



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
HANDBOOK

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WELCOME



The University of Cincinnati (UC) is a diverse campus in an urban setting. Our students, faculty, and staff come from more than 110 countries. We are truly a multicultural community!

As a UC student, you are now a **"Bearcat"**. The Bearcat is our University Mascot. Adopting a mascot is a university tradition in the USA. Now, when people call you a "Bearcat", you'll know what they are talking about!

The University of Cincinnati is a large and exciting international community. During 2017-2018, 4,000 students and 800 scholars from over 110 different countries were part of campus. UC International Services staff members advise international visitors on many topics, including immigration, social and cultural differences, financial matters, and personal concerns.

Cincinnati is located on the southern Ohio border with Kentucky to the south. The Ohio River separates the two states; Kentucky to the south and Ohio to the north. Kentucky is easily accessible by bus. The airport that you will most likely be connecting to will be the CVG airport. This airport is located in Northern Kentucky.

Cincinnati is the home of many multi-national corporations, including Procter & Gamble. Its metropolitan area is home to more than two million people. We have professional sports teams like the Cincinnati Reds baseball team and the Cincinnati Bengals (American football team), world-class museums, and a vigorous, diverse economy with opportunities for co-op, internships and careers after graduation. Our downtown is easy to navigate on foot, and its charming neighborhoods date back to the 19th century.

Because of all that we have to offer, Cincinnati has been rated one of the most livable metro areas in America. Downtown contains architectural gems like the art-deco Carew Tower and majestic Music Hall. Cincinnati's art deco train station has been converted into a stunning museum. The Cincinnati Zoo is internationally known for its collection of endangered species. The rain forest and floral exhibits at the nearby Krohn Conservatory are also quite beautiful. The climate in Cincinnati changes with the seasons.

WELCOME

UC International Services

All of us at UC International Services join the faculty, staff, and students in welcoming you to the University of Cincinnati. We hope that your stay here will be both pleasant and successful.

If you have any questions at all, you should contact our office. We are your primary contact between the University and the U.S. Government. Do not ask for assistance or help with any organization outside of UC International Services without reaching out to our office first. Our office is the only source that should be trusted by international students.

UC International Services caters to international students. We provide a variety of services to assist you before you arrive on campus and we make sure that you remain in legal status while you are here. We also host activities throughout the year to help you get adjusted to life at UC and in Cincinnati. For the purpose of your time here at UC, it is important that you become familiar with the staff at UC International Services.

International students that chose UC have a very high rate of satisfaction with their choice. In the latest International Student Barometer (ISB) survey, a global benchmarking study of international student satisfaction, UC has consistently been ranked in the top tier in overall student satisfaction against a world-wide benchmark. You will have the opportunity to participate in the ISB and to let us know what you think of UC once you enroll.

UC International

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Cincinnati, OH 45221-0640
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international.students@uc.edu

uc.edu/international

Hours of operation:
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PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

iBearcatsGlobal eForm Services

Everything you do with UC International Services from the point of admission through graduation, will be facilitated by the use of our **iBearcatsGlobal** system.

New students who have yet to arrive will use the “limited services” link to complete our pre-arrival checklist. Once you have arrived, all requests for processing of F-1 or J-1 student benefits should be submitted to UC International Services using “full” iBearcatsGlobal services. You will use it to do everything from updating biographical information to requesting program extensions.

Once you have arrived and attended Check-in, the next time you use iBearcatsGlobal, you will click on the “login” button under “Full Client Services for Students and Scholars.”

This will bring you to UC’s Central Login Service. Here you will enter your UC **6+2 username** and **password**. Once you enter your 6+2 account information, you will be brought to the iBearcatsGlobal home page. Here you will see an overview of your iBearcatsGlobal record, including any alerts that may need to be addressed, SEVIS program information, and any notes that have been put on your record by a UC International Services Advisor.

To submit most eForm requests, you will click on the “**F-1 Student Services**” (if F-1) or “**J-1 Student Services**” (if J-1) link and then select the e-form you wish to submit. Some eForms will be found under Biographical Information, Admissions, Orientation, or other links. Follow the instructions for the specific eForm and scan and upload any required documents in PDF format.

iBearcatsGlobal main webpage

Central Login Service

PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

Important Immigration Documents

Before you arrive, you will need four important immigration documents:

Certificate of Eligibility

These documents are issued by UC International Services.

Form I-20: Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 Visa

Form DS-2019: Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (J-1 Visa)

Uses:

- To obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa from the American Embassy/Consulate in your home country.
- To enter the country for the first time.
- To re-enter after a short visit outside the U.S.
- To transfer to another school.
- For entry of family (spouse, children).
- To extend expected program end/activity date.

Note: The I-20 or DS-2019 you have been issued is only good for the semester indicated. If you do not arrive by the date indicated, you must return the form to UC International Services.

Visa

A visa is a stamp placed in your passport by an official of the United States (or the country you are entering) permitting you entry. You must have a valid visa to enter the United States (unless you are visa exempt). However, unlike a passport, once you are in the U.S., your visa is allowed to expire. U.S. visas are currently issued only at U.S. Embassies overseas and cannot be obtained or renewed within the U.S.

I-94 Arrival / Departure Record

- The I-94 card is an electronic record of your arrival in the U.S. Upon arrival, go to i94.cbp.dhs.gov and print a copy of the I-94 for your records. You must upload this copy to iBearcatsGlobal.
- You will receive a new I-94 card each time you re-enter the U.S. You must provide UC International Services with a copy of all new I-94 cards you receive during your stay in the U.S. **Download your I-94 card online.**
- All students should have F-1 (exchange students J-1) written as the visa classification
- The card should also have an indication of "D/S". It stands for "duration of status" and means the period during which the student is pursuing a full course of study, plus one year for optional practical training (18 months to three years for J-1 students), and 60 days in which to depart the country (30 days for J-1 students).

