

International Student Guide



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COLLEGE

Welcome from the Director of the Flagler College International Center

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Flagler College's International Student Guide! My name is Ms. Lisa Fiala and I am the Director of the International Center. We are excited that to have you stop on visit this part of the International Center webpage. Our hope is that this Guide will provide you with more information about the International Center, our programming, and how we contribute to Flagler College's greater mission of preparing you, our students, for productive experiences after you leave our beautiful campus.

The International Center is dedicated to supporting all of Flagler College's international and exchange students from initial communication through your Flagler College experience. We are here to answer your questions in areas such as American culture, immigration paperwork and procedures, social activities & outings, and much, much more.

Located on the west side of campus in Wiley Hall, the International Center maintains a front reception desk area, two offices for our staff, and one large lounge for all members of campus. Our lounge is fully equipped to answer to the needs of our international and exchange students; complete with a multi-media screen showcasing upcoming events, activities, and messages, a study abroad resource library, different forms and information sheets for international students, and a conference table for group projects or meetings.

Feel free to stop by if you are on campus if you have any questions, need support, or would like to say hello. Our staff will be happy to help you in any way we can. Again, thank you for stopping by Flagler College's International Center webpage and visiting the International Student Guide, we hope to see you on campus very soon.

Sincerely,



Lisa Fiala



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Contact Information

The Flagler College International Center (FCIC) welcomes you to St. Augustine and the United States of America. We are thrilled to be your resource and to help guide you through your Flagler College experience.

The FCIC works with all students studying at Flagler College on J-1 and F-1 visas. Both of these visa types have specific requirements that you must be aware of throughout your time on campus. The FCIC will be your point of contact for the duration of your time on campus regarding immigration issues and international and exchange student services. Please stop by our office for any and all questions!

Flagler College International Center

Physical Location:

6 Valencia Street
St. Augustine, Florida 32084

Mailing Address:

ATTN: International Center
74 King Street
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
USA

Email: Internationalcenter@flagler.edu

Website: <https://www.flagler.edu/academics/international-center/>

Social Media: <https://www.instagram.com/flaglerinternational/>

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J-1 Exchange Visa Rules & Regulations

A J-1 visa is a non-immigrant visa issued by the United States government. It allows foreign visitors to participate in programs promoting cultural exchange for typically one to two semesters.

Exchange Visitor Program Description

The U.S. Department of State administers the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the U.S. and then return home to share their experiences.

You must understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws, and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your International Student Advisor will help you keep current of any Exchange related changes, which may affect your J status.

Program Length and Activity

You are allowed to engage in your program activity described in item 4 of your DS-2019 form for the period of time specified in item 3.

Maximum Stay

The category indicated in item 4 of your DS-2019 determines your maximum period of stay under the Exchange Visitor program. See the second page of the DS-2019, 1(c) "Limitations of Stay." Upon completion of your Exchange Visitor program, you will be given a 30-day grace period to prepare for departure from the U.S.

Activities and Program Provisions

Now that you have entered the U.S., you are required to engage only in the one program category in that category and subject/field of activity listed on your DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your program category.

The FCIC will host monthly cultural activities specifically designed to expose J-1 visa students to both the Flagler Campus and the greater St. Augustine community. While these events are not mandatory to attend, the FCIC highly encourages Exchange visitors to join us.

Maintaining Status

The Department of State mandates specific rules as to how J-1 students must maintain status in the U.S. It is important for current students to remember that they must adhere to these requirements throughout their time at Flagler College to ensure they maintain legal immigration status. The Flagler College International Center is willing and able to assist you and answer questions you have concerning your immigration status; however, it is your responsibility to maintain your immigration status in the United States.

Below is a comprehensive list of the responsibilities all J-1 students must follow while studying in the United States.

