

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

University of Connecticut 📍 2011 Hillside Road, Unit 1083; Storrs, CT 06269 📞 Phone: 860-486-3855 📠 Fax: 860-486-5800

Web: <http://www.iss.uconn.edu>

ISSS Stamford: <http://iss.uconn.edu/stamford/> ISSS Hartford: <http://iss.uconn.edu/hartford/>

ISSS Law School: <https://iss.uconn.edu/iss-law-school/>

## International Student Welcome Guide – F-1 & J-1 Visas

*Congratulations on your admission to UConn! Please contact International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at [international@uconn.edu](mailto:international@uconn.edu) if you have questions about being an international student at UConn prior to arrival. Additional information to prepare for your arrival can be found at [iss.uconn.edu](http://iss.uconn.edu) > New Students.*

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## Visas and Immigration

### Form I-20 Instructions

If you received a Form I-20, you will apply for an F-1 Student visa. If you received a Form DS-2019, please see instructions in the next paragraph. Please review your Form I-20 upon receipt. Carefully read Pages 1, 2 and 3, sign and complete the STUDENT CERTIFICATION at the bottom of Page 1. *Notify ISSS immediately if there are any errors on your Form I-20 BEFORE you apply for your visa, so we may send you a corrected form I-20 to use for your visa application.* Often the academic major listed on your I-20 does not exactly match the name of your academic program at UConn– this is normal.

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 does not sign the Form I-20.

### Form DS-2019 Instructions

If you received a Form DS-2019, this means you will apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. Please review your Form DS-2019 upon receipt. Carefully read Pages 1 and 2, sign and complete the EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION at the bottom of Page 1. *Notify ISSS immediately if there are any errors on your Form DS-2019 BEFORE you apply for your visa, so we may send you a corrected DS-2019 to use for your visa application.* Often the academic major listed on your DS-2019 does not exactly match the name of your academic program at UConn– this is normal.

If you have J-2 dependents: Your J-2 dependents who are older than 14 years may sign their own Forms DS-2019 at the bottom of the form. Otherwise, you, as the J-1 principal, must sign on behalf of your young dependents.

### SEVIS I-901 Fee

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) charges a \$350 SEVIS I-901 fee to new F-1 students, and a \$220 SEVIS I-901 Fee to new J-1 Exchange Visitors. **This fee is IN ADDITION TO the visa application fees charged by the U.S. consulate or embassy.** If you are outside the U.S., you must pay the SEVIS I-901 fee and print your payment confirmation before you go to your visa interview. You can schedule your visa interview before you have paid the fee. 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 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 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 the number on your prior Form I-20. Your F-2/J-2 dependents do not need to pay a SEVIS fee. Complete the Form I-901 and pay the fee online by credit card at <http://www.fmiffee.com>; 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. Students with Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria or Gambia as country of birth or citizenship cannot pay the I-901 fee online by credit card – you must pay by Money Order, Western Union Quick Pay or a certified check drawn from a U.S. Bank. See the ICE website at for more information: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm> or the Study in the States webpage: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/paying-the-i-901-sevis-fee>.

## Applying For Your Visa

If you live outside the U.S. and you are not a citizen of Canada, you must apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa to enter the U.S. as a student or exchange visitor. The visa is a stamp/sticker affixed to your passport that you will present upon entry to the United States. You should only apply for the visa using the I-20/DS-2019 for the school that you will attend. Consult the website of the closest U.S. embassy or U.S. consulate for complete instructions on applying for an F-1/J-1 visa stamp. For links to all U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide, see: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>. From the website, navigate to the Nonimmigrant Visas section for step-by-step instructions.

All visa applicants must complete an online **Form DS-160** and schedule an in-person visa interview. If you received a Form I-20 you should indicate on the DS-160 the purpose of your trip as “Academic or Language Student”. If you received the Form DS-2019, indicate the purpose of your trip as “Exchange Visitor”. You will need to list a contact person in the United States. You may list the name of the Designated School Official (DSO) who issued your Form I-20 or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) who issued your Form DS-2019, and the ISSS address (listed at top of this form). Choose “School Official” as the relationship to you. The DS-160 will also ask about your study and work history, whether you have relatives in the United States, and you social media usage, among other questions.

