 7 business days after the last day of class.

Achievement Scale

The achievement scale below can be used to measure a GT student's achievement at any particular point in the program.

Level	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Integrated Skills
Low-Beginner	Can read and identify main idea and basic details from a short, simple passage. (50 words)	Can write short, simple sentences on every day topics using affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentences.	Can complete simple, short phrases and communicate about daily topics at basic level. Can respond to greetings and commands and provide personal information.	Can use simple vocabulary and basic grammatical structures such as the simple past and present tenses, yes/no questions, and possessives.
Beginner	Can read and understand main idea and details from 1-2 adapted paragraphs (50-140 words). Can recognize basic punctuation in a sentence.	Can write a short paragraph (5 sentences) with improving accuracy in mechanics on topic.	Can understand the main idea and details of a simple, short (1-2 minute) conversation or listening passage and respond appropriately. Can participate in simple everyday conversations using appropriate openers and closers and increasing politeness.	Can use simple vocabulary and basic grammatical structures such as adverbs, comparatives, and infinitives.
High Beginner	Can interpret everyday, adapted material (3 paragraphs long, 210 words) on familiar topics. Can skim and scan information and guess the meaning of words from context.	Can write a 2-paragraph story (140 words) based on personal experiences using appropriate sequence and time order of events, using topic sentences and supporting details.	Can state an opinion and give personal views. Can write simple dictated sentences and paraphrase from an oral source (2-3 minutes). Can understand simple conversations, ask and answer questions.	Can express ideas and opinions using more complex grammatical structures and vocabulary in the past and future and by integrating modal verbs, the present perfect, and the passive voice into sentence structure.
Low Intermediate	Can predict the content of authentic readings (4 paragraphs long, 280 words) and is able to summarize simple passages.	Can write a well-developed, detailed essay, 2-3 paragraphs long (140-210 words), about personal experiences or describing an object that demonstrates control of the simple tenses (simple past, present, future) and some control of present and past perfect tenses.	Can participate in one-on-one and in small group conversations of general interest. Can give 2-3 minute presentations about defined topics in a clear, organized way. Can demonstrate comprehension of various aural sources by taking notes, carrying out instructions, and is able to give brief summaries. Can speak on an abstract level and give suggestions and predictions.	Can use appropriate vocabulary and grammar to check understanding, discuss, and understand topics in the past, present, and future. Can incorporate more advanced grammatical structures, such as the past perfect and past perfect continuous for indirect statements and questions and tag questions.

Intermediate	Can enhance comprehension of a wide variety of authentic written material and recognize point of view and supporting details within those passages (5 paragraphs long, 350 words). Can increase reading speed and utilize the reading skills of skimming and scanning for information.	Can use a variety of sentence types, including declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. Can use an outline to plan ideas and organize 3-paragraph essays (210 words), along with using appropriate sequencing in writing. Can self-edit writing for correct grammar usage, mechanics, and clarity of ideas.	Can paraphrase information from a 5-minute listening and reading source. Can make inferences about speakers' mood, feelings, attitude, and urgency of a speaker. Can demonstrate understanding of the gist and supporting details of authentic passages. Can use accurate stress, intonation, and intonation to maximize understanding.	Can demonstrate an increased level of politeness by using the passive. Can use sophisticated grammar structures such as noun clauses that begin with <i>that</i> and gerunds as the subjects and objects of verbs and prepositions.
High Intermediate	Can take notes and make inferences. Can understand the meaning of new words by using clues from context. Can demonstrate understanding and recognize main idea while scanning authentic passages (6-8 paragraphs long, 420-560 words)) for information.	Can write a well-developed, 3-paragraph essay based on outlines. Can write topical essays such as compare-contrast and cause-result.	Can understand the main idea, details, and take notes on short audio passages. Can speak in an organized manner in different situations, including opinions, similarities, suggestions/offers, and regrets. Can engage in discussions and express opinions clearly. Can give a 3 minute presentation about defined topics in a clear, organized way.	Can infer information, draw conclusions, and make inferences concerning concrete and abstract ideas. Can use increasingly difficult vocabulary, as well as grammatical structures such as subordinating conjunctions and transitive and intransitive verbs.
Advanced	Can distinguish between facts and opinion and determine the authors implied meaning in a variety of complex reading materials. Can read authentic texts (9-10 paragraphs long, 630-700 words) and with very good comprehension.	Can write 4-paragraph essays (280 words) summarizing and stating opinions on various academic and social topics. Can analyze and evaluate ideas in writing. Incorporate parallel structures and double comparatives.	Can speak in a nearly fluent manner with minimum hesitation for 5 minutes. Can participate in discussions and debates. Can support a position with facts. Can understand an oral passage at a natural and rapid speed. Can monitor and self-correct errors in oral communication and pronunciation.	Can incorporate critical thinking skills and advanced grammatical structures in the discussion of complex topics. Can demonstrate knowledge of academic vocabulary and very good control of advanced grammatical structures such as adjectives and adverb phrases and clauses, and direct and indirect speech.
Advanced Plus	Can conduct analytical reading of extensive academic reading materials (1,000+ words). Can infer the meaning of specialized (or field-specific?) vocabulary based on the context. Can use critical thinking skills to understand academic materials.	Can produce various types of in-depth academic writing (ex. research papers, book reviews, business correspondence) (1-10 pages long) on a variety of topics. Can produce lengthy academic essays. Can demonstrate control of punctuation and spelling, as well as academic formatting styles.	Can participate in lengthy debates and discussions and speak at a nearly native level. Can formulate and articulate opinions and deliver presentations (minimum 10 minutes) accurately and in depth on a variety of academic, business, social and personal topics. Can understand extended authentic media.	Can conduct undergraduate-level research and present an analytic paper with a PowerPoint Presentation. Can use appropriate advanced grammatical structures and extensive academic, business, field specific vocabulary and idioms across all skills.

