GUIDELINES FOR LONG-TERM EXCHANGES 2025-'26

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Willkommen...

... und herzlichen Glückwunsch!
Sie interessieren sich für einen Langzeitaufenthalt in den USA im Rahmen des German American Partnership Programs.

GAPP bietet die aufregende Möglichkeit, den *American Way of Life* in einer amerikanischen Familie kennenzulernen und den Schulalltag hautnah mitzuerleben. Durch den Aufenthalt in einer amerikanischen Gastfamilie wird der deutsche Schüler nicht nur die amerikanische Kultur und Gastfreundschaft intensiv erfahren können, sondern auch die eigene Lebenserfahrung enorm bereichern.

Der Langzeitaufenthalt in den USA ist für viele Schüler die bisher anspruchsvollste Herausforderung in ihrem Leben. Viele von ihnen haben schon an dem Kurzzeitaufenthalt teilgenommen und kennen nicht nur die Familie, sondern auch die Schule, wo sie ihren US-Aufenthalt verbringen möchten. Ein grundsätzliches Verständnis dafür, dass keine Familie „perfekt" ist, sowie eine vorurteilsfreie offene Haltung machen es wesentlich leichter, sich nicht nur schnell einzuleben, sondern auch das Jahr in den USA voll zu genießen.

Dieser Leitfaden bietet wichtige Informationen für den Langzeitaufenthalt in den USA, speziell zur Beantragung des notwendigen J-1 Visums, sowie eine erste Vorbereitung auf das Leben in einer Gastfamilie und den Schulbesuch in den USA.

Wir wünschen allen Teilnehmern ein ereignis-reiches und erfolgreiches Jahr!

Ihr **GAPP**-Team

Welcome...

...and congratulations!
...and congratulations! You have chosen the German American Partnership Program (GAPP) for your longterm exchange in the United States of America!

GAPP offers high school students the exciting opportunity to experience living and studying in the United States for a semester or academic year. You will share the home of an American family, attend the local high school, and explore your community's social functions and values. With the hospitality and support of a host family in the United States, each student becomes a part of their community, not only a visitor.

The long-term exchange may be one of the biggest challenges you will undertake, but it provides a special opportunity for enriching experiences in a new culture and for creating meaningful, lasting friendships. Students who understand that no culture is "perfect," and who maintain an open mind, will adjust smoothly to their communities and gain the most from their time in the U.S.

This packet provides important information about your long-term exchange in the U.S., including instructions for completing the J-1 visa process. We've also included a few suggestions for adjusting to living with an American host family and attending an American high school.

We wish all students an exciting and successful year!

Your **GAPP** Team

The US State Department has set forth the governing regulations for the Exchange Visitor Program in the Code of Federal Regulations, 22 CFR Part 62. The regulations for the Secondary School Student Category specifically are in § 62.25

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1. QUOTES FROM FORMER GAPP LONG-TERM EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Ich habe hier eine super gute Zeit und viel Spaß. (…) Es fällt mir wirklich schwer, mit dem Gedanken klar zu kommen, dass ich die USA in ein paar Monaten wieder verlassen muss. Ehrlich gesagt war ich mir am Anfang über die ganze Sache nicht so sicher. Ich habe mir Sorgen gemacht, dass ich (…) in der Schule nichts verstehe, ohne meine Familie nicht klar komme und so weiter. Diese Sorgen hätte ich mir wirklich nicht machen brauchen. In der Schule habe ich mich schnell eingelebt und schon nach wenigen Wochen habe ich (fast) überhaupt keine Verständnisprobleme mehr gehabt.

Anne Kahl from Johann-Wolfgang-von-Goethe Gymnasium, spent one year at Mt. Spokane HS, Mt. Spokane, Washington.

This is the best program I have ever participated in (…). I have never had such a life-altering experience, and because of this, I am a much healthier and worldly person than I was before. I would highly recommend this exchange (to everyone). I feel that I have learned so very much.

Lacey Banks from Toledo HS, Ohio

Als es endlich so weit war, hätte ich nie gedacht, dass dieser Austausch nicht nur eine tolle Erinnerung an meine Schulzeit sein sollte, sondern mein Leben wirklich verändern würde. (…) An einem Abend saß ich mit ein paar anderen im Zimmer von (…) Nicole neben dem Bettpfosten auf der einen und zufällig Alex auf der anderen Seite. Wir kamen ins Gespräch, da er eine Riesendose Hershey's Kisses dabei hatte und ich gerne Schokolade mag. Es stellte sich heraus, dass es sein Geburtstag war und er dieses Geburtsgeschenk von seinem Grandpa bekommen hatte, um gerade auf diesem Weg Mädchen kennenzulernen. Es scheint geklappt zu haben.
Barbara Troy student at Paracelsus Gymnasiums, Hohenheim participated in the exchange with Los Alamitos HS, California.

„My life with my host family was awesome. I could not ask for better people. They are always friendly with me. (…) They trust me with their house and bikes. They have been so helpful and welcoming. I was very nervous at first but now I am very thankful for the great family that I was placed with."

Sam Mathew from Deering HS, Maine

The GAP-Program allowed me to see a foreign country, not only as a foreigner, but as a true native. With only sightseeing, one can never get the full or true experience of a country. Without the GAP-Program, I would have never had the opportunity to live (in a foreign country). I would highly recommend (the program to everyone). I have learned and experienced so many things.

Sarah Moser from Tabor HS, North Carolina

2. APPLYING FOR FORM DS-2019 & J-1 VISA / ENTERING THE U.S.

Always request the latest version of the GAPP Guidelines from the GAPP office in New York and be sure to use the most recent forms for your application.

FORMDS-2019

In order to be eligible for a J-1 visa, you must first apply for a Form DS-2019. The GAPP office in New York is authorized to issue Forms DS-2019, while the visa itself is issued by an American Consulate in Germany. Please note that the application process for a German student can only be initiated by the American GAPP coordinator. Only he/she can request the current application forms from the GAPP office. To comply with the U.S. Department of State requirements, the following forms must be completed:

FORMS

Links to the digital DS-2019 application forms are sent to the American GAPP coordinator via email. Only the American GAPP coordinator may begin the DS-2019 application process on behalf of an exchange student.

APPOINTMENTATTHECONSULATEANDAPPLYINGFORTHEJ-1VISA

Once you have obtained Form DS-2019 and gathered all other required application materials for the J- 1 visa, you will need to schedule an interview appointment at one of the U.S. consulates or the U.S. embassy in Germany by following the instructions on the website U.S. Travel Docs. The J-1 visa application fee (DS-160 fee) is $185 (subject to change). Electronic devices, such as laptops and cell phones, as well as large purses and bags, may not be brought to the U.S. consulate/embassy. In addition, all documents and application materials must be carried in a transparent folder. Closed or opaque folders or briefcases may not be brought into the U.S. consulate/embassy.