Maintain Immigration Documents –

- Passport – Be sure you keep your passport valid at all times. Your passport cannot expire while you are in the United States.
- Visa – It is important to check the expiration date on your J-1 visa. You will need to make the necessary arrangements to renew your visa if you plan to travel internationally and your visa is expired.
- DS-2019 – Inform the Flagler College International Center immediately if you notice a discrepancy in information on your DS-2019. Additionally, please reach out to the FCIC to extend your DS-2019 prior to the program end date.
- I-94 – Have a copy of your I-94 with you at all times.

Full Course Load –

In order to maintain your lawful status in the United States, you should be registered for full time during each semester they are present on campus. **Full time enrollment for Flagler College is 12 credit hours.**

Reporting Changes

You are required to have a valid local U.S. mailing address in St. Augustine, FL and a permanent residential address outside of the United States at all times (P.O. box addresses not valid). As a J-1 exchange student you must inform the International Center within 10 days of any changes to your physical address, mailing address, telephone number, and changes in your major or minor. You must also contact your International Student Advisor if you complete or withdraw from your program early.

Employment (Academic Training) –

Students may not engage in unauthorized work. Students should consult with their International Student Advisor prior to engaging in a form of employment to ensure they are being compliant.

Failure to comply with J-1 regulations may result in the termination of your J-1 status and loss of future eligibility to enter the U.S.



F-1 Student Visa Rules & Regulations

The F-1 visa is a type of non-immigrant student visa that allows non-immigrants to enter the U.S. to engage in full-time course of study and pursue an educational degree under the exchange visitor program. F-1 visas are only issued at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate outside of the U.S.

Once admitted to Flagler College, you are eligible to obtain an F-1 visa by visiting your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate and presenting your Flagler College Form I-20 with additional supporting documents such as proof of financial support and the SEVIS fee payment receipt.

Check-In

After arriving to Flagler College at the beginning of each academic semester (Fall & Spring), you should check your Flagler email frequently for information regarding the mandatory International Student Check-In and other important information. In addition to checking-in, it is your responsibility to review and understand Flagler College International Center guidelines for maintaining F-1 status to ensure compliance with U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) F-1 regulations during your entire academic program.

Maintaining Status

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) mandates specific rules as to how F-1 students must maintain status in the U.S. It is important for current students to remember that they must adhere to these requirements throughout their time at Flagler College to ensure they maintain legal immigration status. The Flagler College International Center is willing and able to assist you and answer questions you have concerning your immigration status.

Below is a comprehensive list of the responsibilities all F-1 students must follow while studying in the United States.

Full Course Load –

Undergraduate - must be enrolled in **12 credit hours minimum** during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Graduate – must be enrolled in **9 credit hours minimum** during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Online classes –

Students are able to participate in online learning courses. However, students may only register for three (3) online credits as a part of their full time enrollment. For undergraduate students, only three (3) credit hours may count towards the total 12 credit hours for the Fall and Spring semesters. For graduate students, only three (3) credit hours may count towards the total 9 credit hours for the Fall and Spring semesters.

Exceptions to Full Course Load (Reduced Course Load) –

Immigration regulations require that F1 international students maintain a full course of study (12 credit hours for undergraduate & 9 credit hours for graduate). However, in certain

situations, students are able to drop below the mandatory full time requirements. Specifically, difficulties resulting from a disease or injury, a loss in the family, or other serious circumstances causing challenges in handling day-to-day responsibilities are acceptable reasons for reduced course loads. Please note that in all circumstances, a reduced course load must be approved by the International Center **BEFORE** a student is allowed to drop a course. **Dropping below a full course load without prior approval will result in the student being out of status.**

Make normal progress towards degree completion -

F-1 visa students are required to make normal progress towards completing their program of study by the program end date listed on the Form I-20. Making normal progress includes, but is not limited to, enrolling in the proper courses required for degree completion (12 credit hours per semester for undergraduate and 9 credit hours per semester for graduate), maintaining satisfactory academic progress, and continually meeting all institutional enrollment requirements. Students are required to reach out to the International Center in the event they are no longer making normal progress.