Transcripts

A transcript is as students' academic record: a list of all classes attended and their final grade in each one. A student wishing to obtain a transcript must complete a transcript request form on our website or at our main office or send a written request to:

GT Educational Center
816 S. Michigan Ave
Chicago, IL 60605
Attn: Educational Dept.

Student Records

Privacy Rights

The disclosure of information from student records is governed by State (105ILCS 10: Illinois School Student Records Act) and Federal Laws (FERPA), which are intended to protect the student's right to privacy. Details on these regulations can be obtained by contacting the office.

FERPA-the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act., established in 1976, is intended to provide privacy to students of their educational records, give students access to review and inspect their educational records and provide guidelines for correction of information. GT will not share your educational records without your permission, unless required to do so by law.

Students have:

- the right to see educational records the school is keeping on the student.
- the right to inspect and review the contents of these records
- the right to obtain copies of these records
- the right to a response from the GT to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of these records
- the right to ask to have records corrected that they believe are inaccurate, misleading or in violation of their privacy rights.

Record Retention

Student records are retained or kept on file based on a schedule, available to students upon request. A student record contains application information, academic records, and immigration documentation, if applicable.

A schedule of retained documents is available to students upon request.

Academic Calendar

Program start dates are scheduled periodically throughout the calendar year; there are four to six start dates per year. An academic year is considered to be at least three consecutive sessions of enrollment. All admissions procedures should be completed at least one weeks before to the start of each program if possible. A copy of program start dates may be obtained by contacting the admissions office or on our website: www.gt.edu or in the Course Catalog.

Annual Vacation

International students are allowed to take an annual vacation after completing one academic year, and no sooner than 28 weeks after starting their program at GT. You must complete the last session of your academic year to qualify for vacation. You must also intend to return to school to complete the program to qualify for the annual vacation. You must request a vacation by completing a vacation request form at the office and sign an agreement for the next academic term. You are in status while on your annual vacation.

You cannot go on vacation if your program has been shortened. It is not recommended to have your programs shortened if you plan to continue your studies in the same program. If your program is shortened you will need to re-apply and pay a new application fee.

Students in poor academic status or those who have failed a course in their previous session are NOT eligible for vacation.

Students who have taken a medical leave or leave of absence in excess of two months are not eligible for a yearly vacation until they have taken a full academic year following the leave.

Vacation time does not accumulate. This means that if you choose to not take an annual vacation at the end of your academic year, you will not be able to take a vacation for double the length at the end of the following academic year.

Student Services

Orientation

Orientation is a time for students to become familiar with the school, its policies and surroundings.

GT offers orientation before arrival (pre-arrival), at the time of arrival (initial) and during your studies (ongoing).

Pre-arrival orientation is included in your acceptance package, if you've arrived from abroad and or are a new student. This handbook and the Course Catalog are a part of your pre-arrival orientation. Students applying from abroad also receive a Pre-arrival Guide, which explains the interview process and how to behave yourself and other details about what to do in different circumstances and upon arrival. Students have access to an advisor throughout the application process to answer any concerns by email, Skype, or phone.

Initial Orientation is required. All students arriving from abroad must attend the orientation, which is held before the start of classes. Students will be informed of the date and time of the orientation via email or over the phone. Orientation usually occurs at the main Downtown campus and the Portage Park campus, depending on session start dates. During the orientation we will review parts of this handbook as well as give you additional information and tips on studying and living in the Chicago area. This is a great time for you to ask questions. Please ask us anything you need or want to know about studying and living in Chicago.

Ongoing Orientation/Newsletters gives information about school news, such as policy changes, class information, as well as events and any other school related information and will be made available to you through quarterly newsletter and announcements on bulletin boards on campus. Make sure to check the boards for updates, they could be important!

Student ID

Student IDs are available at our main Downtown location. Not only does a student ID serve as an additional form of photo identification, but it allows you to take advantage of some great student discounts. Museums, restaurants and movie theaters often give great discounts to students.

Academic and Program Support

International Student Advisors at GT provide students with the support needed to achieve their academic goals. Our Advisors are also here to help interpret the rules and regulations of your F-1 status. Often, the international student advisor is also a DSO (Designated School Official). People sometimes think that DSOs are government employees, they are NOT. However, a DSO is responsible to update a student's record and report relevant information through SEVIS (Student & Exchange Visitor Information System).

GT encourages you to come to our office with questions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any part of student life, from visa/status question to cultural understanding, the office staff is here to offer support. Many answers to student questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.gt.edu, reviewing this handbook, or through our Course Catalog. Questions about GT programs can also be answered at our office.