Follow the consular instructions to schedule an appointment for your visa interview, and pay any visa fees. If you cannot secure an appointment early enough to arrive for your program start date, keep checking back to see if any earlier appointments were cancelled. You may also book an appointment into the future, and then consult with the U.S. embassy/consulate to learn if it is possible to request an expedited appointment (usually this requires first booking an appointment).

You will need to bring your passport that is valid at least 6 months into the future, your Form I-20/DS-2019, your SEVIS fee payment confirmation, your proof of funding, proof of your academic preparation (e.g. transcripts, test scores, etc.) and any other required support documentation specified on the embassy/consulate website, to your visa interview. If consular officials wish to collect more information make their visa decision, they may ask you to complete Form DS-5535, Supplemental Questions for Visa Applicants.

Citizens of Canada do not have to apply in advance for an F-1 visa stamp in their passport, but still must be granted F-1/J-1 status by U.S. immigration authorities upon arrival to the U.S. in order to study. Citizens of Canada *do* need to pay the SEVIS fee and present the Form I-20/DS-2019, passport, SEVIS fee payment confirmation and proof of funding when entering the U.S. to begin their academic program.

Plan ahead, as the visa application process can take several weeks, and sometimes longer. Because most visa applicants are required to appear for an interview it can take a long time to schedule an appointment, and security checks can delay visa issuance by several weeks or months. Visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html> for current estimated appointment wait times, and an overview of the visa application process.

When you receive your visa, 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 you find errors, contact the consular office that granted your visa as soon as possible to request correction.

Visa approval is not guaranteed, and we suggest that you wait until your visa is granted before purchasing flight tickets.

## Visa Delays and Administrative Processing

Some visa applications may be selected for administrative processing, which means your application is initially denied, but will be subject to further security checks, and the denial may be overturned. Administrative processing can add significant delays to your visa processing time. Average processing time for visas selected for administrative processing is 60 days, but it can also take much longer. Graduate students in STEM fields may be especially vulnerable to administrative processing. Therefore, **graduate students in STEM research programs should apply for their visas as early as possible**. If you are a graduate student in a STEM research program, we recommend that you bring your CV/Resume (in English), your Graduate Assistantship offer letter (if you have one) and any information

you have about your proposed research at UConn, or the research of your assigned academic advisor (for example, print their biographical information or CV from the UConn website).

Administrative processing takes on average 60 days to complete, though it can often take longer. Students can check the status of their visa processing at this [website](#). You must arrive by the program start date listed on your Form I-20/DS-2019. If you are unable to arrive by the program start date, some programs may allow you to defer your admission to a later semester. Please contact ISSS, your UConn admission office and your academic program if you will be unable to arrive by your program start date.

## Arrival to the U.S.

If your visa is approved you may travel to the U.S. **up to 30 days** before the program start date listed on your Form I-20/DS-2019.

Please notify ISSS if you have received a Form I-20/DS-2019 from UConn, but decide not to attend. You must destroy or 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, provide your U.S. address – if you live on campus this will be your UConn Dorm Name and Room Number, and the city listing for Storrs or Stamford (depending on your campus). If you do not yet have housing, list the hotel where you will stay. If you do not know where you will stay, you can list the ISSS address – 2011 Hillside Road, Storrs, CT, 06269. Be sure to print clearly. You must also declare on the form the amount of money you are bringing with you, if bringing \$10,000 or more, per family. There is no penalty for bringing more than \$10,000, but it **MUST** be declared. You must also include on the form the total value of any goods you are bringing into the U.S. 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. Please do not bring anything with you that is prohibited to travel with to the U.S. See <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/clearing-cbp> for more information on what may not be brought to the U.S., and traveling with cash.

When traveling, carry your Form I-20/DS-2019, passport, visa, I-901 SEVIS fee payment confirmation, admission letter and/or Graduate Assistant offer letter, and proof of finances for your stay. **Do not pack these documents into your checked luggage.** Present your passport and Form I-20/DS-2019 to the U.S. immigration officer, who will stamp your passport and write “F-1 (or F-2)” or “J-1 (or J-2)” and “D/S” (Duration of Status). Do not present your other support documents unless you are asked to do so. Check that the officer admits you in the proper visa status by reviewing the entry stamp in your passport – if the officer stamps your passport with anything other than F-1 or J-1, or lists a specific expiration date (not D/S) please ask 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 select the type of visa that you enter on. Pay special attention that you identify the correct visa type when you process your self-service admission. Check the kiosk for any receipts issued to you upon processing your entry. Do not misplace this receipt!

