

Guide for College/University Staff and Faculty Hosting Students from Northern Ireland

Study USA

2026-2027

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INTRODUCTION

This guide provides information for the faculty and staff of US institutions in contact with students sent to the United States through the Northern Ireland Study USA programme.

This information should inform host faculty and staff how they can help and guide the students during their year in the US. Issues covered have been identified by former participants in the programme as important to their success.

In this guide the term 'host institution' refers to the United States college or university which is receiving the students; 'home institution' refers to the student's university or college in Northern Ireland.

HISTORY OF STUDY USA

The Study USA programme, originally known as the Business Education Initiative, was established in 1994. It is a highly successful and innovative programme which offers undergraduate students studying in Northern Ireland the opportunity to study for one academic year at church-affiliated universities and colleges in the USA.

Study USA provides an excellent opportunity for students studying in Northern Ireland to experience university life and study in the US. The programme is a prestigious, high-value scholarship which is highly regarded by graduate employers. Overall, the purpose of Study USA is to produce graduates with an international perspective who will be capable of eventually contributing to advancing the Northern Ireland economy.

Designed to assist with the Peace Process, the programme was developed in the 1990s and carried out by the Inter-Church Committee on Northern Ireland, in partnership with the Training and Employment Agency (later replaced by the Department for Employment and Learning, and now Department for the Economy). The White House endorsed the programme in March 1995 in a letter written by President Bill Clinton to Reverend Henry Postel, Chair of the Northern Ireland Working Group in the Presbyterian Church USA, and member of the Inter-Church Committee on Northern Ireland.

The programme is held in high esteem within the network of 140 partner institutions across the US and continues to receive significant governmental support.

During the 1994-95 academic year, 19 students from Northern Ireland studied at 11 Presbyterian Colleges. Since then, the number of annual participants has grown substantially, at one stage peaking at 165 students. Presently circa 60 scholarships are available each academic year.

1 INTRODUCING THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council has offices in over 100 countries worldwide and employs 7500 staff. We have offices throughout the United Kingdom in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. The office in Belfast employs 30 staff and this is the office where the Study USA Team is based.

The purpose of the British Council is to build mutually beneficial relationships between people in the UK and other countries and to increase appreciation of the UK's creative ideas and achievements.

This work is driven by our strong belief in internationalism, a commitment to professionalism and an enthusiasm for creativity. These qualities, coupled with our integrity and our conviction that cultural relations can help individuals and the world community to thrive, make the British Council a good partner and a special place to work.

2 STUDY USA STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Study USA Team

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3 AIMS OF THE STUDY USA PROGRAMME

The aims of the programme are:

- To provide students from Northern Ireland with an outward-looking, international experience by spending a full academic year studying at, and living on, a US campus
- To improve the employability skills of the participating students
- To develop future global leaders within the Northern Ireland economy
- To raise the economic, cultural and political awareness of Northern Ireland in the US
- To provide a collateral benefit to US partner institutions and an opportunity for them to further the internationalisation of their campuses

4 REQUIREMENTS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Even though it is the responsibility of each student to meet the programme's requirements for the year, it is useful for the host institution to know what is required of the students. This will permit the host institution to assist the student in reasonable ways to do what is necessary to successfully complete the programme and graduate from Study USA.

- Complete a minimum of 30 credits over one academic year, with students required to take a minimum of:
 - 12 credits related to their home discipline, plus
 - 12 credits in leadership/communication/business, plus
 - 6 credits in any elective of their choosing.
- Maintain 100% attendance unless extenuating circumstances arise which can be evidenced e.g. medical issue, family emergency or an absence excused by the professor in advance.
- Achieve a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or above.
- Ambassadorial Role – deliver five presentations about Northern Ireland over the year.
- Complete voluntary / community work on campus.
- Complete a Personal Development Portfolio (essay and video) of their experience on Study USA.
- Develop employability skills such as team working, presentation and communication skills which they bring back to Northern Ireland.
- Some NI institutions require their students to complete a business-related project which they set and monitor.

4.1 Credits

Students are required to obtain a minimum of 30 credits over the academic year, 24 of which should be in academic classes with the remaining 6 credits made up of elective choices.

Students are required to study full time each semester or quarter. On the semester system, this should be typically defined as at least fifteen hours. Assuming that, this means students will take a minimum of four to five courses each semester.

