

Student Handbook

2023

Table of Contents	pages
Introduction	2
LIT Mission Statement	3
Application Process	3
Before You Leave for the United States	7
When You Arrive in Houston	8
Living in the U.S	9
LIT Program	13
LIT Proficiency Scale	15
Student Policies	18
Immigration and F-1 Visa Compliance	24
Checklists	25
Student Code of Conduct	27
Student Complaint Procedure	28
Fire/Emergency Procedure	30
Emergency Contact Numbers	31



Introduction

Welcome to the Learning Institute of Texas, LIT. If you plan to improve your skills in the English language, our program will help you achieve your goal. If pursuing a college education is your plan, we will help you to prepare for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam. We can also help you improve workplace communication skills and reach your professional objectives. Our faculty and staff strive to assist all students in improving their English skills in order to accomplish their individual goals.

The information provided in this handbook is designed to assist:

- All prospective, new and current international students
- A sponsor or family member of a LIT student.

We encourage you to become familiar with the content in this handbook. It will be a valuable source of information for many of the questions you may have.

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LIT Mission Statement

The mission of English as a Second Language (ESL) program at LIT is to provide the skills that learners need in the areas of listening, reading, writing, and speaking to successfully advance their educational, and personal goals and ultimately lead to their full participation in the diverse society of the United States and other global communities.

LIT reserves the right to change or amend any of the policies and other material contained in this handbook at any time.

Admission Policy

The Learning Institute of Texas employs an “open admissions” policy and will admit students provided that they:

- Are at least 18 years of age (Students who are 16-17 years of age may be admitted provided that they are given parental consent).
- Complete the LIT Application and furnish all required documents as listed in the application.

Application Process

LIT enrolls two types of students:

- Full-time F-1 Visa students (new and transferring)
- Non F-1 students (non-English speakers who need to improve their English for school, work or personal reasons)

The application process for each is different – pay close attention to all details.

New F-1 Students

An F-1 application to LIT should be made as early as possible. ***All of these items must be received and verified for completion and accuracy before issuing an I-20:***

- Completed Application for Admission form
- Application fee: US \$200.00*
- I-20 processing fee: US \$50.00*
- Copy of passport information page with photograph
- Affidavit of Support, recent income tax report, and bank statement
- A financial statement to verify that you can meet both tuition and living expenses while attending LIT. The amount of at least \$15,000.00USD is required for a 12-month period for a single person. For each dependent, add \$3,000.00 per person.

*Fees are subject to change.

Please use the checklists found in the back of this handbook, or on the LIT website (www.litexas.edu), to ensure that you have all documents. Missing items will delay the processing of your application and delivery of your I-20. Submit payment and all application materials to the address on page 2. Payment can be made with your credit card by filling out your credit card information on the Application for Admission form. Your credit card information will never be revealed to any other entities or individuals.

I-20 document will be sent via express mail unless otherwise requested. You are responsible for the cost of express mail.

You have your I-20. What Next?

The next big step is preparing for your visa interview. If you have not already made an appointment, you need to make one soon. Be prepared for a long wait during busy travel months. You can also check estimated wait times for a visa interview appointment in different cities here: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

Please see your country embassy's website for the specific information and required materials needed to apply for your nonimmigrant student visa and to make your visa interview appointment. A list of embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions can be found at: <http://www.usembassy.gov>.

The following is a list of common requirements as a guide, but this should not be considered an official list. ***Please follow the requirements listed on your country's embassy's website for up-to-date and accurate information.***

1. **Valid Passport:** If your passport will expire less than six months from your planned arrival in the United States, is damaged, or you do not have a blank page for a visa, please get a new passport before your interview.
2. **One Photograph:** See your country's specific embassy's website for photo requirements.
3. **Original Receipt for Visa Application Fee:** See your country's specific embassy website for more information on amount and how/where to pay.
4. **Completed Visa Application Forms:** Most are now online in electronic format and many embassies/consulates only accept the electronic version.
5. **Completed SEVIS Form:** I-20 properly completed and signed by both the Designated School Official (DSO) and the applicant. The name on the form must exactly match the name in your passport and have been entered into the SEVIS system by the U.S. academic institution.
6. **SEVIS Fee Receipt:** This I-901 SEVIS Fee can be paid online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee>
7. **Financial Support Documents:** Proof that you can support yourself during your entire stay in the U.S. without working.

The consular officer may request additional information if needed, such as proof of ties to country, résumé, or official transcripts.

Please note that your visa cannot be issued more than 120 days before the program start date listed on your I-20. In addition, you may not enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the program start date, so make your travel plans accordingly.

Ten Points to Remember when Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa

(Modified from NAFSA, Association of International Educators, and the U.S. Department of State)

1. TIES TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY: Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. “Ties” to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person’s situation is different and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter that will guarantee visa issuance.

2. DOCUMENTATION: Evidence of sufficient funds to cover expenses as well as evidence of scholastic preparation may be requested. Make sure to include your letter of acceptance from LIT along with your I-20. If you have immediate family members (parents, siblings) in the U.S., be prepared to explain why they are here and what they are doing in the U.S. It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be read quickly or evaluated. Remember that the interview time is typically less than ten minutes.

3. LANGUAGE: Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do not prepare speeches. Americans generally use direct eye contact when communicating, so it is advisable to do the same.

4. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF: Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. If you are a minor (under age 18) and need your parents there in case there are questions (i.e., funding), they should wait in the waiting room.

5. KNOW THE PROGRAM AND HOW IT FITS YOUR CAREER PLANS: If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, but rather to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the U. S. relates to your future professional career when you return home. *Lastly, be prepared to answer the following question: What will you do if your visa application is denied?*

6. BE BRIEF: Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point and remember to speak clearly.

7. NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL: Applicants from countries with a history of terrorist activities may encounter additional scrutiny. Countries suffering economic problems or applicants from countries where other students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants may have more difficulty obtaining visas – statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending to immigrate. If you are from such a country, you may be asked about job opportunities at home after your study in the U.S.

