International Student Handbook

Please refer to detailed information in this *International Student Handbook* and check in with the International Student Advisor for questions and advance authorization on actions that will affect your visa status.

New International Student Orientation is for all incoming international students in F-1 status (and their dependents), as required by immigration regulations. Failure to check-in in person will result in the termination of your status. Orientation is held at the start of each semester and date is announced to incoming international students after their full acceptance. Updates are also made on *MyCIIS, Student Affairs International Students* section.

**June 2018**
**CIIS | SAN FRANCISCO**

### NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

Orientation will provide information about:
- federal immigration regulations and your responsibilities as an F-1 student
- how to navigate the campus and administration CIIS
- health insurance
- basic needs such as housing, transportation, banking, etc.
- campus employment
- unique characteristics of the U.S. classroom

You will fulfill these essential administrative responsibilities during Orientation:
- provide copies of immigration documents (passport, I-94, visa stamp, admission stamp in passport, dependents’ documents when applicable.)

You will have the chance to connect:
- with other new students to form friendships
- with continuing students for advice and support
- with the students’ from other academic departments
- with relevant campus services, programs and facilities
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Dear New International Student,

Welcome to the California Institute of Integral Studies!

We are excited to have you join our growing international student community. I hope that CIIS and the greater Bay Area will offer you many opportunities to explore and grow as you undertake a new academic endeavor.

Whether you are here as a student, scholar, or visiting faculty member, this handbook is designed to help you locate the resources and services you will need while you are here, and to answer some of your questions. If you are unable to find an answer to your questions, or need to be referred to another student service, academic department or organization, please contact the International Student Advisor at any time. We suggest that you read it at the start of your experience and refer to it periodically as your needs change.

The Bay Area offers an array of activities and natural wonders. You will find space to hike, kayak, mountain bike and surf. And, the city’s diverse neighborhoods offer a variety of theaters, museums, and restaurants. If there is anything that you would like to explore, please let me know. We may be able to organize an event and get the whole CIIS community involved.

Please know that I am available to answer your questions, hear your concerns, inform you of your rights and responsibilities, and ease your adjustment to life at CIIS and the United States. The Student Affairs Office, International Student Services is on the Mission Street campus, Room 302. I can be reached by telephone at (415) 575-6157 and by email at joconnor@ciis.edu.

I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Jody O’Connor
Associate Director, Student Affairs
International Student Recruitment & Services
Principal Designated School Official
International Student Services

OUR MISSION
International Students Services, a division within the Student Affairs Office, provides immigration support services to international students and scholars, and promotes awareness, perspectives and understanding of our international students. We realize this mission in several ways:

- Support international students in successfully completing their educational goals;
- Support international students in maintaining their legal status in the U.S.;
- Assist the university in its commitment to cultural diversity;
- Promote cross-cultural education and experiences through programs, services and events that build our global community;
- Educate the campus about and is a resource for questions pertaining to federal immigration regulations.

SERVICES
The following services are provided to international students through the Student Affairs Office, International Student Services:

- New International Student Orientation
- Summer Bridge Program (academic writing intensive)
- On-going editing services and writing workshops
- Immigration advising and workshops
- Tax workshop
- Liaison for international students with university departments
- Community and campus outreach activities
- Personal and cultural adjustment assistance
- Health insurance plan

Other offices with services for all students include:

- Career Development Services— coaching and workshops for students and alumni around professional goals and applying for employment.
- Center for Writing and Scholarship— one-on-one tutoring, editing, workshop, courses
- Disability Services— assistance with accommodations made to your academic study based on a documented disability.
- Laurence S. Rockefeller Library— workshops, private study rooms
- Wellness Center— one-on-one counselling, health and wellness coaching, rotating stress-reduction offerings from yoga, Pilates, workshops and more.

GENERAL HOURS/ CONTACT
International Student Services is part of the Student Affairs Office and is located in Room 302 of the Mission Street building. Another international student advisor is located at the ACTCM Arkansas Street campus. Information for international students including documents, policies and other helpful resources can be found under the MyCIIS, Student Affairs tab. You are more than welcome to stop by in-person at any time, though it is always best to schedule an appointment for complicated matters. The International Student Advisor work hours are posted outside of the office and may change each
semester. Contact Associate Director of Student Affairs, Jody O’Connor, at joconnor@ciis.edu or 415-575-6157. You can also connect on Facebook!

CIIS POLICIES
The F-1 visa regulations and CIIS policies may not always compliment one another. Despite what the regulations allow, interpretation of the visa regulations by International Student Services and CIIS policies take precedence. CIIS policies are found in the Academic Catalogue on MyCIIS ➔ Academics tab.

ONLINE/HYBRID PROGRAM STUDENTS
Online degree programs do not meet eligibility requirements for the I-20/F-1 student visa. Online students should enter the U.S. on a tourist visa or tourist waiver for the required weeklong intensives/retreats. Please contact the International Student Advisor with questions.

Students in weekend or low-residency/semi-distance programs are required to obtain the F-1 student visa whether or not they intend to live in the U.S.

Although much of the focus for international student services is oriented to immigration policy for F-1 student visa holders, all international students at CIIS are eligible and welcome to avail themselves of services mentioned above—and through the Student Affairs Department.

Information for F-1 Students

Immigration regulations are subject to change. The International Student Advisor will meet with students who are requesting any changes to the rules for maintaining status and will update forms, websites and the International Student Handbook to reflect correct regulations.

THE SEVIS SYSTEM
The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) manages the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVP is a program under the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

SEVIS is an electronic means of providing information to the U.S. Government on all F-1, M-1, J-1 students, scholars and their dependents. It is also a system for tracking a student’s immigration history. Schools are required to use SEVIS for the following purposes:

- Issuing I-20 forms to students
- Recommending off-campus employment
- Maintaining up-to-date records on the status of each student

SEVIS Fee
Currently the SEVIS fee is $200 USD for students. Please check the website for up-to-date costs.

How is the fee paid?
You will need your SEVIS ID on your Certificate of Eligibility Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 to complete the fee payment. The SEVIS fee is non-refundable.

By the Internet: Visit http://www.FMJfee.com by using a credit card and completing the online Form I-901 (Fee for Remittance for Certain F, M, and J Non-immigrants).
For more detailed information about the fee please visit [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm).

**GOVERNMENT WEBSITES**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)  
[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

U.S. Department of Status  
[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
[www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov)

**ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS/TERMS**

**Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months into the future to enter the U.S. and should be renewed if it expires during your stay. You may renew your visa at your Embassy in San Francisco or in the U.S.

**Entry Visa:** The stamp or label entered in your passport by the U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad. (Note: Canadians do not need visas to enter the U.S. as students.) The visa authorizes a specified number of entries — ranging from one to multiple — until a specified date. The visa must be valid only on the day you enter the U.S. It does not need to remain valid while you are in the U.S. However, if your visa has expired and you leave the country, you must renew the visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad before you may re-enter the U.S. The F-1 student visa cannot be revalidated in the U.S.

**Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status:** This form, also called the SEVIS I-20, is sent to you by an approved SEVIS school, notifies consular and immigration officials of your eligibility for F-1 student status. The Form I-20 records relevant information about the school and the program you plan to attend. Page 3 of this form details the conditions of maintaining F-1 status. Your signature on the form indicates that you have read and will comply with these conditions. Page 2 must be signed for re-entry to the U.S. within one year during your course of study and 6 months during Optional Practical Training (OPT). You will use form to identify yourself when doing business with the U.S. government offices, including the Social Security Administration and Department of Motor Vehicles.
Form I-94: The Form I-94, also called the Arrival/Departure Record, is issued by the immigration inspector at your port of entry and is retrieved online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home. It indicates an eleven-digit admission number assigned to you each time you enter the U.S. You will use the admission number to identify yourself when doing business with the U.S. government offices, including the Social Security Administration, Department of Motor Vehicles and others. Please be sure to retrieve your I-94 online each time you enter the U.S.

Employment Authorization Document (EAD): This is the authorization card that F-1 visa holders will receive when approved for off-campus employment through Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Severe Economic Hardship. You will be required to show this upon re-entry to the U.S. while on OPT and to your employer to prove eligibility for work. You may not begin working until you receive the card and may only work for the dates listed on the card. This card alone is not eligible for entry to the U.S. — it must be used alongside the SEVIS I-20 and visa.

Duration of Status: You are admitted to the U.S. as an F-1 student (and your spouse and children as F-2 dependents) for a period known as “duration of status”. D/S should be indicated on your I-94 and the stamp in your passport. Duration of status is defined as the time during which you are pursuing a full course of study or authorized for practical training following completion of studies, plus 60 days to prepare for your departure from the U.S.

