

# GNS Round Square Exchange Opportunities *in the Senior School*



*Encouraging global citizenship through student travel!*

## Introduction

This handbook is intended as a source of information for parents and students who are either contemplating or applying for a GNS exchange. If at any time you have any questions about the Senior Round Square Exchange Program, please contact Sarah McKerlich at smckerlich@mygns.ca.

## Objectives

The exchange program at GNS involves the pairing of students from other global Round Square schools to encourage a cultural exchange. This program started in order to encourage student experiential learning and personal growth, and school internationalism. On an individual level, it offers students opportunities to experience another culture, either in a homestay or in dormitories at the partner school. It is an objective of this program that GNS students on exchange will grow personally in the areas of independence, cooperation, leadership and personal challenge. By hosting their international exchange partner, students also learn about partnership, flexibility, cultural responsibility and cultural differences.

Depending on the student and the scenario, 1.5 to 3 month exchanges can be arranged from Grade 9 to Grade 11. It is best to have both sides (hosting/travelling) take place within the same academic year.

## Criteria

In order to participate in the exchange program, students must be:

- in Grades 9, 10 or 11
- successfully accepted into the exchange program (see Timeline)
- supported in this exchange by their teachers
- academically sound in order to miss up to three months of school at GNS
- interested in the customs and culture of the chosen country
- willing and able to adapt to an unfamiliar environment for up to three months
- willing to support and host an exchange partner in their home for up to three months
- willing to share the experience on return by giving a presentation to the school about the experience.

Please note that students may participate in a maximum of two exchanges during their time at GNS—one in the Middle and one in the Senior School.

## Selecting a Destination

On the Exchange Application for the Senior School Exchange Program, students need to choose their top three Round Square world regions.

The regions are:

- Africa
- Europe/Oman
- India/Thailand
- Americas (including Bermuda)
- Australia

Please note that exchanges are not customizable. The exchange coordinators do their best to find the best fit for each student and family based on the placement opportunities that are available.

## Costs

Costs to the student and family:

- Airfare to and from the exchange school's city.
- Out of country medical insurance (about \$100 for a 3-month period).
- Most Round Square Schools ask for a \$500 deposit to pay for unforeseen expenses and short trips.
- Spending money.
- The cost of hosting the exchange partner for one to three months.

## Timeline/Application Process

1. The application process is open all year. Please start the process with a meeting with your Round Square Coordinator and then read this handbook as a family and fill in the application form.
2. After application forms are in, there will be an interview between the student, Round Square Coordinator and a school administrator/teacher. Students will be asked the questions outlined below. We encourage students to prepare for this interview with their families. By doing so, it is hoped that discussions about expectations and readiness will take place.
3. If the applicant is not accepted into the program, a follow-up interview will take place with the family and student present in order to provide feedback for personal or academic growth.
4. Exchanges will be confirmed as places become available.

*“It was such an amazing experience and it’s an awesome program. I could not say enough great things about our exchange program and I would encourage everyone to apply!”*



*– Jasmine Lee '19*

#### **Interview Questions:**

1. Why do you want to go on a Round Square Exchange?
2. What qualities do you possess that make you a good ambassador for GNS?
3. Do you feel ready to leave your family and travel by yourself? Ideally, for how long would you like to stay on exchange?
4. What are you going to do to make your exchange partner feel welcome?
5. What do you want to learn from your exchange? What do you think you can learn from your exchange partner?
6. What are some strategies you have thought of if you are feeling homesick?
7. How will you support your exchange partner if they are feeling homesick?
8. If you are having trouble communicating with your exchange partner/family, what are some strategies you could use?
9. Do you have any questions for the Round Square Coordinator?

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### ***Exchange Coordinator's Responsibilities***

- The overall administration of the program
- Coordinating the matching of students and partners
- Advertising and promoting the program
- Screening applications and chairing application meetings
- Ensuring school staff are informed of the arrival of incoming student
- Assisting the exchange student in preparing course timetables
- Mailing letters of introduction, and school and course information to incoming exchange student, and
- Mediating any difficulties that arise.

### ***Host Family's Responsibilities***

The entire family must be willing to welcome an additional family member for up to three months. There must be space in the home for another adolescent. A separate bedroom is desirable but not essential. A separate bed is essential as well as some 'private space' where the exchange student may be alone if he/she desires. Parents are expected to meet exchange students at Victoria International Airport upon arrival and deliver them to the same point for departure.

GNS exchange families also have the responsibility to encourage visiting students to take part in all of the opportunities that the GNS community has to offer. On top of these school-based opportunities, we encourage

families to share with visiting students local landmarks and popular tourist destinations. If more than one exchange student is visiting GNS at the same time, we encourage you to connect with the other host family and perhaps find activities (like a welcome barbeque, for example) to do together.