8. EMPLOYMENT: Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work after graduation. While a number of students do work over the course of their studies, such employment requires authorization and is incidental to the main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.

9. APPLY IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY: Applicants for student visas should generally apply at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate with jurisdiction over their place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

10. MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE: Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, **request the reason you were denied in writing** and ask the officer for a list of documents to bring in order to overcome the denial.

NAFSA would like to credit Gerald A. Wunsch, Esq., 1997, then a member of the Consular Issues Working Group, and a former U. S. Consular Officer in Mexico, Suriname, and the Netherlands, and Martha Wailes of Indiana University for their contributions to this document. NAFSA also appreciates the input of the U. S. Department of State.

Transferring F-1 Students

Transferring F-1 students must provide *all* of the same application documents, application fee, I-20 processing fee, and advance tuition payment as noted above for all F-1 international students. In addition, you must request that your current U.S. institution submit photocopies of your Form I-20, Form I-94, U.S. visa page, and Passport Information pages to LIT, along with the Transfer Release Form found on our website at www.litexas.edu.

Non F-1 Students

“Non F-1” students may be citizens, or they may be non-citizens with Permanent Resident or other visa statuses.

The process for non F-1 students is very simple and can begin shortly before classes begin for the semester. You will submit a completed the enrollment form along with a photo I.D. You may take only one class or up to a full-time load.

A non F-1 student checklist is provided in the back of this handbook.

Before You Leave for the United States

Full-time F-1 students should plan to arrive in Houston 5 to 10 days before classes begin. This allows time to become acquainted with the Houston area, adjust to the time change, and take care of any last-minute details.

Documents

Before you leave your country, be sure you have:

Your passport and signed I-20

Your F-1 student visa

Financial support documents

Housing arrangements finalized

Confirmed travel arrangements, including transportation from Houston Airport.

Carry in your hands all of your important documents, including your passport, I-20, visa, and financial documents. These must be readily available for immigration officials at your port of entry.

There are further recommendations at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website, <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/index.htm>, including a fact sheet titled “Arriving at a U.S. Port of Entry.”

When you arrive in Houston

New and transferring F-1 students should plan to arrive in Houston 3 to 10 days before classes are scheduled to start. Please call the LIT office (281-988-9522) when you arrive in Houston – we want to know you have arrived safely. We also need to schedule a registration appointment for you as well as answer any other questions you may have.

Students are encouraged to make an appointment to register and pay fees. Please be on time and expect this process to take about 1 hour. If you arrive at our offices without an appointment, we may be busy with other students and unable to help you until later.

At Registration:

New and Transferring F-1 Students

- Bring your passport, visa, and stamped I-20
- Be prepared to pay tuition and other fees

We will review the class schedule and school calendar, provide directions to class locations, and answer any other questions you may have. A placement test will also be given at this time.

Returning F-1 Students

- Bring your passport, visa and stamped I-20 (if you left the U.S. and returned)
- Be prepared to pay tuition and other fees

Registration for Non F-1 Students

Non F-1 students should also make an appointment to register and should plan to spend about 1 hour.

- Registration form
- Photo I.D.
- Tuition payment

Living in the U.S.

Adjusting in a New Country

You are about to embark on a new experience in the 4th largest city in the United States. Houston's metro has a population of over 6 million people and is approximately 100 miles across and growing. It is a port city famous for its petrochemical industry, its diverse population, and its world renowned medical center. New challenges always accompany new experiences. You may occasionally feel lonely, confused, unsure, and uncomfortable in the United States. People may have different values and new ways of doing things that seem strange to you. You may feel that everything has changed, including your immediate support system of family and friends.

All of these things may contribute to "culture shock." To minimize the shock, you will probably want to keep in touch with family and friends back home—but it is important to also identify new sources of support. People that you meet at LIT - new friends, the staff, and the instructors - will help you to alleviate this initial shock and loneliness. You could also contact relatives or friends who live in the United States to ask for their advice. However, relations with locals, your new friends, and new neighbors might be the key to moving forward.

Most importantly, be prepared to open yourself to new experiences; be prepared to learn, not only in the classroom, but in your interactions with new people every day.

Housing

LIT does not provide and is not responsible for student housing, though we can refer students to local housing options including hotels, apartments, and homestays. Occasionally, a local family will make itself available as a homestay host. LIT will require the family to furnish their own background check and submit it to the Administrator. If you inquire about a homestay, the LIT Administrator may put you in contact with an available family if one is available.

There are many things to consider when choosing a place to live in Houston. Among the factors you may wish to consider are: proximity to school, cost of housing, neighborhood characteristics, resources for children, and length of stay.

One of the best ways to find information and advice about off-campus housing is to ask friends and other off-campus renters. They can share information about the place they live and provide the pros and cons of a particular area. When you find a place that interests you, it is also a good idea to ask residents of the complex/area how they like living there.

Other ways of finding housing include:

Internet Search: Houston Association of Realtors - <http://www.har.com> is free and a great place to look for a rental housing or an apartment. Craigslist is another free service for those who are looking to purchase, lease, or rent. It is one of the most widely used means to find any products or services. <http://www.craigslist.com>

Locator Services: There are a number of apartment locator services in Houston. Locators usually offer their services free; their fees are paid by the apartment complexes. If you decide to enlist the assistance of an apartment locator, make sure you understand what their service entails.

