



Summer 2021 Participant Handbook

Compiled and edited by CLS Program staff
Critical Language Scholarship Program
American Councils for International Education

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American Councils for International Education
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CLS Participant Handbook

Congratulations on receiving a U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship! As a recipient of this award, you will have the opportunity to live and study this summer in your host country. You will be able to improve your language skills, learn about local culture, make new friends, and become a more independent person with a broader perspective on the world.

This handbook has been compiled by American Councils staff to provide you with information that will help you make your overseas experience a success. It is designed to answer many of the questions you may have before departure, as well as questions you may have about the program while you are studying and living in your host country.

If you have a question that is not covered in the handbook, is of a personal nature, requires immediate attention, or cannot be resolved through online discussion, please contact your CLS Program Officer.

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CLS Program

Welcome to the “CLS Program” section of the CLS Participant Handbook!

The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program is an intensive overseas language and cultural immersion program for American students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities. The program includes intensive language instruction and structured cultural enrichment experiences designed to promote rapid language gains.

In this section you will find more details about the major elements of the CLS Program and information about the CLS staff who will support you before, during, and after the program.

Program Overview - What to Expect

Academics

CLS is first and foremost a rigorous academic program. In the span of one summer, institutes typically cover the amount of material that would be covered in an academic year at a U.S. college or university. You will have approximately twenty hours of language class per week, with two to three hours of homework each night.

Language Policy

The more often you speak a foreign language, the faster your language skills improve. For this reason, you will be required to sign the CLS Language Policy during your on-site orientation stating that you agree to use the target language at all times in certain settings. These locations may vary by site but will likely include:

- In CLS classes
- When speaking with local instructors, staff, and officials
- On the grounds of the CLS institute, in all facilities (including classrooms, hallways, and all common areas)
- On group excursions and trips
- With your language partner and with your host family or roommate

While you are required to speak the target language only in these certain circumstances, you should make an effort to use the language at all times. As a recipient of a Critical Language Scholarship, you are expected to adhere to the spirit of the language policy, even when you are not at home, on campus, or involved in formal program activities. We understand that sometimes you may be frustrated and tired of speaking the target language. Occasionally, you might even feel that you are not improving. We urge you to be patient and keep trying. You will make progress if you constantly use the language. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the language policy, we encourage you to reach out to your Resident Director for advice and support.

“I am thankful for the language pledge! I am confident that this aspect made my Arabic a lot stronger today than it would have been otherwise and it definitely helped me achieve my personal goals.” 2016 Amman participant

Group-Based Program

As a CLS participant, you will be part of a group ranging from 5 to 30 students, depending on the language and location. Participants in your group will come from all regions of the United States and will have diverse backgrounds and identities. CLS is a good opportunity to expand your network of people across the United States who share an interest in your target language. It's also a great way to learn about the diversity of the United States, as you get to know other Americans with perspectives and backgrounds different from your own.

During the CLS Program, all your classes and activities will be done in groups, and everyone will share the same general schedule. Everything on the program is designed for language learning in a group setting. Please be aware that you may have less flexibility with your schedule than you are used to, and activities and topics may not always align directly with your field of study or your personal interests.

The CLS Program is intended to be a cooperative experience, and it is important that all cohort members support one another's learning throughout the program. Positive and respectful group dynamics will help everyone in the cohort focus on advancing their language skills and make the most of their cultural immersion experience. Remember that you will likely cross paths with members of your cohort after the program in your personal, academic, or professional paths, and your CLS cohort can serve as a great network for your career.

"As a student from Wisconsin, actually some of the most culturally diverse moments are speaking with other Americans from other parts of the United States. For instance, a lot of what the Chinese teachers know about America comes from the coastal United States, so therefore if I encountered narratives that were common, I would do my best to provide alternative viewpoints that some rural or small-town Americans of different socioeconomic classes might possess and use Mandarin to accomplish this. I felt that our teachers were very helpful in teaching us how to have multi-faceted and civil discussions in Mandarin Chinese." 2019 Changchun participant

Excursions and Activities

Cultural activities and excursions are designed to provide insight into various aspects of the host country's culture, history, and communities while at the same time support language learning. Activities and events are conducted in the CLS language even for groups that include absolute beginners. Although this can certainly be challenging, CLS Program staff will help you prepare to make the most of these opportunities. You will likely have one overnight excursion and several day trips or afternoon excursions in addition to weekly cultural activities. You will receive more information about excursions at your on-site orientation. Please remember that participation in all excursions and activities is mandatory.

"I liked how our cultural activities and excursions covered a wide variety of topics and subjects such as a lecture on Russian business, an excursion to an IT-Company, and Russian dancing. It was nice to see Russian culture from different angles." 2015 Nizhny Novgorod participant

It is important to consider in advance what kinds of special needs you might have while travelling, both internationally to the program site, and domestically during program-arranged activities and excursions. If you have any special needs (such as medication that needs to be kept cold, or other special arrangements) we encourage you to speak with your medical professional in advance to consider what accommodations may be necessary and to talk through those accommodations with your Program Officer in advance of the program. This will allow you to gain more insight into what is available in your

host community and what additional factors you may need to take into account. Once on-site, we also encourage you to inform your Resident Director and institute staff well in advance of an excursion that might require accommodations.

Language Partners

Language partners are local students or other community members who are carefully selected to work closely with CLS participants on a weekly basis to practice the speaking in a less formal setting. Language partners support participants' studies and enhance their conversational skills. Language partners also play an important role in acquainting students with their host community's culture by providing insights into the host city itself, as well as family traditions and daily life. Language partners are required to speak with participants in the target language and will be prohibited from speaking in English per the language policy.

"My language partner was resourceful and diligent. Like my instructors, she came up with the most creative ways to explain an unfamiliar subject while still maintaining the language pledge. I felt that we shared meaningful culture exchanges together. I was able to communicate American cultures and diversity with her, while she was able to do the same for me about Kyrgyzstan." 2018 CLS Bishkek participant

Housing

All CLS participants are required to live in program provided housing throughout the summer program. In most years, the majority of program participants live either with a host family or in an apartment or dorm with roommates from the CLS Program or host institute. Due to the global pandemic, housing for the 2021 program will differ, with most participants living in a hotel or dormitory in single or double-occupancy rooms with fellow participants. In most cases, an initial quarantine period will be required in government appointed facilities. In some cases, a second quarantine may be required as well. Living conditions in each CLS host country differ, but students should generally expect to have less privacy than they may be used to in the U.S. and to need to adapt to the local environment, including different levels of accessibility to air conditioning, hot water, and Wi-Fi. Most participants will need to take public transportation each day from their housing to the host institution. Experiencing daily life in the host community is sometimes challenging, but it is a great opportunity to learn more about society and cultural norms.

Meals

Some meals during the program will be provided by the CLS Program and will typically reflect the ingredients common to and culinary practices of each host community. Each site will be different, you will receive money in your stipend to purchase meals or groceries locally for any meals that are not provided by the host institution or as part of your housing. If you have any dietary concerns, please see the section "[Allergies and Specific Diets.](#)"

Independent Travel

You may wish to travel independently during your free time. Typically, CLS participants are welcome to pursue limited independent travel on designated days that does not interfere with their full participation in the CLS Program or violate program policies. Depending on local conditions related to the global pandemic, independent travel opportunities may be limited or independent travel may not be permitted at all. If independent travel is permitted, participants are required to submit an independent

travel form to the Resident Director at least 48 hours before traveling outside the host city. The independent travel form asks participants to indicate when and where they plan to travel, how they plan to get there, any additional contact information during the travel, and when they intend to return. Should a student present an independent travel plan that is unrealistic or inadvisable, they will be asked to revise their plan and submit an updated form.

Travel to any area deemed unsafe or off-limits by the U.S. or host country government is not permitted. More information about this will be provided during pre-departure orientation and on-site orientation. If travel restrictions exist in your host country, they will be included in the Site-Specific Policies you will be asked to sign when you arrive. The American Embassy or Consulate may also provide information about areas where travel advisories have been issued. Please note that CLS, in consultation with the U.S. Department of State, may add or change travel restrictions at any time before or during the summer program.

[CLS Program Staff](#)

[CLS Staff at American Councils in Washington, D.C.](#)

The American Councils staff in Washington, D.C. is your primary contact for questions before and after the CLS Program. During the program, American Councils works closely with local staff in cases of emergencies. If you have questions about policies or program-wide concerns, you may contact program staff in Washington, D.C.

[Program Officer](#)

The Program Officer in charge of your site is your primary point of contact in Washington, D.C. for the weeks leading up to the start of the program, as well as over the summer. The Program Officer is a great resource for any questions you have about the program structure and host culture during the spring. Over the summer, the Program Officer will conduct weekly phone calls with your Resident Director to stay updated on the program. The Program Officer will remain a primary point of contact for you in Washington, D.C. should you want to discuss any issues or concerns during the summer.

[Resident Director](#)

Your Resident Director (RD) is an American Councils representative at your host institution. The Resident Director will be your primary contact during the CLS Program. If you have any problems related to health, housing, or academics, you should talk with your Resident Director. The Resident Director will have a cell phone at all times and will coordinate with institute staff and American Councils staff in Washington, D.C. as appropriate to resolve any issues.

[Institute Staff](#)

The Institute Director and other local staff members at your CLS program site are responsible for planning and overseeing the CLS academic program and cultural activities schedule. They are excellent resources for information about the culture in your host country, places of interest in your city, and safety. Like your Resident Director, they are also ready to provide emergency assistance at any time. If you are unable to reach your Resident Director during an emergency, you should immediately call the Institute Director or other local staff members. Contact information for the Institute Director and local staff can be found on emergency cards provided by American Councils at the pre-departure orientation.

Before You Go

Welcome to the “Before You Go” section of the CLS Participant Handbook!

The time you invest in planning for your summer abroad will likely minimize the challenges you will experience and will allow you to make the most of the limited time you will have in your host community. We have organized this section to help you in several aspects of planning including how to accept your CLS award, which can be a more time-consuming process than many students imagine, and how to obtain a U.S. passport and any required visas. We also provide an overview of the pre-program requirements that CLS places on participants to prepare them to participate in the program, and give some insight into the many logistical and personal elements that we suggest you think about in advance. Please read the information in this section carefully as it will help you better understand what you can expect over the next couple months as a CLS finalist, as well as important considerations as you prepare for your summer in your host country.

Accepting your CLS Award

If you are selected as a finalist, you will have to decide whether to accept or decline your CLS award, and you will be required to complete either the Accept or Decline Form through the American Councils AIS Forms portal. If you chose to accept the award, your Accept Form will require you to confirm biographical information, as well as read through and agree to CLS’s Terms and Conditions. Once you have accepted your award, you will be able to access additional required forms through your online portal.

Please watch this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2e3twOBKQo&feature=youtu.be>) for more information about the forms CLS finalists are required to submit.

Medical Review

CLS finalists are required to complete a medical review after accepting their award. The medical review process will require coordinating with one or more medical professionals, such as primary care providers, specialists, or mental health professionals, to complete mandatory forms. Completing the necessary forms offers the opportunity for students to think about any medical conditions that they may experience on the program and plan in advance with their medical professional for those conditions. Many students with medical and mental health conditions have successfully completed the CLS Program but planning in advance for these kinds of needs is an important step in the preparation process.

Once a student completes the required forms and submits them to AIS Forms, they are reviewed by a CLS-contracted medical professional. Should the CLS-contracted medical professional have any follow-up questions CLS Program staff will be in touch individually with the student to explain what is needed.

It is important to keep in mind that it often takes time to schedule appointments, and you may need to make multiple visits to your provider(s) if any follow-up is required. We encourage all students to make appointments with their medical professionals as soon as possible after receiving access to and reviewing the required medical forms.

Disability Accommodations

Many students with a variety of disabilities have successfully completed the CLS Program. Finalists seeking accommodations are encouraged to communicate with CLS Program staff as soon as possible after accepting their award about their needs. The first step in this process is to submit a Disability

Accommodation Request form in American Councils' Application Information System (AIS Forms). Please note that this form should be signed by the Office of Disability Services at the student's home university. Once the form is received CLS Program staff will review it and will likely contact the participant directly and speak with them about the specific situation in the host community to provide more context. If accommodations are needed the relevant information will be shared with institute staff. Further conversations may be necessary to follow up with finalists to ask questions or clarify information as specific services available and conditions in each CLS host country differ from the U.S.

Official Transcript

CLS finalists are required to submit an official transcript from their college or university. Both hard copy and official e-transcripts are accepted.

Housing Form

As a CLS finalist, you will be required to complete a Housing Form with information about your living preferences and dietary needs. Your answers are used by program staff in the U.S. and at your program site abroad to place you in an appropriate housing situation. Please note that we will do our best to meet realistic housing requirements, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to meet all your housing preferences.

Academic Credit Request and Waiver Form

Participants who successfully complete the CLS Program can receive academic credit from Bryn Mawr College. After accepting your CLS award, you will be required to complete an Academic Credit Request and Waiver Form, on which you can indicate whether or not you would like to receive academic credit for the summer program. Once you have submitted your form, your decision to request or waive academic credit will be final. You will not be able to rescind your academic credit request, nor will you be able to receive credit after you have waived credit.

Alumni will receive two units of credit, which in most cases is the equivalent of eight academic credit hours. If you requested academic credit, you should check with your college or university registrar prior to the program to determine if and how these credits may transfer back to your university. The CLS Program only awards undergraduate credit, regardless of a participant's degree status.

Travel Information Form

All finalists will be required to complete a Travel Information Form where they list their starting and ending airports for travel on the CLS Program. The starting airport is where you will initially be leaving from at the outset of the program, and the ending airport is where you'll fly back to after the program ends. Although your starting and ending airports may be different, they must both be U.S.-based. CLS will arrange and fund your entire travel itinerary for the program.

The CLS Program will not cover the cost of flights to or from any non-U.S. destinations other than your program site, even if you are participating in other study-abroad programs or internships abroad before or after the CLS Program. If you wish to travel back to the region or another country after the CLS program, you will need to make separate arrangements for flights and visas. CLS will not cover any of these costs or assist in your flight or visa arrangements.

Please watch this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Pc8V2Q9M5M&feature=youtu.be>) for more information about travel on CLS.

Planning for Your Health and Safety

The health and safety of participants is the CLS Program's highest priority. The CLS Program and institutes abroad have put many measures in place to help ensure safety while students are on the program, but participants themselves play a key role in safeguarding their own health, safety, and wellness. In advance of the program students should consider all aspects of their own health, speak with their medical professionals, carefully review all program-provided materials, and research their host country in order to become familiar with risks they will likely encounter during the program.

Physical Health

As noted in the section "[Medical Review](#)", all students will be required to work with their medical professionals during the acceptance process to complete and submit forms related to their health. This may include primary care providers as well as specialists and mental health professionals. In addition to reviewing your own health and planning for specific concerns that you might have, you should also consider the environment of your host community as well as the potential health risks posed by COVID-19. Spend time researching the weather, air and water quality, cuisine, and communicable diseases common in the region you will travel to and discuss these considerations with your physician. A good place to start to explore these topics are the U.S. Department of State's country pages and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention page for each country.

Vaccines

During the medical review process and before going abroad we strongly recommend that you review your immunization record with your health care professional. It is important that your immunizations for common diseases are up to date. Many countries around the world have had recent outbreaks of communicable diseases that are less common in the U.S., such as measles. If your immunizations are not up to date, you may be at risk of contracting a serious, potentially life-threatening, but preventable disease. For the 2021 summer program, it is strongly recommended that all participants receive COVID-19 vaccinations if they are available to you.

Prescription Medications

If you take prescription medicine, you must make arrangements to bring a complete supply for your entire stay abroad, including a little extra in case you lose some. Here are some tips:

Prescription medicine should be kept in the original packaging labeled with your name and prescription information. Look up the generic name of the medicine if it has one and keep that information with you. Do not repackage prescription or over-the-counter medication to save space. Customs officials may question you about any medication that you are carrying, prescription or over-the-counter. Also note the following:

- Ask your doctor for a letter that explains that you have a prescription for this medicine.
- Doctors may be unable to write prescriptions for large supplies of certain medications. If you cannot obtain a sufficient supply of your prescription, contact American Councils immediately, and well before your program begins.
- It is your responsibility to bring all necessary medications on the CLS Program. American Councils cannot deliver medications to you during the CLS Program and certain medications may not be allowed into your host country by mail. If you leave without a sufficient supply

of necessary medication and are unable to obtain it abroad, you may need to return to the United States to obtain the medication, resulting in the termination of your scholarship.

Allergies and Specific Diets

If there are foods you absolutely cannot eat or prefer not to eat, the most important thing to do is explain your specific needs in your medical and housing forms, which you will be required to complete using the Accepted Student Portal once you have accepted your CLS award. This will help the in-country staff prepare for your arrival and match you with a host family. It is also important to let your Resident Director and hosts know about any dietary restrictions when you first arrive. If you are a vegetarian and are offered meat, you can explain to your hosts that for health reasons you do not eat meat.

Allergies

If you report a severe allergy to CLS staff, you will receive an allergy card that explains your allergy in the target language. You should carry the card with you throughout the program. Prior to travel you should learn the names of the foods or other allergens that cause a reaction in your CLS language and be prepared to share that information with staff at restaurants, cafeterias, etc.

If you are allergic to a specific food, such as nuts or dairy, you should explain that eating this food could cause serious illness or a medical emergency. Many people in your host community are likely unfamiliar with certain food allergies, so you will need to clearly state that it is a medical condition and not simply a preference. If you have any doubts about the ingredients of a dish, you should consider not eating it as it may inadvertently cause an allergic reaction.

