

## PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION FOR NEW F-1 STUDENTS AT UCONN

*Congratulations on your admission to UConn! Please read this pre-arrival guide and contact International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at [international@uconn.edu](mailto:international@uconn.edu) if you have questions related to your F-1 status prior to arrival.*

### FORM I-20 INSTRUCTIONS

Please review your Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status. Carefully read Pages 1, 2 and 3, sign and complete the STUDENT CERTIFICATION at the bottom of Page 1. *Important! Please check your Form I-20 Certificate of Eligibility and notify ISSS immediately if there are any errors BEFORE you apply for your visa, so we may send you a corrected form I-20 to use to apply for your visa.*

You must also sign the STUDENT CERTIFICATION at the bottom of Page 1 for all Forms I-20 issued to your F-2 dependents (if any). The F-2 beneficiary does not sign the Form I-20.

### SEVIS I-901 FEE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) charges a \$200 SEVIS I-901 fee to new F-1 students. **This fee is IN ADDITION TO the visa fees charged by the U.S. consulate or embassy.** If you are outside the U.S., the SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) I-901 fee must be paid and you must print your payment confirmation before you apply for your student visa. If you are in the U.S. and applying for a change of status, the SEVIS fee must be paid before you file your application to the USCIS. If you are transferring from another U.S. institution you do not need to pay the SEVIS fee again UNLESS your new I-20 lists a SEVIS ID number that is different from your prior Form I-20. Your F-2 dependents do not need to pay a separate SEVIS fee. The Form I-901 can be completed and the fee can be paid online by credit card at <http://www.fmjfee.com>, and you must print payment confirmation after completing Form I-901 and submitting payment. The fee can also be paid by check or money order after completing Form-I-901 online, or by Western Union. See the ICE website at for more information: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>.

### APPLYING FOR YOUR VISA

If abroad, pay the SEVIS fee (see above) and consult the website of the closest U.S. embassy or consulate for instructions on applying for an F-1 visa stamp. The visa stamp is a travel document affixed to your passport that you will need to seek entry to the United States for the purpose of studying at UConn.

You will need to complete the online Form DS-160 and most likely attend an in-person visa interview. The DS-160 will ask for your U.S. address; if you do not yet know where you will live, you can use your academic department or the ISSS address on the form. You will need to bring your passport that is valid at least 6 months into the future, your Form I-20, your SEVIS fee payment confirmation, your proof of funding and any other required support documentation specified on the embassy/consulate website, to your visa interview. Please see the website of the consulate where you will apply for your visa for the full list of supporting documents needed for your visa interview. For links to all U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide, see: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Citizens of Canada must have F-1 status to study in the U.S., but they do not have to apply for an F-1 visa stamp in their passport before traveling to the U.S.: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/visit/canada-bermuda.html>. Citizens of Canada *do* need to pay the SEVIS fee and present the Form I-20, passport, SEVIS fee payment confirmation and proof of funding when entering the U.S. to begin their academic program as an F-1 student.

Plan ahead, as the visa application process can take several weeks, and sometimes longer. Because most visa applicants are required to appear for a personal interview it can take a long time to schedule an appointment, and security checks can delay visa issuance by several weeks or months. Current appointment and average processing times can be found here: [http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait\\_4638.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html)

When you receive a visa, please IMMEDIATELY verify if the information on your visa is accurate before leaving the embassy/consulate (if picking up your passport), such as your name spelling/order, date of birth, expiration date, visa type, etc. If any errors are found, contact the consular office that granted your visa as soon as possible to fix them.

It is advisable to purchase your flight tickets only after your visa is granted.

Other helpful websites:

F-1 Student Visa Program:

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

ISSS Visa Application Guidance:

[issu.uconn.edu](http://issu.uconn.edu) > International Students > New Students > Apply for a Visa

Visa Denials

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/denials/denials\\_1361.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/denials/denials_1361.html)

### ARRIVAL TO THE U.S.

After you obtain the visa you may travel to the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the program start date indicated on box 5 of your Form I-20. You must arrive at UConn BEFORE the program start date. You should note the start date of your orientation program when making plans for arrival. See [www.issu.uconn.edu/orientation](http://www.issu.uconn.edu/orientation) for further details. Please contact your academic department and ISSS if you have extraordinary circumstances that prevent you from arriving by your program start date.

Please notify ISSS if you have received a Form I-20 from UConn but decide not to attend. You must mail the unused form back to ISSS.

