LEAF Academy is a world class boarding secondary school focused on future leadership, located in Bratislava, Slovakia.

**OUR STORY**

LEAF Academy, a world class boarding secondary school offering a rigorous program focused on entrepreneurship, leadership, academics, and character, was founded by the Slovak NGO LEAF (see below).

LEAF Academy, a world class boarding secondary school offering a rigorous program focused on entrepreneurship, leadership, academics, and character, was founded by the Slovak NGO LEAF (see below). LEAF Academy was designed in cooperation with African Leadership Academy, the unique Pan-African institution whose mission is to develop the next generation of African leaders. LEAF Academy and ALA continue a relationship that includes mentoring and training for LEAF Academy staffulty and internship opportunities for ALA students in Bratislava. An Advisory Council consisting of current and former senior administrators from several world-class secondary institutions, including Winchester College (UK), Raffles Institute (Singapore), African Leadership Academy, (South Africa), and Riverdale Country School and Montgomery Bell Academy (US), was instrumental in helping to create the Academy’s innovative curriculum.

In August of 2016 the Academy opened its doors to 44 students in grades 9 and 11. For the 2017 – 2018 school year, there are 80 students from eleven countries, including several in Central Europe, as well as Germany, Sweden, Afghanistan, Egypt, and the US, enrolled in grades 9 – 12.

**School Profile**

2017 – 2018

- **E:** info@leafacademy.eu
- **W:** www.leafacademy.eu
- **A:** LEAF Academy, Sasinkova 13, 811 08 Bratislava, Slovakia
- **CEEB Code:** 719027

**LEAF**

LEAF is a Slovak NGO founded in 2012, focusing on the development of young people with the potential to grow into the shapers of Slovakia and Central Europe. Through a variety of programs, LEAF aims to nurture future shapers who demonstrate entrepreneurial leadership, high ethical standards, excellence in one or more areas, and civic engagement – regardless of their socio-economic background. In addition to LEAF Academy, LEAF runs a variety of educational and support programs for students and young professionals, including Slovaks living abroad.

For more information, see www.leaf.sk
LEAF Academy seeks to enroll academics, scientists, entrepreneurs and artists from diverse backgrounds. Students come primarily from Central Europe, but LEAF Academy also enrolls students from the rest of Europe and the world.

Admission is extremely competitive: only 11% of applicants admitted for 2017-18.

The unique admission process, developed over five years of careful research and consideration, is lengthy and comprehensive. The search is conducted by an external “talent identification team”, seeking students who are expected to be:

- curious about the world and their role in society,
- open-minded about the beliefs of others and
- interested in bringing about change.

In the first round, students are evaluated on their passion for and engagement in social, civic, cultural, artistic and/or entrepreneurial activities within their communities, as evidenced by their past initiatives and achievements.

Their motivation to effect change is key.

Students who are selected for the second round go through an intensive interview process, with a focus on evidence of strong character. Finally, there is an expectation of academic promise.

All classes are taught in English and the ability to function in academic English is imperative.

The careful selection process has resulted in a student body that is highly accomplished. Students own their own businesses, develop smartphone apps, medal at national and international programming competitions and physics and math Olympiads and win Lego League competitions. LEAF Academy students have been named Best Delegate at international Model United Nations and Model European Parliament conferences, have won regional, national and international debate competitions and won national essay competitions. There is a junior intern who has worked extensively with the Google country director in Slovakia to, among other ongoing projects, set up Danube Valley, a startup cluster in 4 Central European countries that aims to forge cooperation among the countries in order to raise the economic status of the countries. Several received scholarships to attend summer programs, including at an international school in Japan, a technology workshop in San Diego, and Babson College. We have a very active chapter of the Duke of Edinburgh Award program. Slovakia’s first poetry slam, now a regular, well-attended event, was the brainchild of LEAF Academy students.

All admission decisions are merit-based and need blind; LEAF Academy meets full demonstrated need of all admitted students. Currently the average fee paid by families is 15% of the total cost of attendance (total fees for 2017-18 are 21,400 €).

Average fee paid by families:

- 15%
- 21,400 €

While one hundred percent of LEAF Academy graduates are fully prepared for university entrance,

students who excel in the Entrepreneurial Leadership program may choose to further develop their student enterprises or start their own businesses straight out of the Academy.

