



VERITAS COLLEGIATE

A C A D E M Y

Veritas Collegiate Academy International Student Handbook

Welcome to Veritas Collegiate Academy

Veritas Collegiate Academy (VCA) warmly welcomes international students to our vibrant academic community. We are a classical Christian school, with the following mission statement: *'Veritas Collegiate Academy partners with parents and the church, relies on the inerrant word of God as the firm foundation of academia, and leads the whole student into excellence so they may impact the world for Christ.'* For over two decades, we have hosted students from diverse countries, including, China, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Russia, Serbia, Spain. Our program emphasizes academic excellence, cultural immersion, and personal growth, preparing students for success in American colleges and beyond.

This handbook seeks to outline the policies, expectations, and opportunities for international students at VCA. Please read it carefully and refer to it throughout your time here.

Program Overview

At VCA, international students are fully integrated into our academic, cultural, and extracurricular programs. You will live with a host family, participate in a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum, and engage in athletics, arts, and other activities. Our goal is to provide a transformative experience that broadens your horizons and equips you for future success.

Key Objectives

Academic Excellence: Follow a full course load aligned with our accreditation partners: ACTS, Cognia, Niche and Middle States Association preparing you for American colleges or universities.

Christian Instruction: We are a Christian community. As such, we have prayers and chapels that students will take part in.

Cultural Immersion: Live with a host family to experience American family life and culture.
Personal Growth: Participate in sports, clubs, and community activities to develop leadership and teamwork skills.

Guardianship

VCA assumes guardianship ("in loco parentis") for international students during the school year (August to May). Your host family serves as your daily guardian, providing a safe and supportive home environment. Host families act as your parents in the U.S., and you are expected to respect their rules and expectations.

Student Arrival and Departure

Arrival: International students must arrive by the first day of school, the last week of August. Notify your host family of your travel plans during the summer. Your host family will meet you at the airport and bring you to their home.

Departure: Plan to return home after end-of-year ceremonies, typically late May. If returning for the next school year, ensure your I-20 Form is updated by the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) before departure, which requires a tuition deposit for the next year.

Travel Communication: All travel plans, including arrival, departure, and any trips within the U.S. during the school year, must be communicated to the PDSO (Mr.Elgut) or DSO (Mrs.Kang) first then fill it out the travel request form and submit to DSO (Mrs.Kang). Travel requiring missed classes needs Principal approval, and sports-related absences require Athletic Director approval. VCA may confirm travel plans with your natural parents. Students are permitted to travel home during the Christmas period if they would like.

Host Family Assignments

VCA carefully matches students with host families, often those with children attending the school, based on information provided during enrollment. You will receive your host family's contact information to begin communication over the summer.

Housing Changes: Changes to host family assignments are not permitted unless approved by the school after a formal request. A three-week adjustment period is required at the start of the school year to allow time for cultural adaptation. If a change is necessary, VCA will facilitate the transition to a new host family.

Issues with Host Families: If you experience any issues with your host family, promptly inform the PDSO or Principal for support and resolution.

Living with a Host Family

Participation in Family Life

As an international student, you are expected to fully integrate into your host family's life. This may include:

Respecting house rules and curfews.

Eating meals with the family.

Participating in family activities and completing assigned chores.

Communicating openly to build mutual understanding and friendship.

Room Furnishings

You will have a bed with linens, a study space, and access to a bathroom with a shower or bath. You may have your own room or share with another student (with your natural family's permission). Bring your own toiletries (toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, etc.) and a laptop for schoolwork.

Meals

Host families provide breakfast and dinner. Lunch is provided at school during the week. On weekends and holidays, host families are responsible for providing breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Inform your host family of any dietary preferences or allergies to ensure appropriate meals.

Curfew

Host families may set curfews or "lights-out" times to ensure healthy sleep habits. Adhere to these rules to stay productive and engaged in school. Families are instructed to set a house curfew of 10pm.

Homesickness and Culture Shock

It's normal to experience homesickness or culture shock when adjusting to a new environment. Symptoms may include sadness, loneliness, or fatigue. To cope:

Connect with your host family, new friends, or VCA faculty and staff.

Speak with the PDSO or Principal if you need support.

Stay in touch with your family back home, but focus on building connections in the U.S.

Christian Family's

Host families may invite you to attend worship services as part of cultural immersion, but participation is optional.

Academics**Course Schedule**

International students follow a full course load designed for college-bound students, meeting Virginia Department of Education requirements. Class placement is based on your previous transcripts and may be adjusted based on classroom performance.

English Proficiency

You are expected to speak and write English proficiently enough to keep pace with classes and engage in basic conversations. English as a Second Language (ESL) support is available if needed.

College Counseling

All students, especially seniors, have access to college counseling with the Principal to discuss college plans and applications.

A college workshop is scheduled for Friday, August 29, 2025, at 9:00 AM, where you will meet with Mr. Kiffer and Mr. Sutcliffe to review schedules and select non-mandatory classes.

