

# Houghton Academy

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

(By boarding students, parents, and agents)

Last updated 6/17/2024, Jared Winkens

### 1. How does drop off and pick up at airports work?

- a. We offer free rides to and from Buffalo (BUF) International Airport on the following **highlighted** dates (Please do not arrive in Buffalo after 8 pm or depart before 9 am:
  - i. **ELL Boot Camp Students arrive | 8/7**
  - ii. **ELL Boot Camp | 8/7-8/11**
  - iii. **New Boarding Students arrive | 8/10-8/11**
  - iv. **New Student Orientation | 8/12-8/14**
  - v. **Returning Students Arrive by 12:00 pm & Combined Orientation | 8/15**
  - vi. **All Student Orientation & Registration Activities | 8/16**
  - vii. **First day of school / first semester | 8/21**
  - viii. **All School Retreat | 8/22-8/23**
  - ix. **Fall Sports Practice Begins 8/26**
  - x. **Thanksgiving Vacation | 11/27-12/2**
  - xi. **Christmas Vacation | 12/20-1/6**
  - xii. **Free airport/bus/train drop off & pick up days | 11/26 after 6pm, 11/27 8am, 12/2 12pm & 8pm, 12/19 after 6pm, 12/20 8am, 1/6 12pm & 8pm.**
  - xiii. **First day of second semester | 1/21**
  - xiv. **Spring vacation | TBA**
  - xv. **Free airport/bus/train drop off & pick up days | TBA**
  - xvi. **Last day of classes including final exams | 5/29**
  - xvii. **Non-graduates may leave after 6:00 PM | 5/29**
  - xviii. **Graduation | 5/31**
  - xix. **Free airport/bus/train drop off & pick up | 5/29 after 6pm, 5/30 8am, 5/31 after 4pm. (NOTE: if a school driver cannot be found a student may need to use a traditional taxi at a higher expense for the 90 min. trip.)**
  - xx. **All students must leave | by 6/1**
    1. **Plus, on 7/20-22 for Summer English Camp**

- c. Students arriving on non-designated days will be charged \$150 one way and be required to wait until a special driver can be found for that day.
  - d. Since the airport is a three-hour round trip, we try to only make one trip per day but sometimes two if many students are arriving or departing on that day. But this means students will need to wait a bit to be picked up or wait at the airport for their flight to leave.
  - e. Buffalo airport is very small, safe and user friendly, so it is not a problem. There is a waiting area within sight of the baggage claim area on the same level or a larger open lounge immediately above the baggage waiting area on the second floor. Both are very comfortable. Students should never leave the airport for any reason except with a designated Houghton Academy adult.
- e. Unless otherwise notified, Mr. Keith will typically be personally picking up students along with other existing students who form a fun welcoming committee. **His mobile phone number, 630-450-1227, or WeChat: JonKeith\_USA, is accessible to students throughout their whole international flights. Students, parents or agents should not hesitate to contact him if they have questions, delays or any trouble.**

## **2. Where can adults stay when they visit Houghton?**

- a. The Inn at Houghton Creek, 9722 Genesee St., Houghton, NY 14744-8773 is a five-minute walk from the school and most convenient. The phone number is 1+(585) 567-8400 or visit their website.
- b. Other options in the area, needing car ride:
  - i. Oaks Oramel Inn (Oramel, NY): 1+(716) 353-1981 (ten minutes)
  - ii. Colonial Inn: (Portageville, NY) 1+(716) 574-4595 (20 minutes)
  - iii. Microtel Inn (Wellsville, NY) 1+(585) 610-4167 (30 minutes)

## **3. Who will care for my student?**

- a. Our Boarding Student Support Team is led by Mr. Keith, our Boarding Program Director, and includes our Dorm Parents, School Counselor, Nurse / Medical Resource and our Boarding Program Assistant. They meet regularly to review student progress and needs and welcome communication with parents.

