

San Francisco State University

J1 International Student Pre-Departure Guide

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~oip/j1exchangestudent/>



**SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY**

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Welcome to San Francisco State University!

From the Office of International Programs:

Congratulations on your acceptance into the exchange program at San Francisco State University! We hope that you will have a very rewarding and enriching experience at SF State and in San Francisco. You will be joining 30,000 students who attend classes at SF State each year, including more than 2,000 international students from over 93 countries around the world. The [Office of International Programs \(OIP\)](#) assists all of the international students at SF State, and we are here to assist you both before and during your stay in the United States. We look forward to meeting you at the *mandatory* orientation program for all new international students. However, we encourage you to stop by the Office of International Programs upon your arrival to meet our [staff members](#) (Village at Centennial Square, Building C. See [campus map](#) for our location).

The Pre-Departure Guide

This pre-departure guide is meant to assist you as you prepare for your journey to the United States. You will find answers to many of your potential questions in this guide. If you do not find answers to your questions in this guide, or on [our website](#), then please contact us by email at: j1oip@sfsu.edu

The Campus

San Francisco State University is located in the calm south-western quadrant of San Francisco. The campus is easily accessible by [bus, tram, and BART](#). Less than a mile from Ocean Beach, the university is also surrounded by the [Park Merced](#) living community and Lake Merced.



STANDARD ITEMS REQUIRED FOR A U.S. VISA:

- Valid DS-2019 Form from SFSU
- Current & original financial documentation from your financial sponsor (parent, relative, school, etc.)
- Valid passport
- Proof that you have a permanent residence outside of the U.S.
- One or more passport-type photographs
- Non-immigrant visa application (available at the U.S. embassy or consulate)
- Proof of SEVIS fee payment

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS THAT MAY BE REQUESTED:

- Evidence of English proficiency
- School records to verify academic preparation
- Acceptance letter from San Francisco State University



VISA AND IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

SEVIS Visa Fee

The [U.S. Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) requires that all individuals entering the U.S. in J-1 student status pay a \$180.00 fee (subject to change) to cover the costs for the continued operation of the [Student & Exchange Visitor Information System \(SEVIS\) program](#). The SEVIS fee is a U.S. Government fee paid directly to DHS. It is not a University fee and does not provide any funds or services to San Francisco State University.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has set up a website on the Internet to accept electronic submission of Form I-901 and payment of the fee using a credit card at: <http://www.fmjfee.com>. You will need to retain your proof of payment (paper receipt) when applying for your visa as well as when entering the U.S.

Additional details on SEVIS and the SEVIS fee can be found on the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Student and Exchange Visitor Program web site](#).

Information on Applying For A U.S. Visa

You will need a [J-1 student visa](#) to enter the United States. You should apply for the visa at the nearest [U.S. embassy or consulate](#) in your home country using the [DS-2019](#) form included in your acceptance packet. Visa procedures vary slightly from one U.S. embassy or consulate to another, have changed since September 2001, and may continue to change. Before you apply for your visa, check with the U.S. embassy or consulate where you plan to apply to learn about their specific procedures and policies regarding J-1 visa applications as well as to determine exactly what supporting documentation is required. All US Embassies and Consulates require an appointment which needs to be arranged in advance.

If your visa is granted, the consular officer will place a visa stamp in your passport. If you receive a multiple-entry visa, you may use it to re-enter the United States as often as you like up to the date of its expiration as long as you have a valid DS-2019 Form. If you encounter any problems obtaining your visa, please contact the J-1 Visa advisors in the Office of International Programs for assistance: j1oip@sfsu.edu. As you arrive in the U.S., you will present your visa and DS-2019 to the immigration officer at your port of entry to the U.S. The immigration officer will then stamp and return the DS-2019 Form to you, and staple an [I-94 card](#) in your passport. (Canadians do not currently need visa stamps to enter the United States, but they do need passports and must show the DS-2019 Form at the port of entry to obtain status as a J-1 Exchange Visitor). The I-94 card must remain stapled in your passport for the duration of your stay in the U.S. Do not remove the I-94 card!