Designated School Official (DSO): The DSO is the main contact between the student and the school, using the SEVIS database to update student information accordingly in each semester. The DSO signature is also required on your SEVIS I-20 for re-entry to the U.S. The main DSO, the PDSO, at CIIS is the Associate Director of Student Affairs, International Student Recruitment & Services. If the International Student Advisor is unavailable to sign your I-20, you may check on MyCIIS for a name of another DSO on campus who can sign your I-20.

RENEWING YOUR VISA
As indicated previously, the visa in your passport authorizes a specified number of entries to the U.S. — ranging from one to multiple— until a specified date. The visa must be valid only on the day you enter the U.S. and does not need to remain valid while you are in the U.S. However, if your visa has expired and you leave the U.S., you must renew the visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad before you can
re-enter the U.S. The F-1 student visa cannot be revalidated in the U.S. and it recommended that you renew your visa in your home country. (Note: Canadians do not need visas to enter the U.S. as students, only a valid I-20 and passport is required at the port of entry.)

**To Revalidate Your Visa in Canada or Mexico**

Individuals from eligible countries who have never been out of status in the United States are eligible to apply to renew their visa at a border post in Canada or Mexico. Individuals seeking appointments should be aware that consular offices at border posts will refuse applications when they believe there are indications of fraud present. Also, their lack of knowledge of local conditions and familiarity with third country documents may prevent them from properly adjudicating the case.

Third country nationals (TCN) present in the United States must make an appointment for an interview to apply for a nonimmigrant visa at any U.S. border post in Canada or Mexico. Consular offices are located in Halifax, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver in Canada, and Ciudad Juarez, Matamoros and Tijuana in Mexico. Information is at [https://mx.usembassy.gov/visas/](https://mx.usembassy.gov/visas/).

### Maintaining Your F-1 Student Visa Status

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for F-1 students sets forth regulations regarding how to maintain your visa status. As long as you continually meet these requirements you are considered “in status” or “maintaining your visa status”. The International Student Advisor is available to assist you with maintaining your status. However, when you (and your dependents) enter the country in non-immigrant status it is your responsibility to understand the immigration regulations that affect you. Any changes to the information on your SEVIS form I-20 must have prior approval by the International Student Advisor in order to maintain your legal non-immigrant status.

**Maintaining your visa status requires that you:**

- Keep your passport and I-20 valid at all times.
- Attend the school you are authorized to attend as indicated on your I-20.
- Register and complete each semester as a full-time student (12 units for BA, 9 units for SPPH/SCT, ACTCM programs vary, or as otherwise defined by the university).
- Apply with the International Student Advisor if you wish to
  - change your level of study at CIIS
  - transfer to another SEVIS-approved institution
  - extend your stay in the U.S. beyond the program end date on the I-20
  - change your non-immigrant status
  - drop below full-time registration
- All requests must be made in advance of making any changes and prior to the program end date listed on your I-20 to remain in status.
- Have your SEVIS Form I-20 endorsed by an International Student Advisor before traveling outside the United States.
- Report a change of address to the International Student Advisor within 10 days.
- Do not work without written authorization from the USCIS or International Student Advisor, as required. Prior authorization for employment that is not on campus is always required.
- Do not work on-campus more than 20 hours per week while school is in session.
• Inform the International Student Advisor once you complete your degree, and your date of departure.
• Students who violate their status should meet with the International Student Advisor to discuss their options for reinstatement of their visa status.
• It is CIIS policy that international students maintain health insurance throughout the duration of their course. Without maintaining insurance you may not enroll in courses and therefore will not be able to maintain your visa status.

FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENT
Federal regulations require that F-1 students maintain a full course of study while attending CIIS, and make normal progress toward their degree. A full course of study, also called full-time status, is defined as 12 units for BA, 9 units for SPPH/SCT, varying units/semester for ACTCM, or as otherwise defined by the university. Please check Enrollment Status Classifications via the Registrar’s Office.

Federal regulations also require international students to seek prior authorization from the International Student Advisor to drop below a full course of study. A student who drops below a full course of study without prior approval will be considered out of status with the USCIS. The requirement for full-time enrollment is only applicable to the fall and spring terms for immigration purposes and you may remain in the U.S. during summer without registering for classes, or registering part-time. Please note that some CIIS programs require registration in the summer semester.

Exceptions to the full-time enrollment requirement
Enrolling for less than full-time is called a Reduced Course Load (RCL) in the immigration regulations. Reasons for approved RCLs are:

• Academic difficulties: This is defined as initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, or unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods. This exemption is permitted only once and only for a single term of study. A RCL for academic difficulty must consist of at least 6 units.
• Medical conditions: This requires documentation from a licensed medical professional, MD, DO or Psychologist. The exemption may not exceed an aggregate of 12 months and permits students to withdraw from classes if necessary. In medical RCLs, enrollment can be as low as 0 units/semester.
• Completion of course of study: A RCL may be authorized in the student’s final term.

How to apply for a Reduced Course Load
Dropping below a full course of study requires prior approval from the International Student Advisor in order not to be considered out of status with the USCIS. Submit a signed Request for Reduced Course Load Form to the International Student Advisor in advance of registering less than full-time. In some cases, participation in a Reduced Course Load will affect eligibility for your CIIS scholarship award.

RULES FOR TAKING AUDIT UNITS
Students who are making normal progress toward their degree and who do not meet the eligibility for taking a Reduced Course Load may take audit units to meet the full-time enrollment requirement for immigration purposes. Students must meet with the International Student Advisor in advance of the add/drop deadline for documented approval. Note that audit units do not count toward enrollment definitions per CIIS policy. You therefore may be ineligible for the CIIS scholarship, or other situations that require full-time enrollment.
RULES FOR TAKING ONLINE COURSES

The U.S. federal government limits the number of on-line courses that an F-1 student can count towards a full-time course load during a required term. The distance education provision in the student visa regulation does not limit the number of distance education credits that can be used towards a degree's requirements, only the number of such credits that can be used to satisfy the "full course of study" requirement in a semester. During the fall and spring semesters, F-1 students may take only one (1) online or distance education course (up to 3 units) that can be counted toward full-time enrollment.

A course designated as a hybrid course at CIIS which requires all students to come in for a class, exam or some other purpose required to complete the course it is not considered online and does not count toward the limit.

If a student only needs one course to finish the program of study in their final semester, it may not be taken online. There must be a physical presence required for the course.

Please check with CIIS requirements to determine the maximum number of online units that can apply toward your program, if any.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT IN TWO SEVIS-APPROVED SCHOOLS

Immigration regulations allow F-1 students at CIIS to enroll at both CIIS and at another SEVIS-approved school at the same time through a program known as concurrent enrollment. The concurrent enrollment provision is applicable only to those who will be registered less than full-time CIIS, and who are relying on enrollment at another school to meet the full-time enrollment requirement. As long as a student is enrolled full-time at CIIS, he or she does not need special permission to take an additional class at another school. Please meet with your faculty advisor for approval to transfer in units earned outside of CIIS.

Conditions for Concurrent Enrollment:

- Be in valid F-1 status and in good academic standing (2.0 GPA for undergraduates; 3.0 GPA for graduates).
- Be enrolled at CIIS in at least 9 units (BA), at least 6 units (SPPH/SCT) or at least half-time (ACTCM) plus 3 or more units at another school minimum. This applies only in the fall and spring semesters.
- Complete and submit the CIIS Registrar’s Office Transfer Credit Request Form.
- Check CIIS policy for the maximum number of transfer units that can apply to your degree program, if any.

If the student is enrolled in programs with different full course of study requirements (for example, clock hours vs. credit hours), CIIS is permitted to determine what constitutes a full course of study. Usually, this is done by converting the credit portion and the clock hour portion of study in to percentages of full-time study.

How to apply for Concurrent Enrollment

Submit a completed Concurrent Enrollment Request Form signed by your program and get approval from the International Student Advisor at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the semester and before the add/drop deadline.
EXTENSION OF PROGRAM OF STUDY
Page one of the Form I-20 lists a “program end date” which is based on the official length of your degree program. This is the length of time you can legally remain in the U.S. or by which you must take action to make any changes to your I-20. If you are not able to complete your degree by the program end date, you must request a program extension with the International Student Advisor.

Compelling reasons for program extension approval include: changing or adding a major, documented illness, difficulty with your research topic resulting in change of topic or unanticipated delays. If your reason for needing an extension of program is an illness, you must also provide a letter from your doctor indicating the nature and extent of the illness or injury. Delays due to academic failure, probation or suspension are not valid reasons for granting an extension of program.