Reporting Changes

You are required to have a valid local U.S. mailing address in St. Augustine, FL and a permanent residential address outside of the United States at all times (P.O. box addresses not valid). As an F-1 international student you must inform the International Center within 10 days of any changes to your physical address, mailing address, telephone number, and changes in your major or minor. You must also contact your International Student Advisor if you complete or withdraw from your program early.

Failure to comply with F-1 regulations may result in the termination of your F-1 status and loss of future eligibility to enter the U.S.



Important Information for all International and Exchange Students

I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

When you enter the country, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) will issue you an I-94 record which indicates you have been lawfully admitted into U.S. under a J-1 or F-1 visa status and states the length of stay. Please ensure the I-94 record is correct and indicates that you entered under the appropriate category.

You can check your Admission Type at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>. The FCIC suggests you keep a copy of the I-94 for yourself and any dependents.

Medical Insurance

J-1 Students –

The U.S. Department of State requires all exchange visitors to have medical insurance for themselves and any accompanying dependents for the duration of their program. As a minimum, J-1 exchange visitors must have health insurance that meet the following requirements:

- Medical Benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of Remains in the amount of \$25,000
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation in the amount of \$50,000
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness
- A policy underwritten by an insurance carrier that meet one of the following ratings

F-1 Students –

Flagler College requires all F-1 international students to enroll in the offered health insurance plan prior to their arrival. Please be sure you complete the appropriate immunization forms before you arrive to campus. Visit Flagler College's Health Services office to access important information like current immunization forms, medical insurance guide, and much more.

You should receive notifications to sign up for the insurance plan upon acceptance to the college.



Traveling In- and Outside the U.S.

While traveling within the country, you should carry your immigration documents and your most recent I-94 record.

Any time you plan to travel outside of the U.S. you must visit the FCIC prior to your departure to get a travel signature on your DS-2019 (J-1) or Form I-20 (F-1). Be sure you consult with your International Student Advisor prior to departure.

When returning from your travels abroad you will need the following documents to re-enter the U.S.:

J-1 Exchange Visitors	F-1 International Students
Valid Passport (valid for at least 6 months upon re-entry)	Valid Passport (valid for at least 6 months upon re-entry)
Valid J-1 visa (valid for at least 6 months upon –re-entry. Canadian citizens are visa-exempt)	Valid F-1 visa (valid for at least 6 months upon –re-entry. Canadian citizens are visa-exempt)
Valid DS-2019 (with updated travel signature within the last 6 months)	Valid Form I-20 (with updated travel signature within the last 6 months)
I-94	I-94

Travelling with an Expired Visa

If are planning to travel internationally and your visa is expired, the International Center strongly advises you to make arrangements and apply for a visa renewal at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside of the United States several weeks prior to your departure. It is essential that you make the necessary preparations for obtaining a new visa if yours is expired, as you will need a valid visa to re-enter the United States. Furthermore, based on the location of the embassy/consulate and season during which you try to apply, appointments may have to be scheduled weeks in advance.

The International Center also suggests you plan adequate time for the gathering the required documents as well as for the processing time of the embassy/consulate until your visa will be sent to you or available for pick up. Please visit the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate of your destination/home country for further information and requirements. **Reminder! You will not be able to re-enter the United States without a valid visa.**

Employment

On-Campus Employment

J-1 & F-1 students are eligible to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week) during the academic year and full-time (more than 20 hours per week) during winter and summer breaks under your student-status. Please check My.Flagler.edu for the most up-to-date listing of on-campus employment opportunities. The International Center recommends that students schedule an appointment with the Career Development Center prior to your job interview, as interviewing and resume styles may be culturally different than that of your home country.

Off-Campus Employment

J-1 Exchange students interested in participating in an off-campus work experience may apply for Academic Training (AT) through the International Center. AT is meant to give students practical experience, and must directly relate to their academic program of study.

Students may request AT for internships, practicums, apprenticeships, and other types of practical experience gained through off-campus employment.