If you have been prescribed an Epinephrine Auto-Injector or Epi Pen, it is important that you bring it with you on the CLS Program. We suggest bringing multiple Epi Pens, as they are not available in many CLS host countries. Should you lose an Epi Pen, or use it, it may not be possible to obtain more Epi Pens in the host country. If you have an insufficient supply of Epi Pens speak with your health care professional and explain to them that you will spend the summer in a different country where Epi Pens may not be available.

Special Diets

You may find that sometimes people are unclear about what exactly it means to be vegetarian, kosher, or to require a low-sodium diet. Although the restrictions may be obvious to you, they may not be to your host, so be prepared to explain any dietary restrictions and to offer examples of the kinds of foods you can eat.

HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections

The decision to engage in sexual activity while abroad entails certain risks, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In some countries, the level of public awareness about STIs and their symptoms and transmission may be low, and the real figures, such as for HIV, may be much higher than what the local government reports.

If you choose to engage in sexual activity abroad, you should plan ahead to review options for contraceptives. You should bring any prescription contraceptives with you from the United States and might consider bringing condoms with you.

Mental Health

Staying mentally and emotionally healthy while you are abroad is key to having a successful CLS experience. You should note that mental healthcare resources in your host country may differ significantly from mental healthcare resources in the United States. Mental health specialists, and counselors may not be available, and providers who are available may not have adequate English language skills to meet your needs or may approach assessment and treatment for mental healthcare in ways that differ from your current care. If you have a pre-existing condition, you should talk to your healthcare provider and make a plan to continue your care during the summer.

Emotional Well-being

Studying in an intensive program, constantly speaking a foreign language, and navigating life in a new environment will naturally bring on feelings of stress, frustration, and being “out of sorts” at times. We encourage students to research topics related to their unique situations, think in advance about what they can do on program to mitigate stress and maintain a balanced outlook, but also to think about multiple alternatives in the event that familiar strategies are unrealistic or unavailable in the new environment. We also encourage all students to maintain healthy habits by eating well, getting enough rest, and connecting with family and friends while they are abroad.

The Alumni Support Network can be a great resource for tips about reducing stress, eating healthy, getting exercise, and other activities that may help you stay healthy in your host site. The Alumni Advice Guides also provide ideas for staying mentally and physically healthy on the CLS Program, among other topics. Your CLS Program Officer will provide more information in the site-specific pre-program virtual orientation webinars and the site-specific handbook about what is available in the host city and the types of activities that are realistic for students given the cultural norms. You can also reach out with any specific concerns or questions directly to the Program Officer. While you are on the program the CLS institute staff will seek to foster a supportive and encouraging environment for you throughout the program, and we are here to help. However, please remember that the CLS staff are not trained medical or mental healthcare providers.

Accident and Sickness Coverage (ASPE)

All CLS participants are strongly encouraged to have primary health coverage. Your regular health coverage will be supplemented by limited emergency and accident medical coverage from the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) provided by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. ASPE works primarily on a reimbursement basis. Participants should be prepared to pay up to approximately \$500 for medical treatment out of pocket.

Leaving your CLS country during the program is prohibited, and if you do leave, all ASPE benefits cease. In addition, ASPE coverage is only provided during the period of the program. If you plan to do independent travel after finishing the program, you are responsible for purchasing your own medical coverage. Please also note that ASPE is only valid in your host country and during the international portion of your travel; it does not cover participants during their time in the U.S., including during domestic travel before or after the international flight. CLS staff will send you more information about ASPE in the spring.

Your health coverage during the CLS Program does not include a dental plan. We recommend that you visit your dentist before leaving for the CLS Program.

Getting Ready

Passports

To participate in the CLS Program, you must have a valid U.S. passport. In most cases, your passport will need to be valid for up to 6 months after your program begins and have at least two blank pages. However, in some cases your passport will need to be valid for at least 18 months after the start of your program. Your Program Officer will send you detailed visa information specific to the site where you are placed.

If you do not have a passport, or if you will need to renew your passport prior to your CLS program, you should begin looking into the passport process early, as it can often take several weeks or longer for you to obtain your new passport. Expediting your passport is usually possible, but it can be costly. The CLS Program does not cover the cost of obtaining new or expedited passports.

Visas

If your host country requires a visa, the CLS Program will assist you in the visa application process. In some cases, this may require you to ship your passport to CLS to be submitted to an embassy or consulate on your behalf. Passports are generally returned to participants when they arrive in Washington, D.C. for the pre-departure orientation.

Although the CLS Program will assist finalists in the visa application process, officials from your host country will make the decision about whether or not to issue you a visa. You should complete all visa paperwork neatly and carefully and make sure that you adhere to all deadlines. It's also crucial for you to be respectful and courteous in any interactions you have with host country visa authorities, as they often have the sole power to issue or refuse your visa.

Please watch this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13rbuYNrl7o&feature=youtu.be>) or more information about passports and visas.

Webinars

The CLS team will offer webinars for finalists on specific topics, as well as each CLS placement site. Finalists will receive emails from their Program Officers during the spring with more information about each of these opportunities.

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

Before the program, you will be required to take a diagnostic phone-based test of your speaking skills called an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), administered by Language Testing International. The OPI test is scored on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale, a nationally recognized rating system for measuring language proficiency. Rather than test for knowledge of specific grammatical formulas or vocabulary, these proficiency tests are designed to measure what you are able to communicate or "do" with language, such as talk about yourself, describe something, ask and answer questions, or hypothesize. How well you do on the test does not affect your participation in the CLS program. The OPI test provides some insights to help with the placement process. However, it is not the sole factor, as the levels are very broad, and it only measures speaking skills. Your institute will conduct placement using their own assessment measures, either before the program begins or shortly after arrival.

Near the end of the program, you will take a second OPI test similar in nature to the first test. The second test will be a certified version, and after the satisfactory completion of all program requirements you will receive both scores, along with a certified proficiency rating that can be included in your resume or CV. The CLS Program compares the pre- and post-program test scores in aggregate form as a way to measure the effectiveness of the program for language learning. You will receive more information about the OPI before you begin the CLS Program.

Planning for Your Time Abroad

Do Your Research

The CLS Program provides participants with several resources, including handbooks, webinars, a pre-departure orientation, and an onsite orientation, which are designed to assist participants as they prepare for the program and living abroad. However, traveling and studying abroad will bring unique challenges to different groups of students, so we encourage all participants to take an active role in their preparation and do additional research on their host country. Make sure to consult the U.S. Department of State's travel page

(<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>) for your host country, as well as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's page

(<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>) for your host country. Another great resource for information on life in your host city are CLS alumni, with whom you can connect through the Alumni Support Network. Below are some additional resources to consider as you prepare for your intensive summer abroad:

- U.S. Department of State information for travelers with special considerations (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-with-special-considerations.html>)
- Diversity Abroad (<https://www.diversityabroad.com>): The leading international education organization that provides articles covering various diversity topics and information and tips to support underrepresented students looking to study abroad
- Rainbow SIG (NAFSA: Association of International Educators – Rainbow Special Interest Group, www.rainbowsig.org/resource-center/study-abroad/): Resources to support study abroad students who are LGBTQ+
- Mobility International USA (www.miusa.org): A non-profit organization serving people with a broad range of disabilities and provides country accessibility information, travel tips, and student testimonials

First-time international travelers

There will often be several well-traveled CLS participants in a group, but it's also likely there will be at least a few first-time international travelers. If you have little or no experience with international travel, it's normal to feel out of your comfort zone and/or have questions. We encourage you to reach out to CLS alumni prior to the start of the program to ask questions and get a sense of what to expect. CLS program staff and your fellow CLS peers are also excellent resources, so feel free to seek them out during the PDO in Washington, D.C. to ask for pro-traveler tips!

Gifts

You may want to bring small gifts for those you'll be interacting with, such as your host family/roommate, language partner, host institute staff, and/or teachers. You might consider purchasing

some items from the list below, which was assembled with advice from previous participants. Remember that gift giving norms vary from culture to culture.

- Postcards or calendars with photos of your home town, campus, popular cities, or art
- Picture books, art books, or cookbooks
- Gifts for children such as books, pencils (push pencils), notebooks, crayons, matchbox cars
- T-shirts, caps, or sweatshirts, especially those with pictures or insignia
- Food from your home region, such as Vermont maple syrup, Louisiana Cajun seasoning, Maryland Old Bay seasoning, ingredients for a key lime pie or chocolate chip cookies, etc. (Remember to be sensitive to cultural culinary norms; for example, Muslims do not eat pork products)
- Postcards, magnets or trinkets featuring regional monuments and venues are a good last-minute gift idea that you may have time to pick up at the airport.
- It will also be possible to purchase small gifts, such as candy, in the host country.

Electronics

Voltage in your host country may differ from that in the United States, and many countries use differently shaped electrical sockets for which you'll need plug adapters. In general, today's high-tech devices, such as laptop computers and smartphones, are designed to work at different voltages and can safely be used with a plug adapter, but always check the specifications for your devices. Personal appliances, such as hairdryers, electric shavers, or electronic toothbrushes, are usually designed to work at only one voltage and will require a voltage converter in addition to the plug adapter in order to avoid damaging or destroying the appliance. Converters or transformers that can convert voltage are available for purchase online or at some retail stores. You may also consider purchasing these appliances in the host country after you've arrived.

You are advised to do some research prior to departure to determine which electronic devices and appliances can be used safely in your host country. It is highly recommended you purchase adapters, converters, or transformers in the U.S. before departing to your host country, so you'll have them available to you right away.

Communication

We understand that participants may wish to communicate with friends and family while on the CLS Program. Please keep in mind that options for communication in your host country will likely differ from what you are used to in the United States; therefore, it is important that you plan ahead and do some research about what communication methods will be best for you during the summer program.

Cell Phones

For most in-person institutes in 2021, the CLS Program will provide guidance for ensuring your cell phone will work in the host country, including information about unlocking your phone and the use of local SIM cards. Your stipend will include money to cover the change in costs. Please note that if your cell phone breaks or is damaged or lost during the program the CLS Program will not be able to replace it.

In some cases, you may be provided with a cell phone for use in your host country. These cell phones are pre-paid. In other words, there is no phone plan, but rather you must purchase credit to make calls and send text messages. CLS will provide you with initial phone credit, but if you use up this credit

making or receiving personal or international calls, you will be responsible for purchasing additional credit. You are also responsible for taking care of your program-issued phone, keeping it with you, and ensuring that the phone has sufficient pre-paid minutes for emergency use.

Kakao, LINE, FaceTime, WhatsApp or Other Voice-Over IP Services

Internet platforms may be the communication tool of choice for many participants, which include social media, chat apps, VOIP, video, and other platforms commonly accessed with smartphones or computers. However, not all platforms can be accessed in all host countries. Before you go, do some research to see what options will be available in your host country. For more information on using social media while on the program, please see the "[Blogging/Media](#)" section.

Wi-Fi Access

Your accommodations over the summer may or may not include Wi-Fi. If you do have access to Wi-Fi, please be aware that Wi-Fi options may be limited, may lose connectivity frequently, or may have slower download speeds than you are used to in the United States.

Depending on your program site, there may be locations around your host city where you will be able to access free Wi-Fi, such as fast-food restaurants or coffee shops. There may also be Internet cafes where you can access computers and Internet for a nominal fee. Your Resident Director, host family/roommate, and/or language partner can provide you with suggestions on Wi-Fi access in your host city.

Financial Considerations Abroad

Most of your expenses related to participating in CLS, such as tuition, cultural excursions, and housing expenses, have already been paid for by the CLS Program. However, it is still prudent to consider your personal financial situation in addition to your spending habits before you go abroad. If you are curious about the cost of common items in your host country (tickets on public transportation, a cup of coffee, dinner in a restaurant) CLS Program alumni can provide insight based on their recent experience in your host country.

CLS Stipend

To cover personal expenses, such as local transportation, meals not provided by your host family or accommodations, school supplies, and incidentals (shampoo, soap, etc.), you will receive a one-time stipend, in the form of a direct deposit to your bank account, which will arrive in May. Most participants will choose to access these funds via debit card while overseas, as many CLS host countries use cash as the basis of most daily transactions. We do recommend bringing some cash with you in case your card does not work upon arrival to the host country.

ATM/Debit Cards

ATMs may offer good currency exchange rates, but different U.S. banks have different fee policies for ATM withdrawals and purchases abroad, usually ranging from a flat fee to a percentage of the withdrawal. For cards with a flat fee for overseas withdrawals, withdrawing larger sums of local currency a few times over the summer makes sense; for those with a percentage-based fee, it may make more sense to bring cash with you to exchange. It is up to you to research your bank's policy before you leave.

Tips on Bringing Money

- Bring the majority of your money in a cash-accessible form (i.e. ATM/Debit card).

- Bring some cash in case your ATM card malfunctions. Many participants report that their card did not work at some point. If your card does not work, leave that ATM and try another; the problem is often with the machine rather than the card.
- Be sure to contact your bank before leaving home to tell them you will be using your card in the host country.
- Bring new, clean, and crisp dollar bills. Banks and exchange offices rarely accept bills that are old, torn, or have any markings on them.
- Bring a credit card if you have one. Even if you do not plan to use it, it is a good backup in the event of a significant, unexpected expense. Although most medical fees need to be paid in cash at the time of service, if you experience a significant medical issue a credit card may be useful to pay for larger medical fees, if you need to do so as a condition of receiving treatment. You will be able to submit receipts from medical care received on program for consideration for reimbursement from your medical coverage, but it may take several weeks, or even months, before a reimbursement is issued, and not all expenses may be covered.
- Do not bring travelers' checks. It is difficult to find places to cash them and there can be a large fee.
- Bring your passport with you when exchanging money at a currency exchange or bank.

Support for Participants

Connect Before You Leave

As a CLS recipient, there are several ways to connect online with other current program participants, as well as CLS alumni and staff.

- CLS Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CLScholarship>. You can join CLS Facebook language groups to connect with other participants and alumni of your language program.
- CLS Instagram: @CLScholarship.
- CLS Twitter: @CLSScholarship.
- CLS Website: www.clscholarship.org. The CLS website is a resource for participants and alumni. The FAQ page for participants can be found at <http://www.clscholarship.org/information-for/participants>.
- After your return, be sure to join the U.S. Department of State's International Exchange Alumni community to access additional resources and networks: www.alumni.state.gov.

Alumni Support Network

One of the CLS Program's most significant resources for assisting new participants is our deep pool of CLS Program alumni. Their diverse experiences on the CLS Program and the lessons they have learned are valuable tools that they can share with you. The Alumni Support Network exists to put you in contact directly with our alumni and includes our Alumni Resource Directories and our One-to-One Mentorship Program.

Alumni Resource Directories

These directories – distributed by language– list alumni who have volunteered to speak with you about a variety of topics, both sensitive and routine. Please take advantage of this resource – our alumni are looking forward to sharing their experiences and answering your questions about everything from

packing and staying mentally and physically healthy on the program to representing diverse perspectives and navigating identity abroad. You're encouraged to refer to these directories and reach out to the alumni listed in them with pre-program questions as well as throughout your time abroad.

One-to-One Mentorship Program

In addition to the resource directories, which all students will receive in the spring, you will also have the opportunity to request an individual alumni mentor. Mentoring pairs are encouraged to communicate regularly prior to and throughout the program, so that alumni can provide their mentees with ongoing support and perspectives based on their experiences abroad. Mentors are paired with participants based on language and, wherever possible, program site and other factors you identify in your opt-in survey. You will receive a survey in the spring, inviting you to request a mentor if you feel this would be a good source of support for you.

If you have questions about the Alumni Support Network, you can reach out to the Alumni Engagement Officer at clsalumni@americancouncils.org.

Things To Do Before Leaving the U.S.

Banking

- Contact your credit card company and bank to find out about fees for overseas purchases, cash advances, and ATM withdrawals.
- Inform your bank and credit card company of the dates of your trip so your cards are not turned off due to theft alert.
- Bring a 24-hour emergency number for your bank in the event that you need to contact them about a lost or stolen card.
- Make sure your ATM card will not expire during your time abroad. If needed, request a new card early.

Health

- Consult the CDC's country specific page (www.cdc.gov/travel) and the U.S. Department of State's country specific page (www.travel.state.gov) to read about common diseases and other health risks. Do this before visiting your doctor in order to discuss those issues with him/her.
- Discuss any physical, mental, or emotional issues that may need special attention while abroad.
- Make a plan for staying healthy while overseas.
- Make sure your immunizations are up to date. Talk with your doctor about recommended vaccinations, and about health considerations related to COVID virus.
- Visit your doctor and complete all CLS Program required Medical Forms on the Accepted Student Portal.
- Make sure you have an eight-week supply of your prescription medications in their original packaging.
- Discuss which over-the-counter medications may be useful to take with you in case you have a minor illness in country.
- A special note to women travelers: If you have been prescribed birth control, make sure you have an eight-week supply of the medication you have been prescribed as birth control brands vary greatly or may not be available at all.
- Visit your dentist.

- When packing medication, put it in your carry-on bag in its original packaging and bring a copy of the prescription.
- Check with your health insurance provider about coverage while you are overseas.
- Familiarize yourself with ASPE health benefits.
- After receiving your CLS flight information, call the airline to arrange a special meal if you are vegetarian or if you have special dietary needs.

Personal

- Arrange for payment of any outstanding financial matters (for instance, student loan payments or paying rent) while you are abroad.
- Research Skype, long-distance phone plans, email, apps or phone cards that will allow you to stay connected while abroad.
- Make a plan to stay in contact with friends and family while in your CLS host country.

CLS Packing List

[See Appendix A](#)

Mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) in Washington, D.C.

