

# ***Adult Education***

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Education should be seen as a lifelong process for everyone, not something only for the young. According to the FLO Education Counselor, many Foreign Service family members want to continue their education for the following reasons:

- To complete an undergraduate or advanced degree;
- To pick up work-content skills; to keep up to date in a field or to keep a professional license current;
- For personal enrichment; or
- To get a high school or equivalency diploma.

There are many different ways to “return to school.” Which one (or combination) is chosen depends on individual circumstances.

- **Traditional degree programs** can be taken on a part-time or full-time basis at a college or university in the United States or abroad.
- **Distance learning** and **external degree programs** are offered by many colleges.
- **Individual credit courses** can be taken at many different kinds of academic institutions.
- **Continuing education credits** (CEU’s) for professional credentials, which are required by many professions, can be earned at both on-campus and off-campus sites.
- **Training programs** can be taken at work. In addition, valuable information can be obtained by attending conferences, workshops, and professional development programs through professional associations or independent groups.
- **Noncredit courses** for personal enrichment are offered through adult education divisions of community colleges, county agencies, and departments of recreation.
- **GED or external degree programs** for those who did not complete their high school education or foreign-born spouses who wish to have a U.S. high school diploma.

## Adult Education Resources

Three Family Liaison Office publications provide information about the range of adult education opportunities for Foreign Service family members. *Assignment: Washington*, (May 1997) contains information about adult education programs in the Washington area. The chapter on “Adult Education” contains lists of Washington area colleges that offer adult and continuing education and private and public school enrichment programs. The FLO Direct Communication Project Paper No. 28, “*Adult Education*” contains much of the same information as well as material on adult education opportunities abroad, correspondence courses, and Washington area resources. “*Education Options for Foreign Service Family Members*” also contains a chapter on adult education. To obtain any of these publications, contact FLO. (See Chapter 1, **Introduction**.) See also Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**.

Your local public library is a good resource for adult education programs in your community. For more information on the public library as an employment resource, see Chapter 4, **Job Search Techniques**.

## Traditional Degree Programs

Traditional degree programs are offered by colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. In the United States, there are basically four types of degrees:

- Associate degree (AA) is a two year undergraduate degree offered by most two-year (and some four-year) institutions. An AA traditionally requires 60 semester hours of undergraduate study.
- Bachelor’s degree either in arts (BA) or science (BS) is an undergraduate degree offered by four-year institutions and requires 120 semester hours of study.
- Master’s degree either in arts (MA) or science (MS) is the first level of graduate study. These degrees require 30 semester hours of credit beyond the bachelor’s degree and may require a final oral exam and/or original research in the form of a thesis.
- Doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree is a post-graduate degree encompassing 90 semester hours beyond the bachelor’s program. A PhD candidate must produce a dissertation of original research in his/her field. The PhD and its equivalents are the highest degrees offered.

### College Information on the Internet

The Internet is a good way to find out information about college and university programs. The following are good, general web sites:

**[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)**

**[www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)**

**[www.embark.com](http://www.embark.com)**

You can also use any of the Internet search engines and type in the name of the school in which you are interested. (For information about using search engines, see Chapter 3, **Using the Internet in the Job Search.**)

### Earning a College Degree in the Washington Area

Many colleges and universities are interested in recruiting adult learners and provide special programs to meet their needs including evening and weekend programs, college credit for life experience, professional certificate programs, and distance learning.

### Good Idea File

METRO publishes a guide to Washington area colleges and universities, "The METRO System College Directory." This guide contains names, addresses, telephone numbers, academic calendars, as well as information about Metrobus and Metrorail service. The guide can be obtained from the following address:

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

600 Fifth Street NW

Washington, DC 20001

Telephone: 202-637-7000

Web site: **[www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com)**

**Evening and Weekend Programs.** Adults with family and/or work responsibilities often find that evening or weekend programs, offered by

many colleges and universities, are the best way to complete a degree in the shortest possible time. These programs offer many advantages:

- Classes are held in the evening after normal working hours or on weekends allowing professional and family responsibilities to be maintained.
- The year-round format enables most students to finish a bachelor's degree within 18 months.
- The programs are designed for students who have already earned a minimum of 60 credits from accredited colleges.
- At many schools, the core curriculum is divided into modules. Students take one course at a time with each course following consecutively. After beginning the program, there is no lag time between courses. New courses start one week following completion of the last course.