Academic and Personal Advising

We are here to help you succeed! Students who are having a difficult time with their courses or adjusting to the educational environment can speak with our admission administrators and members of the administration about their issues. An appointment is often required. You can call or visit the office to schedule an appointment. If you have a concern or problem we encourage you to speak to someone. The Director of Education will assist you with academic problems. Academic advising can be mandatory in cases where a student is struggling at their midterm review, particularly for the second session in a row. We offer tutorial services to students who are struggling and may give you a helpful suggestion to overcome your problem. Personal issues may arise that are outside our expertise. We do not employ a licensed counselor, but are able to refer you to a qualified professional if the situation requires it. If you are not sure, ask us and we'll be glad to help.

International Student (F-1 immigration) Advising

Immigration advising is available by scheduled meeting with DSOs and/or International Student Advisors or Admission Administrators. Your DSO is very well informed about your student status and will often be able to answer most of your questions or point you to the right resource. GT does not employ an immigration attorney on staff; however, an attorney is available to advisors for consultation with the approval of the PDSO. Students are referred to an attorney when the scope of the issue is outside F-1 status issues. Reinstatement assistance is offered to qualified students (see the admissions section).

International Student Insurance

GT does not require students to have medical insurance, but we strongly recommend it. Health costs in the United States can be very high. If you need to visit a doctor or go to a hospital, the costs can be thousands of dollars. International students can purchase an International Medical Insurance plan by visiting the GT website. Plan information is available online or at the office. Insurance is offered through our partners at Study USA Healthcare/ USI Affinity travel insurance services. Plan information for students is available online at the GT website (www.gt.edu). You can also inquire about our insurance plans at the office. You can choose to purchase a different plan. We ask that you inform us if you have medical insurance. See the healthcare section of this handbook for additional information about healthcare in the US.

Student Housing

GT offers dormitory housing, just steps from our downtown campus. Our apartment style dorms include a full kitchen, living room and shared bedroom and full bath. Building amenities include on-site laundry, gym, indoor swimming pool, social/party room, office, and building security. Dormitory housing is based on availability throughout the year. Homestay is also available through our partners, My International Family. You can find additional housing resources on the accommodations page of our website or stop by the office for assistance and we'll be happy to give you suggestions. GT Educational Center offers academic and program support needed for student to achieve their educational goals.

WIFI

Students have WIFI access when on campus at all three locations. Access codes are available at the office or from the instructor(s).

Extracurricular Activities

Periodically activities are arranged for students outside of the classroom by the administration. Students can send in requests for activities online via the feedback form or by email. An activity calendar is available online. We will post GT led activity announcement on facebook and keep you updated in newsletters. Facebook is another great way to find out what we're up to and what activities are going on around the city.

Financial Assistance

GT offers students payment plan options with no interest. Students registering directly with the school can inquire about the payment options at the office. A payment plan must be completed and signed by the student. Payments are due by the 5th of each month. A late fee will be incurred for all payment that are not made in accordance to the payment plan and/or after the 5th of the month.

Tutorial Services

Tutoring services are available for an additional fee with a certified instructor. Ask an advisor if you're interested in tutoring services.

College Placement Assistance

Students are encouraged to move on to degree-granting institutions upon completion of your program at GT. Advisors will guide you through the US college system and diploma evaluations. We have agreements with several universities who offer GT students of advanced proficiency a TOEFL waiver, which means you don't have to take the TOEFL to get accepted. Please visit our website to see a list of these schools or contact the office for details.

Tuition, Fees, and Refund Policy

GT Educational Center accepts all financial payments by cash, credit card, check, money order or wire transfer payable to GT. Specific tuition and fees charged for all classes are listed in the course catalog or can be found on our website. The application and/or registration fee is not included in the tuition cost. Tuition is the price for instruction. All tuition and fees are due at the time of registration. The total amount of tuition is due and payable on the first day of attendance unless payment arrangements have been made according to the payment plan. There will be a \$50 fee assessed for any check returned due to insufficient funds or a stop payment. Upon processing the withdrawal, the tuition fee will be reduced according to the refund schedule below.

It is the policy of GT Educational Center to issue refunds of tuition and fees in a prompt manner. Students should give notification to GT Educational Center in writing of their intention to withdraw from a program.

GT Educational Center shall refund all tuitions paid to the students in any following circumstances:

1. GT Educational Center did not provide the student with a copy of a valid enrollment agreement,
2. cancels or discontinues the course in which the student has enrolled,
3. fails to conduct classes on days or times scheduled, detrimentally affecting the student.

If a student cancels classes or withdraws from GT Educational Center, he/she may be eligible for a tuition refund. Refunds will be counted from date of written notice and an exit interview must also be scheduled with a P/DSO.

Student application and/or registration fee is not refundable.

GT Educational Center will refund books and materials fees when: (a) books and materials are return to the school unmarked; and (b) the student has provided the school with a notice of cancellation.

Refunds shall be made within 30 days of the date of student's cancelation or withdraw request.

It is the policy of GT Educational Center to issue refunds of tuition and fees in a prompt manner. Students should give notification to GT Educational Center in writing of their intention to withdraw from a program.

