



## OVERVIEW

**ELP Foundations** is a pre-arrival orientation program for newly admitted international PhD and MFA students. Designed to support academic readiness and adjustment to graduate study in the U.S., the program combines an asynchronous online summer course with optional in-person and virtual events in September. Through the summer course, students engage with key academic and professional topics (e.g., working with advisors, teaching, presentations, academic integrity), prepare for the cultural and emotional transition to study in the U.S., and begin building community at Northwestern. Faculty and program staff are invited to nominate eligible students, who then evaluate the offer and decide whether to participate.

Programs are encouraged to nominate students for ELP Foundations when those students would benefit from additional preparation for the linguistic, cultural, and interpersonal dimensions of graduate study in the United States. The program provides structured, early engagement with academic expectations, spoken communication strategies, and the norms of advisor–student interaction before students arrive on campus.

By the start of fall quarter, participants are more familiar with Northwestern systems and resources, connected to a supportive peer network, and more confident using English in academic contexts. Participating in ELP Foundations helps ease their transition, strengthens their readiness to contribute during seminars and lab meetings, and ultimately supports their long-term academic success and well-being.

Please review the information below as you consider which students to nominate for participation in the 2026 ELP Foundations cohort.

### Nominate students using the form at this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/elpf-nominate-26>

### What do students have to say about ELP Foundations?

[elp\\_foundations\\_feedback.pdf](#)

## ENROLLMENT AND REGISTRATION

Enrollment in ELP Foundations is **separate from admission to a student’s degree-granting program** and has no impact on degree progress or academic standing. Students who accept an offer of admission to ELP Foundations will be enrolled by The Graduate School in a special non-degree program for Summer 2026, which includes one online course (TGS 509: Foundations of American English and Academic Culture). There is **no tuition charge** for this course. Transcript grades are recorded as **Satisfactory (S)** or **Unsatisfactory (U)**.

## ELIGIBILITY FOR NOMINATION:

- **Country of Origin/ Citizenship**  
ELP Foundations is intended primarily for international students who will enter the US on an F1 or J1 visa. U.S. citizens and permanent residents are also eligible to be nominated if **any one** of the following applies: primary residence outside the United States; non-native English speaker status; or native speaker of a variety of English spoken primarily outside the 50 U.S. states.
- **English Proficiency**  
Students at all levels of English proficiency may be nominated, including students who have already fulfilled The Graduate School’s English proficiency requirement for instruction (eligibility to be funded as a TA).
- **Admission Status**  
All nominees must be admitted to a PhD or MFA program for **Summer or Fall 2026** with a support package. Students may be nominated before they have made a final acceptance decision, as long as an offer of admission has been made.
- **Time in the United States**  
Preference is given to students who have never visited or lived in the 50 U.S. states, but students who have lived or studied in the U.S. are still eligible to join.
- **Special Circumstances**  
If you are unsure if a student is eligible, please reach out! We are happy to discuss individual cases and make exceptions for special circumstances.



## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND PARTICIPATION

### **Accepting the offer** (*May 2026*)

Students must indicate their decision to attend by completing an online decision form and submitting their Intent to Enroll form to ELP staff by the deadline specified in their offer letter (May 15–23).

### **Pre-boarding tasks** (*May 23 and June 6*)

Students must complete required online pre-boarding tasks between May 23 and June 6. The purpose of this step is to confirm that students have the internet bandwidth, connectivity, and system access needed to use Canvas, Panopto, Zoom, and other instructional tools, and to allow time for troubleshooting and familiarization before the course begins. Most students complete these tasks in 1–2 hours. ELP staff will assist students in identifying and resolving access issues from their location.

### **Online course participation** (*June 19 – July 26*)

The TGS-509 online course runs from Friday, June 19 through Saturday, July 26. Optional orientation events will be held in the week leading up to June 19. Nearly all required assignments are completed asynchronously. Auditing is not permitted: students must engage on a weekly basis and complete all required assignments. The average time commitment is 3–6 hours per week.

### **Completion outcomes** (*Fall Quarter 2026*)

Students who complete the required course assignments earn eligibility to attend ELP Foundations in-person social events in the fall. Students who complete the entire course with a final grade of A or B will receive a \$325 supplemental **stipend from The Graduate School** during their first quarter of enrollment in **AY 2026–27**.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Faculty, staff, and prospective admitted students can visit our [website](#) to download our prospective student factbook and [information from our program alumni](#).

If you have any additional questions about the nominations process, please contact:

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