**Credit for Life Experience.** Many college programs offer the opportunity to earn up to 30 college credits for life and work experience. Foreign Service family members can often use their international experience to advantage in this type of program.

### **The CLEP Program**

The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) is designed to allow students to get college credit for knowledge learned outside the classroom. The heart of CLEP is a series of examinations that reward you for what you know, no matter how or where you learned it — in school, on the job, or through reading, observation, and the learning experiences of your life.

There are 5 general examinations and 30 specific subject examinations. The general examinations in English composition, humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences and history test the knowledge you have accumulated in these broad areas of study. The tests are at the level of courses taken in the first 2 years of college. The 30 subject examinations let you demonstrate the specific knowledge and skills you may have gained through job experience, outside course work, or specialized independent reading. These examinations require a higher degree of specialized knowledge and training.

CLEP is the nation's most widely accepted credit-by-examination program. Nearly two-thirds of higher education, accredited institutions award credit for satisfactory scores on CLEP examinations. Over the years, colleges have found that CLEP students are motivated, intellectually curious, and

independent learners—qualities colleges look for and value in their student population.

The *Official Study Guide for the CLEP Examinations* contains descriptions of all CLEP exams, sample exam questions and answers, updated lists of reference materials for test preparation in every subject, and test-taking strategies. The Study Guide can be purchased in bookstores or ordered from College Board Publications. You can order with a major credit card by calling 1-800-323-7155 or write to the following address:

College Board Publications  
Department #W66  
Box 886  
New York, NY 10101-0886

CLEP examinations are given in every state and in Bermuda, Guam, Panama, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. A booklet, “*CLEP Colleges*,” lists the institutions that administer the tests and accept the results. To receive this booklet and other information about the CLEP program, write to the following address:

CLEP  
P.O. Box 6600  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6600  
Telephone: 609-771-7865  
e-mail: [clep@ets.org](mailto:clep@ets.org)

#### Future Test

Practice tests for the CLEP general exams are available from Future Test, an easy-to-use interactive test-preparation software, available on computer terminals at the Arlington Central and Columbia Pike libraries. The software is free for use by patrons. Check with the reference desk for more information.

#### Graduate Level Examinations

Most graduate schools require an admission test. Catalogs from the graduate schools you are interested in will indicate what type of test is required. The two most commonly used tests are the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT).

**The GRE Program.** There are two tests in the GRE program:

- The **General Test** measures verbal, quantitative, and analytical reasoning skills that are not necessarily related to any particular field of study. The general test is only offered in a computer-based format.
- The **Subject Test** measures achievement in one of fourteen subject areas and assumes an undergraduate major or extensive background in that discipline. Subject tests are only available as paper-based tests.
- A **Writing Test** was added to the general test in the fall of 1999, but is not a requirement for all graduate schools that use the GRE as an admission tool.

The GRE Information and Registration Bulletin is published annually and is available at most universities, educational centers, public libraries, or by writing to the following address:

Graduate Record Examination  
Educational Testing Service  
P.O. Box 6000  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6000  
Telephone: 1-800-537-3160  
Web site: [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)

The GRE web site is the best place to get the latest information about test locations. You can also register and order test materials online.

See information on taking the GRE abroad at the end of this chapter.

**The MAT Program.** The Miller Analogies Test (MAT) is a 50 minute, 100 item analogies test. The questions cover a broad range of subjects (mythologies, arts, sciences, music, architecture, mathematics, and other disciplines) with only a smattering of items in any one field.

The MAT is not administered on a uniform date throughout the country. Rather, each official Controlled Testing Center determines its own testing schedule and establishes its own fees. A list of Controlled Testing Centers and an Information Bulletin that includes specific information can be obtained from the following address:

The Psychological Corporation  
555 Academic Court  
San Antonio, TX 78204-2498

The “*MAT Miller Analogies Test*” by Eve P. Steinbert, William Bader, and Daniel S. Burt is published by Prentice Hall and is available at local public libraries and bookstores.

## **Financing a College Education**

There is a great deal of financial aid available to finance a college education. Scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, and assistantships are awarded based on academic merit as well as need. Adults who need financial aid for college should first contact the financial aid office of the school they plan to attend. This office will provide information and the necessary forms for applying for school-sponsored financial aid as well as Federally-sponsored programs such as Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work-Study programs, and Federal Perkins Loans.

