

# Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics International Student Handbook

equipping  
TO **serve** *across*  
language  
AND **cultural**  
boundaries



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**GIAL**  
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF  
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Graduate Institute of  
Applied Linguistics  
International Student  
Handbook

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## WELCOME

On behalf of the International Students Center (ISC), we would like to welcome you to GIAL. We are very excited that you have chosen this institution to be your "home" for the next few years! We are here to assist you in your personal, academic, and cultural transition to the university environment. Our office provides:

- 1) Orientation sessions and continuing education programs which specifically assist you in your transition to living in the United States and to being a student at GIAL;
- 2) Explanation of immigration procedures and governmental policies which affect you as an international student and assistance in completing ICE paperwork for program extensions, changes in status, reinstatement to student status, and moving to another school or educational level;
- 3) Assistance with the work authorization process for international students who seek employment on and off campus;
- 4) Assistance with personal or academic issues and referrals to appropriate offices or resources when needed.

## ACADEMICS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### *Keys to Academic Success*

The academic system at GIAL and other institutions in the United States of America differs from most other systems in the world. To be a successful student, you will need to learn how the North American classroom operates. Students, professors, academic advisors, and counselors will be able to answer questions for you, but here is a list of suggestions that you should keep in mind as you begin your studies at GIAL.

### *Evaluate Your Expectations*

Have realistic expectations for yourself as you begin your study here. You will need some time to adjust to your new lifestyle, the North American culture, and GIAL. International students often earn lower grades in North American schools than they are accustomed to during their first semester. As their language skills improve and they become accustomed to the university, their grades improve.

### *Study Skills*

Memorization is important, but in the United States, professors are happier when students can actually use facts to solve problems in new, creative, or unique ways. In short, memorizing facts is not enough. It is not necessary to memorize your books, but rather it is necessary to understand the concepts, and be prepared to apply and communicate the concepts in real-life situations.

### *Hard Work from the Beginning*

You may have to adapt your study habits to the North American

educational system. The system emphasizes continual evaluation in the form of tests, projects, quizzes, and participation in class discussions throughout the semester or term, not only on an exam at the end of the semester or term.

### **Attendance**

Almost every professor will have an attendance policy. If you miss too many classes or are late for too many classes, professors have the right to give you a failing grade for the course, no matter what your scores are. Of course, if you are sick or have some emergency, your absence may be excused. You should be prepared to give some written evidence for this, such as a note from your doctor.

### **Syllabi (plural for “syllabus”)**

The professor will give you a syllabus at the beginning of every course: the syllabus is very important. Each syllabus will describe your professor's expectations for that class, including assignments, projects, grading scale, attendance policy, and tests. You will be responsible for completing the material and following the rules listed on all syllabi.

### **Reading Effectively**

Almost every course in a North American university requires the student to do a lot of reading. Professors will lecture, of course, but many times the students are expected to get new information from readings – and the professor will sometimes NOT give lectures on the information found in readings. Even if the professor doesn't give a lecture on a topic, if it is on the syllabus, you are still responsible for learning the information.

Reading is frequently the hardest task for a second language learner, but there are some good techniques for you to use:

*Step One: SKIM over materials quickly, paying attention to the table of contents, the titles of chapters, the headings of various sections of the chapters, the first sentences of each paragraphs, and the summary sections.*

*Step Two: READ over the material again. This time read more carefully, looking for the main points, the conclusion, and the content.*

*Step Three: QUESTION what the writer has written. Ask: “Why is the writer saying this?” “What is the evidence for that?”*

*Step Four: REVIEW the material. Look over your notes and try to retain the main points of the reading.*

Ask classmates and/or your professor immediately (same day) about anything you do not understand from class or from the day's readings or assignments.

### **Classroom Participation**

Students are ENCOURAGED to ask questions and to voice their own opinions, even if they differ from the opinions of the professor! In the mind of a North American professor, student comments and questions mean that the student is paying attention to the professor, and professors generally like that.

In some classes, you may be asked to prepare a short lecture or presentation to deliver to your class. Many such assignments are graded. It is normal to feel anxious about speaking in front of your professor and class. You should practice your presentation aloud to an audience of one or more, and ask for feedback before making class presentations. You can practice in front of your roommate or friends.

Many professors will include your class participation in the calculation of your final grade for the class. You will learn a tremendous amount from your participation and that of the other students in your classes.

### **Examinations**

You will take many examinations in your classes. Most classes have a mid-term (half-way through the course) and a final exam (last day of the course). There are two general types of test.