Apartment locators in Houston include:

- Houston Apartment Finders - <http://www.apartmentfinderhouston.com>
- Apartment Locators - <http://www.apartmentlocators.com>
- Apartments.com - <http://www.apartments.com>
- Houston Association of Realtors - <http://www.har.com>

Safety

While Houston is generally a safe place to live, it is still a good idea to educate yourself and take steps to reduce the potential for problems. By doing so, you will also feel more confident and comfortable. Developing a sense of "street smarts" takes time and comes through experience. You should familiarize yourself with well-lit paths and sidewalks on campus. Evening students in particular should walk in groups from one place to another on campus. Pay close attention to your surroundings. Trust your instincts. If a situation appears scary to you, avoid it.

At "home" (an apartment or private residence), keep your doors locked and your large windows closed and locked. Get to know your neighbors so that you can "watch out" for each other. As always, you should use common sense when it comes to safety.

Remember, it is a good practice to always carry your ID and emergency contact numbers with you.

Health Insurance

The cost of health care in the United States is high and increases annually. Usually, an individual does not have the financial ability to pay for these costs, especially diagnostic tests and hospitalization. For example, surgical procedures can easily cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, uninsured hospitalization for just one day can cost several thousand dollars, and an ambulance or a CT scan can cost around \$2000-\$3000. In cases of accidents or illness, we do not want any student to face such a situation of financial hardship. Therefore, health insurance is essential. **F-1 students are strongly recommended to obtain health insurance from their home country with coverage that includes overseas stay.** The current policy of LIT does not require F-1 students to have health insurance; however, it will be highly risky not to have such coverage. LIT has referral information concerning student insurance for those who want to explore these services at:

www.internationalstudentinsurance.com

Religious Affiliations

Today, virtually every denomination is active in Houston. You may find some comfort by continuing to practice your own faith on a regular basis with a group of like-minded individuals. If you are interested in attending religious activities, you can inquire at the LIT Administration Office and we will help you to find a place.

Around Houston

Houston is home to the world-famous **NASA** (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). The name “Houston” was the very first word spoken when man landed on the moon on the historical day in 1969. It was the voice of the astronaut Neil Armstrong saying, “Houston, Tranquility Base here. The eagle has landed.” **Space Center Houston** is a visitor center with a state-of-the-art educational and entertainment complex where an entire family can enjoy a day exploring space.

Houston shows its devotion to the arts through a full complement of art museums and critically acclaimed galleries. Houston's **Museum District** offers a range of museums, galleries, and art and cultural institutions. Millions of people visit institutions in the Museum District every year. Spend a day in the Museum District and be inspired. Most of the museums offer free entrance on Thursdays.

Houston also boasts a thriving cultural scene centered in the **Theater District**, including symphony, opera, ballet, and theater. Houston is one of the very few cities in America with permanent, professional companies in all major performing arts disciplines. Free performances by Houston Symphony, Houston Ballet, and Houston Grand Opera are available at the **Miller Outdoor Theatre**. Check out their schedule at <http://milleroutdoortheatre.com/>.

Houston has a rich sporting culture and the area residents are active in many spectator and participant sports. Spectators attend events involving teams from many of the Major U.S. Professional Sports Leagues. Participants enjoy activities from running in **Memorial Park** to sailing on **Galveston Bay** and **Clear Lake**.

Houston has teams in nearly every major professional sport, including the **Houston Astros** (MLB), **Houston Texans** (NFL), **Houston Rockets** (NBA), and **Houston Dynamo** (MLS).

Minute Maid Park (home of the Astros) and the **Toyota Center** (home of the Rockets) are located downtown, contributing to an urban renaissance that has transformed Houston into a popular day-and-night destination. Also, the city has the first domed stadium in the United States (**the Astrodome**) and also holds the NFL's first retractable roof stadium—**Reliant Stadium**.

Less than an hour of drive from the LIT campus is **Brazos Bend State Park**. It is a natural habitat of wild Texas alligators and a sanctuary for thousands of species of birds. It has 6 lakes, bike trails, and picnic areas with fishing available. **The George Observatory**, which has one of the largest telescopes in the nation, is also located in the park.

<http://houston.citysearch.com/> is a great resource to find not only what is going on in the Houston area but also to find local businesses and services that other people are recommending.

Weather

Houston’s weather is mostly hot and humid, (90+ degrees Fahrenheit or 30+ degrees Celsius for about 4 months per year), with sporadic rain. Our winters are mild with occasional days/nights just above freezing. Please bring appropriate clothing and personal effects.

Alcohol

American customs and laws regarding alcohol and drinking are probably very different than the laws in your country. In the U.S., you must be 21 years old to purchase and drink alcohol. This law is very strict. It is very common for the store clerk to ask to see your "ID" to prove your age when you are buying alcohol. It is illegal for anyone, regardless of age, to possess an open container of alcohol in an area that is not licensed for alcohol consumption. This means that you may not carry an open can or bottle from your apartment to your friend's house. It is also against the law to take an open container out of a restaurant or bar.

Drunk driving is a serious crime in the United States, and one of the leading killers of people under 25. Drivers are considered drunk if their blood-alcohol level is .08 (that's about three drinks in one hour). If you are arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI), you will lose your license and may go to jail. This means you may be sent back to your country. Also, any rental car insurance you purchase is invalid if an accident is alcohol-related.

The American Way

Physical Space: Although Americans shake hands when they meet, they generally do not touch one another. They do not embrace, kiss one another's cheek, or stand close together. Standing too close is considered rude or threatening. On the other hand, standing too far away indicates coldness or dislike.

Conversation: For Americans, it is like tennis. First one person speaks, then the second speaks, and so on. Interruptions occur between friends, but when talking with an authority, that person speaks without interruption until they signal that it is your turn. If you interrupt, you are being rude and may not get what you want.

Negotiation: In general, Americans do not negotiate. You may offend if you try to negotiate. (Exception: do negotiate when purchasing an automobile.) At LIT: tuition amount, grades, and vacation eligibility are not negotiable.