The Program Extension form must state the additional length of time you will need to complete your degree and the expected date of completion. You must also show proof of finances to cover tuition and living expenses for the additional time. At present, extensions may only be granted for one year at a time.

If a program extension is not requested by the student before the program end date listed on their current I-20, the student is considered out of status and therefore ineligible for a program extension. The student will have to apply for reinstatement of their status or exit the U.S. and apply for a new visa.

How to apply for a Program Extension
Submit a completed Program Extension Form along with required financial documents to the International Student Advisor for approval at least 4 weeks in advance of the program end date listed on your I-20.

CHANGE OF DEGREE LEVEL OR PROGRAM AT CIIS
At some point in your course of study you may decide to apply to transfer your degree level or degree program at CIIS. In another situation, you may wish to begin a new degree level or program upon successful completion of the degree that you were admitted to the U.S. to pursue. So long as you maintain your status and meet the institutional requirements for a new program at CIIS, you are eligible for an updated I-20 form to reflect these changes. Changes to your I-20 may also include the estimated program length and financial estimates.

How to apply for an updated I-20 from CIIS
Bring the following documents to the International Student Advisor at least 2 weeks in advance of beginning courses for your new level/program:

- Proof of full acceptance to the new program at CIIS, and
- If you are transferring to a new degree level you will need to provide a Certificate of Funding Form and support documents demonstrating your ability to cover expenses for the new degree level, or
- If you are transferring to a new program at the same degree level and you have not submitted updated financial documentation to the International Student Advisor in the last 12 months, then the Certificate of Funding form and support financial documents are required.

SCHOOL TRANSFERS
A student in F-1 status is eligible for transfer to another school in the United States if they have maintained their visa status. Students who wish to transfer from CIIS to another SEVIS-approved school
in the U.S. should inform the International Student Advisor of intent to transfer and provide proof of acceptance into the new institution. F-1 students planning to transfer should keep the following considerations in mind:

- Transfers can be allowed only if you have pursued a full course of study at the old school and plan to do the same at the new school.
- You must enroll in the new school in the first term possible.
- You must provide a Certificate of Funding that shows that you have enough money to cover all costs for one academic year at the new school.
- If you have violated your student status, you must apply for reinstatement with the USCIS (see the International Student Advisor for information about applying for reinstatement).

Please refer to the Transfer Eligibility Form on MyCIIS.

ADDRESS AND NAME UPDATE REQUIREMENT
F-1 student visa holders must report any change of U.S. address, residence, or name (for you and your F-2 dependents), directly to the International Student Advisor by email within 10 days of the change; name changes required official documentation as proof. Additionally, please update the International Student Advisor with any changes to your emergency contact. Your information will then electronically notify USCIS of these changes via SEVIS as required by immigration regulations. Simply updating your information with CIIS in MyCIIS or via the Registrar’s Personal Information Update form will not make the updates in SEVIS. Similarly, updates made to the International Student Advisor will not be reported to the CIIS Registrar’s Office nor the CIIS HR Office. Please make updates as necessary to each office.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE AND RE-ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES
Students in F-1 student status must have the second page of their I-20 signed by a Designated School Official (DSO) in order to reenter the United States. For absences of less than five months, the endorsed I-20 is valid for one year from the date of the signature. An exception is made for those students on post-completion OPT where the I-20 signature is only valid for 6 months. To request this signature, submit your Form I-20 to the International Student Advisor at least two weeks before you plan to travel, though it is strongly encouraged to submit it even sooner.

Always double check to make sure that both your visa and passport are valid! You must enter the U.S. in the F-1 visa classification in order to continue your studies. Please confirm your admission to the U.S. by checking your I-94 (information in above section of this Handbook).

Travel to Other Foreign Countries
Based on your nationality, you may be required to obtain a visa and immunizations for travel to other foreign countries. For information on consular offices as well as travel advisories, look online at http://travel.state.gov.

Re-Entering the United States
Upon your return to the U.S., you must show the following documents to the U.S. Immigration inspector:

- A valid passport, with an expiration date at least six months beyond your date of entry
- A visa that is valid beyond the date of your return to the U.S.*
- An initial or currently valid SEVIS I-20 with a travel signature by the International Student Advisor
• EAD card and letter from your employer if you are on Optional Practical Training (OPT)
• Optional: proof of funding, SEVIS fee payment receipt, transcript, and support letter from the International Student Advisor

* Citizens of Canada are exempt from visa requirements, unless entering from outside the Western Hemisphere.

Except for travel to Canada, Mexico, and adjacent islands for 30 days or less, you will receive a new I-94 Admission/Departure number with each entry. Please see above section of this Handbook on the I-94.

**LOSING/REGAINING YOUR LEGAL STATUS**
If you fail to follow the regulations for maintaining status at CIIS and in the U.S. you will lose legal visa status and benefits. You will not be eligible for employment, including campus work, and will not be able to receive a re-entry travel signature on your SEVIS I-20 until reinstatement of your status has been approved by the UCSIS. Further, your SEVIS record (and those of your dependents) will be terminated and SEVIS will automatically notify the immigration services of loss of your status.

**Examples of how a student may fail to maintain status are:**

• Failure to complete the I-20 transfer procedure on time when changing schools or degree programs.
• Failure to apply for an extension of program before I-20 expires.
• Failure to complete a full course of study during a given semester (without a valid exception as determined by USCIS regulations).
• Working off campus without prior authorization.

**Getting back into legal visa status**
Please speak with the International Student Advisor if you are out of status to discuss your best options for regaining your legal status. There are two options to regaining your legal visa status:

**Reinstatement:** This is an application process done from within the U.S. and requires a USCIS application form and fee payment. Processing time can take 3-4 months and you must remain in a full-time course load and may not depart the U.S. While you are pending reinstatement, you may not work, even on campus. Additionally, any reinstatement records may affect any future visa applications to the U.S. Finally, if reinstatement is denied, you must depart the U.S. immediately (no grace period).

USCIS may consider reinstating a student to F-1 status if the student can prove the following:

• The student has not been out of status for more than 5 months prior to filing for reinstatement (unless he or she can show that there were exceptional circumstances that prevented the student from filing during the 5-month period).
• The student does not have a record of repeated or willful violations.
• The need for reinstatement did not result from "a willful failure on the part of the student".
• The student is pursuing, or will in the next available term be pursuing, a full course of study.
• The student has not engaged in unauthorized employment.
• The student is not deportable on any grounds other than the status violation for which reinstatement is being requested.
• The status violation resulted from either:
  o Circumstances beyond the student’s control. The regulations give a non-exclusive list of examples of what might constitute such circumstances, including: "serious injury or illness, closure of the institution, a natural disaster, or inadvertence, oversight, or neglect on the part of the DSO", or
  o "The violation relates to a reduction in the student’s course load that would have been within a DSO’s power to authorize, and that failure to approve reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to the student."

**How to apply for reinstatement of status**

Student will meet the International Student Advisor by appointment for applying for reinstatement. Instructions and information for the government form “I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status” at [https://www.uscis.gov/i-539](https://www.uscis.gov/i-539).

**Re-entry:** This is done by departing the U.S. and requires applying for a new “Initial Attendance” I-20 from CIIS, paying the SEVIS fee again and possibly applying for a new visa if your visa is no longer valid. You may travel during the semester break to remedy your status. Your eligibility for practical training work authorization is re-set when you regain your status through re-entry and you will not be eligible for off-campus employment authorization for one full academic year.

**F-2 DEPENDENT REGULATIONS**

The F-2 visa is available for a spouse and/or minor children of the F-1 visa holders and additional funds are required on the Certificate of Funding form for each dependent. An F-2 dependent visa holder can stay in the United States as long as the F-1 visa holder remains in lawful status. To be exact, F-2 holders lose their status once the principal applicant loses F-1 status. F-2 visa holders are also allowed to change their status in the country.

One can enjoy the following privileges on F-2 visa:

• The F-2 holder can enter the country with his/her spouse or join him/her later.
• The F-2 holder can travel in and out of the country, or stay in the country continuously as long as he/she maintains a valid status.

Individuals holding F-2 dependent visas are not eligible to:

• work in the U.S. or
• pursue a degree (except for minor children who are able to attend elementary and secondary school in full-time status).

**Employment**

F-1 visa holders have limited employment opportunities while studying in the United States. Four employment options for F-1 visa holders are: on-campus employment, curricular practical training, optional practical training, and severe economic hardship.
**ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**
All F-1 visa students are permitted by USCIS to work on campus up to 20 hours per week during the academic year and no more than 40 hours per week during break periods. You may work multiple campus jobs, but the combination of the hours per week may not exceed the total hours allowable. You may begin working on campus on the first day of the semester that you start your course.

