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As a CUNY student, you will be part of a family of over 400,000 students attending one of 19 colleges located throughout New York City. You will also find that CUNY students play a major role in contributing to New York City’s reputation as one of the largest and most culturally diverse cities in the world. Students at CUNY speak over 100 languages and come from over 160 countries. In fact, roughly one out of every three incoming CUNY students was born outside of the United States of America.

Like many students who came before you, knowing what to expect as a CUNY international student living in New York City will help you get the most out of your stay. The CUNY International Student Guide is intended to do just that. It will help you to explore basic areas critical to your success and enable you to take advantage of the numerous educational opportunities and learning experiences.

The CUNY International Student Guide will provide you with information that can assist you in making an easy transition into American culture. It will help you adapt to U.S. college academic and student life, and to be mindful of requirements pertinent to international students. More specifically, it will help you understand your CUNY college’s course and degree requirements, the importance of co-curricular activities, and how to obtain and maintain your student visa and immigration status.

The Guide will also inform you about employment options and life in New York City, and help you understand your relationship with various federal agencies (Appendix C1). Equally as important, it is a great resource for understanding new terminology. To this end, the glossary in the back is especially helpful (Appendix A1-A4).

For more details about a specific area, you may check the web links provided throughout various sections of this guide. You may also contact an International Student Advisor at the CUNY college you plan to attend (see Appendix B1-B2).
PART I: ATTENDING CUNY

This section provides you with an overview of CUNY, including programs, offices and student support services found at each college.

Background

CUNY was founded in 1847. It is one of the largest urban public universities in the U.S., comprised of 19 colleges [http://www1.cuny.edu/about/colleges.html], six (6) of which also provide English Language programs.

CUNY enjoys a proud legacy of diversity, educating generations of students from many different racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Many CUNY alumni from different racial and ethnic backgrounds have become very prominent world figures, like former U.S. Secretaries of State, General Colin Powell and Henry Kissinger (also a Nobel Peace Prize recipient). CUNY alumnus, Shirley Chisolm is a former U.S. Presidential candidate and U.S. Congresswoman as well as a founding member of Medgar Evers College. Outstanding civil rights leader Antonia Pantoja and feminist activist, Bella Abzug are also CUNY graduates. Founder of Intel, Dr. Andrew Grove hails from CUNY, and so does forensic scientist, Dr. Henry Lee. Other remarkable CUNY alumni include: Jonas Salk, the scientist who discovered the polio vaccine; college presidents, Muriel Howard, and Daisy Cocco DeFilippis; and journalist, professor and former Newsday Bureau Chief, Mohamad Bazzi. CUNY also lays claim to novelists and Pulitzer Prize winners Oscar Hijuelos and Frank McCourt; inspirational speaker and writer, Iyanla Vanzant, screenwriter, Paddy Chayefsky, and comedian Jerry Seinfeld.

College Academic Programs

Each CUNY college has its own academic policies, procedures and programs. Over 35 degree programs are offered in numerous academic areas of study. Undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees can be obtained in a wide range of subjects, including business, computer science, and engineering; liberal arts, fine arts, and various health professions. Law, bio-medical and journalism programs are also available.

Academic programs and degree offerings vary from college to college. For more information about a specific CUNY college or academic program, visit each individual college web site.

To successfully complete your program and earn your degree, you will need to understand how the U.S. higher education system operates. CUNY colleges employ a credit bearing, semester based system, with specific program and degree requirements. It is also important for you to know the grading system, course registration procedures and academic calendar at your college. An academic advisor at your college will help you better understand this system. Visit [http://www1.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs.html] for detailed information.

Academic Honesty

Understanding the rules of academic honesty are also key components of the U.S. higher education system, and consequently to your academic success.
Learning comes best in an atmosphere of honesty and trust. Therefore, all forms of cheating, plagiarism, and fraud are not only morally unacceptable but they also undermine CUNY’s educational mission. Your college will take these issues very seriously.

To become familiar with the rules of academic honesty, speak to your instructors and academic advisors. Do not hesitate to ask them to clarify anything you do not understand. You can also visit CUNY’s academic honesty web site for definitions and examples of cheating, plagiarism, and other aspects of academic integrity at: [http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies.html](http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies.html)

**Undergraduate Admissions**

International students seeking an Associate’s or Bachelor’s Degree must complete an admissions application on-line: [https://portal.cuny.edu/cms/id/cuny/documents/informationpage/006373.htm](https://portal.cuny.edu/cms/id/cuny/documents/informationpage/006373.htm) Students interested in English Language study, should visit the individual college websites to find out which CUNY colleges have an English Language Institute (ELI) and/or programs in English as a Second Language (ESL).

**Graduate, Doctoral and Law School Admissions**

International students seeking a Master’s, Doctoral or Law Degree within CUNY will need to obtain an application and procedures for admissions directly from the CUNY colleges offering academic programs that lead to one of these degrees. You can also access graduate programs by campus at: [http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/graduate.html](http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/graduate.html)

**College Offices**

Though they may have slightly different names, all CUNY colleges have offices dedicated to providing student services. These offices are a great support in helping you to enroll in, and complete your program of interest. They are instrumental in helping students to understand their degree requirements, select courses, maintain good grades, and adjust to student life in the U.S. The following are some of the offices that will be beneficial to you.