## **4. Are students safe in Houghton?**

- a. Houghton is one of safest places in the USA. Rarely is there ever any crime. People are generally very trustworthy, friendly and respectful. But of course, it is always wise to take common sense precautions.
- b. Our dormitories are locked overnight, and we have security cameras covering entrances and public areas for everyone's peace of mind.

## **5. How can parents get updates from the school?**

- a. Houghton Academy will have a Parent network that will be set up before school starts which will give parents access to regular pictures of students and updates.

## **6. How can parents send packages to a student at school?**

- a. It is most reliable to use the school address and not the dormitories. Put “Attention: your students name” and the school address:
  - i. Houghton Academy, 9790 Thayer Street, Houghton, NY 14744
- b. Students check in the office each day if they are anticipating a package.

**7. What happens if a student cannot get his/her visa in time to arrive for the start of school?**

- a. That is okay. Houghton Academy is one of the few schools in the world that will let students start any day of the school year. We are flexible and adaptable to the unexpected events in life that impact our best planned schedules and calendar. Our teachers and staff are ready to welcome students when they can get here. We will make it work.

**8. What happens if our visa is denied?**

- a. If a student’s visa application is denied twice, all but \$1,000 of everything paid to date will be refunded. Documentation is required.

**9. What documents does a student need to bring?**

- a. I-20, Passport, Acceptance Letter and Enrollment Contract.
- b. Please make copies of each and keep in a separate location within your luggage during travel.

**10. Where do students keep these valuable documents upon arrival at school?**

- a. We require them to be turned in and kept in the secure school office for safekeeping. Students may keep copies on them and retrieve the originals whenever needed.

**11. Does the student need to fill out the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the I-20?**

- a. No. Just sign the front page. Nothing else.

**12. What will be in a dorm room?**

- a. Two beds, two dressers, two desks, two chairs, one shared closet.
- b. Some rooms have a mini refrigerator.

**13. Will my student have his/her own room?**

- a. No. We will have full dorms. This means students will have one roommate. Our rooms are designed for two per room. Living with a roommate is a great life skill challenge to learn to communicate needs and solve problems. We are available to assist if needed.

**14. What does a student need to bring for his/her dorm room?**

- a. Linens, clothes, toiletries, desk supplies and other personal items.
- b. A fan. Dorm rooms are not air conditioned.
- c. Any of these items can be purchased on the day of arrival if preferred.

**15. How does a student buy supplies once in the USA?**

- a. We usually make a Walmart stop on the trip home from the airport. If not, there is a Dollar General, all-purpose store, within a five-minute drive of our school that students can access the next day.

### **16. Does a student need to buy and bring a computer?**

- a. This is up to you. The school does provide Chromebooks (low power personal computers) to help students do homework. Most students do bring their own laptop or device or buy one here upon arrival.

### **17. Does a student need a phone?**

- a. Yes, all boarding students must have a USA functioning phone for safety purposes. Since we travel a lot and are off campus frequently, it is important. It is also the method our boarding students stay aware of daily student announcements.
- b. We will take students to a phone store, and they can decide on a plan that meets their needs and budget.

### **18. How does the school control the use of technology?**

- a. The internet is turned off at 11 pm on school nights and 12 pm on non-school nights. Younger students must place all electronic devices in “technology beds” in the lounge overnight. This practice encourages students to get their sleep.
- b. Students are not allowed to use phones or technology during class time during the school day unless the teacher assigns a project that makes them necessary.
- c. Students that are struggling to maintain a healthy technology usage balance may be required to live by stricter standards.
- d. Improper use of technology of any kind is not tolerated and dealt with swiftly and seriously.