Host institutions will be aware that the learning styles at the Higher Education level differ between the US and the UK. The students from Northern Ireland will **not** be accustomed to the continuous form of assessment and the importance of classroom discussion; instead, they typically have end-of-semester examinations and large pieces of independent coursework. We are confident that students will adapt and

learn a great deal from this new system, and they are briefed about the differences in advance.

4.2 Home degree classes | Business, leadership, communication classes | Elective classes

A minimum of 24 credits must be related to their home degree/discipline and the business-related class options.

The remaining 6 can be in elective classes. Most students will study 4 to 5 classes each semester (worth 15-16 credits).

- 2 x classes related to their home discipline
- 2 x classes in business, leadership, communication or entrepreneurship
- 1 x elective class

Students are encouraged to select classes at a level where they would be successful in achieving the required 3.0 GPA to graduate from Study USA.

This may mean that students are studying **100 or 200** level classes, rather than more advanced 300 or 400 level classes, as the transition to the US college education system can be challenging for students especially in the first semester.

Regardless of their majors at their home institutions, they are required to take classes that will assist their entrance into the Northern Irish economy upon graduation.

“Business” is defined broadly and includes any courses that are business related, including

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Entrepreneurship | 7 Finance |
| 2 Leadership | 8 Economics |
| 3 Communications | 9 Human Resources |
| 4 Public Speaking | 10 Information Technology |
| 5 Marketing and PR | 11 Foreign Languages |
| 6 Management | |

Students are encouraged/required to take elective credits also. Elective credits might be earned from **any** subject on offer at the US institution. Students are free to pick whichever elective classes they wish.

4.3 Achieve a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or above

The British Council, together with the home institution, requires students to achieve a 3.0 GPA or above on completion of the year of study to graduate from the programme. The Study USA team will review their academic progress at the end of each semester.

Each student has been advised that they have a responsibility to monitor and maintain their own personal academic progress throughout the academic year.

If students are struggling to reach the required GPA in the fall or spring Semesters, they should:

1. Inform their class professor
2. Inform their International Advisor / Academic Advisor
3. Avail of the Academic Services available on campus e.g. writing and tutoring services, help structuring their class schedule, help with time management skills, study techniques etc.
4. Liaise with the British Council to discuss ways to improve their performance

Students below a 3.0 GPA end of fall semester

The following procedure will be taken in the event of a student's GPA falling below a 3.0:

- Students who have not achieved the required 3.0 GPA at the end of fall semester will be **withdrawn from the programme** and will not return to the United States to continue their studies in the spring.
- They will be required to **refund the cost of their return flights**.
- The only exception to this rule is where there are **extenuating circumstances** which are judged to have impacted significantly on the student's grades.
- In such cases, individual circumstances will be identified, and the decision taken, at the British Council's absolute discretion.
- Extenuating circumstances will be considered and assessed by the British Council **only for those with a GPA of 2.5 or higher**.
- For any student with a GPA lower than 2.5, **no extenuating circumstances** will be considered, and the student will not return to the US for Spring Semester.

If students are not able to provide a valid reason, as detailed in the Extenuating Circumstances Section of this handbook, for a low score they will be withdrawn from the programme and must return home to Northern Ireland when results become known. Individual circumstances will be identified, and the decision taken at the British Council's discretion.

Student below 3.0 GPA end of academic year

Students whose overall GPA is less than 3.0 at the end of the academic year **will not graduate** from Study USA, therefore it is important they maintain a 3.0 GPA throughout each semester.

Any student who does not achieve a 3.0 GPA and fulfil the requirements of the programme to graduate by the end of the academic year, will be required to repay the **cost of their flight, plus the £1,000 bursary and the reimbursed £200 commitment fee** that were paid at the beginning of spring semester.

4.4 Obtain an internship with US business (if possible)

Internship opportunities are encouraged particularly if they contribute to academic credit (i.e. where they count for credit hours). Such internships provide an excellent way to see first-hand how American businesses operate. It is important that any organisation offering an internship has adequate insurance cover.

4.5 Ambassadorial role - deliver five presentations on NI during the year

From its inception, the programme has assumed that students will enhance their careers if they can speak well in public. The students are expected to seek opportunities to speak in public while they are in the US. Delivering the ambassadorial presentations gives students an opportunity to develop their public speaking skills, whilst sharing Northern Irish culture and their own personal life experiences.

Students are required to make five presentations over the year on Northern Ireland. Students are asked to look for opportunities to speak to classes or other student groups on campus, at local public schools, or church and civic groups. At the start of the academic year, students will be provided with **an Ambassadorial Presentation Record Sheet** where they keep a record of their completed presentations.

