



Student Handbook

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Forum Intensive English Center is accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation for the period April 2016 through April 2021 and agrees to uphold the CEA Standards for English Language Programs and Institutions. CEA is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for English language programs and institutions in the U.S. For further information about this accreditation, please contact CEA, 1001 North Fairfax Street, Suite 630, Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 665-3400, www.cea-accredit.org.



Purpose of Student Handbook

The purpose of the Student Handbook is to help guide potential and actual students of Forum Intensive English Center (FIEC) through the various policies and procedures that Forum has set forth to ensure an effective learning experience and a productive learning environment for its students.

About Forum Intensive English Center

Forum began with expert educator and linguist, Dr. Susanna McPhilomy (known to her students as Dr. Susie), who developed an accelerated language training technique that she has practiced successfully worldwide.

With over 40 years of teaching experience, Dr. McPhilomy fine-tuned a non-traditional technique of teaching English as a second and a foreign language by promoting a conversational approach to grammar and other skills. After teaching at several English language schools and universities as well as establishing her own language school, U.S. Ling Institute in Utah, Susanna decided to open Forum in the Washington D.C. area with her daughter Maria McPhilomy.

Dr. McPhilomy is known to cultivate a welcoming environment so that her students can effectively learn how to function in an English-speaking environment. With many academic degrees from American and international institutions, Susanna's strong academic credentials and extensive experience continue to attract students from all over the world!

Forum provides effective English language training based on a communicative approach and interactive teaching strategies helping make classes engaging and enabling students to apply their English knowledge outside of the classroom. FIEC also offers student services to assist students including advising and social and recreational activities. Forum caters to students ages 16 and up who are interested in learning English for academic preparation, professional development or professional purposes.

Mission

The mission of Forum is to provide efficient and effective English language training to help culturally diverse students achieve their academic, professional and personal English language goals. Forum is committed to helping students reach their full learning potential through a student-centered teaching approach, interactive instructional strategies and familiarizing students with American culture.

Program Overview

Forum offers an integrated Intensive English Program and a Test Preparation Program for the TOEFL and IELTS exams. These programs are catered toward academic, professional and personal goals and work on developing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

The Intensive Program consists of 7 levels: Basic 1, Basic 2, Intermediate 3, Intermediate 4, Advanced 5, Advanced Level 6 and College Preparation 7. Each level provides 288 hours of instruction and takes 16 weeks to complete with 18 hours of study per week. Classes are held Monday through Thursday for four and half hours each day.

The Test Preparation Program is offered at a five or eight-week interval. The five-week program provides 75 hours of training and the eight-week program provides 120 hours of training. Both programs are 15 hours a week.



Intensive English Program

The IEP is designed for students who want to increase their English proficiency quickly and effectively for academic, professional or social purposes. Forum's integrated communicative approach focuses on dialogues, role-plays, simulations and other interactive techniques that bridge the gap between knowing and using language structures in appropriate contexts.

The Intensive program is geared toward academic English and preparing students with the necessary English skills to continue to an American college or university. This program also prepares students with the necessary listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to successfully function in professional and social settings. The Intensive program provides an in-depth and comprehensive study, as well as extensive practice of key language skills in casual to formal settings.

Test Preparation Program

This program is designed for non-native speakers who are interested in taking the TOEFL iBT or IELTS Academic English proficiency exams to achieve their academic or professional goals.

Forum administers a diagnostic placement test to determine if students qualify for this course by meeting established benchmarks. Students who receive scores lower than these benchmarks must first enroll in the English Program to improve their general English skills before advancing to the Test Preparation Program. Forum will recommend the five-week or eight-week program depending on the placement score and the desired score of each applicant.



Admissions Policies

Admissions personnel attempt to enhance cultural diversity in the classroom as much as possible by admitting students from different cultural backgrounds. Below, please find the admissions policies for Forum's different educational programs.

- Applicants must have an interest in an integrated English program.
- Applicants must be at least 16 years old.
- For the Intensive Program, applicants must be a U.S. citizen, resident or on a valid visa or status that allows for full-time study if they are taking the full-time track.
- The program accommodates applicants with basic to advanced proficiency. Basic level students must be able to score at least a one on the placement exam, meaning they must be familiar with the English alphabet and some basic vocabulary.
- Applicants must be able to pay for the tuition and fees associated with their program of study. International students must also be able to pay for living expenses.
- Forum does not accept terminated F-1 applicants.
- For the test preparation program, applicants must have advanced proficiency to enter the program, as demonstrated on Forum's IELTS or TOEFL diagnostic exam or on the official test report.

ALL OF FORUM'S PROGRAMS ARE NON-CREDIT PROGRAMS. COMPLETION OF FORUM'S PROGRAMS DOES NOT LEAD TO ADMISSION TO ANOTHER SUBSEQUENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.



Enrollment and Registration Policies

**Forum Intensive English Center is authorized under Federal law to enroll nonimmigrant alien students

Registration Policy for All Applicants:

Forum does not have application deadlines, but requires students to properly time their arrival to Forum so they can take the placement exam at least one day before the first class. Applicants must complete the online application and pay the appropriate application fees to register for classes.

Applicants must also present a photo ID to verify their identity. Students on tourist or student visas must also show a valid visa to determine if they can take part-time or full-time classes.

Returning students do not need pay the application fee if they return to Forum within two years. If an applicant is under eighteen years of age, he/she must obtain the signature of their guardian on all of Forum's application forms.

Out of country F-1 applicants are recommended to give themselves about two months in advance of the session would like to attend to have adequate preparation time to receive for the visa and plan their trip. Students must pay the non-refundable application and mailing fees as well as make a tuition deposit prior to their arrival at Forum. Students can then register for classes and pay for books upon their arrival. If an applicant is under eighteen years of age, he/she must obtain the signature of their guardian for all of Forum's application forms.

- The required \$100 application fee and \$75 non-refundable shipping fee are non-refundable. Tuition deposits are only refundable if the applicant is denied a visa.

Non-F-1 Applicants must pay the \$50 application fee to register for class. If the class is not scheduled due to low enrollment, applicants will have the option to stay on the waiting list or withdraw from the application process. If an applicant chooses to withdraw from the application process, the \$50 application fee will be refunded.

Applicants with Limited Proficiency Policy:

Applicants who have limited proficiency and are unable to find a personal contact to translate for them during the application process will be accommodated through either the help of a Forum student, personnel member, or through online translation services to translate key policies for the applicant to ensure that the applicant fully understands the information.

Continuation Policy:

Continuing students must sign an addendum to indicate that they would like to continue to the next level of their current program or enroll in a different program. Addendums are accepted until the first day of class in the next semester. The addendum only expresses the student's desire to continue to the next level, which is approved subject to his/her final grade in the previous level as well as Forum's course availability.

Waiting List Policy:

There may be cases where an applicant completes the placement test but Forum is unable to determine if it will be offering that level for an applicant due to scheduling difficulties. If this is the case, then students are placed on a waiting list to be notified on if there is an available course for them or if they will need to wait until another session.



Terms and Conditions:

Courses are scheduled based on demand. Forum does not offer every level every semester. Forum reserves the right to determine classes, levels and schedules for all students. Tuition and fees are subject to change without notice.

Late Enrollment Policy for Intensive English Program:

Applicants can be admitted after classes begin in the Intensive English Program. If a student joins an Intensive course within two weeks of the first day of class, he/she is responsible for paying the full tuition. Students joining after two weeks are eligible for prorated course tuition.

New F-1 students must join the session within two weeks. Transfer F-1 and all other students who plan to complete the level and advance to the next level must join by week six and be in class by day 1 of week 7. These Intensive late enrollee students will be held to a higher placement benchmark and must make-up the coursework and assessments that they missed to ensure that they understand the material previously covered if they plan on continuing to the next level. These students can request additional support from their instructors if they need additional help understanding the material they missed. Late enrollees must get a complete grade and 70% (C) to advance to the next level.

Short Term & Part-Time Intensive Program for Tourists:

Tourists can take the Intensive Program part-time, which means they must study under 18 hours per week and can attend classes Monday to Wednesday instead of Monday to Thursday. Students that do not plan on continuing to the next level must take a minimum of one month and can join any time before the 12th week of the program. If joining mid-semester, students will also be held to a higher benchmark and be eligible for prorated tuition.

