

“...They add so much to our community, exposing our local students to cultures they had no idea were different from theirs. I love these students as much as my own. They steal my heart, and never give it back. I love when they come back to visit and hearing about their accomplishments and what they are doing with their lives as adults.”

- Host parent of a FLEX student

“FLEX program was the best thing that happened to my daughter. I can tell how much she changed - she became more responsible and mature. She had the opportunity to explore another culture by living with a host family, experiencing a typical American teenager life. FLEX not only helped her to grow as a young adult, but also I can see how American culture feels. Parents are concerned about the safety of their child in an unknown family overseas, but the host families and staff from FLEX and American Councils are extremely supportive.”

- Parent of a FLEX student

“I will never forget this year full of experience, especially my amazing host family...They met me not as a stranger, but with a smile on their faces. I am one of the happiest people in the world, because I have another MOM in addition to my natural MOM. I am really grateful for FLEX and U.S. State Department for giving me this chance.”

- Georgia alumna

APPLY TODAY!

For more information, contact the American Councils office in your home country:

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Funding for the FLEX program comes from:
 The United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

WHAT IS THE FLEX PROGRAM?

In 1992, then-U.S. Senator Bill Bradley cosponsored, together with U.S. Congressman Jim Leach, the historic legislation providing for the FLEX program. Funding was approved by the United States Congress to extend a hand of friendship from the people of the United States of America to the people of the countries of the former Soviet Union, and has since expanded to other countries. FLEX is fully funded by the United States government and administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State. The program provides competitively selected secondary school students with a scholarship to spend a year living in the U.S. with a volunteer host family, attending a U.S. high school to foster understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries around the world.

The FLEX program is supported at the local level by thousands of U.S. citizens and local secondary schools that host, educate, and support students with no financial compensation. Now in its 31st year, the FLEX academic year program has provided scholarships to over 30,000 secondary school students.

WHO ORGANIZES THE PROGRAM?

American Councils for International Education organizes recruitment, selection, orientation, and travel arrangements for the FLEX program. Founded in 1974, American Councils is an international non-profit organization working to improve mutual understanding between countries, exchange ideas among individuals, and enhance collaboration through education. For almost 50 years, American Councils has been designing, implementing, and supporting innovative programs in the United States, Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa for tens of thousands of participants. These include several U.S. government programs for secondary school students (besides FLEX), university and graduate students, teachers, and professors.

Many other private, non-profit organizations in the United States also support the FLEX program. The U.S. government has asked these organizations to place FLEX participants in supportive U.S. host families and to organize local activities during the year-long program.

WHAT DOES THE SCHOLARSHIP PROVIDE?

The FLEX scholarship provides the following:

- Round-trip domestic and international travel (from home to the United States and back)
- Monthly allowance to help students participate in social activities and buy necessary personal supplies
- Placement with a selected and screened U.S. host family for one year
- Enrollment in a U.S. secondary school
- Program orientation activities including pre-program preparation and re-entry preparation
- Program activities arranged in local U.S. communities
- Medical insurance, excluding pre-existing conditions and dental care.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY TO THE PROGRAM?

The FLEX scholarship competition is merit-based and open, at no cost, to applicants who meet the following requirements. Students with disabilities are invited to participate in the competition. FLEX finalists include approximately 20 students with disabilities each year. Selected students with disabilities meet the same criteria as other participants in the program. Students may only apply once to the program during a given recruitment cycle.

Eligible applicants must:

- 1) Meet the grade/age requirements (refer to the table at right);
- 2) Be enrolled in and attending a secondary school in the country in which they apply to the program, at the time of application;
- 3) Have an academic standing of good or better;
- 4) Have previously studied English and demonstrate English language ability at the time of registration;
- 5) Meet U.S. visa eligibility requirements; and
- 6) Be a citizen of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine or Uzbekistan, and be able to receive an international passport in the country where they apply to the program.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY (BY COUNTRY)