In response to the pandemic, pre-program orientations in 2021 will be conducted virtually. These mandatory pre-program sessions will include a combination of live zoom sessions, introductions to CLS program staff and participants, placement testing, and pre-recorded material to help you prepare for the program.

While Abroad

Welcome to the “While Abroad” section of the CLS Participant Handbook!

In this section, you will find the answers to many of the questions you may have about the program while you are studying and living in your host country, including your health and safety abroad and program policies. We advise you to read this section carefully before you go abroad, but you should also refer to it throughout your program if you have any questions.

On-site Orientation

For the 2021 summer institutes, you may be transferred directly from the airport to a hotel or dormitory for quarantine. Information about what to expect will be provided to you in advance. You will have an opportunity to meet local staff and participate in an orientation prepared by local staff in conjunction with your Resident Director. Your orientation will cover subjects such as cultural norms and expectations, academic overview, accommodations, health and safety, emergency procedures, and site-specific policies.

Academics

Language Instruction

Program sites subject to a quarantine will begin with virtual instruction on a modified schedule. Once classes transition to in-person classes, all CLS participants will take intensive language classes for 20 hours each week. The curriculum will develop your reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills – and provide you with opportunities to practice them in appropriate contexts. You are expected to participate actively in your learning process and take advantage of opportunities to speak and ask questions during class. You will also be expected to study outside of class and complete all class assignments, which may include up to three hours of homework each day.

As the CLS Program selects participants from diverse fields of study and levels of higher education, participants inevitably have a range of diverse language learning backgrounds. Please be respectful of your peers’ interests and learning styles and understand that the class may spend time on general vocabulary or grammar concepts you have already learned, particularly in the first weeks of the program. The goal of the CLS Program is to help you master the language so that you can effectively communicate with people of other cultures. Throughout the summer there may be a variety of situations that are not directly tailored to your own personal language learning interests, but we encourage you to keep an open mind toward new language learning opportunities.

Language Placement

Prior to the start of classes, your instructors will conduct testing to determine class placement. Note that the assessment process is for placement purposes only, and there is no placement outcome that will adversely affect your participation in the program (e.g., testing at the intermediate level despite applying for CLS at the advanced level). Due to the widely varying language programs in the United States, you may be placed at a different level than you anticipate, or your perception of your level may differ from the one the placement test shows. Most times, the placement from testing is accurate; however, if you find yourself over- or underwhelmed in your classes after the first week, you may speak to your Resident Director and the institute staff about changing your class placement. We will do our best to ensure that all participants are placed in the most appropriate classes.

Academic and Classroom Expectations

During the CLS Program, you will study with instructors whose methods and techniques may differ from those you have encountered in the U.S. or elsewhere. American Councils and our partners have invested substantial resources in developing a strong academic program. This includes training instructors, sending staff and language-teaching experts to partner sites, and carefully reviewing student evaluations of existing programs so that adjustments can be made as necessary.

Although CLS staff work to make your academic transition as smooth as possible, you should expect differences in academic culture between your host country and the United States. Part of the immersive language-learning experience is growing to understand how a different culture views the academic process. Your instructors will be trained and experienced teachers who are familiar with the teaching materials and curriculum, and they likely have experience interacting with and instructing foreigners. They may not, however, use the same systems or teaching methodologies you are familiar with in the U.S., and they may not have the same expectations for the classroom as your American teachers. Therefore, prepare to be patient and flexible as you adapt to the educational offerings of your CLS host institution.

Grading

You will be given grades by your instructors. Your grades will be assigned based on a variety of factors that will be determined by individual instructors. Primary forms of evaluating your progress may include homework assignments, in-class exercises, exams, and projects. Teachers will use the grading system to evaluate your language skills in spoken interaction, spoken production, reading, listening, and writing. All CLS participants are required to complete all homework assignments and exams, whether or not they have elected to receive academic credit for the program.

Health and Safety

Daily Considerations

Physical Health

Information will be provided regarding COVID-19 testing and quarantine protocols, as well as requirements and recommendations developed in response to the pandemic. In addition to these considerations, you should seek to maintain a healthy diet and regular sleep habits as much as possible. Even if you are normally very healthy, you may get sick while abroad because of the stress of living in a new place and the exposure to new germs. Stomach ailments and the flu are the most common illnesses, so it is wise to bring some basic over-the-counter medications with you, such as pain or fever-reducers, antacids, and antidiarrheal medications. Make sure these medications are in their original packaging. You should also be sure to have all the prescription medicines you need. In addition to any monitoring and reporting of symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus, please alert your Resident Director to discuss medical care if you have severe vomiting or diarrhea, or if the problem continues for 48 hours or more.

Adjusting to Life Abroad

When you travel to a new place, you bring with you your values, patterns of behavior, and understandings about what is good and bad or normal and abnormal. Values, patterns of behavior, and understandings of everyday occurrences in your host country will be different from what you are used to. Some differences are easy to observe, such as traffic patterns or the way buildings or stores look. Others will be harder to observe and may pop up at unexpected times in everyday interactions.

Culture shock is the discomfort people feel as they adjust to life in a new setting with different values, patterns of behavior, and expectations. It is a natural part of learning a new culture and adjusting to a different place, and nearly everyone experiences it.

Feelings often associated with culture shock can include extreme homesickness, physical complaints and sleep disturbances, frustration or annoyance, depression or anxiety, loss of sense of humor, boredom or fatigue, difficulty with coursework and concentration, the feeling that your language skills have grown worse on the program, or hostility toward the host culture.

Talk with your Resident Director, teachers, institute staff, language partner, CLS peers, and host family or roommate about things you do not understand or find frustrating. People who have experience living in both the United States and abroad are also excellent resources, as is the Alumni Support Network.

Here are some other useful strategies that will help with your adjustment to a new culture:

- Set reasonable goals and expectations, particularly at the beginning.
- Plan small tasks each day that will help you meet people and accomplish something, like preparing a new food or exploring a new part of the city.
- Don't isolate yourself – try to be social, even when you don't feel like it. During a quarantine period, this might include reaching out to others online, hosting a virtual tea or coffee chat, or inviting others to join in an online activity.
- Find a friend from the host community who can help “translate” the culture for you.
- Pay attention to your body: eat properly, exercise, and get plenty of rest. The CLS Program is tiring, and a good night's sleep will help to recharge your body and mind.
- If there is something you do regularly at home, try doing it in the host country if appropriate.
- Remember that it is normal to feel overwhelmed, but also that the feeling of being overwhelmed will go away.

If you are feeling depressed or the feelings of homesickness do not go away no matter how much you try to do other things, please talk with your Resident Director.

Safety and Security

The CLS Program takes participant safety very seriously and works closely with the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Embassies and Consulates to evaluate our program sites and review safety considerations before and during the program. All CLS Program participants are registered with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas in advance of departure through the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) (www.step.state.gov/). In addition, local and U.S.-based staff are committed to providing a safe environment. All reasonable precautions are taken to ensure that participants are in safe living conditions and have access to medical care.

Important Safety Information

Countries where the CLS Program operates may experience economic, political, or social uncertainty. In this context, your status as a foreigner can attract unwanted attention and can have potential consequences for your personal safety. Our intention is not to frighten you but to make sure you have basic information to decrease the likelihood of experiencing crime. Some considerations for your own safety are listed below, and more information will be provided during your pre-departure and on-site orientations.

Personal Safety

- Observe interactions between members of your host community and talk with your Resident Director, host family, or language partner about culturally appropriate behavior that may help to lower your profile as a foreigner.
- Dress appropriately for the local culture and avoid clothing that may be interpreted as provocative or makes you stand out as a foreigner. Although foreigners are often considered “exempt” from local societal norms of dress, it is important to communicate respect by abiding by the local dress culture, which will also help you lower your profile.

Transportation Safety

- Walking or traveling with a friend or in a small group is better than traveling alone or with a large group. Walking with someone else helps deflect approaches by people who might bother you.
- Never walk alone at night. If you visit friends in the evening, ask them to escort you home or remain with you until you are in a taxi.
- Always take licensed taxis.
- Always tell someone, such as friends or your host family, where you are going and when you expect to return.
- If you want to visit a new neighborhood, make your first visit during the day. Look at a map and note the nearest sources of public transportation and routes. Discuss the safety of the neighborhood or area with CLS institute staff and other members of the host community, such as your language partner or host family.
- When asking for directions, use common sense and approach people who seem non-threatening. A woman should not ask a single man for directions; ask another woman or a family. Likewise, a man should generally not ask a single woman for directions.
- Traffic accidents are a significant risk to study abroad participants. Always stay alert as a pedestrian and look both ways before crossing the street. In many parts of the world, pedestrians do not have the right-of-way, so never assume a car will stop for you or steer out of the way. Stay on sidewalks away from the curb and walk facing oncoming traffic whenever possible. Be aware that traffic lights may change the instant a pedestrian walk light changes, and there may not be lag time to allow the pedestrian to finish crossing the street. If in doubt of how much time remains, wait for the next light cycle.

Avoiding Theft and Petty Crime

- Be aware of bag-snatching, pick-pocketing, and other thefts, even in broad daylight and especially in busy marketplaces and tourist areas. Wallets in the back pocket of your pants or backpack are an attractive target. Keep your bags zipped and close to your person, either under your arm or in front of you.
- Backpacks are not recommended for use on crowded public transportation. If you do carry a backpack, hold it in front of you or over one shoulder to ensure that you can watch it at all times.
- A concealed money belt is a good option in crowded situations. Be sure to take out money you might need ahead of time.
- Avoid carrying large bags during travel, when possible, as it could draw attention and attract pickpockets.

- Be vigilant in restaurants, hotel lobbies, train compartments, airports, and train stations. Be wary of con artists, distractions, and diversions.
- Talk to your host family about safety. Your safety is one of their priorities, and they will be able to give you more detailed information about areas you may want to avoid.
- Practice situational awareness. Be aware of what is going on around you, and don't think twice about moving or crossing the street to avoid unwanted attention.

Money Safety

- Do not handle or display large quantities of money on the street. Only take out the amount of money that you need for a given transaction.
- Be discreet with credit cards, jewelry, and electronic devices. Once you have obtained local currency, you probably won't need to carry your credit/debit card every day. Be smart about what you carry with you when out and about in your host community.
- Never carry more money than you immediately need. If you need to carry substantial amounts of money, consider wearing it under your clothes in a concealed money belt or pouch.
- At home, lock your money and credit cards in a suitcase in your room, and be discreet with money around your host family. Even if you trust them, you may not be able to trust visitors or workers they may have over while you are out. Bring a luggage lock so you will be able to secure your valuables or private belongings.

Exchanging Money and Withdrawing Money from an ATM

There are many safe locations where you can legally exchange money. When you do this, you should receive a receipt. Keep your receipts until you are back in the United States. Here are some tips for avoiding problems:

- Go with a friend when you exchange money or use an ATM.
- Avoid exchanging or withdrawing money when it is dark.
- Do not call attention to yourself by speaking loudly when dealing with money. Count your money before stepping away from the exchange counter. Calculate the exchange rate and be sure you received the right amount of money.
- If you are traveling, withdraw any money you expect to need for your trip from an ATM before leaving so you won't run the risk of losing your card in a defective ATM far from your host city.
- Do not rely entirely on your ATM card for retrieving money. Bring some cash from the United States that you can exchange if your ATM card is not working.
- Do not use an ATM if you see that there are many scratch marks near the card insertion slot, or if the card insertion slot is loose or looks like it has been detached.

Water Safety

While on the CLS Program there may be opportunities for you to swim, go boating, or participate in other water-based activities. Any activity involving water carries risks, including drowning, injury, and water-borne illness. The safety precautions that you may be used to in the United States, for example, the presence of lifeguards, will likely not be present at your host site. Students are strongly encouraged to carefully consider the risks before participating in water-based activities and follow common sense and water safety guidelines to minimize water-related health issues or injuries.

Drowning

Keep in mind that **drowning is a significant risk**. To reduce the risk of drowning, we expect students to adhere to the following safety measures:

- Assess your own comfort with water and your ability to swim
- Approach all water with an abundance of caution
- Only swim in designated areas
- Never swim or go boating alone, always go with at least one other person
- Do not swim or go boating at night
- Do not consume alcohol before or during swimming or boating
- Do not dive into unfamiliar or shallow water as the depth may not be obvious or marked and dangerous objects, such as rocks, may be present
- If you have an opportunity to ride on a boat, use proper safety equipment such as life jackets
- Beware of invisible dangers such as riptides and strong currents
- Adhere to posted signs, including those that prohibit swimming in a specific area, or note the absence of lifeguards

Water Quality and Water-Borne Illness

In addition to drowning, partaking in water-based activities can also expose you to germs which may cause water-borne illness. Information outlining water quality may not be readily available.

Before participating in any water-based activity, students should review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) host country page for health notices and any specific information related to staying safe around water. Students should also exercise caution and follow the general tips below to avoid germs in the water:

- Make sure you are aware of potential infections that may result from swimming or wading in the waters in your host country. For example, consider whether schistosomiasis and leptospirosis are common in your region.
- Do not swallow water
- Do not engage in water-based activities with open cuts or wounds
- Consider potential pollutants that may be present in the water, but that may not be visible

Other Water-Related Risks

In addition to the risk of drowning and illness, there are other risks associated with being in and near water. Please keep the following in mind:

- Be aware of aquatic animals that may pose a risk in your area such as sharks, jellyfish, water snakes, etc.
- Consider the risk of hypothermia, particularly if swimming or boating in mountainous areas or other areas where the water temperature may be significantly colder than the air
- Think about your footwear when going to a beach. Consider wearing shoes with sturdy soles as you walk on a beach as hazards such as broken glass, sea urchins, animal feces, and parasites, may be present

Heat-Related Concerns

When swimming, boating, or enjoying a beach or other natural area it is important to keep in mind that heat and exposure to the sun can also carry risks, even if you don't step foot in the water. Participants should be aware of the following suggestions whenever they plan to spend a significant amount of time outside in their host country, whether on a beach, hiking, walking in their host city, or doing anything else outdoors:

- Wear and reapply sunscreen to reduce the risk of sunburn or keep covered
- Consider wearing a hat and sunglasses for further protection from the sun
- Be aware of the signs of heatstroke and sunstroke
- Stay hydrated. Even if you are not thirsty drink plenty of water

Policies

Terms and Conditions

When you accepted the CLS award, you agreed to the CLS Terms and Conditions for participation in the CLS Program. For more information on CLS Program policies, we encourage you to review the Terms and Conditions in [Appendix B](#).

Site Specific Policies

During the on-site orientation in your host country, you will be asked to sign additional Site-Specific Policies related directly to your host country. These policies will also be discussed during your site-specific webinar and your pre-departure orientation.

Sexual Harassment Policy

The full CLS Sexual Harassment Policy can be accessed in the CLS Terms and Conditions in [Appendix B](#).

Class Participation

Absence from classes or other mandatory program activities, including day and overnight excursions, for reasons other than approved medical absences or other approved reasons will be grounds for a warning; extended absences may result in a revocation of the CLS scholarship. Two or more medical absences from class require a doctor's note. You must notify your Resident Director as soon as possible (usually first thing in the morning) of any absences. Please note that if you miss 20 hours of class and/or four consecutive class days for medical reasons, a recommendation may be made to the U.S. Department of State to terminate your CLS award. In the event that you are able to keep up with classwork and homework assignments as assigned by CLS teachers, you may be able to continue the program.

You are required to fully participate in all classroom activities and complete all homework assignments, even if you did not elect to receive academic credit for the CLS Program. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and possibly the termination of your scholarship. You are also responsible for observing satisfactory academic and professional standards and maintaining a standard of conduct and integrity that is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the CLS Program.

Personal or Academic Research

CLS participants are not allowed to conduct personal research (including coursework, thesis or dissertation writing) or other non-CLS Program academic work if it in any way detracts from full

participation in CLS Program activities. Research activities may also be prohibited by the terms of your visa.

Blogging/Media

We hope that you will share your CLS experiences on social media throughout the summer. In addition to your own personal social media pages we encourage you to reach out through the CLS Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages listed here.

If you decide to share your CLS experiences publicly via other non-official Internet-based media there are a few points that you should keep in mind:

- Acknowledge that your page is not an official U.S. Department of State website and that the views and information presented are your own and do not represent the CLS Program, the Department of State, or American Councils for International Education.
- You are also expected to maintain a standard of conduct that is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the CLS Program – to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.
- Be aware that what is deemed culturally acceptable in the United States (or, more specifically, on the Internet in the United States) may be inappropriate or offensive to people in your host country.
- Be respectful. Refrain from using disparaging language or images to describe the country you are in and the people you live and work with.
- Please note that you are required to adhere to host country laws and U.S. laws, including as they may pertain to social media, blogging, and Internet use.

Upon accepting the CLS award you also agreed to these media-based guidelines as part of the CLS Terms and Conditions.

Social Media Use

When participants complete their post-program survey at the end of the CLS summer, they often express shock at how fast the two months of the program have gone by. Therefore, we encourage participants to do everything they can to maximize their opportunities for linguistic and cultural immersion and make the best use of their time overseas. A big part of this is staying focused on your language goals during the program and limiting activities that take you away from the immersion experience. In other words, focus on engaging with people in your host country rather than online communities. Many CLS participants have reported that consciously limiting or restricting their social media use positively impacted their language gains and immersion experience. We recommend the following practices for the duration of your CLS Program:

- Prioritize language learning and in-person experiences and communication
- Turn off notifications on devices
- Use social media ‘consciously’ and self-regulate use

Whether on Google Hangouts, Facebook, or in WhatsApp, frequently CLS participants engage in group chats on program. We recommend CLS participants try to be constructive, helpful, mature, and polite in group chats and encourage you to leave chats, or start different threads, if you find that the chat has become a distraction or is detrimental to your learning experience on program.