GT Educational Center shall refund all tuitions paid to the students in any following circumstances:

1. GT Educational Center did not provide the student with a copy of a valid enrollment agreement,
2. Cancels or discontinues the course in which the student has enrolled,
3. Fails to conduct classes on days or times scheduled, detrimentally affecting the student.

If a student cancels classes or withdraws from GT Educational Center, he/she may be eligible for a tuition refund. Refunds will be counted from date of written notice and an exit interview must also be scheduled with a P/DSO.

Student application and/or registration fee is not refundable. GT Educational Center will grant the landlord's refund police on Dorm fees. GT Educational Center will refund books and materials fees when: (a) books and materials are return to the school unmarked; and (b) the student has provided the school with a notice of cancellation.

Refunds shall be made within 30 days of the date of student's cancelation or withdraw request.

TUITION REFUND SCHEDULE

- A. Withdrawal or Cancellation of scheduled program
 - 100 percent refund, if a student withdraws before to the first day of the initial session stated in his/her scheduled program.
 - 70 percent refund, if the withdrawal is initiated prior to 10% of scheduled program.
 - 50 percent refund, if the withdrawal is requested between 10% and 30% of Scheduled program.

- No refund, if withdrawal is initiated after 30% of scheduled program and students are obligated to pay rest of remaining tuition, if there is any.

**** Student who received a discounted tuition rate and withdraw from GT Education Center will deduct a portion of their discount amount from any refunds, which he/she is eligible to receive.**
An early termination fee of \$150 will be charged upon withdraw from the school.

B. Medical

Students who are unable to continue enrollment for medical reasons in their current session can request the tuition refund.

- Request for adjustment of tuition must be submitted to an administrative officer at GT to request an adjustment of charges for tuition.
- Request must be submitted along with supporting documents. In the event of medical withdrawal submission of a medical document from a doctor is required.
- The refund amount will be calculated with pro-rated weeks for the session of enrollment for which the student is dropped.
- When calculating the number of weeks completed, a partial week will be counted as a whole week, if the student cancels after at least one day during the scheduled week.

C. Other Conditions

Students who are absence for more than fifteen (15) consecutive class days without any written explanation, GT Education Center shall consider the student to have withdrawn from the program (unauthorized).

Withdrawing from the school may have consequences both to your academic and student status record. You are encouraged to understand the consequences before you decide to withdraw.

Emergency Information

Emergency School Closures

Emergency closures are announced through email, Facebook, and on the GT website when possible. This is another reason to keep your information updated! You can also be informed by calling the main phone number: 847.568.1560, where a message will inform you of any closures. The most common closures are due to weather, especially in the winter months. Power failures and outages can also cause the school to close. Other unforeseen circumstances may arise, in which case notifications will be given via the above channels as soon as possible.

Emergency Contact: In the state of Illinois, we use 911 for emergencies. If someone is not feeling well and can not be moved to go to the hospital, you call an ambulance. If there is a fire, you call the fire department. If there is an accident, crime, or serious dispute you call the police. All three can be reached, in emergency circumstances only, by calling 911.

EMERGENCY USE ONLY: Police, Fire, Ambulance – 911 (dial “9” first)

Student Complaints and Greivances

To forward a complaint against any aspect of the program the student should speak to the Admissions Administrator and complete a Complaint Form, available from our offices. The Admissions Administrator will forward the complaint to the appropriate member of administrator, either the Director of Education or the Director of Admission, who will take any necessary measures to satisfy the complaint. All complaints are reviewed by an administrator within 30 days. Feedback is also welcome through the feedback form on the GT website: www.gt.edu

Complaints against the school may be registered with: Illinois Board of Higher Education
Division of Private Business and Vocational Schools
1 N. Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 300,
Springfield, IL 62701

Contact Us

We have three Chicagoland locations:

Main Campus: Downtown Chicago
816 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60605
Tel.: (847) 568 1560
Fax: (847)-568-1563

Website: www.gt.edu

Email: info@gt.edu

Classroom Extension:

Portage Park (intersection: Irving Park/Narragansett):
4032 N. Nashville Ave. Chicago, IL 60634
Tel.: (773) 777 4625
Fax: (847) 777-7914

Classroom Extension:

Hickory Hills – the south suburbs of Chicago:
7667 W. 95th St. #301 Hickory Hills, IL 60457
Tel.: (708) 233 5701
Fax: (708) 233-5702

We encourage you to meet with an international student advisor to discuss questions or concerns you may have. We're here to help you achieve your language learning goals.

Understanding the US Culture

American Culture

It is impossible to completely describe Americans or American culture in a few paragraphs. You will learn soon enough how American culture differs from your own. We think that you may even find some similarities between the two. After all, at our most basic core, we are all human beings.

Here are some of the more obvious and initial things students in the past have noticed about Americans and American culture in comparison to their own cultures. Privacy is a fundamental issue that is dealt with many different ways by different cultures. A person's sense of privacy differs from culture to culture. Privacy and protecting personal privacy are deeply personal and political issues in the U.S. However, you may find this statement at odds with some typical American behaviors. For example, American students may talk about things that are not appropriate topics of conversation in your country. This can be a difference in privacy. What is private to you may not be private to many Americans.