Passport

A passport is your country's identification of you as a citizen. Your passport must remain valid at all times. It is not allowed to expire. You may renew it by contacting your Embassy / Consulate within the U.S.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a national system that allows the U.S. government to monitor and track various events of all F-1 and J-1 students during their program of study. In addition to biographical information, the University of Cincinnati is required to provide information regarding a student's academic program, enrollment status, and immigration activities.

You will learn more about SEVIS upon arrival at UC. However, before you enter the U.S., you need to understand that once you have arrived, you must be committed to following all the rules related to your status. Any violations of status will be reported to the U.S. government. Students who do what is required of their status will not be greatly affected by SEVIS.

SEVIS Fee

Before applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa, you will be required to pay a fee, called the "SEVIS fee", to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Students seeking an F-1 visa need to pay the \$200 SEVIS fee. Students seeking a J-1 visa need to pay the \$180 SEVIS fee. Individuals who are not required to obtain a visa (Canadian students) will be required to pay this fee before entering the United States. The fee can be paid by mail, using Form I-901, or by credit card through the internet. If your visa has been denied, you do not need to pay the fee again if you re-apply for the visa within 12 months of the denial.

Who Must Pay the Fee

You will be required to pay this fee if:

- You are seeking an F-1 or J-1 visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for initial attendance at a university or initial participation in an exchange program. The fee must be paid before applying for the visa.
- You will enter the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status, but are not required to have a visa. The fee must be paid before you apply for admission to the U.S.
- You are applying for a change of status to F-1 or J-1. The fee must be paid before you submit your change of status application.

The fee is NOT required:

- For F-2 or J-2 dependents.
- For J-1 participants in an exchange program sponsored by the U.S. federal government.
- If your immigration status is F-1 or J-1 and you are transferring to another school, program, or program category.
- If you are requesting an extension of your program or course of study.
- If you paid the fee but your application for an F-1 or J-1 visa was denied and you are re-applying for the same status within 12 months of the denial.

Fee Payment Process

Option #1: Payment by Credit Card

Go to fmjfee.com. Exchange visitors from the following countries are not eligible to use the credit card option and must use option #2 or option #3: Cameroon; Ghana; Kenya; Nigeria.

Option #2: Payment by Western Union

This option allows Western Union to collect the SEVIS fee in local currency. This option is only available in countries where Western Union offers its "Quick Pay" service. Instructions for paying using this payment option can be found on the [SEVIS website](#).

Find the nearest Western Union agent location.

Option #3: Payment by Check or Money Order

When paying by check or money order there are two options:

A. Internet-generated coupon

Go to the [fee payment website](#), enter basic information, print out a coupon, and then mail a check or money order with the coupon to a lock-box address in Missouri. Once the information and fee are processed, SEVIS will then be updated with the fee payment information.

B. Paper option

You can download or otherwise obtain Form I-901, fill it in, and mail it, with a check or money order, to the specified address in Missouri. Once the information and fee are processed, SEVIS will be updated with the fee payment information.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

In both cases, a receipt notice will be issued when the fee is processed. The mailing addresses for paying by check or money order using the coupon or the paper Form I-901 are:

P.O. Box Address:
I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee
P.O. Box 970020
St. Louis, MO 63197-0020

Street Address for Courier/Express Delivery:
I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee
1005 Convention Plaza
St. Louis, MO 63101

Check Specifics

All checks and money orders must be:

- Payable to the "I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee".
- Made in U.S. dollars and drawn on a bank located in the U.S.

Only checks and money orders may be used when paying by mail. Payment of the SEVIS fee is not limited to the student. DHS will accept fee payment from a third party individual or institution, either in the United States or abroad, using any of the options above.

The fee must be paid at least three business days prior to the scheduled date of your visa interview in order for the payment information to show up on the SEVIS system. You should bring your I-901 receipt with you to your visa interview. The paper receipt can be used as verification in place of the internet verification.

Completing Form I-901

1. You must have a Form I-20 or DS-2019 in order to complete the I-901.
2. You must have the University of Cincinnati's School Code.

For F-1 students (I-20's) our School Codes are:
CLE214F10355000 (Main Campus)
CLE214F10355001 (UC Blue Ash College)
CLE214F10355002 (Clermont College).

For J-1 students (DS-2019) the school code is:
P-1-00733

Students from Canada or Bermuda

Students from Canada and Bermuda are exempt from having to apply for a visa. In addition to your I-20 or DS-2019 Form, you will have to provide the SEVIS fee payment verification to an immigration inspector at the port of entry when applying for entry into the United States as an F-1 or J-1 student.

If your Visa is Denied

If your visa is denied, you may reapply for the visa within a 12-month period without having to pay the SEVIS fee again.

Dependents

If you have obtained an I-20 or DS-2019 for a spouse or children, they do not have to pay a SEVIS fee in order to apply for an F-2 or J-2 visa.

If Admitted to More than One School

If you have been accepted to more than one institution and paid the fee using the SEVIS ID number of another institution, but you wish to attend UC, you will not have to pay the fee again. You can **have the fee transferred** to your UC SEVIS number.