Information about state financial aid programs can be found by contacting the Department of Education for your state of residence.

“*Funding Your Education*” and “*The Student Guide*,” free publications on current Federal financial aid, are available from the following address:

Federal Student Aid Information Center  
P.O. Box 84  
Washington, DC 20044-0084  
Telephone: 1-800-4 FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)  
Web site: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

### **Financial Aid Information on the Internet**

Use a search engine such as Yahoo! or LookSmart and type in the words “scholarships,” “student aid,” or “financial aid” (without the quotes). The following sites may also be helpful:

- [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) - U.S Department of Education web site.
- [www.collegeboard.org/](http://www.collegeboard.org/) - College Scholarship Service information on college costs, and sources of financial aid.
- [www.collegenet.com/](http://www.collegenet.com/) - CollegeNET guide to colleges in the United States and selected other countries with an online scholarship database.
- [www.fastweb.com/](http://www.fastweb.com/) - FastWEB information on scholarships, loan, work-study, and grant programs.
- [www.finaid.org/](http://www.finaid.org/) - National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators access to a wide variety of financial-aid resources.

- [www.petersons.com/resources/finance.html](http://www.petersons.com/resources/finance.html) - Peterson's Education Center with detailed information about financial aid eligibility and the application process
- [www.salliemae.com/](http://www.salliemae.com/) - Sallie Mae (the acronym for the Student Loan Marketing Association (SLM)) with interactive access to a wide range of information on planning and paying for college.

Good resources on financial aid are the books and software programs produced and updated annually by Octameron Associates. (See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography** for the full citations.

Among their many inexpensive offerings are the following:

- “Don’t Miss Out: The Ambitious Student’s Guide to Financial Aid”
- “Financial Aid Software”
- “The A’s and B’s of Academic Scholarships”
- “Loans and Grants from Uncle Sam: Am I Eligible and for How Much?”
- “Financial Aid Officers: What They Do – To You and for You”
- “Financial Aid FinAncer: Expert Answers to College Financing Questions”

### **Special Financial Aid Programs**

There are certain financial aid programs available to Foreign Service family members.

**AAFSW Scholarships and Loans.** The Association of the American Foreign Service Worldwide provides a continuing education scholarship and low-interest loans to assist selected member applicants who are acquiring new skills or upgrading competencies. Applicants for either program must be the spouse or former spouse of an employee in the foreign affairs agencies and an AAFSW member for a minimum of one year. Information and applications may be obtained from the following address:

AAFSW  
 5125 MacArthur Boulevard NW, Suite 36  
 Washington, DC 20016  
 Telephone: 202-362-6514  
 FAX: 202-362-6589  
 e-mail: [aafsw@erols.com](mailto:aafsw@erols.com)  
 Web site: [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org)

**Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund.** The Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund offers scholarships ranging from \$300 to \$1,750 to Federal employees or their family members. The employee must



have at least three years of service; the family member must either be in college or be graduating from high school with at least a 3.0 grade point average. The applicant is judged on academic achievement, community service, and a written essay.

Scholarship applications are available from the following address:

FEEA Scholarship Program  
8441 W. Bowles Avenue, Suite 200  
Littleton, CO 80123-3245

The application can also be downloaded from the FEEA home page at the following web site: **[www.fpmi.com](http://www.fpmi.com)**.

**NARFE Scholarships.** The National Association of Retired Federal Employees has its own scholarship program for members. The program is administered by the Federal Employees Education Assistance Fund at the FEEA address above. Scholarship information can be obtained from NARFE at 703-838-7760.

**SDFCU Scholarships.** The State Department Federal Credit Union offers scholarships for members. To have your name added to the scholarship application mailing list (available in early February), write to the following address:

State Department Federal Credit Union  
Attn: Marketing Department  
1630 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-2745

### **Hope and Lifetime Learning Tax Credits**

The 1997 Taxpayers Relief Act provides HOPE Scholarship Credits that can be deducted from your income taxes. The credits are up to \$1,500 per student for the first two years of college if you earn less than \$40,000 (single) or \$80,000 (joint) annually. At income levels above that, the credit phases out. If you're a part-time student, you can use the HOPE credit as long as you carry at least half of a normal course load.