In order to work on campus at the CIIS, you must be offered a campus job, apply for a social security number and meet with the CIIS HR Office. The International Student Advisor provides guidance through the process, which is outlined on MyCIIS, International Students, Documents.

The Financial Aid Office sets a pre-determined amount of money in a given school year that you may earn at your campus job(s). This system is similar to the work-study program for U.S. citizens and permanent resident students.

**CIRRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)**
Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is defined to be “alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.” It must be an integral part of an established curriculum and requires verification by the International Student Advisor. CPT is a considered type of off-campus employment authorization in the F-1 student visa category that is related to a student’s academic program whether paid or unpaid.

**General Requirements**
- CPT is available to F-1 student visa holders prior to completion of their studies during the regular academic year.
- Students must have been in full-time status for at least one full academic year at a SEVIS approved school and be in good academic standing. If a graduate program requires its students to engage in training prior to the completion of one full academic year, an F-1 student may begin CPT earlier.
- Employment (paid of unpaid) must be temporary and employer specific.
- Students who participate in 12 months or more of full-time CPT are ineligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT).
- Employment authorization is employer specific.

CPT reporting is required for School of Professional Psychology & Health (SPPH) and ACTCM students who are registered for practicum/internship/clinic at CIIS counseling centers, ACTCM clinics or elsewhere. Please fill out the online CPT Reporting Form on MyCIIS, Student Life, International Students page. You must be registered for the course and/or have a contract agreement on file at CIIS to qualify. In some cases, programs will require students’ participation in a practicum/internship/training without registration in a course. These students must also submit the online CPT form on MYCIIS and have a contract on file with the department.

Students in School of Consciousness and Transformation (SCT) and School of Undergraduate Studies (SUS) whose program requires an internship or are registered in a course that supports participation in CPT should fill out the CPT form on MyCIIS and make an appointment with the International Student Advisor to discuss.

Please review the full information provided in the document called CPT Information and Application form on MyCIIS.
How to report CPT
In order to receive approval for CPT you must submit the online MyCIIS form or paper application to the International Student Advisor at least 3 weeks prior to the start of your employment. Employment is not guaranteed and you may not begin working until your I-20 is updated. SPPH and ACTCM students will report CPT through an online form on MyCIIS while SCT and SUS students will submit a paper form. Details are on the CPT Information and Application form on MyCIIS.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)
Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a 12-month employment authorization that provides an opportunity for F-1 students to work in their major field of study indicated on the SEVIS Form I-20. It is a benefit of maintaining one’s visa status that is available during an F-1 student's course of study (pre-completion OPT), after completing one’s degree (post-completion OPT), or may be used as a combination of both pre- and post-completion as long as one does not exceed a cumulative total of 12 months.

OPT is available to students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in a USCIS approved college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year. OPT has a cumulative maximum of 12 months per degree sought.

Work authorization is granted by the USCIS and is issued in the form of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card, which is a photo identity card that indicates the dates an F-1 student may begin employment and the date the student must end employment. Please see “Essential Documents” section above for more information about the EAD.

Once authorization to engage in OPT has been granted, it may not be rescinded or canceled. This means that after OPT is authorized by the USCIS, situations such as unexpected delays in completing degree requirements, inability to find an appropriate job or loss of a job may result in loss of otherwise eligible time to work. Authorization to engage in OPT is automatically terminated when you transfer to another school or when you receive a new I-20 form to begin study at another educational level.

Four Types of OPT
1. Vacation Period Practical Training: A student may work full or part-time during the breaks between semesters if the student is currently enrolled and intends to register for the next term of the session.
2. While School is in Session: A student may work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year.
3. Thesis Practical Training: A student may work full or part-time when all course requirements are completed for the degree and is now working on the thesis/dissertation.
4. Post-Completion Practical Training: When all the work for a degree has been completed, the student may work full or part-time. Students must apply before their graduation date to qualify for this type of OPT.

Additional Information About OPT
Please also read the OPT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document available on MyCIIS, International Students.

- You can apply up to 90 days before the completion of your first year of study, or the completion of your degree.
- You can apply no later than 60 days after the date of completion of your degree.
- No job offer is required to apply.
- Processing takes 90-120 days and approval is granted by the USCIS.
- Employment may occur anywhere in the U.S.
- Employment must be appropriate for someone having your level of study.
- Full-time employment = more than 20 hours per week.
- Part-time employment = 20 hours per week or less.
- Part-time pre-completion OPT is deducted from the total OPT at 50% of the full-time rate. For example, a student who works for 4 months on part-time OPT will have 2 months deducted from the 12 month total OPT time. This also includes the use of OPT at the same educational level, but in different programs.
- Although you may submit an application for OPT up to 90 days before having been enrolled in a full course of study for one academic year (two semesters), your period of employment cannot begin until you have already successfully completed an academic year of full-time study.
- All optional practical training must be completed within 14 months following completion of study.
- Students may not be unemployed for more than a cumulative maximum of 90 days.
- Immigration regulations require all OPT participants to update the SEVIS Student Portal within 10 days with changes to U.S. address and OPT employer(s) information. Information is in OPT documents on MyCIIS and at https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/the-sevp-portal-overview-video.
- You may be self-employed and can work for multiple employers.

How to apply for OPT
Upon reviewing information in the Optional Practical Training (OPT) Information and Application form please make an appointment with the International Student Advisor and bring all requirements listed in the form (please confirm in the I-765 Instructions Form):
- CIIS OPT Request Form (inside the OPT Information and Application form)
- Form I-765, the Application for Employment Authorization, marked with the eligibility category code (c) (3) (A) for pre-completion OPT or (c) (3) (B) for post-completion OPT. Form and Instructions are available at www.uscis.gov.
- Copies of your passport and visa (entry stamp in passport for Canadians)
- A copy of your I-94 form
- A copy of all previous I-20s from previous schools, if you changed information on your I-20 after starting at CIIS (program, extension, CPT, etc.)
- A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs), if this is your first application for work authorization in the U.S. you will not have an EAD card.
- A copy of your practicum/internship contract when applicable. Contact the Field Placement Office for your program.
- An updated SEVIS OPT I-20, provided by the International Student Advisor at the time of the appointment.
- 2 full passport style photos, color photos with a white background, 2" x 2" and not more than six months old. Write your SEVIS ID number in pencil on the back of the photos.
- A check for the I-765 fee (please double check fees on most current version of the I-765 instructions)

Travel while on OPT
Students may travel outside of the U.S. while the application for OPT is pending. If you need to travel outside of the U.S. while your application is pending, you should consult with the International Student Advisor.
F-1 non-immigrants who travel abroad after the USCIS has approved OPT will need the I-20 endorsed by the International Student Advisor within the last six months, a current Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and a letter from their employer verifying employment.

**How to report OPT**
Please review information in the *Optional Practical Training Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)* document on MyCIIS.

**SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**
F-1 students may seek off-campus employment in the event of severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student’s control. These circumstances include:

- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on part of the student
- Substantial fluctuations in the value of the currency or exchange rate (this alone is usually not sufficient)
- Inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student’s sources of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses

In order to apply, students must have been in F-1 status for one full academic year, be in good academic standing, and enrolled in a full course of study.

**How to apply for work authorization for Severe Economic Hardship**
Please make an appointment with the International Student Advisor and bring with you the following items:

- Form I-765, the Application for Employment Authorization, marked with the eligibility category code (c) (3) (iii) for severe economic hardship. Form and Instructions are available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).
- Copies of your passport and visa (entry stamp in passport for Canadians)
- A copy of your I-94 form
- A copy of all previous I-20s from previous schools, if you changed information on your I-20 after starting at CIIS (program, extension, CPT, etc.)
- A copy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs), if this is your first application for work authorization in the U.S. you will not have an EAD card.
- Affidavits that further detail the unforeseen circumstance, copies of your tax documents, etc.
- Letter from the International Student Advisor (optional)
- Write a check for the amount of the fee required listed in the Form I-765 Instructions [OR](http://www.uscis.gov)
- Apply for a Fee Waiver using the USCIS Form I-912 and providing support documents.

**CIIS Policies and U.S. Government Rights & Responsibilities**

**ACADEMIC POLICIES AT CIIS**
Please see the [CIIS Catalog on the Academics tab of MyCIIS](http://www.uscis.gov) for full details on academic policies. The academic year that you enter CIIS are the policies that govern your academics.
Be aware that not all policies apply to international students in the same way they do to domestic students due to the F-1 visa status and regulations. Please review the policies, and meet with the International Student Advisor prior to making decisions regarding your academic program.