During your flight, you will be given a customs declaration form as you near the U.S. On the customs declaration form, you must provide your U.S. address as well as information found in your passport. Again, if you do not have a U.S. address, you may use the ISSS office. Be sure to print clearly. You must also declare on the form the amount of money you are bringing with you, but only if it is \$10,000 or more. Be sure to tell the truth. There is no penalty for bringing this much money but it MUST be declared. You must also include on the form the total value of any goods that you are bringing into the U.S. You don't have to be specific, you can use general terms (i.e. clothing, books, gifts). You can estimate the value of the items. You do not have to pay a duty fee on totals less than \$1,000.

When you travel please carry with you your Form I-20, passport, visa, I-901 SEVIS fee payment confirmation, admission letter or offer letter and funding documentation. **Do not pack these documents into your checked luggage.** Present your passport and Form I-20 to the U.S. immigration officer, who will stamp and annotate your documents with "F-1 (or F-2)" and "D/S" (Duration of Status). Be sure that the officer admits you as an F-1 student by checking the entry stamp in your passport - if the officer stamps your passport with

any other entry than F-1, or gives a specific expiration date (not D/S) please go back to have this corrected BEFORE you leave the immigration area.

*Self Service Kiosks or Global Entry Program:* If your immigration is processed through a self-service kiosk, you may need to elect the type of visa that you enter on. Pay special attention that you process your self-service admission using the correct visa/visa type. Please check the kiosk for any receipts issued to you upon processing your entry, and do not misplace this receipt!

### **I-94 Admission Record**

Upon admission, ALL STUDENTS must confirm the admission record online at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/>. Please print out your online I-94 admission record and keep it for your records.

If you travel through a land border by car you will receive a paper Form I-94 attached to your passport. This form must be annotated the same as your entry stamp: "F-1 (or F-2)" and "D/S".

### ARRIVAL TO UCONN AND CHECK-IN

**IMPORTANT! You must check in with ISSS by the program start date on your Form I-20.** ISSS must register your arrival in SEVIS, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database. To check in, you must do the following AFTER arriving in the U.S.:

1) Update your "Current Local" address field in Student Admin: <http://students.uconn.edu>

2) Complete the online check-in form on the ISSS website: <http://issu.uconn.edu/check-in/>

You will need to have electronic/scanned copies of your passport ID page, visa stamp, signed Form I-20, I-94, and the entry stamp in your passport at the time you check in to upload into the check-in form. If you decide to upload photos of your documents you must be sure they are clear and that you save and name them prior to uploading. Computers are available in the UConn Library for scanning documents, and at ISSS for students to check in and update addresses. ISSS is located in room 183 of McMahon Hall at the main UConn campus in Storrs. **Failure to check in within 30 days (or 15 days if you are an F-1 student with a SEVIS record transferred from another U.S. school) of your program start date on the Form I-20 may result in losing your legal F-1 status.** The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is very strict about check-in requirements.

## ORIENTATION

All F-1 students are required to attend a mandatory ISSS orientation. Further details on the orientation schedule are provided separately. You must pre-register for orientation if you are an incoming degree-seeking student at the Storrs campus. Different orientations are held for different groups of students, depending on your campus, your degree level, and your student status at UConn (i.e. degree seeking or non-degree seeking). Please see <http://issu.uconn.edu/orientation/which-orientation-should-i-attend/> for an overview of the different orientations and more information on sign-up, if required.

## MEDICAL (HEALTH) INSURANCE

*Medical (Health) Insurance requirements* -All full time UConn students are required by the University to have health insurance coverage. In addition, you may be required under the government's Affordable Care Act to maintain health insurance coverage.

Full-time registered students are automatically enrolled in and billed for the University-sponsored Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). The University-sponsored insurance meets the Affordable Care Act insurance requirements and it is strongly recommended for you maintain coverage under the University-sponsored plan, so that you do not have to worry about meeting different sets of legal requirements. If you prefer to use your own personal health insurance plan, you may "opt out" of the University sponsored plan through Student Admin; however it is your responsibility to meet the Affordable Care Act requirements. Please see <http://issu.uconn.edu/> International Students > Medical Insurance for further information on the Affordable Care Act. If you choose to use your own health insurance plan, it is VERY IMPORTANT that you understand how your plan works (for example, whether you must pay out of pocket for expenses and seek reimbursement from your insurance provider, or if you can send your bill to the insurance provider for direct payment to the doctor, etc.).

Graduate students with assistantship awards are eligible to enroll in the **Connecticut Partnership Plan for Graduate Assistants**, instead of the **University-sponsored Student Health Insurance Plan**. Your assistantship award letter provides more information on any benefits associated with the award. Unlike the Student Health Insurance Plan, Graduate Assistants **MUST** elect to enroll in the Connecticut Partnership Plan or not. To sign up for the plan or to get more information visit: <http://hr.uconn.edu/ct-partnership-health-benefits/>.

