



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA  
J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR  
PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE

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Greetings Exchange Visitor:

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. All J visa holders fall under the supervision of the UFIC Exchange Visitor Services Unit (EVS) located within the UFIC at 190 Hub. The UFIC is here to assist you with any questions, concerns or transition matters. We specialize in J visitor immigration; however if we're not the right department to answer your question, we'll guide you in the right direction!

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 <https://iss.internationalcenter.ufl.edu/>
- MyUFL <https://my.ufl.edu/ps/signon.html>
- UF Activity Calendar <http://calendar.ufl.edu>
- Local Bus Service & Schedules <http://www.go-rts.com/>
- Drivers' Handbook <http://www.flhsmv.gov/handbooks/>
- US Embassies Worldwide <http://usembassy.state.gov/>
- Immigration <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>
- Free English Classes <http://www.internationalfriendship.org/english-classes>

You must [request an appointment](#) with the advisor responsible for your surname in order to meet with an advisor. The EVS office 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 Form DS-2019
  - When you receive your Form DS-2019, review your DS-2019 (and any dependent DS-2019s) to make sure that the information is correct. Please review the packet of information included with your DS-2019.
- 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 Exchange Visitor 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.
  - Review [Required Documents](#) for your visa interview.
- Insurance
  - All J-1 Exchange Visitors and their J-2 dependents must maintain active health insurance for the duration of their J program.
  - Review our [pre-approved insurance plans](#)
  - Submit proof of insurance coverage within your [online check-in application](#). Once the insurance and check-in application is approved by the UF International Center, you will receive an email stating you are eligible to attend the [mandatory check-in orientation](#).  
*\*You may wait to purchase insurance after you arrive in the U.S., however this will delay you completing the check-in process\**

# J-1 Regulation Overview

## 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. More information can be found [here](#).

## 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.

## 24-Month Bar

Individuals who participate in an Exchange Visitor program in the J-1 categories of Research Scholar or Professor are subject to a 24-month repeat participation bar. Individuals subject to the 24-month repeat participation bar may not return to the United States as another J-1 Research Scholar or Professor for a 24-month period from the end of their program (official Form DS-2019 program end date), regardless of the amount of time spent in these categories. The 24-month bar applies to both the principal J-1 and any J-2 dependents.

The bars do not prevent individuals from returning to the United States in any other visa status such as the B-1 (business), B-2 (tourist), F, H, etc. or in the J-1 Exchange Visitor categories of Student/Non-Degree Student, Student Intern, or Short-Term Scholar (Short-Term Scholar category excluded as the maximum duration is 6-months). This bar 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 the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the start date on your DS-2019 form. You 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).

## 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](#). It is highly recommend to have your UF invitation/offer letter or admission acceptance letter during the initial entry to the United States.

## 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 EVS.

# Check-In

Once your Form DS-2019 is processed and issued, you will receive an email with check-in instructions (also accessible on our [website](#)). 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 (Monday - Friday at 10am **OR** 3pm)

## 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

Once you receive an email notifying you that your check-in application has been approved, you are eligible to attend a mandatory check-in orientation. **There are two check-in orientations each week, Tuesday and Thursday, at 11am. You must bring the original passports and DS-2019s for you and all J-2 dependents 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 typically takes about 30 minutes.

You may check-in up to 30 days before your program start date and up to 30 days after your program start date, however we highly recommend checking in as soon as you are able.

## What to Expect

Upon arrival, EVS staff will request to see the original passports and DS-2019s for you and all J-2 dependents to review. Once reviewed, EVS staff will verify your eligibility to attend the check-in orientation by confirming your online check-in application has been approved. Please expect to wait 15 minutes or so for document review. We will then begin the check-

in orientation, which includes information about J status requirements, resources available to you, and time for you to ask any questions. The entire process should take around 30 minutes, however if there are others needing assistance, please expect longer wait times.

We will validate your SEVIS record within 2-3 business days of the check-in orientation, and you will receive a confirmation email from your advisor when validation is complete.