**STUDENT POLICIES AT CIIS**
Please familiarize yourself with the CIIS Student Handbook on the Student Affairs tab of MyCIIS for full details on various offices at CIIS, services provided to students by CIIS, policies pertaining to students on and off campus.

**SEXUAL HARRASSMENT**
Sexual harassment and stalking laws legally protect individuals from being victims of sexual or other harassment. These laws apply to all within the U.S.—including citizens, residents and visitors—from being victims of sexual and other harassment. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is a condition of employment, academic progress, or participation in a university program; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct influences employment, academic or university program decisions; or
- The conduct interferes with an employee’s work or a student’s academic career, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work, learning, or program environment.

It is also illegal to “stalk” an individual by following the person, continually making unwanted phone calls, or other unwelcome attempts to contact another person. Please refer to the CIIS Student Handbook for more details on laws and grievance procedures.

**PAYING YOUR TAXES**
U.S. employers are required to withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from wages earned in the U.S. Individuals in F-1, J-1, M-1 or Q-1 status are exempt from these withholding as long as they are considered non-resident aliens for tax purposes. However, some federal and state taxes are required to be deducted per paycheck.

Each international student is required to submit an accurate income-tax statement to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) annually, regardless of whether or not you have any income to report. Tax forms and tax workshops are offered through the international student office in early spring each year. It is each student’s responsibility to understand U.S. laws on the taxation of income and to file correctly with the IRS.

All international students are required to file Form 8843 form even if you did not work. This form is simple to complete. All students who are compensated for any amount of work in a calendar year must file Form 1040 NR-EZ by April 15th to the IRS. If you worked, expect to receive a W-2 and/or 1099-MISC form in the mail between January and March. F-1 student visa holders who are in the U.S. for 5 or more years may opt to file taxes as a resident based on the substantial presence test.

You may go to www.irs.gov for information regarding filing a tax return. Please also review documents about employment and taxes on MyCIIS International Students, Documents.

**LEGAL RIGHTS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**
One of the most important principles operative in the United States is the rule of law. This means that laws, not people, govern and that the law is supreme. People change the law only by proper legislative
procedures. Once the law is established, it must be observed by all including government officials from the President to law enforcement officers. The principle of the rule of law protects us from arbitrary actions of government and law enforcement agencies, since their authority is limited by the law. The U.S. Constitution is the highest law of the land; all other laws must be consistent with it. Those laws of governmental actions which are not consistent with the Constitution can be challenged in court and declared invalid or unconstitutional. In this way, laws and regulations undergo a constant process of testing to be sure that they conform to the principles set forth in the Constitution.

Due process and equal protection under the law
The U.S. Constitution guarantees due process of law to all persons, including aliens in the US. The concept of due process of law requires that specific procedures be followed in the enactment, administration, and enforcement of the laws. The Constitution also guarantees each person equal protection under the law. This concept means that the law applies to all equally, regardless of status, wealth, or position, and that the state may not discriminate between persons for arbitrary or capricious reasons. There are, of course, special laws and regulations that establish the conditions under which international students may study, teach, or pursue research in the U.S., but within these general and reasonable limits, international students and other aliens in the U.S. are subject to the same laws and are guaranteed the same protection of the laws, as are American citizens.

In case of trouble
The international student who conflicts with the law needs advice and assistance to be sure his/her rights are protected. Students can reach out to the International Students Advisor for some help. In most cases, they may refer students to a legal assistance program, a private attorney, or some other person or agency that can provide the knowledge and assistance needed. Some international students feel that if they are convicted — or even accused — of a violation of any law, they will be deported immediately and automatically. That is not true. In most cases, conviction of a single misdemeanor or minor offense will have no effect on a student's immigration status. Conviction for a more serious offense can result in deportation. An international student with F-I visa status convicted of a crime of violence for which a sentence of more than one year could be imposed is considered to have violated his F-I status. As a result, the F-1 student is subject to deportation proceedings.

When a student violates the rules of the University and is disciplined by suspension or dismissal, they are no longer a student and is therefore not maintaining status as a student under immigration law. A sponsored student must keep in mind the particular regulations of his sponsoring agency, for if he/she violates them, the agency may withdraw financial and visa sponsorship, making the student possibly subject to deportation. Finally, you must always consider the attitude of your home government toward any of your actions in the U.S., as the home government may at any time withdraw or cancel your passport, thereby making you subject to deportation.

Civil law
Most of the above discussion relates to criminal law. You should also be aware of the existence of civil law — that body of law governing relationships between individuals not involved in criminal conduct, such as the fulfillment of contract, the payment of bills, business arrangements, and similar matters. Contracts may be either written or oral, and in either case, they are enforceable by law. An example of a contract entered into by many students is an apartment lease. If the conditions of a contract are violated by either party, the other party may bring the suit into court to enforce the contract or to recover damages. A civil suit may also be initiated to force the payment of bills or financial obligations.
In California, many individuals turn to Small Claims Court to settle civil claims amounting to $5,000 or less. In case of an injury, a lawyer should be consulted to see if compensation for the injury is possible.

DIRECTORY OF IMMIGRATION & LEGAL RESOURCES

The International Student Advisor has a list of immigration attorneys in the Bay Area. Other resources include:

- ACLU Northern California: [www.aclunc.org](http://www.aclunc.org)
- San Francisco Women’s Building: [www.womensbuilding.org](http://www.womensbuilding.org)
- U.S. State Department Visa Information (DOS): [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
- Education USA—Pre-departure Information: [www.educationusa.state.gov](http://www.educationusa.state.gov)
- Frequently Asked Questions for F-Nonimmigrant: Arriving & While in the U.S.: [www.ice.gov/sevis/students/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/index.htm)
- SEVIS I-901 Fee Information: [www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm)
- U.S. Embassies Abroad: [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov)
- Special Visa Processing for citizens of Cuba, Syria, Sudan & Iran: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

Living in the United States

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

International students who work on- or off-campus must obtain a social security number prior to beginning employment and you must have a job offer before you can apply for a social security number. Although there are limited campus jobs at CIIS (also called work-study positions), many international students do find work on campus. The Social Security Administration Office nearest CIIS is at 90 7th Street, Annex First Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103 (1-800-772-1213), located on the south side of Market Street between 5th and 6th Streets. You should apply at this office as you may have difficulty receiving service at other offices in the Bay Area.

How to apply for a social security number

To apply for a Social Security number review information on the SSA website and:

- Complete an Application For A Social Security Card (Form SS-5)
- Show original documents in person at the SSA Office:
  - I-20 (If you are a J-1 or J-2 exchange visitor, you must show us your DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status)
  - I-94 print out
  - Valid passport and visa
  - Employment Contract (This information must describe your job, the employment start date, the number or hours you’ll be working and your supervisor’s name and telephone number).
  - Letter from the International Student Advisor verifying your employment eligibility
  - Employment Authorization Document (EAD card), when applicable.
Take your completed application and documents to your local Social Security office

*If you are an F-1 student authorized to work in Curricular Practical Training (CPT), you must also provide your Form I-20 with the employment information updated on page 2.

*If you are an F-1 student authorized to work off campus, you must provide the SSA with the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) you received from USCIS, or proof of pending off-campus employment request so that you may begin working as soon as the employment is approved.

If you are a J-1 student, you must provide a letter from your sponsor. The letter should be on sponsor letterhead with an original signature that authorizes your employment.

RENTING AN APARTMENT
There are many ways to search for affordable housing. You can start by checking the very useful Housing and Relocation Guide on MyCIIS. Many students also find housing from other CIIS students via various student/program listservs. You can also find various search engines in the Housing and Relocation Guide.

Securing an apartment usually requires the first and last month's rent as a deposit, plus a security deposit. The security deposit is refunded to you upon moving out if the premises are left clean and undamaged. Many management companies and landlords want to see that you have good credit and a social security number, however you may not have these when you arrive. If you need a support letter for housing, please request one from the International Student Advisor.

Finally, please be cautious of moving and rental scams. It is sometimes best to find short-term temporary housing for when you arrive while looking for permanent housing once you are already in the U.S. instead of trying to secure something from abroad. Some tips and information is at https://www.usa.gov/housing-scams.

Utilities and services
Before you move into your apartment, you may need to arrange to have the utilities turned on. Contact the Pacific Gas & Electric Company at least one full day before you want the gas and electricity turned on. You may also need to call the San Francisco Water Department to have the water turned on.

