UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
EXCHANGE STUDENT
PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE
Greetings Exchange Students:

Welcome to the University of Florida! The University of Florida International Center (UFIC) is here to support your success as a member of the University of Florida community. Resources for Exchange Students are housed under the UFIC Exchange Student Services Unit (ESS) located at the UFIC North wing. The UFIC is here to assist you with any questions, concerns or transition matters, whether it is academic, personal, financial, or immigration, during your Exchange Program. Your direct contact is Carolyn Cesarotti, Coordinator for partner school exchanges. It is the role of ESS to provide status based advising and to liaise with all departments involved in your exchange.

We hope you will have a rewarding and successful educational experience while with us at the University of Florida. Welcome to UF as part of the Gator Nation!

The below websites may provide you with useful information:

**SOME USEFUL WEBSITES:**
- UF International Center Portal [http://isss.internationalcenter.ufl.edu](http://isss.internationalcenter.ufl.edu)
- MyUFL [https://my.ufl.edu/ps/signon.html](https://my.ufl.edu/ps/signon.html)
- UF Activity Calendar [http://calendar.ufl.edu](http://calendar.ufl.edu)
- Immigration [http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis](http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis)
- Free English Classes [http://www.internationalfriendship.org/english-classes](http://www.internationalfriendship.org/english-classes)

Our office is an appointment-based office. Please request an appointment with the Exchange Coordinator in advance for advising. UFIC is open Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm. The office is closed for all official University of Florida holidays.
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Pre-arrival checklist

After you receive your DS-2019:

- **Verify DS-2019**
  - When you receive your DS-2019 form, review your DS-2019 form (and any dependent DS-2019 forms) to make sure that the information is correct. Please review the packet of information included with your DS-2019 form(s).

- **Pay I-901 SEVIS Fee**
  - See [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the SEVIS Fee for additional information.
  - Bring your SEVIS fee receipt to your visa interview.

- **Apply for J-1 Visa**
  - Review your [rights and protections](#) as a nonimmigrant visa holder
    - [Wilberforce Pamphlet](#) (more languages available at the link above)
  - Find a [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) near you and schedule your visa interview (*not necessary for Canadian nationals*).
  - Review [Required Documents](#) for your visa interview.

- **Insurance**
  - All J-1 visitors and their J-2 dependents must maintain health insurance for the duration of their J program.
  - UF requires [all students to have coverage](#) that meets the Affordable Care Act Guidelines and monitors insurance via the UF Health Compliance Office.
  - You can either submit a waiver to show [proof of comparable coverage](#) OR be automatically enrolled in [UF’s insurance plan](#) prior to the start of your each semester at UF.
J-1 Status Overview

About the J1 Non-Degree Status

The J Program is overseen by the U.S. Department of state. The J1 visa has 20 subcategories, each with their own requirements and restrictions. Most Exchange Students at UF will be sponsored under the J1 visa status as non-degree students. It is the role of the Coordinator for Exchange Students to help you understand your status. By submitting application materials, UF is reviewing your eligibility to participate in an exchange program and confirming your status eligibility for J1 status sponsorship. During your exchange program, you’ll be expected to comply with J1 status requirements:

- Maintain full-time course enrollment (no more than one online class a semester)
- Update US address and phone number
- Attain advisor permission before engaging in any employment or internship type activities

212(e) Two Year Home Residency Requirement

Some, but not all, exchange visitors are subject to this requirement. Through this provision, the Department of State helps ensure that your home country benefits from your educational and cultural exchange activity upon your return from the U.S. If you are subject to this requirement, you will not be able to change from J-1 status while in the U.S. You will not be eligible for the H1-B, L, K, or immigrant visa status until you have physically resided in your country of residence for two years. For the terms of the requirement, please review your DS-2019 form. If you have any questions about the two-year home residency requirement, including whether or not you are subject to it, please ask the U.S. Consular officer when you apply for your visa, or ask our office when you arrive.

12-Month Bar

Individuals who participate in an Exchange Visitor program in any J-1 category for more than 6-months in the United States (excluding Short-Term Scholar) in the previous year (12-months) are barred (not eligible) from returning to the United States in the categories of Research Scholar or Professor for a 12-month period from the end of their program (official Form DS-2019 program end date). The 12-month bar applies to both the principal J-1 and any J-2 dependents and cannot be waived.
Entering the U.S.

You have a 60 day window of opportunity to enter the US as a J-1 visa holder. You can enter no earlier than 30 days before and must have arrived to the U.S. and completed your check-in at UF Exchange Visitor Services within 30 days after the start date of your DS-2019 (#3 of the form). *It is imperative for you to arrive on time as your start date corresponds to the start of the Academic Semester. Please contact the Exchange Coordinator with any delays.*

At the Airport (or Port of Entry)

You will be asked to show your documents in the first city in which you arrive in the United States to be given permission to enter the country.

**Please carry with you (in your carry-on bag, NOT in your checked baggage):**
- Your Passport with J-1 visa stamp
- DS-2019 Form
- The supporting documentation that you showed to the United States Embassy to obtain the visa.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) officer should return all documents to you.

**Canadian nationals:** Canadian nationals entering the United States as J-1 exchange visitors do not need to apply for a J-1 visa at the U.S. Consulate before entering the U.S. At the pre-flight inspection area, port of entry or border crossing, the Canadian national needs to only present a document verifying their Canadian citizenship, form DS-2019, and proof that they have paid the SEVIS fee.