*\*Please note if transferring to the University of Florida from another U.S. Institution as a current J1 status holder, you are still required to complete the check-in process, however you are unable to attend a mandatory check-in orientation until your SEVIS release date. Once the two-part process is complete, an EVS advisor will process your UF DS-2019 within 2-3 business days. EVS will email you and your UF sponsoring department to confirm when the UF DS-2019 is processed.\**

## After Check-In

- Get your Gator1 ID card
  - The Gator1 card is the official University of Florida photo ID card. It is required for all students, faculty, staff and departmental associates. Many activities on campus are available only upon presentation of the Gator 1 card. **To receive a Gator1 card, you must first inquire with your sponsoring UF department's HR representative to complete an online ID Card Authorization on your behalf.**
- Applying for your Social Security Number (if eligible)
  - Only J-1 Exchange Visitors who will be paid by University of Florida (who are receiving program sponsor funds, as indicated on the DS-2019) are eligible to apply for a Social Security number.
  - All J-1 Exchange Visitors **MUST** wait at least 10 days after entering the U.S. and receive confirmation of being SEVIS valid **before** visiting the local Social Security Administration office, or the receipt of a social security card will be delayed.



# Living in Gainesville

## Schooling and Childcare

- [Enrollment Information](#) for Alachua County Public Schools
- [Baby Gator](#) Daycare services

## 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 Hazmat

## Buses

- [Gainesville Regional Transit System](#) (RTS) is the local bus system.
- You can ride for free with your Gator1 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

Depending if your visit meets the eligibility requirements, the [Department of Housing & Residence Education](#) may have availability in their on-campus housing areas. For more information about on-campus options and availability, please visit their website.

### 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. It is important

to try and secure accommodations as early as possible. You can find more resources to aide you in your off-campus housing search by visiting [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.**

# UF Off-Campus Research & Education Centers

- [Citrus REC \(Lake Alfred\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Lake Alfred](#) Information
- [Everglades REC \(Belle Glade\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Belle Glade](#) Information
- [Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory \(Vero Beach\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Vero Beach](#) information
- [Florida Partnership for Water, Agriculture & Community Sustainability at Hastings](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [St. Augustine](#) Information
- [Fort Lauderdale REC](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Fort Lauderdale](#) Information
- [Gulf Coast REC \(Balm\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Tampa](#) Information
- [Indian River REC \(Ft. Pierce\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Fort Pierce](#) Information
- [Mid-Florida REC \(Apopka\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Apopka](#) Information
- [North Florida REC \(Marianna\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Marianna](#) Information
- [North Florida REC \(Quincy\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Quincy](#) Information
- [Plant Science Research & Education Unit \(Citra\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Micanopy](#) Information
- [Range Cattle REC \(Ona\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Tampa](#) Information
- [Southwest Florida REC \(Immokalee\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Fort Myers](#) Information
- [Subtropical Agricultural Research Station \(Brooksville\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Brooksville](#) Information
- [Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center \(Live Oak\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Live Oak](#) Information
- [Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory RDS \(Ruskin\)](#) [\[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Tampa](#) Information

- [Tropical REC \(Homestead\) \[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Homestead](#) Information
- [West Florida RDS \(Jay\) \[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Jay](#) information
- [West Florida REC \(Milton\) \[Map\]](#)
  - City of [Milton](#) Information

## Helpful Websites

### City of Gainesville and the University of Florida Community

- 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](#)
- Find [Consulates](#) in Florida
- Look at the University of Florida [campus map](#)

### University of Florida Employment Resources

#### Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

<http://postdoc.aa.ufl.edu/>

-A variety of services for UF postdoctoral associates. The mission of this office is to support, inform and connect the postdoctoral community at UF. This office strives to provide programs, services and support for all at UF working to better the postdoc experience. You will find Human Services information, FAQs, tax information, mentoring resources, diversity resources, postdoc life at UF, career development, postdoc news, NPA membership, teaching, research and much more

#### UF Employee Handbook (TEAMS and USPS)

-Provides an overview and introduction to UF's policies and programs

<http://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/publications/handbook.pdf>

#### UF Faculty Handbook

<http://handbook.aa.ufl.edu/>

#### Temporary Employment (OPS or Other Personnel Services)

<http://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/new-employees/temporary-employment-ops/>

#### Time and Pay (Holidays, Time Reporting, Your Paycheck, FMLA/Family and Medical Leave Act)

<http://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/time-and-pay/>

**Staying Informed** (UF at Work, Administrative Memos, Faculty Update, New and Information from UF News Bureau)

<http://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/staying-informed/>

**Support** (Institutional Equity and Diversity, HRS Service Center, Employee Assistance Program, Title IX at UF)

<http://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/support/>

**UF Policies** (Human Resources)

<http://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/policies/>

**UF Regulations and Policies**

<http://www.generalcounsel.ufl.edu/regulations-and-policies/>

**New and Current UF Employees**

<http://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/new-employees/>