International Student Pre-Arrival Handbook
International Office
College of Professional and Global Education

WWW.CALSTATELA.EDU/INTERNATIONAL
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Welcome to Cal State L.A.

Congratulations on your admission to California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State L.A.). We are pleased to welcome you to the Cal State L.A. family. We look forward to working with you to maximize the benefits of your F-1/J-1 international student status, and helping you to achieve your academic goals as an international student at Cal State L.A.

The International Office is an office that provides immigration counseling to the international students and faculty members at Cal State L.A. Our staff is well trained to meet the needs of our international students. We are focused on helping you to maintain a legal status and adjusting to your new life in the U.S.

Our role on the campus community is to provide assistance to you. If you have questions about visa, employment, or travel feel free to contact one of our staff members.

In order to maximize the time you spent at Cal State L.A. and in the U.S., we recommend the following to you:

- Read this booklet carefully
- Get to know the International Office staff
- Ask questions and seek advice from the International Office, classmates, friends, faculty and others you meet on campus
- Attend class and study daily
- Utilize the services offered by Student Affairs Services and your academic department
- Converse with your professors both inside and outside of class
- Seek advice from your academic advisor
- Participate with American and other international students
- Travel to different parts of the U.S. during vacation periods.

We wish you all the best and look forward to greeting you upon your arrival at Cal State L.A.
Visa Requirements

1. Upon receipt of your I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1), schedule an appointment with the nearest U.S. Consulate for a visa interview as soon as possible. Click here for a list of U.S. Embassies or Consulates worldwide: www.usembassy.gov/.

2. Contact your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for instructions on how to apply for a student visa. Read all the instructions carefully.

3. Pay the Form I-901 (SEVIS) Fee before the visa appointment. Instructions on payment methods are available at: www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm. You can pay online (recommended) or by mail. Attach the payment receipt to your visa application.

4. You will need to complete the following forms for your visa application:
   - DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form
   - DS-158 Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant
   - If you are a male between the ages of 16 and 45, DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application

5. Prepare the following documents to take with you to the visa interview:
   - A passport valid for at least six months
   - Form I-20 or DS-2019
   - School admission letter
   - Completed visa application forms
   - 2” x 2” inch photographs in the prescribed format
   - A receipt for the visa application fee
   - A receipt for the I-901 (SEVIS) fee
   - Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your program.
   - Any information that proves that you will return to your home country after finishing your studies in the United States. This may include proof of property, family or other ties to your community.

6. Remain calm and speak clearly during the interview.
Preparing for Enrollment

It is recommended that you begin planning your schedule of courses now. A condition of your F-1 or J-1 visa requires that you maintain fulltime enrollment. Fulltime enrollment on the quarter system is considered a minimum of 12 quarter units or typically 3 classes per quarter for an undergraduate student. Graduate students must have a minimum of 8 units of graduate-level coursework. Since course offerings and enrollment cannot be guaranteed it is suggested that you also have a selection for alternate courses.

An electronic schedule of courses is available at the following address: https://get.calstatela.edu. At an early date, this website should be used to view past course offerings for planning purposes. Once you have been admitted to the University and your enrollment date approaches you will be able to log into the Golden Eagle Territory (GET) and use it to view and enroll in courses. The quarterly Schedule of Classes is posted approximately two (2) months prior to the start of the term. For example, the Fall Schedule of Classes will be published in mid-July. The GET system is not very self-explanatory so allow me to offer some navigation suggestions.

Steps to view 2011-12 Schedule of Classes. You do not need a CIN and PIN in order to VIEW any of the schedules.

1- Go to https://get.calstatela.edu, click on “Schedule of Classes”.
2- Select “Cal State University, L.A.” for the institution and “fall 2011” “winter 2012” OR “spring 2012” to see the 2011-2012 course offerings.
3- Click on “Select a Subject” and look for the departments that you’re interested in.
4- Select “greater than or equal to” “100”, uncheck “show open classes only” and then click “search”.
5- This will bring up all course offerings from that department for that term.
6- Repeat steps 2-5 to find courses during other quarters or from different departments.
7- Course descriptions can be found online in the University Catalog under ‘Academic Programs’ http://ecatalog.calstatela.edu.