CALIFORNIA DRIVER LICENSE AND IDENTIFICATION (ID) CARD
If you are a visitor in California over 18 and have a valid driver license from your home country, you may drive in this state without getting a California driver license as long as your home state license remains valid. The international driver’s license is not valid in California. To apply for an original CA driver’s license, you will need to do the following:

- Visit a DMV office or make an appointment on-line at http://www.dmv.ca.gov
- Original DL 44 application form
- Give a thumb print (at the DMV)
- Have your picture taken (at the DMV)
- Provide your social security number (if you do not have a SSN, or are not eligible, please contact the International Student Advisor for a letter verifying such details)
- Verify your birth date and legal presence (bring your passport, I-20 and I-94 document)
- Pay the application fee
- Pass a vision exam (at the DMV)
- Pass a traffic laws and sign test. There are 36 questions on the test, given in many different languages. You have three chances to pass. Pick up the CA State Driving Handbook for free at the DMV to study for the exam!

If your name is different on your birth certificate and/or legal presence document compared to the one you are currently using, you will need to provide an additional documentation such as a marriage certificate, dissolution of marriage or an adoption or name change document that shows your current full name.

If you have a license from another country, you will be required to take a driving test. If you have a license from another state, the driving test can be waived. To take a driving test:

- Call the DMV or visit www.dmv.ca.gov to make an appointment
- Bring your instructional permit
- Provide proof of financial responsibility
- Have a licensed driver accompany you to the test site

After you pass your driving test you will be issued an interim license valid for 60 days and will receive your new photo license in the mail. For more information contact the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) at 1377 Fell Street, (800) 777-0133, or visit their website at http://www.dmv.ca.gov.

A California Identification (ID) Card is a useful form of picture identification, and has the same identification value as a California Driver’s License (you do not need both a California driver’s license and a California ID). Renewal of this identification is completed by mail every four years. The DMV must verify the legal presence of non-immigrants in the U.S. with the USCIS and advises that this process may take four to six months.

**DRIVING IN CALIFORNIA**

It may seem that everyone in the U.S. has a car. Cars are convenient, but they are also expensive to buy and to operate and finding a parking space can be difficult in urban areas. A car is not a necessity in San Francisco, so consider your options carefully before buying one. Maybe a bicycle would suit your needs after all! Some common topics and confusion (and tickets!) for new drivers include:

- Curbing your wheels
- Curb colors
- Tow away zones
- Parking restrictions

You can review the information in the online California Driver Handbook.

**Automobile registration**

All motor vehicles driven by people who reside in California must be registered with the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The nearest office is located at 1377 Fell Street, 415-557-1179. Please visit www.dmv.ca.gov for office hours.

Take the car, the pink slip, and the white copy of the anti-smog certificate to the DMV (new car and some used car dealers register the cars they sell). Out-of-state vehicles must be registered within 20
days of renting a residence in order to avoid penalty fines. There are special requirements for registering Canadian vehicles. Visit [www.dmv.ca.gov](http://www.dmv.ca.gov) to find out how to register a nonresident vehicle. Upon payment of the registration fees, which vary according to the model and age of the car, a temporary registration slip and license plates will be issued. The permanent registration slip will be mailed to you. Used cars keep their license plates; the number is transferred to your name.

**Auto insurance coverage**

Drivers of automobiles and motorcycles have financial responsibility in case of an accident that involves injury, death, or damage to persons, property or another vehicle. Do not drive without insurance. Most insurance companies require a California driver's license to qualify for an insurance policy. Insurance which fulfills the State of California legal minimum requirements includes:

- Personal Liability: Insurance coverage of $15,000 for injury or death of one person in an accident, and $30,000 for injury or death of more than one person in one accident. It also covers property damage.

The following coverage options are optional:

- Uninsured Motorist Coverage protects you and your passengers if you are injured by an uninsured or hit and run driver, but only if that driver is legally liable because of negligent driving. (Some companies automatically include this in their policies.)
- Collision Coverage pays your losses if your car is damaged in a collision or single car accident. This coverage is valuable if the collision cannot be proven to be someone else's fault.
- Comprehensive Coverage pays for your loss if your car is stolen or damaged by fire, hail, hurricane, vandalism, or most non-collision causes.

**Insurance policies**

There are three different types of insurance policies — preferred, standard and assigned risk. They all carry different premiums. Not all companies offer all three policies. It is extremely difficult for an international student to obtain a preferred policy. You should try to get at least a standard policy. Many brokers tend to put an international visitor in the assigned risk category, which means higher costs and less coverage for your car. If you must take an assigned risk policy during your first year in California, you should be able to obtain at least a standard policy after one year of good driving. For students with a "B" average or better, many companies offer the possibility of a "good student" discount.

**Auto insurance companies**

Ask for student rates, discounts for good grades, discount for good driver and discount for not commuting to school by car. Some well-known insurance companies are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allstate</th>
<th>Farmers Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Automobile Association (AAA)</td>
<td>State Farm Insurance</td>
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**About San Francisco**

**ARRIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO**

San Francisco is a wonderful place to live and to study. Known to many simply as "The City," San Francisco has friendly people, breathtaking views, marvelous parks and countless things to do. The city
is as diverse as its many ethnic communities and neighborhoods. While you are here, we encourage you to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible. For information on relocating to the Bay Area, visit the City of San Francisco’s homepage at www.sfgov.org or California State’s homepage at www.ca.gov.

Climate and clothing
Cool bay and ocean breezes meet warm inland air, moderating temperatures year round. Weather patterns may vary from block to block so you can expect to find both sunshine and fog scattered throughout the city. The temperature rarely rises above 70° F (21° C) or falls below 40° F (4.4°C). The heaviest rains usually fall from November to March.

Layering a sweater and jacket is the best way to adapt to the variable temperatures. It is usually cool here late in the day.

Safety
As in any city, there are a few precautions you can take to increase your security. Make it a habit to walk on well-lit, busy streets facing traffic. Remember to be aware of your surroundings, especially at night. Plan your itinerary and know where you are going. Carry only the money and credit cards you need, and keep any bags you carry secure. When possible, travel with a friend at night. In an emergency, dial: 9-1-1. An operator will connect you to the police, fire department or an ambulance.

Tipping
In the United States, service is not included in restaurant checks. When you pay your bill at a restaurant or bar, you are expected to leave a gratuity or tip for the person who served you. The average tip is 18-20% of the bill before taxes. Tipping is not required at self-service or takeout restaurants. Taxi drivers and persons who perform a personal service for you, such as hair stylists, car washers or tour guides, also receive an average tip of 18-20%. Porters who carry your luggage at airports, train or bus stations, and hotels should be tipped $1 per bag. Delivery people, whether delivering flowers or pizzas, are tipped a few dollars, depending on the size of the delivery. A tip is given even if there is no charge for the service. These are general rules to follow. Beware of people who try to intimidate you into giving a larger tip.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
The Bay Area is well connected by ferries, buses, trains historic cable cars and multiple new ride-share services such as Lyft or Uber. As a result, owning a car is not essential for getting around the city and surrounding areas. For more information on how to get around the Bay Area visit www.511.org.

San Francisco airport (SFO) and Oakland airport (OAK)
San Francisco International Airport serves many foreign and most domestic airlines. Clearing Customs and Immigration takes from 30 minutes to an hour and sometimes longer at peak periods. Downtown San Francisco is about a twenty-minute, fourteen-mile drive north.

Oakland International Airport is twenty miles east of San Francisco, across the Bay Bridge. The shuttle services above also provide service to Oakland Airport.

Taxi service from the airport to the city is about $50. A better idea is to take one of the many airport shuttle companies, or use a ride share such as Lyft.
### Around San Francisco

The public transit system for the city is called MUNI, and comprises an extensive array of electric trolleys, cable cars, underground subways, and buses. Route information is published on the SFMTA website. The fare for a ride within the city is $2.50, and exact change is required. Individual cable car tickets cost $5. With your fare, you are given a pass/ticket, which allows you to transfer to any MUNI bus, trolley, or train system until the time posted on the transfer (about 2 hours). You must keep this with you at all times as proof of payment, and show it to MUNI officials whenever requested. Failure to show the proof of purchase results in a citation and a fine of at least $75.

For $75-$94, a MUNI Fast Pass allows unlimited travel for one month on all transportation within San Francisco, including the cable cars and the BART train within SF. Fast Passes are available at stores displaying the MUNI decal in the window.

### Around the Bay Area

The Bay Area is connected to San Francisco by the following services:

- BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) links San Francisco and the East Bay by rail
- AC Transit provides bus service in the East Bay to BART stations and downtown San Francisco
- Golden Gate Transit connects Marin and Sonoma counties by bus
- Caltrain provides rail service to San Francisco from San Jose
- Samtrans connects San Francisco and San Mateo counties by bus

### To CIIS

The Main Building of the Institute is located at 1453 Mission Street between 10th and 11th Streets. It is close to the following MUNI bus lines: 14-Mission (14-R), 47-Van Ness, and 49-Van Ness. The nearest MUNI train station is Van Ness Station, serviced by all train lines. Public parking are available for an hourly, daily, or monthly fee.