Public Gatherings

Many countries worldwide have changing political climates which can lead to protests, demonstrations, and strikes. These situations are particularly risky for foreigners. You should always avoid public demonstrations and areas prone to instability and disorder. Be careful of any large gatherings. If you happen across a protest or strike, leave the area as quickly as possible. Do not stay to take photos or “experience” the protest. The U.S. Embassy in your host country may notify citizens via e-mail of scheduled protests. Do not photograph crowds, and never photograph police, military personnel, or official buildings. Please note that your accident and sickness coverage (ASPE) does not cover injuries sustained as a result of protests, demonstrations, or strikes.

Alcohol and Drugs

Abuse of alcohol or drugs that endangers yourself or others may result in termination of your CLS award.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol during the CLS Program is strongly discouraged, and in some program sites, drinking alcohol will not be tolerated at all. Some CLS Program sites have additional policies regarding alcohol consumption. These will be provided to you as part of the Site-Specific Policies. If you do decide to drink, be mindful of the following:

- CLS participants are required to follow both local and U.S. laws regarding alcohol consumption. The CLS Program prohibits the consumption of alcohol by or distribution of alcohol to participants who are not of U.S. legal drinking age.
- Always drink in moderation. Be cautious when drinking around people you don't know.
- It is not advisable to take alcohol as a gift to a lunch or dinner invitation. Even in cultures where many people drink alcohol, your hosts may not drink for religious or personal reasons.

Drugs

CLS has a zero-tolerance policy for illegal drug use. If you use or possess illegal drugs, your scholarship will be terminated. Using illegal drugs is not only a health risk but also puts you at risk for arrest and imprisonment in the host country. Illegal drugs can be tainted or contain substances other than those advertised and taking them can lead to an overdose or death. Additionally, misuse or abuse of prescription drugs is dangerous. Do not respond to the stresses of adjusting to a new culture by taking more than the prescribed dosage of either your own medication or drugs prescribed to someone else.

Disciplinary Measures

In the event that a participant violates a CLS Program Policy (inclusive of Site-Specific and Language Policies), the CLS Program may issue a written warning, place the participant on probation, and/or recommend the immediate termination of the participant's award. Please note that in the case of a single incident comprising multiple infractions, or if one infraction of program policy is deemed of great significance or severity, there may be a recommendation to move directly to a recommendation for CLS award termination. The warning system is implemented by the Resident Director in consultation with American Councils and institute staff. All warnings issued to participants will be provided to American Councils and the U.S. Department of State.

Harassment & Unwanted Attention

You may experience harassment or unwanted attention abroad. Forms of harassment may include cat-calling, whistling, making comments, or pursuing someone on the street. Please remember that fellow participants, your Resident Director, local program staff, as well as the staff at American Councils in D.C. are here to help support you. If you have trouble adjusting to life abroad or if you've had an experience that made you feel uncomfortable, threatened, or violated, please discuss it with American Councils staff or your Resident Director.

Remember that although there are steps you can take to lower your profile, you are not responsible for the behavior of others. Below are some strategies to mitigate harassment or unwanted attention abroad:

- Avoid making eye contact with or smiling at strangers, especially strangers of the opposite sex. American friendliness can be misinterpreted as a sexual invitation.
- Avoid walking alone, especially on empty, dimly lit streets at dusk or at night.
- Oftentimes, the best response to unwanted stares, comments, or touches is to ignore the harasser and remove yourself from the situation quickly and calmly.
- Participants who are being harassed or pursued by a stranger in public should remain in a public, visible, populated place and call the Resident Director.
- Avoidance is the safest tactic. Try to avoid situations that may be dangerous, such as being out late at night by yourself or being alone with someone you do not know well.
- Many female participants may find it more comfortable to be in the company of a male fellow participant while in public places, as this may decrease sexual harassment.
- Participants should be supportive of one another. If you are among a group of CLS participants and you notice that another participant is receiving unwanted attention, suggest that the group move elsewhere.

You can find additional information about your health and safety abroad in the [Health and Safety](#) section of this handbook.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

Sexual harassment and sexual violence can happen with those you are familiar with or with those whom you have never met before. Being in an unfamiliar environment and away from your domestic support network can add an additional level of distress to any bad experience, including coping with sexual harassment and sexual violence. The CLS Program seeks to decrease the risk of sexual harassment and sexual violence by providing training for all CLS participants and staff to clarify the CLS Program's definitions of sexual harassment and sexual violence. Additionally, the CLS Program speaks with participants before and during the program about health and safety considerations in their host country, and CLS onsite staff are available to provide support to participants throughout the program. However, it is important to note that even when all precautions are taken, sexual harassment and sexual violence can occur.

Sexual harassment or violence is never the fault of the victim. If you are a victim of sexual harassment or assault, the CLS Program will provide nonjudgmental support and help meet your needs to the best of our ability.

Reporting

If you are a victim of sexual harassment, or witness sexual harassment, you are encouraged to inform CLS Program staff, institute staff, or the Resident Director, who can be reached 24-hours a day. CLS urges you to report any instance of sexual harassment as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. If a participant reports to CLS Program staff that he/she has suffered a sexual assault or harassment on the CLS Program, or if CLS Program staff otherwise learn of a sexual assault or sexual harassment incident, CLS Program staff will provide immediate support and assistance, including access to professional medical care and counseling and support (on-line or on-site depending on availability), as requested by the participant.

Upon receiving reports of sexual harassment, CLS Program staff have a responsibility to report the incident to their supervisor or program director. Known incidents must also be reported to the U.S. Department of State. You should know that all reports or complaints of sexual harassment will be handled discreetly; however, individuals with a legitimate need to know will be informed of the complaint in order for the CLS Program to respond effectively.

Participants may also access the following resources, which are independent of the CLS Program:

- Pathways to Safety (formerly Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad): Pathways to Safety provides sexual assault prevention & response regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or location worldwide. (Their crisis line number is +1-833-SAFE-833 from the U.S., see the Pathways to Safety website for country specific directions at <https://pathwaystosafety.org/>)
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): This is the largest anti-sexual violence organization in the U.S. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (+1-800-656-HOPE) in partnership with providers across the United States. (<https://www.rainn.org/>)

Participants are encouraged to make use of U.S. government resources available to Americans overseas, such as the American Citizens Services desk at the U.S. Embassy.

The CLS Program strongly advises participants to contact the Resident Director before reporting incidents to law enforcement. The Resident Director can connect you with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, if necessary. It is important to consider local laws and procedures before making a decision to report incidents of harassment or assault to local police. Local laws, investigatory procedures, and courtroom rules governing such cases may differ significantly from those of the U.S. and in some cases may compound the victim's trauma. Certain incidents, if considered a criminal case, may require the victim to testify at a point in time after the CLS Program has completed. Attitudes toward harassment also vary considerably. In some cases, local police may not be supportive of a victim reporting harassment. Depending on host country laws, the reporting of harassment or assault may even be considered an admission of guilt on the part of the victim.

Prior to departure participants should also consider what resources in their home communities and/or on their home campuses, such as university health or wellness centers, they may be able to access while overseas.

Participants may also report to CLS staff concerning behavior, such as general cat-calling, or actions or statements that they believe may constitute harassment, but which are difficult to fully define. In such incidents, CLS Program staff will also provide immediate support and assistance to the participant.

No Retaliation

As stated in the Sexual Harassment Policy, the CLS Program prohibits retaliation against program participants and other members of the CLS community for filing a complaint of discrimination or harassment. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, threats, intimidation, coercion, and adverse actions in relation to evaluation or program participation. The CLS Program will investigate allegations of retaliation and will take strong responsive action if retaliation occurs; in the case of retaliation engaged in by participants, such behavior will result in discipline up to and including immediate dismissal from the CLS Program.

CLS Sexual Harassment Policy

If you have more questions about the CLS Sexual Harassment Policy, we encourage you to review the Terms and Conditions, as well as the full CLS Sexual Harassment Policy in [Appendix B](#).

Emergency Procedures

In case of emergency or severe illness, contact your Resident Director immediately. If you cannot reach your Resident Director, call other local CLS institute staff.

Cell Phones

Participants are provided emergency contact cards with important phone numbers and information as well as basic mobile phones that they can use to contact local staff in case of emergency. For some sites in 2021, CLS Program staff will work with you to ensure your personal cell phone will work overseas. You are required to keep the phone activated and the battery charged so that you can call in case of emergency and receive calls in case you need to be notified of a serious situation. You should also enter the Resident Director's number and at least two other local staff members' numbers into the phone's memory so that you are not searching for phone numbers in case of an emergency. If there is an emergency, your Resident Director and Institute Director will work with American Councils staff in Washington, D.C., to find the best possible resolution to the situation.

Evacuations or Suspensions of a CLS Program Site

Student safety and security is a top priority for the U.S. Department of State and American Councils. American Councils will engage with the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Embassies and Consulates overseas, as well as local authorities to monitor the security situation prior to and during your CLS program.

Prior to your CLS Program

If the Department of State determines that a program site is not safe for any reason, the program may be suspended. If a program is suspended, American Councils, in consultation with the Department of State, will explore options for moving the institute to another location and/or placing individual participants in alternate sites. If it is not feasible to move the program to a different location, and if no mutually acceptable assignment can be arranged, the CLS Program may be moved to an online format or may be cancelled outright. In the event of program cancellation all benefits and obligations shall cease.

If there are changes to the program location, dates or format, award recipients will be informed of the options and will have the opportunity to decline the CLS award without penalty.

During your CLS Program

In the event that the Department of State determines an evacuation of U.S. citizens from a host country is required, American Councils will work with the U.S. Embassy to ensure that participants are evacuated and returned to the U.S. in a safe and orderly manner that complies with U.S. government standards. At that time, the program will be terminated, and all benefits and obligations shall cease.

Maintaining Your Identity Abroad

As you research the politics, attitudes, beliefs, and values of people in your host country, you will notice different opinions regarding race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. You will most likely encounter attitudes and beliefs that differ from those typically found in the United States, some of which may seem prejudiced, discriminatory, and/or personally offensive or threatening. CLS participants come from diverse backgrounds across the United States, and you should be prepared for differences in politics, attitudes, beliefs, and values within your CLS peer cohort, as well.

Cultural differences, references to racial stereotypes, assumptions about gender roles or religious observances, and openly expressed attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals can be jarring for CLS participants. There may also be the added challenge of being a student of color, a member of a religious minority in the host country, a female student, or an LGBTQ-identified student overseas. Sometimes CLS participants are burdened by the feeling that they are responsible for representing their entire race or identity to their host culture.

Despite these challenges, many participants report that they enjoy learning about their host culture and exploring these differences. We encourage you to seek opportunities to realistically portray American diversity. Participants are encouraged to keep an open mind about their new host culture while remembering that no culture is wrong, just different. Through these interactions, host country nationals will also learn to break their stereotypes about Americans. Remember that as a CLS participant, you play an important role in the State Department's mission of increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

Your Safety

For interactions with CLS peers, as well as with host country nationals, respectful communication is key. Respectful communication may also help to ensure your physical safety.

For your safety, in all new environments you should:

- Refrain from discussing sensitive subjects, including politics, religion, gender norms, and sexual identity, until you get to know your conversation partner(s) better. Begin by speaking in general, rather than personal, terms to measure the potential responses of the person you are speaking with in your host culture.
- Seek to understand the local context, including the history of various identity groups in your host city and country, key legislation that impacts these groups, and common cultural norms.
- Talk with your Resident Director or other CLS peers who are familiar with the host city or country to develop a strategy for discussing sensitive topics. The Alumni Support Network can be an excellent resource for such conversations.

- Be aware of your surroundings, and immediately remove yourself from a situation if it feels uncomfortable or something seems strange.
- If you encounter someone who is being aggressively offensive, the best course of action is to ignore them and move on quickly.
- Contact your Resident Director immediately if you need assistance.

You can find additional information about your health and safety abroad in the [Health and Safety](#) section of this handbook.

American Diversity & Racial Stereotypes

As an American student abroad, you may encounter reactions from members of the host community that range from overwhelming curiosity to complete apathy. These reactions manifest in various ways and are influenced by local notions of what an American “looks like” as well as general attitudes toward foreign visitors.

In many overseas countries, an “American” is understood to be Caucasian. For non-white CLS participants, this can be a unique challenge. People from your host community may be less familiar with Americans with Asian, Hispanic or Latin-American, Indigenous, or African heritage, and they may lack knowledge and context when it comes to the acceptable use of language or the history of race in the United States. As a result, they may ask questions or provide commentary that would be considered offensive or discriminatory in the United States.

Not all negative attention is the result of simple misunderstandings, however. Reactions can range from well-intentioned curiosity such as staring or asking unwelcome questions (which may nevertheless be upsetting), to expressions of open hostility, and interactions that are intended to be insulting or demeaning. Racism is a fact of life in many CLS host communities as it is in the United States, but the social and legal structures that participants are used to may not exist, or the protection that they offer may not extend to foreigners. It is very important that if you encounter a situation that makes you feel unsafe while on the program, you report it to the Resident Director or institute staff. While it is not possible to control all negative aspects of the host culture and society, the CLS Program and our local partners work hard on programming and with members of the local community to build a program where all students can learn safely.

Participants may also find that colorism affects their everyday interactions in ways that are different from forms of racial discrimination in the United States. Colorism is a form of discrimination where individuals or groups with darker skin tone are treated less favorably or regarded as having lower social status in society. These attitudes may be reflected in comments about skin complexion, advertisements for products such as skin-lightening creams, and makeup and photo filters meant to create the illusion of lighter skin.

Participants should be prepared to encounter these sorts of situations occasionally. Previous CLS participants have noted that during such occasions of harassment or discomfort due to racial attitudes, it can help to contextualize it with the experiences of local people from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds in the country or other participants in the same CLS cohort.

While it is not sufficient simply to understand or contextualize such experiences, it is important to remember that the countries and communities that host the CLS Program each bear particular social and cultural histories that effect their unique and complex dynamics around race, class, gender, and

other identities. The study of language and culture necessarily involves thoughtful observation of such dynamics; although there are many things we may wish to change in the United States or abroad, avoidance does not serve as a solution. To the extent that it is possible to engage in such discourses critically and without pre-judgement, but also safely and without self-erasure, that is our goal.

Sexuality, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity

You will find that societal attitudes and perceptions about sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity overseas may differ from attitudes and perceptions in the United States. Laws and legal decisions differ as well. Religious beliefs and observances may also impact these attitudes and laws.

We encourage you to be discreet regarding your sexuality, at least in your first meetings with members of your host community, until you have had a chance to get to know the person. You should also be extremely sensitive about the identities of any friends you make from the host community or those within your cohort who identify as LGBTQ, as they may be relying on your confidentiality.

Local norms and expectations of dating, marriage, spouses, etc. can emerge during conversations with your host family or language partner. If you feel uncomfortable with these questions you can decline to answer, or you can redirect the conversation with a general answer. If you have any concerns before, during, or after the CLS Program, please contact CLS Program staff. Alumni in the Alumni Resource Directory have volunteered to share their experiences and perspectives as well.

Heritage Students

Heritage students can also experience identity challenges or feel misrepresented in their CLS site, because they could be visually identified as being a member of the host community. For many heritage students, the level of comfort they have with the local culture, languages, and traditions is extremely nuanced and based upon their upbringing. Heritage students frequently deal with the expectation that they know much more about their CLS country and language than they actually do; they may also find that their background differs from expectations that others may have of them. It can surprise or frustrate others when a heritage student's background and experiences do not conform to their expectations of diaspora communities. This, in turn, can feel unsettling or frustrating for the student.

If someone asks you questions about your heritage, your family's heritage, or your immigration history in a way that makes you uncomfortable, you can redirect them by explaining that you are on a scholarship to study language, and that you are a university student focusing on your studies. If you are concerned about how to navigate your identity in your host community, consider reaching out to CLS alumni through the Alumni Support Network, or talk to CLS Program staff, your Resident Director, and other CLS peers. Even those who do not share your background may be able to connect you with valuable resources.

Gender Roles

You may find that the gender norms abroad – the traditional roles of men and women and the amount of independence deemed appropriate in your host country – are different than what you are used to. These roles might feel restrictive or discriminatory to you. If you experience anything unsettling, don't hesitate to contact your Resident Director, or speak to your CLS peers. It is likely that they have had similar experiences. You should seek opportunities to engage in dialogue about traditional gender roles, but be aware that teachers, language partners, or host family members may be uncomfortable with the topic.

The CLS Program asks participants to be cautious in their behavior and culturally-appropriate in dress during their time abroad, but you should still feel encouraged to engage with the culture on as many fronts as possible. In particular, spending time with host family members, language partners, and same-gender members of the host community is a great way to engage. When interacting with members of the opposite sex, we recommend that participants do so with prudent consideration of local gender norms and expectations of communication between men and women. If you have any questions about gender roles, expectations, and staying safe, we encourage you to speak with CLS Program staff, CLS alumni, and other CLS peers who have been to your CLS country or city before.

Additional Identities

You will find questions that in the United States are considered “off-limits” or inappropriate as topics of conversation between strangers are relatively common in other countries, even when meeting someone for the first time; it may be completely normal in your host culture to discuss body weight, appearance, marital status, complexion, religion, and socioeconomic background in ways that make you uncomfortable or that may offend you. You may find that identity in the host culture is structured in ways that are unexpected, intersecting those that you are familiar with, and you may be labeled in ways that you are not used to.

As a strategy for deflecting uncomfortable inquiries, we recommend that students develop standard answers to common questions in the target language so that the interactions do not feel so awkward. You should feel confident that you are not misrepresenting yourself as you wish to be seen, but often a quick answer will allow the person you are meeting to move on to another topic.