FlyWire

This allows you to transfer money from a foreign bank account directly to UC. Students who do not have U.S. bank accounts or whose parents are paying their UC bills may benefit from this option. **Set up an account.**

PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

Visa Application & Initial Admission to the United States

Upon receipt of your Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or DS-2019) you will need to pay the \$200 SEVIS fee (\$180 for J-1 students) and obtain a receipt. You will then need to complete the DS-160 online, nonimmigrant visa application. The DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State via the internet. The Consular office uses the information entered on the DS-160 to process the visa application and schedule a personal interview. Although you may apply at any U.S. Consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

Before you apply for the visa, you should understand the process and the rules governing visas. Many visa applications fail. In some countries, most applications fail. Often it is because the student did not know the rules or was not prepared. We do not want this to happen to you.

The consular officer will take a very legalistic view. In the U.S., it is considered important to be impersonal when administering laws. This is considered rude or improper in many countries, but not in the U.S., where the ideal is to apply laws equally to all regardless of status or sex. Do not try to negotiate or discuss personal matters.

The consular officer who makes the decision on your visa application is required to think of you as someone who plans to come to the U.S. permanently, and you must prove that you intend to return to your country after completing your studies. U.S. law states that F visas may be given only to persons who intend to be in the U.S. temporarily. This rule is the number one reason for denials of student visa applications.

Other important rules are:

1. You must have a definite academic or professional objective. You must know what you are going to study and where it will lead. Be ready to say what you want to study and what kind of career it will prepare you for in your home country. Be prepared to explain why it is better for you to study in the U.S. than at home.
2. You must be qualified for the program of study.
3. You must be definite about your choice of schools. If you do not seem certain that you want to attend UC, you will not get a visa.
4. You must be adequately financed and have documents to prove it. Except in the unusual case when employment is particularly authorized on the Form-I-20 or DS-2019 (i.e. graduate assistantship), you may not plan to use employment as a means of support while you are in the U.S.

Note: New students from North Korea and Syria are currently ineligible to apply for a visa.

U.S. Government officials are convinced more easily by documents than by spoken statements. When possible, submit papers to show your connections to your home country. If your family owns property, take the deeds. If you have a brother or sister who studied in the U.S. and then returned home, take a copy of the brother's or sister's diploma and a statement from an employer showing that they have returned home. If possible, show that an individual or company in your home country will give you a job when you return. If you cannot get a promise of a job, try to get a letter saying that you will be considered for a job, or that the company needs people with the kind of education you are coming to the U.S. to receive.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL

Visa Application & Initial Admission to the United States

If your family owns a business, take letters from a bank describing the business to the visa interview with you. Do not emphasize any ties you may have to the United States or to family members in the United States. Your visa application is stronger and better if at least part of your financial support comes from your home country, even if most of it comes from the U.S.

Do not speak of working in the United States unless employment is authorized on your Form I-20 or DS-2019. Though limited work permission is possible for students in F-1 or J-1 status (but not for dependents in F-2 status), employment is not guaranteed and cannot be used as part of your financial support for visa purposes.

Read your Form I-20 or DS-2019. Some of the rules you must obey are printed on page 2. Be aware of these rules – especially the requirements that you study full-time. Look at the date entered for reporting to the school. You must apply for the visa in time to reach the school no later than that date.

There is no time limit on how soon you can apply for the student visa (although the visa cannot be granted more than 120 days prior to the start date on your I-20 or DS-2019). The sooner you apply the better. Consular offices get extremely busy during the late summer months (June, July, August). However, you will not be allowed to enter the United States more than 30 days prior to the start date on your Certificate of Eligibility.

Security Checks

Visa applicants whose fields of study or country of origin appear on the Department of State “Technology Alert List” will be checked against databases maintained by the FBI. This new security procedure will delay the issuance of your visa substantially. The Technology Alert List consists of a “Critical Fields List” as well as a Department of State list of designated State Sponsors of Terrorism. Additional information on these technologies is also available online at state.gov.



WHEN YOU ARRIVE

U.S.-VISIT Entry / Exit System

U.S.-VISIT is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security program that enhances the country's entry and exit system. It enables the United States to effectively verify the identity of incoming visitors and confirm compliance with visa and immigration policies.

The goals of U.S.-VISIT are to:

- Enhance the security of citizens and visitors
- Expedite legitimate travel and trade
- Ensure the integrity of the immigration system
- Safeguard the personal privacy of visitors

The initiative involves collecting travel information and “biometric identifiers” (such as fingerprints, using a simple, inkless device) from visitors to assist the border officer in deciding whether to allow the individual to enter the U.S.

Upon Arrival

At the airport or seaport, travel documents such as your passport and visa will be reviewed. A U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer will ask specific questions regarding your status in the U.S. As a part of enhanced procedures, you will have two fingerprints scanned by an inkless device. You will also have a digital photo taken. All of the data is used to assist border inspectors in determining whether or not to admit you to the U.S. Careful planning and preparation by students and exchange visitors can ensure that your arrival in the U.S. is smooth.

Here are some things you should do:

1. Make sure that your passport and non-immigrant visa are valid for entry into the United States. The passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
2. Check to see that your visa accurately reflects your correct visa classification.
3. If your review indicates any discrepancies or potential problems, visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to obtain a new visa.

4. Students and exchange visitors entering the United States for the first time under their respective non-immigrant visa classification may only be admitted up to 30 days prior to the program start date. Do not make plans to arrive more than 30 days before the start date of your program, as indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019.
5. When you receive your U.S. non-immigrant visa at the Embassy or Consulate in your country, the consular officer could seal your immigration documents in an envelope and attach it to your passport. You should not open this envelope! The Customs and Border Protection Officer at the U.S. port-of-entry will open the envelope.
6. When you travel, you should carry some specific documents in your personal carry-on bag. Do not check them in your baggage! If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will not be able to show the documents to the Customs and Border Protection Officer and, as a result, may not be able to enter the United States.