School Policies

Attendance

Regular attendance is critical to academic success, as VCA's curriculum is progressive and sequential. Key policies include:

Notify the school in advance for planned absences (e.g., family events or trips).

Attendance records are maintained and reported on quarterly report cards.

Missing more than 9 days of a specific class per semester may result in loss of credit.

Excessive absences may prompt a conference with parents to ensure academic progress.

International students must attend from the first day of school (early September) through the last day (late May), except during the December break.

School Holidays and Vacations

Host families host students during all school breaks from August to May. You may return home during the December break but must return for the new semester in early January.

Code of Conduct

International students are held to the same behavioral standards as all VCA students, both at school and in the host home.

Sleeping in Class

Get adequate sleep at home to stay alert in class. Sleeping in class will result in disciplinary action.

Cell Phone and Laptop Use

Per Governor Youngkin's Executive Order, cell phone use will be restricted during school hours to promote focus. Laptops are required for schoolwork; bring your own and ensure it meets school requirements.

Dress Code and Uniform Policy

All students must follow the VCA dress code, detailed in the Student Handbook and on the VCA website.

Uniforms will be ordered on the first day of school. If uniforms are on backorder, wear the Friday Relaxed Uniform (khakis and a solid blue polo). Dress neatly, cleanly, and appropriately at all times.

Transportation

Host families provide transportation to and from school and school functions.

Coordinate with your host family for transportation to extracurricular activities.

Uber use is subject to host family and school approval.

Finances

Bank Account: International students are encouraged to open a U.S. bank account for managing personal expenses. Host families can assist with this process. But the family will not use their own name on your accounts.

Cell Phone Plan: Purchase your own prepaid or individual cell phone plan in the U.S. Do not join the host family's plan.

Disciplinary Actions

Violations of the Code of Conduct, state laws, or Department of State regulations will be reviewed by the PDSO and Principal. Serious or repeated violations may result in removal from VCA and return to your home country. Both host and natural families will be informed of disciplinary issues via the FACTS portal.

Extracurricular Activities

Sports and Clubs

Participation in at least one sports program per year is mandatory for international students to earn credit. Available sports include:

Cross Country
Volleyball
Wrestling
Swimming
Basketball
Boxing
Sailing
Shooting
Cheerleading
Honor Guard Drill
Tennis
Fencing

Contact Coach Warren Miles for details on joining a team. Clubs and other extracurricular activities are also available to pursue your interests.

Field Trips

Field trips enhance learning and may incur additional costs, which are your responsibility. Upcoming trips include:

Washington, D.C. Area: Explore cultural and historical sites in the D.C. region. A PowerPoint presentation will be shown to highlight key destinations.

Flynn and O'Hare Visit: A trip to purchase school uniforms is scheduled after lunch on the first day.

Annual Retreat

Date: September 24–26, 2025

Details: Mandatory for all students. The retreat fosters community building and personal growth. A video will be shown to provide more information.

Spring Break International Trip

Destination: Africa

Timing: Spring 2026

Details: This optional trip offers a unique cultural and educational experience. Further details will be shared closer to the date.

Health and Safety

Health Insurance

All international students must maintain comprehensive health insurance throughout their stay. Most international students receive health insurance through the school. For more details, please contact the Director of International Programs, Mrs. Jieun Kang.

Medical Costs

You are responsible for all medical expenses, including doctor's visits and emergency treatments. Host families are not responsible for these costs.

Communication and Support

FACTS Passwords

Visit the school office to obtain your FACTS account access for grades, schedules, and other updates.

Questions and Support

The PDSO, Principal, and faculty are available to assist with any concerns, including academic challenges, homesickness, or host family issues. A Q&A session is scheduled on the first day to address immediate questions.

Scheduling

Meet with Mr. Kiffer, Mr. Sutcliffe, or Mr. Elgut to finalize your course schedule and select non-mandatory classes during the college workshop on August 29, 2025.

First Day Schedule

- Faculty and Administration Introductions: Learn about your teachers and their classes.
- International Student Introductions: Share your background and interests.
- Retreat Overview: View a video about the mandatory September 24–26 retreat.
- Washington, D.C. Field Trip Presentation: Watch a PowerPoint on upcoming trips.
- Spring Break Trip Discussion: Learn about the Spring 2026 Africa trip.
- Policy Review: Discuss school policies, including attendance, conduct, and uniforms.
- Uniform Ordering: Visit Flynn and O'Hare to purchase uniforms.
- College Workshop Preview: Prepare for the August 29 workshop.
- Lunch and Afternoon Event: Enjoy a meal and participate in a community-building activity.

Conclusion

We are excited to have you at Veritas Collegiate Academy. By embracing the opportunities outlined in this handbook, you will grow academically, culturally, and personally. If you have any questions, contact the PDSO, Principal, or your host family. Welcome to the VCA community!