**Objective Exams:** test the student's knowledge of particular facts. There are five different kinds of question commonly found on objective tests. There are definite right and wrong answers on an objective test.

**Multiple Choice:** The student must choose from a series of answers, selecting the one that is most appropriate. True or False: The student must read a statement and indicate whether it is true or false.

**Matching:** the student must match words, phrases, or statements from two columns.

**Identification:** The student must identify and briefly explain the significance of a name, term, or phrase.

**Fill-in-the-blank:** the student must fill in the blanks left in a phrase or statement in order to make the statement complete or correct.

### **Subjective Assignments**

These assignments require you to write an essay, complete a project, or present research findings to an audience. These assignments often focus on the “big picture” and test your ability to organize your thoughts and relate knowledge of a particular subject. Instructors are getting better at outlining the specific requirements and expectations for the completed paper, project, or presentation at the time it is assigned. There may be as many “right” answers as there are students. The important thing is to follow procedures and to include all criteria required by the assignment as explained by the professor who assigned it.

**Papers:** It is usually required to submit a word-processed paper, rather than a handwritten one. Pay careful attention to required rules for citation/bibliography/notes.

**Projects:** You may be asked to research and develop your knowledge of one particular aspect or one particular application of the skills you learn in class. Your final product may be in the form of a paper, a multi sensory media or computer demonstration, and/or a class presentation.

**Presentations:** These can be brief and simple or more lengthy and drawn out, depending on the instructor's guidelines. Carefully choose visual, or other media, aids which will enhance your audience's understanding of the concept or target information.

It is wise to complete papers and projects before their due date,

so there is time to ask another person or your professor for suggestions for improvement.

Be sure to carefully proofread and spell-check your paper before giving it to your professor.

Do not be afraid to ask your professor for clarification of his/her expectations for your project, presentation, or paper.

## **NORTH AMERICAN CULTURE - AN INTRODUCTION**

### ***Time***

North Americans see time as limited. They put great emphasis on being “on time.” It is important to be on time to classes, social events, public events, and appointments. These Americans generally feel that time spent waiting is wasted and will resent having to wait. If you must miss an appointment or if you will be late, it is polite to telephone the person you were supposed to meet to cancel or delay your meeting.

North Americans also generally prefer to complete one task before beginning another task. North Americans resent it when people ask them to do more than one thing at a time. In American culture, it is considered rude to interrupt someone when they are doing something. It is better to let a North American know you have arrived, and then politely wait until he or she has finished what he/she is doing.

### ***Informality***

Although in some places the atmosphere is quite formal, in others, it is very informal. Treating guests informally is not being rude, but rather a way of taking you into the intimate circle of family and friends. For Americans, being asked to “help yourself,” or to serve yourself, is a great honor. Although Americans frequently address each other by given rather than family names, at first meeting, it is best to use a person’s title (Doctor, Professor, Mr., or Mrs.) unless invited to do otherwise. Typically in the southern US, it is very common to address older people as “Sir” (for a man) or “Ma’am” (for a woman).

### ***Directness***

Being open and direct in expressing your desires, preferences, and feelings, or in discussing issues, events, and most ideas is considered proper in the United States. However, most North Americans are generally hesitant to discuss religion, political beliefs, age, weight, or salary. North Americans are particularly sensitive about their physical appearance. It is VERY rude to tell a person that he/she is overweight or fat, unless he/she is a very close friend.

It is important for you to be direct and honest with North Americans in expressing your opinion, feelings, and preferences. If you feel uncomfortable about something you are asked to do, make your feelings known. For example, if you are asked to speak in front of a large group and would prefer not to do so, it is polite to decline the invitation to speak.

### ***Competitiveness***

North Americans place high value on achievement and success, and this leads them to compete with each other. You will find both friendly and not-so-friendly competition. Although competing is natural to many Americans, they also have a good sense of “teamwork” – cooperating with others toward a common goal.

### ***Inquisitiveness***

Americans from the United States are generally very curious. North American education encourages inquisitiveness and asking many questions. Try to be patient when an American asks you a question about your country, even if the question seems ridiculous. This is your chance to educate them about your culture. You will also learn a great deal about the United States of America by asking questions yourself.

### ***“Equality”***

North Americans are taught from childhood “all people are equal. There are many “equal rights” movements among minorities. In general, North Americans try to treat women and men, members of different racial and ethnic groups, and heterosexuals and homosexuals equally. The operative word these days is “tolerance.”