Rules: Americans believe that rules are made to help people. Rules are not like guidelines; they are more like unwritten laws. The best way to protect yourself and avoid trouble is to know and follow the rules.

Hygiene: Personal cleanliness is important in every country. Americans consider strong body odors and strong fragrances to be unpleasant and rude. The most common complaint students make about other students is strong body odor. Be sure to bathe and use deodorant daily. Wash your clothes after each use. Go easy on perfumes.

LIT Program

LIT's ESL Program consists of an integrated, nine-level curriculum that emphasizes skills to cater to a range of educational, vocational, and personal needs. The levels range from level 1 to level 8, with an optional TOEFL preparation course for students who obtain Level 8 proficiency. Students who enroll in Level 1 can complete the Program in 1-1/2 years.

Program Completion

All students enrolled at LIT are in transitional stages of learning English. Students may transfer to another institution or exit the program anytime depending on what their personal goals are. Students who successfully complete Level 8 with a minimum VERSANT test score of 60 and students who successfully complete the TOEFL class with minimum score of 80 on the TOEFL iBT are considered to have completed the LIT Program. Either student is eligible to receive a certificate of completion.

Placement Test

A placement test is given to all students prior to their entry into classes. This is usually completed at the time of registration. This test measures general English language skills. It is just one tool which the Administrator and instructors will use to place you in the appropriate skill level for your coursework. The official placement test employed by LIT is the VERSANT Test. Students who feel that they placed in a wrong level may speak to the Administrator within their first week of class.

Orientation

Orientation sessions are held on the first week of the semester start and are **required** for all students – new and returning. Class schedules, policies, visa compliance requirements, and other important matters are covered. Sponsors of new ESL students are welcome to attend the orientation sessions to familiarize themselves with the various points of the ESL Program.

Class Size and Levels

There are nine levels of classes in the LIT Program. The Versant placement test will determine skill levels for each student and depending on enrollment, classes will be divided accordingly. Class size will be small in order to provide students with more personalized attention and opportunities to improve their learning skills.

Minimum Class Size & Class Size Report

The usual minimum class size necessary for the continuation of a course beyond the second class meeting is 5 enrolled students in attendance at that meeting. A class may be closed after the first meeting if attendance is below 5 at that time. A class may be cancelled prior to its first meeting for insufficient enrollment.

Class Schedule

Classes are held from Monday through Thursday. The classes start at 9:00 a.m. and end at 1:10 p.m. Current class schedules are posted on the school website. Schedules are typically very similar from one term to another, but will vary somewhat as determined by student enrollment.

Late Registration

LIT employs a rolling enrollment policy and allows F-1 students to enroll who did not meet the registration deadline. However, if a student enters the course after the first session day, he/she will be held responsible for all material covered in that course before the student arrived. Every effort is made outside of class to bring the student up to speed. Students enrolling after the second week of class will receive an "Incomplete" and may be required to repeat the level in the following session.

Courses

Our course program is designed to ensure students are prepared for the rigors of a college classroom experience, such as strong writing skills and the comprehension of lectures and reading materials. Students practice conversation and speaking skills using practical, real-world English. They learn to write with accuracy and effectiveness, develop strategic listening skills, and improve their use of grammar. For those whose plans may not be entering college, these same skills are also essential for developing greater career opportunities in the professional world.

Although many students strive only to meet TOEFL exam requirements for admission to a university program, research shows that a strong background in ESL courses is even more effective for success because it allows the student to reinforce their skills in an English-language classroom setting. Our courses are held on-site; in-class instruction includes Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Reading.

Course Guidelines

1. Use English while class is in session.
2. Be respectful of classmates and instructors (come on time, participate, and listen when others are speaking).
3. Absolutely no cell phones are allowed in the class. Computers or translators may be used with the permission of the instructor.
4. Students should not leave the classroom during class for any reason, except for emergency situations with permission of the instructor.
5. If a student is absent from class, they are responsible for any assignments missed or due.
6. Only water bottles with lids are allowed in the classrooms (no open cups/mugs)
7. No food is allowed in the classroom. No chewing gum while class is in session.
8. Classrooms will open 15 minutes before the first class of the day and are locked after the last class of the day.

LIT Proficiency Scale

LIT Levels: Students are tested using Versant Test for both initial placement and progression purposes. The score ranges below have been aligned with the CEFR (Common European Framework of References) system.

Proficiency Scale

LIT Level	Versant ESL	GSE	CEFR	CEFR Statements
Level 1	<24	10-21	<A1	Can understand only a few words and can interact with the language only at a tourist level. Student relies purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organized repertoire of situation-specific phrases.
Level 2	25-33	22-29	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
Level 3	34-39	30-35	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
Level 4	40-45	36-42	A2+	
Level 5	46-49	43-48	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Level 6	50-53	49-53	B1	
Level 7	54-56	54-58	B1+	

Level 8/ TOEFL	57	59+	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options
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Tuition and Fees

Tuition and all fees are payable at the time of registration, which is the three-week period before the first day of class. Payments received on or after the first day of class will accrue a late fee of \$50.00. The installment plan is available for the returning students. For each installment payment, a fee of \$20.00 is added. Any late installment payment will accrue \$25.00 late fee also. Tuition payments that are not honored by the bank shall constitute unpaid tuition and will be subject to the \$30.00 returned payment charge and late fee. Grades will not be granted until all tuition is paid.

Transcripts and Certificates

ESL classes are non-credit classes. Students receive a numeric grade in each course to rate their work. Grades are noted on the report card and available on Gradelink for all the students. Students who have demonstrated outstanding effort and achievement will receive a certificate of excellence. Upon request, the school will issue a certificate of completion when student completes each course successfully and meets all the requirements for grades and attendance.