COUNTRY	Eligible Grades*	Eligible Birthdate Range	Completed Secondary Education or Graduated Prior to Program Start Date
Armenia	9, 10, 11, or 12*; or I, II, or III; IV* year of college	15 February 2006 – 15 July 2009	Eligible if graduated
Azerbaijan	11*	15 February 2006 – 15 July 2009	Eligible if graduated
Czech Republic	1st & 2nd class of secondary school, OR equivalent at a multi-year high school	15 May 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Estonia	9, 10	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Georgia	9, 10 or 11	1 January 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Greece	3rd year of Gymnasium and 1st year of Lyceum	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Hungary	9, 10	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Kazakhstan	8, 9, 10; or 1st year of a college enrolled after 9th grade	1 January 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Kyrgyzstan	9, 10; or 1st year of college enrolled after 9th grade	1 January 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Latvia	9, 10	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Lithuania	9, 10	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Moldova	9, 10 or 11	1 January 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Mongolia	9, 10 or 11	1 January 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Montenegro	9th grade of primary and 1st or 2nd grade of secondary school	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Poland	1/2/3 class liceum/technikum	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Romania	9, 10 or 11	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Serbia	8th grade of primary and 1st or 2nd grade of secondary school	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Slovakia	1st & 2nd class of secondary school, OR equivalent at a multi-year high school	15 July 2006 – 15 July 2009	Not eligible if graduated
Tajikistan	11	15 February 2006 – 31 December 2007	Eligible if graduated
Turkmenistan	N/A*	15 March 2006 – 31 May 2008	Eligible if graduated
Ukraine	8, 9 or 10	1 January 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not Eligible if graduated
Uzbekistan	9, 10, 1st year of lyceum or college	15 July 2007 – 15 July 2009	Not Eligible if graduated

* Students in their final grade of school who are required to complete military service are not eligible.

NOTE: Students who change their grade level to an ineligible grade before their departure to the U.S. will be disqualified.

WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE?

Students are **ineligible** to apply if:

- S/he does not meet Eligibility criteria 1-6;
- S/he has stayed in the United States for more than ninety (90) days in total during the past five (5) years;

- His/her family (or member of family):
 - Applied or is applying to emigrate to the United States ; or
 - Made plans to emigrate or has already emigrated to the United States.

WHAT IS *NOT* PROVIDED?

The FLEX scholarship does **NOT** cover the following costs:

- any costs associated with receiving an international passport;
- personal expenses not covered by the monthly stipend;
- excess baggage costs, phone bills, or internet use.

HOW DOES THE TESTING AND SELECTION PROCESS WORK?

Students compete in several rounds of online competition. At the semi-finalist stage, students and their parents are invited to attend an informational meeting to learn more about the program. Students then take part in an individual interview with American Councils staff, take a standardized test of English, write proctored essays, and receive the official program application, which is due to American Councils within ten days.

Selection will be based on merit and demonstrated preparedness for a year-long exchange experience as evidenced in students' applications. English-language proficiency is important, but not the sole element in selection. Students also will be required to provide medical evaluations and be certified as medically fit to participate in the program.

The selection process will be completed in spring, and all applicants will receive notification of their status by mid-May. Selected finalists will attend a pre-departure orientation in their home country in June-July and travel to the U.S. in July-August. Students return home the following May-June. FLEX students must return to their home country at the end of the program, on the date assigned by American Councils. The U.S. visa issued for program participants will not be amended or extended beyond the program end date for any reason.

HOW WILL I BENEFIT FROM THE EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE?

The FLEX program offers students an opportunity to learn about the people and culture of the United States. FLEX participants are also young ambassadors who teach Americans about the people and culture of their countries. Students gain an appreciation for and develop sensitivity to other cultures, experience personal growth and independence, and become better prepared for an increasingly interdependent world. Students form strong ties with their American host families and U.S. communities, building relationships that often last a lifetime. Many alumni attend prestigious universities upon their return home, and later find exciting jobs that use skills learned during their stay in the United States.

WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER BEFORE APPLYING TO FLEX?

Students who are interested in this program should consider the possible negative effects of this program:

- Will I have to repeat a year of school after returning home?
- Will I be home too late to take final school examinations/university/institute entrance examinations? FLEX students return to their communities in late May and June.
- Will my university or institute defer my admission if I have already been accepted?
- Will I be required to serve in the military upon return?
- Will I be eligible to graduate with honors/receive a gold medal at my home school?

Finally, although students attend a U.S. high school, the curriculum is substantially different from that in other countries, and likely you will not learn the same subject material.