Documents you should carry with you in your personal carry-on bag:

- Passport (including attached envelope of immigration documents) with non-immigrant visa.
- SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019.
- Visa exempt students (Canadians) entering the U.S. for the first time should have a Form I-797, Receipt Notice, or receipt verifying SEVIS Fee payment.
- Evidence of financial resources (these should be stapled to your I-20 or DS-2019)
- Name and contact information for Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) at UC. See page 4 for contact information.

If you are traveling by aircraft, the flight attendants on board will distribute CF-6059 Customs Declaration Forms and Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record, before you land at your initial port-of-entry in the U.S. Complete these forms while you are on the aircraft and submit them to the appropriate Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer upon your arrival. It is important that the name you put on the I-94 card matches the name in your passport and on your I-20 or DS-2019 form.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

U.S.-VISIT Entry / Exit System

Upon arrival at the port-of-entry, proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers for inspection. As you approach the inspection station, be sure that you have: Passport, SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019; completed Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record; and, CF-6059 Customs Declaration Form available for presentation to the CBP Officer. The Form I-94 should reflect the address where you will reside (not the address of the school or program sponsor).

If you are entering through a land or designated seaport, the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer will provide the necessary CF-6059, Customs Declaration Form and Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record at the port-of-entry. If you do not understand a form, ask the CBP Officer for assistance.

Like all entering visitors, you will be asked to state the reason you wish to enter the United States. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. It is important that you tell the CBP Officer that you will be a student at the University of Cincinnati. Once your inspection is complete, the inspecting officer will

1. Collect your Form I-94 and give you instructions on how to download your I-94 Record after you leave the airport. You can also refer to page 5 for these instructions.
2. Return the I-20 or DS-2019 SEVIS Form to you.

Secondary Inspection Requirements

If the inspector cannot automatically verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be escorted to an interview area known as "secondary inspection." Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information. Verifications are done apart from the primary inspection lines so that an individual case will not cause delays for other arriving passengers.

In limited circumstances, if a student or exchange visitor is mostly in compliance, he/she may be issued a Form I-515A, Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor. This form authorizes temporary admission for 30 days into the United States and requires the student or exchange visitor to take immediate action to submit proper documentation. Non-compliance with the directions contained on these forms can result in future adverse action.

All Other Non-Immigrant Visa Classifications

If you are currently in the U.S. in a visa classification other than F-1 or J-1, you should report to UC International Services with your passport and visa documents during one of our Immigration Check-ins. It is important to understand the rules of your particular immigration status, including if you are permitted to study on that status, and when that status expires.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

International Student Check-In with UC International Services

The term “**international check-in**” is something you will hear often before and during your arrival at UC. Check-in is a process that you must go through in order to activate your SEVIS record and report your arrival in the U.S. Only staff members in UC International can do this for you. First, you must schedule an immigration check-in with our office by following the steps on the Pre-Arrival Checklist in iBearcatsGlobal. Your check-in cannot be done on a walk-in basis. You **MUST** make an appointment time.

At check-in, you will meet our staff, student volunteers, and current UC students that are eager to help you navigate the arrival process. Campus will be bustling during this time. It's important that you follow your schedule and complete all tasks that are assigned to you on your scheduled check-in day. You must be on time and expect to be very busy from arrival until the first day of classes. It's a fun and exciting time for new students!

Your main check-in appointment will be with a member of our office. He or she will activate your SEVIS record and check your documents. Bring all of your immigration documents with you (passport, DS-2019, and I-94 record). You need to **print your I-94 card**. **All new exchange visitors must report as soon as possible.**

By the time you arrive, you should be familiar with iBearcatsGlobal and the pre-arrival checklist. The pre-arrival checklist requires you to upload a copy of your passport and visa prior to your arrival in the U.S. You will also schedule an appointment to meet with an advisor in iBearcatsGlobal. All incoming international students are required to make this appointment at “International Student Check-in”.

In iBearcatsGlobal, you will also make an appointment for your “**Mandatory Health Screening**.” This is required of all incoming international students. If you have any questions about your appointment, you should ask your advisor when you meet with them at International Student Check-in.

At International Student Check-in, you will meet many people; UC International Advisors, Program Coordinators, and various other UC staff that have helped you apply to UC and assisted you in the visa/I-20 process. You will have a chance to meet a lot of new friends. Over 1,000 new students arrive every August and UC has over 4,000 international students and scholars from all over the world on the campus. Prepare to make a lot of friends!

Important Note: It is not acceptable for you to miss International Student Check-in for any reason other than flight complications. If you know that you are going to be late due to flight complications, please email us at international.students@uc.edu so that we are aware of your situation. You cannot proceed with registering for classes or attending classes until you are properly checked-in with UC International.

Mandatory Health Screening

The University of Cincinnati requires that all students new to the University have a health screening at University Health Services (UHS). Failure to complete the health screening upon arrival will result in notification to the Registrar's office and possible cancellation of your classes for the semester. If your classes are canceled, you will be in violation of your immigration status.

The health screening will include Tuberculosis (TB) testing. The cost of this testing will be charged to your student account. Based on the results of this TB testing, a chest x-ray may be required. Chest x-rays from other countries cannot be accepted. Please consult the letter attached in your pre-arrival pack from UHS. It contains an immunization record sheet that should be completed and signed by a medical official. **PLEASE READ THE LETTER!** The immunizations are recommended so you will be adequately protected against these diseases. This is a good time to review and update your immunizations. If you do decide to receive any immunizations prior to your arrival in the United States, make sure these are completed 4 weeks prior to leaving your country.

