



Exchange Student Handbook



UNIVERSITY
of VIRGINIA

INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES OFFICE

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About the International Studies Office

The [International Studies Office](#) is home to the [Education Abroad](#) department, the [Center for American English Language and Culture](#) (CAELC), the [Lorna Sundberg International Center](#), and the [International Student & Scholars Program](#) (ISSP).

ISSP supports UVA's international student and scholar community through advising on immigration matters as well as educational, cultural, and social issues.

The ISO is located on the second floor of [Minor Hall](#), beside the Amphitheater.

General office hours: 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday-Friday

ISSP advising hours (by appointment): 9-11 and 1-4
Monday-Thursday

Main office number: +1 434.982.3010

Team email: issp@virginia.edu

*In the event of an emergency outside of business hours,
your call can be directed to a message center for
emergency assistance.*

ISSP advising team



Adrienne Kim Bird
Assistant Director;
International Programs



Polly Lawson
Responsible Officer;
International Student &
Scholar Advisor



Lora Steiner
Exchange Program Manager;
International Student
& Scholar Advisor



Seth Hall
International Student &
Scholar Advisor



Tricia Carpenter
Principal Designated
School Official, SEVIS &
Technical Manager



Caren Freeman
International Student &
Scholar Advisor

Before you depart

How to apply for your J-1 student visa

Step 1: Check your [UVA email](#) for an invitation to the ISSP Connect portal.

In the portal, submit your request for a J-1 visa by filling out the profile and uploading the required documentation (your unexpired passport, proof of funding, and financial attestation, if applicable).



Step 2: You'll receive notification at your UVA email that your DS-2019 is ready. Download and print your document—check that your biographical information is correct, then sign it with wet ink. (*Canadian citizens: you will receive your visa when you cross the border so no embassy appointment is required, but you must pay your SEVIS fee. Skip to step 6.*)

Step 3: Find the U.S. [embassy](#) nearest you.

Step 4: Complete the [DS-160](#). Need help? See the State Department's frequently asked questions [here](#).

Step 5: Schedule your visa interview. On the day of your appointment, be sure to take your passport, DS-2019, SEVIS (I-901) fee receipt, your DS-160 confirmation page, evidence of your ability to pay for your studies (financial documentation), and any other information required by the embassy.

Step 6: Pay your [SEVIS fee](#). You do not need to pay the SEVIS fee to make an appointment, but it must be paid at least three days before your visa interview. (*Canadian citizens should pay the fee at least three days prior to crossing the border.*)

SEVIS ID number

OMB APPROVAL NO.1405-0119
EXPIRES: 10/31/2020
ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min
*See Page 2

(J-NONIMMIGRANT)

Gender: FEMALE	NOO [REDACTED] J-1
Citizenship Country: JAPAN	
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS	
Program Number: P-1-01254	
ATE; STUDENT BACHELORS;	

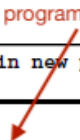
Program number

Step 7. Attend your visa interview. See "[10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Student Visa](#)."

Entering (and departing) the U.S.

You may enter the U.S. on your J-1 visa up to 30 days before the program start date on your DS-2019.

2. Program Sponsor: University of Virginia	
Participating Program Official Description: PROFESSOR; RESEARCH SCHOLAR; SHORT-TERM SC STUDENT DOCTORATE; STUDENT INTERN; STUDENT	
Purpose of this form: Begin new program; accompanied	
3. Form Covers Period:	4. Exchange Visit
From (mm-dd-yyyy): 01-13-2025	STUDENT
To (mm-dd-yyyy): 03-05-2025	Subject/Field Cod 52.0201
5. During the period covered by this form, the total estimated financial support	



You are also permitted to remain in the U.S. up to 30 days after your program end date, for tourism and travel only. No study or work is permitted during this grace period.

Arriving to UVA grounds

The nearest airport is **Charlottesville Albemarle Airport (CHO)**, located approximately 12 km from UVA. The nearest international airport is Washington Dulles (IAD). We recommend flying into CHO as the cost of transportation from Dulles may exceed the difference in airfare.

Taxi service and Uber/Lyft are available at CHO.

UVA's Student Council organizes [bus trips](#) to and from Dulles at semester start and end, as well as over long breaks.

The [Virginia Breeze bus](#) runs between Washington, D.C. and Charlottesville once daily.

UVA does not offer pick up service from airports.

Housing

University-owned housing is available for both [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) students.

If you have been admitted to UVA as a graduate student, you are not eligible for undergraduate housing, regardless of your status at your home institution.