The Round Square Coordinator will be meeting with the visiting student every week for a check-in, to ensure their needs are being met and that they are meeting the expectations of the exchange. It is important to note that this is an academic exchange, and therefore, visiting students are responsible to keep up as much as they can with their GNS coursework. Just as GNS students away on exchange may have GNS homework to do, so might a visiting student. It is the family's responsibility to encourage the visiting student to try their best and get involved. Typically, this is a time of great personal growth and emerging independence, however these students are still quite young and in a new environment. We encourage clear familial communication on house rules and expectations, just as the visiting student is expected to follow all GNS school rules.

### ***Student Responsibilities***

This program is for you and only your efforts will make it a success. A positive attitude, an open mind and a serious commitment on your part are required, as is a sincere desire to learn from cultural differences.

A high priority must be given to the exchange. Part-time work and other relationships should not be allowed to interfere.

These exchanges are academic in nature; GNS students are expected to see all of their teachers a month before their departure to check in on units that they will be missing, and in the case of Math, Science, and Language Acquisition, to see what units of study they can arrange to take with them. This being said, we do not want GNS exchange students to miss out on trying new things in their host schools; we encourage and expect GNS students to do their best in their new courses and participate in several co-curricular activities. Upon their return to GNS, students will be expected to present their key learnings and highlights in a school assembly. GNS exchange students will be asked to fill out a feedback form on their experience when they return. The Round Square Coordinator will receive an effort/academic report from the host school as well.

Special requirements must be clearly indicated on the application (diet, allergies, medical, etc.). Do not expect the host family to adjust to your requirements or habits if they were not specified. House rules of the host family or dormitory must be respected (i.e., curfews, chores, outings, field trips). Smoking, non-prescription drugs and alcohol are forbidden. This exchange is considered "school time" and the GNS Student Code of Conduct is in place.

## **Communication with the Exchange Family**

Correspondence between families before the exchange will help in getting acquainted; Skype or e-mails are encouraged. Students, as well as parents, are encouraged to communicate.

*“I would 100% recommend an exchange to any GNS students who are interested. You may think that you don’t want to leave your friends at GNS or you don’t want to miss your sports, but when you put things into perspective, high school is the perfect time to go experience the world. GNS offers us many advantages as a Round Square school that I think students need to take full advantage of. Even if you are the slightest bit interested in exchange, apply because it’s an amazing once in a lifetime opportunity!”*



*– Christopher Graham '19*

What to write? Suggestions for students include giving your exchange partner more information about:

- Yourself: photos, daily activities, household chores, weekend activities, friends, hobbies, etc.
- Your family: typical evening/weekend activities, photos, any special family events that may take place during their stay
- Your school: photos, school activities, typical day at school, clubs, music, etc.
- Your community: recreation facilities, geographic location, population, cultural and sports facilities, weather, (include photos, maps, newspapers)

Suggestions for parents include giving the exchange partner’s family more information about the home situation, such as household chores, curfews, church, family activities, medical or diet requirements, clothing, climate, etc.

## **Arrival and Hosting of Exchange Students**

Make the arrival or first few days special (e.g., with flowers, a party, BBQ, dinner) As soon as possible, provide a tour of the home and a review of the household routine. This may need to be repeated a few days later to ensure complete understanding.

### ***The First Weeks***

The first weeks are important when trying to establish a relationship with the exchange student. Ensure that he/she feels welcome and is treated with respect. However, try to emphasize at the start that he/she is considered a member of the family and is not a special guest.

### ***House Rules***

Establish at the start that everyone is expected to take part in family activities and chores and to respect the house rules. The sooner this is done, the better. It is suggested that you provide a short, written list of expectations to avoid possible misunderstanding regarding:

- meal times (week and weekend)
- shower schedules
- curfews (week and weekend)
- family chores, setting table, dishes, etc.

### ***At School***

When you take your exchange partner to school the first person he/she should meet is the exchange coordinator, followed by the Principal. He/she may follow

you to your classes until a timetable is established. Inform him/her of the school rules (e.g., morning routines, Dining Hall, gym) help him/her get a locker and agenda, meet your homeroom teacher, and give a tour of the school.

### ***Family Situations***

The presence of a new ‘sister’ or ‘brother’ may cause jealousy within the family. Try to be aware of others feelings in this regard. In some other countries, it is not as common as it is in North America for mothers to be employed outside the home. It is also less common for teenagers to hold part-time jobs. Clearly explain your family situations and how they affect the household routine.

In other countries—notably Germany—most young people use their bedrooms for entertaining friends. Many of them have what we might call a bed-sitting room or a studio room. Explain the use of your living room or family rooms.