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE

Because of the high cost of medical care in the US, all international students on an exchange at SF State must have adequate medical insurance for the duration of their program.

Exchange and visiting students must purchase and maintain health insurance for the duration of their stay in the U.S. They must purchase the SF State recommended insurance policy, regardless of the any additional insurance that they have from other sources. Instructions for purchasing insurance are as follows:

Instructions for purchasing insurance:

- Go to <https://wfis.wellsfargo.com/CSU/>
- Click on "Enroll On-Line Now"
- Scroll Down and click on "San Francisco State University"
- Scroll Down and click on "San Francisco State Univ-Int'l-J-Exchange" for the appropriate year then click "Enroll"
- Click on "Fall", "Spring" or "Fall/Spring" as appropriate
- After purchasing insurance the student will be sent a confirmation via email. Please forward that email to j1oip@sfsu.edu

MEASLES, MUMPS AND RUBELLA IMMUNIZATION

California State law requires university students to be immunized against measles, mumps, and rubella. Bring doctor's certificates in English showing that you have received these immunizations. Otherwise, you may need to be immunized during your first semester at SFSU.



SF STATE HEALTH INSURANCE:

The mandatory SF State insurance meets the following requirements:

- Policy is in English
- All coverage limits are in US dollars
- Medical benefits of \$250,000 for each accident or illness
- Full cost of medical evacuation
- Full cost of repatriation of remains
- Coverage for the entire academic year or semester, depending on the length of your program*
- 75% coverage for each accident or illness
- No capped benefits (e.g. \$1,200 per day for hospital room)
- Maximum deductible of \$100 per condition
- Maximum out-of-pocket expenses \$2,500
- Covers pre-existing conditions



ADVICE FOR CHOOSING LEVEL OF CLASSES:

- Courses numbered 100-299 are considered “lower division” (for 1st & 2nd year university students) and are usually introductory in nature and have few prerequisites
- Courses numbered 300-699 are considered “upper division” (for 3rd and 4th year university students)
- Courses numbered 700-899 are considered graduate-level courses
- For each unit of class time, you should plan to spend at least 2-3 hours per week studying outside of class.

NOTE: J-1 students are required to take a minimum of 12 units of course work per semester, NO EXCEPTIONS!

REGISTRATION FOR CLASSES

A few weeks after you receive your acceptance packet, you will receive an email from OIP with comprehensive information regarding class registration. Please be sure that you provided a working e-mail address on your SF State exchange application! If you have any doubt or would like to change your email address, send a message to j1oip@sfsu.edu.

You will be assigned a specific day and time (indicated in the e-mail) for when you can register. You will have priority registration during this time and therefore will have the best chance to get your first choice for classes. **We strongly encourage you to register during your specifically assigned registration day and time, or you may have difficulty finding classes later on!** Registration for classes is done online. Please make sure you will have access to the internet on your registration day.

In your initial application you may have provided a preliminary list of courses that you were planning to take. **Our office does not register you for your courses based on this preliminary information.** You will now need to check with the online [class schedule](#) for your semester to make sure the classes you intend to take are indeed available. For a list of important dates for your semester of study, visit the [SFSU Academic Calendar](#).

Choosing Classes for your First Semester at SFSU

Look at the [SF State Bulletin](#) for short descriptions of classes. Look at the [Class Schedule](#) to see what courses will be available in the upcoming semester. Speak with an academic advisor in your department at your home institution if you have questions about which courses to take in your major field of study. Be prepared to take at least 12 units of course work each semester.

Please Note: In general, SF State does not have detailed course descriptions (or syllabi) available online. It is usual practice to only receive a syllabus on the first day of class. Sometimes, a department will have some syllabi on their website, but that is very rare. Please select your courses using the descriptions found in the Bulletin.

Prerequisite Tests: Please note that the prerequisite tests are not required for J-1 students who are coming to SFSU on exchange programs for a brief period of study (1-2 semesters), unless you want to take an English or Math class that requires an exam as a specific prerequisite. This is one of your many privileges as a J-1 visiting international student.