UConn's Student Health Services medical office, which provides medical services for Storrs campus students, directly bills only limited insurance companies for service. SHS, as well as hospitals and doctor's offices outside of campus, may not directly bill travel insurance or insurance from outside the U.S. Medical care in the United States is VERY expensive. **We strongly recommend that all international students keep a University-sponsored insurance plan for this reason.** For more information on insurance and which plans SHS directly bills, please see: <http://shs.uconn.edu/> Insurance and Billing.

Some UConn programs do not automatically enroll their students in the University-sponsored plan. If you are in one of these plans, you may elect to purchase the University-sponsored plan. Please check your tuition fee bill to determine if the fee for insurance has been posted. If the charge has not been posted you may still enroll in the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). To voluntarily enroll please call 860-486-4535 or email [shs@uconn.edu](mailto:shs@uconn.edu). If you are in one of these plans, you may elect to purchase the University-sponsored plan - contact SHS for details- or you may purchase a plan that offers comparable coverage.

To assist in the transition from your current medical insurance, to insurance for your stay in the U.S., we recommend you purchase travel insurance coverage for yourself (and family members, if any) for at least the first 30 days in the U.S.

## **STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES AND IMMUNIZATIONS**

In addition to facilitating insurance coverage under the University-sponsored insurance plan, UConn Student Health Services (SHS) provides medical services to students matriculated in Storrs-campus programs. Students enrolled in programs at regional campuses may purchase the University-sponsored insurance plan, but they must seek medical services through off-campus providers. In addition, all new students are required by Connecticut state law to show documentation that they have obtained certain vaccinations prior to starting classes at UConn, by submitting a Student Health History Form. Storrs-campus students will attend a health screening during the international student orientation program, and if they are missing any required immunizations, SHS will administer the immunizations at that time. Regional campus students will not be able to obtain immunizations at the orientation and should plan to obtain all required immunizations prior to arrival at UConn. Please contact SHS directly with any questions about the Student Health History Form or the immunizations requirement, or see: <http://shs.uconn.edu/international-students/>

### SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)

Only students who have employment are eligible to get an SSN. Graduate level students who will work as graduate assistants (Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant), and any students who obtain part-time on-campus employment, must apply for a Social Security Number after checking in with ISSS. During the orientation, ISSS brings Social Security Administration officials to the Storrs campus to take your SSN applications. Students are highly encouraged to wait and apply on-campus. Otherwise, you will not be eligible to receive a SSN until about two weeks after you have checked in with ISSS and your SEVIS record has been registered.

### HOUSING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

If you will be living in University housing at Storrs campus, all academic buildings and services are within walking distance. There is also a system of University buses to help students get more quickly from one end of campus to another, as campus is quite large, and some housing is located further from the center of campus. See <http://transpo.uconn.edu/> for more information on University bus services.

If you are living off-campus, it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you find housing within walking or biking distance to campus. The Storrs area is very rural and public transportation is limited. Students who live in or near the town of Willimantic (next to Storrs) may be able to meet basic transportation needs through the Windham Region Transit District bus system: <http://www.wrtd.net/> The Storrs-Willimantic Bus and Route I95 Express Service buses all stop at UConn and are free to the UConn community with a Husky One Card. However, service is limited and schedules are subject to change, so it is safer to find housing that is within walking or biking distance to campus. Many UConn students purchase cars for better and more convenient mobility; however, basic on-and-off campus needs can be met within walking/biking vicinity to the UConn campus. See [www.offcampushousing.uconn.edu](http://www.offcampushousing.uconn.edu) for further resources on finding housing off-campus.

Students attending programs at UConn's Hartford, West Hartford or Stamford campuses may find that public transportation is better in these more urban areas. See <http://www.cttransit.com/> for further details on city bus schedules.

### DRIVING

International students may drive in the U.S. with a foreign driver's license used together with an official International Driver's Permit (IDP) obtained in the home country. If you have a driver's license

from your home country, it is highly recommended that you obtain the IDP before your departure. If you do not have the IDP, you will be required to go through the regular process described below in order to legally drive in Connecticut and the U.S.

In the United States, each state issues a driver's license for residents of that state. In Connecticut, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is the office that issues driver's licenses. The process to obtain a Connecticut driver's license is long and requires students to first apply for a learner's permit for 90 days, during which time you can only drive with an experienced, licensed Connecticut driver. If you have a license issued in another country, you can waive the learner's permit stage of the application. Full license procedures are outlined at: [iss.uconn.edu/drivers-license/](http://iss.uconn.edu/drivers-license/). Students can also apply for a CT non-driver's identification card (CT State ID) if they wish to have official ID recognized in the U.S. other than their passport.