It is their responsibility to keep this up-to-date and to **inform their International Advisor that each presentation has taken place**. Once presentations have been completed, **they will request that their International Advisor sign this record sheet** and return it to the Study USA team. **Please refer to Annex 4 of this handbook.**

4.6 Complete voluntary/community work

It is expected that the Study USA student will take every opportunity to get involved on campus and seek to give something back to the community in which they are living for the year. The student should be encouraged to participate in various events and volunteering opportunities where possible.

4.7 Business Project for Northern Ireland institutions

Students from Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University are required to complete a business-related project while in the US. They will be required to submit the paper to their home institution upon return. It would be helpful if the US institution were to take an interest in the projects and assist with the selection of an appropriate topic.

5 US HOST INSTITUTION'S RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Administering I-20/DS2019 paperwork

- The student will complete the Study USA document – **'Information to Obtain an I-20/DS2019'**, and email this to the main contact at their US institution, copying the British Council into the email.
- On receipt of this document the US institution will complete the I-20 or DS2019, which should be emailed directly to the student, copying the British Council into the email, who will then review the I-20; signposting the student to apply for the visa.

Guidance notes have been supplied to assist with completing the paperwork. It may also be useful to send a college view-book (or any other digital publications) and any other forms that are required.

If a student needs to complete the college enrollment application, please ensure they are given the link along with any relevant instructions.

5.2 Assigning a designated contact person

When the President commits the host institution to the programme, he or she should designate someone on campus to administer the programme. This will be the person with whom the Study USA team will communicate, the one who enrolls the student and the person who provides a point of contact for the student on campus throughout the year. This is usually a member of staff from the International Office or Admissions Office.

5.3 Assign an Academic Advisor

Experience in the past few years has shown that good counseling on the part of host institutions is one of the keys to the students having a successful year. The UK and

US educational systems share the same common goals, but the way in which they arrive at these goals is different.

Students entering the American system can at times find themselves overwhelmed in strange course requirements and different academic and social expectations.

Careful advising can easily overcome these differences and assist the students in fulfilling their expectations.

5.4 Greeting the students

The British Council makes every effort to have the students arrive on campus just prior to orientation, but flight schedules and personal needs sometimes bring the students to campus a few days early.

The students will inform the contact person at your institution of the date of their arrival, but it is often helpful if the US institution can arrange to have the student met at the airport or greeted within a few hours of arrival.

5.5 Classification of the students

Study USA students are arriving in the US to complete their Sophomore/Junior Year of study.

5.6 Housing arrangements

Funding from the British Council covers **shared accommodation** for the student.

To gain the best possible exposure to American life and study, we ask that where possible:

- Study USA students stay in shared accommodation and are not housed in a single room.
- Ideally share with a US roommate, rather than another international student (preferred option would be for a shared double dorm).
- The student shares housing with a student/s of a similar age 21+ (junior year US students).

Study USA can grant permission for other accommodation options, such as a shared suite, if necessary. Some institutions do classify Study USA students as freshmen since they are transferring in with no credits and automatically house the student in freshman dormitories.

It may be helpful to know that the students from Northern Ireland are usually older (20+ years of age) than most freshmen and they can often feel out of place in a freshman facility.

Sharing accommodation and living with a US student is a vital way to integrate the student into US culture, as well as assisting with building friendships.

During holidays, when the majority of accommodation on campus closes, it is important that the student has sufficient funds of their own to cover accommodation, food and other living expenses, or that they make alternative arrangements.

The British Council does not provide funding for food and accommodation outside term time.

5.7 Orientation

If possible, the **student should go through freshman and international orientation** since they are unfamiliar with the campus and American educational practices.

The student may also need guidance and assistance to enable them to open a US bank account and purchase any necessary items for their dorms.

5.8 Student support

Spending a year studying abroad is an exciting prospect and naturally students have high expectations of the experience.

Many students report that they are surprised by the difference in culture between the US and Northern Ireland and experience difficulties in adjusting to their new environment. If a student is unhappy, homesick, struggling to settle in or having difficulties keeping up with the academic requirements, there is a support system which both the student and US institution can draw on for help.

Firstly, there will be support available on your US campus. We encourage students to reach out early on to seek support on campus for any issues you may be facing.