Eligibility –

- Students must meet the following requirements to be considered for AT.
- Good academic standing
- Maintaining J-1 status
- Employment must directly relate to student's program of study
- Must have an offer of employment
- Must have completed AT Request Form

Additional information –

- AT may be requested on a full-time or part-time basis
- AT may be authorized during or after the completion of your program
- Students must receive authorization from the International Center BEFORE beginning employment

F-1 students may not engage in any off-campus employment (including paid and unpaid internships) before receiving proper employment authorization from the International Center.

There are two types of work authorization you may apply for:

- Curricular Practical Training (CPT), which allows you to engage in an internship or employment opportunity integral to your academic program and related to your field of study.
- Optional Practical Training (OPT), which allows you to gain practical experience within your field of study upon completion of your program for up to 12 months.

Please visit the International Center upon arrival to Flagler College for further information on off-campus employment opportunities and application procedures.

Any unauthorized employment outside of what is specified on your DS-2019 (J-1) or Form I-20 (F-1) is a violation of immigration regulations and can result in the loss of respective student status.

Social Security Number

In order to receive wages from employment in the U.S. you must obtain a Social Security Number (SSN) and card from the Social Security Administration (SSA) office.

How to Obtain a SSN:

- 1) You must wait for your immigration information to appear in the government database (approximately 10 days after arrival and after attending your orientation with the IC).
- 2) Take the following documents to present in person at the SSA Office:
 - Evidence of employment
 - A letter from Flagler College's Human Resources Department
 - A letter from Flagler College International Center

- Valid Passport and Visa
- Form I-20
- A print out of your electronic I-94
- Completed SSN Application to be found at: <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>

3) After submitting the application, you will be given a receipt. You can expect to receive your Social Security Card by mail approximately 14 days after submission of your application. The SSN issued to you will never change and is valid indefinitely.

Program Completion

Grace Period

J-1 Students - upon completion of your degree program, you have 30-days to:

- Prepare for departure from the U.S.
- Transfer to another school/degree program by requesting a SEVIS Transfer Out
- Change your visa status

F-1 Students - upon completion of your degree program, you have 60-days to:

- Prepare for departure from the U.S.
- Transfer to another accredited educational institution/degree program by requesting a SEVIS Transfer
- Change your visa status

All visa status change requests, employment applications, and SEVIS transfers must be initiated well in advance of the program end date, located on the 1st page of your DS-2019 (J-1) and Form I-20 (F-1).

International travel during a student's grace period is not allowed. Travelling internationally will result in the ending of one's grace period. Students who plan to travel internationally during their grace period with the intention of returning to the United States must be prepared to re-enter on a different visa type.



Getting Around in St. Augustine

Transportation

Around Campus - The Flagler College shuttle system provides convenient transportation from campus to each dormitory (operation hours 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.). The International Center encourages students to take advantage of this opportunity, as it is fast, safe, clean and free. For more information about on-campus transportation and parking permits please visit the Flagler College Safety and Security website at: <https://www.flagler.edu/student-support-services/safety--security/> or contact them by phone at +1-904-819-6200.

Around town - St. Augustine is extremely pedestrian and biker friendly. While the city does not have its own dedicated public transportation system, St. Johns County operates the Sunshine Bus Company with 2 local routes. The Red Line serves A1A, Downtown, and the St. Johns County Government Center; and the Blue Line serves some of the major local shopping centers, including (but not limited to) Wal-Mart, Cobblestone, Flagler Hospital, and Flagler Auditorium.

Two alternative transportation methods are Uber and Lyft. Both of these companies employ drivers using their personal vehicles in a similar manner to taxi cabs. The rides can be ordered and paid for with a credit card through their respective cell phone applications. However, users must download the respective company's free application on their phone. Please visit the company websites for more information.

Local Taxi Contact Information:

Abraxi Taxi Clean Taxi of St. Augustine
 (904) 599-6666 (904) 808-9995

Campus Map



U.S. Etiquette & Holidays

Everyday Life

Tipping – Adding an additional 15-20% to the total bill in restaurants and bars and other service settings (i.e. taxi cab drivers, nail practitioners, etc.) is a common practice.