DO NOT RECEIVE ANY IMMUNIZATIONS WITHIN 4 WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL!

WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Maintaining Your Immigration Status

It is your responsibility to maintain your immigration status. There are several requirements you must follow to maintain status that will require submissions of eForms to our office. See the iBearcatsGlobal section of this handbook for further instructions on submitting eForms.

Requirement to Keep Your Passport Valid

Your passport must be valid at all times: Renewal applications must be made with the Embassy or Consulate of the country issuing the passport. You will need a certification of exchange visitor status from the University of Cincinnati (this can be obtained from UC International Services). Addresses of embassies and consulates are available on the U.S. Department of State website at state.gov/countries.

Requirement to Report Address Changes to UC International Services

You are required to report any address change to UC International Services within 10 days of the address change. This includes address changes of any of your dependents as well. To report a change of address go to iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu and submit a "Local U.S. Address Information" eForm.

Requirement to Obtain Prior Authorization from UC International Services to Drop Below a Full Course of Study

You are required to pursue a full course of study during normal enrollment periods (Fall and Spring Semesters). The Reduced Course Load Certification must be completed prior to dropping below full time status. Full time at the University of Cincinnati is 12 credit hours for undergraduate students or 10 credit hours for graduate students not receiving a scholarship. You are allowed to deviate from this full course of study only with PRIOR authorization from a UC International Services advisor, and only under very limited circumstances including illness, completing all required course work (graduate students) or being in your last quarter of study. You will need to submit a request for a "Reduced Course Load" eForm by going to iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu.

Requirement to Adhere to Rules Regarding Online Courses

Only three credit hours (1 course) of online distance education courses can be used to fulfill the 12 credit hour requirement for full-time enrollment. You are not limited in the number of courses / credit hours of online distance education you can take provided that 9 of the credit hour you are enrolled in are in traditional, non-distance education courses.

Requirement to Report Departure Date and Reason to UC International Services

For a variety of reasons, students leave the University early or unexpectedly. Some of these reasons include graduation, leave of absence, suspension, expulsion, or family emergencies. You are required to inform UC International Services if you plan to leave the University, and the reason for doing so. You can do this by submitting a "Departure Certification" eForm at iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu.

Requirement to Abide by Employment Regulations

Students may work no more than 20 hours per week on-campus while school is in session. These 20 hours include the work you do for your assistantship, if you have one. You are not permitted to work off-campus without receiving PRIOR authorization from the DHS and/or UC International Services depending upon your immigration status. Off-campus employment possibilities are very limited. During scheduled breaks (i.e. summer) there is no limitation on the number of hours you can work each week on campus.

Transfer to Attend Another School

You are currently authorized to attend the University of Cincinnati. If you decide to attend another school in the U.S., you must notify UC International Services of your intent to transfer and the name of the school to which you intend to transfer. This is done by submitting a SEVIS "Transfer Out" eForm at iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu. UC International Services will then enter a "Release" date in SEVIS (usually the day the current semester ends). After this date is reached, the new school can issue you an I-20 or DS-2019. You will then have to report to the Designated School Official/Responsible Officer at the new school within 15 days of the program start date in order to complete the transfer.

WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Requirement to Apply for an Extension of Program

You must apply for an extension of your program prior to the expiration date on your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 if you cannot complete your program by that date. Requests for extensions should be submitted to UC International Services prior to the expiration date on the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 so the extension process can be completed before the expiration date on the document. Students must submit a "Program Extension" eForm by going to [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://ibearcatsglobal.uc.edu).

Requirement for Changing Your Academic Program or Degree Level

You must obtain a new I-20 or DS-2019 if you change your academic program from one degree level to another (e.g., from Bachelor's to Master's level) or from one major/field of study to another (e.g., from Chemical Engineering to Physics). You must receive a new I-20 or DS-2019 from a UC International Services advisor within 15 days of beginning the new program/degree level.

Requirement for Receiving Authorization to Travel

You must notify UC International Services prior to traveling outside the U.S. so that your I-20 or DS-2019 can be signed for travel or, if required, a new form can be issued. Your I-20 or DS-2019 form must have been signed within the past 12 months or your reentry will be denied. Students must complete and submit the "Travel Signature" eForm at least 5 business days prior to the anticipated travel date, although you are strongly encouraged to submit the eForm even earlier. The eForm can be submitted at [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://ibearcatsglobal.uc.edu).

Requirement to Provide Documentation of Dependents

UC International Services is required to report information to the DHS and/or DOS regarding your dependents. You must notify UC International Services of any accompanying dependents in F-2 or J-2 status and provide biographical information (e.g., full name, address, country of birth, etc.) and immigration information (e.g., passport information, visa information, etc.) regarding those dependents by filling out a "Dependent" eForm. The form can be found and submitted at [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://ibearcatsglobal.uc.edu).

IMPORTANT NOTE: This information is not exhaustive and is subject to change without notice. International students should contact UC International Services at 513-556-4278 with questions on any of the information presented above. To keep up with changes in immigration law and UC International Services policies, visit the UC International Services website.

