



## **PROGRAM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Q: Where is the Gulf Islands International Program?**

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

### **Q: Won't I feel isolated living on an island?**

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

### **Q: What is special about Salt Spring Island?**

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

### **Q: What is the climate like on Salt Spring Island?**

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

### **Q: What is the school like?**

A: Gulf Islands Secondary School enjoys a reputation for academic success, winning sports teams, outstanding performing arts and visual arts programs, and technological programs. The school is committed to social and human development. It actively and consciously promotes student participation. The majority of students in the school are involved in school activities, including sports and the arts. Leadership is a key value. It is our belief that the schools outperform other schools because of this focus on participation.

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

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

Over the past three years, all of our international graduates have eventually entered post-secondary programs.

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

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

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

A: The enrolment cap at Gulf Islands Secondary School, which has 650 Grade 9 – 12 students, is 10% of number of the Canadian students, which means a current cap of 65 international students. We also try to limit the number of students from any one country to 12 students.

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

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

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

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

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

A: Technically no. Students who plan to study in Canada for less than six months are not legally required to have a Study Permit. It is our policy, however, that all students are required to apply for a Study Permit. It

has been our experience that many of our one semester students decide that they would like to stay longer. It is expensive and challenging to apply for a Study Permit from within Canada. It is also not possible to apply for B.C. medical coverage without a Study Permit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Q: Do these extended activities cost extra?**

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