I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will issue you an electronic I-94 admission number/record of arrival when you enter the U.S. Your I-94 record is proof of your legal visitor status and should be available within 10 days of your entry into the U.S. You need to retrieve and print your I-94 from the CBP website AFTER you arrive in the U.S. Click “Get Most Recent I-94”, and enter your passport information. Review your I-94 to be sure the information is correct. Make sure this form shows the following:
- Admission class as “J-1”
- Admit until date is “D/S”

Your dependents should show J-2 as the class of admission. If there are any discrepancies, please notify ESS.
Check-In

Once your Form DS-2019 is processed and issued, you will receive an email with check-in instructions. You will be required to complete a two-part process:

- Part 1: Online completion of Check-In Application (document submission and informational readings included)
- Part 2: Attend Mandatory Check-In Orientation at UF International Center

Part 1: Online Check-In Application

You can begin this process prior to entering the United States, but you will not be able to complete the application until you have successfully entered the United States. Within the check-in application are required readings, signature documents, and required documents that must be submitted to complete the application. The Check-In Application must be submitted in order for the UF International Center to review and approve your application. Your application must be approved before you are eligible to attend the check-in orientation. You will receive an email from our office once your check-in application has been approved.

Part 2: Check-In Orientation

The Exchange Coordinator will email you with the scheduled days and times of exchange student orientation sessions. You must bring your original passport and DS-2019 in order to attend the check-in orientation. If you arrive later than 15 minutes after the designated time, you will not be permitted to check-in and must return for another orientation time. The check-in orientation sessions will be scheduled for an hour.

What to Expect

Your SEVIS record will be validated after the drop-add period for that academic semester and you will receive a confirmation email from your advisor when validation is complete. Please note the following:

After check-in:

- Review any holds you may still have on your ONE.UF account
- Familiarize yourself with UF Academic Dates and Deadlines
- Get your Gator1 ID card
- Applying for your Social Security Number (if eligible)
- Apply for a Florida State ID or Florida State Driver’s License (additional info at gathergoget.com)
Living in Gainesville

Transportation

Driving in Florida

- Florida Drivers are regulated by The Florida Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) & Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FHSMV)
  - Florida Driver Handbooks & Manuals
- Information for International Drivers in Florida
- Driving without a Florida Driver’s License
  - Statement from DHSMV on International Driving Permits
  - Non-resident visitors to Florida who wish to drive while here will be required to have in their immediate possession a valid driver license issued with his or her name from their country of permanent residence.
- To obtain Driver’s Licenses and Florida State IDs:
  - Find out the documents you need to bring with you at GatherGoGet
- Locations in Gainesville

Alachua County Tax Collector
Gainesville Office
Map
3837 Windmeadows Blvd
Gainesville
FL 32608
8:30am - 5:00pm M-F
Phone: (352) 374-5236
Services: License Issuance

Alachua County Tax Collector
Gainesville Office
Map
12 S.E. 1st Street
Gainesville
FL 32601-5383
8:30am - 5:00pm M-F
Phone: (352) 374-5236
Services: License Issuance

Alachua County Tax Collector
Gainesville Office
Map
5801 NW 34th Blvd
Gainesville
FL 32653-1756
8:30am - 5:00pm M-F
Phone: (352) 374-5236
Services: License Issuance, Driving Test, CDL Hazma
Buses

- **Gainesville Regional Transit System** (RTS) is the local bus system.
- You can ride for free with your Gator 1 card
- Bus schedules change every academic semester and reduced scheduling occurs between academic semesters. To stay updated, check [www.go-rts.com](http://www.go-rts.com). Resources include:
  - How to read the schedule
  - RTS Trip Planner (you can enter your starting location and ending location online to see which busses you need to take)

Biking

In Florida the bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle and the bicyclist is a driver. Bicyclists have the same rights to the roadways, and must obey the same traffic laws as the drivers of other vehicles including:

- Stop at stop signs.
- Obey traffic signals.
- Signal for turns.
- Use front and rear lights at night.
- Ride in the correct direction on a one-way street
- DO NOT wear headphones.
- Always yield to pedestrians.

Housing

There are numerous short-term (under one year) and long-term (one year or more) housing options around the main University of Florida campus. Please find more information below to aide you in your housing search.

**On-Campus Housing**

Housing for exchange students at the Weaver International House will be coordinated by the UF Housing Office. Please wait for the UF Housing Office to contact you directly.

**Off-Campus Housing**

Gainesville has many housing options off campus, however it may be a challenge to secure affordable housing due to the current demand and expense of rental units. You can find more resources to aide you in your off-campus housing search by visiting [Off Campus Life](http://www.Off Campus Life).
Cell Phones and Emergency Phone Calls
There are many cell phone companies in the U.S. It is recommended that you research what company and phone plans are most suitable for your needs. Some companies include: **Verizon**, **AT&T**, **Sprint**, and **T-Mobile**. Most companies want you to sign a 1-2 year contract (especially if you want a free/cheap phone) and want you to have a Social Security number. If you don’t want to sign a contract or don’t have a Social Security number, you can buy “pre-paid” phone plans and pay for the phone.

For emergencies within the U.S. (i.e. car accident, critical injuries, etc.) the emergency assistance number is 911.

Helpful Websites

- View the [Gator Guide](#) for tips to living in Gainesville
- Check out [Visit Gainesville](#) for events happening around the city every week
- Free counseling services are available through the [Alachua County Crisis Center](#)
- If your invitation letter states that you will be a “Postdoctoral Associate” at UF, visit the website for the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) for resources and events.
- Find [Consulates](#) in Florida
- Look at the University of Florida [campus map](#)
- [UF Virtual Tour](#)