### ***Religious Requirements***

Discuss your exchange student’s religious requirements, and please try to accommodate these as fully as possible. They may not choose to attend church at all, however, if they do wish to, and you are unable to assist, call the church for assistance. They may be happy to accommodate the request.

### ***Personal/School Supplies***

On a Round Square exchange, school supplies may be taken out of the money the student has on deposit with the school. Students who wish to purchase school photos or yearbooks should expect to do so at their own expense.

### ***Communications***

The exchange partner will wish to contact home. Please ensure the student has access to wifi for Skype or something similar. However, you may also need to remind them that constant communication home can lead to homesickness and a compromised experience.

### ***Daily Transportation***

Parents in both countries are expected to pay for daily transportation costs to and from school for the visiting student. This reciprocal arrangement seems to be the most convenient for both sides.

### ***Insurance, Medical and Dental Expenses***

Individuals must purchase adequate medical/dental/travel insurance before they travel.

*“I strongly recommend an exchange to everyone because the experiences and the memories you make are incredible. I personally feel much more independent and confident and believe that everyone here changed me for the better.”*

*– Tina Fischer, Switzerland*



### ***Exchange Students at GNS***

School attendance is mandatory during this exchange. This is an academic exchange and must be treated as such. Special approval to miss a day to travel with the host family may be arranged with the permission of the exchange coordinator. Each exchange student will be required to give a short presentation in assembly about their school, country and family.

### ***Friends/Social Life***

GNS students should try to have some of their friends meet the exchange partner soon after they have arrived in Victoria. However, the host family/partner is not expected to provide instant friends. Friendships take time to flourish and should not be forced. The exchange students should be encouraged and supported in this regard.

### ***Preparation for Your Time Away***

Families of exchange students are responsible to ensure that their son/daughter is physically (immunizations, appropriate luggage—see Departure Worksheet) and academically prepared. Before departure, the exchangee and the parents will meet with the Round Square Coordinator and ensure that all areas of the worksheet (passport, travel plans, visa, gifts, etc.) are accounted for. It is the responsibility of the Round Square Coordinator to ensure that the exchangee has a formal letter of invitation in their possession for customs/visa.

### ***Passports***

Please ensure you have a valid passport with more than six months left prior to expiry.

### ***Visa***

Visas are the responsibility of the family. You may travel to Australia or Europe as a visitor, for up to three months on a tourist visa. If you plan to extend your stay in the host country, please check the visa requirements.

### ***Medical/Accident/Liability Insurance***

Is the individual's responsibility to purchase adequate insurance coverage for the time abroad. This must be purchased before departure, either through your travel agent or another agency of your choice. Cost will depend on the nature of the coverage. Some students may be covered by their parents' extended medical plan, however, please check the coverage carefully. Dental work can be expensive in other countries. Before leaving, students should have a check-up and necessary dental work completed.

### ***Eyeglasses/Contact Lenses***

It is suggested that an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses with a copy of the latest prescription be taken on exchange. If glasses/contact lenses are broken, the spares will prevent frustration and a costly eye exam.

### ***Money***

Students are advised to have some money from their exchange country. Banks often need a few days' notice to order foreign currency, so do not leave this until the last minute. Approximately \$300.00 per month is suggested for personal spending money, however, this will vary according to personal activities.

### ***Family Life***

The 'settling in' period can take a few weeks. Take heart and know that in a few weeks things will not be as strange as they are at first. Different cultures have different customs and routines. You may be expected to adapt to their way of doing things, just as your partner will have to adapt when staying with you.

### ***Making Friends***

During the first few weeks in this new environment, you may feel a tendency to cling to your partner. Realize that this can become tiresome and try to allow your partner some independent time. Even though it may seem difficult at first, try to develop some friendships on your own.

### ***Communication***

Before you depart on exchange, please ensure you have a phone or communication plan.

### ***School Participation***

When you arrive at the school the first morning, have your partner introduce you to your exchange coordinator. This should be the first person you meet. You may not receive a timetable immediately. You may go to classes with your partner until a timetable is arranged. You will need to take your uniform to wear initially. A school uniform may be provided later. You are a visitor to the school, however, you will be expected to take part in all activities and complete the same assignments as the other students. You must remember that you are responsible to keep up with your work in Math, Science and Language Acquisition while you are away. You will be expected to understand the key ideas of these studies when you return.

In all other subjects, you will be expected to complete only those portions of the course work that were covered while you were not on exchange. For these subjects, your exams may be modified.

### ***Attendance***

School attendance is mandatory.

### ***After the Exchange***

Just as there was a period of adjustment when you went on exchange, there may be some readjustment upon returning home, probably more than you expect. You may feel like an outsider and have some catching up to do. In all probability you will have changed quite a bit, but most people here, both family and friends, will not have changed.

You will be expected to give a short (five minute) presentation to a school assembly upon your return. You can show the students where you were and what it was like.