Even the volumes at which Americans speak may be different than what you would expect in your country. It is very common for Americans to ask the question, "How are you?" when walking past you on the sidewalk. Many international students are surprised and offended when the American students do not stop to hear a reply. For Americans, "How are you?" is just a greeting, like the word "hello" or "good morning." Do not be surprised if people seem very open, friendly and concerned when they first meet you and then seem as if they do not know you the next time they see you. This is quite common here, as Americans can be quite friendly and helpful without any personal involvement on their part. It takes time to make personal relationships here just as it does in any other place.

Americans have different ways of interacting and reacting. Family structures, friendships, interpersonal and even impersonal relations differ greatly from culture to culture.

Give yourself some time to recognize the new gestures and facial expressions.

Social Customs

Every country has its own set of customs and behavior patterns. Here are just a few things that every American knows and might not think to tell you:

Greetings

Most people shake hands the first time they meet. A common greeting is “Hi, how are you?” The common response is “fine” or “good.” The individual then usually asks, “How are you?” in return. This sort of greeting can be the beginning of a more involved conversation, but usually it is used to simply acknowledge another person.

Social Invitations

You will often hear “come and visit us sometime.” This is not a serious invitation, but rather just a polite expression of friendship. If someone would actually like you to come and visit, the invitation will include a date, time and place. Invitations should be accepted as soon as possible. It is not considered at all impolite to turn down an invitation; however, it is **very impolite** to accept an invitation and then not show up. For example, if a party is to begin at 8:00 p.m., many of the guests will arrive at staggered hours, and some may come as late as 10:00 p.m. This is acceptable at student parties, but is not acceptable for a dinner invitation.

Saying Thank You

It is very considerate to send a thank you note to your host or hostess. It is not necessary to take a gift, especially if you are invited only for dinner. When someone does a small favor, it is customary to say “thank you.” The response “you’re welcome” is also customary.

Use of Names

First names may be more readily used in the U.S. than in other countries. It is correct to use the first name of someone of approximately your same status and age or younger. A man or woman older than you should be addressed as Mr., Mrs. or Ms. until the person requests you to use his/her first name. The title Mrs. applies to married women only. If you do not know if a woman is married, you may use the title of Ms. When having doubts about how to address someone, just ask the person what they like to be called.

You may find some American names strange or difficult to pronounce. The same can be said about your name by some Americans. If someone makes a mistake with your name, try to correct him or her in a very good-natured way, so he/she does not become embarrassed.

Smoking

There are many places in which smoking is not allowed. The trend in the United States has been to increasingly limit places where smoking is permitted. If you see a “No Smoking” sign, please obey it. Here are a few generalizations to help guide you if you choose to smoke while you are here. Smoking is generally not allowed in most public buildings. If you want to smoke in a restaurant, you must ask to be seated in the smoking section. If you are in the company of other people who are not smoking and you are indoors, it is best not to smoke. If necessary, it is not impolite to excuse yourself and go outside to smoke. Chicago does not permit smoking in any public building. Most restaurants are also non smoking; however it may be permitted at the bar.

Language

It is considered impolite to speak your native language in the presence of others who do not understand it. If you have a friend who does not speak any English or is very shy about using the language and you have to use your home language, then apologize to the other people. If it is convenient, you may want to translate what your friend said.

Culture Shock

The term “Culture Shock” is used to define the physical, intellectual, social and emotional adjustments a person will make transitioning between cultures. The degree to which a person experiences culture shock will depend largely on the following:

The person’s ability to understand and be understood in the new culture- most often this depends on the person’s ability to speak, read and write in a non-native language.

Greater language proficiency may mean a swifter or easier adjustment period.

The quality of the differences the person’s native culture and the new culture- If there are a lot of differences, chances are the adjustment and period of culture shock may be longer and more difficult.

Daily life in all cultures consists largely of a series of learned habits that we perform almost automatically with little thought and therefore little mental energy. When changing cultures, you

cannot rely on these habits to function on a daily basis. A period of disorientation occurs, during which you must learn new habits in order to function smoothly and comfortably. The good news is that eventually the new habits become as automatic as those of your native culture. The bad news is that this learning process can be very challenging and takes some time.

Understanding cultural shock will keep you from undergoing the experience, however, understanding what to expect during your adjustment may help you learn how to cope.

Physical Manifestations of Culture Shock:

- difficulty in sleeping
- disorientation due to time change (jetlag)
- adjustment to a new language and new accents
- strange dreams, often in English
- mental confusion
- change in eating patterns and schedules
- change in diet
- stomach problems
- irritability
- tension
- homesickness
- feelings of anxiety

Emotional Adjustment

During your first few months in the United States, do not be surprised if you experience many different emotions very quickly. Many international students seem to love everything about the American culture at first. They feel very happy and excited and eager to learn everything. After a while, these same students may begin to dislike everything about this country: the people, the food, and the culture. This is a very normal transition that students experience. It is important for you to remember that eventually things will get better. You will come to enjoy some American values and traditions while also embracing your own culture.

Here are some additional resources regarding mental health

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

Call 1-800- 273-8255 (available 24 hours a day 7 days a week)

Text 273TALK to 839863

Alcohol & Drug Helpline

Call 800-923- 4357

Text RecoveryNow to 839863



www.dhs.state.il.us

DHS wants to help you and your family live a healthy and independent life. Following are links to health information and services provided by DHS and other State Agencies.