North Americans are very proud of the diversity of people who live here, even when we don’t seem to be getting along. Like all societies, the United States of America has people with rigid and prejudicial ideas about people, food, customs, and proper ways of living. However, people of different races, religious beliefs, and national origins have full, legal, and equal rights. Racial, sexual, or religious insults or jokes can get you into trouble.

One other note: you may encounter homosexual people in the United States of America. Many North Americans’ sense of equality informs their belief that homosexuals have the same legal and civil rights as any other citizen. Some North Americans consider intolerant behavior toward homosexuals (insulting or abusing of homosexuals) as being ethically wrong. If you have questions or concerns about homosexuality, you should ask a trusted counselor or advisor.

### ***Friendships***

It is common for Americans to have a few very close friends, but many less intense social relationships with other people. The latter are people with whom they work, go to school, or participate in sports, hobbies, or cultural events on a regular basis. In the US we have a habit of saying, “Let’s get together sometime,” and then not following through. It is perfectly appropriate to respond to such an invitation by calling to ask, “When is a good time to get together?” to set up something definite.

### ***Public Displays of Affection (PDA)***

North Americans tend to avoid “Public Displays of Affection”, or “PDA,” between friends of the same or different sex. In general, Americans do not hug or hold hands with their friends in public areas unless it is some special occasion.

Romantic partners may show affection in public, but only within limits: hand holding and short kisses in public are OK, but prolonged kissing and other activities are considered offensive, and even strangers may ask them to stop.

## **Romantic Relationships**

Dating is acceptable between people, and is usually arranged with an informal invitation from a man, although it is increasingly acceptable for a woman to give the invitation. Accepting or offering a “date” does not necessarily mean that you are interested in marriage, or a serious or sexual relationship. People often get together to go to movies or to dinner to have a good time and to get to know someone. Marriage normally happens only after a person has had several romantic relationships.

## **Language and Dialect**

In Dallas, you will encounter African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and native Texans, and most every other ethnic, immigrant, or regional dialect group. Each of these groups has its peculiarities when it comes to speaking English which can be difficult even for other speakers of English to understand. If you have trouble understanding a person, ask him/her to slow down or to repeat what he/she said. Most people don't mind explaining the terms or expressions they use and will happily help you.

## **Names**

Be patient while others learn how to say your name correctly. Some international students will choose an “Americanized” version of their name to make it easier for others to remember, but this is a matter of personal choice. You should not feel that you have to do this yourself, though you can if you would like to. Any American can learn to say your name properly, if not perfectly. They may even be proud to learn how to pronounce it correctly.

# **CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

Moving to a New Culture is an Experience. Each day at GIAL you will be learning many things outside and inside the classroom. You will learn how people of another culture view the world and their lives. There is value in experiencing and understanding a way of life different from your own. You will even learn things about your own culture that you never thought about before. This is a rare opportunity to not only broaden your views but to mature and establish your values. You will also be able to educate others about your culture. The best way to find out about something you do not understand is to ask questions. Do not hesitate to ask question -- even if the questions seem trivial or you think your English is not good. People are generally helpful, but they can't guess what you need to know. Ask Questions!

## **Culture Shock and Adjustment**

What is it? “Culture Shock” is the name given to the feelings of confusion that occur when a person leaves a familiar place to enter an unfamiliar one. You may not be able to convey your thoughts in English. Your family and friends are far away. There are academic and social symptoms of Culture Shock: People experience Culture Shock in varying degrees.

You may:

- become nervous and unusually tired
- seek out familiar sources of comfort: sleeping,
- particular foods, same-language speakers

- keep in close touch with those at home
- feel frustrated and hostile toward your host country
- become excessively angry over minor irritations
- associate only with people who also consider themselves “foreign”

## **Coping With Culture Shock**

Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

- Evaluate your expectations. Your reactions are products of the way things are here and the way you expected them to be. If you find yourself being confused or disappointed about something, ask yourself: What did I expect? Was my expectation reasonable?
- Keep an open mind. Try to understand that Americans are acting according to their cultural values. Avoid evaluating their behaviors by the standards of your country.
- Learn from the experience. You are here to explore a new way of life. You do not have to change your own values, but you should respect those of other people.  
Meet with the international student advisor when you have questions or need to speak with someone who will try to help you as you adjust to your new environment. With your international student advisor, you can discuss any problems that you are having with making your adjustment. Students can also be a resource for each other in coping with life in a new culture.

## **The Adjustment Process**

The following describes the stages and symptoms of the adjustment process. Although individuals differ, it is important to know the stages and recognize symptoms.

### **Honeymoon Period (first few weeks)**

As a newcomer you are interested and excited by the new surroundings. Although you may be nervous, your excitement outweighs anxiety or concern.