Students joining a session in-progress must understand that the teacher is not expected to repeat information already covered. Students are not required to make-up assignments and will not receive a complete grade. Instead, grades will be calculated based on partial completion of whichever assessments a student could complete.

Enrollment Policy for Test Preparation Programs:

Students eligible to take the test preparation program can start at the beginning of any week. This program has rolling enrollment and can start on any Monday. It does not have set start or end dates. If a student joins an ongoing session, the course will be extended to cover the sections that the student had missed. This program can be shortened and customized if there is a strong discrepancy between section scores. This decision however is dependent on the approval of the Academic Director.



Placement Testing Policies and Procedures

*Forum Intensive English Center reserves the right to determine classes, levels and schedules for all students.

Student Placement Test Policy:

All applicants must take the placement test before the start of classes to see if the program they are interested in is being offered at their level. All applicants initially undergo an oral interview to first gauge their approximate level and determine whether the student has the necessary proficiency for the program they intend to take. Forum recommends that applicants take the placement test at least one week prior to the start of classes and even earlier if possible.

If an applicant knows which specific program they intend to enroll in or has certain visa limitations that narrow the programs available to them, then they must take the placement test at least two days prior to the start of classes. If an applicant does not know which program they would like to take, then they must begin the placement testing process at least three days prior to the start of classes. These requirements ensure that there is sufficient time to administer more than one placement test/procedure if needed. If an applicant is unable to complete the placement testing in advance of classes due to uncontrollable circumstances or is a late enrollee, then Forum administers one or more placement tests/procedures in the same day. All placement testing is free for the applicant.

1. Applicants have the right to view the results of their placement test in a timely manner. This report will be in the form of a test report sheet that will contain: your placement info; score on each subtest of the placement test and the total score.
2. Applicants have the right to have their results on any portion of the placement test explained to them. For test security purposes, applicants will NOT be allowed to view the actual questions and answers they selected but they will be given a thorough explanation of each section of the test.
3. Applicants have the right to see the scoring rubrics used to grade the writing sub-test and the speaking sub-test. Applicants may make an appointment with the Academic Director to discuss how these rubrics are used to rate their performance. Applicants have the right to review their essay(s) from the writing portion of the exam and have the results explained to them. For test security purposes, applicants may not keep the essay.
4. Applicants have the right to request a re-test. If the Academic Director determines the reasons to be a valid, a re-test will be given at a time determined by the Academic Director.
5. During the first day of classes, teachers informally evaluate whether new students in their classes have been placed into the appropriate levels. If a teacher or a student believes the student has been placed in a level that is too low or too high, the student can retake the placement exam which is typically administered within the first two days of classes. The Academic Director then has the authority to provide the final decision on the placement level.

Returning Students Placement Policy for Non-F-1 Students:

If a former student would like to return to Forum and they have not attended class for less than a year, they do not need to retake the full placement exam. The student may be required to take parts of the placement exam, if his/her proficiency is unclear. The Academic Director makes the final decision on whether a returning student will need to retake parts of the placement exam. Students who have not attended class for more than one year will need to retake the placement exam.



Program Change Placement Policy for Non-F-1 Students:

If a continuing student would like to change their course of study, then they may or may not be required to retake the placement exam. The Academic Director makes the final decision on whether a student will need to retake the placement exam or parts of it.

Placement Procedures for the Intensive English Program:

Applicants who are interested in the IEP must take the Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test, Placement Conversation, and Placement Essay. The Objective Placement Test consists of three sections: Listening (20 items), Reading (20 items) and Language Use (30 items). Applicants are given 50 minutes for the Objective Test, 30 minutes for the essay and 10 minutes for the conversation. The scores of each section are averaged into a cumulative rating which is used to determine the applicant's level per Forum's adaptation of the Interchange/Passages placement rubric.

Placement Procedures for the Test Preparation Program:

Applicants must demonstrate advanced proficiency to enter the test prep program. If an applicant has taken the official TOEFL or IELTS before they must demonstrate a minimum score of 70 on the TOEFL iBT official test or a 6.0 band score (or 5.5 in each section) on the IELTS exam to enter the program.

If an applicant has not taken the official exam before, then they will need to first prequalify for the course by passing an oral exam. If the applicant passes the prequalification requirements they will be able to proceed to the remainder of the adapted diagnostic test that Forum administers.

If an applicant does not meet the prequalification requirements they will be recommended to take a regular English to improve their general English skills before advancing to the Test Preparation Program.



Proficiency Scales

In the following pages please find the proficiency scale and the interpretation of the scale for all of Forum's programs: Intensive, Semi-Intensive and Test Preparation. The interpretation of the scale is based on the student learning outcomes that are expected of students upon the completion of each level in each program in the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Intensive English Program

BASIC I – LEVEL 1

The goals of Basic Level 1 are to build learners' basic skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as provide them with basic cultural orientation that equips them with survival skills for the most essential contexts of every day life. Upon completion of this level, students will be able to understand and participate in casual conversations in practical scenarios such as ordering food, running everyday errands, going to the doctor, interviewing for a job and more. Students will acquire basic reading and writing skills in order to read and retell stories and write short passages. Students will also learn how to express and ask about personal information, past events, upcoming plans and directions. Additionally, students will have a thorough understanding of basic language patterns and grammar structures. Practice will include simulating daily interaction experiences, delivering presentations on simple topics and understanding main ideas of short stories, dialogues and comprehensive videos.

BASIC II – LEVEL 2

The goals of Basic Levels 2 are to expand learners' abilities in the critical skill areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary) and begin to bridge the gap between knowing and using language skills in appropriate contexts. Upon completion of this level, students will have a better understanding of basic language patterns and grammar structures as well as use various basic grammar forms. Students will also be able to write one to two paragraphs on assigned topics, understand longer listening and reading passages, expand their vocabulary as well as develop their conversational skills on more complex topics. Practice will include listening to dialogues and short videos, reading passages and stories on a variety of topics and delivering presentations on assigned topics.

INTERMEDIATE III – LEVEL 3

The goals of Intermediate Level 3 are to fully bridge the gap between knowing and using language skills in appropriate contexts as well as develop presentation and writing skills gradually beginning to transition students from casual to academic content. Upon completion of this level, students will be able to read and discuss higher-level contemporary and academic topics and will have more developed communicative and interactive skills to express their thoughts and understand English speakers. This course focuses on enabling students to use grammar structures more accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. Students will also learn idiomatic language and learn how to deliver engaging presentations as well as organize and compose formal essays. Practice will include participating in various structure-based listening and speaking activities, reading comprehensive stories while identifying new vocabulary through context as well as writing formal essays on assigned topics with the vocabulary acquired from listening and reading passages.

INTERMEDIATE IIII – LEVEL 4

The goals of Intermediate Level 4 are to enable learners to understand and differentiate between all verb and non-verbal forms, strengthen writing skills and be prepared to converse more comfortably with English speakers in causal and formal settings. Upon completion of this level, students will be able to participate in a variety of complex debates and discussions as well as understand a variety of casual to academic written, audio and video materials. Students will also develop the necessary skills and vocabulary to deliver creative presentations and draft formal and creative writing compositions.



Practice will include participating in debates and problem-solving discussions on a variety of topics, writing different types of essays, listening to authentic materials and reading a variety of texts to identify main ideas and supporting details.

ADVANCED V – LEVEL 5

The goals of Advanced Level 5 are to equip students with the ability to understand and identify the main ideas on highly complex topics expressed in a variety of multimedia materials and comfortably express their opinions, both in writing and speaking. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to debate on complex and contemporary issues, conduct research and outline their ideas before writing well-structured independent essays. Students will also be able to discuss contemporary issues and understand relevant contents based on written, audio and video materials identifying main ideas and supporting stated and unstated details. Students will have become more familiar with idiomatic language and will be able to deliver and critique academic presentations working in groups or individually. Practice will include developing skills to outline ideas and organize essays, conducting research for presentations and acquiring extensive vocabulary through listening and reading comprehension exercises.

ADVANCED VI – LEVEL 6

The goals of Advanced Level 6 are to assist students with the ability to identify and utilize high-level vocabulary related to their academic or professional field and express their opinions in formal business and academic settings both in writing and speaking. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to accurately use complex language structures and vocabulary in various communication settings. Students will also learn how to write formal and personal essays as well as business letters and memos. Practice will include listening to longer academic lectures and talks on contemporary issues, actively participating in discussions on complex topics and engaging in vocabulary building activities using context clues and synonyms.