LEAF Academy operates in Slovakia pursuant to the provisions of Slovak education law governing foreign schools, with the consent of the US Embassy. LEAF Academy has applied for accreditation through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Membership is also pending in ECIS (the Educational Collaborative for International Schools). LEAF Academy is approved by the College Board to offer the AP Capstone Diploma; the Class of 2020 will be the first cohort to complete the requirements. Members of the University Guidance Office belong to the International Association for College Admission Counseling and the National Association for College Admission Counseling; Counselors adhere to the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice. LEAF Academy is a member of Global Online Academy.
LEAF Academy does not report a GPA or rank in class. Please see further discussion of grades in the Academic section.

REFERENCE / RECOMMENDATION LETTERS
Recommendation letters are confidential. Students are counseled not to request extraneous recommendations.

TESTING
Currently fewer than 10 LEAF Academy students have sat for standardized college admission tests. However, it is worth noting that in 2016 – 17, the first year of the school’s existence, 22 students sat for 55 AP exams, scoring a 3 or higher on 95% of the exams, well above the national and international averages.

LEAF Academy employs an outstanding and diverse group of professionals (referred to as staffulty).

25 Teaching staffulty

Bachelor

Master degree

PhD

There are 25 teaching staffulty, 18 with full class loads and 7 who perform administrative or other duties in addition to teaching one or more classes.

18 out of 25 have experience working in their fields outside of the classroom, including in the private sector, civil service, and NGOs

several left lucrative jobs because of the desire to be involved in the LEAF Academy mission

The teaching staffulty offer a combined classroom experience of 123 years

The average class size is 12

Most staffulty, including non-teaching, are involved in the residential life of the school.

LEAF Academy, believing that discipline should involve education as opposed to punishment, follows the Restorative Justice model in which students who commit acts outside of the principles and rules of the community are counseled as to the harm their actions have caused and are expected to take responsibility for those actions. “Discipline,” generally in the form of suspension or probation, is reserved for students who repeat such actions. Students who receive a penalty are expected to report their actions and resulting penalties to all colleges which ask; the counselor letter will provide follow up in the form of verifying the student’s explanation, providing context, and commenting on the student’s current standing in the community.
LEAF Academy’s four-year program offers two entry points, Year 1 (9th grade) or Year 3 (11th grade). Students pursuing the 4 year program will spend the first 2 years in an internally developed curriculum. All Year 3 & 4 students will pursue either the AP International Diploma, or, starting in 2018, the AP Capstone Diploma. LEAF Academy currently offers 11 AP classes; in addition, students have the option of and are assisted in preparing for taking additional AP exams, based on their interests and skills. The curriculum is divided into four main components, Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL), Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Central European Studies (CES), which houses the humanities; and Character Development.

The unique curriculum intertwines rigorous academic preparation with the intentional development of ethical leadership, entrepreneurship, strong moral values, and self-awareness through a pan-departmental focus on the:

4 Es
- Ethics
- Excellence

4 Cs
- Critical Thinking
- Creativity
- Entrepreneurial Leadership
- Civic Engagement

... as outlined in the LEAF Academy Graduate Profile: www.leafacademy.eu/education/graduate-profile/

All courses combine traditional academic pursuits with experiential learning, teamwork and collaboration, as well as cross-curricular investigation and synthesis. Self-study and independent learning are encouraged both within the curriculum and through our partnership with Global Online Academy, online language and other academic classes, independent research, internships, structured mentoring and tutoring, and diverse summer programs around the world. In addition to full time studies at LEAF Academy, many students are concurrently enrolled in a national secondary school or pursuing national matriculation certification in their home countries.

Because of the heavy emphasis on skills and competency development through experiential and collaborative learning in all LEAF Academy classes, traditional grading is not applicable. However, in addition to regular narrative evaluation, faculty provide a term-end letter-grade (A+ to F) based on academic achievement and other markers of class performance such as effective communication, teamwork and leadership development. Three courses at LEAF Academy are not graded: Entrepreneurial Leadership, Mathematics Modelling and Statistics, and Character Seminar. There are, however, clear expectations that students must meet in order to achieve a “Pass” in these classes. A student who fails to meet expectations will be assessed as “No Credit.” Students who show exceptional performance will earn the a “Pass with Distinction.”

In order to graduate, students entering in Year 1 will successfully complete courses in Entrepreneurial Leadership 4, Central European Studies (English / History / Humanities) 3, AP English Language and Composition 1, Mathematics 3, Natural Sciences 2, Home Language and Current Affairs or another approved academic course 4, Character Seminar 4, additional AP Diploma-eligible courses 3 – 4, and Sports 1. Students entering in Year 3 will successfully complete courses in Entrepreneurial Leadership 2, Central European Studies (English / History / Humanities) 1, AP English Language and Composition 1, Mathematics 1, Home Language and Current Affairs or another approved academic course 2, Character Seminar 2, additional AP Diploma-eligible courses 3 – 4. In addition, all students are expected to fully participate in Seminal Readings, Experiential Weeks and TermE.
One of the flagship programs at LEAF Academy, EL is designed to develop the future leaders and shapers of Central Europe.