### **Culture Shock**

You feel overwhelmed by new problems and behaviors: Housing, transportation, food, language, and loneliness. Symptoms include:

- Fatigue resulting from continuously trying to understand and use a second language;
- Doubt about why you came to this place;
- Lack of self-confidence;
- Minor illnesses (colds, upset stomachs, etc).

### **Step One: Initial Adjustment (zero to two weeks)**

Soon, you find that everyday activities such as housing, meals, and transportation are no longer big problems for you

### **Step Two: Mental Isolation (two to six weeks)**

After you make the initial arrangements and adjustments for daily living, you will begin to look for personal relationships. Although you may be able to express basic ideas and feelings in a second language, you feel you cannot express yourself as well as you can in your native language. You feel like you have little or nothing in common with most people around you.

### **Symptoms of Mental Isolation:**

- Spending most of your time with people who speak the same language;
- Spending a lot of time alone;
- Being depressed;
- Abusing alcohol (on-campus use of alcohol is prohibited);
- Having persistent and intensely negative feelings toward the new environment and the people.

### *Step Three: Acceptance and Integration (beginning at about six weeks)*

A routine (work, school, social life) is established. You have accepted the customs, habits, food and characteristics of the friends, associates, and language of the U.S.

### *Return Anxiety, Reentry Shock, Reintegration*

You may experience “Reverse Culture Shock” when you return to your home country. You will have to readjust to life in your home while assimilating the things you learned at GIAL and in U.S. culture. Anxiety can begin two or more months before you leave the US.

Anytime you feel that you need to talk to someone about your cultural adjustment at GIAL & to the USA, you can contact an instructor, staff member, Dean, or advisor in the ISC. They are available to listen to your problems and needs.

## HEALTH INFORMATION

### **Who to contact**

#### *When you need immediate help*

Emergencies (serious accident or life-threatening condition): Dial 911 from nearest telephone. You will be taken by ambulance to a hospital.

If ON campus, also follow these steps:

- Call 144 (or from a cell phone dial 214-906-1648) to alert emergency personnel on campus.
- Mon-Fri 8a-5p, call the Welcome Desk at 2338 or 2339 so they can assist in meeting the emergency vehicles at the front entrance and direct them to the emergency
- During non-working hours it is imperative that someone goes to the Center entrance to direct the emergency vehicles (normally two vehicles respond).

#### *When you have time to arrange for help*

**Health care facilities:** It is wise to choose the facility that is most appropriate to your immediate need.

**Campus Health Care Center** SIL maintains a small clinic on the campus. It is open to anyone who has an ID badge issued on campus. Fees are kept to a minimum, but must be paid at the time you receive services there. A Doctor and at least one nurse are available during office hours. You pay for a Clinic visit according to their fee schedule on the day of your visit. Fees are very affordable. *Medical Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 am – Noon, Wednesday 1:30 pm - 4: 30 pm; Dental Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 am – Noon, Tuesday & Wednesday 1 - 4 pm.* You can call the Clinic number 1-972-708-7408 24 hours a day for emergency referral. For routine or planned visits, the clinics require an appointment which

can be set up during office hours at the clinic or by calling 972-708-7408.

There are four basic places to obtain health care:

**Public Clinics** offer services for low or no cost, but services are very limited, and often require long waits. We have a version of this here at the Center:

**Private Physicians** offer most services, but the price can be high. Most private physicians accept health insurance for payment. Normally, you must make an appointment to see one.

**Urgent Care Centers** offer care which is needed urgently for conditions that are not life-threatening. No appointment is usually necessary. They are open longer than most public clinics or doctors' offices. They may be more expensive than a doctor's office, but are less expensive than a visit to an emergency room. Two in our area are: Primacare Clinic, 642 Uptown Boulevard in Cedar Hill, tel. 972-637-5100, and Urgent Care Clinic, 4323 Hampton Road in Dallas, tel. 214-331-6531. They accept most health insurance.

**Hospitals** provide advanced health care services, including surgery and emergency services. Hospital services are very expensive. In cases of emergencies, you can go to any hospital, and they must treat you – even if you cannot pay. All hospitals will accept health insurance.

#### *North Central Texas Poison Center:*

1-800-222-1222 is the number to call for advice on treatment for contact/ingestion of poisonous materials or suspected overdoses. From the Poison Control Network website (<http://www.poisoncontrol.org/>). Your call will be answered by one of the specialists at the Poison Center. These experts are trained nurses and pharmacists who specialize in poisoning emergency treatment and poison prevention. The poison specialist will help you to decide if you need to go to a hospital. Most poisonings are not life threatening and can be handled at home with the help of a specialist, saving you time and money. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911 for an ambulance.