Textbooks

All students are expected to have their own copy of all required textbooks for each class. After the first week, students who do not have the textbooks will be asked to go to the Administration Office to purchase them before returning to the class. The list of required textbooks is posted on the website two-weeks before the beginning of the term. Generally, full-time ESL students should plan to spend around \$120 per session for textbooks.

Due to U.S. copyright laws, it is illegal to photocopy any or all portions of a textbook. Students are not allowed to use copies of books. The sharing of textbooks is not allowed; neither student benefits.

If you purchase the textbooks on the internet, it is your responsibility to order the correct titles. Students should order early to receive the books in time for the first day of class.

Late registering students (after 8 school days) must either already have the textbooks or purchase them from the Administration office before the start of classes.

Scholarships

Scholarships depend on the availability of funds and are limited to exceptionally hardship cases only. Students should request the Application for Scholarship form and submit it to the Administration office upon completion. It is then reviewed by the Board of Directors for determination of eligibility and amount of scholarship to be awarded.

Student Advising, Counseling and Referral

LIT recognizes the need to provide academic, personal advising and counseling, as well as assistance in immigration matters. In order to provide such advice and assistance in a timely and accurate manner, the following is implemented:

- Both the LIT Administrator and the Assistant Director are responsible for advising students in academic, personal, and immigration matters. Each student is required to undergo an academic advising session prior to his or her first session. LIT advises on appropriate topics related to the students' legal enrollment in the language program. Any other immigration or personal advising not pertaining to the language program should be sought from other professionals, services, and/or programs. LIT provides a list of local immigration attorneys for those students who may need their services.
- Prior to registration and enrollment, the LIT Administrator advises students in detail as to the courses needed as well as the duration of the program of study. Students are also informed of any required textbooks or other learning materials needed for their coursework. Additional topics covered are policies regarding transferring to other institutions and course credits. Students are required to meet with the LIT Administrator before they begin their first session. Subsequent academic advising sessions may be held at the student's request.
- The LIT Administrator and the Assistant Director provide basic personal advising to any student who needs assistance regarding adjustment to local society and/or culture shock. For personal issues that require professional attention, LIT will promptly refer students to professionals in that area. LIT also introduces new students to existing students of the same native language/cultural background to facilitate the adjustment process.
- Each new F-1 student will receive the compliance document located in the Student Handbook and should review and understand each item. Students will sign this form at their registration appointment to certify that they understand the requirements and will fully comply with all regulations to remain in legal status. Additionally, the I-20 describes the rules and regulations for international students. Although LIT will make every effort to assist students in their immigration concerns, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to be in compliance. Students seeking any additional immigration advising should contact the appropriate professionals for such services. LIT provides students with current contact information for professional services and/or programs that can meet their needs.

- When student needs exceed the resources and expertise available within the program, LIT provides contact information for other qualified professionals, services, or programs in an effort to direct students to accommodating resources.

LIT Student Policies

Who is Eligible to Attend Class

Students may not attend a class unless they are properly enrolled. (Students who wish to audit a course must follow the instructions to become properly enrolled as an auditor). Students may visit classes in which they are not enrolled only with the consent of the instructor and the Administrator.

The F-1 visa issued to full-time international students has a specific set of requirements from U.S. immigration laws and regulations for maintaining visa status; this includes a full-time course schedule, participation, and making normal progress in a course of study. For this reason, LIT carefully monitors attendance and academic progress throughout the semester; failure to meet these requirements can result in probation and possible termination of the F-1 visa.

Students are expected to attend all classes on time, participate in class, and have all assignments completed and submitted on the dates they are due. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and will be combined for all classes. **An F-1 student may not miss more than 20% of classes in order to maintain their visa status – this includes coming to class on time.** Students will be expected to make up and turn in any assignments missed while absent.

When absent, it is your responsibility to ask your teacher for missed assignments and make up all work missed.

Absence Calculations:

- One tardy = less than 10 minutes late to class
- Three tardies in a class = one class absence
- More than 10 minutes late = one class absence

Excused absences: The only excused absences are for the medical reasons. Students who are sick must have a doctor's note to be excused. Driving exams and regular doctor appointments do not qualify as excused absences. Undocumented sick days are not considered excused absences.

Unexcused absences: An absence is unexcused if the student does not provide the doctor's note. Some instructors may not allow students to make-up work missed due to unexcused absences. Excused absences are still recorded as absences, but special circumstances may be considered when calculating totals.

Excessive Absences:

- After 12 total class absences – student receives a warning letter. The student may also receive a verbal warning.
- After 20 total absences – student receives a second warning letter.
- After 28 total class absences – student maybe placed on probation and subject to dismissal without any notice unless satisfactory improvement has been made.

Academic/Classroom Misconduct

Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times. Academic/classroom misconduct will not be tolerated.

- Come on time for the classes. Classrooms will open 15 minutes before the first class.
- Be respectful to classmates and instructors (come on time, participate, and listen when others are speaking). Know the instructor's rules stated on the course syllabus.
- Use English in class. Students speaking their native language in the classroom will be warned and may be reported to the Administration if repeated.
- If you are absent from class, you are responsible for any assignments missed or due.
- Behavior that disrupts instruction is not permitted.
- Displays of temper, violence, or bad manners are not acceptable. Arguing with an instructor during class time is not acceptable. Make an appointment with your instructor if you are unhappy about something.
- Absolutely no cell phones are allowed in the class. Translation apps may be used only with the permission of the instructor.
- Students should not leave the classroom during class for any reason, except for emergency situations with permission of the instructor.
- No food is allowed in the classroom. No chewing gum while class is in session.

Refund Policy

LIT service fees such as Application fee, I-20 Processing fee, and placement test fee are **non-refundable**.

For notice of withdrawal received prior to the first day of classes, a refund of 100% of total tuition will be granted for both F-1 and non F-1 students.