**Admissions Office**

There is an Admissions Office at every CUNY college. Staffs in this office will help you understand the admissions procedures for degree, certificate and special programs offered at individual institutions. You can also access [http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate.html](http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate.html) and [http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/graduate.html](http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/graduate.html)

**Academic Advisement Office**

Each college has an office or center for academic advisement. The staff in this office help students make important decisions regarding their academic program requirements and educational goals. Upon enrollment, graduate students are assigned an academic advisor in their particular field to guide them through their course and degree requirements.

**Registrar’s Office**

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for maintaining student information and records, like dates of enrollment, courses taken, and grades earned. If you change your name or local address while studying at CUNY, it is important to notify your college’s Registrar’s Office about the change.
Bursar’s Office

The Bursar’s Office is responsible for collecting student tuition and fees. This includes accepting payments, deferring bills, and processing refunds due to overpayment. Once you have registered for your courses, the Bursar’s Office will send you a statement listing your tuition and fees for the semester and providing instructions on how to submit payment. Tuition and fees will vary, depending on the CUNY college that you attend and the degree or certificate you are seeking.

International Student Services

CUNY takes special pride in its international student body and offers many resources to assist them. The staff in the International Student and Scholar Services Office at each campus is available to advise you on your college’s orientation program, course registration procedures, and international student immigration issues. Whether you are in F-1 or J-1 status, you should always contact your International Student Advisor (Designated School Official-DSO, Responsible Officer-RO or Alternate Responsible Officer-ARO) before and upon your arrival in the U.S. Click on the link below for a complete list of the CUNY International Student Advisors http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/international-students/advisors.html

Health Services

It is the mission of CUNY’s Student Health Services Division to assist students in receiving quality health care. Each CUNY campus has a health center where you can go for medical referrals, immunizations and basic first aid. Health services center can also assist students with questions about health insurance and provide referrals to medical providers in the community. Staffs in this office are trained to be sensitive to the cultural diversity of the CUNY population. The contact list for campus health advisors can be found at: http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/student-health/advisory-council-contact.html

Counseling Services

It is not uncommon for students studying in a foreign country to experience homesickness, cultural adjustment issues, and stress. If you have any of these feelings while studying at CUNY, you may visit your college’s counseling office for help. Services are free and confidential and provided in a safe environment in which students may address personal and other issues that may inhibit them from attaining their academic goal. Counseling Centers are staffed with multi-culturally sensitive counselors, who can help you learn how to adapt to your new environment and enjoy your time in the U.S. Contact information can be found at: http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/counseling/campus-centers.html

Writing Services

At your college’s writing or language center, you can meet English instructors and tutors who will help you improve your writing skills. They can also provide feedback on papers that you have written. The ability to write well can drastically improve your grades and help you to do well in your professional life. You should take advantage of this service as much as possible.
Career Services

For career information and help with job searches, you can visit your college’s Career Development Office. You can also obtain assistance in writing a resume, interviewing for jobs, and finding internships. Go to the following website for more information:

http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/career/career-centers.html
http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/career.html

Child-Care Services

CUNY currently operates 19 licensed campus-based child care programs that provide services to over 2,000 student-parents and 2,200 children of CUNY students. Programs are designed to improve the quality of life for student parents and their families. Educational programs created by the child care centers focus on the children’s cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. More details are located on:

http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/child-care/campus-centers.html

Disability Services

Based on nationally regarded best practices, CUNY is deeply committed to ensuring equal access and equal opportunity for students with disabilities through innovative support programs. Each CUNY campus features an Office of Disability Services, managed by a director who oversees the delivery of reasonable accommodation and support services for students with disabilities. They also provide counseling and medical referrals, and arrange crucial auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology services, sign language interpretation, distance learning networks, priority registration, and alternative testing arrangements. For further information please visit:

http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/services/disabilities/directory-to-services.html

CUNY Malave Leadership Academy

The CUNY Leadership Academy (CLA) is the principal source for leadership education, research, and opportunities at the City University of New York (CUNY). The Academy is where students come together with faculty and other leaders to develop the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to become global leaders. For more information please go to http://cla.cuny.edu/

Student Life/Activities

All CUNY colleges have a student life or student activities office. This office provides students with the opportunity to participate in student government, join student clubs, and engage in various events and activities.

Participating in student organizations and activities will help you become an integral part of the CUNY campus community, and build a network of friends. It will also help you become a more effective and influential leader on campus as well as in the global marketplace.

Most CUNY colleges have a wide variety of student clubs from which to choose. However, if you cannot find a club that matches your interests, you can often start your own club by visiting your Student Life Office for guidance.

Joining a student organization is beneficial because they:

• provide you with leadership training and skills.
• allow you to meet American students as well as those from your home country and other countries.
• give you the opportunity to learn from other students by sharing academic interests and hobbies with one another.
• help you to improve your English Language communication skills.
• provide you with the opportunity to become more academically well-rounded, gain work experience, and enhance your resume.

If you have an interest in writing, broadcasting or other forms of media, check with your student life office to find out how you may become involved with the student-operated newspapers, magazines, television stations, and/or radio stations. Contact information can be found at: http://web.cuny.edu/administration/sa/student-activities/campus-offices.html

CUNY Athletics

Many CUNY colleges have free athletics facilities where students can exercise or play sports. The City University of New York Athletic Conference (CUNYAC) consists of ten institutions in the senior college division and five institutions in the community college division. CUNYAC promotes the highest standards of intercollegiate athletic competition at the Division II and III levels. The Conference recognizes championships through tournament and league play in more than 11 sports for men and for women (including soccer, basketball, swimming, volleyball, tennis, etc.). Each year over 2,500 student-athletes participate on the athletic teams of the CUNY institutions. See: http://www.cunyathletics.com

PART II: OBTAINING A VISA & IMMIGRATION STATUS

This section covers the information, process and forms needed to obtain the F-1 and J-1 visa, and immigration status; also frequently referred to as F-1 status or J-1 status (F or J status).