COLLEGE PREPARATION – LEVEL 7

The goals of College Preparation Level 7 are to develop both fluency and accuracy in language use to prepare students for an American college or university and/or a professional workplace. In this level, students will develop analytical reading, writing and speaking skills by actively listening to academic lectures and longer passages, taking useful notes, participating in discussions, analyzing academic texts and preparing more extensive individual or group presentations. Upon successful completion of this level, students will be able to understand all levels of spoken English, read at a quick pace, compose multiple types of formal essays and comfortably speak and present in academic and professional settings. Practice will include participating in conferences and debates, writing a research paper and other types of essays, delivering extensive academic presentations and synthesizing the information retrieved from multiple reading and listening passages.



Test Preparation

Forum offers two different test preparation program options for both the IELTS and TOEFL iBT exams. There is a five-week option and an eight-week option. These courses can be taken in addition to the Intensive course once students have completed level 5 in the Intensive.

Applicants who are recommended to a test preparation course based on their placement and desired score and are unable to, may not meet all the learning outcomes of the course they take. In any case where test preparation students do not meet the expected learning outcomes, Forum may recommend additional practice to the student after completing their test preparation course.

Below please find the learning outcomes expected of students in the **Test Preparation Program** for each skill area on the TOEFL iBT and IELTS Academic Exam.

TOEFL iBT Student Learning Outcomes:

Reading: Read university-level academic passages of approximately 700 words from various subjects and accurately answer questions about the content and organization of each passage.

- Identify the main ideas, stated details, purpose, structure and relationships of ideas and unknown vocabulary; make inferences based on implied content.

Writing: Write two well-organized, unified and coherent essays in a limited time observing the rules of academic writing: one integrated (150-200 words in 20 minutes) and one independent (300-350 words in 30 minutes) using a variety of compound and complex sentences and minimizing common writing errors.

- Independent Writing Task: Plan, outline and compose an essay with an introduction, supporting paragraphs and conclusion. Demonstrate a strong thesis statement and supporting details that align with the thesis.
- Integrated Writing Task: Identify the main ideas, supporting details and the relationship between a reading and listening passage and write a summary explaining the relationship with accurate sentence structure and organization.

Listening: Listen to conversations in academic settings and to lectures from various subjects such as sociology, technology, and the arts and accurately answer questions about the content, organization and delivery of speech.

- Identify main ideas, important details, purpose or function, structure, relationships between ideas and recognize speakers' attitudes; make inferences and conclusions.

Speaking: Respond to timed independent and integrated oral tasks using basic and complex language structures and vocabulary with accuracy and delivering well-paced, fluid and clear speech. Minimal listener effort is required to understand the meaning and progression of ideas.

- Independent Speaking Tasks: Respond to a familiar topic with a strong topic statement and sufficient details to support the topic statement.
- Integrated Speaking Tasks: Summarize a written and/or spoken content by stating the main idea and sufficient supporting details to respond to the question.



IELTS Academic Student Learning Outcomes:

Reading: Read long, authentic factual, discursive and analytical texts and accurately answer questions about the content and organization of each passage.

- Identify the main ideas, important details, recognizing the writers' opinions and purpose.

Writing: Respond to two writing tasks with well-organized, coherent responses using a variety of simple and complex sentences and minimizing common writing errors.

- Task 1: Summarize or explain information or data retrieved from a newly-presented graph, table, chart or diagram in a formal written response. Provides a well-developed and well-structured response addressing all aspects of the task.
- Task 2: Plan, outline and compose a formal essay with an introduction, supporting paragraphs and a conclusion in response to a newly-presented perspective, argument or problem. Demonstrate a strong thesis statement and supporting ideas that align with the thesis.

Listening: Listen to conversations and monologues in social, academic and training contexts and accurately answer questions.

- Identify main ideas and detailed factual information; understand the opinions and attitudes of speakers; understand the purpose of an utterance; follow the development of ideas.

Speaking: Respond to three different oral tasks: Part 1 and 3 (Q&A), Part 2 (deliver a briefly prepared response) using a wide range of grammatical structures and vocabulary to deliver coherent and clear responses.

- Part 1: Respond to questions about yourself and range of familiar topics with a strong topic statement and sufficient details to support the topic statement.
- Part 2: Prepare and deliver a short response to an assigned topic stating a main idea and sufficient supporting details to discuss the topic.
- Part 3: Respond to questions connected to the topic in Part 2; demonstrating an ability to discuss more abstract ideas.



Student Progress and Assessment

Students should hand in all graded assignments on time and all quizzes and exams should be taken on their designated days. Students will be assigned homework daily. Although daily homework assignments are not required to be completed by students, it is encouraged for students to complete their daily homework assignments for their individual progress since the primary purpose of daily homework is for students to perform well on the larger graded assessments outlined below. Daily homework assignments are not factored into a student's final grade, but rather a means for their personal academic development to perform well on larger graded assignments, quizzes, and exams.

If for some reason a graded assignment cannot be completed or a quiz or exam cannot be taken on the assigned day due to uncontrollable circumstances, students should contact their teacher before class to notify him/her. If the circumstance is excusable, faculty will work with students to catch them up on the graded assignment or to reschedule the quiz or exam. If multiple graded assessments are not completed or taken on the assigned date due to uncontrollable circumstances, then the faculty member will give a verbal warning and meet with the student to discuss a progress plan for the student. If the student fails to make progress after the meeting, then faculty will begin to deduct points from the late assignments' grades. These grade point deductions may result in a student not meeting the benchmark percentage to progress to the next level and therefore may need to repeat the level or may be demoted in his/her level placement.

All homework, graded assignments, quizzes and exams must be completed by the student unless the teacher has given other instructions. Students are prohibited from copying another student's information and this dishonesty should not be tolerated and should be punished with an automatic zero.

If students are completing their assignments and assessments in a timely manner and still failing to make satisfactory progress, instructors will contact the AD who will then schedule a meeting with the teacher and student to discuss a progress plan for the student.

If, at the midterm student conference, the instructor sees that the student is in danger of failing the course due to poor attendance or lack of completing assignments, a written academic warning will be issued. The instructor will work with the student to devise a progress plan. If the student does not make the necessary steps to improve their failing score they will be in risk of being placed on academic probation at the end of the course.

A Forum student is considered as a completer when he/she completes the program of studies for which he/she has signed up for (enrolled in). Forum keeps data on student achievement and course completion for three years.

Student progress is measure based on the below:

Intensive English Program: student progress for this program is measured in each session through multiple quizzes, multiple assignments and a midterm and final exam.

Test Preparation Program: student progress for this program is informally assessed throughout the course through multiple model tests and skills assessment quizzes; however, final progress is formally assessed through the section scores students receive on the final exam which is a complete model test of either the TOEFL iBt or IELTS Academic or exam.

Instructors will grade and provide feedback to students on the assessments outlined above in a thorough and timely manner and will provide an original or copy of the assessment to students, if students request so. Instructors will keep with the original or a copy of the assessments in their class



portfolios except for quizzes to discuss the assessments with each student individually during the mid-session during student teacher conferences.

Intensive Student Progress Policy:

Advancement depends on a student's grade for each session. To advance to the next level or to obtain a Certificate of Completion, the student must receive at least a C (70%) in their program.

Warnings and Academic Probation for Intensive Program:

If students do not have 70% after the first month in the Intensive Program they will receive a verbal warning, if they do not have 70% after the midterm or at the third month of the Intensive session they will receive a written warning. If the final percentage for a session is less than 70% they will be placed on academic probation for the next session. If a student disagrees with his/her attendance probation determination, he/she can appeal the decision by filing a formal grievance. See Student Grievance Policies and Procedures.

Students who receive 60-69% their first semester:

At the end of the course, students who receive 60-69% will be allowed to resubmit any failed assignments and final exam sections to obtain 70% and advance to the next level. Students who resubmit failed assessments and do not obtain 70% will be placed on attendance probation and must obtain 75% in the next semester their

If 70% is **not** met after resubmissions or student refuses to meet the criteria then the teacher's and AD's recommendations are needed to go to the next level. If the AD and teacher recommend that the student go to the next level then the student will be placed on academic probation in the next level and must obtain a minimum of **70%** to be removed from probation. If the teacher and AD do not recommend that the student continue to the next level the student may need to repeat the level, which places them on academic probation requiring the student to get a **75%** to be removed from academic probation.