Application deadline: Students wishing to apply for university-owned housing in the fall semester must fill out the housing application form between May 1 and 31. Students attending during the spring semester can apply for housing beginning November 1. *For the purposes of housing, exchange students are considered to be in the same category as transfer students.*

Off-grounds housing

There is heavy demand for university-owned housing, so we strongly recommend considering off-campus housing options. You can find more information on these sites:

UVA's [Off-Grounds Housing Service](#): Registration is required, allows you to search listings and for roommates.

[UVA Housing, Sublets & Roommates Facebook group](#)

[UVA Housing Groupme group](#)

Tips for your housing search:

Location: You may want to check the location of your school/classes in comparison to your housing options to consider how far you are willing to commute.

Transportation: [Buses](#) in Charlottesville are free. We also have a scooter and e-bike share, [Veo](#).

Your fellow students are a good resource: We encourage you to join UVA-related Facebook and other online groups, and take advantage of all opportunities to connect with current UVA students, who are familiar with housing and best options for lodging.

Course information & registering for courses

Please refer to the Academics section.

Health insurance

Exchange students at the University of Virginia are required to have health insurance coverage; you must either enroll in the UVA student health plan or submit proof of health insurance coverage that is comparable and be waived from the UVA student health plan.

It is not up to the ISO to determine comparable coverage; Student Health reviews plans and whether they meet requirements. If Student Health determines that the coverage is not comparable, you will be automatically enrolled in the UVA plan and responsible for costs.

Immunizations & vaccinations

All students are required to fill out the [Pre-Entrance Health Form \(PEHF\)](#) and show proof that you have received the required vaccines.

Arrival & Orientation

Student ID card

You will be issued a [UVA student ID card](#) that can be used for the library, athletic games, UVA transit, etc.

Prior to the start of the semester, you will be sent instructions and a deadline to submit your information for your ID card.

Once you arrive on campus, you can pick up your card at the [Academic ID Card Office](#) at your convenience.

Exchange student orientation

Mandatory exchange student orientation is held the day prior to classes, and covers immigration regulations as well as free resources at the university, including the [Student Health Center](#), [Care and Support Services](#), [recreation centers](#) and more.

University orientation activities

[Wahoo Welcome](#) is held at the start of each fall semester. Activities range from a run with UVA President Jim Ryan to shopping trips to school-specific orientations.

[Global Greeters](#) also hosts various orientation activities especially for international students, including an insider's tour of the UVA grounds.

Immigration check-in

All international students are required to [check in](#) with the International Studies Office within three days of your arrival into the United States.

This allows us to confirm with the U.S. government that you have arrived and are maintaining your visa status.

Academics

Full-time enrollment

All exchange students, undergraduate and graduate, must enroll in a minimum of 12 credit hours.

We encourage undergraduate students to register for at least 15 hours in case you need to drop or withdraw from a course.

Course syllabus: If you need a syllabus before the start of the course in order to receive approval from your home institution, please contact the instructor directly. You can find the course instructor in the [Student Information System](#), on [Lou's List](#), or by doing an internet search.

Registering for classes

You can enroll in classes in the [Student Information System \(SIS\)](#) once your enrollment appointment begins. (*You can find your enrollment appointment in SIS by going to “Enrollment” and selecting “Enrollment Dates.”*) Since you are a visiting exchange student, you may need to reach out to the professor to request permission; instructors can grant you permission to enroll through SIS. You may need to show an unofficial transcript to the instructor to show you have met the pre-requisite requirements for the course.

Once you are enrolled as an exchange student, your information is also to an advisor or the registrar of the school where you intend to study. Your advisor can assist with enrollment questions.

Please note that courses are not guaranteed.

Exchange students may not take courses in the School of Law, Darden School of Business, McIntire School of Commerce, and the School of Nursing unless directly admitted by those schools. No exchange students may study in the Batten School of Leadership & Public Policy or the School of Medicine.

Academic culture

U.S. classroom culture emphasizes an individualist rather than collective approach—students are assessed on individual work and thought, as well as classroom participation. Your semester grade will be based on your course participation, regular assignments, readings, and quizzes, as well as exams. You can find a good overview in the “Academic Culture” webinar of our [virtual pre-arrival series](#) for new international students. UVA’s Academic Support has tips on [how to study](#), as well.

Student Disability Access Center (SDAC)

[SDAC](#) works to ensure full participation in campus life for every student through academic accommodations, support services, and advocacy. If you have accommodations at your home university, including for learning disabilities, chronic health conditions, etc., SDAC can advise you on how to apply for accommodations at UVA.