### **19. What is the School Dress Code?**

- a. Students are encouraged to review the Student Handbook on the website for the Dress Code and many other standards.
- b. Students may buy uniforms at [www.landsend.com](http://www.landsend.com)

### **20. What is the best way for a student to handle money?**

- a. First, it is best to exchange foreign money into USA currency before you come to America or to the airport. Remind students to always keep cash and valuables on them at all times. Do not put in luggage that will not be with them.
- b. Each family has paid their \$1,500 personal deposit before they arrive at school. It is available at designated times during the week in the business office. Students will be made aware of when this “school bank” is open to them.
- c. Students that bring or have access to additional cash are encouraged to deposit it into the “school bank” for safety purposes. Having cash sitting around in dorm rooms is never a good idea.

- d. Students are able to open a bank account in our local bank (Note: Obtaining a credit card often requires an age of 17).
- e. Many parents will send family credit cards with their students.

### **21. What if a student wants to play sports?**

- a. First of all, we strongly encourage participation by everyone regardless of experience or expertise. Our teams have a no cut policy. So, if you consistently attend practice, you will be on a team.
- b. Participation in a team is a quick and great way to build quick friendships.
- c. Fall practices schedules are listed. Students interested in joining should arrive prior to the first scheduled practice. See the calendar section for dates.
- d. Attending all practices is critical because each student is required to practice six times before they can play in a game.
- e. Girls playing volleyball must have rubber bottomed sneakers, knee pads and black spandex (4" inseam) to wear under uniform shorts.
- f. Boys or girls playing soccer must have shin guards, soccer cleats and at least one pair of competition white and competition blue soccer socks.
- g. All athletes must have a sports physical from a medical professional. These will be available through the school during the first week of practice.

### **22. When does a student get his/her class schedule?**

- a. During Orientation week, students will be advised on their schedule.
- b. In some cases, students may need to take placement assessments before finalizing classes.

### **23. How does ESL support work for weaker English-speaking students?**

- a. We have various levels of ESL support. Some students may be required to arrive at HA early to attend English practice sessions. Others may be strongly recommended. This makes a big initial difference.
- b. Some will continue or start daily or weekly ESL support for the year beginning the first week of school. As students improve, they may earn their way out of regular ESL support. Others may need it for 1-2 years.

### **24. What happens during the first week?**

- a. First, we give the students time to rest from jet lag and get comfortable with their new surroundings. They set up their rooms and learn routines.
- b. Secondly, they learn their way around school and town, while making new friends in the dorm.
- c. Thirdly, they start classes and attend a retreat.

### **25. What if a student does not feel well?**

- a. The first step is to talk with our dorm parents and see how they can help.

- b. Secondly, if needed we have a local medical clinic that we can take students to. It is located immediately next to one of our dorms.
- c. In serious medical situations, we can take the students to the hospital urgent care about 25 minutes from school. We also have access to a local ambulance service if needed.
- d. Our School has access to a local pharmacy.

**26. When do I need to turn in my Houghton Academy Medical Form?**

- a. Before travel plans to arrive in the USA can be accepted.

**27. What about medication?**

- a. All prescription medication needs to be reported to and turned in to the dorm parents upon arrival for adult supervision.
- b. Over the counter medication may be kept by students if they are aware of intended use.

**28. What about the cost of medical treatment?**

- a. The school provides basic medical insurance, but the parents usually remain responsible for a co-pay and deductible. Any pre-existing conditions, dental and vision needs are not covered.
- b. Any additional vaccines and medical requirements that are required upon arrival into the USA are the financial responsibility of the family.

**29. Is there any COVID requirement?**

- a. Not at this time but we recommend students continue to practice the good hygiene practices we all learned during COVID (frequently washing hands, covering coughs, cleaning common surfaces with disinfectants, etc.).

**30. What is a student who misses his/her home food?**

- a. Of course, living in a foreign country this is to be anticipated. Parents would be wise to prepare their students for this reality. Practice eating a variety of new foods before arriving is recommended.
- b. Our dining halls and menus are obviously USA focused but we try hard to offer options that will be comfortable for students far from home.
- c. We also take our students periodically to ethnic supermarkets as well as local American grocery stores. Many dorm rooms have individual mini refrigerators.