Alcohol Laws – The legal drinking age is 21 years. It's generally not allowed to have and consume alcohol open in public outside of designated events and restaurants.

Conversation Topics to Avoid – Personal income, religion, political views.

Personal Space – People in the U.S. generally want to be given privacy and 2-3 feet of personal space.

Greetings – An informal greeting may involve a wave, saying “hello/hi,” or can even take the form of a handshake.

Table Manners – Most meals are eaten with utensils.

Common Gestures – Wave, peace sign, smile.

Driving – The driver's seat is on the left side of the car and traffic is on the right side of the road.

Personal Hygiene – it is common to bathe/shower one or two times a day as personal cleanliness is highly valued in the U.S.

Business Etiquette

Introductions – It is polite to introduce yourself and those in your party to all individuals/parties involved. A handshake with direct eye contact is the most common and appropriate business greeting.

Language – Although the U.S. does not have an official language, English is the most common language used.

Eye Contact – It is considered respectful to make eye contact with the individual who is speaking.

Appointments/Meetings – Always be on time. In the U.S., people generally plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early.

Holidays

New Year's Day - January 1

Martin Luther King Day (observed) - January 15

President's Day - Third Monday in February

Memorial Day - Last Monday in May

Independence Day - July 4

Labor Day - First Monday in September

Columbus Day (observed) - Second Monday in October

Thanksgiving - Fourth Thursday in November

Christmas Day – December 25



Culture Shock

The International Center's Tips for Dealing with Culture Shock

- *Talk to someone when you are feeling overwhelmed.* It can be helpful processing what you are feeling by speaking with someone. Your listener can be a friend (at Flagler or in your home country), a trusted professor, a fellow international or exchange student, or someone from the International Center.
- *Be prepared to feel homesick.* We all say it “won’t happen to me,” but the reality is we ALL experience homesickness sometimes. By acknowledging the fact that you will experience this, you can be prepared to embrace the feelings as they arise as opposed to suppressing them.
- *Bring something familiar from home to Flagler.* It may seem menial, but there is a lot of value in bringing a cherished photo, your favorite book, or a favorite recipe of yours from home. In moments when you feel down, you can refer to something familiar to help address your current feelings.
- *Express your emotions.* There will be times during your abroad experience when all you want to do is cry. Similarly, there will be moments when you laugh so hard your sides hurt. Regardless of the emotion, it is important to express whatever you are feeling when you are feeling it. Cry, laugh, shout, pray, create, do whatever you need to express yourself in the moment.
- *Keep an open-mind and ask questions when you don’t know or understand.* It is important to remember that you will not know everything about American politics, history, and cultural customs. It is ok to ask for clarification.
- *Set realistic goals for yourself.* At times, it may seem like you have too much on your plate. Instead of trying to complete grandiose tasks in one sitting; try to accomplish smaller manageable goals. However, do not be upset if you do not complete everything on your “to-do” list.
- *Make small decisions and see them through.* Accomplishing small tasks will help you regain confidence.
- *Do things that pique your interest.* Never lived near the beach? Then join the Flagler surf club! There are many different opportunities and resources (both on and off campus) in St. Augustine. Do your best to try something that interests you.
- *Slow down!* The tendency is to keep things moving quickly. This type of approach can become overwhelming very quickly. Instead of speeding through the day, try to carve out sometime to slow down and relax. This can help you address the emotions you are experiencing.
- *Be realistic.* The reality is not everything will go according to plan! You will have good days and bad days, but the important thing to remember is nothing is infinite. Remind yourself that other international and exchange students have experienced similar feelings while studying at Flagler College.
- *Visit the International Center.* We are here to help you manage your many priorities as an international or exchange student. It is our job to help you transition to your life at Flagler College, and we want to be available to you in any way we can. If you are ever feeling overwhelmed, homesick, or are experiencing culture shock, do not hesitate to stop by our offices. Please do not be a stranger!