Students Not Subject to Visa Requirements

Certain students are not required to have a valid visa stamp for entry to the United States. The most common examples are Canadian citizens, and citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Such students should apply directly to an immigration officer at a U.S. port of entry for admission as a F-1 student, bypassing the procedure of applying for a visa. The procedure at entry is the same as that described previously, except that you are not required to present a passport with a visa stamp. Landed immigrants of Canada must apply for a visa stamp at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Temporary Admission with Form I-515A

If you have lost or misplaced your Form I-20 or DS-2019, or for other reasons are unable to produce that form at the port of entry, you should ask to be admitted on a Form I-515A. In such a case, the immigration officer will determine if you have a valid F-1 or J-1 visa and are qualified in all other respects for admission as a student. The officer may admit you to the United States in student status for a period of 30 days and issue the Form I-515A. That form instructs you to submit Form I-20 or DS-2019 and I-94 by mail to the DHS in Washington, D.C. Upon receipt of these forms, the DHS will update your I-94 record to "duration of status" by striking out the date and writing "D/S". The valid I-20 or DS-2019 and original I-94 should be submitted so that the I-20 or DS-2019 can be marked "D/S".

If the immigration officer at the port of entry is not able to determine that you are eligible for admission as a student, the officer may parole you into the United States for "deferred inspection," which requires that you report in person to a USCIS office.

The penalties for not following these rules can be severe. If you fail to maintain proper status you begin accruing what is called unlawful presence. If you accrue

WHILE YOU'RE HERE

more than 180 days of unlawful presence you are automatically barred from reentering the U.S. for three years. After accruing one year of unlawful presence the ban on reentering the U.S. increases to ten years. It is important not to lose your status and to check in with us anytime you have questions about what you can or can't do in the U.S.

Visa Expiration / Renewal

This procedure is only necessary when you intend to travel outside the U.S. and your visa has expired. To get a new visa stamp, you will need a valid passport, an I-20 or DS-2019, proof of financial support, and/or letter of certification. You must visit the American Consulate/Embassy Office located in the country you are visiting in order to get the visa stamp issued. A student visa cannot be obtained in the U.S. If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or other contiguous U.S. territories for less than 30 days, you do not need to get a new visa stamp. Students from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Syria must have a valid U.S. visa to re-enter the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, or other contiguous U.S. territories.

Traveling Outside the U.S.

F-1 visa holders need the following documents to re-enter the U.S. after a temporary absence:

- Form I-20 endorsed by UC International Services for travel within one year of the date of travel return, or within 6 months if you are on Optional Practical Training.
- A valid passport and U.S. F-1 visa (unless visa exempt).
- Verification of adequate financial support.
- Verification of enrollment. (Verification of Employment if you are on Optional Practical Training)

NOTE: A new DS-2019 is required if your current DS-2019 will expire before you plan to re-enter the U.S., if your program of study, degree level, or finances have changed, or if all endorsements are complete. Requests for a new DS-2019 or for a signature must be made at least 5 business days before your planned departure.

Drunk Driving Arrests Result in Visa Revocations

The U.S. Department of State consulate gets notified in the event that an international student or scholar is convicted (or even just an arrested), for driving under the influence (DUI), driving while intoxicated (DWI), or a related criminal charge. In such cases, the DOS sends a revocation notification from the consulate informing the student or scholar that their visa has been revoked. This practice, which is known as "prudential revocation," can create confusion with international visitors. Per U.S. Department of State (DOS), the consulate is supposed to contact the individual and provide notice of the visa revocation. However, the revocation occurs even if the visitor cannot be reached. In these instances, the student or scholar may not be aware of the revocation until he or she leaves the United States and tries to reenter based on the facially valid visa. In other cases, the international visitor believes the email revokes their legal status in the U.S.

The prudential revocation of a visa stamp by the DOS does not disrupt the student or scholar's legal status in the United States. If the student or scholar subsequently travels after the DUI/DWI, he or she must apply for a new visa prior to reentering the U.S. The DUI/DWI may result in a denial of the application. As such, students and scholars with such charges/convictions should consider carefully their need to travel.

WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Visits for Spouse and Children

F-1 students must obtain an I-20 to send to family members (spouse or children) who wish to visit them in the U.S. for extended periods of time. The family member(s) will use the I-20 to support their application for an F-2 visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The Embassy/Consulate will require evidence that you have adequate financial resources for each family member's support without recourse to employment. You must show proof of financial support to UC International Services in the amount of \$4,000 per year for a spouse and \$2,000 per year for each child, in addition to the amount needed for your own studies and living expenses. You must realize that under no circumstances will your spouse be permitted to take any employment after he/she reaches the U.S. F-2 children may attend elementary or high school. F-2 spouses or children are not permitted to study full-time at the college level without changing status to F-1, unless the courses are recreational in nature and do not lead to a specific educational objective. In addition, bringing family members to the U.S. is not considered a valid reason for needing employment authorization.

J-1 Students must obtain a DS-2019 to send to family member(s) who wish to visit them in the U.S. for an extended period of time. The family member(s) will use the DS-2019 to support their application for a J-2 visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The Embassy/Consulate will require evidence that you have adequate resources for their support. You must show proof of financial support to UC International Services in the amount of \$4,000 per year for a spouse and \$2,000 per year for each child in addition to the amount needed for your own studies and living expenses. J-2 dependents can apply for a work permit provided the employment is not needed to support the family. J-2 dependent spouses and children can study at any educational level. In addition, all J-1 exchange visitors must have insurance which covers themselves and any accompanying dependents for the entire period of their program.

The following levels of coverage and special conditions must be met:

- \$25,000 for repatriation of remains.
- Medical benefits of \$100,000 per accident or illness.
- \$50,000 for expenses associated with medical evacuation to home country.
- Must include a deductible not in excess of \$500 per accident or illness and shall not exclude coverage for perils inherent to the activities of the program and;
- The insurance policy must be underwritten by an insurance corporation with an A.M. Best rating of 'A-' or above, an Insurance Solvency International Ltd. (ISI) rating of 'A-1' or above, a Standard & Poor's Claims paying Ability rating of 'A-' or above, or a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of 'B-' or above. Insurance coverage backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the exchange visitor's home country shall be deemed to meet this requirement.