## I-94 Admission Record

Upon admission, ALL STUDENTS must confirm your admission record online at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/>. **Please print out or save an electronic copy of your I-94 admission record and keep it for your records. If you are at Storrs campus, you may print this in the ISSS office.**

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”. You might not have an electronic I-94 if you received a paper form – this is OK.

# Arrival to UConn

## Transportation to UConn

**NOTE: Please check the ISSS website for most up to date transportation information, as some services have been disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it is unknown when they will resume.**

### To Storrs

#### From Bradley International Airport (BDL):

**UConn Shuttle:** ISSS plans to provide a shuttle service between Bradley International Airport and the UConn Campus on certain dates in August, aligning with move-in weekends. Please contact [international@uconn.edu](mailto:international@uconn.edu) if you would like to receive more information about the shuttle schedule, or visit [issu.uconn.edu](http://issu.uconn.edu) for shuttle dates and a sign up form, when available. We will provide more information on our shuttles once these details have been finalized.

**Taxis:** The closest airport to UConn Storrs and Hartford campuses is Bradley International Airport, located in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. Taxis are available outside of the airport. If there are no taxis at the airport please go to the Ground Transportation desk and they can arrange a taxi for you. The current taxi rate to Storrs is \$79. Tipping is customary for taxi services, at a rate of 15-20% of the fare. See <http://www.bradleyairport.com/directions/rental-taxi-limo/> for more information. You can pay with cash or a credit card for taxi service. Rideshare services such as Uber and Lyft are also available – all payments should be made through the app, and tipping is not expected unless specified within the app.

**Public Transportation:** Take the 30-Bradley Flyer bus from Bradley Airport to Union Station in Downtown Hartford (fare \$1.75). Pick up is from Terminal A, and the International Arrivals terminal. Have exact fare ready in cash/change. <https://www.cttransit.com/services/bradley-flyer>

#### From Downtown Hartford:

CT Transit Bus 913 travels from Union Station to Storrs via Manchester. Purchase your ticket as you board the bus by selecting “Get 2 Hour Pass” on the fare box, and inserting cash into the box. From Union Station to Storrs you will travel 4 Zones, \$5.00. Change is not given. Drop off is near Whitney Hall (East Campus) and at the Storrs Center Nash-Zimmer Transportation Center, in downtown Storrs.

#### From New York City – JFK – Public Transportation:

- **Option 1** From Kennedy International (JFK) in New York take the [Air Train](#) to Jamaica Station (the last stop). At Jamaica Station transfer to the “E” Line (Blue Line). Take the “E” Line all the way to Manhattan and exit at “42 Street – Port Authority Bus Terminal”. <http://www.panynj.gov/airtrain/index.html>
- Take the Peter Pan bus from New York Port Authority Bus Terminal to Storrs, University of Connecticut. The ticket is \$29.00. Be sure to be familiar with a [NYC Subway Map](#): <http://web.mta.info/maps/submap.html>
- **Option 2** Take a Taxi from JFK Airport to New York Port Authority Bus Terminal on 42nd St. From Port Authority Bus Terminal, take the Peter Pan Bus from New York Port Authority Bus Terminal to Storrs, University of Connecticut. The ticket is around \$22.00 – select depart at Port Authority New York, and select arrive in Storrs UConn. <https://peterpanbus.com/>

#### From Boston (Logan Airport):

From Logan Airport (BOS) in Boston take the [Peter Pan bus](#) to Storrs, University of Connecticut. Pick up the bus outside of Terminals A, B, C, E. The ticket costs around \$34- purchase your ticket online and print for travel. You will change buses in Providence, RI. <https://peterpanbus.com/>

From both New York and Boston, private transportation companies offer vans and limousines from the airport to requested destinations. Prices vary, but this can be a good option if traveling with a group. Rideshare companies like Uber and Lyft can also be taken from these airports, but charges for these services could be quite expensive – up to \$300 per ride to Storrs campus.

### To Hartford

**From BDL – Public Transportation:** Take the 30-Bradley Flyer bus from Bradley Airport to Union Station in Downtown Hartford (fare \$1.75). Pick up is from Terminal A, and the International Arrivals terminal. Have exact change ready.

Drop off is at Union Station and the Connecticut Convention Center (both downtown).