For notice of withdrawal received on the first week of classes, a refund of 80% of total tuition will be granted for both F-1 and non F-1 students.

For notice of withdrawal received on the second week of classes, a refund of 50% of total tuition will be granted for both F-1 and non F-1 students.

No refund will be granted after the second week of program start date.

Upon extenuating or extraordinary circumstances which may result in student's withdrawal, the student may submit a written request for refund consideration. It will be considered on a case-by-

case basis. Exceptions which should not normally be considered include common illness, poor decisions, or change of mind by a student.

Academic Honesty Policy

Students at LIT are expected to perform honestly and ethically in completing homework and class assignments. Students who are dishonest in the performance of class work will be subject to disciplinary action.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism consists of taking the words or specific substance of another and either copying or paraphrasing the work without giving credit to the source. If you submit an assignment paper, examination, or other work that is written by someone else, it is plagiarism. The most common example is **copying from the internet**, which is a flagrant instance of plagiarism.

Cheating: Using information from another student or student's paper on an in-class examination, and/or allowing another person to do one's work, and then submitting the work under one's own name.

Disciplinary Actions: If a student is found guilty of dishonest or unethical behavior in the completion of homework or class assignments, he or she is subject to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may be mild or severe, ranging from verbal or written reprimand, to probation, a grade of "F" or no credit in a course, to suspension, expulsion, or dismissal from a course, or from LIT.

Hearing Procedures (Due Process): A student who is disciplined because of dishonest behavior may request a hearing with the Executive Director or his designees for a review of the facts of the matter and to present his or her perspective. The student must call or write to the Executive Director requesting a hearing within 10 days of notification of discipline.

Grievance Policy

If a student has any complaints or troubles in regards to a certain class or teacher, the student should first talk with the teacher and work together to address the situation and come to a mutual agreement. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, the student should then make an appointment with the Administrator, who will try to work with both the student and the teacher to reach a satisfactory resolution. In case the complaint is not resolved, the student should file for a formal complaint by completing the complaint form. All formal complaints are reported to the Executive Director. Student complaint procedure and the official student complaint form are located in the back of this brochure.

Vacation

F-1 students may take the equivalent of one academic term of vacation after completing a full academic year. One academic term equates to a 9 week session, and a full academic year consists

of 4 sessions. Students who have failed a session will be required to enroll in the subsequent session and defer vacation to the following session. Each academic year, students may take one vacation, provided the student is registered for the following term.

Grades and Promotion

In order for a student to progress to the next level, he or she must both achieve an average grade of 70% or higher in each of their courses and obtain the minimum required score on the VERSANT Test for his or her respective level. The grade for each class is made up of quizzes (30%), tests (40%), graded homework/assignments (20%), and class participation (10%). The participation category includes any measure that is indirect (attitude, non-graded homework, effort, etc.). If a student fails to either pass the VERSANT Test or the level, they then must repeat the level. Failing students may repeat the level one time and must pass to avoid termination. All students are expected to make normal and satisfactory academic progress.

LIT Grading Scale

90-100%: A-Excellent

80-89%: B-Good

70-79%: C-Satisfactory

0-69%: F-Fail

Academic Probation

Full-time F-1 students must show normal progress in classes to maintain student status. Students should maintain at least an average grade of 70% in each of their courses to meet the minimum grade standard. In addition to excessive absences (see attendance policy above), if a student does not meet the minimum grade standard, does not participate in class, or habitually does not turn in assignments or homework, the student's visa status and/or future enrollment will be in jeopardy. If a student does not regularly participate in class, or turn in assignments or homework, the instructor for that class will first talk with the student individually. If there is no improvement, the instructor will inform the Administrator and a warning letter will be sent to the student regarding possible probation.

Warning Letter

A warning letter regarding possible probation will be sent for any of the following reasons:

- the student has 12 class absences;
- the student does not meet the minimum grade standard when final grades are issued; or
- an instructor does not see improvement in class participation and/or assignments after talking with the student personally (either in person or by letter).

Probation

The student will have one session to show improvement after receiving the warning letter. If no improvement is seen in grades, class participation, class assignments, and/or the student reaches

28 class absences, the school will place the student on probation for the rest of the session. Student will not be allowed to register for the following session unless satisfactory arrangement has been made with the administrative office within 5 days of the notice. Students who do not show substantial improvements in grades and attendance during probation will be terminated without further notice.

Probation conditions may include:

1. Monitoring of class attendance, participation, assignments/homework, and grades for all classes.
2. Meetings with the administrator as needed.

A student on probation must also meet the following requirements to continue studying at the LIT:

1. The student must not receive less than a 70% grade average for each class during the semester.
2. The student must not miss more than 20% of classes.

A decision will be made at the end of the session regarding the student's continued enrollment in the LIT program.

Removal of Probation

Students who have met all the terms of their probation at the end of the session may be taken off probation and moved back to "active status" for the following session.

Change of Address

If you change your home address, phone number, or email address, you must notify the administration office immediately.

Children

Children are not permitted in classrooms and should not be left on campus without adult supervision.

Copiers and Office Equipment

Please refrain from using any of the office equipment without permission from the office staff.

Data Security

LIT strives to protect its data information against accidental or unauthorized access, disclosure, modification, or destruction. LIT also strives to assure the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of information. Students allowed to access the computers in the Language Lab are required to follow instructions given to them to ensure security and confidentiality of data.

Transfers

Students may transfer out in "active" status in SEVIS to other SEVP approved schools if they:

- Are in "Good Standing"

- Do not owe any money to LIT

LIT requires students to complete a minimum of one semester/two consecutive sessions before becoming eligible to transfer. The transfer release date will be the end of the current session. Students must complete the *Transfer Out Request Form* and *Exit Questionnaire*.