There is also a designated Student Support Advisor, based in Pittsburgh, to assist Study USA students while they are in the US. Dr. Erin Hinson will be happy to take a call, respond to emails, talk via Zoom/Facebook, or even arrange to visit campus if necessary. Erin's contact details can also be found on page five of this document. The Study USA team in Belfast is available to lend support. Contact details can be found on page five of this document.

If students are having difficulties on your campus, please take the following steps:

1. Ask the student to meet with the designated contact at their institution to discuss the issues and discuss steps to overcome any problems/issues. It may be useful to make the student aware of any campus counseling services.
2. If necessary, encourage the student to book an appointment with the Wellbeing or Academic Services team on campus.
3. Encourage the student to contact the Study USA Student Support Advisor, Erin Hinson.
4. Encourage them to contact the Wellbeing and support services at their NI institution.
5. Contact the Study USA Team at the British Council.

The Study USA team is experienced in dealing with problems and is able to contact students directly if necessary.

5.9 Study USA Safeguarding (Title IX) Procedures

What is safeguarding in the British Council?

In our work, we meet many children and adults who are potentially at risk for various reasons. Safeguarding represents our commitment to creating a safe environment where no child or adult will experience harm, abuse, or exploitation during their contact with us.

The British Council promotes a zero-tolerance inaction approach to safeguarding. British Council Safeguarding commitment is documented in the British Council *Safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct*.

For more information on the British Council Safeguarding framework please visit our corporate site:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/how-we-work/policies/safeguarding>.

The safeguarding policy is mandatory and must be applied in all situations where the British Council, or our partners, work.

All partners of the British Council are expected to have their own Safeguarding / Title IX policy **or** adhere to and implement British Council Safeguarding policy before and during the partnership with British Council.

A. Student Welfare: In the event you receive information that raises concern about the welfare or protection of a Study USA student and have their consent to disclose or share details with the British Council, please share this information via the British Council Safeguarding Reporting Portal – see link below

B. Student Perpetrator: If you have concerns that a Study USA student is the accused perpetrator of an offence, please follow the same mechanism for disclosing or sharing this information.

Report via the British Council Safeguarding Reporting Portal:

<https://tinyurl.com/2wycb8w7>

OR

email the Study USA Safeguarding Lead – Mary Mallon

mary.mallon3@britishcouncil.org

5.10 Certification of the completion of the Study USA year

Host institutions will be asked by the British Council to certify that students have completed the full academic year and the expected courses. Students must have left the host institution in good standing and have completed all requirements.

Each Study USA student has signed a waiver which is included in their enrollment paperwork to you. This waiver states that the Study USA staff may have access to any details that may be required in connection with their academic achievement and Grade Point Average.

Should state laws prevent the passing of such information to third parties, this waiver should be regarded as their authorisation to release the required information.

6 CAMPUS LIFE

Study USA students are sometimes concerned they will find it difficult to adapt to a different social life than they are used to in Northern Ireland. They are leaving behind old friends and are hoping to find new ones in the United States.

They have grown up in a culture where the legal age to consume alcohol is 18 and may be concerned about American and campus restrictions in this area.

They will not have a car or the money to travel too far and have been told that they must be proactive in developing their own social network, but any assistance will be appreciated.

Many US institutions offer a “host family” system which provides international students the chance to enjoy time and company away from campus.

6.1 Involvement in campus activities and sports

One way to develop a social life is to become involved with one’s community. Students are encouraged to participate in campus life, but most of these students come from large NI institutions where the opportunity for extensive involvement can feel limited.

The host institution can help students to become involved by suggesting possible activities to them. They have already been encouraged to volunteer on campus and in the nearby community, but they may need some contacts.

Each year, a number of the students express interest in sports, both intramural and intercollegiate. Many are very fine athletes and could contribute to the campus teams. Students are encouraged to email the Athletic Director if they are interested in participating, but if your institution can assist the students in finding their way to the right people on campus, it would be much appreciated.

6.2 Exposure to American culture and travel

Most of what international students know about the US they have learned through the media. Therefore, students are encouraged to experience the variety and diversity of American life.

The responsibility for this lies with the students, but the host institution might assist by arranging for them to meet local families, visit various churches, assist at local charities, attend local sports and cultural events, etc.

6.3 Part-time job on campus

The scholarship covers all student expenses **during term time only** e.g. food, accommodation, textbooks etc. and students are only required to pay for the necessities.

Many students may wish to look for a part-time job to help support themselves; the British Council does not object to this, so long as the students do not violate visa regulations.