Major Requirements: Read about requirements specific to your major in the SFSU Bulletin's list of [academic programs](#). Read the specific [course descriptions](#) to determine: if you are eligible to enroll in a course that has prerequisites, and/or if you have already completed an equivalent university-level course at your home university.



HOUSING

We recommend that you make plans to arrive at least one week before orientation begins so that you will have enough time to locate permanent housing. Visit the [housing page](#) on our website for more information.

On-Campus Housing

Though most J-1 students pursue off-campus options, on-campus housing is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. There are a limited amount of spots reserved for international students for on-campus housing, and interested students should apply for housing as soon as possible. To apply for on-campus housing, go to the [University Housing website](#), click on “apply for housing” and follow directions. (OIP cannot reserve housing for you, but it is helpful if we know that you have applied.)

Off-Campus Housing

Most exchange students live off-campus.

NOTE: *We do not recommend that you secure your off-campus housing or pay any deposits over the web before your arrival. There have been numerous instances of fraud perpetrated on international students trying to secure housing before they arrive in San Francisco.*

ARRIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO:

Most international students arrive in San Francisco by plane from the San Francisco International Airport (SFO):

- The BART Train (Bay Area Rapid Transit) runs directly from SFO airport all over the San Francisco Bay Area. Trains leave every few minutes and takes about 30 minutes to get downtown and costs about \$5-6.
- Door-to-door vans are another transportation option
- Taxis cost from the airport to the university is approximately \$35. The cost to downtown San Francisco is about \$45.



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION EXCHANGE COUNCIL (IEEC):

J1 students are required to contribute to the internationalization of SF State per the exchange agreement with partner universities and conditions of the J1 visa. J1 students fulfill this obligation through participation in [the International Education Exchange Council \(IEEC\)](#). The IEEC is a student organization that works with the Office of International Programs to represent and support international students and study abroad at San Francisco State University. With over 1800 members and 6 different choices for contribution, the IEEC is a fundamental part of international student life in San Francisco. Since IEEC will be an integral part of your experience, we encourage you to read about them on their [webpage](#) and visit their profile on [facebook](#) by searching "ieec sfsu".



MANDATORY ORIENTATION PROGRAM

We recommend that you arrive a week before the start of the Orientation Program in order to find housing and become acquainted with San Francisco.

Please refer to the [orientation page](#) on our website for the schedule, location and date of the orientation.

- Transportation and housing
- Legal and immigration issues
- The US university system
- Budgeting and tips for living inexpensively
- Health insurance
- Finance and banking concerns
- SFSU policies and services
- Safety and security

IMPORTANT: Orientation is **mandatory** and a part of your J-1 visa requirement. You must attend **every day of orientation!** The orientation week is designed to provide you with important information about San Francisco State University. Some of the government-mandated topics will include:

The orientation will also be a great opportunity for you to meet SF State students and the other new international students.



CONTACT US

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ Review your DS-2019 document when you receive it. Verify that all the information is correct (spelling of your name, your birth date, etc.)
- ☐ Create a folder for all your important documents – make extra copies of all your immigration documents
- ☐ Pay SEVIS fee: <http://www.fmjfee.com>
- ☐ Locate your local U.S. consulate; schedule an appointment for a visa interview: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- ☐ Arrange travel to U.S. Plan to arrive at least one week before the first day of orientation
- ☐ Plan your finances (check with your bank to inquire about travels checks, money transfers, etc.)
- ☐ Research the San Francisco Bay Area and buy a guidebook for San Francisco
- ☐ Make temporary [housing arrangements](#) for when you first arrive in San Francisco and research long term housing options:
- ☐ Review “Class Registration” instructions very carefully (you will receive this info by email in about two months)
- ☐ Get a health check up – physical, dental, eye exam etc. Make sure you have any prescriptions written down and doctor’s instructions
- ☐ Review [SF State immunization requirements](#) – obtain the necessary documentation from your doctor
- ☐ Verify [SF State health insurance requirements](#)
- ☐ Research Student Life at SF State and the [IEEC](#)
- ☐ Arrange for [travel from airport](#) to your temporary housing
- ☐ Send the postcard with the label attached that you received in your acceptance packet

Have a safe trip and we look forward to meeting you upon your arrival!