



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



Greetings Exchange Visitor:

Hello, and 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 <https://www.usembassy.gov/>
- Immigration <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>
- Free English Classes <http://www.internationalfriendship.org/english-classes>

You must request an appointment or email 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 “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (J-Nonimmigrant)”
 - When you download your Form DS-2019, review your DS-2019 (and any dependent DS-2019s) to make sure that the information is correct. Please review the information included with your DS-2019. If there are any errors, please email the advisor responsible for your surname.
- 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 are 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 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. completed your online check-in at UF Exchange Visitor Services and attended the mandatory orientation with UF Exchange Visitor Services within **15 days** after the start date of your DS-2019 (#3 of the form). If your arrival to UF has been delayed and you will not be able to start your program within **15 days** from your original program start date, please contact your UF host department. Your UF host department will then submit a request to EVS to amend your program dates.

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.
- Printed and signed 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 recommended 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 online Check-In Orientation with UF Exchange Visitor Services on Zoom (Wednesdays and Fridays at 3pm EST – Eastern Standard Time)

IMPORTANT: You MUST complete the check in process and attend orientation with UF Exchange Visitor Services *before* applying for a Social Security Number, applying for a Florida Driver’s License, or completing E-Verify. You cannot complete these until you have attended the online orientation with our office first.

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 online check-in orientations each week, Wednesday and Friday, at 3 pm EST (Eastern Standard Time).** If you log on and arrive later than 10 minutes after the designated time, you will not be permitted to attend the orientation and must return for another orientation time. The online check-in orientation typically takes about 90 minutes.

You may check-in up to **30 days before** your program start date and up to **15 days after** your program start date, however we highly recommend checking in as soon as you are able. If your arrival to UF has been delayed and you will not be able to start your program within **15 days** after your original program start date, please contact your UF host department. Your UF host department will then submit a request to EVS to amend your program dates.

What to Expect

Upon logging in, we will start the check-in orientation, which includes information about J status requirements, resources available to you, and time for you to ask any questions. The orientation should take around 90 minutes. At the end of the orientation, please make sure to email the advisor responsible for your surname range with your US phone number and US address. If you do not have a US phone number yet, please email the US phone number of a friend or colleague.

Once you email your US phone and US address to your advisor, we will validate your SEVIS record within 2-3 business days of the check-in orientation, and you will receive a confirmation email from EVS when validation is complete.

Transfer-In: 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 but no earlier than two weeks before your SEVIS transfer release date. Once the two-part process is complete, an EVS advisor will process and issue your new UF DS-2019 within 2-3 business days. EVS will email you when the UF DS-2019 is processed.

After Check-In

- Get your GatorONE ID card.
 - The GatorONE 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 GatorONE card, you must first inquire with your UF department 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 the 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. **You MUST complete the check in process and attend orientation with UF Exchange Visitor Services before applying for a Social Security Number.**

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](#):
 - Attend the mandatory online check in with UF Exchange Visitor Services
 - Have your SEVIS record validated by your EVS advisor
 - Go to the local Social Security office to receive *either* a Social Security Number (if eligible) or a non-eligibility letter.
- DMV Locations in Gainesville

Alachua County Tax Collector
 3837 Windmeadows Blvd
 Gainesville
 FL 32608
 8:30am - 4:30pm M-F
 Phone: (352) 374-5236
 Services: License Issuance

Alachua County Tax Collector
 12 S.E. 1st Street
 Gainesville
 FL 32601-5383
 8:30am - 4:30pm M-F
 Phone: (352) 374-5236
 Services: License Issuance

Alachua County Tax Collector
 5801 NW 34th Blvd
 Gainesville
 FL 32653-1756
 8:30am - 4:30pm 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 GatorONE **STAFF** card.
 - If you have a GatorONE **AFFILIATE** card you will have to pay to ride the RTS bus.
- Bus schedules change every academic semester and reduced scheduling occurs between academic semesters. To stay updated, check www.go-rts.com. Resources include the RTS Trip Planner (you can enter your starting location and ending location online to see which buses 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 assist 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 \(Lake Alfred\)](#)
 - City of [Lake Alfred](#) Information
- [Everglades REC \(Belle Glade\)](#)
 - City of [Belle Glade](#) Information
- [Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory \(Vero Beach\)](#)
 - City of [Vero Beach](#) information
- [Florida Partnership for Water, Agriculture, and Community Sustainability at Hastings](#)
 - City of [St. Augustine](#) Information
- [Fort Lauderdale REC](#)
 - City of [Fort Lauderdale](#) Information
- [Gulf Coast REC \(Balm\)](#)
 - City of [Tampa](#) Information
- [Indian River REC \(Ft. Pierce\)](#)
 - City of [Fort Pierce](#) Information
- [Mid-Florida REC \(Apopka\)](#)
 - City of [Apopka](#) Information
- [North Florida REC \(Marianna\)](#)
 - City of [Marianna](#) Information
- [North Florida REC \(Quincy\)](#)
 - City of [Quincy](#) Information
- [Plant Science Research & Education Unit \(Citra\)](#)
 - City of [Micanopy](#) Information
- [Range Cattle REC \(Ona\)](#)
 - City of [Sarasota](#) Information
- [Southwest Florida REC \(Immokalee\)](#)
 - City of [Fort Myers](#) Information
- [Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center \(Live Oak\)](#)
 - City of [Live Oak](#) Information
- [Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory RDS \(Ruskin\)](#)
 - City of [Tampa](#) Information
- [Tropical REC \(Homestead\)](#)
 - City of [Homestead](#) Information
- [West Florida RDS \(Jay\)](#)
 - City of [Jay](#) information
- [West Florida REC \(Milton\)](#)
 - City of [Milton](#) Information
- [Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience](#)
 - City of [St. Augustine](#) Information

Helpful Websites

City of Gainesville and the University of Florida Community

- 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

<https://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/employee-handbook/>

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)

<https://hr.ufl.edu/working-at-uf/current-employees/time-reporting/>

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

<https://welcome.hr.ufl.edu/getting-started/orientation/new-staff-enrollment/>