If possible, it would be helpful if the designated contact could help the student to secure their Social Security Number. The British Council does not wish to put pressure on the institution to find students work and acknowledges that the institutions have already made a major contribution to these students.

7 FUNDING

The Study USA programme is managed and administered by the British Council and funded by:

- The Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE)
- USA Church-affiliated colleges/universities through them waiving, or a US benefactor associated with the college/university, paying the tuition fees

A place on Study USA represents a scholarship of approximately \$65,000. This is a considerable investment on the part of the US institutions and DfE/ the British Council.

7.1 US institutions contribution

The US institution generously waives/pays the student's tuition fees for the two semesters of study.

7.2 British Council financial contribution

DfE provides, through the British Council, the following funding:

- One return flight to the US
 - Shared on-campus accommodation during term time only
- Full meal plan
- Other costs as specified by US institution (application fees, activity costs etc)
- Textbook allowance – up to a maximum of \$1000, part of which may be used to cover the first transfer costs from the US airport to the US institution if not covered by the institution
- Elective classes allowance – materials and fees up to a maximum of \$500 per academic year (\$250 per semester)
- £1000 bursary paid directly into each student's UK bank account. This is paid at the start of semester two to students who successfully completed semester one and return to the US for semester two.

NB: Vacation/Break Allowance is not provided.

Any additional funds required in respect of Study USA students should have the prior approval of the British Council before funds are made available.

7.3 Student financial contribution

The Study USA student is responsible for the following costs:

- Visa application fee
- SEVIS fee
- Travel and medical insurance
- Extra costs incurred throughout the year, eg:
 - Changes to meal plan, housing upgrade to a single room, replacement ID card fees, lost keys, or additional vaccinations/health checks
 - Bookstore charges, e.g. stationery, clothing, art supplies, computer equipment etc.

- Any additional campus charges e.g. paid campus events/trips, music lessons (unless this is an elective), rentals.

Note: Should a student incur any such costs, the US hosting college must seek reimbursement from the student prior to their departure at the end of the academic year

7.4 Travel and medical insurance

In discussion with the US Faith-Based Higher Education Association, the US institution's President has agreed that the **Study USA student is not required to purchase the US institution's international insurance plan**. Instead, each student is responsible for purchasing their own insurance for their year in the US, from a UK insurance provider, which meets the minimum J-1 / F-1 visa coverage level.

Study USA does not check policies, it is the students' responsibility to source and purchase insurance. The Study USA team provides all students with written guidelines, which states students need to purchase a policy that:

- Meets the J1/F1 visa insurance requirements
- Provides routine and emergency medical cover
- Provides adequate travel insurance (multi-trip) to allow for travelling back home at Christmas and internal trips in the USA

The written guidelines for students' insurance policy are outlined in the table below:

1. Routine medical treatment and non-emergency medical cover	2. Luggage delay
3. Multi-trip travel insurance – internal travel, overseas and returning to NI during the year	4. Loss of passport and travel documents
5. Emergency medical cover	6. Trip interruption (i.e. Due to death in the family)
7. Covid-19 medical expense	8. Curtailment and hospital benefit
9. Cancellation (including covid-19-related cover)	10. Medical expenses & repatriation of mortal remains in the event of death
11. Missed departure (including covid-19-related cover)	12. Dental treatment
13. Travel delay (including covid-19-related cover)	14. Personal accident
15. Luggage and personal money	16. Personal liability
17. Pre-existing / new mental health conditions	

The students are given information as to what to purchase and usually purchase a dedicated Study Abroad policy from a company in the UK. The student will have purchased this policy before leaving the UK.

The policy should provide cover from **1st August 2026 – 31st July 2027**.

Students are advised to send a copy of their insurance policy to their US institution.

Note:

- If the coverage is not explicit in the policy provided, U.S. institutions may require the student to get written confirmation of the minimum coverage.
- If the policy does not meet the minimum J-1 /F-1 visa coverage level, the student should be notified by the U.S. Institution that an alternative policy/coverage must be secured to meet the minimum level.
- **U.S. institutions asking for clarification about, or changes to, student policies, will have five business days to request these clarifications/changes from the Study USA participant following submission of their insurance documents.**
- **This will allow the student time to follow up with the insurance provider within the purchase grace period.**
- If the Study USA student is informed within the grace period by their U.S. institution of the need to secure alternate insurance and fails to secure appropriate insurance prior to arrival at the US institution, then the institution may require the student to purchase an insurance policy offered through the institution.