In preparation for your meeting with the academic advisor, you should have a copy of your previous school’s transcript ready. Typically, if you have credits being transferred to CSULA, your transcripts will not be evaluated until the end of your first term at Cal State L.A. As a result, your advisor will not know what courses you have taken at the previous institution and whether you have met the prerequisite for a particular class.

For undergraduate students, the Undergraduate Academic Advisement Center is located in the Library South, Palmer Wing. You should consult with them to help guide you through the General Education requirements. For courses within your major, consult with the academic department’s advisor.

Graduate students should consult with your specific academic department’s advisor for guidance.
Traveling to Cal State L.A.

There are two international airports near Cal State L.A.:

- Los Angeles International Airport: [www.lawa.org/welcomelax.aspx](http://www.lawa.org/welcomelax.aspx)
- LA/Ontario International Airport: [www.lawa.org/welcomeont.aspx](http://www.lawa.org/welcomeont.aspx)

If you are making a connected flight from another city to Los Angeles, make certain you allocate sufficient time in between flights in case of delay.

From the airport, there are several local transportation options to get to the campus:

- ISI Greater LA provides free airport pickup: [www.isi-greaterla.org/pages/](http://www.isi-greaterla.org/pages/)
- SuperShuttle: [www.supershuttle.com](http://www.supershuttle.com)
- Prime Time Shuttle: [www.primetimeshuttle.com](http://www.primetimeshuttle.com)
- Shuttle2LAX: [www.shuttle2lax.com](http://www.shuttle2lax.com)

Reservation with the ISI Greater LA is required, and reservation is highly recommended for the other companies. Prices vary depending on your final destination from the airport.

Prior to traveling to the U.S., you must make temporary housing accommodations. If you have a room confirmation from the University Housing Services, you may contact them to arrange an earlier move-in date. You will need to provide an address where you will be living upon entry into the U.S.

Weather Conditions

The weather in Los Angeles is generally mild with very few days of extreme temperatures. Listed is a range of temperatures in Los Angeles to guide you in your packing. For real time weather, go to [http://www.weather.com/](http://www.weather.com/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average High</th>
<th>Average Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February-May</td>
<td>75F/24C</td>
<td>50F/10C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-September</td>
<td>85F/29C</td>
<td>61F/22C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October-November</td>
<td>73F/23C</td>
<td>53F/12C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December-January</td>
<td>69F/21C</td>
<td>48F/9C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Housing

On-Campus

Newly admitted students can apply for on-campus housing. You must also be enrolled as a full-time student in order to pick up keys and move in. To apply for housing, you will need to submit an online application and make the initial payment. Apply as soon as possible as space is limited.

Application is available at University Housing Services: www.calstatela.edu/univ/housing/. You will also find information about application deadlines, costs, and housing style.

Off-Campus

The International Office has provided some general tips on how and where to search for off-campus housing. You can view the information at www.calstatela.edu/international.

If you plan to live off-campus, it is important to start your search early as it takes time to find the right accommodations that fit into your budget.

Temporary Housing

You should arrange for temporary housing prior to your arrival in the U.S. You want to know where you will go from the airport. The International Office Housing Resources provides information for temporary accommodations near the campus.

Money Matters

As an international student, you are required to show proof of financial support for the amounts listed on your I-20 or DS-2019. This is an approximate cost of attending Cal State L.A. The amount will be different based on each individual’s spending habits.

There are multiple payment methods acceptable in the U.S.; cash, credit card, and bank checks. Credit card is most commonly used amongst Americans. If you plan to use your credit cards in the U.S., notify the credit card company that you will move to the U.S. Often times, credit card companies will put transactions on hold that are out of the ordinary, such as new locations or unusual amounts. If you plan to use your credit card to pay for tuition, make certain the limit is over US$5000.