ENTERINGTHEU.S.

The Bureau of Customs & Border Protection (CBP) makes the final decision on foreigners entering the U.S. CBP officers, not the consular official in Germany, determine the duration of your stay. The maximum duration of stay will be indicated on the I-94 Form (Record of Arrival-Departure). As of 2013, the CBP issues Form I-94 electronically at air and seaports of entry. The paper form will no longer be provided to a traveller upon arrival, except in limited circumstances. The traveller will be provided with a CBP admission stamp on their travel document. Since this modification, only the original, printed DS-2019 Form and your passport need to be presented at the immigration counter at the airport.
Please expect the following expenses to be incurred: $1,500 GAPP application processing fee for Form DS-2019, $220 SEVIS fee, and $185 DS-160 fee (please check the U.S. consulate website for current visa fees). Additional expenses include flights, spending money, and health insurance.

J-1 VISA APPLICATION PROCEDURE

WHAT IS A J-1 VISA?

A J-1 visa is issued by the U.S. Consulate/Embassy and gives an exchange student permission to enter the United States and attend high school. To obtain a J-1 visa, the student must first apply for a Form DS-2019.

Please note: The exchange program start date on the Form DS-2019 should correspond with the first school day, which should be the first day of the semester. Extensions are not possible. It is advisable to indicate the maximum intended exchange length. Exchanges may be no longer than 12 months and no shorter than 5 months. J-1 visa recipients have a 30-day grace period in the U.S. before and after their exchange program start and end dates.

WHAT IS FORM DS-2019?

Form DS-2019 is a "Certificate of Eligibility" required to obtain a J-1 visa. It may only be issued by sponsors designated by the U.S. Department of State. As an official sponsor organization, GAPP, Inc. can issue students Forms DS-2019. An American GAPP Coordinator may only apply on behalf of a German exchange student to GAPP, Inc. for a Form DS-2019 if:

1. **The German and American schools have an existing GAPP partnership**
2. **The schools have conducted *at least one* reciprocal, short-term GAPP exchange**
3. **The student is between the ages of 15 and 18 ½ by the program start date**
4. **The student has not completed more than 11 years of secondary school by the program start date**
5. **The student has not already participated in a secondary school exchange program in the U.S. in J-1 or F-1 immigration status**

A printed copy of Form DS-2019 should be kept with the student's passport, presented during the U.S. Consulate/Embassy interview, and presented, along with the J-1 visa, at the airport when entering and leaving the U.S. If a student wishes to leave the U.S. during the exchange program, Form DS-2019 must be signed a second time by a responsible officer at GAPP. *Please refer to the section entitled, "Traveling abroad while living in the U.S.," on page 8.*

WHAT IS SEVIS?

The 'Student and Exchange Visitor Information System' (SEVIS) is a digital information system designed to collect, maintain, and manage information about international exchange participants during their time in the U.S. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) manages the system and tracks J-1 visa participants from the time they receive their initial documentation (DS-2019) until they leave the U.S.

Registering with SEVIS is mandatory. GAPP will register the student in SEVIS when issuing Form DS-2019. SEVIS will only allow registration for students **between the ages of 15 and 18½** by the program start date.

A SEVIS fee of $220 is required and can be paid online via credit card when submitting the I-901 Form.

OBTAINING A J-1 VISA

If there is an established GAPP partnership between a German school and an American school, and a German student wishes to study at their American GAPP partner school for one semester or academic year, they should follow the process outlined below.

PLEASE NOTE: The completed application must reach the GAPP office in NY at least three months prior to the exchange student's proposed exchange program start date.

AmAemricear cooGrAdiPna coordinator

1. The American GAPP coordinator determines whether their school will accept J-1 status German exchange students sponsored by GAPP.
2. The American GAPP coordinator emails the GAPP office in New York (GAPPLT@goethe.de) to request the DS-2019 application forms.

GAPP office and GAPP coordinators

3. GAPP emails the DS-2019 application form links to the American GAPP coordinator. The Enrollment Verification Form must be signed by the GAPP coordinators and the school principals. Their signatures indicate that the school will accept the exchange student, that the student will take a leave of absence from their school in Germany, and that all parties have read and *understood the GAPP Guidelines document.*

All

4. Forms should be completed by the exchange student (and their parent(s)/guardian(s), the American GAPP Coordinator, the exchange student's host family, and the German GAPP Coordinator.

American GAPP coordinator and host family

5. The American GAPP Coordinator, as well as all members of the prospective **host family household aged 18 and older, must consent to a criminal** background check conducted by GAPP via Checkr, Inc. This is a U.S. State Department requirement.

Exchange student

6. The student completes their part of the application and receives an invoice **for the non-refundable GAPP application processing fee of $1,500.**

PLEASE NOTE: The student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) should each keep a complete, printed copy of the DS-2019 application for their records and for travel purposes.

GAPP office

7. Once GAPP receives the complete DS-2019 application, GAPP generates the student's Form DS-2019 by registering the student with the U.S. Department of State in SEVIS. GAPP then emails a PDF of Form DS-2019 to the student. **The student must bring a printed copy of Form DS-2019 to their J-1 visa appointment at the U.S. Consulate/Embassy in Germany.**

   NOTE: It is advisable to bring a second, printed copy of Form DS-2019 to the consulate/embassy appointment as a backup. Only the copy signed by a consular official is valid.

Exchange student

8. The student prepares the **J-1-visa application.**

   For detailed information regarding the J-1 exchange visitor visa application, please visit the **Exchange Visitor Visa** page of the **U.S. State Department Website**: https://www.travel.state.gov → Get U.S. Visas → Study & Exchange → Exchange Visitor Visa (J)

   Please pay the $220 **SEVIS fee** (I-901 fee) on the **U.S. ICE website**: https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html

   Please make sure you have read all information about the application procedure on the website for **U.S. Travel Docs**, the organization authorized by the U.S. State Department to handle visa application processing in Germany: https://ustraveldocs.com/de/de-niv-visaapply.asp#

Exchange student

9. In order to be issued an exchange student visa, the German student must submit their complete visa application and supporting documents ***in person*** at the U.S. Consulate in Frankfurt or Munich or the U.S. Embassy in Berlin. All applicants **must schedule an appointment** for administrative processing, biometric collection, and a personal interview with a consul here: https://ustraveldocs.com/de/de-niv-appointmentschedule.asp

Exchange student

10. **After arriving in the U.S., the exchange student must contact the GAPP office in New York via e-mail at GAPPLT@goethe.de within the first 5 days after their arrival in the U.S.**

