

Arriving in the United States

Students and scholars coming to the United States in F or J status for the first time may not enter the country more than 30 days prior to the start date listed on the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019. Academic program start dates are established by the University and cannot be changed, so students and scholars are advised to plan their travel accordingly.

Students and scholars already in the United States in F or J status are not bound by the 30 day rule. However, an F-1 student transferring to WCU from another school in the U.S. must report to the CIP within 15 days of the program start date listed on WCU's I-20. Ideally one should plan to arrive at WCU the weekend before the first day of class.

Before boarding an international flight, students and scholars should be sure to hand-carry their passports, immigration documents, and other supporting documentation so that they can be presented to an immigration officer upon arrival in the United States.

ARRIVING AT THE PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) is the major airport closest to campus. It is also possible to fly to New York area airports (JFK International Airport, LaGuardia Airport, or Newark International Airport) and travel by train or bus to Philadelphia. However, travel to Philadelphia from the New York City area can be more expensive and time-consuming than direct arrival into Philadelphia, and can be very confusing to those unfamiliar with these cities. Airport information centers in baggage claim areas provide details on the various ground transportation options. WCU is approximately 35 miles west of Philadelphia. If you need transportation to WCU, we recommend UBER or LYFT.

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

West Chester University of Pennsylvania

Mitchell Hall, 3rd floor
675 S. Church Street
West Chester, PA 19383
Phone: 610-436-3515
Fax: 610-436-3426

Email: international@wcupa.edu

Website: www.wcupa.edu/international



West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania 19383

The VISA Process



YOUR IMMIGRATION DOCUMENT

We have enclosed your Certificate of Eligibility Form I-20 (F-1 visa) or Form DS2019 (J-1 visa). Please review the document to ensure that the following information is accurate.

- Name (exactly as it appears on your passport)
- Date of Birth (month/day/year)
- Academic Program
- Program Start Date
- Program End Date
- Sponsor
- Description of program activity (DS-2019 only)
- Program Category (DS-2019 only)

If the information is correct, please sign and date the I-20. If any of the information is not correct, please contact the international office immediately. During the academic year, the CIP is open from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. EST. We prefer that you email us first before calling. Also, please locate us on the internet at www.wcupa.edu/international for updated orientation, events, and arrival information.

Form I-20

Form **I-20** is a United States Department of Homeland Security document issued by colleges, universities, and vocational schools that provides information for issuing a student visa. Please note that an I-20 is **not** a visa. An I-20 is a “Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status.” Please read the guidelines on the I-20 before signing your name. Do not unstaple or separate the document.

DS-2019

Form **DS-2019** is a “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1 Status)”. This document is issued for the administration of the exchange visitor program. This is a Department of State controlled document that can only be produced through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

Do not use West Chester University of Pennsylvania’s immigration document to obtain a visa if you do not plan to attend WCU. We will not transfer you to another institution during your first semester in the U.S.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A VISA?

STEP 1: PAY THE SEVIS FEE

All accepted international students and scholars applying for an F or J visa will become part of the Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) when an I-20 or DS-2019 is created. All F and J visa applicants must complete form I-901 and pay a SEVIS fee (\$350 for F Visa and \$220 for J Visa) to the Department of Homeland Security before applying for a new visa. Take the receipt to your interview. If you have questions, please visit: www.fmjfee.com or call (from overseas) 011+212-620-3418 or email fmjfee@sevis.dhs.gov.

ONLINE: Go to: www.fmjfee.com and complete Form I-901 and make a payment via credit card. A receipt can be printed immediately. Do not forget to print a copy. It will take approximately 3 days for your payment to be processed. Please allow plenty of time for this to clear before your visa interview.

STEP 2: MAKE A VISA APPOINTMENT

Plan well in advance. As a student or scholar, you will be applying for an F-1 (I-20) or J-1 (DS-2019) visa. U.S. law states that F and J visas are given to persons who intend to remain in the U.S. temporarily, and their primary purpose is for Academics. Contact the local embassy or consulate for an appointment. To find your closest U.S. Embassy please visit <http://usembassy.state.gov>. Visit your embassy or consulate’s website for specific application procedures.

STEP 3: PREPARE FOR YOUR VISA APPOINTMENT

What you will need for your visa appointment:

- I-20 or DS-2019
- SEVIS I-901 fee Receipt
- Online Non-Immigrant Visa application DS-160 <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>. See your embassy website for more details and exceptions.
- One passport photo (2"x2")
- Valid passport
- Financial support letters & bank statements
- WCU acceptance letter
- Other documents as required by U.S. Embassy or Consulate (TOEFL, GMAT, GRE scores or transcripts from previous institutions are usually required)



An interview is required of all visa applicants. Please allow yourself adequate time to apply for the visa. Visa appointments are granted on a first-come first-served basis, so it is vital that you arrange an appointment with a U.S. visa office at your earliest convenience.

Canadian citizens: If you are a Canadian citizen, you do not need a visa to enter the U.S. You are required to present a SEVIS Form I-20 to the Custom Border Patrol Agent.

STEP 4: VISA APPROVAL OR DENIAL

DENIAL: If your visa is denied, you can apply again within the same year. If you decide to defer until the next semester, notify the Center for International Programs in writing as soon as possible at international@wcupa.edu. Your SEVIS fee is valid for 12 months.

APPROVAL: Please make plans for your housing and transportation. Pay tuition and fees prior to arrival and purchase health insurance.