### **Health-related regulations**

#### **Communicable Diseases (US law)**

US law requires that certain diseases be reported. If you are aware that you have such a disease either through diagnosis or obvious symptoms, it is your responsibility to report this information to GIAL officials. If you are unsure whether a disease you have must be reported, seek counsel with either the Dean of Students, the Dean of Academic Affairs, or the ISC staff. All incidents of communicable disease will be handled on a case-by case basis with the strictest confidence.

See Center for Disease Control website for a list of reportable diseases [http://www.cdc.gov/osels/ph\\_surveillance/nndss/phs/infdis2011.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/osels/ph_surveillance/nndss/phs/infdis2011.htm).

#### **Immunizations (Texas law)**

Bacterial Meningitis vaccination is required for all students under the age of 30 entering a Texas institution of higher learning (colleges and universities). Other immunizations are recommended,

but not required, for international students attending GIAL. If you will be studying at another school during your time in the US, check with that school to see which immunizations, if any, are required.

Your children will be required to provide proof of several immunizations before they will be allowed to attend Texas schools. Check with the school itself to find out which immunizations are required for enrollment in that school.

If you or your children need additional immunizations for whatever reason, check first with the Center Health Clinic to see which immunizations they can provide and at what cost. For immunizations they can't provide, see <http://www.ci.duncanville.tx.us/pdf/school%20immunize.pdf> for the times of the nearest immunization clinics.

Note on Measles, Mumps and Rubella immunization (required by most schools): This vaccine (called "MMR" in English) in Spanish is called "Triple" and in French is called the "ROR." More information on required Texas immunizations can be found at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/>.

### ***Tuberculin PPD Skin Tests (GIAL policy)***

GIAL requires all international students to get a PPD skin test for Tuberculosis soon after arrival on campus. The skin test is a painless procedure that shows if you have been exposed to tuberculosis.

A nurse at the Clinic will place a small drop of liquid under your skin. Two days later, the nurse will look at the skin to see if there are any reactions. If a student's skin reacts to the liquid, he/she may be required to go to a doctor to get a chest x-ray.

Treatment for TB will be required if its presence is detected. A student may not attend class after positive test results until a doctor declares him/her TB-free.

### ***Environmental health concerns***

A wooded area that has some dangers of which to be aware bounds the International Linguistics Center on the west and south. Some environmental features of our area are worth noting:

Mammals: Squirrels, skunks, raccoons, armadillos, foxes, bobcats and other ILC wildlife are best left in the wild. If these animals seem aggressive, even when unprovoked, they may be rabid. If a human is bitten by a rabid animal, rapid response with serum can prevent death. Have someone call 911 for you.

Bugs:

Fire ants bite (ammonia or vinegar wash)

Scorpions sting (seek treatment)

Brown recluse spider "fiddle back" bite (seek treatment)

Black widow spider bite, pain 1 to 3 hours after bite (seek treatment)

Tarantulas sting, (seek treatment)

Bees and wasps sting (paste of baking soda and water)

Snake bite (seek treatment)

### ***Health Insurance***

The Health Care system in the US is complicated and can be expensive. Most people could not afford the health care they need without a health insurance policy.

Students enrolled at GIAL are required to carry health insurance for themselves and their immediate families during their time of study at GIAL and must have proof of coverage at the time of registration. J-1 visa holders at GIAL are required to carry a specific level of health care insurance. The international student health policy offered by GIAL meets the US Department of State requirements for exchange visitors. Married couples planning to have children should maintain comprehensive medical insurance, because the cost of having a baby in the U.S. can exceed \$10,000.

Students may choose to acquire health insurance from an insurance provider other than the one GIAL recommends. Insurance plans usually pay 50%-80% of doctor, lab, prescription, and hospital costs. You pay the rest ("co-pay"). Doctors' offices and pharmacies require a co-pay at the time of an office visit and/or pick-up of a prescription. Hospitals and labs will send you a bill after the insurance company has paid its part of your bill. This sometimes takes a month or more.

### ***Dental Insurance***

Dental care is expensive in the United States. Although dental care is not covered under all medical insurance plans, separate student dental insurance plans are available. Dental insurance pays for 50%-80% of dental costs.