The F and J visas allow you to legally enter the U.S. as a student. The F and J immigration status on the other hand allows you to legally stay in the U.S. for the duration of your studies.

Most international students come to the U.S. as F-1 students. They either, financially support themselves, and/or are financially sponsored by family or friends. The J-1 status is for those students who are in an exchange program and are financially sponsored by their home government or university; the U.S. government or international organization; and as per agreements between a CUNY college and a foreign government or university.

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) regulates the issuance of all non-immigrant visas, including the F-1 and J-1. DOS also regulates the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) is the agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that regulates all immigration laws, standards, practices and procedures, including the F-1 and J-1 immigration status.

For a schematic overview of your relationship with the various federal government agencies in charge of U.S. visa and immigration policies and procedures, see Appendix C.

Once you have been accepted to a CUNY college, there are series of steps you will need to take before you can apply for the F-1 or J-1 visa and, consequently, obtain your F or J immigration status.
Step 1: Welcome Letter and Required Forms

After you have been accepted to the CUNY College to which you’ve applied, you will receive a Welcome Letter, along with four (4) forms for you to complete and return to your college’s International Student Advisor. These forms are needed before you can enroll at the college and so that the International Student Advisor can issue the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019. You will need the Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility) to obtain the F visa; Form DS-2019 to obtain the J visa.

Here’s what you will need to do, upon receiving the Welcome Letter and required forms:

1. Review the Welcome Letter and forms.

2. Complete and return the following forms:
   - The immunization form.
   - I-20 or DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility) application forms. Review the instruction letter accompanying your I-20 or DS-2019, upon receipt.
   - Affidavit of Support form.
   - Declaration & Certification of Finance form.

Proofs of certain immunizations are needed before you can register for courses. Therefore, you will need to submit this immunization form, along with any other pertinent health records. This information is needed to determine if you have the mandatory health immunizations as required by the U.S. government.

The Certificate of Eligibility (I-20/DS-2019) application form is needed to obtain information required to issue the actual I-20 or DS-2019 forms. The Affidavit of Support and the Declaration & Certification of Finance forms are needed to determine if you are financially able to support yourself.

When completing the finance forms, remember to convert all figures into U.S. dollars and attach all necessary documents (e.g. bank letter/statement, sponsor’s proof of income, proof of an approved loan or evidence of a scholarship) before returning them to your advisor. Please attach documents that are original and translated into English.

Step 2: I-20 or DS-2019

Forms I-20 and DS-2019 are very important documents. They are needed to obtain the F or J visa, and to maintain F or J immigration status in the U.S.

In addition to issuing these documents, the International Student Advisor is charged with entering the information listed on them in the DHS database known as SEVIS: Student & Exchange Visitor Information System. The information is viewed by the Department of State officials at the U.S. Consulate when you go to apply for F-1 Student Visa or J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa.

After the college has determined that you have provided the required information, including sufficient funds to support your education and living expenses, the International Student Advisor will mail the Form I-20 to you, if you are a prospective F-1 student; the Form DS-2019 if you are a prospective J-1 student.
The Forms I-20/DS-2019 will be reviewed and verified by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer via SEVIS, each time you enter the U.S. The SEVIS database is also updated by your International Student Advisor, when you report to school, register for classes, change your major, drop below full-time status, apply for permission to work, change your address, graduate, withdraw from school, and any other related F/J requirements.

It is extremely important that you take care of your I-20 or DS-2019 forms, and do not lose them. Your I-20 or DS-2019 form, passport with the valid F-1 or J-1 visa stamp and, I-94 Admissions/Departure Card are documents critical to maintaining your F/J status.

**Step 3: Letter Accompanying the I-20/DS-2019**

You will receive instructions from your International Student Advisor on how to apply for your F/J visa, how to obtain your F/J immigration status, and what you must do after you arrive. Carefully review this letter upon receipt and before you apply for the F-1/J-1 visa.

**Step 4: SEVIS Fee & Payment Receipt**

As a new applicant, you must pay a one-time I-901 SEVIS fee: $200 for F-1; $180 for J-1, to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security before you can apply for a visa. You will need the SEVIS fee payment receipt in order to apply for your visa at the U.S. Consulate in your home country. This fee is not required for F-2 or J-2 dependents.

You must pay the SEVIS fee in U.S. dollars, either online (using a credit card) or through the mail (by U.S. check, money order, or bank draft). Once payment is received, it takes three business days to be processed. This means your payment must be received at least three days before you apply for a visa at the U.S. Consulate in your country (or at least three days before your entry into the U.S. if you are a Canadian citizen).

You must have your I-20 or DS-2019 form before you can pay the SEVIS fee. After receiving the I-20 or DS-2019 form, you will need to know your SEVIS identification number. The SEVIS identification number is printed in the upper right section of the I-20 or DS-2019. Detailed information and instructions on paying the fee can be accessed at [https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/](https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/)

**Step 5: Consulate Appointment**

Once you have received your I-20 or DS-2019 and your SEVIS fee payment receipt, make an appointment at the U.S. Consulate in your home country to apply for the visa: [http://usembassy.state.gov](http://usembassy.state.gov)

While Consulate procedures for the F-1 or J-1 visa may differ from country to country, the application process usually includes a short interview in English, several forms that you need to complete, and a processing fee. **When you go to the U.S. Consulate, you must bring your college acceptance letter, financial form with supporting documents, I-20 or DS-2019 form, SEVIS fee payment receipt, and passport. Your passport must be valid for at least six months from the date of your appointment at the Consulate.**

Once your application is approved, the F-1 or J-1 visa will be stamped in your passport.
Step 6: U.S. Entry

After receiving your F or J visa, you will be ready to enter the U.S. and receive your corresponding F or J immigration status upon arrival in the U.S.