Your Hosts and Cohort

The CLS program works with our partners to prepare for hosting a diverse range of participants. Teachers and staff are invested in providing support to all participants on the CLS Program, regardless of background. Even so, it can be hard for them to understand the nuances of American culture, and how Americans perceive various aspects of diversity. Although the CLS Program provides regular trainings and resources to partners, misunderstandings cannot always be resolved through targeted training. Experience plays a key role in learning, and in the same way that you may experience awkwardness and challenges when learning about your host culture and language—sometimes after years of studying it—your hosts are also learning about you and different aspects of American culture and society. Be patient with your host family, language partner, and other people from your host community with whom you interact, who do not share the experiences that you do.

Consider your role in helping those in your community to learn more about cultural differences and the complexities of American society, as well as offering them space to reflect on their own society and its interactions with the issues of diversity and identity, in the same ways they provide you that space.

You will also be learning with a group of American students, each of whom brings their own unique set of identities and experiences. Often participants say that the cultural gap between themselves and other Americans on the program was larger than the gap they felt with members of the local community. Be sensitive to the experiences of your classmates; acknowledge that your experiences on-program may differ significantly from theirs and try to maintain an awareness about how status and privilege are distributed in the local community according to identity, and what affect that has on different members of your cohort.

Finding Support

The Resident Director

The Resident Director at each program site has significant experience abroad and is connected to many official and informal resources that can support you through a difficult experience. We don't expect that every participant will connect with the Resident Director on a personal level, or feel comfortable discussing deeply personal challenges, but they can provide space for you to reflect and process your experience initially; they can also help you talk over next steps and think about resources that may help.

Any CLS participants who experiences discrimination or inappropriate behavior, inside or outside of the institute, should inform their Resident Director. Although not every situation will have a perfect solution the Resident Director, host institute staff, and student support staff in the United States want to address inappropriate behavior and create a safe environment for all students.

Your CLS Peers

Fellow CLS peers who have spent more time in the host country can also be a resource for discussing how to handle these situations. Alumni from previous years are also available through the CLS Alumni Support Network to discuss these issues and experiences.

If you have trouble connecting with alumni, you may reach out to your Program Officer our Alumni Engagement Officer at clsalumni@americancouncils.org, and we will do our best to connect you with someone.

Returning Home

Welcome to the “Returning Home” section of the CLS Participant Handbook!

Your CLS experience does not end once you leave your host country. In this section you will find information about what to expect as you reach the end of your program, including your post-program requirements and re-entry resources. You will also find details about the CLS alumni community and the benefits you will receive as an alumni of the CLS Program.

Flying to the U.S.

The CLS Program will issue you a round-trip airline ticket to travel to your program site and return to the United States with the group after your program ends. Please note that we cannot accommodate any individual requests for later return dates. We also cannot pay for changes to tickets or make changes to the tickets and then bill you.

In response to the pandemic, COVID testing may be required to return to the United States. Information will be provided in advance of your travel.

You will have to pass through customs when you arrive in the United States. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with U.S. customs regulations (<https://www.cbp.gov/>).

Re-Entry Resources

One of the most unexpected challenges of studying abroad is the process of returning home. Even if you have been abroad many times before, returning home can still be a challenge. The CLS Program provides a variety of resources to help you make sense of the transition and make the most of your CLS experience as it relates to your personal, academic, and professional development. These resources include:

- An in-country workshop on re-entry that will be facilitated by your Resident Director
- A re-entry webinar hosted by our staff in Washington, D.C.
- A comprehensive re-entry guidebook that includes exercises for reflection and future planning that will be sent to all participants

The transition back to life in the U.S. can be an emotionally and mentally demanding process, which is experienced differently by each individual. For this reason, the CLS Program makes resources available to alumni that they can access at the point in their process that they find them most useful. Re-entry resources are distributed shortly following the conclusion of the program, but are also available on the CLS website at <https://clscholarship.org/alumni/re-entry> and updated each year. More information about each of these activities/resources will be provided at the end of the summer.

Post-Program Requirements

After you finish the CLS Program, you must complete several tasks before being considered an alumnus/alumna of the program. Post-program requirements include:

- A **CLS Post-Program evaluation survey** (during the program you will also be required to complete a mid-program evaluation survey).
- A **post-program Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)** language test.

All post-program requirements must be completed in order to receive your CLS certificate of completion, your OPI scores, transcript for academic credit (if credit was requested), and certificate of non-competitive eligibility for federal employment. You also need to complete the requirements in order to be eligible for CLS alumni activities or grants.

Joining the CLS Alumni Community

Alumni Activities

After successfully completing all CLS post-program requirements, you will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of CLS alumni initiatives including those designed to contribute to the success of future participants. More information about these activities will be provided upon your completion of the CLS Program in the aforementioned re-entry webinar and guidebook. We hope that you will choose to stay involved with CLS for many years beyond this summer!

International Exchange Alumni

As alumni of the CLS Program, you will be joining a community of alumni of U.S. Department of State programs, a distinguished network of individuals from all over the world. You can explore the additional resources and opportunities available to you as a member of this community on the International Exchange Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov/>). Following completion of post-program requirements, you will receive an invitation with a link to create your account.

Non-Competitive Eligibility

Under Executive Order 13750, alumni who successfully complete the CLS program are eligible for 12 months of non-competitive eligibility (NCE) hiring status for civil service positions within the federal government, with the possibility of an extension up to three years if certain criteria are met. Alumni of the CLS program will automatically be issued a letter confirming this status upon successful completion of their post-program requirements. If you are interested in working with the U.S. government and want to take advantage of your NCE status, more information is available through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (<https://alumni.state.gov/highlight/noncompetitive-eligibility-federal-employment>). You will receive additional information and a guide to using your NCE in your job search following completion of the program.

CLS Alumni Society

The Critical Language Scholarship Alumni Society (CLSAS) is an independent, alumni-led organization by and for CLS alumni. CLSAS provides alumni with avenues for professional development, community engagement, networking, and language retention. The association serves as an advocate for the continued advancement of critical language studies and cultural exchange in the United States and abroad. We encourage you to join the CLSAS and stay engaged with the CLS community. You can find more information on the CLSAS website (<https://www.clsas.org/>).

Staying in Touch

CLS alumni play an important role in maintaining and demonstrating the success of the CLS Program. Please remember to keep us updated about new jobs, fellowships, continued studies, and any other big news.

The Department of State and American Councils also reach out to alumni for opportunities to represent CLS with important U.S. and foreign government officials, speak at special events, and to be featured on Department of State and CLS promotional materials and websites. If you change your email address,

relocate, or change your name, please make sure to let us know by emailing us at clsalumni@americancouncils.org so that we can contact you about relevant news, events, and opportunities!

CLS also offers opportunities to stay connected and network with other CLS alumni online:

Join the Critical Language Scholarship Official Alumni Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/clscholarshipalumni/>

Join the Critical Language Scholarship Alumni Society as a member: <https://www.clsas.org/membership>

Join the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program – Official Alumni Group on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3126138>

Check out resources and funding opportunities at the U.S. Department of State’s International Exchange Alumni website: <https://alumni.state.gov/>

If you haven’t already, join the Critical Language Scholarship Facebook group for participants and alumni of your target language:

- Arabic: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSArabic/>
- Azerbaijani: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSAzerbaijani/>
- Bangla: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSBangla/>
- Chinese: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSChinese/>
- Hindi: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSIndic/>
- Indonesian: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSIndonesian/>
- Japanese: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSJapanese/>
- Korean: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSKorean/>
- Persian: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSPersian/>
- Portuguese: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSPortuguese/>
- Punjabi: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSIndic/>
- Russian: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSRussian/>
- Swahili: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSSwahili/>
- Turkish: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSTurkish/>
- Urdu: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CLSIndic/>

In early spring, you will also be invited to share your experiences as alumni of the program through the Alumni Support Network. Alumni who opt to participate in the Alumni Resource Directories receive a copy in order to connect with other alumni.

Transcripts

Transcript Requests

Bryn Mawr College will provide one official transcript to each CLS participant who successfully completes the program and has requested academic credit. If you require additional transcripts, you will need to request them directly from the Bryn Mawr College Registrar:

To request a transcript from Bryn Mawr College, visit the website of the Office of the Registrar at <https://www.brynmawr.edu/registrar/undergraduates/transfer-credit-and-transcripts/transcripts> and select “Transcript for American Councils, HPI, RLI, Avignon, Non-Degree.”

While Bryn Mawr will award academic credit for successful completion of the program, participants are responsible for arranging credit transfer to their home institution. As each college and university has its own regulations regarding credit transfer, participants should contact the registrar or study abroad office at their home institution to determine how much of this credit may be transferred upon completion of the program. CLS participants are strongly encouraged do this before leaving the United States. There may be a delay between the end of the program and the issuing of official transcripts by Bryn Mawr College. If you are a graduating senior, this delay *could cause problems if arrangements have not been made in advance.*

Appendix A: CLS Packing List

CLS Program staff have compiled a list of suggested items to take for the CLS summer based on feedback from past participants and input from local staff. Please note: the below is not a comprehensive list, rather a useful starting point.

When planning what to pack, you should also do some independent research on your host country, such as local weather. You might also consider reaching out to CLS Program alumni to ask for further advice on clothing and packing.

Clothing

Bring clothing items that can easily be mixed and matched with each other. This will allow you to pack fewer items while maintaining flexibility and variety. Remember that airlines maintain weight limits on checked luggage.

- Shoes: Many past participants have commented that they walked more during the CLS Program than they do in their daily lives in the U.S. Bring a pair of good walking shoes, preferably with water-resistant soles
- Socks and undergarments
- 3-4 country-appropriate tops/shirts
- 3-4 country-appropriate pants or skirts
- 1-2 sweaters or sweatshirts
- 1 pair of modest pajamas/loungewear
- 2-3 sets of country-appropriate workout clothes
- 1 jacket /raincoat
- 1 country-appropriate bathing suit and cover up
- 1 small, sturdy bag for weekend trips
- 1 light-weight scarf
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- You may want to pack a dressier outfit and shoes for more formal ceremonies and occasions in the host country

Medical

- A complete supply of all necessary prescription medications in its original packaging
- Copy of your prescriptions and a letter from your doctor explaining any prescription medications
- Contraceptives (including condoms)
- Digestive aids such as antacids, anti-diarrheal, laxatives
- Multivitamins, if you usually take them
- Cold and allergy relief medicine such as decongestants, cough suppressants, throat lozenges, antihistamines, nasal-spray, etc. (In general, if you favor particular brands of over the counter medications, you should pack those with you in the original packaging.)
- Band-Aids and antibiotic ointment
- Prescription glasses/reading glasses/contact lenses and contact lens solution
- Over-the-counter pain reliever or fever reducer (some U.S. brands not available)
- Hand sanitizer and wipes

Personal

- Deodorant/antiperspirant
- Toothpaste/toothbrush/floss
- Shaving supplies
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent (50% DEET or higher)
- Tampons, sanitary pads, menstrual cup (these products can be more expensive or difficult to find overseas)
- Bath towel (if not provided by your host country accommodations)
- Travel-size umbrella

Electronics

- Adapter, converter, transformer (if needed)
- Camera, cables, memory cards, charger
- Travel size flashlight or headlamp
- Headphones

School Supplies

Many of these items can be purchased in your host city. However, they may be more expensive and/or difficult to find.

- Textbooks, if you were issued them by American Councils before departure
- Book bag/shoulder bag
- Small target language dictionary and/or phrasebook
- Pens/pencils and notebooks
- Journal
- Other study aids, such as index cards, highlighters

Identification & Finances

- Passport
- Driver's license or official state identification card (if you do not have alternate government ID, contact us)
- Photocopy of your passport
- Credit card
- ATM/Debit card
- Some cash
- Money belt or pouch, if desired
- Medical insurance card
- ASPE Medical Benefits card (provided at the pre-departure orientation)

Miscellaneous

- Up-to-date guidebook
- Small gifts for your host family/Language Partners/teachers
- A luggage lock, not only for the flight, but to secure any items you do not want anyone else to touch in your room (original passport, cash, or any other very personal items should be secured in your suitcase at home)
- Water bottle

- House slippers or shower sandals
- Zip-lock bags

Do Not Bring

- Pillows and Bed linens (these will be supplied by the CLS Program)
- Valuables that cannot be replaced if lost or stolen

Packing your Carry-On

- Passport, copy of the face page of your passport, and additional ID
- Keys
- ASPE card and emergency card (issued at pre-departure orientation)
- Copy of your itinerary
- Prescription medicine and prescription documents
- Personal financial items
- 1 full change of clothes, pajamas and hygiene items (This may help you feel more comfortable in the first few days on the program in the event that your luggage is lost by the airline.)
- Check airline restrictions on allowable liquid sizes and banned items

Final Packing Considerations

- Please pack light. One comment we have heard over and over from a vast number of past participants is that they wish they had packed lighter.
- Overseas travel can be hard on luggage. We recommend that you use tough and durable bags.
- Your CLS participant stipend includes modest funding to bring home books, music, movies, and other language materials that will aid your continued study. You will need room for these items.
- Your CLS participant stipend does not include funding for overweight bag fees at the beginning or end of the program; you may budget for this by spending less elsewhere, but remember that they can be very expensive. (An overweight or extra bag can cost over \$100).
- It is likely you will want to purchase at least some souvenirs. Consider the size and type of souvenirs you'd like to buy and remember that you will need room for them as well.

Appendix B: CLS Terms and Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to all finalists and participants of the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. Individual CLS Institutes may have additional policies specific to the program and/or host country that participants will be required to sign and adhere to as part of the CLS award.

Purpose

The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs supported in its implementation by American Councils for International Education (herein, "American Councils"). The CLS Program is part of the U.S. government's effort to increase the number of U.S. citizens studying and mastering foreign languages that are critical to U.S. national security and economic prosperity. The CLS Program provides funding for intensive overseas language institutes at beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. Participants advance their language learning through formal classroom study, facilitated language learning opportunities, and structured cultural activities.

Finalist Requirements

Applicants who are selected for the CLS Program are referred to as finalists prior to the program start, and as participants during the course of program activities. In order to participate in the CLS Program, finalists must meet all eligibility requirements, and satisfactorily complete all requirements and submit all documents necessary for their participation in the program, including the following:

- a. Submission of all required medical forms
- b. Completion of the medical review process (see [Section 6](#))
- c. Submission of all other required documents listed on the Accepted Student Portal
- d. Completion of the pre-program language test
- e. Finalists must also fulfil the medical, placement, academic, and visa requirements necessary for participation of the host institution, country and location in which the applicant is placed.

Documents must be submitted through the Accepted Student Portal or directly to American Councils according to the instructions provided on the Accepted Student Portal.

Any changes in medical and/or mental health status following the submission of the application and above documents, but prior to the start of the program must be reported immediately to American Councils ([see Section 6](#)).

Any finalist who has been charged or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor following the submission of the application must notify American Councils immediately. Minor traffic violations do not need to be reported. Further documentation related to the felony or misdemeanor charges may be required in order to determine a finalist's eligibility to participate. Failure to report on felony and misdemeanor charges or convictions may result in termination of the award ([see Section 25](#)).

Any finalist who is subject to disciplinary action by a university (or other academic institution) at any time following submission of the CLS application must report such incidents to American Councils immediately. Further documentation may be required in order to determine a finalist's eligibility to participate in the CLS Program. Failure to report on university disciplinary actions may result in termination of the award ([see Section 25](#)).

A scholarship offer may be terminated prior to departure if a finalist a) fails to meet or maintain eligibility requirements, b) fails to complete pre-program requirements, c) fails to provide requested information by stated deadlines, or d) exhibits behavior that may pose a risk to the standing of the CLS Program abroad, including, but not limited to inappropriate behavior or social media activity. If a finalist cannot meet the medical, placement, academic or visa requirements of a CLS Institute, the U.S. Department of State and American Councils cannot guarantee placement in an alternate host country and may terminate the award.

Accepting or Declining the Award

Information submitted by finalists through the Accepted Student Portal, including the decision to accept or decline the CLS award, is binding.

Communication

Information about the CLS Program will be communicated electronically through the Accepted Student Portal and through e-mail. Institute-specific information about the CLS Program, program requirements, deadlines and formal decisions regarding CLS policies and program arrangements will be communicated to finalists by e-mail. It is the responsibility of finalists and participants to maintain an e-mail address, to communicate changes to their contact information to the CLS Program in a timely manner, and to read all program communications thoroughly, including all instructions regarding program deadlines and requirements. It is the responsibility of CLS finalists to make arrangements in order to be able to receive communications from CLS Program staff in the event that e-mail or Internet access is not available to them for a prolonged period of time (for instance, due to personal travel or other circumstances), in order to ensure completion of the program requirements by the program deadlines. When on program, participants are expected to keep their CLS Program phone with them, turned on, and charged at all times.

Limited Health Benefits

CLS participants are strongly encouraged to maintain their current healthcare coverage during their overseas program. Participants' primary medical insurance coverage will be supplemented by a limited emergency and accident medical benefits plan from the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). ASPE covers CLS participants only during the in-country portion of the CLS Program, beginning upon arrival in the host country, and ending on the final day of the CLS Program, or upon a participant's departure from the host country in the case of an early withdrawal. If a participant withdraws from the program or their award is terminated, all ASPE benefits cease. ASPE health benefits are not provided during the Washington, D.C. pre-departure orientation. In the event that an accident or illness sustained while on the CLS Program overseas requires a return to the United States, continued treatment in the United States may not be covered by the ASPE benefits. Participants will receive information about ASPE benefits prior to the start of the CLS Program.