<https://www.cttransit.com/services/bradley-flyer>

#### From JFK – Public Transportation:

- **Option 1:** From Kennedy International (JFK) in New York take the [Air Train](#) to Jamaica Station (the last stop). <http://www.panynj.gov/airtrain/index.html> At Jamaica Station transfer to the “E” Line (Blue Line). Take the “E” Line all the way to Manhattan and exit at “42 Street – Port Authority Bus Terminal”. Take the [Peter Pan](#) (<https://peterpanbus.com/>) or the [Greyhound](#) bus (<http://www.greyhound.com>) from New York Port Authority Bus Terminal, to Hartford. Depending on the time, the ticket will cost between \$22.00 - \$35.00. [NYC Subway Map](#): <http://web.mta.info/maps/submap.html>
- **Option 2:** From Kennedy International (JFK) in New York take the [Air Train](#) to Jamaica Station (the last stop). At Jamaica Station transfer to the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). Take the LIRR all the way to Penn Station, W. 34<sup>th</sup> Manhattan. From Penn Station take the [Amtrak](#) train to Hartford, CT. [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)
- **Option 3:** From NYC take the [Metro North Railroad](#) <http://www.mta.info/schedules> -New Haven Line travels from Grand Central Station to Stamford, and New Haven, CT. In New Haven switch trains to [CT Rail - Hartford Line](#) <http://www.hartfordline.com/> traveling from New Haven to Hartford.

#### From BOS – Public Transportation:

- Option 1: From Logan Airport (BOS) in Boston take the [Peter Pan bus](#) to Hartford. Pick up the bus outside of Terminals A, B, C, E. The ticket costs around \$40-\$50- purchase your ticket online and print for travel. You will switch buses in Providence, RI.
- Option 2: From Logan Airport take the “T” (Boston subway) silver line to South Station. At South Station, take the [Peter Pan](#) or the [Greyhound](#) bus from Boston South St Station to Hartford. Depending on the time, the ticket will cost between \$30-\$40.

From both New York and Boston, private transportation companies offer vans and limousines from the airport to requested destinations.

#### *To Stamford*

##### From JFK – Public Transportation:

- Option 1: Take the [Airtrain](#) to Jamaica Station, and from there, take the Long Island Railroad to Penn Station (Manhattan). <http://www.panynj.gov/airtrain/index.html> From Penn Station, [Amtrak](#) travels to Stamford. [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)
- Option 2: Take a taxi from the airport to Grand Central Station, and from there, take the Metro North Railroad to Stamford. <http://www.mta.info/schedules>
- From Stamford Transportation Center, take the [Harbor Point Trolley](#) around Stamford to get to UConn. <http://stamford-downtown.com/getting-around/harbor-point-trolley/>
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**From Newark, NJ – Public Transportation:** Take the [Airtrain](#) to Newark Liberty Airport Station, and from there take [Amtrak](#) to Stamford.

From New York and Newark, private transportation companies offer vans and limousines from the airport to requested destinations. Visit the ISSS website for further transportation resources.

## ISSS Immigration Document Check-In

**IMPORTANT!** All new international students are required to complete immigration document check-in on the ISSS website after you arrive at UConn. You must complete immigration document check in with ISSS by the program start date listed on your Form I-20/DS-2019. ISSS must register your arrival in SEVIS, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database.

To complete immigration document check-in, do the following AFTER arriving in the U.S.:

- 1) Update your “Current Local” address field in Student Admin: <https://studentadmin.uconn.edu/>
- 2) Complete the online check-in form on the ISSS website: <http://iss.uconn.edu/check-in/>

To complete the immigration document check-in, you will need to have electronic/scanned copies of your passport ID page, visa stamp, signed Form I-20/DS-2019, I-94, and the entry stamp in your passport. You will upload these documents into your online check-in form. If you take photos of your documents to upload, the copies must be clear. Computers are available in the UConn Libraries and in the ISSS office in Storrs for scanning documents. ISSS in Storrs is located in Room 183 of McMahon Hall. ***Failure to complete immigration document check-in within 30 days after your program start date on the Form I-20 may result in losing your legal F-1 visa status (or 15 days if you have transferred from another U.S. school).***

## Orientation

All international students are required to attend an orientation to the F or J visa regulations provided by ISSS. ISSS provides a mandatory full-day orientation program to all new graduate (Master's and PhD) students who attend the Storrs campus. All other international students will attend an ISSS information session as part of the orientation provided by your academic program. Please visit <https://iss.uconn.edu/orientation/> for an overview of the different orientations offered, and more information on sign-up, if required. Many orientation programs will charge a required fee to cover the costs of providing the orientation.