If a student advanced to the next level (second semester) based off the teacher's and AD's recommendations see below:

- Below 59%: expulsion for failure to make progress and violating academic probation.
- Between 60 - 69% failed assignments and/or failed sections of the final exam need to be resubmitted until a minimum of 70% is obtained for the student's final grade percentage. Only one resubmission is allowed. If both the teacher and student agree that the student should repeat the course then resubmission is not necessary.
 - Caveat:
 - If an F-1 student refuses to meet the criteria then expulsion for failure to make progress and violating academic probation.
 - If a non F-1 student refuses to meet the criteria they may be expelled, may be required to repeat or may be permitted to continue to the next level based on the recommendation of the AD. If the AD does not recommend that the student continue to the next level the student may need to repeat the level, which places them on academic probation requiring the student to get a **75%** to be removed from academic probation.

Students who receive 59% or below their first semester:

If a student fails (59% or lower), the student will need to repeat the level and will be placed on academic probation and must obtain 75% in the next session to be removed from probation and continue on with the program.

If repeating and a student fails the same level again in the second semester (below 59%) then expulsion for failure to make normal progress toward program completion. If repeating and the



student receives 60 - 74% then failed assignments and/or failed sections of the final exam need to be resubmitted until a minimum of 75% is obtained for the student's final grade percentage. Only one resubmission is allowed. For F-1 students, if 75% is not met then the student will be expelled for failure to make normal progress toward program completion. For non-F-1 students, the teacher's and director's recommendations are needed to advance to the next level. If the student is recommended to continue to the next level, the student will remain on continued probation and must obtain 75% to be removed from probation.

Test Preparation Progress Criteria:

The test preparation courses are not graded for Pass or Fail purposes. The instructor will informally assess student progress throughout the course to ensure that students are meeting the learning outcomes and provide feedback regarding student performance. At the end of the course, a complete TOEFL iBT or IELTS Academic test will be administered and students' scores will be reported. Students will receive a narrative report within a few days of taking the exam consisting of their scores for each section (including sub scores) along with a narrative explaining to what extent the student met the learning outcomes of the course.

Applicants who are recommended to a test preparation course based on their placement and desired score and are unable to, may not meet all of learning outcomes of the course they take. In any case where test preparation students do not meet the expected learning outcomes, Forum may recommend additional practice to the student after completing their test preparation course.

Grade Reporting, Transcripts and Certificates:

Students will be able to check their submitted grades on the Axess portal within a few days of taking the final exam for a course. A student may request a copy of his/her transcript from Forum staff. Students who have successfully completed the full course will also receive a Certificate of Completion on their last day. Students who have not taken the complete course, yet made satisfactory academic progress and met the attendance requirement will receive a Certificate of Attendance.

Forum abides by the following grading scale. If a student disagrees with his/her grade, he/she can appeal the grade by filing a formal grievance. See Student Grievance Policies and Procedures section in this handbook.

Grading Scale:

| Letter Grade | Percentage Point |
|--------------|------------------|
| A | 90-100 |
| B | 80-89 |
| C | 70-79 |
| D | 60-69 |
| F | 59 and below |

Grade Scale Interpretation:

A grade of A in a class or any assessed aspect of a class/test means either that the student has achieved a numeric grade of 90% to 100% or has demonstrated excellence in this area.

A grade of B in a class or any assessed aspect of a class/test means either that the student has achieved a numeric grade of 80% to 89% or has demonstrated high proficiency in this area.

A grade of C in a class or any assessed aspect of a class/test means either that the student has achieved a numeric grade of 70% to 79% or has demonstrated acceptable proficiency in this area.



A grade of D in a class or any assessed aspect of a class/test means either that the student has achieved a numeric grade of 60% to 69% or has demonstrated low proficiency in this area.

A grade of F in a class or any assessed aspect of a class/test means either that the student has achieved a numeric grade of 59% or has demonstrated unacceptably low proficiency in this area.

Incomplete Grades: An incomplete grade means that a student did not complete all assessments in the course either due to short-term study, termination, or were unable to turn in assignments or complete assessments.



Academic Policies and Procedures

Course Syllabus:

Instructors should hand out the class syllabus on the first day of class. The syllabus should contain the following components:

- Identifying information: program, level, instructor information
- Textbooks
- Course description/course goal
- Course objectives and student learning outcomes
- Assessment criteria
- Grading and advancement criteria
- Attendance Policy
- Course schedule

Student Conferences:

Students will have a brief one-on-one conference with their instructor halfway through the term during their speaking midterm to discuss their overall progress and attendance.

Cheating, Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

FIEC values academic integrity and does not tolerate the theft of intellectual property. A responsibility of each faculty member is to help students learn what constitutes academic honesty in a U.S. academic community, how to avoid dishonesty, and how serious violations are. None of the instances below will be tolerated at FIEC. If a student cheats, plagiarizes or does not uphold academic integrity the instructor will automatically assign a failing grade (F) for the assignment.

It is unacceptable to:

- Give out or asking other students for copies of tests, quizzes and assignments.
- Have or paying a friend to complete an assignment for you or looking and/or copying another person's work.
- Ask a friend for help on a test, project, quiz or homework unless the teacher gives permission or assigns groups; a student should go to the teacher first for help.
- Share with another person or asking for information about a test, project, quiz, or homework.
- Give out or ask other students for copies of tests, projects, quizzes, or homework.



Student Services Policies and Procedures

Student Service Offerings:

Forum offers its students and alumni a variety of student services. Some services are paid such as Tutoring and the English Gym and others are included in the cost of the Intensive Program or require minimal out of pocket fees.

- **Academic Advising and Counseling:** This service encompasses helping students understand program information in a thorough manner or institutional academic policies and procedures including placement, attendance, advancement and dismissal. Academic counseling also entails assisting students understand the U.S. system of education and academic behavior as well as assisting them in credential evaluation and understanding the application and/or admission process for the college/university of their choice or partner schools.
- **Personal Advising and Counseling:** This service encompasses providing students with information about the community and places of interest, helping students get adjusted and understand American culture, explaining to students who are nonresidents the importance of having health insurance, helping them cope with any emergencies, providing advice and explanations for day-to-day errands, issues and documents as well as other non-academic procedures and routines. Personal advising also includes informing students about state and federal laws that apply to them as well as helping students with professional endeavors such as a job searching.
- **Immigration Advising and Counseling:** This service encompasses assisting students in understanding immigration regulations that pertain to them, if any. This service is specifically for helping students who are nonresidents or U.S. citizens or F-1 students to achieve compliance with immigration regulations that may limit the programs available to them. If an immigration advising request is too complex for Forum's advisors, students will be directed to professionals in the field.
- **Cultural Activities & Field Trips:** Forum hosts holiday parties for students and staff and arranges school wide monthly field trips to different places in the D.C. metro area. All annual parties are at no extra cost to the student. However, students must pay out of pocket for costs associated with field trips.
- **Teacher Review:** Students and alumni can send important work e-mails, college admission documents, resumes and cover letters to Forum for review.
- **Library Services:** Students are always welcome to check out books, iPads and laptops from the Forum library. Students should log what books they are checking out and must return the book on the date assigned for the book return. In the case that a student loses a book, he/she must pay the full cost of the book. Electronics that are checked out from the library cannot be taken outside of Forum, they are designed to be used at the center only. Students can see Forum staff if they are interested in checking out books or electronics.
- **Digital Forums:** Forum has an official Facebook page and WhatsApp group where students and alumni can ask instructors and staff questions as well as share and exchange information.
- **Conversation Club:** This is a free service available to students in the Intensive Program. Students gather to practice speaking about a variety of topics in order to help develop their fluency.
- **Tutoring:** This is a **paid** service that offers existing and new students to receive customized instruction on the specific skills they need to work on. These tutorials are great for those who need to build fluency and accuracy in a specific skill area or would like to better versed in business English or more technical English in the legal, medical or IT industries.
- **English Gym:** This is a **paid** service that is similar to conversation club for existing or new students who would like more conversation practice. Classes are offered twice a week for one hour. Students practice speaking about a variety of topics in a workshop-style manner.



Orientation Policies and Procedures

Full-Time Intensive Program Orientation

Pre-Arrival Orientation: Upon acceptance to Forum, staff directs registered students to the Student Handbook available on the website and notifies them of key policies related to the first day of class. For F-1 applicants, the DSO sends a Pre-Arrival Orientation packet along with the Form I-20. This packet contains step-by-step guidance on the next steps to ensure compliance with immigration regulations and a smooth arrival to the United States. This packet also contains tips on cultural assimilation as well as guidance to finding health insurance, housing and transportation.