We are fortunate to have a dentist at the clinic in the Member Services Building for routine cleaning and check ups. If you need something more extensive done, the dentist and the clinic can refer you to local dentists who can meet your need

## **CRIME AWARENESS**

GIAL is committed to maintaining an environment in which the dignity and worth of all members of the institutional community are respected. While we like to think we are living, working, and studying in a safe environment, reality demands that you keep purses, book bags and laptops secured or with you while on campus, that you hide valuables out of sight and close and lock all doors when leaving a car, and that building doors shut and lock behind you if you are on campus on the weekend or after hours. An extra measure of precaution everywhere is advised.

GIAL Crime Statistics are available on the website [www.gial.edu](http://www.gial.edu).

## **IMMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION STATUS**

The following summary of U.S. immigration is provided to give you basic information about your non-immigrant visa status. Be sure to carefully read the sections below that apply to you. Please remember that it is your responsibility to know and follow the regulations under which you may study, work, or stay in the U.S. If you have any questions about your visa status, contact the International Student Office. An International Student Advisor will answer your questions or refer you to the appropriate office or agency for information. Friends, faculty advisors, and others may be well intentioned in their advising on visa information, but they are not always dependable sources of information on matters so crucial to your stay in the U.S.

But first, some abbreviations/acronyms:

- DHS-US Department of Homeland Security
- DOS-US Department of State
- ECA-Educational and Cultural Exchange (part of DOS)
- ICE-Immigration and Customs Enforcement (part of DHS)
- USCIS-US Citizenship and Immigration Services (part of DHS)
- CBP-US Customs and Border Patrol (part of DHS)
- SEVP-US Student and Exchange Visitor Program (part of ICE)
- SEVIS-US Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

## **Your Passport**

*Jurisdiction: DOS*

Your passport is an international travel document issued to you by your government. The U.S. government expects you to keep your passport valid at all times. Check the expiration date on your passport. If you have less than six months remaining on the passport, you should request an extension. If needed by your embassy, your international student advisor will provide, at your request, a letter to affirm your student status. If your U.S. visa is still valid and you are being issued a new passport, you should request the return of your expired passport. By keeping the passports together, the valid visa can be used for reentry to the United States. Otherwise you will need to apply for a new visa the next time you leave the country.

## **Your Visa**

*Jurisdiction: DOS>Consular Affairs*

This is a stamp or seal placed in your passport by a U.S. Consular officer abroad. The visa notes the purpose of your visit, the last date you can enter the United States, and how many entries you will be allowed. The visa is a permit to enter the United States. The visa does not indicate how long you will be permitted to stay and a visa does not have to be valid in order to remain in the United States. A visa can be obtained ONLY at U.S. Consulates outside the United States. The exception to this is for individuals who have adjusted their status to H-1 while in the United States.

There are many different categories of visas. The type of visa is determined by the purpose of the visitor's entry into the U.S. GIAL's international students are on F-1 or J-1 student visitor visas.

## **Your I-94 (Arrival/Departure Card)**

*Jurisdiction: DHS >CBP*

The immigration officer at the port-of-entry issued and stapled this small white card to your passport. It confirms that you were lawfully admitted to the U.S.

The I-94 shows how long you are permitted to stay in the United States. For F and J visa holders, "D/S" is noted instead of a specific date in the right hand- corner. "D/S" stands for "duration of status" and operates in conjunction with the I-20 or DS-2019. This means you are permitted to stay as long as you are maintaining your status as a student. (See section on 'maintaining your student status'.)

Other types of visas (A, B, etc.) will have a specific date in the right-hand corner. To remain past the date stamped on the I-94, those visa holders must file for an extension before the expiration date.

## **Definition of F or J Status**

*Jurisdiction: for F: DHS>ICE, for J: DOS>ECA*

An F-1 visa and F-1 student status may be granted to an individual "who is a foreign student qualified to pursue a full course of study" at an academic or language institution authorized to admit foreign students. When applying for an F-1 visa, the individual must prove to a U.S. consular official that he or she wishes to enter the U.S. temporarily and solely for the purpose of study. The applicant must have a permanent residence in a foreign country and have no intention of abandoning his or her home country. F-2 visa holders are dependents of F-1 students.

A J-1 visa and J-1 visitor status may be granted to an exchange visitor in any one of about 20 categories, among which are student, professor, researcher, short-term scholar, specialist, and intern. These individuals must prove that they will be engaged full time in category-appropriate activities, that at least 51% of their support comes from sources other than themselves, that there are enough funds to cover their expenses while here, and that they have compelling social and economic ties abroad that will insure their return abroad at the end of their visit. J-2 visa holders are dependents of J-1s.

## **Maintaining Your Student Status**

*Tracking student status changes: SEVIS*

After entering the U.S. in F-1/F-2, or J-1/J-2 status, you the student, or your dependent, must satisfy certain requirements to remain in status.

