



# PROGRAM HANDBOOK



School District 64 (Gulf Islands)  
112 Rainbow Road,  
Salt Spring Island, B.C.  
Canada, V8K 2K3  
[www.studyinbc.ca](http://www.studyinbc.ca) or [www.studyinbc.cn](http://www.studyinbc.cn)

# Table of Contents

- Fast Facts, page 3
- Introduction, page 3
- Why Study in Canada, page 4
- Why Study in British Columbia, page 5
- Why Study in the Gulf Islands, page 6
- Programs, page 10
  - Graduation Program, page 10
  - English as a Second Language and French Immersion, page 13
  - Cultural Awareness Program, page 14
  - Junior Program, page 18
  - Short-term Programs, page 16
- School, page 17
- Homestay and Medical Insurance, page 18
- Authorization of Grades, page 19
- Application Process, page 19
- Fees and Refund Policy, page 20
- Additional Resources, page 24
- Gulf Islands International Program Video Link, page 33



# Fast Facts

## Studying in Canada

1. Canada has one of the best education systems in the world and **ranks in first place in the PISA** scores for English speaking countries.

## Studying in the Gulf Islands International Program

1. Gulf Islands Secondary School has one of the most best average class sizes in British Columbia, 21.6 compared to the provincial average of 23.4, with no classes over 30 students.
2. In an recent Report on Schools, **62.4%** of the Gulf Islands students graduated with an **Honours Standing**. This compares favorably with the provincial average of 47.8% for all public and independent schools in British Columbia.
3. The **Graduation Rate** at Gulf Islands is **95.9%**, one of the highest in British Columbia.
4. The **average GPA** of graduates from Gulf Islands Secondary School is **3.1 or B** (on a four-point scale) compared to a provincial average of 2.89 or C+.



## Quality of Life

1. Over **95% (98<sup>th</sup> percentile)** of students attending Gulf Islands Secondary School **reported feeling safe** at school. This compares with the provincial average of 75%.
2. **Less than one percent** of the students attending Gulf Islands Secondary School **reported being bullied, picked on, or teased**. This compares to an average of 8.3% for the rest of the province of British Columbia.
3. **97% (100<sup>th</sup> percentile)** of Gulf Islands Secondary School students **reported that they respected other students** who think, look or act differently than they do. 83% of the students in the rest of the province felt the same way.

## Introduction

According to the Canadian Association of Public Schools – International (CAPS-I) website, over 20,000 international students are currently studying in CAPS-I member elementary schools, middle schools and high schools in Canada. Like the other CAPS-I members, the Gulf Islands International Program (School District 64) is dedicated to offering “comprehensive, government-approved

curriculum and superior care and support for international students in both school and living environments”.

The Gulf Islands International Program is authorized by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) and the provinces and territories, through the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), to proudly use the *Imagine Education au/in Canada brand*, which ensures a commitment “to providing a wide range of world-class programs and an academic environment that is welcoming, stimulating, and safe; where tolerance and celebration of cultural and educational diversity are paramount”.

At the provincial level, the Gulf Islands International Program (School District 64) adheres to the principles of the British Columbia Center of International Education (BCCIE), a government sponsored agency that is committed to advancing the international education interests of the province of British Columbia.

The Gulf Islands International Program (School District 64) was one of the first programs to join the newly formed International Public School Education Association (IPSEA), a consortium of public school international programs that encourages and promotes best

practices in international education in the Province of British Columbia.

## Why Study in Canada?

### High Quality Public Education in Canada

Canada’s public education system consists of schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12. All public schools in Canada are provincially accredited, follow a standard curriculum, employ only government certified teachers and are publicly funded. While the education system in each province contains many similarities, each has its own provincial curriculum and guidelines that reflect the culture and history of each region. Over 95% of Canadians choose public school education for their children. Canada spends more on education (per capita) than any other country in the G8. Canadian public high school students consistently rank near the top in the world on standardized tests and Canadian high school graduation diplomas are recognized throughout the world.

- According to the **Quality of Life Index**, Canada ranks as 2<sup>nd</sup> on a list of the world’s top countries.
- The **United Nations Human Development Index** ranks Canada in the top 10 countries in the world in the category of human development.

- Canada scored at, or near, the top in areas such as housing, education, health, and life satisfaction among the 34 major industrialized countries that make up the OECD.
- The **Global Peace Index for 2012** ranked Canada as the third safest country in the world to live.
- Canada consistently ranks near the top in the OECD's **PISA** results, which assessed the competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science (with a focus on reading). Canada ranked first in the list of the English-speaking countries.