If you have finished two years of college, you can take a tax credit (called a Lifetime Learning Credit) worth 20 percent of the first \$5,000 of college tuition up to a maximum of \$1,000 if you earn less than \$40,000 (single) or \$80,000 (joint) annually. The Lifetime Earning Credit applies to every type of coursework beginning the junior year of undergraduate work even

if it does not lead to a degree. For more information, see the IRS publication 970, “Tax Benefits for Higher Education.”

Tax Note

Educational expenses may be tax deductible. For more information, see IRS publication #508, “Educational Expenses.”

**Continuing  
Education  
and Certificate  
Programs**

**Continuing education units (CEUs).** CEUs are often required in certain professions. They may be used for job training or recertification, wage upgrades, developing and/or documenting competency in new job skills, community service training, personal development, and self-improvements. CEUs cannot be substituted for college credit or applied toward an academic degree.

Many Washington-area colleges and universities offer continuing education programs. The local public library is a good source of information.

CEUs and non-credit courses can often be completed over the Internet. See the discussion of distance learning below for more information.

Internet Resources

- Spectrum Virtual University ([www.vu.org](http://www.vu.org)) provides a variety of online learning opportunities at very low cost.

**USDA Graduate School.** The USDA Graduate School in Washington is a continuing education institution offering career-related courses primarily to U.S. Federal, State, and local government employees. The school offers more than 1,500 courses worldwide for career development and personal enrichment through a variety of training programs and services. The more than 1,200 part-time faculty are drawn from government, academia, and the private sector. As practitioners of the skills they teach, the faculty bring a practical approach to their subject matter.

The USDA Graduate School is open to all adults and there are no admission requirements. The school does not grant degrees but does grant Certificates of Accomplishment. Evening and weekend courses, day courses, and correspondence courses are offered. Courses include

accounting, management training, computer science and operation, English, and 22 foreign languages, horticulture, natural history, and landscape design. Correspondence courses are available in paralegal studies, English and writing, math and statistics, management and supervision, computer sciences, accounting, engineering, library techniques, elder law, and more.

Good Idea File

Some of the courses offered by the USDA Graduate School have been designated as receiving college credit recommendations by the American Council on Education's Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (ACE/PONSI). Check with degree-granting institutions to determine if they give credit for USDA courses.

Information about the USDA Graduate School and the courses can be found on the Internet at web site: <http://grad.usda.gov> or by e-mail at [pubaffairs@grad.usda.gov](mailto:pubaffairs@grad.usda.gov) or you can write to the following address:

USDA Graduate School  
600 Maryland Avenue SW, Room 129  
Washington, DC 20024  
Telephone: 202-720-5885 for evening and weekend classes  
202-720-7123 for correspondence classes  
Toll-free: 1-888-744-GRAD (1-888-744-4723)

See the USDA web site for more information on their correspondence courses: <http://grad.usda.gov/corres/corpro.html>

### Good Idea File

One Foreign Service spouse took advantage of the fact that she had been evacuated from post and completed two short courses offered by the Small Business Development Center at George Mason University. “Contracting with the Federal Government” provided an introduction to the Federal Government process, covering topics such as procurement entities, marketing, subcontracting, bid procedures, accounting and auditing, types of contracts, and rate structures. “Writing a Winning Proposal” provided a thorough analysis of the kind of proposal necessary to bid on a contract. The lecturers for both courses were small business owners or professionals with good presentation skills. Useful handouts and materials for each class were also offered for sale. The courses were attended by a varied group of people who provided excellent networking opportunities.

### Non-Credit Courses for Personal Enrichment

The number of noncredit courses available in the Washington area is almost limitless. A sampling includes the following (see Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography** for complete addresses and telephone numbers):

#### College and University Programs

- American University’s Institute for Learning in Retirement (202-885-3920) offers noncredit courses and seminars for retired people.
- Catholic University’s Division of Musical Arts (202-319-5223) offers noncredit courses in music and film, and the art of concert-going.
- Corcoran School of Art (202-639-1800) offers courses in drawing and painting, ceramics, printmaking, fine arts, photography, sculpture, computer graphics, and landscape design.
- Gallaudet University (202-651-6000) offers sign-language classes.
- Montgomery College (301-279-5188) offers courses in home-based business, computer training, wellness, and professional development.

- University of the District of Columbia (202-274-6675) offers personal enrichment classes in personal computer training, real estate, and communication skills for managers.