MentalHealth.gov
Let's talk about it.

www.mentalhealth.gov

Intellectual Adjustment

Academics may provide a challenge for you in many ways. First, there may be a significant difference due to the language. You may find that you will need to devote much more time to completing your assignments. Second, classes in the United States are often conducted in different ways. Some professors will expect students to participate in class a great deal, so classes may lack the structure to which you are accustomed. Do not be too disappointed if your academic work is not as successful as you had hoped it would be during your first term. Many students procrastinate and let work pile up until the

last minute. You will find that if you read all of your assignments and complete your homework on a regular basis, you will do much better.

American/International Student Relationships

It is difficult to provide a guide to social relationships in the U.S. because they are constantly changing. The country's size also creates differences in social conduct. The regions of the U.S. are separated by thousands of miles, distinct climates, and differing ethnic groups. Each region and some ethnic groups have developed its own subculture within the larger national culture.

How Americans make friends is difficult for international students to understand. In the U.S., friendliness comes easily but friendships take time to grow. American students may be very

Friendly – they may be eager to talk, smile, and joke – but this does not necessarily mean a commitment to friendship. This is because American students are concerned with establishing personal freedom and finding themselves, so they tend to be cautious about making commitments.

Close friendships do exist, but they are the result of repeated interactions between individuals and recognition of shared views and experiences. You will have to put forth some effort in making friends. Social groups form in halls, classes, clubs, and at sporting events. The key to being successful is to participate; don't let a weakness in English keep you from seeking out friendships.

Communication

Email

If you do not already have one, set up a free email account through www.gmail.com, www.yahoo.com or www.hotmail.com. In the U.S., many cafes, libraries, and office service stores (ex. Kinko's) offer Internet access for a small fee. You can use any of GT's computer labs, when classes are not in session, to surf the web and check your e-mails for free. GT often sends newsletters to students, many times regarding changes in policy and status information, so it's a very good idea to provide a personal e-mail. We also expect students to check their emails on a regular basis, at least once per week, because it is our primary source of communication with you.

Telephones

We recommend buying a calling card for all of your international telephone calls. For international calls, you will need to dial 011 + (country code) + phone number. All phone cards have instruction for use on the back of the card.

Regular Mail

You can buy stamps at a post office for mail you wish to send. Domestic rates are 44 cents for letters and 32 cents for postcards. International rates vary.

Telephone Use and Information

In order to call local stores or friends in the surrounding area from a landline, you must dial the 1+ the 10 digit number, including the area code, if you are calling from 847 or 224 (North West Chicago Suburbs), otherwise, the one is not required before the number if you are calling locally. To make long distance calls, you must dial 1+ the 10 digit number and please remember that charges will apply. Phone numbers, which begin with 1-800, are a toll free call, which means that there is no charge to you. The **service fees for "800" numbers are paid by the business as a courtesy** to customers. Do not confuse an "800" number with a "900" number – "900" numbers are extremely expensive to use!

Important Phone Numbers

- ☐ **EMERGENCY USE ONLY Police, Fire, Ambulance – 911 (dial "9" first)**
- ☐ GT – 1 (847) 568-1560 Main Office in Downtown, IL
- ☐ Chicago O'Hare Airport (General Information) – (866) 434-2226
- ☐ Amtrak – 1-800-872-7245
- ☐ CTA (local train and bus transportation) – (312) 836-7000
- ☐ Greyhound Bus Lines (long distance travel by bus) – 1-800-231-2222

Additional Needs and Services

Money/Budget

If you have not lived "on your own" before, living in America may seem costly at first. You will be responsible for housing (depending on your housing situation), food, transportation, entertainment, and general living expenses. It is important that you budget your money wisely, and that you do not run out of money.

We encourage you to open a bank account at a local bank. Never give your personal bank identification number (or "pin" number) to anyone, including any of GT's program staff. Most banks offer Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) that are open 24 hours a day for you to withdraw or deposit money. You should be the only person that has access to your bank account.

It is also a good idea to purchase a pre-paid calling card to make long distance phone calls. Cards are readily available at many stores and post offices. They can be used on any home telephone or pay telephones. Try to use the calling card on a residential phone as pay phones deduct extra minutes for all connections.

Opening a Bank Account

While in the U.S., you should keep your money in a bank account. We recommend you choose a bank with many ATMs and offices throughout the United States to make it easier to withdraw money at the lowest cost possible and feel comfortable knowing your money is safe.

You may be able to obtain a debit card that you can use to pay for your purchases and withdraw cash from ATMs. Before departure for your home country, you may request your bank to transfer funds by wire to your home country bank. Transfer fees will most likely apply.

Tipping - At American restaurants, it is customary to tip your waiter 15% to 20% of the meal price. The same practice applies to taxi drivers, hairdressers, and other service industry individuals. If you received good service, tip more. If you are dissatisfied, tip less.

Housing

If you are experiencing problems with your living situation, including problems with GT or GT recommended housing, please let us know immediately. We will do our best to help resolve the issue. To file a complaint, please complete a complaint form by stopping by our office or submit a feedback form on our website.

Healthcare

We offer health insurance to our students through our partners at Study USA Healthcare. Visit our website, www.gt.edu plan information. We strongly recommend you purchase health insurance.

