

# **International Student and Scholar Services VCU Office of International Education Procedures and Guidelines**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Who Should Read This Document</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Contacts</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Procedures</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>I. Housing Accommodations for International Students/Scholars</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>II. Arrival Pick-Up</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>III. Medical Health Insurance</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>IV. Non-Academic, Non-Immigration Issues</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Related Documents</u>	<u>4</u>

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## PURPOSE

Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to bringing international students, research scholars, professors, and specialists to the VCU campus to participate in academic programs and other endeavors. The University recognizes the importance of offering world-class academic programs in attracting international visitors, and recognizes as well that international visitors offer important cultural and academic interactions with U.S. students and faculty which immensely enrich the VCU academic experiences.

It is the goal of the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services to welcome international visitors to VCU and to help those visitors' transition into their academic programs and into their new life in the United States. The office also offers guidance and support to those international visitors while they are at VCU.

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## WHO SHOULD READ THIS DOCUMENT

All faculty and staff who interact with international students, research scholars, visiting professors or specialists.

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## CONTACTS

The VCU Office of International Education officially interprets these procedures and guidelines and shall revise or eliminate any or all parts as necessary to meet the changing needs of Virginia Commonwealth University and its population of international visitors, whether students, research scholars, visiting professors, or specialists. Questions about this procedure/guideline will be directed to the Executive Director of the VCU Office of International Education.

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## PROCEDURES

### I. Housing Accommodations for International Students/Scholars

Advisors in the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services provide advice and guidance to VCU international students and research scholars about on-campus and off-campus housing opportunities.

Advisors in International Student and Scholar Services work closely with the VCU Office of Residential Life and Housing to find suitable housing for students wanting on-campus housing, whether on the Monroe Park or the MCV campus.

Discussions with students about housing include explanations of leases, utilities, and transportation.

Advisors in the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services are also available to advise Schools or Departments about possible housing options for their visiting professors/scholars.

### II. Arrival Pick-Up

Advisors in the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services offer to meet new VCU international students when they arrive at the Richmond International airport (RIC), train or bus stations. International students submit a "VCU Welcome Transportation Form" (see RELATED DOCUMENTS) to the Office of International Student and Scholar Services **at least two weeks prior to their arrival** at RIC or at the Richmond bus station or train station.

Students making late requests for an arrival pick-up will be accommodated if possible.

Schools or Departments will make arrangements in their School or Department to meet their own visitors (i.e., visiting lecturers, visiting professors not affiliated with the VCU International Partnership Universities) at the Richmond airport, bus station or train station. If no one is available, the School or Department may contact the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services which will arrange assistance, if possible.

There is a nominal fee for this service.

### **III. Medical Health Insurance**

International students with **F visas** studying at Virginia Commonwealth University **are required by VCU** to have medical health insurance for themselves and their dependents. The VCU Office of International Education helps VCU international students find appropriate medical health insurance once they get to VCU. The Office of International Education strongly recommends that students obtain a policy from a company having an office/representative in the U.S. in order to make easier the billing process by their health care providers. It is also recommended that students obtain a policy with a policy year minimum benefit of \$250,000 and with at least a \$1,000,000 life-time benefit, and with coverage for medical evacuation (returning a seriously ill student to his/her home country) and repatriation of remains.

International students studying at Virginia Commonwealth University with a **J visa are required by U.S. regulation** to have medical health insurance for themselves and their dependents (for more information on minimum benefit requirements see “Medical Insurance Requirements for All J-1 and J-2 Visa Holders” in RELATED DOCUMENTS).

International students should contact the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services in the Office of International Education for information on medical health insurance in the U.S.

### **IV. Non-Academic, Non-Immigration Issues**

The VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services refers international students to their academic advisors when there are academic issues to be resolved. The VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services refers international visitors with visa or immigration issues to the VCU Office of Immigration Services.

Advisors in the VCU Office of International Student and Scholar Services will, however, provide the following services to international students and scholars:

- Communicate with new students prior to their arrival by e-mail or by phone to provide information about VCU and VCU services.
- Plan and implement orientation activities for newly arriving international students and scholars, including information aimed to assist with adjusting to U.S. culture(s).
- Organize shopping trips to buy essential supplies upon arrival.
- As needed, refer students to support agencies on campus like the Office of Student Accounting, University Counseling Services, First-Year Student Services, etc.

- Assist students in satisfying their Student Health requirements, including getting tuberculosis skin testing (PPD) and, if needed, follow-up chest x-rays.
- Assist students in opening bank accounts in Richmond.
- Provide information on obtaining Social Security numbers, Virginia drivers' licenses, Virginia ID cards, and day care for dependent children.
- Organize bi-monthly "coffee hours" which will allow international students and other visitors to lunch together and will foster cultural exchange with VCU domestic students and faculty.
- Organize monthly educational excursions to locations of interest within Virginia (e.g., Jamestown) or along the East Coast of the U.S. (e.g., Washington, D.C. or New York City).
- Recruit U.S. students and/or families to be "conversation partners" with international students or to be "friendship partners" who host monthly visits in their homes.

Transportation services are provided on a nominal fee basis.

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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- VCU Welcome Transportation Form (for airport, train or bus pick-up)  
[http://www.vcu.edu/oie/pdfs/Transportation\\_Form.pdf](http://www.vcu.edu/oie/pdfs/Transportation_Form.pdf)
- Immigration Services for International Students, Research Scholars, Instructional Faculty, Postdocs or Specialists—Required insurance coverage for J-1 visa holders and their dependents:  
<http://www.vcu.edu/oie/pdfs/J-1%20InsuranceReqs.pdf>