### **Miscellaneous Programs**

- Art League School (703-683-3223) offers courses and weekend workshops in drawing, painting, print-making, sculpture, stained glass, glass-bead making, fibers, and pottery.
- Glen Echo Park (301-492-6226) offers classes and workshops in acting, ceramics, social and modern dance, painting, pottery, enameling, photography, puppetry, glass blowing, natural gardening, and sculpture.
- Jewish Community Center (301-881-0100) offers classes and workshops in art, music, dance, drama, sports and fitness, parenting, Hebrew, Yiddish, Judaic studies, and interfaith issues.
- Levine School of Music (202-686-9772) offers group ensembles, music-discussion groups, chamber music, and opera workshops.
- Maryland Public Television (1-800-223-3678) offers “tele-courses” which you watch in your home.
- Smithsonian Associates (202-357-3030) offers weekend seminars and evening lectures on the humanities, science, the arts, and current issues, studio arts, and photography.
- The Writers Center (301-654-8664) offers writing, web-page writing, and desktop-publishing workshops.

In addition, local community colleges and public school adult education departments offer myriad courses.

#### Other Continuing Education Resources

*Washingtonian* magazine publishes a yearly list (usually in August) of institutions offering continuing education programs in the Washington area. Their web site address is **[www.washingtonian.com](http://www.washingtonian.com)**.

## Distance Learning

Distance learning (DL) — sometimes called distance education (DE) — is defined as any instruction in which the student is not present in the same location as the instructor and where communications between instructors and students are mediated by technology. Historically, this meant correspondence study but today it makes use of many technological advances, including the Internet, 2-way television, satellites, radio, short-wave radio, videocassette and audio tapes, and FAXs as well as U.S. and international mail. DL allows students and instructors to communicate through both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (delayed time) methods. Distance learning can provide courses for college credit, non-credit courses, workshops, seminars, and continuing education units (CEUs).

Distance learning can use any (or all) of the following technologies:

- **Voice** — instructional audio tools include the telephone, audioconferencing, short-wave radio. Passive (one-way) audio tools include audio tapes and radio.
- **Video** — instructional tools include still images such as slides, film, videotape, and interactive television (ITV) which typically consists of one-way video transmission and two-way audio. Pre-recorded videotapes can be used to present class lectures and visually oriented content.
- **Data** — instructional tools using computers:
  - Computer-assisted instruction (CAI)** uses the computer as a self-contained teaching machine to present individual lessons;
  - Computer-managed instruction (CMI)** uses the computer to organize instruction and track student records and progress.
  - Computer-mediated education (CME)** computer applications that facilitate the delivery of instruction, including e-mail, FAX, computer-conferencing, and web applications. The computer can be used to send messages, assignment feedback and other communications to one or more students and to increase interaction among participants. FAXs can be used to distribute and receive student assignments, give last minute announcements, and provide timely feedback.
- **Web-based Training** — communication between and among students and instructor(s) is mediated through various Internet or Intranet resources (e-mail, listservs, IRC, Internet web sites).
- **Print** — Textbooks, study guides, workbooks, course syllabi, schedules, and case studies provide much of the basic instructional content.

Distance learning has many advantages:

- Give adults a second chance at college;
- Accommodate those who live far away from higher learning institutions, have limited time or a physical disability;
- Provide opportunities for career advancement;
- Update the knowledge base of workers at their places of employment; or
- Assist those simply interested in learning.

Classes are usually offered one at a time in sequence. The student concentrates on one subject at a time and when the class is completed moves on to the next. The student can choose the best time to “log on.” Distance learning also makes it possible for all students to have access to the best lecturers and the best teachers.

Learning and teaching online is different from the traditional classroom experience. Since most communication takes place via written messages, writing skill and the ability to put thoughts into words is very important. On the other hand, the increased practice in writing often results in improved writing skills.

There are a number of misconceptions about distance learning. According to Greg Kearsley, an online teacher and researcher ([kearsley@fcae.nova.edu](mailto:kearsley@fcae.nova.edu)), the most common misconception is that online classes are sterile and impersonal. The truth is that once students start to interact with others in the class, they are usually drawn into the subject matter much more deeply than in the traditional classroom. A second misconception is that online learning is only for people with a lot of computer experience. Actually, although a distance learning student must have convenient access to a properly equipped computer system and some computer skills, technical know-how is not necessary.