The University of Cincinnati Student Health Insurance Plan will meet the levels of coverage required. Single student coverage is \$1,232 per semester or \$2,464 per year. Dependent coverage is not available on UC's plan. All costs are subject to change.

Employment Opportunities

As an international student, you are permitted to work on campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session. You are not permitted to start working on campus more than 30 days prior to initially starting classes at UC. During holidays and breaks you will be permitted to work more. The Job Location and Development Program in the Career Development Center, located on the first floor of University Pavilion, maintains a listing of part-time job opportunities. If you have any questions you can call the Career Development Center at (513) 556-3471.

Once you find a job, you will have to submit an "Employment Eligibility Verification / Social Security Letter" eForm at [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://www.bearcatsglobal.uc.edu).

EXTENDING YOUR STAY

Optional Practical Training / Academic Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT)/Academic Training is an opportunity to gain work experience to complement your academic program. In most cases, students must complete one full academic year of study before being eligible for Optional Practical Training/Academic Training. All F-1 students are eligible for one year (12 months) of practical training for each higher degree obtained. In addition, students who major in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) may be eligible to get 24 additional months of OPT (36 months total) if their employer participates in the E-verify employment verification program.

When it is time for you to do Optional Practical Training, you must attend a required seminar at UC International Services prior to meeting with an advisor for final processing. The Department of Homeland Security must receive your OPT application no later than the 60th day following your graduation date or they will not authorize your practical training. The application process at the DHS usually takes 90 days. J-1 students are eligible between 18 months and 3 years of Academic Training, depending on the degree obtained. J-1 students must apply for Academic Training prior to graduation or the expiration of the DS-2019 and must have a job offer. Unlike Optional Practical Training, Academic Training is authorized by UC International Services.

Optional Practical Training/Academic Training falls into four categories:

1. during the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student is eligible, and intends to register for the next term or session;
2. while school is in session, provided that the training does not exceed 20 hours a week;
3. full-time after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or the equivalent), if the student is in a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degree program; and
4. full-time after completion of the course of study. OPT/Academic Training under the first three options would occur before completion of a course of study (pre-completion), while the last option would occur following completion of a course of study (post-completion). OPT/Academic Training after completion of studies may not be part-time.

Who is eligible to apply for the 24-month OPT extension?

In order for you to take advantage of the 24-month OPT extension, your degree as shown on your I-20 form in SEVIS must be in a degree field that is on the current STEM Designated Degree Program List.

"STEM" refers to degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics. This means if your degree is in such fields as business, education, the humanities, social sciences or visual and performing arts, you will not be able to apply for an extension of your OPT. STEM fields of study include, but are not limited to:

- Computer Science (CIP codes 11.XXX - Except data entry/microcomputer applications 11.06)
- Engineering (CIP codes 14.XXX)
- Engineering Technologies (CIP codes 15.XXX)
- Biological and Biomedical Sciences (CIP codes 26.XXX)
- Mathematics and Statistics (CIP codes 27.XXX)
- Military Technologies (CIP codes 29.XXX)
- Physical Sciences (CIP codes 40.XXX)
- Science Technologies (CIP codes 41.XXX)
- Medical Scientist (CIP code 51.1401)

Periods of Unemployment During OPT

DHS regulations currently define the period of an F-1 student's valid status as the time the student is pursuing a full course of study or is engaged in authorized post-completion Optional Practical Training, plus a 60 day grace period. The DHS has established an aggregate maximum period of allowed unemployment of 90 days for students on 12-month OPT. Students who qualify for and receive the 24-month OPT extension can be unemployed for an aggregate of 120 days .

This particular part of the rule also puts responsibility on students to keep UC International Services up to date with the name and address of your OPT employer. Unless we have the SEVIS system updated with the name and address of your employer, you will be accumulating unemployment time in SEVIS. Once you have reached the 90 or 120 day maximum, your F-1 status is no longer valid.

EXTENDING YOUR STAY

Please notify UC International Services with the name and address of your employer once employment is secured using an “Employer Update for OPT” eForm by going to [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://ibearcatsglobal.uc.edu). If you don't secure employment within the 90 day period beginning with the start date on your OPT card, you will be expected to depart the U.S. or otherwise take steps to maintain proper F-1 status (get a new I-20 to start a new program of study). Volunteer (unpaid) employment does not accrue unemployment time provided the volunteer work is for 20 hours per week or more.

H-1B Cap-Gap Relief

F-1 students who are the beneficiaries of approved H-1B petitions, but whose period of authorized F-1 stay expires before the H-1B employment start date, will have a gap in authorized stay and employment requiring them to depart the U.S. and return within 10 days of beginning H-1B employment. Regulations now provide relief to students and employers in this situation when the annual H-1B cap has been reached. These rules extend the status and work authorization of any F-1 student who is the beneficiary of a timely-filed H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year. This rule applies to all students on OPT, not just STEM students. The extension of duration of status and work authorization automatically terminates upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf. Students are **REQUIRED** to obtain a new I-20 form from UC International Services showing an OPT recommendation that covers this “cap-gap” period. A “Cap Gap” eForm will need to be submitted at [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://ibearcatsglobal.uc.edu).

