



Guide to the Gilman (Summer Study Abroad) Scholarship

Overview

The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship is one of the most important study abroad scholarships for LaGuardia students who receive Pell Grant funding. It supports U.S. undergraduate students who want to study or intern abroad for academic credit but may face financial barriers. For Japan Studies students, the Gilman Scholarship can be an excellent way to make a program in Japan more affordable while also strengthening transfer, scholarship, and career applications.

1 Basic Information

- The Gilman Scholarship is a program of the U.S. Department of State.
- It is designed for U.S. undergraduate students with financial need, especially students who might otherwise not be able to participate in study abroad.
- Students at both two-year and four-year colleges are eligible to apply.
- Applicants must be receiving a Federal Pell Grant at the time of application, or be able to show that they will receive Pell Grant funding during the term of the study abroad program.
- Applicants must apply to or be accepted into a credit-bearing study abroad or internship program abroad.
- The award is competitive. Standard awards can be up to \$5,000. Some students may also be considered for supplemental funding, such as the Critical Need Language Award or the STEM Supplemental Award, if they qualify.
- Japan can be a strong fit for Gilman applicants because Japanese language study, intercultural learning, and academic work in Japan align well with the program's goals.

2 Important Eligibility Notes

- You must be a U.S. citizen (Pell Grant recipient) .
- You must be an undergraduate student in good standing at an accredited U.S. institution.
- Your program must be credit-bearing.
- Gilman recipients can only receive the scholarship once.
- The program follows U.S. Department of State travel advisory rules. In general, Gilman-supported travel must be in locations permitted by the program's current travel advisory policy.

3 Timeline and Deadlines

As of April 9, 2026, the March 2026 application cycle is already closed. The next widely relevant deadline listed by the official Gilman website is the October 2026 cycle.

- March 2026 deadline: closed on March 5, 2026.
- March 2026 advisor certification deadline: March 12, 2026.
- October 2026 application deadline: October 1, 2026 at 11:59pm Pacific Time.
- October 2026 advisor certification deadline: October 8, 2026 at 11:59pm Pacific Time.
- Students should always verify the current deadline directly on the official website: <https://www.gilmanscholarship.org/>.

4 Why Japan Studies Students Should Consider Gilman

- Study abroad in Japan can significantly improve your Japanese language ability in a short period of time.
- Living in Japan helps you build firsthand knowledge of Japanese society, culture, and daily life that cannot be gained from classroom study alone.
- A Gilman award can strengthen your resume, transfer application, and future scholarship applications.
- Gilman alumni also receive a form of noncompetitive eligibility for certain U.S. federal jobs, which may be useful if you are interested in public service or international careers.



5 What You Need to Submit






The Gilman application includes several important parts. Students should always verify the exact requirements for their application cycle on the official Gilman website, but the following materials are typically central to the application.

- **Online application form:** You will enter your personal information, academic information, financial aid status, and study abroad program details.
- **Four required short essays:** According to the current Gilman essays page, applicants must submit four short essays. Each required essay must be no more than one single-spaced page with 1-inch margins and Times New Roman 12-point font, and each essay has a maximum of 500 words.
- **Short Essay 1: Motivations for Studying or Interning Abroad** (maximum 500 words).
- **Short Essay 2: Knowledge and Skill Development through Studying or Interning Abroad** (maximum 500 words).
- **Short Essay 3: Gilman Scholars as Citizen Diplomats** (maximum 500 words).
- **Short Essay 4: Contributions to U.S. Communities and Follow-on Service Project Proposal** (maximum 500 words).
- **Optional supplemental essays:** Some applicants may also apply for extra funding opportunities, such as the Critical Need Language Award or STEM Supplemental Award. These optional supplemental essays are currently limited to 300 words each.
- **Advisor certifications:** The application is not complete until the required certifications are submitted by the appropriate campus officials, usually a study abroad advisor and a financial aid advisor.

6 Suggested Steps to Take

- (1) Meet with your academic advisor and study abroad advisor to identify possible Japan programs.
- (2) Confirm that you are Pell-eligible and that your financial aid status supports your application.
- (3) Review the official Gilman eligibility requirements and deadline page.
- (4) Select a realistic program and gather the basic details you will need for the application, such as program dates, location, costs, and credits.
- (5) Draft your essays early. Focus on your goals, your reasons for studying in Japan, and how the experience will support your future plans.
- (6) Identify the correct certifying advisors for the Gilman application. Both the study abroad advisor and financial aid advisor must certify your application by the advisor deadline.
- (7) Revise your essays with feedback from professors and advisors.
- (8) Submit the application before the deadline and then follow up to make sure advisor certifications are completed on time.

Links

- Japanese Option webpage: <https://t-nagano.com/projects/JapaneseProgram/> 
- Japanese Option Blog: <https://chrysanthemum.commons.gc.cuny.edu> 
- Japanese Option Discord: Contact tnagano@lagcc.cuny.edu for the invitation link 
- Tomonori Nagano, Faculty Advisor of the Japanese Option at LaGuardia
 - Office: B-234FF 
 - Phone: 718-482-5484 
 - Email: tnagano@lagcc.cuny.edu 