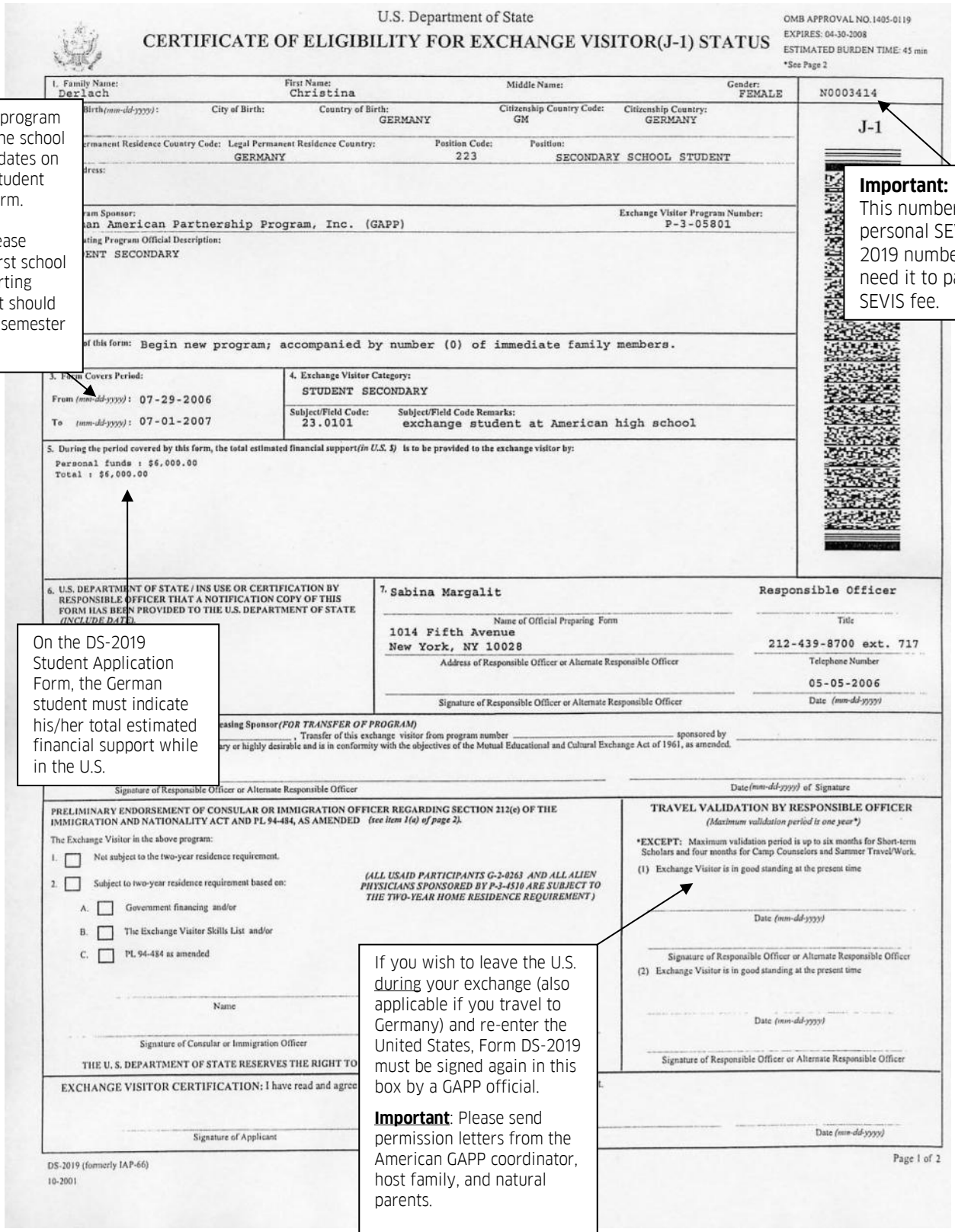
    This step is required before GAPP can validate the exchange student in SEVIS (the U.S. State Department). **Failure to do so results in termination of the exchange status!** (Reinstatement fee is U.S. $198 plus SEVIS fee).

Traveling Abroad While Living in the U.S.

If the exchange student wishes to travel to a foreign country (including Germany) during his/her exchange:

- He/she must receive written permission from the host family, the American GAPP coordinator, and natural parents/guardians.
- He/she is responsible for contacting the consulate of the country to be visited in order to obtain any necessary visas.
- In order to exit and reenter the U.S., the student's Form DS-2019 must have an **additional signature from a GAPP official**. The student must email proof of written permission from the above parties to GAPPLT@goethe.de **at least two weeks prior to departure,** and GAPP will provide the second signature.

EXAMPLE OF A FORM DS-2019



U.S. Department of State

CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR(J-1) STATUS

OMB APPROVAL NO.1405-0119
EXPIRES: 04-30-2008
ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min
*See Page 2

1. Family Name: Derlach | First Name: Christina | Middle Name: | Gender: FEMALE | N0003414

Birth(mm-dd-yyyy): | City of Birth: | Country of Birth: GERMANY | Citizenship Country Code: GM | Citizenship Country: GERMANY

J-1

ermanent Residence Country Code: | Legal Permanent Residence Country: GERMANY | Position Code: 223 | Position: SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

dress:

ram Sponsor: an American Partnership Program, Inc. (GAPP) | Exchange Visitor Program Number: P-3-05801

ating Program Official Description: ENT SECONDARY

of this form: Begin new program; accompanied by number (0) of immediate family members.

3. Form Covers Period: From (mm-dd-yyyy): 07-29-2006 To (mm-dd-yyyy): 07-01-2007

4. Exchange Visitor Category: STUDENT SECONDARY

Subject/Field Code: 23.0101 | Subject/Field Code Remarks: exchange student at American high school

5. During the period covered by this form, the total estimated financial support(in U.S. $) is to be provided to the exchange visitor by:
Personal funds : $6,000.00
Total : $6,000.00

6. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / INS USE OR CERTIFICATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER THAT A NOTIFICATION COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (INCLUDE DATE).

7. Sabina Margalit — Name of Official Preparing Form | Responsible Officer — Title
1014 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10028 — Address of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer
212-439-8700 ext. 717 — Telephone Number
Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer
05-05-2006 — Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

easing Sponsor(FOR TRANSFER OF PROGRAM)
. Transfer of this exchange visitor from program number _____ sponsored by _____
ary or highly desirable and is in conformity with the objectives of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended.
Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer | Date(mm-dd-yyyy) of Signature

PRELIMINARY ENDORSEMENT OF CONSULAR OR IMMIGRATION OFFICER REGARDING SECTION 212(e) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AND PL 94-484, AS AMENDED (see item 1(a) of page 2).
The Exchange Visitor in the above program:
1. ☐ Not subject to the two-year residence requirement.
2. ☐ Subject to two-year residence requirement based on:
A. ☐ Government financing and/or
B. ☐ The Exchange Visitor Skills List and/or
C. ☐ PL 94-484 as amended
(ALL USAID PARTICIPANTS G-2-0263 AND ALL ALIEN PHYSICIANS SPONSORED BY P-3-4510 ARE SUBJECT TO THE TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT)
Name
Signature of Consular or Immigration Officer
THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO

TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
(Maximum validation period is one year*)
*EXCEPT: Maximum validation period is up to six months for Short-term Scholars and four months for Camp Counselors and Summer Travel/Work.
(1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time
Date (mm-dd-yyyy)
Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer
(2) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time
Date (mm-dd-yyyy)
Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION: I have read and agree
Signature of Applicant
Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

DS-2019 (formerly IAP-66)
10-2001
Page 1 of 2

The exchange program dates reflect the school start and end dates on the DS-2019 Student Application Form.