1. Keep your passport and I-20, DS-2019 valid all at times. Note: Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) personnel prefer passports with expiration dates at least six months into the future. Tip: Keep your I-94, financial verification, and school enrollment documents with your passport and I-20 or DS-2019 in a safe, but easily accessible, place. Carry all these documents any time you travel, and at all times when you are within 100 miles of any US border (CBP jurisdiction limit).
  - a) See your ISC advisor if you drop courses, change programs, plan to change schools, or need to change your program completion date from what is printed on your I-20 or DS-2019.
  - b) See your ISC advisor to inquire about an updated travel signature anytime you leave the country. CBP personnel prefer travel signatures that are no more than 6 months old.
2. Attend the school which issued your I-20 or DS-2019 certificate. If you plan to transfer schools, please notify the ISC at least a month before you need the transfer so that we can coordinate the transfer with the other school.
3. Register for and complete a full-time course of study in the fall and spring semesters.
4. Maintain at least a B average in each class;
5. Limit employment, to a total of 20 hours per week while school is in session;
6. Never work off-campus without written authorization from

your International Student Advisor and/or the USCIS.

7. Keep the ISC informed of any significant changes in your life: in finances, health, name, marital status, address, work place or hours, program of study, grades, attendance, or add/drop of any course. Visit us in person or email [isc@gial.edu](mailto:isc@gial.edu).

### ***A Full Course of Study***

A full-time course of study is defined by GIAL as 13\*\* credit hours per semester if a student is enrolled in any undergraduate credits and 12\*\* credit hours otherwise. (\*\* Reflects GIAL policy, June 2010).

#### *Exceptions to the Full Course of Study Requirement:*

There are very few exceptions to the full course of study requirement, all of which require approval of the ISC and, often, US Immigration officials. Please talk to a professor, a Dean of Students, the Registrar, an international student advisor, or any GIAL staff member AS SOON AS you feel that you are having difficulty in either attending a class or keeping up with class assignments. The ISC needs to be informed to help you remain in status through these difficulties.

### ***When Dropping a Class***

See GIAL's attendance policy in the GIAL Student Handbook. If you register for a class but do not attend, or if you stop attending class without officially dropping it, you are likely to receive an "F" in the class which will lower your GPA. A low GPA, or failure to maintain full-time student status, could lead to termination of your student visa status.

Legally, whether you attend a class or not, you are financially responsible for all classes for which you have registered and not officially dropped .

## **DISCIPLINE POLICIES**

Students are responsible for knowing all GIAL rules, regulations and deadlines published in the Catalog and Student Handbook.

## **WORK/EMPLOYMENT**

For international students learning to live in a new language and culture, coursework at GIAL is exhausting. Therefore, it is not advisable for international students to work during the first year.

When you are ready for employment, you will need a social security number. This number will be used by your employer to report wages and to withhold taxes for you, as shown on an annual W-2 form issued by your employer. If you do any work for wages, you will need the W-2 to complete Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms by April 15 of each calendar year. See the "Obtaining a Social Security Number" and "Tax Information" sections below.

Unlike US students who can work anywhere to supplement their income, international students cannot. Any work you do must

be approved by the ISC before you begin to work. Request a "International Student Work Authorization" form in the ISC to get things rolling. There is a section in it for you, for your potential employer, and for the ISC to fill in.

Students maintaining F-1 or J-1 status are permitted to work on the GIAL campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year. If an F-1 or J-1 student intends to register for the next academic term at a school, he/she may be employed during a school break, up to 40 hours per week.

Transfer students may work, but only at the school responsible for the student's SEVIS record. Before transferring out, the student may only work at the transfer out school; after the release date, the student may only work at the transfer in school.

To find out about on-campus work opportunities, make an appointment with the dean of students. Please inform the ISC office personnel what job you are doing and for whom you are working.

### ***Tax Information***

Federal income tax: The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules for international student workers are found at: [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-regss/td\\_9167.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-regss/td_9167.pdf).

## **LIVING AND GETTING AROUND**

### ***Housing***

Several housing options are available to GIAL students. None are operated by GIAL. Students will make their own arrangements for payment for their choice.

The housing department at the International Linguistics Center (ILC) handles rentals at several facilities. The closest one is a Guest House owned by SIL. The others are small apartment complexes. The ILC hospitality office keeps a list of other local rental opportunities. The Housing office is in Mahler 100C off the main entrance. Hospitality office is in Mahler 100D. Ask for help and directions at the Welcome Desk.