Initial Orientation: Within the second or third week of class, all new students are required to undergo mandatory New Student Orientation. During orientation, students will review and learn about program information, policies and procedures, immigration regulations and American culture. On the first day of class, the instructor also conducts a brief orientation explaining to students the instructional style and content, the academic expectations, advancement criteria, appropriate student conduct in the class and reiterates the attendance policy.

Returning Student Orientation: Students who are returning for another semester have a brief orientation at the beginning of each class where key policies related to progress and assessment are reviewed. Returning F-1 students must only do orientation again if there have been major changes to SEVP regulations.

Late Enrollee Orientation

Students who join late will have a brief orientation prior to their first day. Forum staff will review key policies in the Student Handbook and provide students with handouts and forms from orientation.

Ongoing Orientation for All Students:

Ongoing Orientation: Instructors meet with each of their students individually halfway through each term to discuss their progress and to reiterate any relevant program information such as academic expectations and advancement criteria. Forum staff members are available to students both new and longer-term on an as-needed basis to offer continuing support in all advising matters and to help understand the school and surrounding area. Forum's DSO is available on an as-needed basis to help students understand immigration regulations and procedures related to maintaining status, vacations, transfers, extensions, employment matters and any other issues that arise for international students. The DSO will reiterate important immigration regulations related to enrollment during continued students' registration period.



Facilities

Facilities Description:

Forum Intensive English Center is located on Huntington Avenue in Alexandria, Virginia. The center has multiple classrooms, a testing room, a kitchenette and a student lounge. Students are welcome to utilize vacant classrooms for studying after class.

Students are also welcome to bring small snacks that do not require heating to enjoy during the break and there are vending machines located on the first floor of the building.

Forum also has laptops for students to use. The lounge has a comfortable seating area, a water machine for water and tea, and a coffee machine. The kitchenette has a small seating and eating area as well as a fridge and sink for students to use. Restrooms are located on either side of the elevator on the fourth floor, outside our office.

Use of Forum Property Policy:

Equipment owned by Forum may only be used for school activities or activities approved by Forum. They may not be used for personal purposes. If students want to use equipment they must obtain permission from either the Academic Director or the Executive Director.

Disability Access Policy:

For students who need special arrangements to enter and exit the building due to disabilities, the Executive Director will make the necessary arrangements for a student to easily access the school. The building that Forum is in has a ramp in the rear that students can easily access.

Parking:

The building that Forum is located inside offers a large parking in front of and behind the building. All students, faculty, staff and interested candidates can use these parking lots and do not need to obtain a pass to do so.



Health Insurance and Housing Policies

Health Insurance Policy:

Forum does not offer health insurance for its students or refer students to a healthcare provider. Students should be aware that the United States does not provide socialized healthcare so a major accident or illness can be **very expensive** and stressful. Forum does not require students to purchase health insurance but it **strongly recommends** that all its international students have health insurance while they are in the U.S. to avoid any major issues.

If you would like to purchase health insurance, the resources below can help you start your search. ****DISCLAIMER**** Forum declares no affiliation or partnership with the below health providers. These health providers were not vetted by Forum Intensive English Center and operate as independent entities.

Health Insurance Providers

- International Student Insurance: <http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/>
- Atlas America Insurance: <http://www.atlasamericainsurance.net/>
- ISO Insurance: <https://www.isoa.org/>
- Compass Benefits Group: <https://www.compassstudenthealthinsurance.com/>

Housing Policy:

Forum does not offer any housing accommodations nor does it refer students to housing accommodations. If a student needs help finding information, Forum's administrative staff can describe different housing accommodation options in the near area, however administrative staff cannot refer students to a housing accommodation.

If a student finds himself or herself in a less than satisfactory housing situation, then Forum will explain to the student how to lodge a complaint to the housing institution. If the housing complaint is more of a serious nature, Forum will help the student search for other housing options, but does not recommend or refer any accommodations to the student.

If you would like to arrange housing accommodation, the resources below can help you start your search. ****DISCLAIMER**** Forum declares no affiliation or partnership with the below housing providers. These housing providers were not vetted by Forum Intensive English Center and operate as independent entities.

Housing/Homestay Accommodations

- Just Like Home: <https://justlikehome.com/>
- Cities Housing Solutions: <https://citieshousing.com/>
- Homestay Finder: <https://homestayfinder.com>
- Homestay Bay: <http://washington-dc.homestaybay.com/>



Obtaining a Virginia Driver's License or State ID Card

If you are a non-resident temporarily living in Virginia, you can drive with your home state or country driver's license and license plates for no more than six months.

To apply for a Virginia driver's license, learner's permit or state ID card you must provide the following documents to the Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV):

- Two identification documents
- One document proving legal presence
- One document proving Virginia residency

Primary proofs of identify documents:

- Unexpired passport with expired or unexpired visa and I-94 card
- Unexpired Employment Authorization Card
- Unexpired driver's license or learner's permit from another U.S. state
- Expired or Unexpired driver's license or learner's permit from Virginia

Legal residency documents:

- Unexpired Employment Authorization Card
- An unexpired passport with an expired or unexpired visa, I-94 card and I-20 form

Virginia residency documents:

- Original monthly bank statement no more than 2 months old
- Certified transcript from an accredited U.S. school
- Residential lease agreement
- Utility bill with the applicant's name and address no more than 2 months old



Immigration Policies and Procedures for International Students (F-1 Visa Holders)

Academic Year Definition:

For F-1 students, Forum defines an academic year as two Intensive sessions, which equals eight months of study in its Intensive program. A student can count the time spent studying in F-1 status at the transfer-out school toward any requirement that requires the student to be in a F-1 status for a full academic year (such as qualifying from employment). However, if a student leaves the U.S. and returns on a new Initial Form I-20 instead of transferring, the student cannot count the time spent studying at a previous school.

I-20 Information:

Per immigration regulations, F-1 students are responsible for safekeeping their initial I-20 with the admission number and any previous copies that have been issued to him or her. If students lose their current I-20, Forum will provide a replacement copy with the same information as the last copy including any endorsements for employment or additional notes. Students are responsible for requesting an extension to their I-20 within 30 days before the completion date. Students should discuss this with Forum's DSO.

Forum will issue an I-20 for 24 months at a time. In cases where students do not have the funds to reflect the 24-month duration of their studies, Forum will issue an I-20 for a shorter period of time in order to reflect the funds available by the student.

Duration of Status:

Per immigration regulations, an F-1 student is admitted for duration of status. Duration of status is defined as the time during which an F-1 student is pursuing a full course of study, which is considered a minimum of 18 hours per week. F-1 students may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the indicated program started date listed on Form I-20. A student is maintaining status if he or she is making normal progress toward completing a course of study.

Maintaining Student Status:

F-1 students must comply with immigration regulations and Forum's policies and procedures to maintain their student status. Forum will provide students with updates to immigration regulations through handout and online updates; however, students are ultimately responsible for maintaining their F-1 status. Students must see the DSO prior to their current semester completing to register for the next semester.

Employment Policy:

F-1 students must not work off campus without prior authorization from USCIS. Documented off-campus work without proper authorization will result in loss of status for F-1 students. F-1 students in good standing may apply for employment at the Forum. On-campus work is limited to twenty hours a week and is subject to availability.

Students will be eligible for off-campus employment upon receipt of a USCIS EAD and approval Notice of Action to their application for off-campus employment on the basis of severe Economic Hardship. Forum students are not eligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

F-2 Dependents:

F-2 dependents cannot enroll in a full-time program except for avocational or recreational purposes. F-2 children may enroll in elementary or secondary schools full-time. An F-2 may remain in F-2 status if the F-1 maintains status. If the F-1 student falls out of status, the F-2 falls out of status as



well. F-2 students are also required to keep their passports valid for at least six months into the future. F-2 visa holders are not allowed to work or engage in any business activities.