Important: Please indicate the first school day as the starting date. Ideally, it should align with the semester start date.

Important:
This number is your personal SEVIS/DS-2019 number. You need it to pay the SEVIS fee.

On the DS-2019 Student Application Form, the German student must indicate his/her total estimated financial support while in the U.S.

If you wish to leave the U.S. during your exchange (also applicable if you travel to Germany) and re-enter the United States, Form DS-2019 must be signed again in this box by a GAPP official.

Important: Please send permission letters from the American GAPP coordinator, host family, and natural parents.

3. GAPP GUIDELINES FOR LONG-TERM EXCHANGES

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS OF THE AMERICAN GAPP COORDINATOR

- Remain up-to-date on the latest information about long-term GAPP exchanges and complete an online SPARC training/certification offered by the Department of State once per calendar year.*
- Request the DS-2019 application from the GAPP office and distribute GAPP Guidelines, forms, and instructions to all parties.
- Confirm that the long-term exchange complies with your school district policy.
- Ensure that no more than 5 exchange students are placed within one U.S. high school.
- Submit F3a, American GAPP Coordinator Application and F3b, Authorization to Release Information (criminal background check authorization form).
- Live within a 120-mile radius from the host family and the exchange student, in case of emergency.
- The American GAPP coordinator may not serve as host family for an exchange student, nor may they select a relative of the student to serve as host family. If placing a student in a single-person host family household without a child in the home, the American GAPP coordinator must obtain additional references from the host parent, as well as consent from the student's natural parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Provide host family with the GAPP Guidelines and the U.S. Department of State Code of Federal Regulations for the Secondary Student Exchange Visitor Program (CFR 22 Part 62).
- Before officially selecting the family: Conduct an in-person, in-home, interview with all family members residing in the home.
- Provide GAPP with 5-7 photos of the host family's home when submitting F4a, Host Family Application Form and follow up on the two host family references indicated there.
- Conduct a pre-arrival host family orientation with all members of the host family that includes information about cross-cultural interaction (could involve a workshop to familiarize host families with cultural differences).
- Advise host families of their responsibility to inform GAPP of any material changes in the status of the host family or student–changes in address, finances, employment, and criminal arrests.
- Inform the German student and German GAPP coordinator about registration and immunization requirements of the U.S. high school and school rules, e.g. dress code. (Keep in mind that German schools often have fewer official school rules).
- Provide the student and the GAPP office with a completed GAPP ID Card and, if needed, a student ID card for the school.

* New rules and regulations are highlighted.

- Support the German exchange student in creating their course schedule and explain about programs offered at the U.S. high school (AP classes, honors classes, heritage program).

- Refer to the GAPP Orientation Materials packet for information on pre-arrival and first-day orientations, as well as information for supporting the student during their adaptation to the host community.

- Follow the GAPP host family change procedure: A host family change may only occur after a series of discussions involving the German and American GAPP coordinators, the host parents, and the student. If a host family change is deemed necessary, the American GAPP coordinator must contact the GAPP office in New York *at least two weeks prior to the student's proposed move date* to initiate the change of placement. *Before moving the student, new F4a, F4b, and F4c host family forms (with 5-7 photos of the home) must be filled out and submitted to GAPP, all criminal background checks for household members 18+ must come back clear, and an in-person host family interview and orientation must be conducted.* The American GAPP coordinator searches for a new host family, but a new placement is not guaranteed. If no suitable replacement host family is found, the program ends.
    - It is advisable to interview, select, and pre-screen (with criminal background checks) an "emergency host family" ahead of time, in the event that a new host family is needed.

- Maintain *monthly contact* with the exchange student and host family, documented on the F3c Monthly Report Form. The monthly report form should also include a paragraph about the student's current activities. If a host family change is deemed necessary, the circumstances must be documented on the first monthly form after the change has occurred.

- Select a school official or administrator to visit the exchange student in their host family home *within 60 days of the student's arrival*, documented on the F3d Program Report Form.

- Inform the GAPP office of any significant changes in the student's or host family's circumstances (e.g. school closings, evacuations, etc.).

- Report any allegations of sexual misconduct to the Department of State, the local authorities, and the GAPP office.

- Submit an evaluation report on the hosting experience written by a school administrator.

- The GAPP coordinator has the right to terminate the stay of an exchange student at any time. The student and their natural parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for any costs associated with travel back to Germany.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GERMAN GAPP COORDINATOR

- Select students for long-term exchanges according to maturity, character, language proficiency, and academic abilities. Provide the student with the contact information of their U.S. high school, the American GAPP coordinator, and their host family.
- Provide the student information about the United States, their high school, the community surrounding their high school, and the U.S. high school system in general (the more specific, the better—explain to them about the number of students, courses and subjects, credits, etc.).
- Prepare the student for potential intercultural conflicts that may arise during the exchange (e.g., host family rules, dating rules, laws, etc.)
- Assist the student with travel arrangements.
- Support the student in finding a health insurance plan that meets the U.S. State Department coverage requirements (*see page 15 for requirements*).
- Provide the student with age- and language-appropriate information about how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTICIPANT AND RULES OF PARTICIPATION WITH GAPP

- Must be a current secondary school student in Germany who has not completed more than eleven years of study. Students who have already completed secondary school in Germany prior to the proposed exchange program start date are not eligible to participate in a long-term exchange.
- Must be between the ages of 15 and 18½ by the program start date.
- May not have already participated in an academic semester- or year-long secondary school exchange program in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 status.
- Possess sufficient English language proficiency to participate in the exchange, certified by the student and German GAPP coordinator.
- Provide a translated academic transcript with F1b, Student Interview Form as part of the DS-2019 application and upon request by the school administration for enrollment purposes.
- May not obtain a U.S. driver's license.
- May not be employed but may accept sporadic employment, such as babysitting or yard work.
- Athletic eligibility for or participation in competitive sports is not guaranteed. The exchange student may participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, including athletics (varsity/JV sports), only if participation is permitted by both the local school district and the state authority responsible for determining athletic eligibility.