Healthcare is NOT free in the US. A trip to the hospital emergency room can cost thousands of dollars. Special international student insurance is available through different insurance companies. The cost of this insurance is relatively inexpensive, depending on the policy you choose. You can check current prices on our website by selecting the "insurance" option under "student services." An insurance policy is the type of insurance plan you select, different plans cover healthcare at different percentages. A cheaper plan will generally cover less than a more expensive plan. Read the entire policy to make sure the policy you choose is reliable. Visit our office for options and more information.

Transportation

Unlike some parts of Europe, it is considered unsafe and illegal in most states to hitchhike. It is not recommended that you hitchhike while in the U.S. You should learn about the public transportation in your local community. Ask your employer if there is public transportation convenient to your place of employment, shopping areas, and other areas of the local community.

Driver's Licenses

Your National License

All states in the U.S. officially recognize foreign licenses. International licenses, however, are NOT recognized in the state of Illinois. Consult cyberdriveillinois.com, for more information or the Department of Motor Vehicles of the state you are in to confirm the length of validity. Your national license will only be valid if accompanied by your I-20 and passport.

An American License

In most cases you do not have to obtain an American drivers license, if you have a valid driver's license from your home country. However, you can. To obtain an American License, you will need to visit your local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), in the USA. The following link will provide information on DMV locations that can assist international students there are 36 designated Secretary of State facilities.

http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_tvdl4.pdf

You will need to pass a written test and a driving test. You can study for the Illinois drivers license by reading the Rules of the Road book online: http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_a112.pdf or stop by a DMV to get a paper copy.

All TVDL facilities, except for Chicago North and Chicago West locations, process TVDLs without an appointment. TVDL processing will NOT be available on Saturdays at any facility. To schedule an appointment at Chicago North Driver Services facility or Chicago West Driver Services facility, please click below.

<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/TVDL/tvdl.html>

Please know that each state has specific policies and procedures for obtaining a driver's license. We urge you to call the local Department of Transportation or Motor Vehicle for these requirements before visiting the office. You may call their toll free number at 1-800-932-4600. Typically the following documents will be required for international students to obtain a driver's license. In Illinois it is required that you bring the following with you:

- a valid passport
- a Form I-20 with a valid signature-your I-20 must be for issued for a minimum of 1 year and be valid for at least 6 more months.
- your I-94 [Arrival Record-electronic] (see the documents section on how to retrieve your I-94 number)
- two forms of proof of residency: lease agreements for rental properties, a statement from school, current utility bills [water, gas, electric, cable, phone, etc.]

If you can not produce two forms of proof of residency, see GT for a letter describing the residential nature of your educational experience. Many of the forms of acceptable documentation do not apply to residential students.

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Renting a Car

Most car rental companies require drivers to be at least 25 years old. They also require a major credit card such as Visa or Master Card. However, some companies might waive the credit card requirements as long as you leave a deposit. In some cases, rental companies will rent a car to those that are younger; however, they will charge more for the car rental. The following are reputable car rental companies:

Alamo: 1-800-GO-ALAMO

Avis: 1-800-331-1212

Budget: 1-800-527-0700

Hertz: 1-800-654-3131

Dollar: 1-800-800-4000

Enterprise: 1-800-562-0450

Buying a Car

If you do buy a car, be very careful to buy one in good condition. It is a good idea to spend the few extra dollars and have a reputable mechanic look over the car before investing your money. In order to register a car, you must purchase insurance. Check with the state's motor vehicle department before buying the car, and find out everything you need to do and the cost to register it. Keep in mind that the car will be hard to sell later.

Plane

The fastest way to travel around the U.S. is by air. Finding the best fare at the time you want may be difficult, so check out websites for plane ticket information (www.expedia.com, www.travelocity.com, www.orbitz.com, www.kayak.com) or visit a local travel agent. Buying plane tickets online from a reliable website is reliable.

Public Transportation

CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) provides public transportation in and around the Chicago area. You will see both buses and trains marked "CTA". In Chicago, we call the CTA train system The "EL", which is short for ELevated, because they were the first elevated train tracks in the world. The EL stops right outside of our Downtown campus and is a good way to get around the city. The CTA offers daily, weekly, and monthly passes. You can check schedules, prices and get directions on the CTA website: www.transitchicago.com

Bus

Traveling by bus is an affordable and popular mode of transportation around the U.S. The Greyhound Bus is the major company, as it has many stations across the country. Fare and schedule information may be found by calling 1-800-231-2222, or by checking out the website at www.greyhound.com.

Train/Rail

Amtrak is the nationwide train system, and offers a U.S.A. Rail Pass that is valid for either 15 or 30 days and allows foreign visitors to travel across the country. You can purchase a U.S.A. Rail Pass outside of the U.S. and also in major U.S. cities. For more information on schedules and fares, check out www.amtrak.com or call 1-800-USA-RAIL.