## Health and Medical Insurance Requirements

### Medical Insurance Requirements

All full time UConn students are required by the University to have health insurance coverage. 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.** In addition, you may be required under the U.S. government's Affordable Care Act to maintain health insurance coverage.

### University Sponsored Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP)

Most full-time enrolled students who attend the Storrs campus are automatically enrolled in, and billed for, the University-sponsored Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). After you have registered for classes, check your UConn fee bill to see if the University also enrolled you in the SHIP – there will be a charge on your fee bill, if yes. Many full time students at the other UConn campuses are *not* automatically enrolled for the UConn SHIP and you must contact UConn Student Health Services to enroll, or find a comparable insurance plan for yourself. Again, check your UConn fee bill to see if you were automatically enrolled. Graduate students who have Graduate Assistantship awards are not automatically enrolled in the SHIP, because most Graduate Assistants choose to take the subsidized employee insurance instead of the SHIP.

If you were automatically enrolled in the UConn SHIP, but prefer to use your own personal health insurance plan, you may “opt out” of the University sponsored plan by completing a waiver through StudentAdmin. If you choose to use your own health insurance, it is VERY IMPORTANT that you understand how your plan works. For example, must you pay your own medical expenses and seek reimbursement from your insurance provider? Can you send your medical bill to the insurance provider for direct payment to the doctor? Please see <https://shs.uconn.edu/insurance-information/> for further information about the SHIP and waiver procedures.

ISSS strongly recommends that students take the UConn SHIP, as it is commonly accepted by local healthcare providers, and provides coverage for travel related benefits such as medical evacuation back to the home country.

**Graduate students with Graduate Assistantships** usually enroll in a University sponsored employee health plan, the **Connecticut Partnership Plan for Graduate Assistants**, instead of the SHIP. This is a subsidized insurance plan, so it costs less than the UConn SHIP. Unlike the SHIP, Graduate Assistants **MUST** self-enroll for the Connecticut Partnership Plan. Sign-up information and coverage description can be found online: <https://hr.uconn.edu/ct-partnership-health-benefits/>. This plan will not become effective until the first day of the month *after* you begin your Graduate Assistantship (GA) – if your GA begins in August, your insurance will be effective September 1. If your GA begins in January, your insurance will be effective February 1. Therefore, you should try to get all required immunizations **BEFORE** you travel to UConn, and you should purchase a travel insurance plan to cover you in the event of an emergency during your first month at UConn.

**Students on J-1 Visas** are required by U.S. federal law to maintain insurance for themselves and accompanying dependent family members that meets certain coverage requirements. The SHIP meets J-1 visa requirements, but the Connecticut Partnership Plan for Graduate Assistants does not. **If you are a GA with a J-1 visa, you will need to purchase additional supplementary insurance to meet your legal visa requirements.** Please contact ISSS for more details.

## Immunizations and Health History Form

Connecticut state law requires all students to show that they have obtained certain vaccinations prior to starting classes at UConn, by submitting a Student Health History Form. Students at the School of Social Work and School of Law are exempt from the SHS Health History Form, but may have their own form requirements: <http://shs.uconn.edu/forms>. Contact your admission representative at the School of Law or School of Social Work directly for more information.

International students should try to get all required immunizations before submitting the Health History Form. Students who do not submit a Health History Form or have not met all immunization/testing requirements will have a hold placed on your academic record that will prevent you from registering for classes and using University services. If you attend the Storrs campus, UConn Student Health and Wellness (SHaW) will contact you if you are missing required immunizations, or if you must attend an additional health screening during Orientation. At the health screening during orientation week, SHaW will provide you, at cost, with required immunizations missing from your Health History Form. Please contact SHaW directly with any questions about the Student Health History Form or the immunizations requirement at [shs@uconn.edu](mailto:shs@uconn.edu). Students at other UConn campuses who are missing required immunizations will be responsible to obtain missing immunizations at a community medical facility.