- Visits from parents and friends from Germany during the student's exchange are subject to the prior consent of the host family but *should not occur during the first five months of the student's exchange*. The American GAPP coordinator must be informed in advance of any planned visits.
- Must follow host family rules.

- Follow the GAPP host family change procedure: If the student feels uncomfortable in their assigned host family, they should first explain their concerns to the American GAPP coordinator. The student may also contact the GAPP office with concerns. *A host family change may only occur after a series of discussions involving the German and American GAPP coordinators, the host parents, and the student.* If a host family change is deemed necessary, a new family must be found and fully vetted in advance of the student's move. If no suitable replacement host family is found, the program ends.

- After the exchange, the student is asked to submit a one-page, English-language report about their exchange experience in the U.S.

INFORMATION FOR THE HOST FAMILY

- Each member of the prospective host family household aged 18 or older must consent to a criminal background check conducted by GAPP via Checkr, Inc. This is a U.S. State Department requirement.

- Review the GAPP document entitled "Chapter 7: How to host a German Exchange Student."

- Families hosting exchange students are eligible to receive a $50 per month tax deduction. *The U.S. State Department prohibits host families from receiving any other form of financial contribution for hosting an exchange student.*

- Submit evaluations to American GAPP Coordinator before or shortly after the exchange student returns to Germany.

- Students may not live with any of their relatives.

- Host families must be capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and possess sufficient financial resources to do so.

- All host family responsibilities are listed on F4a, Host Family Application Form.

FEES AND EXPENSES

Fee/Expense	Estimated Cost
GAPP non-refundable DS-2019 application fee	$1,500*
SEVIS fee (current fee schedules: SEVIS)	$220*
Health Insurance (must cover the full duration of stay)	Appr. €35 to €65 per month
Consulate visa fee (current fee schedules for Germany)	$185*
Passport pictures	Appr. €10
Travel to and from U.S.	Varies by state, appr. €400-€800
German passport	€37,50*

*Fees are subject to change

Additionally, students will need personal spending money. The amount depends on personal spending habits and abilities, but we recommend budgeting about $200-$300/month, taking into account age and other factors.

4. IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENTS TO BRING ALONG

- **Passport and printed Form DS-2019**
  To apply for a J-1 visa and enter the United States, you must have a passport valid for at least six months after your proposed exchange program end date. It is not permitted to enter the United States with a provisional passport. In addition to your passport, you must present a *printed copy of Form DS-2019* to enter the United States.

- **Personalausweis (identification card)**
  It is also recommended to bring your identification card, in addition to your passport. It should be kept in a safe place after your arrival in the U.S. Your personal identification card serves as proof of your identity and age. In the U.S., it is useful to always carry a form of ID with you.

- **A (copy of) your birth certificate and student ID if necessary**

- **Complete copy of your GAPP DS-2019 application**
  The American coordinator's and high school principal's signatures on the application form officially justify the presence of the exchange student in the U.S.

- **SEVIS documents (proof of payment of the SEVIS fee)**

- **Vaccinations and vaccination card**
  U.S. schools often require exchange students to be vaccinated against diphtheria, measles, mumps, pertussis, polio, rubella, and tetanus. Please ask the American GAPP coordinator for detailed information on your partner school's policies. Some schools or school districts/states require additional vaccinations, e.g., against hepatitis B. Please ensure that your health certificate/vaccination card indicates the exact dates of vaccinations and/or infections.

- **Health insurance and certificates of insurance**
  We strongly recommend contacting the health insurance company prior to departure to make sure the coverage fully meets the student's needs for the duration of their exchange in the United States, e.g. for routine medical care, dental care, or vision coverage.

  If necessary, obtain an additional travel health insurance plan to meet the minimum coverage amounts required by the U.S. Department of State. When it comes to liability insurance policies, in most cases, the same conditions apply in the U.S. as in Germany, but it's best to contact your insurance company to make sure. The insurance company will also inform you of any additional policies you may need.

  Please familiarize yourself with the terms and conditions of your insurance policy and with the process for filing a claim.

Minimal Coverage Amounts (Determined By the U.S. Dep. of State):
$100,000 per illness/accident
$25,000 for repatriation of remains
$50,000 medical evacuation coverage (minimum)
Deductible not exceeding $500 per accident/illness

- **English-language copies of your most recent academic transcripts**
- **Proof of financial support**
  Bring an English-language letter written by your parents, stating how much financial support you will receive during your exchange (sample letter at the end of this document).

> The student should have **two copies** of all documents. The student's natural family should keep one set in Germany, and the student should bring a back-up set in case of emergency. **One set of the above documents should be kept in an easily accessible place in the student's carry-on bag when traveling.**

WHAT TO PACK IN YOUR CARRY-ON BAGS

We recommend bringing toiletries and extra clothes in your carry-on bags, in case of delayed or missing checked bags. Always attach multiple tags with your name, email address, and destination (your host family's address) to your checked and carry-on bags. **Sharp items, lighters, liquids, gels, and aerosols are not permitted in carry-on bags.** You are allowed to pack one quart-sized ziplock bag with liquids in containers of 3 ounces or less in your carry-on bags. Liquid medications may only be transported in carry-on bags if you can present a medical prescription for them.

We recommend packing the following items in your carry-on bags:

- ☐ Boarding passes and other travel documents
- ☐ Passport (with J-1 visa) and printed Form DS-2019
- ☐ Complete copy of the GAPP DS-2019 application
- ☐ Proof of health insurance and other insurance documents
- ☐ Medications (including English translation of the medication names and corresponding medical prescriptions)
- ☐ Student identification card, issued by the American GAPP coordinator. The student ID card includes contact information for the student, the American host family, the high school, and the GAPP office in New York.
- ☐ Credit card and debit card (*see section 5*)
- ☐ Cash (U.S. dollars in small bills)
- ☐ Valuables (glasses, jewelry, camera, electronics, chargers & plug adapters)
- ☐ Change of clothes, umbrella/rain jacket, essential supplies in case of flight delay or emergency

The GAPP Student Identification Card

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION CARD

Note: The student ID card must be corrected, reprinted, and reissued to the student if changes occur due to a change in the student's placement and a copy must be mailed to the GAPP office in New York (see address below).