## Why Study in British Columbia?

### High Quality Public Education in British Columbia

According to the British Columbia Centre for International Education (BCCIE), British Columbia offers international students:

- Top quality, wide-ranging education opportunities at all levels (The Conference Board of Canada ranked [B.C. as the country's best education system](#) in 2014)
- Moderate climate and safe surroundings
- Geographic location, as Canada's Gateway to the Pacific and Asia
- Healthy, active lifestyle with abundant outdoor activities
- Diverse physical geography, communities, and cultures

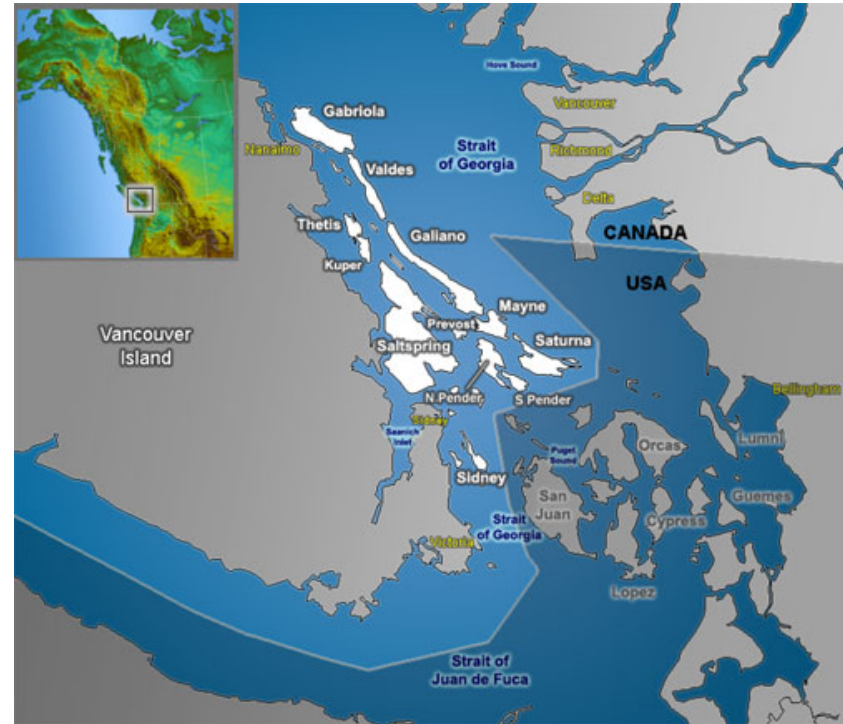


# Why Study in the Gulf Islands?

## A Quality Education and Quality Lifestyle

*“Living on Salt Spring Island was truly a great experience. Being a small island that was full of nature and a tight-knit community of friendly people, Salt Spring was a place where I always felt relaxed, safe and welcome. I learned a great deal about sustainability and the environment from living and spending time outdoors on Salt Spring Island and through the lifestyle of the people on the island - especially through my host family. I lived with a wonderful host family who really welcomed me in as part of their family and exposed me to so many different things. My experience on Salt Spring Island truly sparked my interest in sustainability and that has greatly affected the way I see the world today. Salt Spring, also being a community so enriched by the arts, gave me more motivation to explore my own interest in this area.” Yuko Okamura, Japan*

*After graduating from Gulf Islands Secondary, Yuko studied Architecture at the University of Washington, before entering the Master of Architecture program at the University of British Columbia.*



The Gulf Islands International Education Program is located on scenic Salt Spring Island, the largest of Canada’s famous Gulf Islands. This island community enjoys an ideal location. It is only 30 minutes from the provincial capital city of Victoria, yet enjoys the natural beauty of the West Coast of Canada. Well known as a highly educated, creative and professional community, Salt Spring Island also enjoys a reputation for being one of the most desirable places in Canada to live with more sunshine and warmer temperatures year-round than any other place in British Columbia.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °C (°F)	14 (57)	16 (61)	19.5 (67.1)	26 (79)	32 (90)	31.5 (88.7)	31.5 (88.7)	36.5 (97.7)	32 (90)	25.5 (77.9)	16.5 (61.7)	15 (59)	36.5 (97.7)
Average high °C (°F)	5.5 (41.9)	7.3 (45.1)	10.3 (50.5)	13.5 (56.3)	16.9 (62.4)	19.5 (67.1)	22.1 (71.8)	22.3 (72.1)	18.6 (65.5)	13 (55)	7.9 (46.2)	5.3 (41.5)	13.5 (56.3)
Average low °C (°F)	-0.4 (31.3)	0 (32)	1.3 (34.3)	3.1 (37.6)	5.9 (42.6)	8.5 (47.3)	10.3 (50.5)	10.3 (50.5)	7.6 (45.7)	4.4 (39.9)	1.5 (34.7)	-0.2 (31.6)	4.4 (39.9)
Record low °C (°F)	-14 (7)	-13 (9)	-10.5 (13.1)	-3 (27)	-1.5 (29.3)	2.5 (36.5)	3.5 (38.3)	3 (37)	-0.5 (31.1)	-5 (23)	-16 (3)	-17.5 (0.5)	-17.5 (0.5)
Precipitation mm (inches)	150.9 (5.941)	125.1 (4.925)	99.9 (3.933)	67.3 (2.65)	48.9 (1.925)	37.5 (1.476)	22.9 (0.902)	27.6 (1.087)	35 (1.38)	88.5 (3.484)	176.5 (6.949)	148 (5.83)	1,028.2 (40.48)

Although part of the charm of living on the Gulf Islands is being away from the hustle and bustle of the city, the residents of Salt Spring Island enjoy a fast and efficient ferry service to Vancouver, Victoria and Vancouver Island. British Columbia Ferries ([www.bcferrries.ca](http://www.bcferrries.ca)) have numerous sailings to these destinations every day.