## Husky One Card (UConn ID Card)

The Husky One Card is your student ID card, and it can be used to take books from the library, access University facilities (dormitory, gym) and pay for food if you have a meal plan, or add cash to the card balance to use it like a debit card (Husky Bucks). Some off-campus restaurants also accept Husky Bucks for payment. **International students should upload their photo in advance to the One Card office before coming to UConn** by following the Online Photo Submission instructions on the UConn One Card website: <https://onecard.uconn.edu/the-one-card/online-photo-submission/>. Your UConn One Card can also be used to prove your student status in order to get student discounts for various off-campus services (some places like museums, theaters, amusement parks, online subscription services offer special student rates).

## Communications and Mail

### Mobile Communications

The U.S. has a variety of cell phone providers, and many offer student plans. Phones can be purchased on a contractual basis, where you are billed monthly for a set amount of phone/internet, or a pay-as-you-go service, where you can add service as you need it (this may be better for short-term stay). Most cell phone providers can help you with both plans. International students and scholars who do not have a Social Security Number and wish to purchase a contract phone service may need to pay a high security deposit. This is because the cell phone service provider cannot check your financial history without your SSN, so they are taking a financial risk by providing you with a cell phone contract.

While international calling can be expensive, some service providers offer low rates for international calling. Other students prefer to connect with their families through apps like Whatsapp, Skype, WeChat, Viber and Telegram.

### Mail

Most mail is handled through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). If you live off-campus, mail is delivered daily, except for Sundays and federally-observed holidays. At Storrs campus residence halls (excluding Northwood Apartments), mail



is delivered Monday – Friday. See Student Mail Services for further information about on-campus mail.

<https://studentmail.uconn.edu/>

## Packages and Private Mail Carriers

Packages can be sent through U.S. Postal Service, or also through private providers such as UPS, Fed Ex and DHL. Off-campus packages are typically delivered to your door, or if you live in an apartment complex there may be a mailroom where you pick up packages. On-campus packages are delivered to dorms through the Student Mail Services (exception: Northwood Apartments). If you have an oversized package mailed to you, or if you will have packages mailed to you before the semester begins, you may need to pick up those packages from a central UConn Mail Services facility.

## Housing

### Temporary Housing Options

When you arrive, you may need to stay somewhere temporarily until your residence move-in date. Hotels are expensive and generally cost more than \$100 per night. Youth hostels and other lower cost options are not common in Connecticut.

#### **All cities:**

Short-term room and apartment rentals can be found through online apartment and room rental services like **Airbnb** and **VRBO**.

#### **Storrs:**

**Along bus line to campus (you may need to walk to a bus stop, or use taxi or rideshare to come to campus):**

Spring Hill Inn: <https://www.springhillinnct.com/>

The Inn on Storrs: [www.theinnonstorrs.com](http://www.theinnonstorrs.com)

#### **Hartford:**

Downtown Hartford hotels <https://hartford.com/hotels/> are in walking distance to the Graduate Business Learning Center and UConn Hartford. Law School students can use CT Transit Bus System routes 60, 62, 64, 66 and 72 from downtown, or may find West Hartford hotels more accessible.

**Stamford:** There are a number of hotels in downtown Stamford. <http://stamford-downtown.com/downtown-living/hotels/> Check an online map to see walking time to UConn Stamford.

### Long Term Housing

**Living On-Campus:** On-campus housing is available at the UConn Storrs and UConn Stamford campuses. The UConn Residential Life office manages applications for on-campus housing. **ALL Bachelor's students at the UConn Storrs campus are required to live on-campus for the first academic year.** Students apply for on-campus housing directly through the Residential Life website, <https://reslife.uconn.edu/>. Please read all sections of the Residential Life website to learn more about housing options, costs, deadlines to apply, and what to expect when living on campus. Graduate student housing on campus is also available, but limited, in apartment style housing walking distance to campus.

It is important to have realistic expectations about living on campus! The [UConn Office of Residential Life website features videos](#) at <https://reslife.uconn.edu/liveonandlearn/> with current UConn students showing you what it is like to live in their dorm or on-campus apartment. There are many different types of residential living arrangements available (traditional housing, suites, apartments), but they vary in cost, and some living arrangements may not be available to first year students. Traditional housing consists of a shared or single room in a hall, where residents share bathrooms and other common areas. In a suite, a bathroom may be shared among only a few bedrooms. Graduate student on campus housing is limited to Northwood Apartments. After you learn your housing assignment, you can visit the Office of Residential Life webpage to view a [virtual tour](#) of your residence: <https://reslife.uconn.edu/virtual-tours/>.