On your flight to the U.S., you will receive the I-94 Admissions/Departure to complete. Present this form, along with your passport, and I-20/DS-2019 to the U.S. Custom and Border Patrol Immigration Officer for inspection. The officer will place the F-1 or J-1 and D/S (Duration of Status) stamps on your I-20/DS-2019 form, and the I-94 card.

Please note, that when you enter the U.S., you may be subject to various security checks, including, being photographed and electronically fingerprinted. This is a routine procedure for anyone entering the U.S. with a visa and is part of the safety measures taken by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

DHS regulations require that you enter the U.S. on the Form I-20 or DS-2019 from the CUNY college or any other U.S. college that you plan to attend. If you do not do so, it is a violation of F-1 immigration laws and can result in loss of your student immigration status.

Step 7: Report to Your College

Once you enter the U.S., you must report to the International Student Services Office and meet with your International Student Advisor.

Your International Student Advisor will need to validate your F/J status in SEVIS. To do so, you must provide him/her with the following original documents: passport, I-20 or DS-2019, and I-94 Card. Your advisor will make copies of these documents and maintain them for mandatory record-keeping purposes.

Failure to report to the college that issued the I-20 or DS-2019, upon your U.S. arrival is a USCIS violation and can also result in loss of your student immigration status.

Student Orientation: It is important that you participate in the new-student orientation programs offered by your college. The International Student Advisor will provide you with specific orientation information pertinent to you. Orientations are held at the start of each semester, and offer valuable information that will help you understand the requirements for maintaining your F or J status. They also provide you with student life information that will help you adjust to your new environment and learn more about your academic requirements.

PART III: MAINTAINING YOUR IMMIGRATION STATUS

One of the most important responsibilities you will have during your CUNY stay is to maintain your immigration status. This section will assist you in doing that.

Remember, immigration status is often referred to as just status. Maintaining your status is often referred to as "being in status". Being in status means that you have fulfilled all of the U.S. F-1/J-1 regulations, requirements, and procedures.

If you violate any of the F/J regulations, you could lose your status, be required to leave the U.S., and be denied re-entry. Therefore, it’s very important that you
meet with your International Student Advisor on a regular basis to review the F-1 or J-1 regulations.

Also, keep in mind that immigration laws often change. Your advisor will keep you informed. In addition, you should also check The Department of Homeland Security website from time to time for any updates http://www.ice.gov/sevis/index.htm

Rules for Maintaining Your Status:

Rule #1: Remain a Full-time Student

You must remain a full-time student each fall and spring semester. Failure to enroll as a full-time student is a violation of your immigration status.

To be a full-time undergraduate student, you need to take at least 12 class credits during both, the fall and spring semesters. This usually means being registered for at least four classes each semester.

Depending on the CUNY college, the number of class credits required for a graduate level, doctoral or law student to be full-time can vary. Please check with the International Student Advisor at your respective campus to confirm the number of credits you must take each semester to satisfy your full time status requirement.

Rule #2: Keep Your Documents Valid

To maintain your immigration status, you must make sure that your passport, and I-20/DS-2019 remain valid all the time. Your visa needs to be valid each time you enter the U.S.

Your I-20 or DS-2019 will include an anticipated completion date for your studies in the U.S. This date is listed in Section 5 of the I-20 and in Section 3 of the DS-2019. Most students complete their programs in the period of time noted on their I-20 or DS-2019, but occasionally students need an additional semester or more to complete their program. **You must consult your International Student Advisor if you need additional time to complete your program, at least 30 days before the completion date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019. Once your completion date passes, your I-20 or DS-2019 will expire and you may not be able to extend your stay in the U.S.**


Make sure that your passport is valid for at least six months from the day you plan to re-enter the U.S. **You cannot enter the U.S. on the F-1 or J-1 visa, using a passport that is less than six months from expiration.**

You will always need to maintain a valid F or J visa in order to re-enter the U.S. Check the expiration date on your visa to see when you will need to renew it. Remember, you can only renew it at the U.S. Consulate in your home country. **You cannot obtain or renew the visa in the U.S.** Know that if your visa expires while you are in the U.S., you do not have to renew it until you leave the U.S. for a vacation in your home country.

If you have a valid visa in an expired passport, always present both, the old and new passport to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer when you re-enter the U.S.
Rule #3: Obtain Travel Authorization to Re-enter the U.S.

Meet with your advisor before you leave the U.S. to obtain the advisor’s travel authorization to re-enter the U.S.

If you plan on traveling outside the U.S. during your studies, **you must have your I-20 or DS-2019 signed by your International Student Advisor before you leave.** The advisor’s travel signature is only valid for six months.

If you do not have a current signature on your I-20 or DS-2019, you will have difficulty re-entering the U.S. You should visit your International Student Advisor with your passport that has a valid F-1 visa stamp and I-20 or DS-2019, at least two-three weeks before traveling.