GAPP-Exchange Student

Name: _____

SEVIS ID # N 000_____

Host Family

Name: _____

Address: _____

Direct Phone: _____ Cell:_____

High School

Name (State): _____

GAPP-Coordinator's Name: _____

Direct Phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail:_____

Health Insurance

Provider: _____

Policy-#: _____

Department of State, Exchange Visitor Program
http://j1visa.state.gov/
Department of State Emergency Hotline: (1-866-283-9090 – toll-free)
E-mail: jvisas@state.gov

Sponsor
German American Partnership Program (GAPP)
Ajkuna Hoppe, Executive Director
30 Irving Place, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10003, USA
Program ID # P-3-05801
Phone: (212) 439-8700, Fax: (212) 439-8705
Cell phone: (646) 267 2022
E-mail: ajkuna.hoppe@goethe.de

Please give two printed copies to the student (one for their documents file, and one backup) and **email a PDF to the GAPP office!**

5. TRAVEL PREPARATIONS & PRACTICAL INFORMATION

MEDICAL CHECK-UP

Before your trip to the U.S., you should make an appointment with your doctor for an annual check-up. If needed, your doctor should write a note describing your prescriptions and medical conditions (also translated to English) for you to include with your DS-2019 application materials (along with the Medical Form).

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The host family is not responsible for paying for the exchange student on family trips or outings. Therefore, it is necessary for the student to have sufficient funds for eating out, movies, trips, etc. It is advisable for the students and their natural parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss how much spending money the student will receive.

SPENDING MONEY

We have gathered from former exchange student reports that $200 – $300 per month is an appropriate amount of spending money for the duration of the exchange. Depending on their age and grade, German exchange students are usually placed in the final, "senior" class (grade 12) at U.S. high schools. The senior year often includes additional privileges and events (homecoming, senior prom, etc.) that should be considered when determining the student's monthly spending budget.

SIDE JOBS

Secondary school exchange students in J-1 status are permitted to take on sporadic employment, such as babysitting, helping in the household, or yard work. However, U.S. labor laws prohibit J-1 exchange students from being officially employed in both full- and part-time positions. Additional laws surrounding babysitting may differ by state, so it is advisable to ask the GAPP coordinator or do research before accepting a side job.

DEUTSCHE BANK AND BANK OF AMERICA ATM ALLIANCE

We do not recommend bringing your spending money with you in cash when traveling to the U.S. The best strategy is to open a bank account at Deutsche Bank in Germany, as there is an "ATM alliance" between Deutsche Bank and Bank of America, the third-largest bank in the United States. You won't be charged any fees when withdrawing money from a Bank of America ATM with your Deutsche Bank debit card.

Parents/guardians in Germany should have full access to the bank account in case of emergency. The student should keep track of their German account using online banking. There are usually several Bank of America ATMs in major U.S. cities, but as access can be more challenging in rural areas, please locate the nearest ATMs in your student's community: https://locators.bankofamerica.com/

OTHER BANK OFFERS

Similar offers are available from banks like ComDirekt or Postbank, which don't charge their customers for withdrawing money overseas. We recommend researching the options before the exchange program begins.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are the most common form of payment in many parts of the U.S. It's worth discussing whether the student should have their own credit card or a card connected to the parent/guardian's bank account, to be used only for emergencies. It's best to set the credit card limit relatively low as a safeguard against potential financial hardship if the card is stolen or abused. Please contact your bank for further information.

GIFTS FOR YOUR HOST FAMILY

Bringing a small gift for your host family is a kind gesture to thank them for their hospitality. You could bring books about Germany or special products from your home region. Personal gifts are also a great idea—a photo album or a calendar with pictures of your home and family? Or a CD with German songs for your host siblings? Younger siblings are often excited about paper models of German castles, timber houses, or famous landmarks. For further ideas, check out: http://www.schueleraustausch-abc.de/20100617/top-10-die-beliebtesten-gastgeschenke/

THE U.S. DOLLAR

It is advisable to keep track of the exchange rate and to consider fluctuations. On http://www.oanda.com/lang/de/currency/converter/ you can check the current exchange rates. If you're interested in the symbols and historical figures on the dollar bills or in the history of the U.S. Dollar, see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/US-Dollar for more information.

SALES TAX

Prices in the U.S. usually exclude sales tax, which is added upon check-out. Sales taxes are determined by each state and vary depending on state and city. Sales taxes in each state are listed here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sales_taxes_in_the_United_States.

VOLTAGE

U.S. electrical outlets take 110 volts, while German outlets take 220. As a result, German electronics usually don't work in the U.S. However, some special travel appliances (e.g., travel hair dryers) can be converted to accept 110 volts. Cell phones and computers usually adapt to different voltage amounts automatically. Other electronics can be used in the U.S. with a voltage converter. It's a good idea to bring a voltage converter and several plug adapters.

MEASUREMENTS AND TEMPERATURES

The U.S. doesn't use the metric system for distances, weights, and quantities, but instead, the Anglo-American/U.S. customary system. The Fahrenheit temperature scale is also used instead of Celsius. The Umrechnung.org online unit converter is a helpful tool: http://www.umrechnung.org/.

PHONE PLANS AND SIM CARDS

When using your German cell phone and German SIM card in the U.S., you may encounter expensive roaming costs, unless you have an international phone plan.

Pre-paid phones and SIM cards are a convenient option. Please be aware that some cell phone plans in the U.S. charge for a fixed number of minutes and text messages per month, unless you choose an unlimited plan. It's a good idea to choose a plan that includes data, in addition to minutes and texts, as WiFi (WLAN) is not always available in rural parts of the U.S. Popular cell phone providers in the U.S. are AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon. Representatives at these stores can help you find a suitable prepaid plan.

Keep in mind that iPhones and Android phones may need to be "unlocked" by your current cell phone provider in Germany before accepting a new SIM card. It's a good idea to contact your provider before leaving Germany to make sure your phone is unlocked.

WHATSAPP/ FACETIME/ COUNTRY CODES

FaceTime and WhatsApp are great alternatives to international phone calls for free video or audio calls with friends and family in Germany.

The most important country codes are:

To the U.S.	001	
For example:	GAPP office New York	001 – 212 – 439 8700 (USA) – (area code) – (number)
To Germany	0049 01149 (landline)	
For example:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin	01149 – 30 – 5000 0 (GER) – (area code without 0) – (number)

WIFI

In the U.S., free WiFi is available in many public places, such as schools and cafes. If the student plans on bringing a laptop to use during their exchange, it's polite for them to ask the host family whether they can use their WiFi network, and whether their connection is strong enough to use multiple devices at once.

LETTERS AND PACKAGES

If you'd like to send letters or postcards in the mail, you can buy stamps at the post office, but also at many newsstands and grocery stores (be aware that these stores often charge a bit more than the actual value of the stamp). It normally takes around three to ten days for a letter sent from the U.S. to reach Germany.

Please note the different address format in the U.S.:

House/Building Number Street Name Apartment Number (if applicable)
City, Abbreviation of State ZIP Code

6. LIVING WITH A HOST FAMILY

HOST FAMILY

It would be impossible to describe a "typical" American family because there is no such thing. The United States is a nation of immigrants, and Americans are proud of their diversity. No matter if your host family has Central or South American, Asian, African, Native American, or European heritage, their roots influence their values and daily routines. Living with a host family affords each student a unique opportunity for immersion in their host community by developing close relationships with their host family and participating in family or community activities and traditions.