UConn also offers students the chance to live in Learning Communities, where residents share a common academic or personal interest. Learning communities are a great way to meet other students from the United States, because you already share a common interest through your learning community. If you apply for or are assigned to live in a Learning Community, it is important that you participate in the activities and academic components of that community. Residents must be engaged with the community to get the most out of the living experience.

Students who live on campus are only able to apply for a parking permit after they have earned 54 or more credits. This means first year students generally cannot keep a car on campus. Please plan for this, and do not purchase a car until you meet the parking eligibility requirements.

When you are completing your housing application, it is important to be aware of some of the terminology. Some halls are mixed gender (co-ed) and some halls or floors may be specific to one gender, or gender inclusive (which refers to a floor or community that allows for students of any gender to live together regardless of assigned sex). If your housing application or housing contract refers to guests, this may have a different meaning for different students. For some, a guest may be a friend visiting campus, but for others it may include romantic partners. Housing assignments are made based on an assessment of the lifestyle preferences of applicants, so be sure to answer the application questions honestly.

After you learn of your housing assignment and roommate, it is customary to contact your roommate before the semester begins. If your roommate is an American student, you may want to use a U.S. social media account (if you are able to) so that you can connect with your roommate more easily. If you cannot use a U.S. social media platform, then we recommend that you at least email your future roommate to introduce yourself and let them know that you look forward to living with them. It is common for American students to have a mini-refrigerator or microwave in their dorm, rather than utilize a shared kitchen space. Sometimes roommates will negotiate in advance, who will bring each of these items – for example, one roommate may bring a mini-fridge, and one may bring a microwave, and you will both share the items while living together. However, if you do not feel comfortable with this arrangement, or have no future need for the appliance, you can politely decline.

**Living Off-Campus:** Students who seek off-campus housing should use the resources offered through UConn’s Office of Off Campus Student Services. <https://offcampus.uconn.edu/> The Off Campus Student Services website has a searchable off-campus housing database, information about the rental process, and resources for international students. They are also willing to look at your rental contract before you sign, to make sure the contract is standard. It is very important that you understand the terms of your rental contract before you sign. **Contact the Office of Off Campus Student Services with questions about your rental contract BEFORE you sign any rental agreements.**

If you live off-campus, you must have reliable transportation (e.g. on bus line, or already have a U.S. license and car), or can safely walk/bike to campus. It can take a long time to obtain a driver’s license after arrival to the United States. Many of the main roads around UConn are not safe to walk on.

#### **Housing within Walking Distance to Storrs Campus:**

- Carriage House Apartments
- Celeron Square Apartments
- Clubhouse Apartments
- Hunting Lodge Apartments
- Knollwood Apartments
- Oakwood Apartments
- Orchard Acres Apartments
- Oaks on the Square

#### **On the Willimantic Regional Transit District Bus Route (WRTD) to Storrs Campus:**

- Carriage House Apartments
- Celeron Square

- Clubhouse Apartments
- Hunting Lodge Apartments
- Colonial Townhouse Apartments
- Meadowbrook Gardens (weekday shuttle to campus)

## Driving and Local Transportation

### Driving a Car

International students may drive in the U.S. for up to one year with a foreign driver's license. If your license is in a language other than English or Spanish, the license must be accompanied by an official International Driver's Permit (IDP) obtained in your home country. After one year, you must have a Connecticut driver's license to drive a car. If your country does not issue an International Driver's Permit, or if you do not obtain an IDP before you go, and your license is not in English or Spanish, you must apply for a Connecticut driver's license in order to drive in the United States.

In the United States, each state issues a driver's license for residents of that state. The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is the office that issues driver's licenses for Connecticut residents. The process to obtain a Connecticut driver's license is long, and requires students to first apply for a learner's permit. During the first 90 days with your learner's permit, you may only drive if you are with someone who is 20 years or older, who had had a license for at least four consecutive years with no license suspensions. After a 90-day waiting period, you may take a road test to get the full driver's license. If you have a license issued in another country, you can waive the 90-day waiting period, but you still must take the permit test. Visit the ISSS website for further details.