Rule #4: Keep Your Advisor Informed

**Changes in Personal Information:** Notify your International Student Advisor and your college’s Registrar’s Office within 10 days after obtaining your new address. You must also notify your advisor if there are any changes in your name, citizenship, degree level, major, sources of funding or anticipated graduation date. Your advisor will make the necessary updates to your records in SEVIS. **Failure to report changes in your personal information within 10 days of receiving it can place you in danger of losing your student immigration status.**

**Departure from College:** Contact your advisor if you plan to leave your college temporarily or permanently. Whether you plan to study abroad, take a leave of absence, withdraw, graduate early, or transfer to another school, you must notify your advisor before leaving.

**Missing Documents:** Contact your advisor immediately if any of your documents are stolen, lost, or misplaced. Your Advisor will instruct you on how to obtain replacement documents. **Note: You must always report your lost passport to the police and obtain a police report.**

Rule #5: Do Not Work Without Authorization

International students are only permitted to work outside their colleges with permission from either their International Student Advisor or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). **Working without authorization is a deportable offense.** Do not accept any employment unless you have written work authorization. For more information on how to obtain legal employment, see the employment options section of this guide.

PART IV: UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

As an international student, your options for employment in the U.S. are limited by federal law. However, you may work under certain circumstances, after receiving employment authorization. You may work on-campus and off-campus to gain practical training in your academic field or if you are experiencing an economic hardship. You may work while you are attending classes as well as after completing your studies.
Keep in mind; you are not permitted to work without official permission. So, before you begin your job search or begin working, contact your International Student Advisor to find out if you are eligible to work, how long you can work, and other procedures for obtaining work authorization.

On-Campus Employment

As an international student, you can work throughout the CUNY system for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session, and 40 hours a week during the summer and winter breaks. Working on campus is a convenient way to earn extra money, make professional contacts, and improve your professional skills.

In an effort to ensure that the student obtains a good academic foundation, and maintain immigration status, many International Student Advisors will only permit students to take on-campus employment after their first year of study in the U.S.

It is highly recommended that students refrain from on-campus employment and focus on their coursework during their first year of study for the following reasons:

- The first year is used to adjust to a new higher education system and culture.
- The student's primary purpose is to study in the U.S.
- Students have already demonstrated valid financial sponsorship to cover tuition and living expenses for at least one year of study.
- On-campus employment is considered incidental to study and should not be used in lieu of certified financial sponsorship from family, friends or self.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) & Academic Training (AT)

CPT or AT may be conducted off campus. This option is available if you are registered for an internship course or enrolled in an academic program that requires you to obtain practical training in your field of study for a specified period of time.

Internships are considered part of your education and, therefore, are allowed through a program called Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for F-1 students; Academic Training (AT) for J-1 students. This is a great way to network, develop new skills and gain work experience.

Most internships will also count as course credits, thus helping you make steady progress towards completing your studies. Here is the process for obtaining CPT or AT:

- Check with your International Student Advisor to make sure you are eligible for an internship or practical training in your field, and to find out the specific procedures.
- See if your academic department requires you to conduct academic training or offers any internship courses.
- Have your prospective employer write a letter on company letterhead, containing a job description, and specifying the length of the internship. Ask your advisor in advance, about other requirements.
- Have the professor in charge of the internship course or overseeing your academic training to approve your internship in writing.
- Register for the course.
- Pay your tuition bill.
- Bring the job description, approval letter, proof of course registration, payment receipt, and your I-20 or DS-2019 to your International Student Advisor to obtain approval to work.
Off-Campus Employment (Economic Hardship)

In exceptional circumstances students may pursue off-campus employment that is not directly related to their studies. Such employment is available only to students who experience unexpected economic hardship, and only after the first year of study.

It can be difficult to obtain permission to work based on economic necessity. Those who are authorized for off-campus employment can only work 20 hours per week while school is in session; 40 hours during vacation periods.

F-1 and J-1 students should discuss off-campus employment with their International Student Advisor, who will instruct them on how to apply for work permission from USCIS.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

You must be in F-1 status for one year to receive OPT. There are 2 categories of OPT: Post Completion and Pre-Completion.

Post Completion: Following graduation, F-1 international students are allowed to work full time for up to one year to gain work experience in their field of study before returning to their home country.

STEM OPT: In April 2008, USCIS published a regulation allowing F-1 students in STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics fields to apply for an additional 17 months of OPT, beyond their initial 12 months. To qualify for the STEM OPT extension, a student must be engaged in an authorized OPT based on graduation from a program in the acceptable STEM field. The student must also be working for or have a job offer from an employer that is enrolled in the E-Verify system. Detailed information can be found at www.ice.gov/sevis/stemlist.htm

Pre-Completion: F-1 students can obtain OPT prior to graduation. They can work 20 hours a week while classes are in session and 40 hours a week during holiday and vacation periods. The amount of time used under Pre-Completion OPT is deducted from the students Post Completion OPT.

J-1 Academic Training (AT)

J-1 students may work under Academic Training for up to 18 months, after they graduate or while attending classes. They may also engage in AT for 20 hours a week while in school; 40 hours during holidays and vacation period. J-1 students should discuss the procedures for obtaining AT with their International Student Advisor (J-1 Responsible/Alternate Responsible Officer).

Social Security Number

If you get a job while in the U.S., you will need to obtain a Social Security Card from a U.S. Social Security Office. This card will contain your Social Security Number. You need the Social Security Number for tax and employment purposes. Your Social Security Number will never change, so you only need to apply once.