7.5 Vaccinations

The Study USA programme does not cover the cost of any enrollment vaccinations or required health checks such as Hepatitis B, TB, MMR, Diphtheria & chest X-rays.

We would ask that the student be notified of any required vaccinations prior to their departure to your institution so that they may receive the medication in Northern Ireland.

7.6 Changes in accommodation or meal plan

If the student should decide to change the accommodation or meal plan while on campus the student is responsible for any extra costs incurred. The British Council cannot provide additional funds for individual students for upgrades or personal trips and expenses.

The student is responsible for budgeting their meal plan and the British Council strongly advises that the student does not use their meal plan card to purchase additional drinks/treats in campus shops.

7.7 Book allowance

Participating colleges request a book allowance on behalf of their student of up to \$1,000 which is paid directly to the US institution and allocated to the Student Account. We recommend that the student purchase only essential core textbooks and make full use of the library on campus.

The British Council cannot increase the book allowance beyond \$1,000 and students will need to prioritise and budget carefully. The Study USA team may, at times, need to monitor the spending activity in relation to a student's book allowance. All book allowance purchases must be substantiated by receipts or itemised on the student account. Any purchases made by the student should be reimbursed to them directly on production of receipts. Students should not be given any portion of their book allowance up-front in the form of cash/cheque as this makes it difficult for the programme to monitor the spending that is taking place.

Airport Transfer: Students may use a portion of their book allowance to cover the first transfer costs from the US airport to the US institution if not covered by the institution. A receipt for the associated travel costs must be provided.

7.8 Elective class allowance

The Study USA scholarship provides funds up to a maximum of \$500 per academic year (\$250 per semester) to cover costs for essential materials required for elective classes such as piano lessons/guitar lessons, art supplies etc. If in doubt, please consult a member of the Study USA team.

7.9 Reconciling student accounts

At the end of the academic year the British Council will seek reconciliation for each student account. For auditing purposes, a full statement of the student's financial account will be required.

If, during the course of the academic year, it is estimated that the student's grant amount will be exceeded, please seek approval from the Study USA team. Once the reconciliation documentation is received, the British Council will either pay any outstanding amounts or will request that any surplus monies are returned to the Study USA programme. **Surplus monies should not be repaid to the student.**

It is the responsibility of the student to pay for any personal expenses, damage to property, lost keys, laptops, iPads etc. These are not covered by the scholarship and must be recouped from the student prior to their departure at the end of the academic year.

More information on how to make payments will be circulated at the end of the academic year.

8 IRISH AMERICAN SCHOLARS (IAS) PROGRAM

To thank U.S. colleges and universities for hosting students from Northern Ireland through the British Council's [Study USA Program](#), select Northern Ireland institutions created the *Irish American Scholars* (IAS) program. Through IAS, domestic U.S. students enrolled at Study USA host colleges and universities can apply to study *tuition-free* for one or two semesters at an institution in Northern Ireland.

Every fall, representatives from U.S. Catholic, Presbyterian, and United Methodist colleges and universities reach out to international advisors at schools participating in Study USA. The advisors are invited to submit up to three applications from [sophomore or junior students](#) with a GPA of [3.2](#) or higher who would like to study in Northern Ireland.

These students are then evaluated by a selection committee composed of representatives from the participating institutions in Northern Ireland.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Institutions that have agreed to host a Study USA student during the current academic year may submit student applications for the Irish American Scholars program even if there is no Study USA student currently on campus.
- Students may not attend a school in Northern Ireland for their final semester of study. In order to obtain a visa, students must show that they are required to return to the United States to complete their education. This means, for instance, that current juniors may apply only for the fall semester of the 2026-27 academic year.
- Additionally, due to the 3-year curriculum model used in Northern Ireland and higher entry requirements for all institutions in the United Kingdom, U.S. students who are currently freshmen will not be accepted as Irish American Scholars applicants. However, they are encouraged to apply as sophomores.
- Accepted U.S. students may opt for courses in any subject area available at their host institution, for which tuition and fees will be waived.
- Please note that U.S. students are expected to cover their own living expenses and other related costs, including travel to and from Northern Ireland.

Further details of this interesting opportunity may be obtained from your US Faith-Based Higher Education Association, the addresses for which are included in Section 9 of this document.