The ACTCM campus is located at 455 Arkansas Street in the Portrero Hill neighborhood. It is close to the MUNI bus lines: 10-Townsend, 19-Pole and 22-Fillmore. Street parking is ample in this neighborhood.

### Health and Wellness

#### HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance is a very important part of the international student's education in the United States, and therefore is required of all students who attend school at CIIS throughout the duration of their program of study. Students must show proof of coverage for the full semester dates prior to registering for classes. Students who fail to enroll in a CIIS-endorsed policy or provide other proof of adequate coverage in a U.S.-based plan will not be permitted to register for classes.

In the United States, each individual is responsible for paying the costs of his or her own medical care. Except for certain low-income U.S. citizens and permanent residents, no government assistance is available for those who need care but cannot afford it. The cost of medical care is the fastest rising expense in the U.S. today and since most Americans cannot afford the high cost of medical care, they
rely on insurance in medical emergencies. For an international student, one serious illness, injury, or catastrophic medical emergency can mean financial ruin.

All students are required to enroll in the CIIS-endorsed insurance plan or can waive out with a comparable U.S. plan via the online form. Information and the enrollment/waiver form is on MyCIIS, Student Affairs, Wellness Services tab (log in).

**Understanding a health insurance policy**

Insurance companies have a distinct vocabulary for communicating the coverage provided by their policies. Below are explanations of several common terms used in health insurance policies. These are general explanations and are not specific to the CIIS-endorsed insurance policy:

**Deductible amounts:** Most insurance policies require you to pay certain part of the medical cost before the insurance company pays anything. This amount is called the deductible. Some companies have an annual deductible that you pay once each year while others have a per incident deductible that you pay each time you become sick or injured. Per incident deductibles are usually less than annual deductibles, but if you are sick or injured several times in one year, you will have to pay the deductible each time.

**Co-payment percentage:** Most insurance policies pay a percentage of your medical costs after you pay the deductible. For example, some policies pay 80% of the costs, and you pay 20%. Many insurance policies make a larger co-payment for certain types of illness, a smaller co-payment for other types. Others policies pay a percentage until you have paid a certain amount (called an out of pocket maximum), then they pay 100%. This protects you in case of a very high medical bill, because even 20% of thousands of dollars is more than most students can afford.

**Specific limits:** Some policies give specific dollar limits on what they will pay for particular services. For example, they may limit the hospital room and board charge, the doctor's fee, the surgery fees, the psychologist/psychiatrist fees, the anesthesiologist charge, etc. Other policies pay "usual" or "reasonable and customary" charges for these costs, meaning they pay what is usually charged in the local area.

**Lifetime/per-incident maximums:** Many insurance policies specify a limit in the amount they will pay for an individual's medical bills. In some policies, the maximum is for the lifetime of the individual, which means that if the total amount the insurance company pays for that person reaches the maximum, no more will be paid. Other policies have a limit in the amount they will pay for any one illness or injury; once the cost of a specific illness or injury reaches the limit, the insurance pays no more.

**Benefit period:** Some insurance policies limit the amount of time they pay for illnesses and injuries. For example, if a policy has a 52-week benefit period, it will stop paying for an illness 52 weeks after it occurred, even if the insured individual still requires treatment. Although most illnesses are cured within 52 weeks, chronic problems and serious accidents often require treatment beyond that time. After the benefit period has expired, the student must pay all the costs for continuing treatment.

**Extension of benefits:** The extension of benefits provision applies if you are receiving treatment at the time your insurance policy expires and you are not eligible to renew it. Some policies will continue to pay benefits for a limited period.

**Exclusions:** Most insurance policies exclude coverage for certain conditions. It is important to read the list of exclusions carefully so that you understand exactly what is not covered by the policy.
Medical Evacuation Repatriation: For international students in the United States, coverage for medical evacuation and repatriation of remains is important. If your policy covers medical evacuation, it will pay your transportation costs if you need to return home because of a covered medical condition. If it covers repatriation, the insurance company will pay the cost of returning your remains home from the United States should you die here. Though unlikely, these events do occur, and the families of most international students are unprepared for the expenses involved.

**What to do if your insurance claim is denied**
Remember that most insurance policies have specific exclusions, that is, medical procedures that are not covered. You may submit a claim and later learn that the company has denied your request for payment. If you do not understand the reason for the denial, you should contact your insurance agent or the International Student Advisor for help. If you disagree with the decision of the insurance company, you have the right to appeal that decision and request that the company consider your case again.

**MEDICAL CARE**
Some information on healthcare, insurance, men’s and women’s reproductive and/or sexual (HIV/STD) (free) health clinics can be found on the Student Affairs Office, Wellness Services, Documents page.

Emergency Hotlines
- San Francisco Suicide Prevention 415-781-0500
- Domestic Violence Crisis 415-255-0165
- Rape Crisis Line 415-647-7273

In case of any emergency, call 911 or head to the nearest Emergency Room.

**EASING CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**
Adjustment to a new culture and environment is not accomplished in a few days; in fact, it can take a year, or in some cases even longer. Most people who enter a new culture will suffer from feelings of disorientation and loneliness at some point during their stay. The physical and social environment contains much that is new and hard to understand. Student have shared their surprise with the time it takes to learn how to get around, do laundry, buy food and other necessary items, and become comfortable in a new society. For non-native speakers of English, it is exhausting and difficult to speak in a second language, understand the meanings that lie behind both spoken and unspoken language, and learn new types of behavior. The cultural differences that must be met and dealt with and an inability to understand them may cause an increasing sense of insecurity.

Culture shock can be experienced in many ways: headache, upset stomach, irritability, homesickness, helplessness, depression, difficulty concentrating, insomnia, etc. Eventually it will almost always disappear. Your adjustment will be easier and your culture shock will decrease if you are aware that this is a normal and real experience that most people have when they move to a new country.

**Wellness Services at CIIS**
Don’t be shy about reaching out! Please feel free to meet with the International Student Advisor to chat about any issues you may experiencing, or just to get frustration off your chest! As well, CIIS offers free, short-term counseling services through the Wellness Center as well as health coaching sessions. Please find information via MyCIIS, Student Affairs, Wellness Services (log in). The Wellness Center also offers on-going stress-reduction classes in each fall and spring semester such as Pilates, yoga, dance/aerobics, workshops, lectures and more.
Stages of Adjustment
Cultural adjustment has often been described as a four-stage process. Not every foreign student will experience all of the stages listed. (*Originally conceptualized by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg.)

Stage One: Initial Happiness and Excitement. This first stage is sometimes called the "honeymoon period." New students are often busy with registration, orientation, exploring the city and getting to know new people. Students may become preoccupied by the novelty and excitement of a new country. At this point, students are most likely to notice the similarities between their own country and the new country, and that people are basically alike everywhere. This stage can last from two weeks to two months, but it inevitably ends.

Stage Two: Irritability and Hostility. As cultural differences become apparent and difficulties arise, students may begin to feel uncomfortable or become irritable, develop various physical symptoms or illnesses, withdraw, or show other signs of being troubled. Since the new environment is the cause of the discomfort, some can experience some hostility toward Americans, CIIS, or the United States. Some students have called this period the "three month blues" because the worst part of this stage seems to occur about three months after arrival.

Stage Three: Gradual Adjustment. As the student begins to understand lectures and textbooks better, and correctly interprets some of the "cultural cues" that have been so puzzling, there is a gradual — sometimes barely noticeable — adjustment taking place. Students may still isolate themselves and spend all their time studying, ignoring the areas of life that remain difficult or sticking with a friend from his or her own country. Gradually, things seem less overwhelming and more comfortable, and the student will regain their sense of humor.

Stage Four: Adaptation. Students have adapted when they can manage well in two cultures — the new one and their own. They are able to understand the differences they encounter, and feel comfortable and at ease with school and their classmates. They can communicate more easily and develop closer relationships with people in the new country. The student begins to feel at home in the new environment.

Tips for cultural adjustment
Adjustments vary from individual to individual. An important thing to remember is not to be afraid to ask questions. This is the key to learning. Ask as many questions as necessary until you learn what you want and need to know. Here at CIIS, staff, faculty, and fellow students are interested in your well-being, so do not hesitate to ask for their help and advice.