In addition, international students must have a CT driver's license or CT State ID in order to register a car you have purchased. You are required to register a car in order to drive it. Therefore, if you are planning to purchase a car, you should not do this until you have obtained your CT driver's license, or CT State ID. You will also be required to have auto insurance to register your car in Connecticut. If you plan to purchase a car and drive in the U.S., please budget accordingly.

### PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

In accepting the F-1 visa, you obligate yourself to all terms and conditions stated on Form I-20 and will be admitted to the U.S. for the purpose of pursuing the academic program stated on your Form I-20. You are eligible to study on a full time basis during the program dates indicated on your Form I-20. Any changes to the terms of your academic study must be reported and updated on your Form I-20 after arrival. Please see the website of ISSS for further information on maintaining F-1 status after your arrival at UConn: [iss.uconn.edu](http://iss.uconn.edu) > Students > International Students > Current Students.

### F-1 VISA REGULATIONS

There are many rules and regulations that you must follow in order to maintain your F-1 student status after you have arrived in the U.S. ISSS is the only office on-campus authorized and responsible for advising students on their visa and immigration matters. It is very important that you understand the terms of your student visa and abide by those terms. ISSS has five International Advisors who serve the advising needs of all Storrs and regional campus students. Please see [iss.uconn.edu](http://iss.uconn.edu) > About > Staff Directory to find your assigned international advisor.

## PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- Read thoroughly this material and your Form I-20.
- Complete the ISSS Online Pre-Arrival Information module to help you prepare for your move.  
<http://iss.uconn.edu/students/newstudents/new-students-pre-arrival-information/>
- Sign your Form I-20 and any F-2 Dependent Forms I-20.
- Pay I-901 SEVIS fee (you do not have to pay a separate fee for accompanying dependents).
- Apply for your F-1 visa and F-2 visas for accompanying dependents.
- Obtain an International Driver's Permit while in the home country.
- Obtain travel insurance for at least 30 days. Be prepared to pay for medical insurance for the length of your stay after you arrive. The University-sponsored insurance is strongly recommended.
- Make sure your immunizations are up to date and complete the Student Health History Form  
<http://shs.uconn.edu/international-students/>
- Pay your student fee bill: [www.bursar.uconn.edu](http://www.bursar.uconn.edu)
- Contact ISSS ([international@uconn.edu](mailto:international@uconn.edu)) if you will be arriving after the program start date on your Form I-20
- Register for your orientation program (if required).
- Enter the U.S. with your F visa documents no earlier than 30 days before the start date on your Form I-20.

## POST-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST- FIRST THINGS TO DO

- Upon arrival to the U.S., make sure you have been admitted in the correct visa status (check the entry stamp in your passport and online I-94).
- Storrs campus students:** Visit the Lodewick Visitors Center and ask for a campus map!  
<http://visitors.uconn.edu/>

Update your "Current Local" address, as well as your mailing address, in Student Admin.  
<http://students.uconn.edu>

Go to the ISSS website to complete the online check-in: <http://iss.uconn.edu/check-in/> To complete your check-in, you will need scanned copy of all your immigration documents taken AFTER going through the immigration inspection at a port of entry.

Obtain your UConn One Card (UConn ID Card) before orientation:  
<http://www.onecard.uconn.edu/>

Attend a mandatory ISSS Orientation program. Bring your immigration documents and your UConn One Card to the orientation!

Ensure that you are registered for a full-time course load (9 credits per semester for graduate students and LLM students, 12 credits per semester for undergraduates and JD students)

## WHAT NOT TO DO RIGHT AWAY UPON ARRIVAL:

**Do not apply for a Social Security Number (SSN).** After your arrival, your immigration records will not yet have record of your status in the U.S., so Social Security Administration will not be able to process your application. You must wait until at least 2 weeks after you have checked in with ISSS (sometimes longer) before you may apply. It is best to wait until "Services Day" during the orientation week at our office (and easier for you!) to apply for your SSN.

**Do not apply for a Connecticut Driver's License or Connecticut State ID.** In order to apply for a Driver's License or Connecticut State ID you must have a Social Security Number (SSN) or evidence from Social Security Administration that you are not eligible for a SSN (SSN denial letter). This can only be done after you have checked in with ISSS, and sometimes after the start of the semester (see above). **This means you should consider transportation needs if you will live in off-campus housing - do not commit to a housing arrangement where you will need a car/driver's license.**

**Do not purchase a car.** In order to purchase a car and legally drive it, you must have a CT driver's license or CT State ID (see above).