Even if you do have credit cards, you should plan to have at least US$1000 in travelar’s checks and a small amount of US dollars for immediate use. It will take time for you to open and transfer funds into a new bank account.

If you plan to live off-campus, be prepared to have an additional US$3000 in traveler’s checks available. Most landlords require an extra month of deposit plus first month rent to move in. Since you will not have a credit history, you may be required to pay extra deposits. In addition, you will need to pay deposits to open utility accounts (gas, electricity, phone, etc.).
Immunization and Vaccination

All new and returning international students are required to provide the Student Health Center with acceptable proof (i.e., a written document signed and dated by a licensed healthcare provider) of measles, rubella and hepatitis B immunization; and verification of a negative tuberculosis (TB) skin test or chest x-ray taken within the last year.

Immunization and freedom from tuberculosis verification must be submitted on the Medical Requirements for Registration Clearance form the first day of the first quarter of attendance. **Note:** Please take this form to your doctor before leaving your country.

Should you need to have immunizations updated through the Health Center, processing of your records could take up to three working days. Therefore, please plan ahead to clear this registration hold. Failure to do so may cause considerable delay in your eligibility to register for classes. More detailed information and the Medical Requirements for Registration Clearance form can be found at [www.calstatela.edu/univ/hlth ctr](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/hlth ctr).

Packing

When you travel, you should carry specific documents on your person. Do not check them in your baggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will not be able to show the documents to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer and may not be able to enter the United States. In addition, do not pack fresh fruit, produce, meat, prepared food, spices, or plants. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers will not allow you to bring these items into the country.

Do **not** check the following documents in your baggage:

- Passport with nonimmigrant visa.
- SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019.
- Visa exempt nationals entering the United States for the first time should have a Form I-797, Receipt Notice or Internet Receipt verifying SEVIS Fee payment. For additional SEVP/SEVIS Program Information, refer to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website at [www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/students/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/students/index.htm).
- Evidence of financial resources.
Recommended documents to also carry with you:

- Admission letter.
- Name and contact information for Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) at your intended school or program.

Do not feel necessary to pack everything you think you need. You can purchase toiletries and other necessities in the U.S. inexpensively. You need only bring sufficient amount for first couple of weeks until you can locate stores near you. Check baggage limits with your airline or travel agent so that you are aware of the limits and fees for exceeding it.

At the Airport

Upon arrival at the port-of-entry, proceed to the terminal for arriving passengers for inspection. As you approach the inspection station, ensure you have your passport, SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019 and CF-6059 Customs Declaration Form available for presentation to the CBP Officer.

Like all entering visitors, you will be asked for the reason of your visit. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. It is important to tell the CBP Officer that you will be a student or exchange visitor. Be prepared to include the name and address of the school or exchange visitor program where you will enroll/participate.

For more information, visit the U.S. Customs and Border Protection at www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/clearing/traveler_entry_form/.

Once you have passed through customs, place your passport and I-20 or DS-2019 securely into your bag or pocket. It is easy to lose your documents in a busy airport. Lost documents are very difficult to replace.

Medical Insurance Requirement

Health insurance coverage is a condition of enrollment at Cal State L.A. Failure to purchase health insurance can result in placing a registration hold on your records. International students will not be permitted to register for classes until the International Office has received verification that they have purchased the mandatory health insurance.

In the U.S., individuals are responsible for paying for any health care they receive, a notable difference from the perspective of other countries. Therefore, it is essential that anyone spending time in the United States purchase health insurance.

There are two options for purchasing the required health insurance.
**Option #1: CSU-sponsored Insurance**

The Cal State L.A. required health insurance plan may be purchased online using a credit card at: [www.csuhealthlink.com](http://www.csuhealthlink.com).

**Option #2: Private Health Insurance**

You can use your private health insurance; however the policy of your health insurance must meet the minimum requirements described by Cal State L.A.’s health insurance. If you want to waive university insurance, complete the waiver request online at [www.csuhealthlink.com](http://www.csuhealthlink.com) or go to the waiver page directly. If your policy meets the criteria described Cal State L.A.’s health insurance, the International Office will be notified by the next business day and the hold will be waived.