Regardless of who signs a medical form, the CLS Program, American Councils, local CLS Institutes, the U.S. Department of State and its employees and their representatives, and host families are not responsible for any medical bills not covered by personal insurance or the health benefits provided by the program incurred by a participant. Neither American Councils nor the U.S. Department of State bears any responsibility for any complications and/or negative results associated with medical treatment.

Health and Medical

All finalists must complete the required CLS Medical Forms, have a licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.), licensed Physician's Assistant (P.A.) or licensed Nurse Practitioner (N.P.) review and complete the Medical Form (Part 1) and the Physician's Form (Part 2). The Mental Health Form (Part 3) and the Specialist Form (Part 4) must be completed if applicable. All forms must be uploaded to American Councils' online system by the stated deadlines. The omission or falsification of pertinent medical information may result in revocation or termination of the CLS award at any time prior to, or during, the program ([see Section 25](#)).

All medical forms will be reviewed by CLS Program staff and a contracted licensed medical professional. If the contracted physician has questions or requires more information about the finalist's medical history, which may include, but is not limited to test results, prescription records, or medical forms and records, it is the finalist's responsibility to provide timely and complete responses. Any and all requests for further information must be satisfied before the medical review process is complete.

The CLS Program may share any information from a finalist or participant's medical forms and the medical review process that is necessary to facilitate placement, to arrange housing and medical accommodations, or to comply with local laws, regulations and institutional policies ([see Section 28](#)).

If any medication or treatment is cited as a condition for participation in the program by the medical or mental health provider completing the forms, participants must adhere to the treatment plan outlined as a condition for participation. Students must be stable on a course of medication or treatment for a minimum of 8 weeks. In the case that a participant finds it necessary to adjust the medication or treatment plan in advance of the program or while the program is in progress, the participant must bring this to the attention of CLS Program staff in a timely manner. The CLS Program may require the finalist to undergo an additional medical or mental health evaluation prior to or during the program.

The CLS Program makes reasonable efforts to place and accommodate finalists with medical needs. Please be aware that some conditions cannot be accommodated in certain host institutions, countries or areas of a country. In certain situations, after completion of the medical review process, the CLS Program may determine that it cannot assure the safety and well-being of a finalist in the assigned host country. In some cases, it may be possible to transfer placement to another country. In other cases, the CLS Program may determine that it cannot place and support a finalist in any location, and may terminate the CLS award.

Any finalist who has experienced a significant change in physical or mental health after the submission of the required medical forms must inform American Councils immediately. Such changes in a finalist's medical condition include, but are not limited to, hospitalization or urgent outpatient treatment; changes in a regular course of medication or beginning a new course of regular medication; and/or the need for regular or frequent follow-up related to a medical or mental health concern. Disclosure of an unreported significant medical condition or previous treatment for any conditions, disorders or symptoms may require medical confirmation of the finalist's ability to participate, as determined by the CLS Program. Failure to report on significant changes in physical or mental health may result in termination of the award ([see Section 25](#)).

In the event of a significant change in physical or mental health or disclosure of a previously unreported condition during the CLS Program, the CLS Program may require an evaluation by a medical or mental health professional in order to confirm a participant's ability to continue on the CLS Program.

Finalists should consult a physician and monitor the [U.S. Center for Disease Control's \(CDC\)](#) travel guidance pertaining to their host country. Finalists are encouraged to comply with CDC guidance regarding immunizations and other health precautions. Finalists are responsible for any consequences resulting from failure to comply with the CDC recommendations. American Councils and the U.S. Department of State cannot provide medical guidance on immunizations, and the CLS Program does not cover costs associated with immunizations.

Award Benefits

CLS Program funding is intended to cover all program-approved costs, including program-provided housing, meals, incidentals, CLS institute activities, domestic travel to Washington, D.C. for a mandatory pre-departure orientation, international travel between the United States and the host country, visa fees, accident and emergency health benefits coverage, and tuition.

CLS participants receive a stipend to cover some of the above costs incurred while on program. Stipend amounts and distribution vary by program site and are determined by each CLS Institute in consultation with the U.S. Department of State and American Councils. CLS Program stipends are not intended to cover passport fees, costs associated with completion of the CLS medical forms, non-program related travel, or costs associated with outside interests.

Non-Competitive Eligibility

Under Executive Order 13750, CLS Program alumni who successfully complete the program are eligible for 12 months of noncompetitive eligibility (NCE) hiring status within the federal government, with the possibility of extensions if certain criteria are met. CLS alumni will be issued an NCE certificate after all program and post-program requirements are completed. More information about NCE is available on the U.S. Department of State website at <https://alumni.state.gov/member-resources/job-center/non-competitive-federal-employment>.

Visas

The CLS Program staff works with finalists to procure visas for travel to the CLS Institute host countries. The issuance of visas is entirely at the purview of the host country. The U.S. Department of State and American Councils are not responsible for other countries' visa requirements, visa processing procedures, including changes of procedures, and/or the denial of a visa application. The U.S. Department of State and American Councils are not responsible for other countries' interpretation of the terms of the visa status and activities that may constitute a violation to the terms of the visa issued by the host country.

Factors that may impact the issuance of a host country visa include infectious diseases, dual citizenship, country of birth or parents' origin. **Finalists must notify the CLS Program staff immediately if (a) they hold dual citizenship with the CLS host country, or (b) have been previously denied entry, deported, or refused a visa to the CLS Program host country.**

- a. **Pre-Program:** Participation in the CLS Program is contingent upon receipt of the appropriate host country visa according to the deadline established for each program site. If an appropriate host country visa has not been received by the established deadline, the CLS award may be terminated. **All finalists must meet deadlines set by American Councils to submit required materials, forms, photos, and U.S. passports for visa processing. Failure to do so may result in termination of the CLS award** ([see Section 25](#)).
- b. Finalists are required to submit a U.S. passport for visa processing before participation in the CLS Program. If a finalist is planning any international travel during the months between selection and the beginning of the CLS Program during which time they would require the use of their passport, it is the responsibility of the finalist to work with CLS Program staff and/or the host country consulate to secure an appropriate visa by the established deadline. Failure to do so may result in termination of the CLS award ([see Section 25](#)).

Post-Program: Participants are expected to return to the United States on the group flight provided at the end of the program. Participants **may not** extend their stay in the host country on the visa sponsored by the CLS host institution. If a participant chooses to stay in the host country upon completion of the CLS Program, it is the responsibility of the participant to obtain the proper visa and/or registration required by local law. CLS Program staff are not able to provide assistance with a visa extension or visa application to stay in the host country following the conclusion of the CLS Program.

Travel Policies –

International Travel: Round-trip travel from a participant's home city in the United States to the overseas CLS institute site will be provided by the CLS Program. Travel arranged by the CLS Program cannot be used to travel from another country to the United States before the start of the CLS Program, or to travel to another country upon completion of the CLS Program. Travel to the host country will include a stopover in Washington, D.C. to attend the CLS Program's mandatory pre-departure orientation. International air travel will be coordinated as a group flight with the roundtrip based from Washington, D.C. Domestic travel arrangements to and from the participant's home city in the United States will be based on the roundtrip international group flight tickets.

All CLS Program-provided air travel must conform to the Fly America Act, which requires that all U.S. government-funded travel be on American Flag Carriers where such service is available. Participants are also subject to the airline's group rate restrictions and policies. Participants are expected to return to the United States on the group flight provided for the program. Group tickets cannot be converted to individual tickets. CLS Program staff, including host institution staff, will not be able to change tickets for participants.

The CLS Program is not responsible for the disruption of participants' plans by unforeseen travel delays.

All participants are registered with the U.S. Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) prior to the start of the CLS Program. Finalists are advised to consult the online resources related to international travel available through the U.S. Department of State (<https://travel.state.gov/>) and the Center for Disease Control (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>) to review information related to health, safety and security while overseas.

Travel During the CLS Program: Each CLS Institute incorporates group excursions designed to enhance participants' understanding of the host country language and culture. Participants are required to participate in all scheduled group travel unless they have been excused in advance in writing by the CLS Program.

Participants are not permitted to leave the host country at any time during the CLS Program. All independent travel, either day trips or overnight stays, outside of the CLS Program host city requires the submission of an Independent Travel Form and prior acknowledgement from the CLS Program. Independent travel within the host country may only take place during dates designated by the host institution; these dates are subject to change at the discretion of the host institution. The CLS Program is not responsible for financial penalties or losses incurred as a result of changes relating to independent travel.

Further guidelines on independent travel, including restrictions and prohibited areas, are specific to each site and will be communicated in the site-specific policies prior to the start of the CLS Program. Locations cited as high risk in the U.S. Department of State's Travel Advisories (see <https://travel.state.gov/>) are off-limits to all participants, unless specifically advised otherwise by the U.S. Department of State and American Councils. **Unauthorized travel may result in the immediate termination of the CLS award** ([see Section 25](#)).

Pre-Departure Information

Finalists are required to read all provided pre-departure materials and participate in all required webinars or meetings before the beginning of the CLS Program. Any questions regarding the materials or the CLS Program should be directed to CLS Program staff.

Orientation

Participants are required to attend a mandatory pre-departure orientation in Washington, D.C. immediately before the group departs for the overseas CLS Institute. Program-related and approved expenses (hotel, ground transportation to/from the airport in Washington, D.C., airfare, and meals) incurred while participating in the orientation will be covered either directly or through the program stipend. Participants are also required to attend all arrival and in-country orientation sessions.

Living Arrangements

Participants are required to live in CLS Program-provided housing, which may consist of hotel rooms, dormitory rooms, apartments, and/or homestays with local families. The pre-departure information provided in the Participant Handbook and on the Accepted Student Portal describes the living accommodations for each CLS Institute. Living arrangements are subject to change if circumstances require. Participants are expected to follow all program rules and guidelines, and to conduct themselves appropriately at all times. Double-occupancy rooms should be expected for the CLS pre-departure orientation, as well as during the summer institutes.

Dependents and Companions: No dependent(s) or companion(s) may accompany a participant during the program. Visitors may not participate in any CLS Program activities or live in program-arranged housing.

CLS Program Participation and Conduct

The CLS Program is first and foremost an academic experience. Participants are expected to participate to the fullest extent. Attendance at all scheduled classes and program activities and excursions is mandatory, unless explicitly excused by program staff. Full CLS Program participation includes, but is not limited to, complete attendance of all classes, completion of work assigned as part of the academic program, attendance of all mandatory cultural activities, arriving on time and at the correct location to all mandatory events and activities, and adherence to the language policy of the CLS Institute. Participants who fail to participate fully may be considered as not having successfully completed the program and may not receive a CLS Program completion certificate, academic transcript, language test certificate, NCE certificate, or access to benefits and/or resources that are available to CLS Program alumni.

Participants are expected to be respectful and maintain the highest level of professional conduct with CLS Program staff, language partners, host families and roommates, and fellow participants. Participants are expected to maintain the highest levels of cultural sensitivity towards the host country and culture, and to maintain a standard of conduct and integrity that is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the CLS Program. If CLS Program staff determines that a participant is being disrespectful or not following program directives, that participant may be subject to immediate disciplinary action, and the award may be terminated.

Academic Honor Code

Participants are expected to approach their academic work with dedication and integrity, understanding that they are responsible for enhancing their own learning through personal effort. Participants agree to be fully prepared for each class session and refrain from engaging in disruptive, offensive or distracting behavior. Further, because the program is designed to integrate classroom work with excursions to local sites, attendance of all classes and cultural activities is mandatory. Participants who fail to attend program sessions without prior permission of CLS Program staff may be subject to immediate disciplinary action and considered for dismissal from the program ([see Section 25](#)).

While the highest instructional standards are expected and applied, participants should be aware that local teaching methods may differ from U.S. standards of instruction. If a participant would like to express concern regarding an instructor or instruction methods, comments should be directed to the CLS Institute's designated point of contact, not directly to instructors.

The following behaviors are prohibited:

- a. **Plagiarism:** Submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source.
- b. **Cheating:** Using unauthorized notes, study aids, or information on an examination; altering a graded work after it has been returned, then submitting the work for reevaluation; allowing another person to do one's work and submitting that work under one's own name; submitting identical or similar papers for credit in more than one course without prior permission from the course instructors. Persons who assist cheating by sharing their work are also guilty of cheating.
- c. **Obtaining an unfair advantage:** (a) Stealing, reproducing, circulating, or otherwise gaining access to examination materials prior to the time authorized by the instructor; (b) stealing,

destroying, defacing, or concealing library materials with the purpose of depriving others of their use; (c) unauthorized collaboration on an academic assignment; (d) retaining, possessing, using, or circulating previously given examination materials, where those materials clearly indicate that they are to be returned to the instructor at the conclusion of the examination; (e) intentionally obstructing or interfering with another participant's academic work; or (f) otherwise undertaking activity with the purpose of creating or obtaining an unfair academic advantage over other participants' academic work.

- d. **Fabrication:** Falsifying or inventing any information, data, or citation; presenting data that were not gathered in accordance with standard guidelines defining the appropriate methods for collecting or generating data, and failing to include an accurate account of the method by which the data were gathered or collected.
- e. **Falsification of record and official documents:** Altering documents affecting academic records; forging signatures of authorization or falsifying information on an official academic document.
- f. **Conducting research activities that have not been approved by the CLS Program and certified by a recognized Institutional Review Board (IRB) process:** Participants are not allowed to conduct personal research (including coursework, thesis or dissertation writing), or other non-CLS Program academic work if it in any way detracts from full participation in CLS Program activities. Participants interested in conducting research during the CLS Program must first receive approval from the CLS Program staff before initiating any research activities. All participants conducting research will be required to submit proof of approval from their home institution's IRB for any research involving human subjects.
- g. **Unauthorized access to computerized academic or administrative records or systems:** Viewing or altering computer records, modifying computer programs or systems, releasing or dispensing information gained via unauthorized access, or interfering with the use or availability of computer systems or information.

Testing, Evaluation, and Survey Requirements

Finalists are required to complete testing and evaluation or survey requirements as outlined below.

Language testing for the program is conducted by Language Testing International (LTI), a division of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). LTI will arrange for an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) examination to be conducted with an ACTFL-certified tester by telephone.

- a. **Pre-Program Requirements:** Finalists must complete all required program forms and an ACTFL OPI language evaluation by the stated deadlines.
- b. **Mid-Program Requirement:** Participants are required to submit a short mid-program evaluation using the provided form by the stated deadlines.
- c. **Post-Program Requirements:** Upon returning to the U.S., all participants are required to (a) complete a post-program evaluation by September 15 and (b) take a post-program ACTFL OPI language evaluation by September 15, if one cannot be arranged on site before the end of the program.

Participants will receive an official certificate of completion from the U.S. Department of State, a certificate of Non-Competitive Eligibility, and an official ACTFL OPI score certificate only after completing testing and post-program reporting requirements for the CLS Program by the stated deadlines.

Missed OPI Fee: Participants who fail to take their pre- or post-program language test at the scheduled time will be responsible for any fees incurred. **The current penalty for a missed ACTFL OPI exam is \$55.**

Test score data, surveys, and program evaluations will be shared with the U.S. Department of State, American Councils, and CLS in-country program staff for the purposes of placement, measuring program outcomes, assessing the effectiveness of the CLS Program, basic record keeping, and other needs that may be determined for program administration and/or evaluation. Aggregate test score data and program evaluation data will be shared with the U.S. Congress as measures of program effectiveness. Additionally, the U.S. Department of State and American Councils may prepare external reports or make public presentations about the CLS Program using testing and evaluation data in aggregate form.

By signing the Terms and Conditions of Award agreement, finalists indicate that they understand how test score and program evaluation data will be used (see also [Section 28](#)).

Academic Credit

Credit for coursework completed on the CLS Program is issued through Bryn Mawr College. Before the beginning of the program, finalists must elect, through the Accepted Student Portal, either to request academic credit for their coursework or to waive their right to do so. After the start of the program, a participant may not alter their decision to receive or waive academic credit.

Participants who have requested academic credit and who have successfully completed the program will receive two units of undergraduate academic credit, equivalent to approximately four semester hours per unit. Successful completion of the academic program requires attendance for the duration of the CLS summer institute. Participants who face situations requiring an early return from the CLS Program site may not be eligible for academic credit. In the event that a participant must leave the program site early, academic credit may be awarded provided that all of the following conditions have been met: the reason for the early return must be approved by CLS Program staff and the U.S. Department of State; the participant must have attended over 87% of the summer institute before departing the program site; required work for the program must be completed within three weeks of the final program date; CLS instructors must have the ability and capacity to complete the assessment of the participant's work. A participant must achieve passing grades in their courses in order to earn academic credit.

Finalists are advised that not all institutions may accept academic credit from another institution. Finalists should work with the study abroad office or office of the registrar at their home institutions to determine the procedures for transferring academic credit for the CLS Program. In many cases, it is important to do this before the start of the CLS Program.

At the end of the summer program, CLS Institute Directors submit lists of grades from each institute to American Councils. These grades are converted from the grading scale used by the host institution to the Bryn Mawr College four-point scale. Upon successful completion of the CLS Program, grades are forwarded to the Bryn Mawr College Registrar. Grades usually become available eight to twelve weeks after the conclusion of the program. Once all of the post-program requirements have been completed, one transcript will be issued to the address provided by each participant on the Academic Credit Request Form when they accepted the CLS Award. Additional transcripts can be requested by following the instructions outlined on the Bryn Mawr College website: www.brynmawr.edu/registrar/.

Internet and Media Guidelines

Participants who share their CLS experiences publicly via Internet-based media must acknowledge that theirs is not an official U.S. Department of State website, blog, or posting, and that the views and information presented are their own and do not represent the CLS Program or the U.S. Department of State. Participants must agree to adhere to the Internet and Media Guidelines on the Accepted Student Portal as a condition of participation in the CLS Program.