Salt Spring Island is well known in North America as a center of the arts. Many of Canada's top writers, performing artists and visual artists choose to make Salt Spring Island their home. Salt Spring Island is also a very professional community and an ideal place to raise a family. The low crime rates and sense of community foster a sense of belonging and security. Many of our international students come from very large cities, yet the island quickly becomes their Canadian home, a place that they never forget.



*“Going to Gulf Islands Secondary School was the best choice of my life. The friendships that I made there will always be a part of my life. Salt Spring Island is my second home and I will always appreciate the care and support that my host family gave me. I thank my teacher’s and friends for giving me the confidence and skills to go to university. The teachers at Gulf Islands Secondary are the best.” Robin Yin, Hong Kong.*

*Robin is a recent graduate from the University of Toronto and has been working as a research assistant at the university. He is currently pursuing a Master degree and then will be doing his PhD.”*

The Gulf Islands International Program is truly committed to ethnic diversity and celebrates the synergy that results when young people from around the globe work together to create a better world. The Gulf Islands International Education Program has rapidly become one of the most popular international programs in Canada. The commitment to ethnic diversity, limits on enrolment from any one country, and a combined capacity of 75 students ensures that our International students receive a quality Canadian educational experience in two of the province’s best schools.

The Gulf Islands International Education Program offers a variety of quality high school and middle school programs, outstanding academic and elective course options, university preparation, intensive English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, tutor support and vocational programs. As a highly educated, creative and professional community, the Gulf Islands School District

recognizes the importance of a quality education and has made the Gulf Islands International Program an educational priority. In the Gulf Islands, dreams come true and there are no limitations to what you imagine you can do.



Graduates from the Gulf Islands International Program attend some of the most prestigious universities in Canada and the United States, including the University of Victoria, York University, the University of British Columbia, Carleton University, Purdue University, McGill University, Boston University, the University of Iowa, Simon Fraser University, Mount Allison University and the University of Toronto.



*“Every day at Gulf Islands Secondary School was a good memory for me. I learned so much about myself, other cultures and the environment. This experience gave me the confidence and the English and academic skills that I needed to pursue my post-secondary education in Canada”. Max Yaoshishen, China.*

*Max is currently studying at Carleton University on a full scholarship for his first year.*

Given the strong emphasis on intellectual and social development, the Gulf Islands International Program is a natural choice for highly motivated students who value personalized learning and a commitment to academic and personal development. The Gulf Islands International Program recognizes that students from different parts of the world have different reasons for studying in Canada. At the present time, the program hosts three specific ethnic groups: Asian students, European students, and Latin American students. Although there are some overlaps, these students have specific needs and reasons for coming to the Gulf Islands:

- High school graduation and post-secondary transition
- English as a Second Language or French Immersion
- A cultural and educational experience
- A short-term, usually 5 to 10 months



Despite these differences, there are several common reasons why studying in the Gulf Islands is an excellent choice.

- Outstanding ESL, academic and elective programming;
- The majority of our international graduates have successfully transferred to top universities or colleges;
- Safe, supportive school and “green” community;
- Small number of non-English speaking students and members of the community, which ensures a focus on developing English;
- School based administration and homestay program;
- Program where the emphasis is on quality, not quantity;
- Professional post-secondary and career counselling;
- Commitment to the ideals of respect, global awareness and cultural understanding;
- Emphasis on student-centered learning based on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and the principles of Personalized Learning

# Programs

## Graduation Program

The Graduation Program is designed for students, mostly from Asia, who have chosen to study at Gulf Islands Secondary School until they graduate from school and earn the provincial Dogwood Graduation certificate. The majority of these students are enrolled in the program for two or more years. Previous academic transcripts, language and math assessments, and letters of recommendation help determine grade placement, level of language support, and the potential for transfer credit.

Like the Canadian students, the international students are expected to meet the graduation requirements as determined by the Ministry of Education of British Columbia. The students in this program share the same goal, that is, to successfully make the transition from high school to university or college in Canada, the United States, or perhaps even back at home.

It is important to note that Gulf Islands Secondary School is a comprehensive school and the only high school serving the educational needs of the students who live in the Gulf Islands. As a comprehensive school, several distinct education programs are

offered at the school, including academic, vocational and arts programs. The international students in the Academic Study and Graduation Program enroll in the academic program, but have the option of taking vocational and arts electives, as well as other elective programs.

To help our international students prepare for the transition to post-secondary, the Gulf Islands International Program and the school offer several support programs, including post-secondary counseling, tutorial support and peer support. The Gulf Islands International Program also has transition partnerships with three Vancouver Island post-secondary institutions: University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University and Camosun College.



## Focus on Academic Results



Sometimes parents limit themselves to using the Fraser Institute Rankings of Schools when choosing a program or district. Unfortunately, these rankings are not particularly relevant in the case of smaller school districts like School District 64 (Gulf Islands), which only have one comprehensive high school. Gulf Islands Secondary School successfully serves the educational needs of three distinctive groups

## Quality Instruction

As previously mentioned, Salt Spring Island is one of the most desirable places in Canada to live. Residents enjoy the best of both worlds. They are close enough to the city to get there with relative ease (a short ferry trip and drive into Victoria or Vancouver), yet far

enough away to enjoy the peace and quiet of the beautiful island setting.