#### Distance Learning Web Sites

One of the best web sites with information on distance learning is <http://distancelearn.miningco.com>. Information about distance learning can be found in the Internet newsgroup [alt.education.distance](http://www.faqs/education/distance-ed-faq/part1), at [www.faqs/education/distance-ed-faq/part1](http://www.faqs/education/distance-ed-faq/part1).

A third important misconception is that online classes will be easier than conventional classes. Participants report that they find online classes to be much more work as well as much more rewarding than conventional

classes. Distance learning requires students to have the self-discipline to do the preparation required for online participation and activities.

**Is Distance Learning Right for You?** If you are interested in the distance learning option, you need to do a self-assessment of your personal learning styles. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you able to set and meet deadlines?
- Are you comfortable learning primarily through the written word?
- If you are interested in a course using audio or videotapes, are you comfortable with auditory learning?
- For online courses, do you enjoy working alone at your computer? Do you find e-mail a satisfying way to communicate?

There are guidance and career counselors who can assist you to choose the right program for a fee. There are also books and web sites with information.

If you feel that the distance learning is right for you, you should interview the program directors to find the most appropriate program. Robert Tucker, president of the higher-education research firm InterEd suggests asking the following questions:

- How many students are enrolled in the online program? How many have graduated?
- Is there a residency requirement for a degree or certificate? How long is the requirement?
- Are all required courses offered online?
- How much does it cost? How does this compare with offline tuition and fees?
- Will the software work on my computer?

### **Correspondence Courses**

Correspondence study is defined as individual instruction using mail service to communicate between students and instructors. This method is also called “home study” by for-profit organizations and “independent study” by universities. Correspondence study should be considered the first generation of distance learning, the tried and true, most established form. Like other forms of distance learning, correspondence courses are flexible, convenient, and personalized. Students can enroll at any time, study at home, and set their own pace. Work is done on a one-to-one basis with faculty experts who design the instructional materials, guide course study, and respond and evaluate the submitted work.



### USDA Graduate School Correspondence Courses

The USDA Graduate School Correspondence Program offers instructor-led training courses by mail and on-line using the Internet and a bulletin board system.

Web site: <http://grad.usda.gov>.

Correspondence study is demanding. Since the printed word and written exchanges are the principal learning media, it is essential that students have reasonably strong reading and writing skills. While the flexibility of correspondence study is one of its distinct advantages, it is also one of its greatest hazards. Being on their own, unsupported by the discipline of the traditional classroom, correspondence students must have the initiative and self-reliance to develop good study habits, work independently, and establish and maintain a regular schedule of study.

### FSI Correspondence Courses

For information on FSI correspondence courses available to Foreign Service family members, see Chapter 6, **Federal Government Employment**.

Those interested in correspondence study should obtain a copy of the *Independent Study Catalog*, published by Peterson's Guides and available at most public libraries and bookstores. See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**, for the full citation. The *Independent Study Catalog* provides information for students in both the United States and in foreign countries on colleges and universities that provide correspondence instruction and the courses offered by those institutions. Prospective students can obtain further information, catalogues, and registration forms from the individual institution in which they are interested.

Students who wish to apply credit earned through correspondence study to a college degree or a high school diploma should consult the institution which will award the degree or diploma before enrolling in a correspondence study course. Most schools have limitations on the number and kinds of correspondence study credits they will accept.

Correspondence credits earned from a regionally accredited institution are normally transferable to another institution. However, since policies

and degree requirements vary, students are urged to consult appropriate officials at the institution from which they expect to receive a degree to find out whether credit is transferable. If course work is taken from an institution that is not regionally accredited, transferring the course work may be more difficult.

#### Good Idea File

Students who are planning to take a correspondence course while abroad should try to enroll before leaving the United States and arrange to take the textbooks and course materials with them. This will eliminate postage and possible customs fees as well as potential lengthy postal delays.

### **Diploma Mills**

The most serious problem with distance learning is the proliferation of institutions that are primarily interested in separating students from their money. A diploma mill can be defined as an illegal institution that grants phony degrees in exchange for money, without requiring the student to do any coursework or testing, or to demonstrate course mastery. Students can guard against this by carefully investigating the credentials of any school before enrolling. One thing to look for is whether the institution offering the courses meets quality academic standards for accreditation. Without accreditation, schools cannot receive Federal aid. Many cyberschools are part of already existing, already accredited institutions.