9 US FAITH-BASED HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION CONTACT DETAILS

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Tamara K. Gieselman

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ANNEX 1 – UK-US GRADE CONVERSION GUIDE

***Please note that this table is for guidance only**

GPA Table	GPA Grade	US %	UK %
A	4.0	93-100%	70+
			66-69
A-	3.7	90-92%	63-65
B+	3.3	87-89%	60-62
B	3.0	83-86%	57-59
B-	2.7	80-82%	53-56
C+	2.3	77-79%	50-52
C	2.0	73-76%	45-49
C-	1.7	70-72%	43-44
D+	1.3	67-69%	
D	1.0	60-66%	40-42
F	0	Below 60%	0-39

ANNEX 2 – EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Extenuating circumstances, for the purposes of the Study USA Programme, are defined as unforeseen factors, or factors outside a student's control which have a negative impact on his or her ability to achieve the criteria required for Successful Completion of the programme. Pre-existing conditions for which students have received support and reasonable adjustments do not constitute extenuating circumstances, though a worsening of a condition may do so.

The following table provides a few examples of extenuating circumstances. It is a guide and is not meant to be prescriptive. The British Council will use its own judgement and discretion when deciding if a participant has experienced extenuating circumstances on the basis of the facts presented.

We advise students to inform the Study USA team immediately if they are experiencing any of the circumstances below - it is very difficult for us to take these into account after a decision on continuing participation has been made. Extenuating circumstances will not re-occur in the spring semester.

	Extenuating Circumstances - <i>Normally Acceptable</i>	Notes
1	Death of a close relative	'Close' means parent or guardian; partner or spouse; child or sibling.
2	Serious illness of student	An incapacitating illness or an on-going illness or medical condition. This includes breaks and serious sprains to the normal writing hand/arm. <i>Medical certification must be obtained, self-certification is not acceptable.</i>
3	Serious illness of a close relative	See notes at 1 above for definition of 'close'
4	Hospitalisation	A medical letter/certificate from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the student's circumstances and the likely impact it has on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment will be required.

5	Acute Personal/Emotional Circumstances	The following will be required: A medical certificate or letter from the appropriate medical professional involved with your treatment at the time A letter from the US/NI institutions Counselling Service (or equivalent), confirming the nature and severity of the student's circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to perform as required. <i>*Please note, letters from medical professional cannot be considered in retrospect</i>
6	Victim of Crime	A written statement of events which is supported by written evidence from the police and/or appropriate medical professional or a letter from the US/NI institutions Counselling Service (or equivalent), will be required.
7	Financial Problems due to crime.	Stress brought on by financial concerns which are a direct result of a crime.
8	Serious personal disruption	Divorce; fire; burglary; serious assault; jury service, serious childcare difficulties. Corroborating evidence must be produced.
9	Pregnancy	A medical report from the student's doctor or midwife must be provided in support of such grounds. Pregnancy of a wife/partner would be acceptable in appropriate circumstances.
Not Acceptable		Notes
1	Social activities, part time work commitments or self-induced financial difficulty.	Hectic social life; parties; visits to/from friends. Working part-time rather than completing assignments/studying. Becoming over involved in sporting/society activities. Overspending & failure to budget personal spending money, book allowance etc.
2	Temporary self-induced medical conditions	Hangover; drug taking (excluding prescribed medication).
3	Minor ailments	Coughs; colds; sprains (other than in the writing hand/arm).

4	Non serious personal and domestic disruptions which could have been anticipated or planned.	Moving house; weddings; holiday; failed transport arrangements.
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ANNEX 3 - INFORMATION SHARING AGREEMENT (ISA).

This document is not intended to replace a legal contract but can be used when agreeing the responsibilities under Article 26 of the GDPR.

This ISA defines the detailed arrangements for processing information shared between the **British Council** and **US institutions**. This does not constitute a legal contract but represents an undertaking by the partners to observe the best practice guidance found in the British Council's Information Sharing Policy.

If you need further information, please contact our Privacy and Security Team by emailing: infogovernance@britishcouncil.org

1. Why is the information being shared?

Necessity – By sharing the individual's personal information with the partner college the individual can become enrolled at the US partner institutions for admission to study for one academic year.

2. What is the justification for sharing?

There is a contract between the student and the British Council. We cannot carry out delivery of the Study USA programme unless we share this information.

Consent (we have recorded the wishes of the individuals concerned regarding the proposed sharing with partner colleges).

3. What information is being shared?

The British Council will share the Individual's name, postal address, telephone number, email address and home university details. The US partner institutions will share visa paperwork and academic transcripts back to the British Council.