HOST FAMILY SELECTION

GAPP does not select host families for exchange students. Instead, the American GAPP coordinator finds a host family in their community for each student.

U.S. Department of State regulations require all members of the host family household aged 18 and older to comply with a criminal background check. Exchange students are not permitted to live with their relatives during their exchange.

THE EXCHANGE STUDENT AS AMBASSADOR

The exchange student's behavior at school and in the host family home determines the outcome of the exchange and often informs the perceptions Americans have of Germans and Germany. GAPP exchange students should keep in mind that they are ambassadors of their country and should take care to represent Germany positively.

CULTURAL PARTICULARITIES

American host families enjoy getting to know their exchange student, learning more about Germany, and having intercultural experiences. They are also eager to introduce the exchange student to American culture. If you are open-minded and show interest, you'll be capable of resolving any small conflicts that may occur between you and your host family. Conflicts often arise from miscommunication and cultural misunderstandings. Having a basic knowledge of regional characteristics, e.g., economy, ethnic background, and religion, as well as familiarity with modes of transportation, dress codes, or the meaning of closed doors, will help you avoid such misunderstandings. Intercultural learning begins with gaining a new perspective on your own life and behaviors, and living abroad allows you to do so.

HOUSEHOLD

To integrate yourself into your host family household, and to show your gratitude for the family's hospitality, we advise that you act not like a guest, but like a family member. Be part of the family's daily routine and show your willingness to help with the household! If they invite you to join a family outing or activity, show your appreciation and go along!

MEALS

Sitting down at the dining room table to eat together is not as common in American families as it is in many German families. Often, breakfast is prepared individually—the German student may just be told with a friendly, "help yourself!" to take whatever they like from the kitchen. Although lunch is usually available at school, some students bring their own lunch.

Many families do, however, eat dinner together at the table. Please keep this in mind when planning your day and inform your family as early as possible if you ever won't be home for dinner.

TABLE MANNERS AND FOOD

Just like Germans, Americans value table manners. Sometimes, exchange students find it difficult to adjust to the "American style" of eating, but a general openness to try new things will help to prevent disappointments on both sides. Of course, there is no problem with expressing your own food preferences. It's also a great idea for the German student to cook a German meal for their host family to thank them for their hospitality.

DISCUSSIONS

In every family, discussions and arguments can arise from time to time. However, it's best to respect your host family's beliefs about religion or politics. There is nothing wrong with having different views, but your tone of voice should always show care, respect, and a desire to find mutual understanding. Try to avoid making hasty judgments or derogatory remarks.

PATRIOTISM

Many German exchange students take time to adjust to American patriotism. For example, at many schools, students say the Pledge of Allegiance each morning. In a country with such a diversity of cultures, traditions, values, and experiences, expressions of patriotism are thought to unify the American people. The exchange student should be open-minded and understand that patriotism has a long history and complex function in American culture. We encourage GAPP exchange students to discuss patriotism with their American friends and host families.

RELIGION

Religion is important for many communities in the U.S. Religious institutions function as spaces for community-building and religious education. Many religious communities mainly consist of members of the same ethnic background and uphold the traditional beliefs and practices of that ethnic community. In addition to providing spiritual guidance, these communities often organize social programs like childcare and activities for senior citizens.

The German exchange student is not obligated to attend religious services with their host family. However, occasional visits allow the student a glimpse of American cultural traditions and may foster mutual understanding.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Most extracurricular activities in the U.S. are organized by high school athletics and clubs (see chapter 7). Since public transportation is often not as available as in Germany, you will likely depend on your host family and friends to drive you in their cars. Please be aware that American teenagers are usually raised less liberally than German teenagers and might, for example, not be allowed to stay out for as long as the exchange student can in Germany. The German student is expected to respect their host family's rules.

CLOSED DOORS

If you wish to have some privacy, please consider that doors in American households usually stay open—closed doors are interpreted as, "please do not disturb." Having your bedroom door closed all the time may be seen as rude. We recommend discussing this with your host family early on.

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

American students follow much stricter rules surrounding alcohol consumption than students in Germany. Smoking is permitted from the age of 18 (as it is in Germany), but the legal age to drink alcohol in the U.S. is 21. Smoking is prohibited in almost all public buildings in the U.S., and most states have extended the smoking ban to restaurants, bars, and clubs.

Especially when it comes to alcohol, the German student is required to strictly adhere to United States law and their host family's rules. Failure to do so will lead to the immediate termination of the program, which means that the exchange student must return to Germany.

TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS

Large parts of the United States are characterized by a more generally conservative attitude. Tattoos and piercings are not appreciated in many areas, and there may be rules about them at some high schools. If you wish to openly show your tattoos and piercings, please contact your American GAPP coordinator and your host family before departing from Germany to prevent any conflicts.

7. HIGH SCHOOL IN THE U.S.

HIGH SCHOOL

All high schools in the U.S. are comprehensive schools. Unlike in Germany, in the U.S. there is only one form of secondary school, which all American students attend, unless they are enrolled at a private school or home-schooled. High schools provide students with a general secondary education, although they are sorted into different levels according to their academic abilities.

Since education in the U.S. is the responsibility of each state, educational systems in the 50 states vary. In addition, each school district within the state has authority over the curricula and organization of the schools in their district.

Students attend high school after middle school (usually grades 5-8). High school can also be subdivided into junior high school (grades 7 to 8) and senior high school (grades 9 to 12).

GRADUATING CLASSES AND THE SCHOOL YEAR

In senior high school, each graduating class (grade) is identified by a different name: freshmen (9th grade), sophomores (10th grade), juniors (11th grade), and seniors (12th grade). Just like in Germany, the school year is subdivided into two semesters. The fall semester usually begins at the end of August or beginning of September and runs through December, and the spring semester usually runs from January through May or June. Summer breaks can last for up to three months. The U.S. Department of State strongly recommends starting a long-term exchange on the first day of the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND OFFERINGS

The German exchange student is advised to speak with the American GAPP coordinator or the school guidance counselor for help with designing their course schedule. U.S. high schools usually offer a wider range of courses and subjects than German secondary schools. As mentioned earlier, there are different levels offered for each class. However, it is advisable to select courses equivalent to the German “Oberstufe,” especially if the student wishes to receive credits for these courses back in Germany. We recommend speaking with the German GAPP coordinator to determine which courses fulfil the requirements of the German school.