To get a Social Security Number, you need to get a referral letter from your International Student Advisor. Take this letter, along with your job offer, passport, I-94, I-20 or DS-2019, and CUNY identification card to the Social Security Office nearest you. You should receive your card within two-three weeks. For more information or Social Security Office locations, access http://www.ssa.gov
Taxes

International students earning money while in the U.S. are subject to federal and state income taxes, and will need to complete the W-4 form prior to working.

International students must report their annual U.S. income by filing income tax forms each year, even if they do not work or receive some other form of U.S. income.

Students who do not receive U.S. income are required to file U.S. Internal Revenue Form 8843.

Students who receive U.S. income (including scholarships and assistantships) will need to file non-resident federal and state forms. Under certain conditions, international students can file as a U.S. resident for tax purposes only. Tax forms for those who earned U.S. income are filed between January 1 and April 15; for those who do not receive income during the year, the filing deadline is June 15th.

Check with your advisor to determine which forms are best for you, and to find out about available tax software programs.

PART V: LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY

New York City is a very exciting, vibrant city, full of interesting things to see and do. However, moving to the city can be a huge adjustment, and the earlier you begin to think about issues like housing, transportation, and banking, the easier your transition will be. You should prepare yourself for cultural differences, which can be the most surprising – but often the most interesting part of moving to a new country. For example, many international students find the fast pace of the city to be the single greatest challenge of studying here. However, it is that very pace that gives New York City its energy and vitality.

Diversity: New York City (NYC) is the most densely populated city in the country, with over 8 million residents, many of whom were born outside of the U.S. With a resident and visitor population as diverse in culture and ethnicity as the world is wide, New York City serves as an international gathering place for the nation and the world. Its reputation for opportunity, and it’s multicultural and multilingual population continue to attract many students and immigrants from all over the world.

Attractions and Activities: Adding to the NYC diversity are the visitors who come to “The City” each year to visit its famous attractions, including the United Nations, the Statue of Liberty, Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Empire State Building, and Rockefeller Center.

Whatever your interests are, you should be able to find opportunities for them at your college and definitely throughout NYC. To learn more about life in “The City”, access the following link http://nyc.gov/visitors

Finally, there are also off-campus organizations that work with CUNY to provide valuable cultural opportunities and experiences for students, like One To World. One To World is a private, non-profit organization, dedicated to creating cross-cultural understanding by encouraging cultural, social, and intellectual exchange between Americans and students from other countries. One To World offers community visits, walking tours, conferences,
career programs, and social nights. For more information about this organization visit http://www.one-to-world.org

**Geography:** New York City is in the State of New York. The State of New Jersey borders New York City to the west and south. Long Island, New York is to the east, and the City of Yonkers, New York is to the north.

New York City is divided into 5 government division called boroughs:

- **Manhattan**
  Manhattan is generally considered the heart of New York City. This is where you will find most of the city’s skyscrapers and cultural attractions. An island, Manhattan is surrounded by the Hudson River to the west, the Harlem River to the north, and the East River to the east. *Population – over 1.6 million*

- **Brooklyn**
  Brooklyn is the most populous borough and is known for its cultural diversity, its distinct neighborhoods, and its independent art scene. *Population – over 2.5 million*

- **Queens**
  Queens is the most ethnically diverse county in the city. It is the largest New York borough and the location for the city’s two major airports, LaGuardia and JFK. *Population – approximately 2.3 million*

- **Bronx**
  The Bronx is the city’s northernmost borough. It is home to the Bronx Zoo and is the birthplace of rap and hip hop culture. *Population – approximately 1.4 million*

- **Staten Island**
  Staten Island is the most suburban of the five boroughs and has the smallest population. *Population – approximately 0.5 million*

**Transportation**

**Flying into New York City:** There are three major airports in the New York metropolitan area:
- John F. Kennedy International Airport (also called “JFK Airport”)
- LaGuardia Airport
- Newark Liberty International Airport

There are many options for ground transportation to and from the airports, including taxis, car services, buses, shuttle vans, the subway, and trains. You can check the airports' websites for prices and other information.

**Traveling In and Around New York City:** There are four main ways to travel in and around the New York area:

- **Subways** – Most New Yorkers do the majority of their inner-city travel on the city’s subway system, which is open 24 hours a day. You will need to purchase a Metro Card to ride on the subway.

- **Buses** – They are available throughout the city. The Metro Card can also be used to ride the bus. Buses provide travel to/from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.
• **Taxis** – Also known as “cabs”, are generally the most expensive way to travel in the city. However, many people find them a convenient way to travel at night, when subways and buses run less frequently.

• **Trains** – There are different train lines for travel to nearby New York (like Long Island, and Yonkers) as well as to Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and upstate New York towns and cities, like Albany, the New York State capital.

For information about New York City public transportation, including maps of the subway and bus systems, visit the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) website [http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/index.html](http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/index.html)

### Housing

Housing is one of the biggest concerns for new students. Because it is expensive, you should try to find a place to live before arriving in New York.

It is a good idea to contact family, friends, current CUNY students, the international student office, and student life office to help you find housing. You should also ask people about the different neighborhoods (areas) of New York so that you can decide where to live, based on your comfort level, budget, and commuting time.