Smoking, Drinking, and Eating

Smoking is a health hazard and is only allowed in the designated area. Smoking is prohibited on all other parts of the LIT campus, including parking lots, paths, fields, and sports/recreational areas. This policy applies to all students, faculty, staff, and other persons on campus, regardless of the purpose of their visit. Soft drinks and coffee are allowed only in the café area. Any drinks, other than those in a sealable container, are not allowed in classrooms. No food is allowed in classrooms or computer labs at any time.

Alcohol and Drug Free policy

LIT strictly prohibits the use, possession, or distribution of alcohol and other illicit drugs on the school campus, on property owned or controlled by LIT, or as part of any activity of LIT.

Lethal Weapons on Property

Lethal weapons of any kind, including but not limited to firearms, knives with blades exceeding 2.5 inches, and explosives of any kind, are not be permitted on campus property at any time except when carried by law enforcement officials. Any student or employee who brings a lethal weapon on campus property or to a LIT sponsored function, whether or not on campus property, shall be subject to termination.

Employment

International students are permitted to work up to twenty hours per week on campus only. There are very limited employment opportunities on campus. Check with the school administrator about the employment opportunities. Off-campus employment for F-1 students is a violation of student visa regulations and will result in the student losing legal status.

Bad Weather

In the event of inclement weather (a hurricane or tropical storm), classes may be cancelled. All students should follow the announcements on the website at www.litexas.edu or LIT Facebook for updates regarding late start or closing of the school. Please note that we follow the Alief Independent School District's policy for closure due to inclement weather.

Immigration and F-1 Visa Compliance

All F-1 academic students are responsible for maintaining their visa status in good standing. Each new F-1 student will receive the compliance document below and should review and understand each item.

We strive to keep students within the requirements of the law; compliance with immigration regulations is an important part of that goal. The following is a list of the major points.

Notice concerning the role and responsibility of an international student in LIT to comply with U.S. Immigration laws and regulations.

It is critical that international students with an F-1 visa classification maintain their legal status in the United States. Students must be aware of and comply fully with the following:

- Maintain a valid passport at all times.
- Complete an official immigration transfer whenever you change educational institutions.
- F-1 students must complete a full course of study.
- Students are expected to leave the U.S. once they complete their studies.
- Excessive absences, lack of participation, and/or missing assignments will result in termination of the Form I-20. At LIT, the student may not miss more than 20% of classes in order to maintain student status.
- If the student cannot complete the program by the end date, he/she must submit a request for an extension 30 days prior to the expiration date of the Form I-20.
- F-1 students are NOT allowed to work in the United States without authorization.
- Report any change of address or residence, and/or any change of name.
- Notify the school prior to traveling outside the U.S.
- Notify the Administrator of any accompanying dependents in F-2 status.

The LIT Office is here to assist you with concerns about your immigration status. **However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) insists that it is YOUR responsibility to understand the rules for your immigration status while you stay in the United States.** If you do not follow the rules, you may be "out of status," which means you are no longer a legal student in the United States and must return home.

If you have an **F-2 spouse**, he/she may not attend school or work. However, your spouse may qualify to change his/her visa to allow for work. Generally, your **F-2 child** can attend public school up through the 12th grade or high school graduation, but he/she cannot attend college without

changing his/her F-2 visa to an F-1 visa. In addition, an F-2 child must change their F-2 status when he/she reaches 21 years of age.

A Note of Caution: If you have any questions about immigration regulations or staying in status, do not ask your friends for advice! Please see the administrator for up-to-date immigration information.

Lost/Stolen Passport

If you lose your passport while in the United States, or if your passport is stolen, take steps immediately to replace it. Notify the school office that your passport is missing, and then contact your embassy or consulate as soon as possible to find out what steps are necessary to replace it. If your passport was stolen, file a police report with the local police office.

Checklists

We encourage you to use these checklists to ensure you have all documents ready when required. You have a number of important items to keep track of and it is important to be organized and have everything ready at the appropriate time. Missing documents can cause serious delays and stressful situations that can be avoided with proper advance preparation.

Application Checklists

NEW Full-time F-1 Students

- Completed Application for Admission form
- US \$200 application fees and advance payment
- US \$50 I-20 fee
- Photocopies of passport information page with photograph
- Financial Support Documents

NEW Transferring Full-time F-1 Students

- Completed application form
- US \$200 application fees and advance payment
- US \$50 I-20 fee
- Financial Support Documents
- Transfer Verification form
- Photocopies of your I-20, I-94, U.S. visa page, and passport information pages

Travel Checklists

“Arriving at a U.S. Port of Entry” fact sheet at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/index.htm>

- Your passport and I-20
- Your F-1 student visa
- Financial support documents
- Finalized housing arrangements
- Confirmed travel arrangements
- Contact information for your sponsor/guardian/US family members
- Contact information for LIT Office

Registration Checklists

NEW and Transferring Full-time F-1 Students

- Call the LIT Office at (281) 988-9522 and make an appointment
- Your passport
- Your visa
- Your stamped I-20
- Full payment for tuition and all appropriate fees

Returning Full-time F-1 Students

- Call the LIT office at (281) 988-9522 and make an appointment
- If you left the U.S. and are returning for class, we need your I-20, I-94, passport, and visa
- Full payment for tuition and all appropriate fees

All Non F-1 Students

- Call the LIT office at (281) 988-9522 and make an appointment
- Non F-1 student registration form
- Photo I.D.
- Full payment for tuition and all appropriate fees

Student Code of Conduct

LIT provides a comprehensive ESL program designed to meet student's diverse social, cultural, and religious background while providing a safe and healthy environment. LIT promotes and encourages ethical sensitivity and responsibility as well as respect for the rights and viewpoints of others.

