

IMPORTANT PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Please read the pre-arrival information provided on this sheet, as well as the information that is available on the Center for International Services website at <https://experience.syracuse.edu/international> . The **Preparing to Arrive** webpages include information on required documentation, arrival procedures, and orientation.

Immigration and Customs Procedures

In order to study in the United States, international students must be in a valid immigration status that allows full-time study. The most common student visas are the F-1 and J-1 non-immigrant visas. ***Do not enter the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program or with a B (tourist) visa if you intend to study full-time.***

Student Visa: All students (except citizens of Bermuda and Canada - see instructions below) must obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa to enter and study in the US. You may apply for your visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate closest to your home (<http://www.usembassy.gov>) up to 120 days before the program start date on your I-20 or DS-2019 (usually the first day of classes). Review the Consular website for your interview location for the visa application (usually completed online) and the documents necessary for your visa interview. Generally speaking, you will need the following documents for your visa interview: completed visa application, I-20 or DS-2019, valid passport, Syracuse University admission letter, evidence of funds to pay for your degree program, evidence of 'ties to your home country' (for example, family, a family home, property), passport size photographs and SEVIS fee receipt.

SEVIS Fee: A SEVIS fee is required of those who are applying for an F-1 visa based on an I-20 form issued for "initial attendance" or a J-1 visa based on a DS-2019 form issued to "begin a new program." The fee is \$350 for those applying for an F-1 visa and \$220 for those applying for a J-1 visa. The SEVIS Fee must be paid before you apply for your visa and you must present proof of fee payment at the visa appointment. Any dependents who are accompanying you will need their own I-20 or DS-2019 forms for F-2 or J-2 visas. There is no SEVIS Fee for those seeking F-2 or J-2 status.

Travel Documents You MUST Carry with You: When you travel to the U.S., your important documents (passport, I-20 or DS-2019 form, financial support documents) should be with you at all times in your carry-on baggage. You will be required to present these documents at the U.S. port of entry so do not pack these documents in checked baggage.

Record of Arrival - Entry Stamp and Electronic I-94: Upon arrival by air to the United States, you will be inspected by a Customs and Border Patrol officer, who will review your documents, scan your fingerprints and stamp your passport with the date of arrival and your visa status. If you arrive as an F-1 student, confirm that the entry stamp in your passport has the correct date and reads "F1 D/S". If you arrive as a J-1 student, confirm that the entry stamp in your passport has the correct date and reads "J1 D/S". An electronic I-94 admission record documenting your arrival will be generated when you are admitted to the U.S. You can access your most recent I-94 arrival record at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/> any time after you have left the inspection area.

When the Immigration inspection is complete, you will collect your baggage and go through Customs, where a CBP officer will ask what you have brought into the U.S. and will collect your completed Customs Declaration Form (received prior to arriving in the U.S. if traveling by air or sea). Please be honest with Customs officials as the penalties for concealment of declarable items can be severe. You will not have to pay duty/tax on items you brought in for personal use or minor gifts (up to \$100 total per person). If you are carrying more than \$10,000 in cash, traveler's checks or money orders, you should inform the CBP Officer. While there is no limit imposed, you may have to fill out some forms. Agricultural and unsealed food products are prohibited (not allowed), as some are considered to be unsafe. See <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/know-before-you-go/prohibited-and-restricted-items> for a list of prohibited and restricted items.

Special Instructions for Citizens of Bermuda and Canada: Citizens of Bermuda and Canada are not required to obtain a student visa at a U.S. Consulate, but must present a valid passport, Form I-20 (for F-1 students) or DS-2019 (for J-1 students), and the SEVIS fee receipt at the port of entry. You should confirm that the entry stamp in your passport has the correct date and reads either “F1 D/S” or “J1 D/S” as appropriate.

If you are already present in the U.S. in another visa status: Students who are already present in the U.S. in another visa status may be eligible to study or to change to F-1 or J-1 status. Examples of other visa status types that allow study include J-2, H-4, and L-2. If you are in F-2 status, you may study as a part-time student only. If you are in a status that does not allow you to study, such as B-1/B-2, then you may not study unless USCIS approves an application for change of status. Please contact the Center for International Services if you have any questions about your eligibility to study or change status. If you need or wish to change status, we can advise you on the process.

If you are currently in the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status: If you will be transferring from another U.S. school, have recently graduated, or will soon graduate from a U.S. high school or higher education institution, or are currently on a period of post-completion F-1 Optional Practical Training, you may be eligible to have your F-1 or J-1 record transferred in SEVIS to Syracuse University. Please contact your current school’s international student advisor or the Syracuse University Center for International Services to determine if you are eligible for a SEVIS transfer and, if so, how to request a SEVIS transfer. If you wish to have your SEVIS record transferred and are eligible, the Center for International Services will issue you a new form that notes your SEVIS transfer.

Health Insurance

Matriculated F-1 and J-1 students: Syracuse University requires full-time matriculated students to carry qualifying health insurance coverage. Through the Syracuse University Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP), eligible students have access to comprehensive health care coverage. More information about the SHIP can be found at <http://healthinsurance.syr.edu/>. The cost of the SHIP will be billed to your Bursar’s account

Non-Matriculated F-1 students: It is your responsibility to maintain valid health insurance, including coverage for all of your dependents, while you are a student of Syracuse University. Upon arrival in Syracuse, you will be required to show proof of a health insurance policy which meets the standards as stipulated on the Center for International Services website.

Non-Matriculated J-1 students: Immigration regulations require that you and your J-2 dependents, if any, maintain valid health insurance for the duration of your stay in the United States as a J-1 student. Upon arrival in Syracuse, you will be required to submit a copy of your health insurance (and your dependents’ insurance, if applicable) to the Center for International Services. Your health insurance coverage must meet U.S. Department of State standards.