This relaxed, yet upscale, modern and safe, lifestyle attracts many top educators to the island. The teachers and administrators in School District 64 are among some of the best in the province. The schools boast having certified and well educated teachers who are student-centered and dedicated to helping their students achieve their personal best.

The teachers in the Gulf Islands are certified by the Ministry of Education and many of them hold Master of Education degrees and/or relevant industry experience.

## Unique Schedule

In 2004, the Gulf Islands School District 64 adopted an innovative four-day schedule that resulted in the students and teachers spending more time in the classroom four days of the week. Although the school week has been shortened by a day, the total amount of total instructional time per week remains the same. This immersion approach to scheduling has increased student results on provincial assessments, and the Gulf Islands students earn marks well beyond the provincial average on most mandatory government

exams. It has also improved student attendance as students are reluctant to miss any time away from the classroom.

In 2012, Gulf Island Secondary School also adopted a five-block rotation, which meant international students can either take an extra fifth course each semester or attend specialized *Work Zones* for extra help, to work on special projects, or to participate in enrichment activities.

The four-day schedule has proven an added benefit for the international students who are registered in the Gulf Islands International Program. These students have the option of participating in a Friday program that includes the popular English Enrichment seminars, the Eco-Adventure program; and SAT and TOEFL preparation. Our students receive up to 20% more instructional time than other students in British Columbia.



Supplementary and Specialty programs include:

- Gulf Islands School of the Performing Arts, see <http://www.gispa.ca/>
- French Immersion
- AP Studio Art and AP English Literature and Composition\*



- Saturna Island Ecological Centre program, see <http://www.seec64.ca/index.php?/home/index>
- Access to post-secondary courses while attending secondary school\*
- Vocational programs including Apprenticeships, see <http://www.sd64.bc.ca/ssa/>



- Self-Directed Learning (SHIFT)\*
- Soccer Academies



\*For more information about courses and programs please see <https://sites.google.com/a/gulfislandssecondary.ca/giss-course-selection-guide/>.

## English as a Second Language and French Immersion

The Gulf Islands International Program offers a unique approach to learning English. Like the French Immersion Program, Gulf Islands Secondary School believes that English is best learned by being immersed in the language. All English as a Second Language (ESL) students are assigned to regular courses, including academic and elective courses, in addition to their ESL classes.

All new English learners are assessed for English proficiency during the Orientation weekend. Depending on their needs, they are assigned to one of four levels of English as a Second Language. The greater the need, the more ESL support they will receive. Once they reach Level 4 they will be placed in the regular English program supported by an ESL block.

In the spirit of personalized learning, new English learners are enrolled in English classes as soon as possible so that they can work with local and other international students to perfect their English skills. The grade levels pursue the Prescribed Learning Outcomes of the Language Arts 9-12 curriculum that focus on reading, listening to, writing, and speaking English. Under the guidance of the English teacher, often supported by a well-qualified Education Assistant and/or peer coaches, international students work on the

development of their English skills in a cooperative learning environment based on the personalized learning strategies for the 21st Century



Enriched English seminars are offered on Fridays. Senior international students can also take TOEFL and IELTS preparation courses. Because of the strong focus on English in the school and community, the ESL students in the Gulf Islands International

Program tend to learn English much faster than students in the larger city programs. The cap on the number of students from each country also results in English being the common language of the international students.

Some international students also choose to earn Peer tutor credit by helping local Canadian students learn the language of the international student.

### Cultural Awareness Education Program

The Cultural Awareness Education Program is particularly appealing to European and Latin American students who wish to learn more about life in Canada while studying in a Canadian school.

Students enrolling in this program generally plan to limit their Canadian educational experience to one term, one semester or one year. Every year about 60% of international students who are registered in the Gulf Islands International Program are enrolled in the Cultural Awareness Education Program.

The performing and visual arts programs have attracted many of these international students to Salt Spring Island and the Gulf

Islands International Program. The natural beauty of the island and the recreational opportunities are also motivating factors.



The Cultural Awareness Education Program sometimes appeals to international students who are taking a GAP year before pursuing a post-secondary education. These students find the wide variety of elective programming, the work experience and volunteer programs, the possibilities for academic enrichment, and the supplementary programs that are offered by the program very enticing. It should be noted that to be considered for enrolment in a GAP year a student must be 18 years old or younger at the time of enrolment.

The Eco-Adventure program on Fridays is often very popular with the Cultural Awareness students.



### Junior Program

The Gulf Islands International Junior Program is located at Salt Spring Island Middle School and is one of the few programs in Canada that actually limits the number of new international students who are accepted each year. Only five international students are permitted to enroll at each grade level. This limit on enrolment ensures that our students are getting the maximum educational and cultural benefits and maximum exposure to the English language.

## Short-term Program

The Gulf Islands International Program hosts a maximum of one short-term program each semester. These visits are limited to a maximum of 10 days and 30 students.

At the high school the short-term programs utilize the “School within a School” model that maximizes the amount of ESL a student receives, while minimizing any disruption to the normal classroom routines.

Integrated elective activities, such as volleyball or softball tournaments, provide opportunities for the visiting students to mix and meet with local Canadian students.