Students enrolling in LIT assume an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with an educational community. LIT's policy and regulations are outlined in the Student Handbook. LIT retains the authority to maintain order within the school and to exclude those who are disruptive of the educational process or who represent a threat to the community. Willful disruption of the educational process, destruction of property, and interference with the orderly process of the school or with the rights of other members of the school will not be tolerated.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct includes a list of violations, incidents other than academic dishonesty, for which disciplinary action may be imposed on students. Violations of the Code of Conduct fall into the following, but not limited to, categories:

- Falsification, forgery, alteration, unauthorized possession, or misuse of school documents, records, or identification, or knowingly furnishing false information to the school, or to a school employee.
- Destruction, damage, unauthorized possession of, or misuse of private or school property.
- Obstruction or disruption of teaching or any other lawful function or mission of the school.
- Willfully refusing or failing to leave any property owned, operated, or controlled by the school upon being requested to do so by an authorized school employee.
- Verbal, physical, or psychological abuse, including detention or threat of bodily harm to self, another person, or persons in the LIT community.
- Possession, manufacturing, sale, or distribution of alcoholic beverages or other illicit drugs on school campus, on property owned or controlled by LIT, or as part of any activity of LIT.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs on any school property.
- Sexual harassment, intimidation, or harassment of LIT students or employees.
- Theft of property or damage, other than accidental, to property of the school, members of the LIT community, or campus visitors.
- Violation of rules relating to the use of campus buildings and other school facilities or services.
- Possession or use of firearms, illegal knives, dangerous weapons, explosives, and/or dangerous chemicals on school campus or property.
- Smoking outside of approved smoking areas.
- Unauthorized tampering with any fire alarm or fire safety system.
- Failure to report behavior that threatens the public safety of the community.
- Stalking – following or harassing a person over an extended period of time, including by electronic means.

- Bullying – aggression that intends to harm, occurs repeatedly, including by electronic means.
- Other violations determined by school authorities to warrant disciplinary action.

Student Complaint Procedure

LIT promotes an open educational environment, rich in values and designed to protect the integrity of teaching and learning. In that spirit, the school encourages all students to first direct their complaints and concerns to the faculty, staff, or administrator specifically involved.

LIT believes many complaints can be resolved through an open, honest dialogue between the persons involved. When it is not resolved through the initial effort, the school advises students to discuss the complaint with the Administrator for resolution. In cases where that may not be possible, the LIT Student Complaint Form should be filed with the Administrator to facilitate a resolution. All Student Complaint Forms will be considered formal complaints and will be reviewed by the Executive Director for resolution.

Procedures:

Students should make every attempt to pursue concerns in a timely manner and complaints should be reported within 10 calendar days.

- Form is available in the Administrator's Office and should be submitted within 10 calendar days of the complaint.
- Complaints will normally receive a response within 10 calendar days from the time it is received.
- Executive Director may require interview(s) with the student.
- The final formal official response will be in writing to the complainant.
- Complaints involving auto accidents as well as matters of a criminal nature, such as theft, battery, etc., should be directed to the Houston Police Department.



OFFICIAL STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

Please print all information

Today's Date: _____ Complainant making allegation: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Cell () _____ Email _____

Preferred Method of Contact: Cell Phone () Email () Mail ()

Individual Named in Complaint: _____ Date of Incident _____

Description of Complaint:

The student complaint must include but not limited to, the following elements:

1. The nature of the complaint.
2. The facts on which it is based. Include dates, times, witnesses (including contact information).
3. What have you done to resolve the situation?
4. When did you discuss your concern with the above-named individual prior of filing this formal complaint?
5. The outcome you're requesting.

Please continue on the back or attach other pages, including supporting documentation (email, papers, etc.) if necessary.

My signature affirms my statement above is true and correct.

Student Signature	Date	Print Name
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When complete, please return to the Administration Office.

Students must initiate the complaint procedure within 10 days of the occurrence of the action being grieved.

Rev. 10/11

Fire Evacuation/ Emergency Procedures

IN CASE OF FIRE

1. Leave fire area and close doors.
2. Activate wall mounted fire alarm pull station.
3. Attempt to extinguish fire only if you can do it safely.
4. Call 911 and report to the Administration office.

IF YOU ARE ON FIRE

STOP where you are, **DROP** to floor or ground, and **ROLL** your body to smother the fire.

WHEN FIRE ALARM SOUNDS

1. Calmly evacuate the building.
2. Close windows and doors if time allows.
3. Use an alternate exit if you encounter smoke or fire.
4. Report anyone suspected of remaining in the building.
5. Move away from the building at least 100 feet, leaving clear access for emergency services.
6. Do not re-enter the building until authorized by the Fire Department.

IF UNABLE TO EVACUATE

1. Call 911 giving your location.
2. A closed door can provide good protection against fire and smoke. Use available materials to seal the door and air ducts.
3. Stay low if smoke enters the room as heat and gas tend to rise.
4. Signal your position at a window.

VIOLENCE/HOSTILE INTRUSION

1. If a hostile intruder is seen inside a building or if someone becomes violent, dial 911 to report what is happening. ***Do not call 911 in the presence of the violent person.**
2. **DO NOT** pull a fire alarm! This could cause innocent persons to be put in harm's way.
3. Only you can tell if it is safe to run from the building. If in doubt, do not run but seek shelter where you are.
4. Lock the doors to the room you are in. Turn off the lights and block the door if you can. Be quiet and stay calm.
5. Stay in hiding until a Police Officer gives an "All Clear" notification.

IN CASE OF A BOMB THREAT, pull the fire alarm and follow the Fire Procedure.

Important Telephone Numbers

Fire, police or ambulance:	911
Telephone Number Information	411
Police Dispatch	(281) 463-6666
Harris County Constable Precinct #5	(281) 492-3500
Harris County non-emergency number	(713) 221-6000
LIT Office	(281) 988-9522