

Amity Institute

For Volunteer Foreign Language Teaching Assistants

The **Cultural Exchange Program** is based on the belief that cultural exchange enables greater international understanding and friendship. The assignment provides aspiring educators the opportunity to share their language and culture in American classrooms. By bringing their culture to life, participants actively engage and motivate students in the United States to excel in other languages and gain knowledge of cultures other than their own.



Dance performance at school

The Cultural Exchange Program has three main components: Live, Learn and Teach. Living in another country with a host family offers participants an opportunity to absorb American traditions and way of life. These future educators assist for approximately 32 hours per week in the classroom under the guidance of an experienced

teacher, allowing for an extended learning experience. At the end of the assignment, Amity provides a Certificate of Participation.

Applicants must be at least 21 years old and have sufficient English skills to participate in the program. Candidates must be able to share their native language effectively and provide information about their culture in a classroom setting and in the community. Most importantly, applicants must have enthusiasm for working with American students and enjoy intercultural communication.

Amity participants represent a broad cross-section of social and cultural backgrounds from Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

We work with a worldwide network of Screening Officers who recruit, screen and evaluate potential applicants to ensure that Amity Institute's high standards are maintained. Host schools request, review and select applications from the admissions department and may conduct interviews with the selected candidates.

The Cultural Exchange Program relies on the spirit of volunteerism and is designed to be a two-way exchange between participants and the school community.

Participants commit their time and energy to their host schools and in return, receive the opportunity to experience life in the United States.

In most areas, schools recruit volunteer host families who provide free room and board. In some large cities, housing may require living with a paid host or independently.

The Cultural Exchange Program works on the principle that international friendship and cultural understanding is best achieved through personal interaction with a native of the other culture. Over the course of the last 50 years, thousands of participants in this program played a vital part in this effort.



Amity Institute Programs

Cultural Exchange Program affords participants the chance to live in the U.S., acquire teaching experience and most importantly, serve as informal ambassadors for their country in American schools by sharing their native language and culture.

**Building
International Friendship &
Cultural Understanding
through
Teaching Exchange
since 1962**

Exchange Teacher Program arranges for certified, qualified teachers from other countries to serve as temporary faculty at accredited primary and secondary levels in the U.S.

Volunteer Abroad offers teaching opportunities and internships with language immersion in Germany, Italy, Spain and Brazil.

Program Guidelines

Entry Requirements

To qualify, applicants must:

- Be 21 or older
- Be currently enrolled in an academic institution (college/university) pursuing studies granting a degree **OR** have graduated no more than 12 months before the start date of the program
- Have a career goal in education
- Have sufficient proficiency in the English language to participate in the program

Be enthusiastic about sharing their culture and native language with U.S. students

Overview

Participants:

- Are assigned to a supervising teacher and assist at school for approximately **32 hours a week** including:
 - Preparation time
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Staff meetingsOccasional special events are excluded
- Play a flexible role in the classroom including:
 - Observing classroom and school culture
 - Assisting the teacher with lessons/group work
 - Prepare and deliver age-appropriate cultural presentation about their country
 - Participating in extracurricular activities
 - Give students the opportunity to practice a foreign language in conversation groups and small groups

Participants complete a Cultural Project, the Amity online course or audit a course (where available) that will enhance the learning experience



Cost to the Participants

Application fee (non-refundable)	US\$150
Visa application fee	US\$150 (approximately)
SEVIS fee	US\$180
Round-trip airline ticket	Varies (by location and season)
Health insurance coverage	US\$75per month (average)
Personal spending money	US\$150 per month (minimum)

Proof of sufficient funds required

The Assignment

Under the guidance of the supervising teacher:

Observing: The participant observes classes to gain understanding of how an American classroom functions. Subsequently, the participant provides basic assistance to the teacher, interacts with students and serves as an international role and language model.

Assisting: After gaining familiarity with the class during observation, the participant should be given increased responsibilities, including working with small groups, student interaction/assessment and occasional lesson planning/execution.

Co-teaching: Building upon observing and assisting, the participant may begin co-teaching in the classroom. Under the supervision of a licensed teacher, the participant prepares and delivers lessons about his/her own country, incorporating visual arts, music and dance as appropriate.

Community events and extra-curricular activities are other occasions for the participant to learn about U.S. traditions.