### ***Money and banking***

GIAL students will need to have banking service from time to time. Local banks will open an account for you which you can add to, withdraw from, and draw checks on. Most checking accounts can have a debit card linked to the account. Monthly maintenance and other service fees may apply. These differ from bank to bank. Large deposits from overseas may have a 7-10 (or more) day hold put on them before you can use the funds. Ask the bank account managers what kind of account will work best for you. Banks are required by regulation to provide you with all fee and account information.

GIAL is not able to accept wire transfers for student payments. The Finance Office does accept cash, checks, money orders and traveler's checks.

### ***ID cards***

GIAL student card: The GIAL card is a photo ID card. The photo is taken at registration. The card can also be used as a Library card

at the GIAL library. The GIAL ID card may also entitle you to local student discounts.

### **Driver's license**

This is the most common form of ID used in the US.

International students can obtain a Driver's License. You will need access to a car, knowledge of Texas driving regulations, as well as testable driving skills. Drivers' licenses are issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety Office (DPS).

Ask at the Welcome Desk in the Mahler building for the "Driver Requirements in Texas" information.

You will need your passport and a Social Security number (See "Obtaining a Social Security Number" below.) when you apply for a license. You will be required to take a written test as well as a driving test.

### **Obtaining a Social Security Number**

Take your passport, your I-94, and I-20 or DS-2019 (proof of your legal immigration status), as well as your student ID (proof of your student status), to the local Social Security office. Social Security Administration procedures may require as long as 10 working days after you apply to issue a social security card/number. If you are denied a social security number upon application, obtain a letter immediately from the Social Security Administration, stating that fact. This letter will be necessary in place of the social security number if you desire to obtain a driver's license.

Social Security Information website: <http://www.ssa.gov/ssnvisa/>

Map from GIAL to the nearest Social Security Office:

<http://s3abaca.ssa.gov/pro/foi/foi-form.cgi>

The Dallas area office is:

Hours: Monday – Friday 9 AM – 4 PM

7330 S Westmoreland Road Suite 100

Dallas, TX 75237

tel. (800) 772 –1213

Social Security Application form (SS-5):

<http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>

### **Other Transportation info**

Public:

Dallas Area Regional Transportation (DART)

[www.DART.org](http://www.DART.org)

Trinity Railway Express (TRE) (links Dallas to Ft. Worth)

[www.trinityrailwayexpress.org](http://www.trinityrailwayexpress.org)

Fort Worth Transportation Authority

1600 E. Lancaster Avenue

Forth Worth, Texas 76192-6720

[www.the-T.com](http://www.the-T.com)

*Private: Bicycles follow traffic laws for automobiles. Bicycles should be parked in spaces provided for them: west door to Mahler; south entrance to Hunt; picnic area by the swimming pool; or west end of the Guest House.*

*Cars, motorcycles: Personal autos and motorcycles must be registered at the Welcome Desk in Mahler and require permit*

*stickers on the vehicle. Ask at the Welcome Desk about cars available for rent. If you need help finding a car to fit your budget, contact Dick Bergman ([dick\\_bergman@sil.org](mailto:dick_bergman@sil.org)). Many people on campus use his services to buy used or new vehicles.*

*Recreational vehicles: Campers, trailers, and towed vehicles may be parked in the RV area. Reservations for RV spots may be made by contacting the RV park by telephone at 972-708-7456 or by email at [RVpark\\_Dallas@sil.org](mailto:RVpark_Dallas@sil.org).*

Revised 4/23/2013

## **RESOURCES**

**GIAL International Student Services: [Isc@gial.edu](mailto:Isc@gial.edu), (972) 708-7573, Fax (972) 708-7396**

**Dean of Students: (972) 708-7379, [Dean-students@gial.edu](mailto:Dean-students@gial.edu),**

**Registrar: [Registrar@gial.edu](mailto:Registrar@gial.edu), (972) 708-7536**

**GIAL Library: [Library@gial.edu](mailto:Library@gial.edu), (972) 708-7416**

**GIAL Computing services: [Gial\\_helpdesk@gial.edu](mailto:Gial_helpdesk@gial.edu), (972) 708-7574**

**International Linguistics Center: (972) 708-7400**

**Counseling Ministries, Member Services Bldg 400, (972) 708-7315**

**Center Security, Ext. 144, OR (214)-906-1648 (24 hour cell)**

**Health Services/Clinic Member Services Bldg 100, (972)-708-7408**

**After hours emergency: From center phone dial 9-911 (links directly to public emergency services) Or call Center Security (above)**