Curricular Practical Training

F-1 students who have co-ops or internships as part of their degree requirement must be authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT). In addition, graduate students may be authorized for Curricular Practical Training if the employment is an integral part of a thesis or dissertation. Curricular Practical Training must be part of your degree requirement. You are not limited in the amount of Curricular Practical Training you can use. However, if you use 12 months or more of Curricular Practical Training on a full-time basis, you are not eligible for any Optional Practical Training after you graduate. CPT is authorized by UC International Services. You will need to submit a “Curricular Practical Training” e-form by going to [iBearcatsGlobal.uc.edu](https://ibearcatsglobal.uc.edu).

A Few Words of Advice

1. All eForm requests submitted to UC International Services require 5 business days to process. Plan accordingly!
2. Bring your passport and all relevant immigration documents (I-20 or DS-2019, passport, I-94 and financial documents) when you come to UC International Services with requests.
3. Always see a UC International Services staff member before you consider contacting the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. The USCIS is a very busy agency and the officer answering your call may not have the time required to fully understand your problem or question. If necessary, UC International Services will contact the USCIS for you.
4. If at any time you are uncertain about your status, check with UC International Services immediately.

TAXATION ISSUES

Paying Taxes

The subject of taxation can be complicated for Americans, let alone visitors to the US. UC International Services is here to assist you in any way we can. Please be sure to read the following carefully, even if you are not going to be paid by US Employer during this visit. **Our website answers many taxation questions.**

Working and getting paid by UC

If you are going to work and be paid by UC, we will need to determine how much in Federal Taxes you should be paying on your salary. Log on to iBearsGlobal, go to Full Client Services, Insurance and Finances, and submit the Tax Analysis eForm. This eForm will allow us to determine your tax residency, any applicable tax treaty benefits and whether or not you can claim dependents; all of which can lower the amount of Federal Income Taxes you need to pay. Do not submit this eForm until you have your Social Security Number.

Working and getting paid by CCHMC

If you are going to work and be paid for CCHMC you will need to contact Maria Llambi at Maria.Llambi@cchmc.org after you arrive in the US and before you begin work.

What is a Tax Return?

A tax “return” does not mean that you are filing papers to get your taxes returned, although this may be the result. Instead, what it refers to is the act of “returning” a report to the US Government (Internal Revenue Service or IRS). This report declares what you received during the previous tax year (January 1- December 31), what you were taxed on this income, and what you should have been taxed. This report is due April 15 of the following year and UC International Services will provide help to you and your dependents even if you have already returned to your home country.

When filing this report you may discover that you paid too much tax on your income and therefore are eligible for a refund. Alternatively, you may discover while filing this report that you did not pay enough taxes and now owe money to the IRS. If your only income is coming from UC or CCHMC and you follow the instructions above for using the Tax Analysis eForm or meeting with Noemi Almanza, our goal is to ensure that you are taxed correctly so that you avoid paying additional taxes with your annual tax report.

Who needs to file?

Regardless of income, every nonresident F and J visa holder in the U.S. must file an annual tax report and a statement to substantiate nonresident status with the IRS. This includes F-2 and J-2 spouses and children, regardless of their age and length of time in the US.

What needs to be filed?

Nonresident F and J visa holders who earned US income during the tax year must file a tax report on Form 1040NR or “Form 1040NR-EZ. They must also file a Form “8843 Statement for Exempt Individuals or Individuals with a Medical Condition”. F-2 and J-2 spouses and children who earned no U.S. income need only file a form 8843.

What are the penalties for not filing a report?

Penalties can include:

- future requests for change of status (especially to permanent resident) being denied.
- visa renewals at US Consulates/Embassies being denied.
- fines and interest are assessed when money is owed to the IRS. If more than 16 months late in filing the form, no deductions can be claimed.
- if more than 3 years late in filing and a refund was due, no refund will be given.

TAXATION ISSUES

Important Tax Dates, Documents, and Forms

April 15

The last day on which residents and non-residents who have earned wages from U.S. sources may file their U.S. federal income-tax returns.

June 15

The last day on which non-resident students and their dependents who have no wage income from U.S. sources may file their income tax returns.

Form 519

U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens, an IRS publication. This publication is essential for individuals from nations having tax treaties with the United States.

Form 8843

Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical condition. This one-page document must be completed and returned with the 1040NR and 1040NR-EZ. It verifies nonresident alien tax status. Students who have not earned wages from U.S. sources will file this form only.

Form 1040NR

U.S. Non-resident Alien Income Tax Return. The longer version of the return completed by many non-residents. This form is distinct from the 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ filed by residents for tax purposes. It is not interchangeable with those forms. The IRS publishes an instruction booklet to accompany the form.

Form 1040NR-EZ

U.S. Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresident Aliens with No Dependents. A simplified version of the 1040NR. Most F-1 and J-1 students may file the 1040NR-EZ. The IRS publishes an instruction booklet for this form.

Form W-2

Wage and Tax Statement. A form issued annually by employers (normally during the month of January). Copies of the W-2 must be filed with federal, state, and local tax returns.

Form W-4

Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate. A form completed by employees at the time of hire to indicate how much tax is to be withheld from the paycheck.

Form 1042S

Foreign Persons U.S. Source Income Subject to Withholding is a form used to report total scholarship/fellowship payments income tax withheld and other information relating to grant payments.

Form W-8BEN

Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding is a form used to certify an individual's foreign status for tax purposes. Students who receive service free scholarships or fellowships must file Form W-8BEN.

Form 8233

Students who are employed in the U.S. (including teaching and research assistants) and are partially or fully exempt by treaty from U.S. taxation must file Form 8233 and the appropriate attachment with the employer to claim exemption from withholding each year.

Our website answers many taxation questions.