Personal and Program Property

Participants are responsible for safe-guarding stipend funds and other CLS Program-provided equipment or property, including but not limited to cell phones, textbooks, and housing keys. Lost or stolen stipend funds, equipment, or other property cannot be replaced by the CLS Program and must be re-paid or replaced by CLS participants as determined by individual CLS Institutes. The CLS Program does not provide insurance for participants' personal property.

Host Country and U.S. Laws

Participants are subject to the same laws and regulations that govern the host country's citizens and any other laws that are applicable to a foreign citizen in the host country. It is the responsibility of CLS Program participants to be aware of local laws and to abide by them. Any violation of local laws may result in the immediate termination of the CLS Program award ([see Section 25](#)), and any resulting legal fees will be the responsibility of the participant. **Neither American Councils nor the U.S. Department of State can provide any immunity from local laws or prosecution.** Participants are also expected to abide by U.S. law.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Finalists must review the CLS Sexual Harassment Policy and agree to adhere to the policy on the Accepted Student Portal as a condition of participation in the CLS Program. Participants are prohibited from engaging in sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, which includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; or other spoken, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's participation in the program or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Depending on the severity of the incident, disciplinary actions for sexual harassment may include a warning, probation, or a termination of the CLS award ([see Section 25](#)).

If a participant reports to CLS Program staff that harassment or a sexual assault has occurred on the CLS Program, or if CLS Program staff otherwise learns of a sexual assault or sexual harassment incident, CLS Program staff will provide immediate support and assistance, including access to professional medical care and counseling and support (on-line or on-site depending on availability), as requested by the participant. CLS Program staff are required to report the incident to their supervisor or program director. Known incidents must also be reported to the U.S. Department of State. Participants may review the CLS Sexual Harassment Policy for information regarding resources that they may access directly, and that will not result in communication about the incident to the CLS Program or U.S. Department of State.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

Participants must obey local and U.S. laws regarding alcohol consumption. The CLS Program prohibits the consumption of alcohol by or distribution of alcohol to participants who are not of U.S. legal drinking age. Participants who are of U.S. legal drinking age and choose to consume alcohol do so with the knowledge that they remain responsible for their actions at all times.

Participants who choose to consume alcohol are expected to do so responsibly, and be sensitive to local customs and norms when consuming alcohol. Excessive and irresponsible drinking leading to intoxication and behavior that interferes with the program or the rights of others, is disrespectful to others or to the host culture, and/or compromises the safety of the individual or other participants is subject to immediate disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the program. **Any alcohol infraction is considered a grave violation of policy and will result in immediate disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the CLS Program ([see Section 25](#)).**

Participants are prohibited from selling, using, or possessing any drugs that are illegal under either U.S. or host country law. Participants are cautioned that the possession of drugs is often dealt with harshly by host country law enforcement. **Any drug infraction is considered a grave violation of policy and will result in immediate disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the CLS Program ([see Section 25](#)).**

Prohibited Activities

The following activities are prohibited, and will result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the CLS Program ([see Section 25](#)):

- a. **Violation of local or U.S. law** (see Section 19).
- b. **Theft, damage, or vandalism** of any kind including, but not limited to, belongings of other participants or any other person, CLS institute property, property of host universities, dormitories, host family accommodations, apartments, program arranged transportation, or facilities used by the program.
- c. **Violent, abusive, disruptive, inappropriate, or offensive behavior** against others, including but not limited to faculty, staff, participants, language partners, host families, roommates, or host country nationals, including:
 - Any form of physical violence, including striking or any other physical harm to one's self or another person.
 - Any form of verbal abuse, bullying behavior or cyberbullying, including the use of profanity, derogatory or degrading comments, obscene gestures, or threats.
 - Disorderly, disrespectful, disruptive, threatening, or intimidating conduct, including disruptive actions that interfere with the learning environment or impede the ability to carry out program-related activities.
- d. **Culturally insensitive or disrespectful conduct, including the following:**
 - Behavior, including online activity, that impairs current relations or could have an adverse impact on future relations between the U.S. Department of State and its CLS

Program and the host institution, host families, host country, program staff, or other partner organizations.

- Engaging in any behavior, including online activity, that is considered culturally offensive to the host country and its population.
- Initiating conversations, including online discussions, on topics that are considered inappropriate or offensive for discussion with program staff, host families, language partners, fellow participants and/or members of the host community.

e. Risky behavior or dangerous activities:

- Engaging in risky behavior or knowingly placing oneself or others in a dangerous situation.
- Participating in protests, demonstrations, or strikes.
- Engaging in dangerous activities, such as parachuting, skydiving, hang-gliding, or bungee jumping while on the program. Activities such as skateboarding, rollerblading, biking, and boating are allowed as long as participants use adequate safety gear and exercise reasonable precautions.
- Driving or operating motorized vehicles of any kind in the host country is not permitted while on the CLS Program.
- CLS participants are advised to review the policies of their health insurance and the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits for activities and behaviors that may not be covered.

f. Alcohol or drug policy violations (see Section 22).

g. Failure to follow site-specific policies, guidelines, directives, timetables, and instructions of CLS Program staff:

- Individual CLS Institutes may provide guidelines for appropriate attire for all or part of a participant's stay in the CLS Program host country. Participants are expected to dress appropriately according to local customs.
- Violations of residential guidelines and/or rules established by the CLS Institute or host family including, but not limited to, unauthorized overnight guests, curfews, excessive noise, rowdy conduct, or intoxication.

h. Unauthorized entry to or use of CLS Program facilities or host institution facilities or technology.

i. Violation of the Travel Policy (see Section 10).

j. Unauthorized housing:

- Participants are required to stay in program-provided housing, except for independent travel outside of the host city. Participants who choose to stay in the host city during independent travel weekends are required to stay in program-provided housing.
- During independent travel participants may not stay in short-term rentals, including but not limited to online hospitality services or private house rentals.

k. Engaging in any income-generating activities.

l. Engaging in any proselytizing activities.

Disciplinary Measures

In the case of a minor policy infraction, a participant may receive a written warning outlining the nature of the violation. Multiple minor infractions or major policy violations may result in being placed on probation. A participant placed on probation will receive a notice regarding the nature of the policy violation(s) and requirements for continued participation in the program. A participant may contest the warning or probation by submitting a written notice or email to CLS Program staff. CLS Program staff will review the case and provide a written response. The terms of the warning remain in effect during the review period. CLS Program staff may carry out appropriate disciplinary measures based on an assessment of the severity of the offense after consultation with the U.S. Department of State. In the case of a single incident comprising multiple infractions, or if CLS Program representatives deem one violation of program policy to be of great significance or severity, a recommendation for immediate termination of the award may be presented to the U.S. Department of State ([see Section 25](#)). All warnings and probation letters will be provided to American Councils and the U.S. Department of State.

Termination of the CLS Award

Decisions concerning termination of a CLS Program award will be made by the U.S. Department of State upon the recommendation of, and in consultation with, CLS Institute staff and American Councils. CLS Institute staff and American Councils have primary authority for recommending that the U.S. Department of State terminate a CLS award.

Grounds for termination of the CLS award include the following: (1) failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress and observe appropriate professional standards; (2) failure to attend all classes and program activities for reasons other than approved absences; (3) physical or mental illness that prevents fulfillment of program obligations; (4) failure to disclose pertinent medical or mental health conditions which significantly impact participation on the program; (5) failure to comply with the CLS Program Terms and Conditions of Award; (6) material misrepresentation made by any participant in a program application form or document; (7) conduct which may have the effect of bringing the U.S. Department of State, American Councils, CLS Institutes, or the CLS Program into disrepute; (8) acts likely to give offense to the host country; (9) violating terms of the host country visa, and/or (10) engaging in a prohibited activity described in [Section 23](#).

Dismissal for Medical Concerns: A cumulative total of 20 hours, or four consecutive days, missed from the academic program as the result of a medical issue (mental or physical) may result in a recommendation to the U.S. Department of State for termination of the CLS award. In the event that a medical issue impedes a participant's ability to attend classes, participate fully in program activities and

excursions, or exceeds the level of care available in the host location, a recommendation may be made to the U.S. Department of State for termination of the CLS award.

In the event that a physical or mental health condition impedes a participant's ability to attend classes, program activities, or excursions and the student wants to continue to participate in the CLS Program, the CLS Program in consultation with the U.S Department of State may require the participant to submit a medical reevaluation of their ability to fulfill the terms of the program. As part of this reevaluation process, a participant may be required by CLS staff to seek additional treatment as a condition of staying on the CLS Program. Failure to comply with a medical or mental health reevaluation requirement may result in a recommendation for termination of the CLS award. If, after a medical reevaluation, the participant's ability to fully participate in classes and program activities is still impeded, or if the CLS Program determines that an appropriate level of care and support cannot be provided in the host location, a recommendation may be made to terminate the CLS award.

In addition, a recommendation may be made to the U.S. Department of State for termination of the CLS award as a result of a medical condition if (1) a participant has exhausted all ASPE benefits of health and accident medical coverage provided by the U.S. Department of State in connection with the award; (2) a definitive diagnosis cannot be reached after a second medical consultation; or (3) a physical or mental health issue poses a significant risk or threat to the well-being of the individual, other CLS participants, or host country nationals.

Procedure for the termination of the CLS award: (1) The participant is immediately placed on probation and informed that termination of the award is a possibility; (2) the participant will have an opportunity to provide relevant information pertaining to the incident or behavior at this time; (3) American Councils, in consultation with the CLS Institute prepares a written statement explaining the reason for the termination, including all relevant documents for review and evaluation by the U.S. Department of State; (4) the U.S. Department of State informs American Councils of its final determination; (5) American Councils and the CLS Institute inform the participant in writing of the decision to terminate the award and the reasons therefore.

Withdrawal from the CLS Program

Participants may withdraw from the CLS Program at any time. If a participant withdraws from the CLS Program at any point after signing the Terms and Conditions of Award, for any reason other than a documented critical incident (e.g. medical or family emergency) approved by the U.S. Department of State, the participant may be responsible for the repayment of all award costs (including but not limited to the Washington, D.C. orientation, travel to and from the host country, any advance stipend issued for the program, and all housing and meals).

Result of CLS Program Withdrawal or Termination

After a decision to withdraw from the program or termination of the CLS award, the participant is considered as not having received the award and will not receive a program certificates, academic credit, or be considered an alumnus or alumna of the CLS Program. After a termination, unless otherwise stated, the award will be considered to have ended when the U.S. Department of State makes its decision to terminate and this decision is communicated to the participant.

In the case of a decision to withdraw from the program or termination of the CLS award, disbursement of any allowances, stipends, and benefits will cease (except for return travel), including any medical benefits under the U.S. Department of State's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges. The participant will also be required to immediately repay any advances in allowances, stipends or benefits disbursed or intended for use in the period of time following the termination. Unless otherwise authorized by the U.S. Department of State, no further claim for disbursements of allowances, stipends, or benefits will be honored.

Privacy and Use of Personal Data

Finalists have already or will be required to share some personal data with the CLS Program and American Councils, including: contact information; education history; personal information and history; demographic information; health information; and other information the participant chooses to disclose. The CLS Program shares information about participants under limited circumstances and with appropriate safeguards on privacy as detailed in the [full Privacy Policy](#).

Notifications and Releases

Participants agree to allow the U.S. Department of State, American Councils, and individual CLS host institutions to cite a participant's name, CLS language and language level, U.S. college or university, educational level (undergraduate or graduate), field of study, CLS Institute, and host country in all print, broadcast and online publications, as part of the promotion of the CLS Program.

Participants agree to allow mailing and email addresses to be provided in annual notification letters to elected representatives, including members of the U.S. Congress, governors of U.S. states and territories, and the mayor of the District of Columbia. Elected representatives will be informed of the names and addresses of CLS Program participants from their respective locales should they wish to congratulate them.

Participants grant permission to the CLS Program and its administrators to anonymously quote or publish sections of surveys and program evaluations in connection with CLS Program activities including, but not limited to, staff and partner development and CLS Program promotion.

Participants hereby grant permission to the U.S. Department of State, American Councils, and/or individual CLS institutes to photograph, film, reproduce, transcribe, or otherwise record and use (including release, publish, quote or broadcast) their image and/or voice in connection with the U.S. Department of State's public information programs and activities connected with the CLS Program including, but not limited to, CLS Program promotion.

Participants hereby give consent that any and all photographs and any other audio/visual materials taken by CLS Program staff can be used in the promotion of the CLS Program or other exchange programs by the U.S. Department of State, American Councils, and/or individual CLS institutes through print, web, and/or social media platforms. Further, participants grant the CLS Program and its administrators perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free and non-exclusive license to use, distribute, reproduce, modify, adapt and publicly display materials provided voluntarily by participants to CLS Program staff.

Liability

Participants agree to hold harmless and waive any and all claims against any one or more members of the U.S. Department of State, American Councils or the American Councils' Board of Trustees, and the CLS host institution or other host institutions or individuals providing services for the CLS Program, for illness, injury, accident, death, emotional distress, theft, loss or damage of personal property, legal issues, or other contingencies which may befall the participant during the program or in connection with the participant's activities while receiving support from this award. Insurance coverage for theft, loss or damage of personal property is not provided by the CLS Program.

Claims

Participants agree to release and waive any and all claims against the U.S. Department of State, American Councils or American Councils' Board of Trustees, or the CLS host institution, which may arise out of failure to enter upon or to complete the outlined program.

Tax Responsibility

Please be advised that some award monies are taxable, although there might be exemptions on certain items. The U.S. Department of State, American Councils or any of their affiliated partners cannot advise participants on tax matters. As with most tax issues, it is essential that each taxpayer consult with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or a tax professional to determine liability. Please refer to the IRS website (www.irs.gov) or call 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).

I understand that it is my responsibility to contact American Councils directly to discuss any circumstances that would interfere with my ability to adhere to the Terms and Conditions of Award, or meet the CLS Program requirements. Any special arrangements or requests to modify the Terms and Conditions of Award must be raised with American Councils **before accepting** the CLS Program award.

In signing these Terms and Conditions of Award, I acknowledge having read and understood the terms of this award fully. I agree to the expectations and requirements laid out in the Terms and Conditions of Award and pledge to meet them as a finalist and participant of the CLS Program. I certify that the information provided in all parts of the CLS application and acceptance process is truthful, and understand that any misrepresentation or false answer may be grounds for termination of the CLS award.

Signature

Date

Sexual Harassment Policy

The CLS Program expressly prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence in all of its programs and at all of its locations, including homestays and social settings where students gather as part of their participation in the program. This policy applies to the conduct of all students, staff, and third parties that work with CLS Program participants.

When CLS Program staff know of possible sexual harassment, including sexual violence, it will take immediate and appropriate steps to investigate or otherwise determine what occurred. If an investigation reveals that a violation of this policy occurred, CLS Program staff will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate the hostile environment, prevent the harassment from recurring, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects.

Definitions

Sexual Harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile environment, including rape, sexual assault, and sexual exploitation. Conduct is considered “unwelcome” if the student did not request or invite it and considered the conduct to be undesirable or offensive. Participation in the conduct or the failure to complain does not always mean that the conduct was welcome. This policy prohibits sex-based harassment by peers, employees, or third parties that is sufficiently serious to deny or limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the CLS Program and activities (*i.e.*, creates a hostile environment). Harassing conduct may take many forms, including verbal acts and name-calling, as well as non-verbal behavior, such as graphic and written statements (including the use of cell phones or the Internet), or conduct that is physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating. Unwelcome conduct does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents. The more severe the conduct, the less need there is to show a repetitive series of incidents to prove a hostile environment, particularly if the conduct is physical. Indeed, a single or isolated incident of sexual violence may create a hostile environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include: making sexual propositions or pressuring a program participant for sexual favors, touching of a sexual nature, writing graffiti of a sexual nature, displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures, or written materials; performing sexual gestures or touching oneself sexually in front of others; telling sexual or dirty jokes; spreading sexual rumors or rating other students as to sexual activity or performance; or circulating or showing e-mails or websites of a sexual nature.

Sexual violence is a form of sexual harassment and refers to physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent (*e.g.*, due to the student’s age or incapacitation). A number of different acts fall into the category of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual abuse, sexual coercion, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking.

Consent is a voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. Someone who is incapacitated cannot consent. Incapacitation can occur due to the use of drugs or alcohol, when a person is asleep or unconscious, or because of an intellectual or other disability that prevents the student from having the capacity to give consent. Past consent does not imply future consent, and silence or an absence of

resistance does not imply consent. Consent to engage in sexual activity with one person does not imply consent to engage in sexual activity with another. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and coercion, force, or threat invalidates consent.

Gender-based harassment is another form of sex-based harassment and refers to unwelcome conduct based on an individual's actual or perceived sex, including harassment based on gender identity or nonconformity with sex stereotypes. This policy protects all students from sex-based harassment, regardless of the actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity of the alleged perpetrator or complainant. Sexual harassment, including sexual misconduct, may occur between persons of the same or opposite sex.

Reporting

Program participants who are victims of sexual assault or harassment, or who witness or learn of assault or harassment, are urged to inform CLS Program staff. In addition to their resident director, local program staff, or program officer in Washington, D.C., who can be reached 24-hours per day, participants are encouraged to contact the following staff, who have been designated as Coordinators under this policy, at any time, to report harassment or assault:

Jeanette Owen, Project Director, Critical Language Scholarship Program, American Councils for International Education: jowen@americancouncils.org
1828 L St. NW
Suite 1200
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-833-7522

Andrew McCullough, Assistant Project Director, Critical Language Scholarship Program, American Councils for International Education: amccullough@americancouncils.org
1828 L St. NW
Suite 1200
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-833-7522

The Coordinators have responsibility for compliance with this policy.