All short-term students stay with homestay families during their visit. Most students can expect to be placed in a double placement. Single placements may be available, but should not be expected.

Visiting students in both programs can expect their own classroom for ESL instruction, a combination of visual and performing arts workshops and recreational activities. Depending on the needs of the group, local or regional fieldtrips (such as whale watching, trips to the Provincial Museum, or even ski trips) can also be arranged.



*The Gulf Islands International Program regrets that we are not able to offer Summer Programs due to a lack of suitable homestays,*



# School

## Gulf Islands Secondary School



The award-winning Gulf Islands Secondary School, which was opened in 1994, boasts a reputation for academic achievement; winning sports teams; outstanding performing and visual art programs, including the Advanced Placement Studio Art and the Gulf Islands School of the Performing Arts programs; and exceptional computer technology programs, including computer animation, media arts, computer programming and computer assisted drafting.



Gulf Islands Secondary School serves the educational needs of 650 local students from Grades 9 to 12. With a capped international student enrolment of 10%, the school currently has a limit of 65 International students from three broad ethnic groups: Asian, Latin American and European. Gulf Islands Secondary School serves the needs of a diverse population of students. Because it is a comprehensive school some students pursue academic studies, while other students choose to enroll in vocational programs. According to a recent study, about 80% of Gulf Island's graduates pursue an academic program while in high school, while the rest of the students choose vocational or career preparation programs.

While the majority of the students pursue an academic program, given the creative nature of the community and the school, many of these students also enjoy being part of the performing, visual and media arts programs.

Gulf Islands Secondary School is often seen as one of the model schools in the area of Personalized Learning and the teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. British Columbia educators, Ministry of Education personnel, and university students often visit the school for observation purposes.



## Homestay and Medical Insurance

The Gulf Islands International Program is a homestay program and recognizes that a good homestay is essential to a sense of security and belonging. Our program is only as good as its homestays. International students need to feel happy in their homestays in order to thrive in their studies. The Coordinator of Student Services is responsible for the homestay program. It is her goal to find the

best match possible for our international students. She is also responsible for medical insurance coverage.

All international students are required to have medical insurance while studying in Canada. The Gulf Islands International Education Program provides a combination of interim medical insurance and the British Columbia Medical Services Plan for our students.

It should be noted that the British Columbia Medical Services Plan is mandatory for all residents of British Columbia, including international students.

## Authorization of Grades

Some of our international students, most notably from Korea, Colombia, Brazil and Mexico, require an authorized statement of grades and/or a certificate of enrolment. We submit the necessary documents to the appropriate consulates and forward the authorized documents to the students. The process can take up to three weeks to complete. The cost of this service is included in their tuition.

## Application Process

International students can either download an application from our website or apply online. Please see the APPLY tab at [www.studyinbc.ca](http://www.studyinbc.ca) or [www.studyinbc.cn](http://www.studyinbc.cn) in China.

Activity waivers, which are required before a student can participate in any of the program's recreational activities, can also be downloaded from the same location.

It is important that the applications are written clearly and in English. Ideally, we would like all students to send us an email stating their full name, date of birth, gender, grade applied for, address, email address, and the names and birthdates of their parents.

This information will help ensure the accuracy of the acceptance documents.

The program also would like at least the transcript of grades for the previous two years of study, a teacher's reference, a collage of personal and family pictures and a letter of introduction that can be used in the selection of an appropriate homestay.

All English as a Second Language (ESL) students should try to provide us with SLEP test results with their applications as these results will help us determine how many ESL classes we will need to plan for. It is important that all applicants need to understand that it is our goal to help you reach our educational goals.

\*All students are expected to make connections to the Victoria International Airport for pickup by the host families.

## Fees and Refund Policy

In an effort to simplify the fee structure, some previous fees, such as the Application Fee have been added into the Tuition Fee.

Current Fee Schedule (all fees in Canadian Dollars)	
Tuition Fee (Graduation, Cultural or ESL Programs)	\$12,000 per year or \$6,000 per semester
Homestay Fee	\$800 per month
Medical Insurance	\$85 per month
Application Fee	\$300

The Gulf Islands International Program does not charge airport pickup fees\*, homestay placement fees, or activity fees, unless those activities are contracted activities like surfing weekends to Tofino, ski trips to Whistler, field trips to Seattle, kayaking weekends and the like. The Eco-Adventure and English Enrichment programs on Friday are free of charge.

### Refund Policy

- Full refund, less processing fee of \$150, if the student's application for a Study Permit is rejected by Canadian Immigration. A copy of the letter of rejection must be included with the request for a refund.
- Two-thirds (2/3) of the tuition, if the student withdraws prior to the commencement of the program.
- One-third (1/3) of the tuition fee, if the student withdraws at any time between the commencement of studies (defined as the first day of classes) and the end of the first calendar month of the program.
- No refund of the tuition fees if the student withdraws after the first calendar month of the program.

*Please ensure that your passport is valid for the duration of your stay.*







## Additional Resources

### Program Questions and Answers

[Q: Where is the Gulf Islands International Program?](#)

A: The Gulf Islands International Program is located on beautiful Salt Spring Island, which is the largest of the five Gulf Islands in British Columbia, Canada.