• There are also companies and online listings that can be helpful in your search for apartments or temporary housing. Many students find the following resources useful:
  - Educational Housing [http://www.studenthousing.org](http://www.studenthousing.org)
  - CUNY [http://www.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/explore/housingoptions.html](http://www.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/explore/housingoptions.html)
  - De Hirsch Residence [http://www.dehirsch.org](http://www.dehirsch.org)
  - Hearts and Minds [http://www.heartsandminds.org/housing.htm](http://www.heartsandminds.org/housing.htm)
  - One To World [http://www.one-to-world.org/content/view/141/211/](http://www.one-to-world.org/content/view/141/211/)
  - Webster Apartments. (For Women Only) [http://www.websterapartments.org](http://www.websterapartments.org)
  - University place (Brooklyn Housing) [http://www.campusadv.com/brooklyn-aps.html](http://www.campusadv.com/brooklyn-aps.html)
Banking

One of the first things you should do when you come into the country is to open a bank account. Then you can transfer money from your home country and deposit traveler's checks and other money you may have.

Many international banks have branches in the U.S. You should see if your home bank has a branch in New York. Otherwise, you can open an account with an American bank. To open an account, you will need your passport, Form I-20 or DS-2019, proof of U.S. address, and other forms of identification.

In the U.S., credit and debit cards are widely used and often preferred over checks or cash. You can pay your tuition bill and make most purchases using these cards. However, most people still use checks to pay for rent.

Your international student office can also help you with this matter.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory for J-1 exchange students and scholars and for their J-2 dependents. Although it is currently optional for F-1 students and F-2 dependents, it is highly recommended that you and your dependents also purchase health insurance throughout your stay; especially since health care in the U.S. can be very expensive. Your international student advisor and health services office can help you find insurance plans suitable for you and your dependents.

To view various health insurance plans for international students, visit the following websites:

- International Student Insurance Plans [http://internationalstudentinsurance.com/international_students/](http://internationalstudentinsurance.com/international_students/)
- International Student Insurance Plans [http://internationalstudentinsurance.com/international_students/](http://internationalstudentinsurance.com/international_students/)
- International Student Organization [http://isoa.org](http://isoa.org)

**CUNY does not endorse any particular health insurance provider for international students.**
GLOSSARY

Academic Calendar – A calendar that defines a school’s academic semesters

Academic Honesty – Ethical consideration for students, pertaining to the avoidance of plagiarism

Academic Training (AT) – An employment option available to J-1 students, authorizing them to work in a field related to their studies

Alternate Responsible Officer - See Responsible Officer

Associate’s Degree – A two-year degree

Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree – A four year degree in a non-scientific field

Bachelor of Science (BS) Degree – A four year degree in a scientific field

Borough - A section/area of New York City

Bursar – A college official in charge of collecting tuition and fee payments

Bursar’s Office – The office responsible for the collecting tuition and fees

Campus – The location of a university’s classrooms and offices

Co-curricular Activities – Activities that provide students with learning opportunities and experiences beyond the standard curriculum, including on and off campus leadership, service and cultural programs, often conducted by, but not limited to student organizations

Credit (noun) – Units measuring the number of hours of class taken during a semester (degrees require a certain number of accumulated credits)

Credit Card – A magnetic card given to a customer by a bank or other business for the purpose of making purchases on deferred payment (“on-credit”)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) – A type of employment that allows F-1 students to work in their field of study as part of their course requirement

Debit Card – A magnetic card that enables the holder to withdraw money or to have the cost of purchases charged directly to the holder’s bank account

Degree Requirements – The actual courses and other academic stipulations needed to obtain a specific degree

Designated School Official (DSO) – A school official who advises international students and works with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Very often this person is also the college’s International Student Advisor
**Doctoral Degree** – The highest degree that can be held in a field; usually obtained only after first receiving a Master's Degree

**Doctoral Student** - A student pursuing the highest U.S. academic degree, one that is higher than a Master’s Degree. For example: Ph.D. – Doctor of Philosophy; Ed.D.-Doctor of Education; J.D- Doctor of Juris Prudence (Law)

**DS-2019** – The U.S. Department of State document issued to J-1 students and J-2 dependents

**Duration of Status (D/S)** – A stamp placed on the I-94 card indicating that the holder of the card may remain in the U.S. during the length of time it takes them to complete their studies

**F-1 Visa** – A U.S. visa required for international students to enter the U.S. for the purpose of study

**F-1 Status** – A USCIS non-immigrant standing assigned to students, who hold the I-20

**F-2 Visa** – The visa given to the spouse or dependent child of a student holding the F-1 visa

**F-2 Status** – The USCIS non-immigrant standing given to the spouse or children of the F-1 status

**Freshman** – A student who has completed 27 or fewer credit hours

**Full-Time Student** – A student who is taking at least 12 credits (usually four classes)

**Grading System** – A scale used to translate numerical values into letter grades or letter grades into point values. The numerical-letter grading scale used at most U.S. colleges is: A= 96-100, A- = 90-95, B+= 87-89, B= 83-86, B-= 80-82, C+= 77-79, C= 74-76, C- = 70-73, D+= 67-69, D=64-66, D-=60-63. The letter point value grading system is: A= 4.0, A-= 3.70, B+= 3.30, B= 3.00, B-= 2.70, C+= 2.30, C= 2.00, C-= 1.70, D+= 1.30, D= 1.00, D-=0.70, F=Failed

**Graduate Degree** – An advanced degree beyond the Bachelor’s Degree (for example a Master’s or PhD)

**Graduate Student** – A person participating in post-graduate study (for example an MA or MS program)

**I-20** – A government form that colleges use to certify that an international student is eligible for or maintaining F-1 status

**I-94 Card** – The Arrival–Departure Record, also known as the I-94 Admissions Card, or I-94 Departure Card. This card is used to monitor the students U.S. entry and departure. It is the white card stapled in the passport and stamped F-1 D/S (Duration of Status) or J-1 D/S by the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officer at the port of entry