The student will share their name, postal address, telephone number, email address, home university details, health declaration, copy of passport, academic transcript, two references and insurance policy directly with their host US college.

4. What are we telling individuals about this information sharing & how are they notified?

The SUSA Privacy Notice to students' states:

- The processing of your personal data under the Study USA Programme is lawful as it is necessary for the performance of a contract between yourself at the Study USA grant awarding body.
- As part of providing student welfare support and the provision, setting up and administration of Study USA we shall have to send your information to partner colleges and organisations outside of the European Economic Area which are based in the USA. We require explicit consent to transfer your data to the USA. Your information will be shared securely using password protected documents. Please note that the USA does not have equivalent data protection laws to that of the UK.
- Under UK Data Protection Law, you have the right to ask for a copy of the information we hold on you and the right to ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information.

Should you wish to amend or delete any information held or would like to find out more about this [please contact study.usa@britishcouncil.org](mailto:study.usa@britishcouncil.org) or see our website: www.britishcouncil.org/privacy.

5. How will the information be shared, and what security measures will be used?

The majority of data sharing will take place between the student and their host US partner institution. When required, the British Council will share personal information using individual password documents via Outlook email.

Access to the documents will be limited using access controls set by the British Council. Passwords will be sent by a separate communications channel.

The British Council will expect the US partner institutions to use the same method to share data with the British Council. If the US partner institutions will not use the same method, they must inform the British Council how this information will be shared securely.

6. How will the information be stored? (e.g. secure server - include any security measures).

The British Council will expect the US partner institutions to apply the same standards of data security to the Study USA student data as they do for US students.

7. Access Controls

The British Council will expect the US partner institutions to apply the same standards of data security to the Study USA student data as they do for US students. Access should be limited to a need-to-know basis.

8. Termination of this Agreement

Data will be retained in line with the US partner institutions data retention policy.

9. How will the information be disposed of?

Data will be disposed of in line with the US partner institutions data disposal policy.

10. Who will be handling formal information requests, queries and complaints from data subjects?

The British Council will take the lead in handling information requests, queries and complaints and will liaise with the partner college to resolve any issues. The partner college undertakes to inform the British Council as soon as practical; no later than 3 working days from the day after receipt of such a request or complaint.

11. International Transfers

Based on the contract between the British Council and the student, the transfer of personal data to the USA will be lawful because the student has given their explicit consent for the transfer of their personal data to the USA.

Both parties must ensure that the Agreement and any associated documents are known and understood by all staff involved in the process.

ANNEX 4 – AMBASSADORIAL PRESENTATION RECORD SHEET

Study USA

Ambassadorial Presentation Record Sheet 2026-27

Every Study USA student is required to complete a total of **five** ambassadorial presentations on Northern Ireland during their year at a US college to successfully graduate. This is an excellent opportunity to refine and perfect your public speaking and communication skills.

Presentations delivered in the US are your chance to promote Northern Ireland in the US, the Study USA programme and change many of the misperceptions that you may encounter about life back home.

In the US, your presentations can be held either on or off campus. Some of your presentations should be formal in style, but some could also take a different format. Previous students have hosted *panel discussions, sports coaching sessions, film screenings or cookery demonstrations*.

You may have opportunities to speak to classes or other student groups on and off campus, the international **club, local schools, and church and civic groups**. Your International Advisor may be able to help put you in contact with suitable groups. There should be a variety of presentations completed. Presentations should not be duplicated.

It is your responsibility to inform your International Student Advisor of presentations that have taken place.

When your presentations are completed towards the end of your final semester please submit this record sheet to your **International Advisor** and ask that they sign it and email to the Study USA team: study.usa@britishcouncil.org

Please ensure this record is signed and submitted before you leave your campus.

This completed form must be submitted to Study USA by **31 May 2027**.

NOTE: Former Post Primary School Presentation Option

If you arrange to deliver a Study USA presentation at your former post primary school, this can count towards one of your ambassadorial presentations.

If you proceed with this option, please notify Study USA in advance and ensure you submit a photograph from your school visit. Previous students have coordinated their school presentations when they return home for their Christmas break.

Student Name	
US College	

Date	Venue	No. and type of Attendees	Brief Summary of the Presentation	Supervised By?
e.g. Tues 18 Oct	Local High School	<i>30 schoolchildren and teachers</i>	Northern Irish History	Professor Brown
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

International Advisor Name	
International Advisor Signature	
Date	