[Q: Won't I feel isolated living on an island?](#)

A: Absolutely not. Salt Spring Island is one of the most desirable places in Canada to live. It is only a short ferry ride away from Victoria and Vancouver Island. There is also regular ferry service to the city of Vancouver. As the commercial center for the Gulf Islands, Salt Spring enjoys all of the amenities and services that can be found in larger communities. Part of the charm of living on Salt Spring Island is the fact that it is an island. Island life is fun!

[Q: What is special about Salt Spring Island?](#)

A: Salt Spring Island's reputation as an international center of the arts has contributed to its unique charm. The island has recently become one of Canada's most desirable places to live. Interest in the beautiful, tranquil setting has created a very upscale, highly educated and professional community.

[Q: What is the climate like on Salt Spring Island?](#)

A: The Gulf Islands enjoy the best climate in Canada. Because the islands are located in the "rain shadow" of Vancouver Island, they receive the least amount of rainfall and enjoy mild temperatures during the winter months. There is always a possibility of a few days of snow each winter.

[Q: What are the schools like?](#)

A: Both Gulf Islands Secondary School and the Salt Spring Island Middle School enjoy reputations for academic success, winning sports teams, outstanding performing arts and visual arts programs, and technological programs. Our schools are committed to social and human development. The schools actively and consciously promote student participation. The majority of students in the schools are involved in school



activities, including sports and the arts. Leadership is a key value. It is our belief that the schools outperform other schools because of this focus on participation.

**Q: What percentage of the international students goes to university or college when they graduate?**

A: While this answer obviously depends on how hard an individual student works, but we are proud that almost all of our international grads have been accepted into post-secondary programs in the past. They universities and colleges in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, the United States and even back home. Over the past three years, all of our international students have eventually entered post-secondary programs.

**Q: Why are your international students so successful?**

A: Part of the answer is our recruitment policy. We look for students who are committed to making the best of their educational opportunities. We also believe that students who are actively involved in their school communities tend to do better academically. We look for students who express a willingness to get involved in some way. As a desirable place to live, Salt Spring draws highly professional and talented teachers. These teachers are committed to working hard on behalf of their students. We also provide our students with a lot of support, both personally and educationally.

**Q: How many students are there in the Gulf Islands International Program?**

A: Both the high school program and the middle school program have capped enrolments. The enrolment cap at Gulf Islands Secondary School, which has 650 Grade 9 – 12 students, is 10% of number of the Canadian students, which means a current cap of 65 international students. We also try to limit the number of students from any one country to 12 students. The enrolment cap at Salt Spring Middle School, which has 350 students in Grade 6 – 8, is 9 students per year, with a maximum of 5 students from any one country.

**Q: Where do most of your students come from?**

A: The largest number of students come from Germany, Japan, Hong Kong and Mexico, with smaller numbers coming from the United States, China, Korea, Switzerland, South America, Austria and Slovakia. We expect to see students from Italy and Spain this year.

**Q: How do I apply to the Gulf Islands International Program?**

A: The first step is doing some research. Is this the program that you are looking for? Our program is somewhat unique. We are looking for students who are willing to work hard and get involved in our schools and community. Although it is relatively easy to go shopping in Victoria on

the weekends, if you prefer shopping malls to being part of a school community, our program might not appeal to you. It is important to note, however, that the majority of our international students come from very large cities, but once they become accustomed to life on Salt Spring Island, they are often reluctant to leave it. Most students come back to visit. Once you think the Gulf Islands International Program might be for you, you can download our application form from our website. Please see the Apply tab at [www.studyinbc.ca](http://www.studyinbc.ca). Please take care in providing us with as much information as possible. We need transcripts for two reasons. We need to assess your academic strengths and weaknesses. They also help us determine course placements and support levels. Successful applicants will be issued a Letter of Acceptance and a Custodial Letter, which states that we will be responsible for you during your studies in the Gulf Islands International Program. These documents will need to be presented to the Immigration officials who will be reviewing your application for a Study Permit.

**Q: Do all students need a Study Permit?**

A: Technically no. Students who plan to study in Canada for less than six months are not legally required to have a Study Permit. It is our policy, however, that all students are required to apply for a Study Permit. It has been our experience that many of our one semester students decide that they would like to stay longer. It is expensive and challenging to apply for a Study Permit from within Canada. It is also not possible to apply for B.C. medical coverage without a Study Permit.

**Q: Do I need to take ESL?**

A: This really depends on your language proficiency and your reason for studying in the Gulf Islands International Program. You will be asked to complete an online language assessment after you have applied to the program. We offer four levels of ESL support, including Introductory ESL, Advanced ESL, Composition 11 and Advanced Writing/Composition 12. Advanced Writing/Composition 12 is the prerequisite to English 10. It should be noted that most European students do not require ESL support.

**Q. The Gulf Islands School District adopted a four-day week several years ago. Shouldn't I be worried that I will miss a lot of instructional time in the classroom?**

A. No. The total number of instructional hours is mandated by the Ministry of Education in British Columbia. In fact, the international students registered in a Graduation program actually have more instructional time. We offer these students a fifth-day program that could include English and ESL seminars, Math tutorials, homework assistance.