Termination Policy:

International students must meet all requirements to maintain the F-1 status. Initial students must report to Forum within 30 days of the program start date. If a student enters the United States and does not report or enroll in a full course of study within 30 days of the program start date, Forum will terminate the student's record. An international student's SEVIS record can be terminated for the reasons below:

- Failure to reenroll in a full course of study
- Working without proper authorization
- Expulsion from Forum

Expulsion

A student will be expelled from Forum under the following circumstances:

- Does not respect Forum's rules and regulations set forth in this Handbook. Including but not limited to treating students, personnel and facilities with respect; upholding the academic integrity policy and not using any drugs or alcohol at the center.
- Violates any state or federal laws.
- Failure to make normal progress toward completing a course of study: this means failing to make adequate academic progress by violating academic probation terms and violating attendance probation terms or having four weeks of consecutive irregular attendance without prior notification or authorization.

SEVP Reporting Policy:

Forum is required to report the following to immigration:

- A student that is not in status or has not reported to the school
- A student's change of name
- A student's early completion of the program
- Disciplinary actions taken against a student for a crime
- A student's start date for the next session
- Current address
- Any notice that SEVIS requests
- Any update to their immigration status in the U.S.

Facts to Remember:

- The earliest a F-1 student can enter the U.S. is 30 days before the program start date.
- F-1 students have 60 days to return to their home country after the program completion date. Students authorized to withdraw before the completion date have 15 days to return to their home country.

F-1 Student Responsibilities:

- Maintain a valid passport throughout studies at Forum.
- Maintain current local address with Forum's DSO. If a student moves, he/she must update their address using form AR-11 and mail it to the address noted on the form. Students must report a change of address within 10 days of moving. Depends must also be reported.
- Request an extension for his/ her I-20 before the completion date

Reduced Course Load Policy:

DSOs may authorize a reduced course load (RCL) if an F-1 student is experiencing academic difficulties, a temporary illness, medical condition or needs fewer courses than a full course load in



his/her last term to complete the program of study. RCL allows F-1 students to attend classes part-time. RCL for medical conditions requires medical documentation and cannot exceed a total of 12 months. RCL for academic difficulties such as: improper level placement, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods, initial difficulty with reading requirement or with the English language; can only be used for the initial academic term and students must begin a full course of a study at the next offered term.

Annual Vacation Policy:

F-1 students who have attended full-time for two consecutive semesters and intend to register for study in the semester following their vacation are eligible for a vacation semester, during which they can take a one-semester leave and still maintain active status. Students who are on attendance probation are not eligible for a vacation semester. Students taking an unauthorized vacation will lose their F-1 status with Forum.

Transfer students must have completed a total of eight months of consecutive study, four months of which must be at Forum to be eligible for a Vacation Semester. Students, who count time spent at another institution, must present a letter verifying their enrollment at the previous institution. Students who join the semester after day one in week 3, must complete three semesters in order to get a one semester vacation.

Students cannot take a vacation more than 16 weeks long, as the length of the vacation semester needs to be the equivalent of one semester at Forum. To apply for a Vacation Semester please complete the Vacation Request Form.

Travel and Re-entry Policy:

A F-1 student may be readmitted after a temporary absence of five months or less from the U.S., if the student is otherwise admissible. Students must provide a flight itinerary as evidence of their last exit from the United States.

Students should consult the DSO prior to traveling to ensure they have all the required and suggested documentation to re-enter the U.S. successfully. To re-enter the U.S. after traveling abroad students must show a valid visa valid, foreign passport, proof of necessary funds to cover tuition and living expenses as well as a current Form I-20 properly endorsed by the DSO for re-entry. If there has been a major change of the information on the student's most recent I-20 such as a transfer or advancing to a higher level of study, students must obtain a new I-20 for readmission.

Students who leave the U.S. and would like to return to Forum must provide the DSO with evidence of their intention to return as well as have paid at least one month of enrollment upon return. Evidence includes documentation of a return ticket or indication of a specific start date. If students fail to provide this evidence, their SEVIS record will be cancelled 60 days from their last session end date.

Medical Leave Policy:

If an F-1 student experiences a medical emergency and needs to take a break from their studies, they should work with the DSO to either request a Reduced Course Load or a leave of absence that cannot exceed a total of 12 months.

Transfer Policy:

A F-1 student can transfer from one SEVP-certified school to another at any given time. Students must comply with immigration regulations and Forum's policies to transfer-out of Forum and maintain their student status.



A student must fulfill all financial obligations by his/her transfer release date (the date of the student's transfer in SEVIS). If a student does not fulfill the financial obligations prior to the student's transfer release date, Forum will put the student out of status. Students should work with the DSOs at their current school and the school they wish to transfer to establish an acceptable release date.

A F-1 student can remain in the U.S. when transferring between schools if the student begins classes at the transfer-in school in the next available term or within five months of a student's classes at the transfer-out school, whichever is sooner.

Terminology

- Transfer-Out School – the school the student is leaving
- Transfer-In School - the school receiving the student
- Transfer release date – the date on which responsibility of the student's SEVIS record shifts from the transfer-out school to the transfer-in school.

Transfer-In Policy & Procedures:

Students may transfer to Forum from another school at any given time. Students who are out of status and are transferring from another school must apply for reinstatement of F-1 status at the same time they are applying for their studies at Forum.

To maintain status and facilitate a successful transfer, students should take the following steps:

1. Apply for admission at Forum by providing the following:
 - Completed International Student Application Form
 - Completed International Student Transfer Form Part 1
 - Application Fee
 - Passport copy
 - A copy of F1 visa or Change of Status approval
 - A copy of I-94
 - A copy of I-20
 - A copy of bank statement with current balance or Sponsor Affidavit
2. If accepted, Forum will provide students with an acceptance letter via e-mail or in-person if they are in the state. After receiving the acceptance email from Forum, please make a tuition deposit of at least \$550. Students should then notify the DSO at their current school of their desire to transfer and work with them to set an appropriate release date (the date that Forum takes responsibility for a student's SEVIS record). Students should provide the DSO at their current school with the following documentation:
 - Acceptance letter from Forum
 - Completed Part 1 of the International Student Transfer Form
3. Ensure the DSO at your current school provides Forum's DSO with the completed Part 2 of the International Student Transfer Form.
4. Report to Forum to take the placement test and register for classes at Forum within 15 days of the transfer release date. *Remember to request your I-20 from Forum once your classes begin.

To avoid losing status throughout the transfer procedure, students must attend classes at their current school until the transfer release date. Students transferring from another school to Forum



who are out of status must apply for reinstatement to F-1 status while they apply for their studies at Forum.

Transfer Out Policy & Procedures:

Forum strongly encourages students to make transfer plans at least 90 days in advance of their last day at Forum. If students are transferring out of state, Forum urges students to making all necessary accommodation arrangements beforehand.

To transfer to another school, a student must apply and be accepted to the school they are transferring to. Students must also inform Forum of the transfer no later than the last day of the current program. Students who do not re-enroll in the next available session or do not notify Forum of their intention to transfer will be put out of status by Forum’s DSO at the end of the registration period for the upcoming session.

After a student applies to another SEVP-certified school, the student will need to provide Forum with proof of acceptance and a transfer from the school they wish to transfer to. Forum’s DSO will work with the student and the transfer-in school’s DSO to set an appropriate release date. Forum’s DSO will complete the transfer form and send it to the transfer-in school so the transfer-in school will have all required documents to continue the transfer process.

Departures:

F-1 students have 60 days to return to their home countries after the completion of the program. Students that are authorized to withdraw before the completion date have 15 days to return to their home countries. If students withdraw without authorization, they must leave return to their home countries immediately.

Change of Status:

If a student is in the U.S. on a non-F-1 visa they may be able to change their visa status. Depending on the type of visa someone currently has they may or may not be allowed to change their visa to F-1 in the United States. It can take up to 12 months to approve a visa change of status request.

Depending on a student’s original visa status, they may or may not be allowed to start their studies during the waiting time for the decision. If a change of status request is approved, the student may not leave the U.S. and return on the same student visa at any point throughout their studies. If a student leaves then, they must return to their home country and apply for a student visa at the embassy or consulate.



Leave of Absence and Expulsion Policies for Non-F-1 Students

Leave of Absence Policy for Non-F-1 Students:

If a student must take more time off than is allowed in their attendance requirement due to an emergency, they may be compensated with prorated tuition. If a student plans to continue the program after the absence, then they must make-up the work and still obtain a 70% in the course to continue to the next level.

Since part-time programs are short in length, a leave of absence is only allowed in Forum's full-time Intensive Program. A student can only request a leave of absence in the case of a family emergency, medical condition or work-related reasons.