Housing

Assignment locations vary greatly and free room and board cannot be provided in all areas. The following choices apply:

Host family - volunteer:

The host school recruits host families who offer free room and board in exchange for active involvement in family life and household chores. The participant will be responsible for any additional personal expenses.

Host family - paid:

The host school recruits host families who provide room and board for a reasonable monthly fee. This option may apply in some large cities. Unless the school pays the host directly, the participant's stipend needs to be adjusted accordingly.

Independent living:

If a suitable host family cannot be provided the host school assists participants in finding housing (small apartment or room at a private residence) prior to arrival. The participant's stipend needs to be adjusted accordingly.

Host School Responsibilities

School provides Mentoring and Support

The Principal or a designated school representative oversees the assignment, both inside and outside of the classroom and assigns a staff member as:

- **Supervising teacher** – acts as a mentor to the participant throughout the assignment and works closely with him/her to develop lesson plans and classroom activities for language and culture presentations while providing feedback
- **School coordinator** – ensures program requirements are met, recruits host families and monitors situation at home, assists the participant in establishing social contacts outside of school, serves as a mediator in sensitive situations with the host family and keeps in regular contact with Amity Institute



School pays Stipend

- \$150 per month (minimum) paid to the participant. Stipend may be prorated according to beginning and ending assignment dates

School pays Administrative Fee

- Fees vary by length of assignment

School arranges Transportation

- Transportation to and from the nearest airport, train station or bus depot upon arrival and departure should be provided
- The school assists with transportation to and from school in the form of a ride with the host family, staff member or other parent, school bus ride, etc.
- **NOTE:** If living independently, participants may be responsible for own transportation and cost

School finds Housing

Housing should preferably consist of living with a volunteer host family. Amity hosts can be families with children, individuals, single parents, grandparents or anyone in the community who can offer a safe and suitable home away from home. Hosts should be interested in international exchange and other cultures.

Paid host families and independent living arrangements require an increased stipend and a written agreement signed by all parties prior to arrival.

- Room and board should be arranged with an American host family/individual in the community or in on-campus housing
- Participant must have a private bedroom but can share a bathroom with other family members
- Participant can live with multiple families, but each family should host for a minimum of eight weeks to allow for some consistency
- School coordinator must visit each prospective home to discuss arrangements, clarify expectations and confirm living conditions
- Amity Institute will support recruitment with materials/ advice

Schools must deliver host information to Amity **at least three weeks** before the assignment start date.

This will assure the participant and his/her family that a safe home will be provided.



Amity Institute Services

- **Candidate recruitment** - supply schools with applications of candidates for review and selection
- **Visa** - provide visa sponsorship and handle all required administrative paperwork
- **Sickness/Accident insurance** - offer a group insurance policy to participants - in compliance with visa regulations
- **Pre-departure orientation** - provide information regarding visa process, travel arrangements, living in the U.S., cultural adjustment and home-stay requirements
- **Orientation** - provide orientation materials for all participants and conduct regional orientations in areas with a high concentration of participants
- **Program materials** - provide handbooks and other material to all participants, ensuring a comprehensive overview of the program
- **Supervision and assessment** - monitor the assignment and participant progress
- **Amity counselors** -
 - Guide participant through the visa application process
 - Remain in contact with participants, schools and host families
 - Act as mediators for any issues or problems
 - Keep accurate, detailed records of each assignment
 - Provide ongoing monitoring and support
 - Review evaluations
- **Certificate of Participation** - issued upon completion of the assignment

Getting started in the Cultural Exchange Program

Amity Institute **cannot** guarantee the issuance of a visa. It is at the discretion of the Immigration Officials to grant the visa and entry into the U.S.

- **Host School - Steps to inviting an applicant**
 - School submits request form to Amity
 - Amity matches request with available applicants
 - Amity submits applications to school for review
 - School selects applicant
 - School submits invitation form and contract to Amity
 - Amity officially invites applicant
 - Applicant accepts or declines the invitation
- **Applicant - Steps to obtaining an assignment in the U.S.**
 - Applicant submits application and communicates with Amity regularly
 - Amity receives an official invitation from host school
 - Amity extends official invitation to applicant
 - Applicant accepts invitation
 - Applicant receives pre-departure packet with assignment information
 - Applicant completes and return all forms to program counselor immediately
 - Applicant follows instructions on how to apply for the visa
 - Applicant sends all information about arrival in the U.S. to program counselor, host school and host family
 - Host school arranges participant pickup at arrival

Contact Information:

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