Q: Are there any other activities available to international students on the fifth day?

A: Yes. Many of the sports programs have their practices on the fifth day. Many of the Gulf Islands School of Performing Arts activities and work experience programs are scheduled for the fifth day. The Gulf Islands International Program offers a number of special events, such as field trips, ski trips, outdoor recreational activities, and artist workshops on the fifth day. In addition, many of the community activities are scheduled for this day. Some students like to use this time to visit Vancouver or Victoria. We also offer free of charge the very popular Eco-Adventure Program.

Q: Do these extended activities cost extra?

A: Some do and some don't. Most recreational activities have a cost associated with them. The Gulf Islands International Program also offers a weekend trip to Whistler and an overnight trip to Vancouver. The cost of these excursions are based on cost recovery only. The Gulf Islands School of the Performing Arts is a separate program with their own tuition fees. Please the GISPA website for more information. The Advanced Placement Art program is subsidized by the Gulf Islands International Program so there is no direct cost to the student. There are no costs for the English or ESL seminars, Math tutorials or homework assistance program.



## Homestay Questions and Answers



**Q: How are homestays selected?**

**A:** We believe that homestay is the most important part of your stay in Canada. The Student Services Coordinator, who is responsible for the homestay program, works hard to find you a suitable host family. We have many excellent host families to choose from and our Student Services Coordinator tries to find the family that best suits your requirements.

**Q: How do I ensure that I get the type of family that I am looking for?**

**A:** We do our best to match each student with the “right” family. To help us do this, we ask you to provide us with as much information as possible about yourself and what you are expecting from a host family. Are you looking for a big family with many children who will give you lots of attention or are you looking for a more private experience? Do you like to play sports? Do you like pets? What are your hobbies? Answering these questions can really help us find the best possible family for you.

When applying for the school and our homestay program please feel free to tell us as much as possible about yourself!

**Q: I am afraid of dogs. What if my family has a dog?**

A: If we know in advance that you do not like dogs – you will not be placed in a home with dogs. Also, before you arrive you will be told of any pets that are in the home; you can notify us then and we will find you another home.

Q: Are any checks conducted to ensure my safety?

A: Yes. The Student Services Coordinator meets with the families before they are accepted. A criminal record check by the RCMP is a requirement as well as a home inspection. The Student Services Coordinator also meets with the student during the year to make sure they are happy and feeling safe and comfortable in their home. Salt Spring is also a community in which we all look out for one another—every student should feel safe here.

Q: Do I pay my homestay family?

A: You can pay the program and we pay the homestay for you. If you have arranged your own homestay you can pay homestays directly. Either way, it is vital that you pay before the 1st of every month.

Q: Will I have my own room?

A: Yes. You will have a private bedroom?

Q: What does my monthly homestay fee include?

A: Your monthly homestay fee pays for room and board. You will be given a private bedroom with a door. You will be also given three meals daily. The homestay also provides or arranges transportation to school and activities as well as help with the student's arrival and departure.

Q: What should I expect to have in my room?

A: The bedroom will contain a bed, dresser, closet space, desk and lamp. Again each house is different, but you can expect to have a room in which you feel comfortable to sleep and study. That means your room will be clean, private and have a bed and small study area.

Q: Will I be expected to do chores?

A: To feel as though you are part of the family, it is suggested that you try to help out with minor chores. You would only do what other children in the family may do and it should never interfere with your studies. This is different with every homestay and is something that will be discussed upon your arrival. The families only want you to feel comfortable and so would never ask you to do something that you would not want to do.

Keeping your room tidy, cleaning your share of the bathroom and washing up after you use the dishes are examples of what is commonly expected of students.

**Q: What is Canadian food like?**

A: Canada is a multicultural country and that is reflected in the food choices of many of our homes. The food you eat in Canada will most likely be quite different from what you eat in your home country. Every host family is different but you can probably expect the following:

Breakfast – cereal with milk, toast, juice and coffee or tea are standard. On the weekends, breakfast may be bigger and include eggs, pancakes, bacon, etc...

Lunch – most students pack their own lunch for school. Lunch usually includes a sandwich, a drink, some fruit and snacks like cookies.

Dinner- A family will often serve Italian one night, then Mexican, German, British, East Indian or Asian foods on the other nights. British Columbia is on the coast and so fish and seafood are always fresh. Beef and chicken are also common and all types of produce are available year round.

**Q: What do I do if I don't like the food?**

A: Talk to the family or if you are uncomfortable with that suggestion then talk with the homestay coordinator. She is there to help you and will find a way to explain to your homestay that you do not like the food in a way that will not hurt anyone's feelings.

**Q: Will the host family drive me to school, to school events, or to visit friends?**

A: The host family is required to drive you to school and school events or to help you catch the school bus. They will drive you to places you need to go — such as friend's homes and sporting events. Please understand that your homestay is not a taxi service though and you need to make sure it is convenient for them to drive you — if you give them enough notice it should never be a problem.

**Q: If my host family invites me to go with them on a family outing will I be expected to pay for myself?**

A: No, if it is a family outing then you are to be included. If it is to travel somewhere where there are large travel costs involved (such as a trip to Hawaii) then you are to help pay OR you can stay with a friend or a temporary homestay for no added cost. This would be your choice and you would never be required to pay for a trip unless you wanted to go.