SCHOOL DAY

A typical school day in the U.S. starts between 7:30 and 8:30 AM and lasts through the afternoon. Most American students have lunch in the school cafeteria, although some bring their lunches or find lunch off-campus (if permitted). Unlike in Germany, the students, not the teachers, rotate classrooms in U.S. high schools. There is only a short break (often 5-10 minutes) between classes, which should not be extended for personal reasons. The "home room," or "advisory," teacher may take attendance and give out important information once per day.

SCHOOL RULES

U.S. high schools often have more rules than German schools, as student discipline is considered a virtue. The German exchange student is expected to take note of the school rules and follow them diligently. For example, in the U.S., it is considered very rude to snap your finger when you raise your hand to answer a question. Following the school’s dress code is also very important. Attendance is compulsory, and it's uncommon to have free periods. You may even need to ask the teacher for a "hall pass" to use to the bathroom.

ABSENCES

If you must miss class for health-related reasons, it's best to check with your school administration in advance to find out what you need to do. At some schools, it's sufficient to call in sick in the morning, while at others, students must submit a doctor's note. The exchange student should closely read the school rules and ask the American GAPP coordinator for clarification as needed. Violating school rules is considered very disrespectful and may work against the goal of intercultural understanding.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

While in Germany, only a few schools offer extracurricular activities in the afternoon, it's standard for U.S. high schools to have a wide range of extracurricular activities offered in the afternoon. Besides participating in the numerous athletic options, students can join different clubs (model UN, mock trial, foreign language clubs, etc.) and creative clubs (art, music, dance, theatre, etc.). Competitive sports events with other schools are an essential part of school spirit, so American students usually identify much more with their schools than Germans. Attending sports games and rooting for your school's team with your peers is a classic American high school experience!

ATHLETICS

The exchange student may participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, including athletics (varsity/JV sports), only if participation is authorized by the local school district and by the state authority responsible for determining athletic eligibility. Please keep in mind that varsity and junior varsity teams can be extremely competitive at U.S. high schools, and most have an extensive "tryouts" process to determine students' placement, so a spot on the varsity/JV team is not guaranteed.

SENIOR YEAR AND GRADUATION

Most German exchange students attend 12th grade in the U.S. and will be seniors at the American high school. Senior students take part in many special events during their final year at high school, such as senior prom and graduation festivities—these are often highlights of the senior year and represent a culmination of students' high school careers. Often, students and their families buy or borrow formal attire for prom and graduation events, and they may even arrange for special "extras"—dinner before school dances, a car service to prom, etc. These are memorable experiences for the exchange student and the senior class, and we encourage the German student to plan on spending a bit of extra money for such events.

SCHOOL WEBSITE

It is advisable to review your U.S. partner school's website before your departure to get an overview for the courses and extracurricular activities offered. In many cases, you'll also need to enroll in your courses before leaving Germany—for help with this, please ask the American GAPP coordinator. Being informed about the staff, school rules, and other general school information before your exchange begins will ensure a smoother start.

8. LAST BUT NOT LEAST

EMERGENCIES

In case of an emergency, call 911. In most cities, this number dials the first responder, who then directs your call to the police, fire department, or rescue services, depending on the type of emergency. Only call when there is an actual emergency!

CONTACT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Although today's communication technologies and social media allow frequent communication with family and friends across the world, you should keep in mind that homesickness is a normal part of being an exchange student, and that keeping in touch with loved ones in Germany may actually make you more homesick. It's more difficult to make new friends in the U.S. if you're always thinking about your friends back home, so try to be open to new friendships and conversations with your peers in the U.S. To improve your English, you should try to speak English as much as possible—also in your free time. It's important to keep in regular contact with your friends and family in Germany, but out of respect for your host family, try to limit your calls where possible.

VISITORS FROM GERMANY

Having visitors from Germany may interrupt and slow down the acclimation process, since you may fall back into your German behavioral patterns and cultural thinking. American host parents may also find it difficult to switch roles from parents to only hosts. Similarly, the German parents will need to accept that their child has undertaken a challenging new experience in the United States, and that independence is an essential part of an exchange. Visits from parents and friends from Germany are subject to the prior consent of the host family but should not occur during the first five months of the exchange.

Mental Health Information from the U.S. Department of State:

MENTAL HEALTH

Youth mental health remains a critical issue in the U.S. and is impacting exchange student programs. In 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a new advisory to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. The recommendations below are provided for U.S. youth, parents, schools, and host families:

https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf

As of July 16, 2022, all calls and text messages to "988" route to a 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline call center. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7, confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress.

Additional resources for finding treatment: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Below you'll find useful links and resources pertaining to long-term exchanges in the U.S.

General Information

- Information on the U.S. from the German Federal Foreign Office:
  http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Laenderinformationen/00-SiHi/UsaVereinigteStaatenSicherheit.html

- Lonely Planet is an English-language travel guide. The USA section of the website provides information about living and traveling in the U.S.:
  http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa

- The Center for Travel Medicine (Centrum für Reisemedizin) offers current information on health-related travel information:
  http://www.crm.de/

American Links

- You can search your host family home and school addresses on Google Maps to gain an idea of your host community:
  http://maps.google.com

- You are likely already familiar with a few American newspapers and magazines. Reading articles every once in a while allows you to improve your English comprehension and stay up-to-date on news and culture in the U.S. Researching local newspapers and publications in your town is also a great way to learn more about your host city and community.

  New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/
  Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/
  The New Yorker: http://www.newyorker.com/
  New York Magazine: https://nymag.com/
  Los Angeles Times: http://www.latimes.com/
  Time Magazine: http://www.time.com/time/

Books

- *Als Gastschüler in den USA* by Max Rauner, Reise KnowHow
- *Mein Jahr in den USA* by Daniel Faltin, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag
- *Gebrauchsanweisung für die USA* by Adriano Sack, Pieper

Sample Letter for Proof of Financial Support

Please note: It is also advisable to bring parent/guardian bank statements from the last 3 months to the interview at the U.S. consulate/embassy as supporting documents.

To Whom It May Concern:

(My/our) (*son/daughter/foster child*) (*student's name*) will be in the U.S. from (*dates of your exchange in the U.S.*), participating in a long-term exchange between (*U.S. high school/state*) and the (*German school*), sponsored by the German American Partnership Program.

This letter certifies that *(I/we)* will provide *(my/our)* (*son/daughter/foster child*) with financial assistance during his/her exchange program in the U.S. *(I/we)* guarantee to send *(my/our)* (*son/daughter/foster child*) at least _____ *EUR (write the amount listed on Form DS-2019, divided by the number of months your child will be in the U.S.)* per month for personal expenses.

_____
(Date and signature of parent(s)/guardian(s))

We hope this information helps you prepare for your exchange in the United States.

The GAPP team wishes you the best of luck for a successful and exciting exchange!

Comments, concerns, or ideas for improvement are always welcome, as this guide is intended to help and support students. Please email gappLT@goethe.de with any constructive feedback.