If participants report to CLS Program staff that a sexual assault or harassment has occurred on the CLS program, or if CLS Program staff otherwise learns of sexual assault or harassment, staff will provide immediate support and assistance, including access to professional medical care and on-line or on-site counseling, depending upon availability, as requested by the participant. CLS Program Staff will report the incident to the U.S. Department of State.

Participants may also access the following resources, which are independent of the CLS Program:

- Pathways to Safety (formerly Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad): Pathways to Safety provides sexual assault prevention & response regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or location worldwide. (Their crisis line number is +1-833-SAFE-833 from the U.S., see the Pathways to Safety website for country specific directions at <https://pathwaystosafety.org/>)

- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): This is the largest anti-sexual violence organization in the U.S. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (+1-800-656-HOPE) in partnership with providers across the United States. (<https://www.rainn.org/>)

Contact information for these organizations is also provided to all participants in CLS Program materials and during pre-departure orientations. These confidential resources will not report information to the CLS Program or U.S. Department of State. More information about confidentiality is provided below.

The CLS Program will provide students with information about how to seek medical treatment during pre-departure orientation. In the event of a sexual assault, it may be important to obtain immediate medical treatment and to preserve evidence in order to press charges against the assailant.

However, participants who seek to report incidents of harassment or assault to local police should be informed of local laws, investigatory procedures, and courtroom rules governing such cases, as these may differ significantly from those of the U.S. and in some cases may compound the victim's trauma.

The CLS Program recommends contacting the U.S. Embassy or consulate in the host country to learn about local laws and procedures before making a decision to report incidents of harassment or assault to local police.

Participants may further report to CLS staff concerning behavior, such as general catcalling, or actions or statements that they believe *may* constitute harassment, but which are difficult to fully define. In such incidents, CLS Program staff will also provide immediate support and assistance to the participant. American Councils will contact the U.S. Department of State at the participant's request.

Non Retaliation and Amnesty

The CLS Program prohibits retaliation against program participants and other members of the CLS community for filing a complaint of discrimination or harassment, for assisting in the filing of a complaint or advocating for another person's rights under this policy, or for participating in an investigation, hearing, proceeding, or the resolution of a complaint. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, threats, intimidation, coercion, and adverse actions in relation to evaluation or program participation. The CLS Program will investigate allegations of retaliation and will take strong responsive action if retaliation occurs. The CLS Program may grant amnesty from drug, alcohol, and other student conduct policies for complaints of sexual harassment, including sexual violence, made in good faith.

Investigating Complaints

Upon receiving a report of sexual assault or harassment, the CLS Program will take immediate, interim measures as needed to ensure the safety and freedom from retaliation of all parties. Examples of interim measures include separation of the parties, no-contact directives, and alternative arrangements for housing, classroom locations, class schedules, and other program components. Such arrangements will be made to the fullest degree possible while recognizing the reasonable limits imposed by each program's financial resources, faculty and staff availability, housing availability, and visa requirements.

To initiate the formal investigation of an incident, participants should submit a written complaint, including a detailed description of the conduct, any supporting documentation, and the names of any witnesses or others with relevant information to one of the Coordinators for this policy:

Jeanette Owen, Project Director, Critical Language Scholarship Program, American Councils for International Education: jowen@americancouncils.org

1828 L St. NW
Suite 1200
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-833-7522

Andrew McCullough, Assistant Project Director, Critical Language Scholarship Program,
American Councils for International Education: amccullough@americancouncils.org
1828 L St. NW
Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036
202-833-7522

The CLS Program may also begin an investigation on its own initiative depending on the severity of the incident and the need to mitigate a significant risk to an individual or the community. While pursuing resolution through CLS Program internal processes, complainants may also file a criminal report with the local police department or other appropriate law enforcement agency (see above recommendation for contacting the U.S. Embassy in the host country to learn about local laws and procedures). The CLS Program will not delay its investigation if criminal charges are filed. However, the investigation may be temporarily delayed while criminal investigators gather evidence.

Informal Resolution

The CLS Program encourages, but does not require, informal resolution when possible in cases of sexual harassment that do not include sexual violence. Informal resolution, such as mediation, will never be used in cases of sexual violence. In addition, the informal resolution process may be bypassed in sexual harassment cases depending on the severity of the allegation or the complexity of the complaint. A student who brings forth a complaint is under no obligation to engage in informal resolution and will not be pressured to do so under any circumstances.

The goal of informal resolution is to resolve concerns at the earliest stage possible, with the cooperation of all parties involved. This may include inquiry into the facts, but typically does not include a formal investigation. Informal efforts to resolve the incident may include mediated dialogue between the complainant and the respondent or other fora in which the complainant addresses the respondent directly. Possible conclusions for the informal resolution process include but are not limited to: the creation of a no-contact environment between the two parties, the referral of one or both parties to counseling, targeted trainings for one or both parties, or other remedies for the individual harmed by the alleged discrimination or harassment.

If the matter is resolved informally to the satisfaction of all parties, the CLS Project Director will maintain a record of the complaint and its resolution.

Formal Investigation and Resolution

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate given the nature of the complaint, a formal complaint may be filed in writing to one of the Coordinators listed above who will conduct an investigation or designate an investigator who will conduct a thorough, impartial investigation. More than one investigator may be assigned. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the formal investigation may include interviews with the complainant, the respondent, and any witnesses; review

of written documentation and policies; and any other reasonable steps necessary to investigate the allegation to the fullest degree possible. However, the CLS Program does not have the resources to collect forensic evidence as part of any investigation or inquiry. During the investigation, the complainant and respondent will have an equal opportunity to identify witnesses and provide evidence. The investigator will not consider evidence about the complainant's prior sexual conduct with anyone other than the alleged perpetrator. In addition, evidence of a prior consensual dating or sexual relationship between the parties by itself does not imply consent or preclude a finding of sexual misconduct.

Once the investigator has completed the fact-finding, the CLS Project Director will consult with the Executive Vice President for Higher Education Programs ("review committee") and determine a) whether there was a violation of this policy; and b) the appropriate response.

The complainant and respondent will both have an opportunity to identify potential conflicts of interests related to the investigator and/or review committee. If there is a conflict of interest, an alternate individual will be designated.

The review committee will use a preponderance of the evidence standard when evaluating the facts and making a determination regarding violations of this policy. A violation of this policy may be found based on a majority vote of the review committee.

The CLS Program will seek to complete its formal investigation within 60 calendar days of receiving a written complaint and the review committee will seek to complete its determination within 14 calendar days of receiving the results of the fact-finding. However, all of the timeframes stated in this policy may be extended solely at the discretion of the CLS Program.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the committee will notify the concerned parties simultaneously in writing of the outcome of the investigation and the option to appeal, as described below.

The CLS Program will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate the hostile environment, prevent the harassment from recurring, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects.

Sanctions

Potential sanctions include, but are not limited to, verbal or written warning, mandatory counseling, ban from location or area, loss of privileges, probation, suspension or dismissal from program. Sanctions are determined at the discretion of the CLS Program and there is no requirement of progressive discipline.

Appeals

Appeals may be filed in writing to Lorne Craner, President, American Councils for International Education at:

1828 L St. NW
Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036
202-833-7522

Either party may file an appeal within 14 calendar days of notification of the review committee's decision. Appeals may be filed only when there was a material failure to follow procedures or when significant evidence was not considered that would have altered the outcome of the investigation. The other party will be given an opportunity to respond to the appeal within 7 calendar days. The President will make the final decision regarding the appeal and may decide: 1) to support the full results of the investigation and resolution; 2) support the results of the investigation but recommend different corrective action; 3) reach a different result and/or corrective action; or 4) require additional fact-finding.

False or Frivolous Charges

This policy shall not be used to bring false or frivolous charges against employees or participants. Those bringing such charges may be subject to disciplinary action.

Confidentiality and Obligation to Respond

The CLS Program encourages students to talk to someone about what happened so they can get the support they need and so CLS can respond appropriately. The CLS Program recognizes that reporting sexual assault or harassment is often a painful, deeply personal matter. However, CLS staff are not confidential resources. CLS staff must report incidents of sexual assault or harassment to the U.S. Department of State. CLS Program staff will preserve a student's confidentiality to the fullest degree possible consistent with the need to respond appropriately to allegations of sexual assault or harassment. When a student reports to a CLS staff member about an incident of sexual harassment or sexual violence, the CLS Program will take immediate and appropriate steps to investigate what happened and to resolve the matter promptly and equitably. Unless required by law, the CLS Program will not report an incident to law enforcement without a student's consent.

Students who wish to maintain complete confidentiality may contact the Rape And Incest National Network (RAINN) at <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/> (live on-line chat with crisis counselors offered 24 hours per day) or Pathways to Safety (formerly Sexual Assault Support and Help for Americans Abroad, <https://pathwaystosafety.org/>), rather than reporting to the CLS Program. If a student reports to these confidential resources, without informing a CLS staff member, the CLS Program will be unable to conduct an investigation or pursue possible disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrator. Please note that, while confidential counselors and advocates may maintain a victim's confidentiality vis-à-vis the CLS Program, they may have reporting or other legal obligations, such as mandatory reporting to law enforcement in case of minors; imminent harm to self or others; or requirement to testify if subpoenaed in a criminal case.

During the investigation of an incident of sexual assault or harassment, confidentiality will be maintained to the fullest degree possible and within the limits imposed upon the CLS Program by its duty to ensure a safe environment for all program participants.

Records

Records of all complaints will be maintained by the Project Director for the CLS Program. Disciplinary actions will become part of participant's record.

Prevention and Education

The CLS Program informs students of this policy and available resources through its orientation program, which is conducted at the beginning of the program.

Training

CLS Program staff are trained on this policy. Those who respond to, investigate, and adjudicate complaints under this policy also receive training.

Agreement

By checking this box, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the Sexual Harassment Policy set forth above.

Agreed

Internet and Media Guidelines

Agreement to these guidelines is required for participation in the CLS Program.

With the myriad of Internet-based resources available, CLS participants have many opportunities to share their experiences with friends, family and the Internet community. This brings positive attention to the CLS Program and highlights the program's impact, not only on the CLS participant, but on the host community as well.

If you decide to share your CLS experiences through Internet-based media, there are a few points that you should keep in mind:

- Acknowledge that yours is not an official U.S. Department of State website and that the views and information presented are your own and do not represent the CLS Program, the Department of State, American Councils for International Education, or the CLS hosting institution.
- While participants in all U.S. State Department-sponsored academic exchange programs have full academic and artistic freedom to write, publish and create, they are also expected to maintain a standard of conduct that is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the CLS Program – to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.
- What is deemed culturally acceptable in the United States (or, more specifically, on the Internet in the United States) may not be received well overseas. The use of disparaging language or images to describe the country you are in and the people you live and work with can undermine the goals of the program, and in some cases violate local laws.
- Inappropriate, offensive, or culturally-inappropriate online comments or photos are strictly forbidden in the CLS Program and are subject to disciplinary action (see CLS Program Terms and Conditions, Sections 23 and 24).
- If you submit a photograph and/or video to staff of the CLS Program, you must have secured permission from any individuals pictured and informed them that you plan to use their image publicly.

Contact American Councils for International Education if you have any questions.

By checking this box, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the Internet and Media Guidelines Agreement set forth above.

Agreed

Testing and Program Evaluation Data Consent

All Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program finalists and participants are required to take an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) language evaluation, administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages ([ACTFL](#)), before the CLS Program begins and upon completion of the institute. In addition, all CLS participants are required to complete mid-program and post-program evaluations. Individual CLS Program sites may also require pre- and post-program language tests.

On occasion, the CLS Program may receive and review requests from academic researchers in second language acquisition for access to CLS Program test score data and measures for program evaluation. Research scholars in second language acquisition and related fields may find the CLS data a valuable resource for the purposes of improving our understanding of how languages are learned and the impact of immersion language programs on the acquisition of language and cultural knowledge, leading to improvements in the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

In such cases, following a review of the research project and protocols for protecting data, the U.S. Department of State and American Councils may provide test score and program evaluation data to scholars with all personally identifying information about individual participants removed. Generic data such as language level, age, gender, and years of language experience may be shared, if relevant to the project, but only after all names and other identifying information has been removed.

Declining this form by not checking the box below will not affect your eligibility to participate in the CLS Program.

I have read the above statement and agree to allow the use of ACTFL OPI test scores and program evaluations, measures and information such as age, gender, years of language study, with all references to name and personally identifying information removed, to be used for external reports, public presentations, and the purposes of academic research in second language acquisition.

Agreed

If you have questions about the way test scores and data are used, please contact:

Jeanette Owen
CLS Project Director
American Councils for International Education
202.833.7522
jowen@americancouncils.org

Privacy Policy

This Privacy Policy applies to personally-identifiable information, also known as personal data, collected from alternates, finalists and participants of the CLS Program and used for the administration of the CLS Program. In this document, CLS Program institutes in each country are referred to as our programs. Please note that this Privacy Policy does not apply to programs or services unrelated to the CLS Program.

Information We Collect

We only collect information about you if we have a reason to do so to facilitate the administration of the CLS Program.

Alternates, finalists and participants of the CLS Program are required to share some personal data with us, including: contact information; education history; personal information and history; demographic information; health information; and other information they choose to disclose to program staff.

We also ask for personal data about finalists' parents, legal guardians and emergency contacts. This may include their names, addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, and other information.

How and Why We Use Personal Information

It is our practice not to collect personal data unless we need it or intend to use it. We use the information we collect to manage our programs and related alumni activities, as well as to fulfill our legal responsibilities to provide monitoring, evaluation and reporting on behalf of our program funders.

We use personal data as mentioned above and for the purposes listed below:

- To communicate with you;
- To facilitate the administration of our programs—for example make selection decisions, to facilitate placement of students in individual program sites or with host family and roommate accommodations;
- To provide support to you before and during our programs.

Legal Bases for Collecting and Using Information

Our use of your personal data is made on the following legal bases:

- The use is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation;
- The use is necessary in order to protect your vital interests or those of another person;
- We have a legitimate interest in using your information, as described below; or
- You have given us your consent.

We rely on several legitimate interests in our use and sharing of your personal data, including:

- Providing and improving our programs;
- Administration of our operations;
- Promoting the success of our current and former students;
- Maintaining ongoing relationships with alumni, and helping them to connect them with one another;
- Providing opportunities for participation in events;
- Conducting research;

- Understanding how our services are used;
- Ensuring the safety and security of our students, employees and others;
- Meeting reporting requirements set by the federal government;
- Maintaining records;
- Evaluating and selecting participants for our programs;
- Meeting our obligations and enforcing our legal rights.

How We Share Information

The CLS Program may share student personal data with various American Councils' offices, affiliated organizations, and third-party business partners. Our third-party business partners may include program funders, service providers, and others located in the United States of America and throughout the world that work with us to deliver our programs and other services. All third-party business partners that we share your personal data with are required to comply with applicable regulations and privacy requirements.

We share information about students in limited circumstances and with appropriate safeguards for their privacy:

- **Funders:** The CLS Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its administration by American Councils for International Education under a cooperative agreement. Personal data collected by American Councils may be provided to the funders of the CLS Program at their request to facilitate their legitimate interest in providing oversight for the administration of this cooperative agreement.
- **Partners, Employees, and Independent Contractors:** We may disclose information about you to our partners, our employees, and individuals who are our independent contractors that need to know the information in order to facilitate our programs or to process the information on our behalf.
- **Third Party Vendors:** We may share information about you with third party vendors who need to know information about you in order to provide their services to us, or to provide their services to you on our behalf.
- **Legal Requests:** We may disclose information about you in response to a subpoena, court order, or other governmental request. We will strive to limit the scope of information that is furnished under these circumstances to only that which is necessary to satisfy the specific request.
- **To Protect Rights, Property, and Others:** We may disclose information about you when we believe in good faith that disclosure is reasonably necessary to protect the property or rights of American Councils, third parties, or the public at large.
- **With Your Consent:** We may share and disclose information with your consent or at your direction. For example, we may share your information with third parties with which you authorize us to do so.
- **Aggregated or De-Identified Information:** We may share information that has been aggregated or reasonably de-identified, so that the information could not reasonably be used to identify you.

Medical and Housing Information

In order to facilitate our programs, the CLS Program may share any information from a student's medical forms and the medical review process that is necessary to facilitate placement, to arrange housing and medical accommodations, or to comply with local laws, regulations and institutional policies.

In order to facilitate the students' placement in host families, the CLS Program shares limited personal data and medical information with prospective hosts, including students' ages, genders, allergies, dietary restrictions, medical conditions that require specific accommodations as determined by the medical review process and CLS Program staff, and other personal information, such as religious affiliation that students choose to provide that would affect placement.

How Long We Keep Information

We keep the personal data that you share with us for as long as it is necessary for us to provide you with our program services, for as long as it is necessary for us to administer alumni and other outreach activities, and for as long as it is required for us to meet our oversight and reporting requirements and responsibilities.

Your personal data is retained for as long as there is a basis for its collection and use, until such time as consent is withdrawn (if the legal basis for its use is consent), or until effective opposition to data processing is filed in cases where the legal basis for its use is the legitimate interest of American Councils. The Data processing period may be extended if the processing is necessary to establish and assert any claims or defend against them, and after that time only if and to the extent required by law.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or our privacy and data security practices, if you want to submit a request, or if you feel that we are not abiding by this Privacy Policy, please contact us immediately, as follows:

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Postal Mail

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