The program involves a practical, hands-on, needs-analysis approach to developing innovativeness and teamwork, leading to changes in organizations and markets. Learning is supported by the latest in entrepreneurial and leadership knowledge. The course includes human-centric design methods, project challenges and work with external communities and organizations. Part of the curriculum supports understanding how selected industries work, provides a snapshot of the future trends which can be considered in their projects and develops the mindset of connecting knowledge from different fields, including STEM. Students in the last two years of the program work in student enterprises, serving real customers with products and services developed by the students themselves. Due to the nature and objectives of the class, which challenges students to follow their intrinsic motivation, work collaboratively, take risks, fail fast and fail often, EL is credit-bearing but ungraded.

The Character Department focuses on helping students build their self-awareness and developing them as well-rounded, values-driven leaders, through workshops, discussion and individual or group reflection and feedback.

The four-year program helps students discover their relationships with the outside world; delve into their own strengths, motivations and values; and develop an understanding of the basic concepts of moral philosophy and their applications to real-world dilemmas. The sequence concludes with a final project aimed at students identifying their own mission in life, through the intersection of their strengths, their passions, and the needs of the world around them. Because of the subjective and sensitive nature of the courses, Character Seminar is credit bearing but ungraded.

The Central European Studies Department houses all areas of what would traditionally be labeled the Humanities: literature, writing and rhetoric, history, government and politics, social sciences, languages and the arts.

The curriculum is designed to further LEAF Academy's commitment to “focusing on the development of young people with the potential to grow into the shapers of Slovakia and Central Europe.”

Required courses:

- The Year 1 & 2 CES classes fulfill the English / History / Humanities requirements. The courses focus on skills development, critical reading and thinking, writing, research, and communication. Historical study examines Central Europe from the Habsburg Empire through the Interwar Period.

- CES (Year 3) This seminar course fulfills the Year 3 English/History/Humanities requirement. Students investigate issues and concepts relevant to the region, while also considering them in a broader global context. The course looks at the concept of "Central Europe" and “Central European identity” through multiple lenses (historical, literary, cultural, political, philosophical) as articulated by Central European dissidents and intellectuals. Writers studied include novelists, essayists and poets such as Milan Kundera, Slavenka Drakulic and Wislawa Szymborska. Students are required to explore contemporary issues of their own choice in the form of individual and group projects. Throughout the course, active reading, academic writing, critical thinking, inquiry, and the investigation, understanding and proper presentation of different perspectives are emphasized. Students learn to formulate relevant and interesting research questions, conduct research and analysis, collaborate with others and communicate the results of their work in appropriate forms and to diverse audiences.

- AP English Language and Composition (Year 4)
Language Electives (Years 1 – 4) LEAF Academy currently offers a formal study of German Language and Culture. Students may also pursue self-study in a language of their choice, either at a local language institute, with a tutor, or online. There are currently students doing self-studies in Russian, Spanish, Latin, Chinese, French and German. Students may choose to sit for the appropriate AP Language exams.

Year 3 – 4 Electives Students may choose from among the following to fulfill elective requirements for graduation and the AP Diplomas:

- AP Comparative Government and Politics
- AP European History
- AP Economics: The course covers elements of both Micro – and Macroeconomics. Students may choose to sit for either or both exams. Some self-study may be required.
- AP Human Geography
- AP German Language and Culture
- AP Studio Art: 2-D

The STEM Department houses all courses relating to the natural sciences, technology and mathematics.

Engineering concepts are incorporated into the curriculum, in particular during Year 1 & 2. In addition, the EL and STEM Departments collaborate to introduce challenges which require human-oriented, engineering-based solutions. All courses in the department include guided and self-directed research, investigation and presentation. All science courses include laboratory work.

Required courses:

- Mathematics and Computer Science (Years 1 & 2) This two-year sequence develops students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills through improvement of their inferential and analytical skills, as well as such process skills as representing, modeling and calculating. The course is built around several modules including logic, mathematical literacy, geometry, combinatorics, proportionality and basic functions. Students who successfully complete Maths Y1-2 are prepared to enter the Mathematics Modeling and Statistics course, AP Statistics, or, with some guided self-study, AP Calculus BC.

- Science (Year 1 & 2) The foundational 2-year science sequence covers the fundamentals of kinetic theory, mechanics, inorganic chemistry, cellular biochemistry, human physiology, electricity and magnetism, optics and nuclear physics and environmental systems.