The Academic Environment
Academic standards and practices vary from one culture to another. What is considered appropriate academic behavior in your home country may be looked upon very differently here in the U.S. It is therefore important that you understand what acceptable academic behavior in the U.S. and on this campus. Here is a list of some generally held U.S. beliefs and customs that may shape the academic environment as well as your social environments in the following ways:

- Active classroom participation is expected.
- Time pressure is high—time management is an important skill to develop.
- Critical thinking must be developed.
- Independent thinking is highly valued.
- Presenting ideas concisely in class is expected.
• Competition is a common mind-set.
• Achievement and hard work are highly valued; the finished product is most important.
• Students must be responsible for themselves.
• Informality is normal.
• Direct and straightforward communication is expected.
• Combining theory and practice— the practical application of ideas is emphasized.

Classroom Etiquette
Some behaviors you witness in the classroom here may be very different from what you are accustomed to in your home country. Some international students consider classroom etiquette in the U.S. to be surprisingly informal. For example, students often bring beverages and sometimes even food to class, particularly if the class takes place near mealtime. Professors have different opinions about eating in class so; if you are in doubt about what is appropriate in class, ask.

In addition, while some professors conduct their classes quite formally, others are much more informal with their students. Some professors may even invite you to call them by their first name. Because people in the U.S. are often focused on achievement, the outward appearance may not be as important to status as it is in some cultures.

Class participation is usually expected and encouraged in discussion sections or in smaller courses, where it may not be possible in large lecture courses. Participation may be factored into your grade, therefore you may raise your hand to ask questions, comment on what has been said, and even disagree (as long as it is done in a respectful manner). Refer to the syllabus the professor hands out on the first day of class, or observe U.S. students in the class during the first few days to get an idea of the level and type of participation expected. If you are still unsure, ask the professor.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism means presenting the words or ideas of others without giving credit or citing the source. You should know the principles of plagiarism and the correct rules for citing sources. In general, if your paper implies that you are the originator of words or ideas, they must in fact be your own.

If you use someone else’s exact words, they should be enclosed in quotation marks with the exact source listed. You may put someone else’s idea in your own words as long as you indicate whose idea it was (for example, “As Jane Smith point out...”).

CIIS offers writing tutors and editing sessions to all international students. Please avail yourself of the assistance of the Center for Writing and Scholarship starting at MyCIIS, Academics (log in).

Academic Advisors
All degree-seeking students at CIIS have an academic advisor. Your advisor is available to help you determine the best way to proceed toward your academic goals and can help you determine what classes you must take in order to satisfy university and program requirements for graduation. Please note however, that academic advisors are not often aware of the strict immigration regulations that govern the F-1 visa holders. It is your responsibility to make sure that you consistently maintain your visa status.

Office Hours
Professors are required to have weekly office hours or be available by appointment, which are listed on the syllabus you receive at the beginning of the semester. During office hours or your appointment with
the professor, you may discuss any questions or concerns you have regarding the course. It is highly advisable that you take advantage of this opportunity to ask questions about the content of the course, as well as anything that you might not understand due to cultural differences. Professors enjoy meeting personally with their students and seeing their interest in the course material.

Cultural and Student Organizations
The CIIS Student Union is a student-run organization that supports students’ needs by promoting their involvement in all levels of the CIIS community. Its mission is to facilitate communication, sponsor events, and distribute funds to promote the good of the community within CIIS. Student Union administers a budget of $30 per student (contributed through registration fees). These funds benefit students and the CIIS community by underwriting the following programs:

- Support and sponsor student group events and classes
- Offers funding awards for student participation at educational conferences
- Sponsors the Social Justice and Community Research Grant
- Provides opportunities for student leadership

Information about the CIIS Student Union, including forms for starting a campus group or applying for grant and funds is available under the MyCIIS Student Affairs tab.

BAY AREA COMMUNITY RESOURCES
The International House (I-House) of the University of California at Berkeley welcomes foreign students in the Bay Area at many events. I-House is an international program center and residence for students and scholars from the U.S. and abroad. Its mission is to foster peaceful interaction, understanding, and friendship among the peoples of all nations, races and cultures. Events include seminars and lectures about the U.S., other nations, and current international issues. They also sponsor nationality nights, cultural events, trips through California, parties, dances, theatre and music performances. A monthly calendar of events is posted on the international student bulletin board. For further information contact or visit the International House at the campus of UC Berkeley, 2299 Piedmont Avenue, (510) 642-9490. More information can be found online at http://ihouse.berkeley.edu/.

Community/Information Centers in San Francisco

- Chinese Cultural Center: www.cccsf.us/
- French Americal Cultural Society: www.facs-sf.org/main/
- Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California: www.icnc.org/en/
- Japanese Cultural and Community Center: www.jccnc.org/
- Korean Community Center: koreancentersf.org/
- LaRaza Information Center: larazacr.org/
- Taiwan Visitor Association: 415-989-7242
- Turkish American Society of Northern California: www.taaca.org/

Cultural centers feature workshops, support and information programs, and social events. Other cultural centers may be located by consulting your local telephone directory. If you visit or call, ask for newcomer information and services.

Recreation
- The YMCA of San Francisco: www.ymcasf.org
- SF Road Runners Club: www.sfrrc.clubexpress.com
- East Bay Regional Parks (Swimming): www.ebparks.org
- Mission Cliffs (Rock Climbing): [www.touchstoneclimbing.com](http://www.touchstoneclimbing.com)
- Marin.org (Check ‘Recreation’): [www.marin.org](http://www.marin.org)

Various Activities
- SF Station: [www.sfstation.com](http://www.sfstation.com)
- Laughing Squid SF: [www.laughingsquid.com](http://www.laughingsquid.com)

Arts & Museums (many have free days and student discounts)
- Asian Art Museum: [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)
- California Academy of Sciences: [www.calacademy.org](http://www.calacademy.org)
- The Contemporary Jewish Museum: [www.thecjm.org](http://www.thecjm.org)
- Exploratorium: [www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu)
- M.H. De Young Museum: [www.famsf.org](http://www.famsf.org)
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org)
- Yerba Buena Center for the Arts: [www.ybca.org](http://www.ybca.org)

Libraries
Because the CIIS library is modest in size there may be times when you need to visit another area library when doing research. The San Francisco Public Library has its main branch near CIS, off Grove and Larkin Street, north of Market Street, between 8th and 9th Street.

- San Francisco Public Library: [www.sfpl.org](http://www.sfpl.org)
- Niebyl-Proctor Marxist Library: [www.marxistlibr.org](http://www.marxistlibr.org)

📖 U.S. Holidays

*Please view the CIIS Academic Calendar to check for school closings due to national holidays and breaks.*

**New Year's Day** (January 1)

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** (2nd Monday of January) commemorates the champion of Civil Rights and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Chinese New Year** (late January - February) is celebrated at CIIS/ACTCM and recognized in the Bay Area. Many celebratory events are scheduled in the Chinatown district.

**President's Day** (2nd Monday of February) is a tribute to George Washington, the first president of the U.S., and Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president, responsible for the abolition of slavery in this country.

**Mother's Day** (2nd Sunday in May) is for the expression of reverence and love to mothers.

**Memorial Day** (May 30) honors those who have died in military service.

**Father's Day** (3rd Sunday in June) is for the expression of reverence and love to fathers.

**Independence Day/ 4th of July** (July 4) celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.
**Labor Day** (1st Monday in September) celebrates the rights of workers and the labor forces of the country.

**Indigenous Peoples' Day** (2nd Monday in October) is a holiday that celebrates the Indigenous peoples of America. It is celebrated across the United States, and is an official city and state holiday in various localities around the country. It began as a counter-celebration to the U.S. federal holiday of Columbus Day, which honors European explorer Christopher Columbus. Indigenous Peoples Day is intended to celebrate Native Americans and commemorate their shared history and culture.

**Columbus Day** (2nd Monday in October) is a national holiday in many countries of the Americas and elsewhere which officially celebrates the anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the Americas on October 12, 1492.

**Halloween** (October 31), Children dress in costumes and go door-to-door for sweet treats. Adults may also dress in costume and attend parties.

**Veteran’s Day** (November 11), Honors military veterans; that is, persons who served in the United States Armed Forces. It coincides with other holidays, including Armistice Day and Remembrance Day, celebrated in other countries that mark the anniversary of the end of World War I.

**Thanksgiving** (4th Thursday in November) is a day to reflect and give thanks for our family, our welfare, and our nation.

**Hanukkah** (usually in December) is an eight-day Jewish celebration commemorating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.

**Christmas** (December 25) is a Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Christ.

**New Year's Day** (January 1) The celebration of this holiday begins on New Year’s Eve, December 31. It is a time of merrymaking in which people gather to celebrate the end of the old year and the beginning of the new one.