**Accreditation.** In most parts of the world, national governments run universities or license them. In the United States, a voluntary process called regional accreditation provides students with the assurance that certain standards have been met. You can check out a school's accreditation claims by calling the U.S. Department of Education, Accreditation and State Liaison Division at 202-708-7417. (Web site: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov))

Other schools are licensed by the state in which they provide programs. The licensing authority sets standards regarding qualifications of faculty and number of semester hours required for a degree. Actual details regarding program content and qualifications for a degree are left to the discretion of the institution. State licensure does not constitute endorsement or approval. For information about a state-licensed school, contact the Department of Education in the State in which the school is located.

Other suggestions for students to protect themselves include the following:

- If you expect to be certified or licensed in a particular field, talk to the licensing or certifying agencies to see if the school meets their requirements.
- Contact the Better Business Bureau nearest the school for a report on for-profit institutions.

## **High School Diplomas**

There are a number of ways in which Foreign Service family members can complete their high school education. These include the GED program and external diplomas conferred by U.S. school systems.

### **The GED Program**

The General Educational Development (GED) testing program offers individuals the opportunity to earn a U.S. high school equivalency diploma. GED's can also be used by foreign-born spouses to obtain an English equivalent to a foreign degree or by Foreign Service teens whose schooling was interrupted. The GED tests consist of a battery of five comprehensive examinations in writing skills, social studies, natural sciences, mathematics, and interpreting literature and arts. Emphasis is on intellectual ability rather than on detailed knowledge of content. The GED test is available in English, Spanish, and French.

#### The GED on the Internet

Students interested in taking the GED may study and prepare for it using distance learning techniques described above. The following web sites contain information:

[www.pueblo.gsa.gov/press/infopubs.ged.txt](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/press/infopubs.ged.txt)

[www.acenet.edu/programs/CALED/GED/Sylvan.html](http://www.acenet.edu/programs/CALED/GED/Sylvan.html)

[www.oltraining.com](http://www.oltraining.com)

[www.ged-to-work.com](http://www.ged-to-work.com)

**Eligibility Requirements.** Each U.S. state has different eligibility (residence and age) requirements before a student can take the GED. For information about eligibility requirements, and to arrange to take the

GED, contact the appropriate county school system, or adult education department, or one of the following numbers:

District of Columbia: 202-576-6308

State of Maryland: 410-767-0538

State of Virginia: 1-800-237-0178

**Preparing for the GED Test.** Many GED preparation books and software programs are available in public libraries, adult education centers, community colleges, and bookstores. A television series, “GED on TV” is carried on the Learning Channel. Both cable television and many public television stations in the United States provide a general preparation for the test. To find out what channel in your area carries the “GED on TV” series, call 1-800-354-9067.

The official GED practice tests (English, Spanish, large print, and audio versions) can be ordered from the publisher:

Steck-Vaughn Company  
P.O. Box 690789  
Orlando FL 32819  
Telephone: 1-800-531-5015

or from the Learning Line:

The Learning Line  
P.O. Box 81826  
Lincoln, NE 68501-1826  
Telephone: 1-800-232-2775

### **External Diplomas for Adults**

Another way for those without a high school diploma to obtain credentials is through an external diploma program (EDP) offered by many U.S. school systems. Unlike traditional examinations where test-takers are timed and tested in one day, EDP asks candidates to demonstrate their ability in a series of assessment tasks completed at home or in private office visits. Skills demonstrated through this applied performance assessment process are those needed by an adult functioning in the modern world: oral and written communication; listening, reading, and following instructions; computation and problem-solving; sensitivity to cultural diversity; team-work; career development and entry-level job skills; awareness of social, consumer, governmental, and scientific issues; familiarity with computers and calculators; and the ability to manipulate, analyze, synthesize, and apply data.

### Fairfax County's EDP Program

Fairfax County, Virginia, offers a self-paced, appointment-information session program (no classes) that allows an adult to demonstrate 64 general competencies, including skill in reading, writing, and mathematics through testing. Completion time varies from 4 months to a year. Upon completion, a high school diploma is awarded by the Fairfax County Public Schools.

Other Washington area school systems offer adult high school completion courses that feature daytime and evening small-class instructional programs for adults 17 and older who have previously attended but not graduated from high school. For more information about these programs, contact the appropriate county school system.

