

Information for STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



FLEX AND YOU

The FLEX program is committed to providing all eligible students with the opportunity to take part in the program. This includes students with disabilities. Since the program began in 1993, over 370 students with visual, hearing, motor, and other disabilities have become FLEX participants.

All FLEX participants have an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of other cultures, increase their skills and self-esteem, acquire new language skills, expand their career opportunities, and much more. Study abroad can be a life-changing experience and a gateway to becoming independent and better able to overcome obstacles and challenges.

FLEX does not discriminate due to physical ability. As long as an applicant meets the age, grade, and citizenship requirements for participation, she or he may apply to the program. FLEX can accommodate applicants with a wide range of disabilities. Testing materials are available in a variety of formats that enable anyone to be tested. Please contact your local American Councils office so that we can best accommodate your needs.

THE MIUSA PROGRAM

Students with disabilities who become finalists of the FLEX program attend a one-week independence skills workshop in Eugene, Oregon, in mid August, before traveling to their U.S. host communities. The Eugene workshop is organized by Mobility International, USA (MIUSA, www.miusa.org), a leading disability rights organization in the U.S. The MIUSA workshop will include:

- Interactive sessions on life in the U.S. for people with disabilities, including rights and opportunities in education and community activities;
- Activities to build leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills; and
- Action planning to achieve short- and long-term goals for the FLEX year.



FLEX alumni say this about the MIUSA program:

“This workshop was helpful for me because I became more self-confident to ask for some of the accommodations because I know it’s my right. I think nothing can stop me now to go on in school and to go up high.” - Nikola



“I remember every day and every lesson from MIUSA; those meetings encouraged every disabled student to be brave and strong and to know that in spite of our disability, we are just like everyone else. We learned special vocabulary words, for example, you cannot call a disabled person ‘abnormal’; we are normal, we just have some disabilities, and we learned about different accommodations in the U.S. We met disabled people who have succeeded in their lives, who do different kinds of jobs, and who are happy and enjoy every single day.” - Aziza

“You taught me to never give up. I just want to tell you all thanks for this seminar, You made it fun, useful and interesting.” - Natasa



Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) is a program of the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and is implemented by American Councils for International Education.

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www.discoverflex.org



“Nadina far exceeds our expectations in her level of effort, curiosity about our culture, and her willingness to try anything requested of her.”

- Host parents of Nadina

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Not that many students with disabilities get accepted into FLEX. Why should I try?

FLEX accepts as many students with disabilities as those without disabilities, and as many students as they can, proportional to the number of applicants. It is never easy to try something new, especially something as big as spending a year away from your family and friends. This may be even harder if you are not confident in your language skills and ability to do things independently. Based on alumni experiences, it is worth taking the chance, and giving it your best try. The benefits are endless, even if the first step is the hardest.

What are the age and grade requirements for students with disabilities?

The age/grade requirements for students with disabilities may differ from the country requirements for other applicants. Candidates must be:

- Born between February 15, 2003 and July 15, 2006.
- Studying in 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 grades.
- A citizen of the country in which they apply.

What if my English is not strong enough?

If you are accepted to FLEX, and your English skills are still developing, you will have two opportunities that will help you:

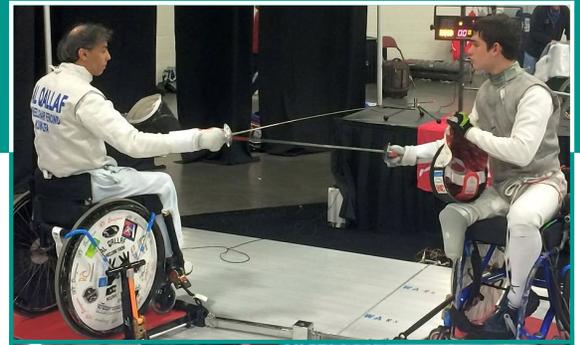
- You might be assigned to take part in American Councils' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Workshop, in Chisinau, Moldova in July 2021.
- You will also be designated as a Language Program FLEX student, meaning that your Placement Organization will provide at least 14 days of concentrated study or tutoring in English, in the U.S., before your U.S. school starts.

If I need medical care in the U.S., who will pay for it?

The FLEX program provides all finalists with program insurance that covers medical emergencies. In addition, the program has additional funds available to each student with a disability. However, FLEX is not a medical treatment program, and does not provide for consultations, treatments, or surgeries.

I require special accommodations to take tests at school. Can FLEX help me?

All students who apply to the FLEX program regardless of physical ability or disability go through the same testing process. However, adapted tests (Braille, enlarged, etc.) are available and can be used to allow anyone to be tested. As long as a candidate is able to communicate in English (spoken, written, etc.), FLEX is able to accommodate them. Feel free to contact your local FLEX office to get more details on how you can be accommodated.



“Never before had I thought that I would attain what I have attained up to this point, and all of this is thanks to the fact that I took part in the FLEX program... it changed my outlook on life and gave me a great deal of optimism, belief in myself, and most importantly, taught me to solve problems and make decisions. After all, it's not easy for children with disabilities, who are used to having their parents accompany them everywhere, to travel abroad alone.”

- Ayazhan

“FLEX gave me a wonderful opportunity to become more mature and independent through my exchange year. In America, I joined the tennis team and I was in the school band... I became more mature through all of these things and by living independently. Now I see my future - I have the power to fight for it, and I am happy that I went on the FLEX program. I strongly recommend that students with disabilities try this program. I still have a close relationship with my host family and my American friends, even from thousands of kilometers away.”

- Nika