Q: What happens if I need to see a doctor or dentist?

A: We have a doctor who will see you immediately and either your homestay or the homestay coordinator can set up an appointment for you or take you to the hospital if it is an emergency. Your medical fees cover this cost. If you need to see a dentist – the same applies except that your medical fees do NOT cover this cost — you would have to pay for any dental work. It is suggested that you should go for a dental visit before coming to Canada.

Q: Do I need to have the British Columbia medical coverage?

A: All students, especially those in a graduation program, are required to have B.C. medical coverage. By law, any one who resides in British Columbia for six months or more must have provincial medical coverage.

Q: What services are covered by the British Columbia Medical Services Plan?

A: Please see <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp/bc-residents/benefits> for complete details.

Q: According to the Health Services website site, an international student is expected to have interim medical insurance until they qualify for the British Columbia Medical Services Plan. Does the Gulf Islands International Program provide this interim medical coverage and what does it cover?

A: Yes, we provide interim coverage until the qualifying period is over. For complete details of the interim coverage please see [student-med.com](http://student-med.com).

Q. Can I expect to have a phone line, internet connection or television connection in my room?

A. No, you should not expect these things — but all three could be arranged. The costs for these items are beyond the fee you pay for homestay and if you request them you may have to pay towards it.

Q: I think I will be quite nervous about living with a new family. What can I expect to experience as I adjust to the family?

A. The first few weeks of living in a new country with a new family, will at times, be difficult for some. You may feel homesick and frustrated with your new environment and language. This is natural. Give yourself time to adjust to your new surroundings. You may go through what is called “culture shock”. If this happens it is best if you participate with the host family as much as possible. Also - feel free to talk with the Student Services Coordinator or the school’s counseling staff or peer counselors about what you are going through — they are there to help you.

Q: What tips can you give me to help me make the most of my homestay experience?

A: Communication, consideration and tolerance are the three most important things for a successful homestay experience. After all, cultural differences are just that – differences. Try to interact as much as possible with the family. Show them pictures of your home and family so they can get to know you better and ask them lots of questions. Homestays are always happy to help and they know they are vital in helping you understand our Canadian culture.

Q: Who are Homestay families?

A: Canada is a multicultural country made up of people from all over the world. There is wide variety among Canadian families, with different jobs, interests and ethnic backgrounds. Some Canadian families consist of a mother, father and children. There are also single parents with or without children, couples with no children, families with pets, and older, retired people who enjoy the company of international students.

Q: Is my host family responsible for all my meals or will I be expected to make my own meals?

A: This is something that you and your host family can discuss at the beginning of your stay as some students do like to do some cooking. The homestays are ready to prepare your breakfasts and dinners for you and to help you make up your lunch for school. Most students do put their own lunches together and often make their own breakfasts in the mornings as well. Some students prefer for their homestay to help them with making their lunches or breakfasts. It is up to the individual and what they are most comfortable with.

Q: What do I do if I am unhappy in my homestay?

A: Our Student Services Coordinator is school based. She is responsible for the homestay program. The first step is to discuss the problem with her. We strongly believe that our students need to feel secure in their homestays if we expect them to succeed in school. The second step is trying to resolve the problem. The Student Services Coordinator will help mediate the process. Sometimes it is nothing more than a simple misunderstanding or a personality conflict. If necessary, you will be moved if the problem can’t be resolved. Every effort is made to match you with a Canadian family that is suited to your personality and lifestyle. Both students and families must realize that they are dealing with a new culture and both may need to make some compromises. Even if you are matched with a family that is different from what you expected, the homestay experience can be great. In unusual circumstances it may be necessary to move you to a new homestay.



## Gulf Islands International Program Video

Please see <http://www.studyinbc.ca/gulf-islands-international-education-program-video/>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website for the Gulf Islands International Program. The browser's address bar shows the URL [www.studyinbc.ca/gulf-islands-international-education-program-video/](http://www.studyinbc.ca/gulf-islands-international-education-program-video/). The website header features the logo "GULF ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM" and a search bar. A navigation menu includes links for Home, Video, Profile, Programs, Location, Apply, Student Testimonials, Contacts, Agents, and News. The main content area is titled "Gulf Islands International Education Program Video" and includes the text "Imagine a place where..." followed by a paragraph: "This video attempts to capture the essence of what the program, school, and community might look like through the lens of the cameras of the international students. Special thanks goes out to our Media Arts and Gulf Islands School of the Performing Arts students who helped make this video possible." Below this text is a video player. The video player shows a large circular logo placeholder with the text "THE GULF ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM" around a red maple leaf. The video player controls show a play button, a progress bar at 03:28, and an HD icon. Below the video player, there is a thank-you message: "Thanks as well to the alumni team of [Eric Peterson](#) (former Media Arts student and now Vancouver videographer) and [John Cameron](#) (former Media Arts teacher and now Salt Spring Island photographer)." At the bottom of the page, there is a "Return to top of page" link and a copyright notice: "Copyright © 2016 SD64 Gulf Islands". The Windows taskbar is visible at the bottom of the screenshot, showing the time as 12:34 PM on 2016-01-26.