### High School on the Internet

Richard Milburn High School in Woodbridge, Virginia offers an on-line accredited high school program over the Internet . The WISE (Worldwide Internet Secondary Education) Program uses a curriculum specifically designed for individual study and growth and is an alternative available for those seeking to complete high school.

For more information, contact the school at the following address:

Richard Milburn High School  
14416 Jefferson Davis High School, Suite 8  
Woodbridge, VA 22191  
Telephone: 703-494-0879  
Web site: [www.rmhs.org](http://www.rmhs.org)

### **Adult Education Opportunities Abroad**

Foreign Service family members can often attend colleges and universities abroad. There may be a U.S. college or university at post, a local college or university that an employee or adult family member can attend, or graduate/undergraduate programs given at the local U.S. or international school.

A number of colleges in the United States have programs at posts with U.S. military bases nearby. Programs range from a certificate or associate degree in recreation technology and occupational education to graduate programs in international relations, counseling, public administration, and systems management. Some countries have a national university that is open to foreigners who are fluent in the language of instruction. There are also posts that have universities with classes in English.

Many U.S.-sponsored and international schools provide courses for the teachers at their schools, and these classes are often open to members of the U.S. Mission. California State College, Michigan State University, the University of Maryland, and Trenton State University offer programs at schools abroad. For information on educational options available at post, contact the Community Liaison Office Coordinator (CLO) or the Personnel Officer. In Washington, visit the Overseas Briefing Center or the Family Liaison Office. (See Chapter 1, **Introduction**.)

#### Adult Education Information At Post

Check with the Community Liaison Office for the FLO resources described above, as well as local college catalogues, course directories, guides to independent study, and other reference materials. Other sources of information could be the guidance office of the American or International School, the Student Advising Center, a Fulbright office, or in some countries, the local public or university libraries.

#### DANTES Program

The U.S. Armed Forces has a distance learning program called DANTES (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support). Academic and technical courses are available to personnel in all the military services as well as U.S. personnel stationed abroad. Contact the local U.S. military educational counselor for more information or see the web site: <http://voled.doded.mil/>

### **Applying to Graduate School From Abroad**

If you plan to apply to graduate school from abroad, make sure you have developed a list of people who will write letters of recommendation for

your applications. Include at least one academic reference. Writing samples and resumes of work experiences can be useful attachments to the application. Since most graduate schools require a stay on campus, you should choose a school in a location where you are likely to live in the United States, or where you have studied previously.

After selecting graduate schools with attractive programs in your field of interest, write jointly to the Admissions Office and to the Chairman of the Department in your chosen field. Ask the Department Chairman for information on residency requirements (minimum number of course units that must be taken on campus) and the basic degree requirements. Explain your situation and request approval to take some course(s) locally, if they are available.

### **Taking the GRE Abroad**

You can take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) at 374 locations abroad. For more information, see the GRE Information and Registration Bulletin described earlier or check out the web site. Outside the United States or Canada, call 609-771-7243.

### **Taking the GED Abroad**

Foreign nationals and U.S. citizens abroad who did not graduate from a U.S. high school can earn a U.S. high school equivalency diploma through computer-based GED tests abroad administered by Sylvan Prometrix at approximately 100 Sylvan Technology Centers around the world. The centers are open year round but hours vary from country to country. Sylvan processes U.S. high school equivalency diploma applications through the Iowa Department of Education. Therefore, your high school equivalency diploma will be issued from the state of Iowa.

In order to take the tests you must present proper identification. Your ID must bear your name as it is given at the time of registration, your signature, date of birth to verify that you are at least 17 years of age, and a recent, recognizable photograph. Acceptable forms of ID include the following:

- Passport (required for candidates testing in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan)
- Driver's license containing your photograph and signature
- National ID card
- Employee ID card containing your photograph
- Military ID card containing your photograph

- Student ID card containing your photograph (if primary ID card, you must also present a second form of ID).

For more information, visit the web site at **www.sylvanprometric.com**. To receive an International GED application, a list of international test centers, and a practice test, contact the following:

Sylvan Information for the GED  
1000 Lancaster Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Telephone: 410-843-6016  
FAX: 410-843-8744  
E-mail: **ged@educate.com**

U.S. civilians and military dependents abroad may also take GED tests at military installations operating DANTES testing centers. Priority is given to active duty service members.