**SEVIS Check-In**

You must report to the International Office in Cal State L.A. within 30 days of your entry into United States or by the first week of classes, whichever is earlier. This is mandatory for all new students, including transfer students from another U.S. institution. Failure to do so may result in termination of your I-20/DS-2019 and F-1/J-1 status.

You are required to bring the following original documents with you to check-in:

- Passport
- I-94 card (printed from [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94))
- CSULA I-20 or DS-2019
- Form I-20(s) or DS-2019(s) of your dependents (spouse and children), if applicable
- Form I-209(s) or DS-2019(s) from previous school if you are a transfer student

**International Student Orientation**

Attendance at the International Student Orientation is mandatory for all new students, including transfer-in students from another U.S. institution. The orientation fee is a non-refundable $60.00. If you attended the University
Orientation, you are still required to attend the International Student Orientation as we cover issues related to immigration regulations, visa status and so on. To register for the International Student Orientation, please go to www.calstatela.edu/international.

For the students who are already in the U.S., you are recommended to attend the University Orientation as the attendees are granted earlier registration dates. This gives you the opportunity to enroll in classes prior to the open enrollment period. With limited courses available, an earlier enrollment date will help secure full time enrollment as required of your immigration status.

Academic Honesty Policy

An important value of American higher education is that students and the society need to be vigilantly protected. Cheating and plagiarism can be neither justified nor condoned, as this would destroy the ideals and purposes of higher education. Students enter the University to gain the knowledge and tools necessary for participation in society. Academic integrity is one foundation for a society based on trust and honesty. Therefore, the University takes seriously its responsibility for academic honesty. The Judicial Affairs Office is the administering entity for academic honesty. If you have any questions, please contact them at 323-343-3103, Student Affairs Building #117, www.calstatela.edu/univ/stuaffrs/jao/.

Violations of CSULA’s academic policy include:

- Cheating – that is attempting to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means.
- Plagiarism – any use of the ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were your own, without giving proper credit to the original sources.
- Misrepresentation – knowingly furnishing false academic information to a University official, faculty member, or campus office.
- Collusion – any student who intentionally helps another study perform cheating, plagiarism or misrepresentation.
- Fabrication – using made-up information or sources in an academic exercise.
- Forgery – knowingly using another person’s signature in an academic exercise or document.
- Destruction – knowingly removing, destroying or concealing academic materials belonging to the University, faculty, staff or students.
- Solicitation – asking another to assist in an act of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, forgery or destruction related to an academic exercise, document or record, or offering to dos o for another.

If a student is found to have violated the academic honesty policy, the student may be considered as not meeting some portion or all of the academic requirements of a course resulting in a failing grade. The incident may also be forwarded for administrative sanctions which can include: expulsion, suspension, probation, withdrawal of a degree or restitution. Please see the CSULA Academic Honesty policy for more details: www.calstatela.edu/univ/stuaffrs/jao/.
Pre-Arrival Checklist

- Pay the Form I-901 (SEVIS) fee before the visa appointment ([http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm))
- Apply for your F-1 or J-1 Visa
- Confirm that your passport is still valid for entry into the U.S.
- Prepare for travel to the U.S.
- Complete the International Student Online Orientation Course (mandatory)
- Contact your department academic advisor for assistance in course selection; have a copy of your previous school’s transcripts to show to the academic advisor
- Pay registration fees ([http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/sfinserv/cashiers.php](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/sfinserv/cashiers.php))
- Purchase mandatory health insurance ([www.csuhealthlink.com](http://www.csuhealthlink.com))
- Provide Vaccination and Immunization information to Student Health Center ([http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/hlth_ctr/SHC_Registration.php#Forms](http://www.calstatela.edu/univ/hlth_ctr/SHC_Registration.php#Forms))
- Register for the International Student Orientation
- Enroll in classes at your earliest opportunity