**31. How do students wash their clothes?**

- a. Free laundry facilities are in both dorms. Dorm parents will teach students as needed. Students need to buy their own laundry supplies.

**32. Where will students eat their meals?**

- a. Seven days a week we have the wonderful opportunity to enjoy dinners buffet style in our next door, sister university Dining Hall. Weekend lunches are also at Houghton University.

- b. School day breakfasts and lunches are in the Houghton Academy Cafeteria / Canteen.

**33. What if a student doesn't get along with a roommate or another student?**

- a. We encourage all of our students to practice relational problem solving by trying to work things out directly. But, if two students are unable to resolve conflict, they should enlist the help of a dorm parent or school adult.

**34. Does a student have to attend church and participate in some religious activities if he/she does not come from a religious background or necessarily have an interest in religious things?**

- a. Yes. As a Christian School, Houghton Academy believes that a growing understanding of religions in general and Christianity in particular is a crucial element of a well round, well-educated individual.
- b. So, if parents do not appreciate this foundational part of a Houghton Academy education or students cannot participate without a positive attitude, this family should probably find a better fit school.

**35. How will a student know what is going on?**

- a. We have a group WhatsApp or WeChat just for our Boarding Students.
- b. Mr. Keith and other school adults will make daily announcements and updates for which students are responsible for.

**36. Are boardings students allowed to date?**

- a. No. We do not want the drama that usually comes from exclusive one-to-one relationships between opposite genders. We believe boarding students, while away from their parents, should be focusing on their studies, building many friendships and accumulating as many new experiences as possible.
- b. We do allow young men and women to attend designated social events chaperoned by school adults (school banquets, etc.) as pairs. We believe these types of formal affairs provide excellent opportunities for young people to refine their social skills and practice appropriate etiquette.
- c. If we detect any potentially unhealthy close relationships, we will be in touch with parents.

**37. Does the school give tuition refunds?**

- a. No. Once a student enrolls, we provide a year's worth of support and dedicate that "space" to that student. If a student leaves, our expenses do not change.

**38. Can a student stay in the dorm over vacations?**

- a. For school year vacations, yes. There is no school food service during these times (Thanksgiving, Christmas or Spring Break) but there is also no additional charge for this time of vacation supervision.
- b. For the summer vacation between school years, yes but there is a fee. Fees for the upcoming summer are set during the second semester and depend on the

type of programs being offered, the level of food available and the trip opportunities.

- c. Houghton Academy does usually have a variety of summer camp options between school years.

### **39. What about cars?**

- a. We do not allow Boarding students to ride in another car with a teenage driver.
- b. If they receive permission ahead of time, and the adult is approved by the school, a Boarding student may ride with a school parent or adult.
- c. We do not offer driving training for Boarding students due to the liability issue.

### **40. What are some behaviors that Houghton Academy does not tolerate from its students?**

- a. Lying, stealing, inappropriate language, bullying, disobedience, disrespect, pornography, tobacco, vaping, alcohol, drugs or sexual activity. Students unable to live by these and our other clear standards should not waste everyone's time and their parents' money by coming to Houghton Academy.
- b. We are absolutely committed to a positive, productive and respectful school environment for everyone.

### **41. What is the standard that boarding students have the most trouble adjusting to?**

- a. Most of our students do not have a problem adjusting to our rules because they generally find them very reasonable, understandable and consistently applied. But a few struggle with the following.
- b. We are serious about teaching the most basic but important life skills such as being on time and getting responsibilities done.
- c. Two of our regularly very important expectations are: Get to school on time and get all your assignments in on time. Simple.
- d. Successful people start by mastering these two life skills. But yet we find some students come to us still struggling with these expectations. So, each Friday, we review the week's performance of each Boarding student. Have they been late to school or any class? Have any assignments been late? If the answer is "yes" to either question, the student misses out on all the fun weekend activities. Students have choices but each choice has a consequence! Simple.