**Internship** – A paid or unpaid job position held by a student to gain working experience and/or class credits

**International Student** – A foreign student holding the F or J immigration status
International Student Advisor – A college or university staff member charged with assisting students in implementing F-1 and/or J-1 visa and immigration regulations. Advisors also hold the titles and responsibilities of Designated School Official (DSO) and/or Responsible Officer (RO)

J-1 Visa (J-1 Exchange Visitors Visa) – A visa issued by the U.S. Department of State at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. This particular type of visa is granted to students, professors, researchers and scholars who are participating in specific government and university affiliated exchange programs

J-1 Status– A USCIS non-immigrant standing assigned to students, scholars, and interns who hold the Form DS-2019 and the J-1 visa

J-2 Visa – The visa given to the spouse or dependent child of a J-1 student, professor, researcher or scholar

J-1 Status– A USCIS non-immigrant standing assigned to students, who hold the Form DS-2019 and the J-1 visa

Junior - A student in the third year of a program of study in a U.S. college or university

Leave of Absence – A break in attendance from school. International students must receive permission from their international student advisor before taking a leave of absence. Failure to do so can result in loss of legal F or J status

Liberal Arts – A college or university curriculum aimed at imparting general knowledge and developing general intellectual capacities, in contrast to a professional, vocational, or technical curriculum

Master’s Degree – An advanced degree awarded after obtaining the Bachelor’s Degree

Master’s Student – A student pursuing a Master’s Degree

Metro Card – A magnetic card purchased to ride New York City subways and buses

Off-Campus – Outside of a school’s primary location

Office of the Registrar – A U.S. university or college office responsible for enrolling a student in his/her studies

On-Campus – Within a school’s primary location

Optional Practical Training (OPT) – A work program that allows F-1 students, who are in status for at least one year to work either before or after graduation in a field related to their studies

Register – The act of selecting and officially signing up for specific courses

Responsible Officer (RO) – A college or university’s primary official authorized by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) to oversee the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program at their specific college. The RO issues the DS-2019, maintains the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and advises students, professors, researchers and scholars on obtaining and maintaining J-1 and J-2 status, and is responsible for submitting reports to
and communicating with DOS. The Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) has all RO duties except for DOS reporting and communications

**Semester** – A 15-18 week period of time constituting half of an academic year

**Senior** – A student who has completed 90 or more credit hours (usually someone in his/her fourth or last year of university/college study)

**SEVIS** – A U.S. Department of Homeland Security internet database used to collect information, issue I-20 and DS-2019 forms, request employment authorization and monitor all other visa and immigration requirements relative to F-1 and J-1 non-immigrants and their dependents

**Social Security Number** – A nine digit number assigned by the U.S. Social Security Administration primarily to track individuals for taxation purposes. In recent years, it has been used quite frequently as an identification number

**Sophomore** - A student in the second year of a program of study in a U.S. college or university

**Status** – The condition of a person or thing in the eyes of the law (in this tutorial, it refers to a student’s U.S. immigration status)

**Transfer Student** – A student who changes colleges/universities prior to completing his or her degree

**Trimester** - The trimester model is when the school year is divided into three equal sessions. Student data is reported three times a year, generally in Spring, Fall, and Winter session

**Undergraduate Degree** – The degree received after completing a two year college program (Associate Degree) or a four year college program (Bachelor’s Degree)

**Undergraduate Student** – A college student seeking an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree

**U.S. Citizenship** – A native or naturalized member of the U.S., who gives his /her allegiance to the U.S., is entitled to the U.S. privileges and protected by U.S. laws

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** – The Government bureau under the Department of Homeland Security dealing with citizenship and immigration issues

**U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)** – A security branch of the Department of Homeland Security that protects American borders and ports of entry


**U.S. Department of State (DOS)** – The foreign affairs agency of the U.S. Government that oversees the issuance of U.S. visas at U.S. Embassies and Consulates in foreign countries. This agency also governs the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

**U.S. Higher Education System** – A credit bearing, semester based system, with specific program and degree requirements throughout U.S. universities and colleges
**U.S. Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE)** – The agency under the Department of Homeland Security that enforces U.S. immigration regulations

**Visa** – An official stamp issued by the U.S. Department of State to allow non-immigrants to enter the U.S. on a temporary basis for a specific purpose, e.g. to study, for business, to tour the U.S.
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<th>College</th>
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<th>Address</th>
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<td>LaGuardia CC ELC</td>
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<td>Fax: 718-609-2004</td>
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<td>Lehman College</td>
<td>Ann O’Sullivan, International Student Advisor</td>
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<td>Medgar Evers College</td>
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<td>Fax: 718-270-6411</td>
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APPENDIX C

International Students’ Visa & Immigration Relationship with U.S. Government Agencies

Department of State
U.S. Consulates Abroad
- Issues Student and Exchange Visitor visas (the key for U.S. entry)

Department of Homeland Security
ICE: Immigration & Custom Enforcement
- Immigration police
- Manages SEVIS
- Enforce compliance

International Student
F-1 & J-1 Visa and Immigration Status

Department of Homeland Security
CBP: Custom & Border Protection
- Gatekeepers
- First point of contact at all ports of entry
- Stamps I 20/DS2019 & issues I-94 Arrival & Departure Cards

Department of Homeland Security
USCIS: United States Citizenship & Immigration Services
- Employment Authorization
- Change of Status
- Reinstatement

Department of State
USCIS: United States Citizenship & Immigration Services