Resources

Transportation

Around UVA & Charlottesville: The [University Transit Service](#) is free for UVA students. You can download the [TransLōc](#) app for more information on routes, stops, and estimated arrival times.

The [Charlottesville Area Transit](#) (CAT) is free.

[Veo](#) is a scooter and e-bike share available on UVA grounds as well as around town.

Safe transportation options: If you are out late, your ride falls through, or you can't use University Transit Service, there are a number of options to [help you get home safely](#), including Safe Walk and Charge-A-Ride.

Getting to & from Charlottesville

The Amtrak [train station](#) is approximately 1.5 km from UVA grounds, with daily service to Washington, D.C.

The [Virginia Breeze bus](#) offers daily service to Washington, D.C. and Dulles International Airport. The [Greyhound bus](#) also offers service to Washington, D.C.

Mobile phones

In the U.S., most major phone plan carriers (Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T) require contract plans of one to two years, and a credit check and Social Security number. Contract plans usually have an early termination fee and are not recommended for shorter stays.

If you are bringing your phone, plans such as [Mint Mobile](#), [Visible](#), and [US Mobile](#) do not require contracts and may include things like hotspots and affordable international calling rates. *(The University of Virginia does not endorse any carrier; these are simply examples of prepaid plans.)*

If you want to purchase a phone in the U.S., make sure that it is unlocked so that you can use it with your preferred carrier.

Want to do some research? [Whistleout](#) lets you compare plans and tells you whether your current phone is compatible

and what kind of coverage you can expect on different networks.

Student Health Center

The [UVA Student Health Center](#) offers [evaluation and treatment](#) of general health concerns, preventative healthcare, and more.

Most services offered within the building are free to UVA students, including exchange students.

Care that requires testing or further evaluation will be billed to your insurance plan and may require payment.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

[CAPS](#) offers a range of resources to students that include individual and group counseling, as well as [general resources](#) to support student well-being.

Their services are free to exchange students.

Get involved

There are many options to get involved during your time at UVA, including over 700 [student clubs and organizations](#).

The [Rec Center](#) is free to exchange students. Some activities, such as [intramural sports](#), have a small fee.

Athletic events: Admission is free to all regular season home games, except for men's basketball. See [Student Ticketing 101](#) for more information.

The [Lorna Sundberg International Center](#) hosts social events, cultural programs, cooking classes, and English conversation groups. [Sign up](#) for their newsletter or follow them on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#).

Employment

Employment authorization

J-1 exchange students may only work in the U.S. with approval from their program sponsor (UVA). *This includes any work performed for a foreign employer while physically present in the United States.*

J-1 exchange students may [work](#) up to 20 hours per week on grounds, with ISO approval. All employment must be approved in advance.

Academic Training

[Academic training](#) allows J-1 students to gain practical experience in their field of study. Students may choose to participate in Academic Training during or after their studies. The position must be directly related to the field of study on your DS-2019, and must be approved by the ISO prior to beginning.

The Department of State does not permit work to be fully remote; hybrid positions must be at least 60 percent in person.

Social Security Number

A [Social Security Number](#) (SSN) is a tax ID number. If you are employed in any way, you must have an SSN. In order to apply for an SSN, fill out a letter request in the ISSP Connect portal. (Make sure you have arrived in the U.S. and completed your immigration check-in). ISSP will issue you a letter to take to the Social Security Administration office, and send instructions about the additional documentation you'll need to apply, including your letter of employment.

UVA bucket list

Some time-honored [traditions](#) to make your time here even more memorable:

- ☐ Have a picnic (or a snowball fight!) on the Lawn
- ☐ Attend an event for a cultural organization you are not a member of or wouldn't usually go to
- ☐ Go stargazing on [public night](#) at McCormick Observatory
- ☐ Enjoy a meal in the Amphitheater
- ☐ Take a picture at the I Love Charlottesville mural
- ☐ Study in the McGregor Room
- ☐ Go to a UVA basketball game (and get on Hoovision)
- ☐ Visit the home of one of the United States' founding fathers, including Thomas Jefferson's [Monticello](#) (a UNESCO World Heritage site); James Monroe's [Highland](#); and James Madison's [Montpelier](#).
- ☐ Paint Beta Bridge
- ☐ Check out Edgar Allen Poe's [room](#)
- ☐ Play an [intramural sport](#) or take a [Rec class](#).
- ☐ Learn something new by sitting in on a class you're not enrolled in—with the instructor's permission, of course!
- ☐ Take a [cooking class](#) or go to an [event](#) at the International Center
- ☐ Hike Humpback Rock
- ☐ Visit the [Special Collections Library](#)