Safety and the Law

Chicago is a large metropolitan city, there are good and bad areas in and around the city. Although most areas are safe, you should always be aware of your surrounding and look for suspicious activity. You should try and plan activities with others or in areas and at times when others are around. You should be aware that criminals often look for an "easy target"—someone who is obviously new to the area, unfamiliar with his or her surroundings, and a non-native English speaker. To help avoid becoming a victim:

- Get to know your school community, including any areas that might not be safe
- Never enter a stranger's car under any circumstances
- Unlike many other parts of the world, it is not safe and it is illegal to hitchhike in the U.S.
- Do not leave your things unattended
- Do not give strangers your home address or phone number
- Always be aware of your surroundings
- Carry your GT ID card at all times

U.S. Laws

While in the United States, it is extremely important that you obey all laws. If you break the law, this may lead your arrest and possible deportation from the country. This will also prevent you from obtaining a visa to enter the U.S. in the future. Avoid problems and follow all laws!

Here are some standard laws you are required to obey

Don't do it!

Shoplifting (Stealing)

Under-aged drinking (the drinking age is 21 years old)

Drinking alcohol in public

Driving under the influence (of alcohol or drugs)

Drug possession

Destruction of property

Disturbing the peace (Being too loud in public)

Disorderly conduct

BE SMART! OBEY THE LAW!

Entertainment

Chicago and its surrounding areas offer some of the best recreation in the country.

Downtown Chicago – excellent museums, restaurants, bars, clubs, cafes, sightseeing tours, architecture, shopping, and everything you could possibly imagine.

Downtown is not the only area to explore in Chicago. This city offers lots of neighborhoods to explore: Lincoln Park, Wicker Park/Bucktown, Lincoln Square, Wrigleyville, Lakeview, Greek town, China town, and more. All of these are accessible by public transportation or CTA (Chicago Transit Authority). For more on getting around the city, see the transportation section of this handbook.

There are endless possibilities for exploring the city. Here are some of our suggestions:

- Chicago River Tour
- Navy Pier
- Millennium Park-where you can find the Cloud Gate/Bean
- Chicago Architectural Society Walking Tour
- Double Decker tours
- Chicago Ghost tour
- Second City-Improve Comedy
- Lincoln Park Zoo (FREE)
- Willis Tower (Sears Tower) observatory
- Signature room lounge-top of the John Hancock building
- Wrigley Field tour-or catch a game!
- Volleyball on North beach
- Ice skating at millennium park

- Lake Shore drive run or bike ride
- So much more!

The city offers some great activities for FREE! That's right, FREE! Museums often have free days as well as street fairs and markets. Be sure to check websites such as metromix.com and citysearch.com to find some great activities.

Suburbs - also offer some great shopping and restaurants. Different cities/suburbs are known for different things. The town of Evanston, for example, is known for being a college town with lots of restaurants, bars, and the beach. You can find the Chicago botanical gardens in Highland Park, also north of Chicago. These suburbs are very close to our Downtown campus!

Our staff is incredibly helpful and we know a lot about the city and surrounding areas. Ask us!

To find current events and entertainment info visit www.metromix.com or www.chicago.citysearch.com.

School events can be found on our website or on the events boards at all locations.

Quick Reference

Slang

While you are in America, you will hear Americans use "slang," or informal phrases or expressions that are unique to America. These may be words you did not learn in English class! Here are some examples of American slang:

Awesome: great and impressive
 Catch some rays: get some sunshine
 Check this out: look at this
 Chicken: coward
 Cool: excellent; superb
 Dorky: strange; peculiar
 Dude: a person, usually a male
 Flick: movie
 Get it: to understand something
 I.D.: identification
 I'm outta here: I'm leaving; I'm departing
 Chill/Laid back: relaxed; calm
 Lame: boring
 Luck out: to be lucky or fortunate
 OK or okay: decent
 Pig out: eat too much
 Split: to leave
 Sweet!: pleasing, cool
 Totally: really, complete
 What's up?: how are you? What's going on?

Electricity

The United States electrical system uses 110 volts, 60 hertz (cycles). If you are bringing any electrical appliances, they are probably designed for Europe's electrical system, which uses 220 volts. You will need to purchase a transformer and plug adapter that can accommodate the wattage of your appliances.

Differences in Measures

1 mile = 1.6 kilometers 1 gallon (4 quarts) = 3.79 liters
 1 yard (3feet) = 0.91 meters 1 quart (4 cups) = 0.95 liters
 1 foot (12 inches) = 30.48 cm 32 F = 0 C
 1 inch = 2.54 centimeters 68 F = 30 C
 1 pound (16oz) = 0.45 grams 95 F = 35 C

Time Zones

List of Resources

- www.studyinthestates.dhs.gov
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)- www.uscis.gov
- U.S. Department of State (DOS) (Bureau of Consular Affairs) www.state.gov
- U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)(Employment & Training Administration) – www.dol.gov
- Social Security Administration (SSA) www.ssa.gov
- Federal Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA)- www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/
- www.cyberdriveillinois.com/

EST (Eastern Standard Time) – New York, Boston, Florida: 8:00 AM

CST (Central Standard Time) – Chicago, Houston: 7:00 AM

MST (Mountain Standard Time) – Denver, New Mexico: 6:00 AM

PST (Pacific Standard Time) – San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle: 5:00 AM

Resources

Sources for Supplemental Information

- Information about F1 programs- www.travel.state.gov
- Immigration laws, regulations and guides
- Types of non-immigrant visas and regulations- www.travel.state.gov/visa
- White House Web Site www.whitehouse.gov/infocus.immigration
- Immigration and Customs Enforcements-www.ice.gov