A leave of absence is permitted in the Intensive English Program for a total of three weeks or the equivalent of 54 hours. If a student must leave in the middle of a session due to a family emergency, medical condition, work-related reasons or an unexpected vacation.

Students must request the leave of absence in advance of the beginning date of the leave of absence, unless unforeseen circumstances prevent the student from doing so.

If the student does not resume their studies, it will be treated as a cancellation and tuition will be refunded for the time taken for the leave of absence as well any prepaid tuition amounts.

Expulsion/Dismissal Policy:

A student will be expelled from Forum under the following circumstances:

- Does not respect Forum's rules and regulations set forth in this Handbook. Including but not limited to treating students, personnel and facilities with respect; upholding the academic integrity policy and not using any drugs or alcohol at the center.
- Violates any state or federal laws.
- Violates his/her attendance probation terms and conditions or has consecutive irregular attendance.
- Continually fails to make adequate academic progress and violates academic probation terms.



Attendance Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy:

Forum students are expected to attend all their classes. Regular attendance is important for achievement and progress. Students are required to attend a minimum of 80% of each session to advance to the next level in the Intensive Program or to obtain a certificate of completion for the Test Preparation Program. If students are late more than 15 minutes or leave 15 minutes early three times, it is treated as one absence. Students are responsible for notifying their instructor or the school administrator beforehand via phone or email if they are going to be absent. Students are also responsible for obtaining class materials and assigned homework from the instructor or their classmates.

Important Note for F-1 Students: Due to regulations, F-1 students may only miss class for illness or medical conditions. The DSO will require students to submit a doctor's note for an excused absence due to medical reasons; if the DSO does not require a doctor's note they must document the reason why the note requirement was waived. An unexcused absence is an absence for personal reasons or taking care of an ill dependent or any other personal reason. Unexcused absences could result in attendance probation or termination. Please do not ask your teacher to excuse your absence, please talk to the DSO.

Warnings and Attendance Probation:

If a student's attendance is below 80% at the end of the first month of their first Intensive session, they will be issued a verbal warning by their teacher. If a student's attendance is below 80% at the midterm or at the third month of an Intensive session, they will be issued a written warning by their teacher. If final attendance for a session is less than 80% they will be placed on attendance probation for the next session. If a student disagrees with his/her attendance probation determination, he/she can appeal the decision by filing a formal grievance. See Student Grievance Policies and Procedures.

If students are on attendance probation, they must attend at least 85% of their second session in order to be removed from probation. If a student is between 80-85% at the end of the semester they will remain on probation and F-1 students will not be allowed to take a vacation semester. If a non-F-1 student has below 80% attendance at the end of their probationary semester they must obtain recommendations from their teacher and the Academic Director to continue the program and will remain on attendance probation.

If an F-1 student has below 80% attendance at the end of their probationary semester they will be expelled for failure to make normal progress toward program completion and will have their SEVIS record terminated. F-1 students who are absent for four consecutive weeks or 16 school days without prior authorization or notification will also be expelled for failure to make normal progress toward program completion and will have their SEVIS record terminated.



General School Policies for All Students

Privacy of Student Information:

Although Forum does not need to comply with FERPA regulations, the administration encourages language faculty and administrators to keep student records secure and confidential. Language faculty and administrators should not disseminate student information unless it is an emergency, the parent of a dependent child would like to access information or a school official needs to access the student's records for educational interests (including but not limited to academic advising, teaching, financial reasons, discipline). Language faculty and administrators should keep attendance documents, student work and assignments secure and out of plain view.

Release of Student Record Information

If any of the below situations arise, information from the student's records can be released without the student's permission:

- Emergency – if there is a threat to the safety of a student and permission cannot be obtained by the student because of the circumstance then information will be given to people that can assist in the matter.
- Parents of Dependent Students – records are available to parents who have dependent children. Dependent students can be defined by referring to Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code. FIEC also reserves the right to notify the parents of students under 21 who violate drug and/or alcohol policies at FIEC.
- School Officials (instructors, coordinators and administrative officials) – school officials have the right to access a student's records for educational interests (including but not limited to academic advising, teaching, financial reasons, discipline).
- FIEC will not give out directory information without the written permission of the student. This includes name, address, date of birth, and emergency contact information.

Student and Parental Rights:

All students have the right to access and challenge educational records that are kept by FIEC. Students do not have the right to any information that is about other students. If the student feels that any information in their file is incorrect, the student may submit an explanation on why the information is incorrect and provide documentation to support it.

Photos, Videos and Testimonials:

Personnel of Forum will not post photos or testimonials of students without the student providing written consent.

Evaluations:

Students evaluate their course and their teachers in the middle and at the end of each session. This evaluation is very important so that Forum can see whether the instructional methods and skills of the instructors help the students in achieving the student learning outcomes for each course. Students must be objective and sincere when completing the evaluation. The evaluations are read and analyzed by faculty and staff and actions are taken accordingly. Students also evaluate their overall experience at Forum including Forum's student services, facilities, orientation and office staff upon the completion of their studies. This is a very important evaluation as Forum is a student-centered program and the student's feedback is necessary for program improvement and growth. All evaluations at Forum are anonymous.



Advising Policies and Procedures:

Students can schedule advising sessions with Forum staff on an as needed basis. Administrators, staff, student council, the DSO and directors are all available for advising depending on the request.

All advisors try to provide students with immediate guidance. If an advising request requires additional research, advisors should aim to provide guidance to the student within five days of the advising session, if possible. If an advising request is too complex for Forum's advisors, students may be directed to a qualified individual to assist students in their advising needs.

Book Rental Policy:

Students must buy the main text for the course, but can rent books from Forum for a \$10 charge. Books that are rented must be returned within one week of the class finishing. If books are not returned by this deadline, then Forum reserves the right to charge the student for the full cost of the book.

Student ID Policy:

Students can request a student ID from administrators. There is a \$10 charge for the ID. The ID is not needed for school functions, but may be useful to receive promotions from neighboring businesses.

Laptop Rental Policy:

Forum has laptops students can rent. Students can rent laptops free of charge and use the laptops at school. Students cannot leave the premises with the equipment. To rent a laptop, students should see a staff member and fill in the check out the log with their information. Laptop rentals must be returned the same day.

Snow Day Policy:

In the case of heavy snow or severe weather conditions Forum may cancel classes. If more than two days of classes are cancelled in the Intensive Program, Forum will make up any additional classes. For part-time programs, any classes cancelled due to weather will be made up with additional hours.

Library Policy:

Students are always welcome to check out books and laptops from the Forum library. Faculty members are encouraged to provide students with suggestions on books to check out from the library to improve students' proficiency. Students should log what books they are checking out and must return the book on the date assigned for the book return. Students should see the Administrator to check out and return books. In the case that a student loses a book, he/she must pay the full cost of the book. Electronics that are checked out from the library cannot be taken outside of Forum. They are designed to be used at the center only.

Center Policies:

- Students MUST speak ENGLISH ONLY at all times at Forum!
- No electronic devices are allowed in the classroom without the teacher's permission.
- Only leave the class in case of emergencies.
- Always come to class prepared and on time.
- Smoking is allowed only outside of the building in designated areas.
- Ask for permission before using the copier and scanner.
- Keep the classroom, common areas and bathrooms neat.
- Dress in a respectful manner.
- Drugs and alcohol use are not tolerated at Forum.
- Students and personnel must treat each other and the facilities with respect.



Copyright Policy:

Forum Intensive English Center will not reprint material that violates the fair use provisions of the U.S. Copyright Law. Forum requires employees and students to respect the use of copyright protected materials of others. Forum acknowledges that copyright infringement is a violation of the law and requires all members of staff, faculty and students to comply with copyright laws and adhere to this copyright policy. Publicly available information such as material posted on the Internet is not free from copyright protection. Please do not copy or download any published materials, texts, manuals, books or audio video materials. Copyright infringement can result in legal disciplinary action.

Forum respects copyright rights including but not limited to:

- Rights of owners of third party materials used in teaching
- Rights of students in all material they create in and for Forum
- Rights of teachers and staff have in any material they created prior to being employed at the school and in any material created while employed at Forum
- Rights of software and resource publishers in all material used by teachers and or staff of Forum

Holidays:

The Forum Intensive English Center dismisses class for the following holidays:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Columbus Day
- Memorial Day-Last Monday of May
- Independence Day-July 4th
- Labor Day-First Monday of September
- Thanksgiving-Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving (Thanksgiving is always the fourth Thursday of November)
- Christmas Vacation and New Year's Day (December - January)

Accessing Correspondence Policy:

Students can reach faculty, administrators and staff through e-mail and phone. Forum's Facebook page and WhatsApp group can also be used to exchange communication among students, faculty, staff and the directors. Grades and attendance are posted online through Forum's Axess portal that each student is assigned upon their registration. Students can also view their course registration and transaction history through their online portals.