- Mathematical Modelling and Statistics (Year 3 or 4) is designed for students who are not preparing for further studies or careers in mathematics or the sciences. The course aims to develop quantitative reasoning, information literacy and critical thinking by providing students with a range of sophisticated tools and techniques, including descriptive statistics, inferential methods and mathematical modelling. The approaches to modelling include proportionality, iterations, and the use of finite differences. Since the focus of the course is on skill development and exploration, in line with the Academy's interest in developing inner motivation and curiosity of the students, the course is credit bearing but ungraded.

or

- AP Statistics (Year 3 or 4)

Year 3 – 4 Electives Students may choose from among the following to fulfill elective requirements for graduation and the AP Diplomas:

- AP Calculus BC (Year 3 or 4)
- AP Computer Science (Year 3 or 4)
- AP Biology (Year 3 or 4)
- AP Physics C: Mechanics and Electricity (Year 3 or 4)
- AP Chemistry (Year 3 or 4)
- AP Environmental Science (Year 3 or 4)
Seminal Readings:

- Four times during the school year, the entire Academy takes time out to explore together selected challenging literature and thought-provoking films. Students and staffulty meet by grade level and in advisory family groups over the course of several days to review the readings and accompanying material. These sessions are intended to provide students and staffulty the opportunity to tackle transcendental questions and dilemmas, engage with challenging texts and ideas, reflect on values, in particular as set out in our Four Es, and to instill a sense of purpose and common experience within the community.

Experiential Learning Weeks:

- Several times during the school year, students participate in department-designed Experiential Learning activities. While all classes at LEAF Academy incorporate experiential learning into the syllabus, these activities are much deeper and more intense. Experiential Learning Weeks take students out of classroom and often involve travel. They are meant to complement the curriculum of the respective department, while also sparking awareness of the application of the Four Es and Four Cs to real life situations.

Term E:

- Experiential learning culminates in a three-week term at the end of the school year, Term E. During Term E all students are required to be immersed in intensive out-of-class activities that involve internships, service learning, and/or directed academic research. The focus is both local and global, with numerous opportunities for student involvement ranging from immersion in local community service, volunteer activities with local NGOs, internships with local and international corporations and organizations, international service activities such as 2 weeks serving in various capacities at a refugee camp in Serbia.

ACTIVITIES

Students are required to be involved in an after-school activity and encouraged to explore a range of opportunities. All activities are student led.

SPORT
- Self-defense
- Gym
- Rowing
- Dance
- Yoga
- Volleyball
- Climbing
- Sailing
- Quidditch

FITNESS

CLUBS
- MIT Launch (EL)
- Debate Club including participation in local, national and international debate competitions, MUN, Model European Parliament, Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions – OBESSU, and local and national “speakers’ corners”
- TEDed students create, discuss and critique TED Talks
- Rainbow Club
- Fountain Poetry – poetry slam
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Challenge

And clubs focusing on current events, visual imagery, music, and drama

LOCAL

ACTIVITIES

A number of students continue to be involved in activities in their home towns or communities.
LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

From the beginning of LEAF Academy, students have been involved in shaping the policies and day to day life of the school. Currently students serve in the following leadership roles:

The Community Principles Committee
CPC is one of the most important leadership opportunities at LEAF Academy.
The 3 students on the committee are charged with developing the principles and standards that form the code of conduct for the school. In addition, along with 3 staffulty, they hear and make recommendations for disciplinary cases among their peers.

Residential Assistants
are carefully chosen and assume an important position of leadership in the residence.
RAs serve as a liaison between staffulty and students, set the tone for the residence, and are expected to exhibit good judgment at all times. While they do have specific daily responsibilities (meet regularly with the head of hall, conduct hall meetings, organize hall activities, serve as counselors / mentors to other students) their responsibilities are such that they are “on duty” 24/7 throughout the school year.

The Residential Committee
organizes and runs most social, cultural, holiday and entertainment activities for the school.

The Library Committee
is responsible for ordering books, maintaining the stacks, and communicating library news and activities to the community.

The News
is a student-produced live and video news show that constitutes the weekly school assemblies.
The News covers local, national and international current events, school news, sport and cultural news, public service announcements, and school announcements.

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Each student is assigned to an Advisory Family consisting of 5 or 6 students and 1 or 2 staffulty who act as Family Heads. Families meet as a group at least once a week for lunch, schedule cultural or social events, and students have the opportunity meet one-on-one with the Family Heads both formally and on an as needed basis.