Health and Safety Policy:

Safety and health at Forum must be part of every operation. The safety and health of every employee is a high priority. Faculty and staff must do their best to promote safety and health for all students and personnel and take every reasonable measure to promote safe conditions at Forum. Students must sign a waiver during registration indicating that they will not hold Forum responsible for any risks or hazards associated with the social gathering

Safety Procedures for Activities:

For any injuries or illness on or off campus, students should notify a faculty or staff member or one of the directors immediately. If a personnel member or student is injured and requires more than first aid and students cannot reach another personnel member to notify them of the injury, students should call 911 and act as directed.



Payment, Refund and Cancellation Policies

Payment Policy:

The application fee is non-refundable and must be paid at the time of applying to Forum. The application fee and the book fees are non-refundable.

Students are encouraged to pay the tuition in full; however, if they are unable to, they are welcome to make monthly payments. Monthly payments must be made within the first week of the month.

Intensive students must pay all the costs associated with their tuition and fees by the 12th week of the program.

Eight-Week Test Prep students must pay all the costs associated with their tuition and fees by the 6th week of the program. Short term and Five Week Test Prep students must pay all the costs associated with their tuition and fees by the first two weeks of their classes.

Tuition Deposit: A \$600 tuition deposit is required for all Out of Country F-1 applicants to the Intensive Program applicants. The tuition deposit is also required of change of status students.

Students attending for only partial term can receive prorated tuition for their shorter course length. If a F-1 student's Change of Status is approved and the approval date occurs after the start of a current session, the student will pay a prorated tuition amount. The deposit is also refundable if the change of status request is denied. However, the \$600 tuition deposit is not refundable should the student decide to transfer to another school after the status change is approved.

Refund Policy:

All refunds will be calculated using the last date of attendance and will be made within 30 calendar days from the date of cancellation (the date the student gives written or verbal notice of withdrawal).

Cancellation Prior the Start of Class or No Show for F1 Students: Forum requires written notification of a student's cancellation before the start of class. Forum's application fee and express mailing fees are non-refundable. If a student never enters the country on Forum's I-20 a student will receive a full tuition refund minus any non-refundable fees. If a student enters the United States on Forum's I-20 and then cancels their enrollment or does not show up to class, no refund will be given. If a student's application is rejected by Forum or a student is not granted a student visa, a full refund minus non-refundable fees (application fee and mailing fees) will be issued.

Cancellation Prior the Start of Class or No Show for All Other Students: Forum Intensive English Center requires verbal or written notification (e-mail is okay) of a student's cancellation or withdrawal before the start of a new session to receive a refund except for **non-refundable fees, which includes the application fee.** If a student notifies the administrator in advance of the start of class that he/she will not be able to complete the full program; the administrator has the discretion to give prorated course price on a case-by-case basis.

Withdrawal, Termination or Expulsion After the Start of Class for All Students:

- Tuition will not be refunded to students who withdraw after classes begin unless the withdrawal is due to an unforeseeable event such as a family or health emergency.
- Termination or expulsion due to student misconduct: no refund will be given if a student violates any of Forum's rules and regulations or state or federal regulations.



- If a student is terminated or dismissed from Forum for irregular attendance and/or academic failure, no refund will be given.
- If a student is expelled due to misconduct such as violating any federal or state laws or violating Forum's rules and regulations, no refund will be given.
- If a student takes a temporary absence midsession, Forum will prorate the weeks missed if more than one week of absence.
- No partial week refunds.

Referral Policy:

Students who refer others will receive a 10% discount for each paid semester of the referred student. The referred student must be enrolled in class in order to receive the discount. If the referred student is making monthly payments, the student who referred them will receive the 10% discount on a monthly basis.

Payment Policy for Tutoring:

Required upfront payments for the first week, then monthly. Tutorial cancellations require a 24-hour notice to reschedule. Less than 24-hour notice will result in lost hours. Students have 365 days to reschedule or credit hours to another person if cancelling the program. Forum does not match students for semi-private tutoring; pairs must register together. The final approval of partners is at the tutor's discretion.

Payment Methods: *All electronic payments can be made through the online Axxess portal*

- Cash in U.S. currency only and in-person! DO NOT SEND CASH!
- Wire transfers in U.S. dollars. Payee must pay all transaction fees, regardless of whether the wire transfer is incoming or outgoing (as in the case of a refund sent to the student by Forum)
- Personal, certified or company bank checks. All checks must be from U.S. banks in the Federal Reserve System. If the check is from a sponsor or company, the student's name must be written in the memo area. Temporary or starter checks are NOT accepted.
- Traveler Checks from U.S. banks or major credit card companies, such as American Express and Citibank.
- Money orders in US dollars drawn on US banks. Forum does not accept Money Orders in U.S. dollars drawn on non-U.S. banks.
- Major credit and debit cards: Forum accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover.



Student Grievance Policy and Procedures

The grievance process provides a means to resolve disputes, which have not been resolved through the normal process of reasoned discussion with the parties involved. The grievance process is intended to define clearly the matters that are at issue; to assure students that his/her complaint or problem has been presented to and considered by appropriate school officials; and to assure the school community that decisions involving students in their relationship to the school are fully considered.

Please keep in mind that whenever possible, all complaints should be resolved by the grievant (student) and the one that has caused the grievance. If a student would like to launch a formal complaint against Forum, they should follow the procedures outlined below.

Forum defines a formal complaint as a complaint of serious nature that cannot be resolved through reasonable discussion. The below situations provide guidance on what Forum considers a formal complaint:

- Sexual Harassment by personnel members or peers
- Mishandling of Finances (includes tuition, books, fees)
- Discrimination
- Grade or attendance and academic probation appeals
- Violation of school conduct policies by personnel members or peers
- Feeling endangered
- Mistreatment by peers or personnel members
- Misinformation provided by personnel member

The below procedures are followed during the formal complaint process:

1. Students should approach the Executive Director with verbal information of the complaint (name, action, and date of occurrence (s). The Executive Director will then make the individual aware of the action that needs to be taken, if any.
 - If a student would like to file a grievance against the Academic Director or the Executive Director, then the student should approach the Director that they are not filing a grievance against.
2. If there is sound evidence of a problem, the Executive Director will then notify the student to file a formal grievance (Formal Grievance Form is on the back of this handbook) and submit it to the Executive Director.
3. Within five days of receiving the formal grievance, the Executive Director will arrange a formal meeting with the DOCO, President & Academic Director and the parties involved to discuss the complaint.
4. A decision will then be made by the President & Academic Director about what action, if any, should be taken. This decision will be based on federal law.
5. If the grievant is unsatisfied with the resolution, he/she may appeal in writing by giving a report to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will give the report to the President & Academic Director who will then review the appeal and notify the grievant within five days of any further action needed, if any.

*Discrimination can be an action based on any of the following: race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disabilities, ancestry, veteran's status, or political affiliation.



Formal Student Grievance Form

Return completed form to the Executive Director. To be completed by complainant when the informal process is unsatisfactory. If complainant does not have the English ability to fill out the form, he or she may have somebody help them complete the form

Complainant Information

| |
|--|
| Name: |
| Telephone Number: |
| E-mail Address: |
| Did you attempt to resolve this issue informally? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, on _____ (Date) <input type="checkbox"/> If no, why not? _____ |
| Please attach list of correspondence, if any |

Date:

| |
|---|
| Date and Time of Incident: |
| Location: |
| Witness 1 Name: |
| Witness 1 Contact Information: |
| Name of alleged offender (person who you feel did something wrong): |
| Describe what happened (please attach copies of any documents that you feel could help this investigation): |
| |
| |
| |
| |

Description of Complaint

| |
|--|
| What do you think should be done about this? |
| |
| |
| What kind of response would you like to this form? <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting with the person(s) involved <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please explain) |
| |
| |

Complaint Requests:

By signing this paper, I give the FIEC representative permission to investigate the above issue. I understand that the information in this document is considered *sensitive* and will only be shared with the person(s) necessary to have a thorough investigation.

Signature of Complainant

Date