<https://iss.uconn.edu/drivers-license/>

If you will purchase a car, you should already have a Connecticut driver's license or Connecticut Non-Driver ID Card issued by the Connecticut DMV. These license or non-driver ID card are required to register your vehicle, and your vehicle must be registered with the DMV before you can drive it. 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 your time and money accordingly.

### Public Transportation

**U-Pass:** The U-Pass is a state-wide benefit for students who attend participating campuses (Avery Point, Storrs, Hartford, Stamford, GBLC and School of Law). With a U-Pass and your UConn ID, you can ride free on many buses and trains within the state of Connecticut. You must apply for your U-Pass online and it will be mailed to your local address (not international address). Therefore you must plan to pay any public transportation fares until you receive your U-Pass. Visit [upass.uconn.edu](http://upass.uconn.edu) for application details.

#### **Storrs:**

Storrs is located in a rural part of the state. You may find public transportation very limited compared to what you are accustomed to. If you will live in University housing at Storrs campus, academic buildings and services are accessible either by walking or by the free University bus system. If you live off campus, we strongly recommend that you find housing that is walking distance to campus, or directly serviced by the WRTD bus line.

Campus bus shuttle: <https://transpo.uconn.edu/>

Windham Region Transit District: <http://www.wrttd.net/> Bus routes between Storrs, Campus, and neighboring town Willimantic/Windham

CT Transit 913 Bus: <https://www.cttransit.com/services/express-services> Bus between campus, Manchester (shopping mall) and downtown Hartford (Union Station)

Peter Pan Bus: [www.peterpanbus.com](http://www.peterpanbus.com) (Connections from campus to Hartford, NYC, Boston and beyond)

#### **Stamford, Hartford, Waterbury, Avery Point:**

Students attending programs at UConn's Hartford or Stamford campuses may find that public transportation is more accessible in these urban areas. See <http://www.cttransit.com/> for city bus schedules. Hartford is served by rail via

the national rail carrier Amtrak, ([www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)) and CT Rail (<http://www.hartfordline.com/>). Stamford is also served by Amtrak, as well as Metro North <http://www.mta.info/schedules> .

## Bicycles

At Storrs campus, UConn Recreation runs a bike share program, UConn Recreation Cycle Share. <https://recreation.uconn.edu/cycle-share/> There are other local options where you can purchase a bike – Storrs Center Cycle is within walking distance to campus, and some students have purchased bikes at the local Walmart (on bus line).

## Packing and Weather

Connecticut is a four-season state; we experience very cold weather and a lot of snow in winter, very hot weather in summer, and mild weather in spring and winter. You should plan to bring or purchase winter gear by October of each year. For winter, you will need a warm jacket, hat, scarf, mittens/gloves, wool socks, and boots. For extremely cold weather, you may want to purchase long underwear to wear under your clothes. Contact ISSS if you are unsure what to bring. On the coast of Connecticut (Stamford and Avery Point campuses) winter can be a bit more mild than inland (Storrs, Hartford).

UConn's Residential Life office provides a packing list for students who live on campus <https://reslife.uconn.edu/items-to-bring/> ; however, international students will likely need to purchase most of these items upon arrival due to packing limitations. Electrical sockets in the U.S. are 120/240 volts/60 hz. During orientation, many programs offer a new-student shopping trip to a large department store. Many items can also be purchased on campus at the UConn Bookstore. Students who live on campus should try to pack bedding for the first night – i.e. sheets, pillowcase and blanket.

UConn mail rooms will not be open until the semester officially starts – you will not be able to receive any mail sent to you, including small packages, until then. Large packages are held at a central mail room on campus, and can be picked up during normal business hours (Monday – Friday).

## Money and Your Fee Bill

### Financial Planning

The University provided you with an estimate of your billed and unbilled expenses at UConn, which you referenced to apply for an I-20 or DS-2019 document. Your actual expenses may be higher or lower than the estimated cost of attendance listed on the ISSS website. <https://iss.uconn.edu/students/financial-declaration-form/> **Your initial expenses upon arrival to the United States will be significant** – if you are living off campus, you will often be required to pay the equivalent of three months of rent up front (first month, last month and a security deposit). You must plan accordingly, and bring enough savings to help you with initial move-in expenses. Text books and course supplies are also very expensive.

We recommend that you have \$100 in cash with you when you arrive to the United States to help with initial small expenses. Traveler's checks are still a safe way to bring larger amounts of currency, but be sure they are denominated in U.S. funds. You may also be able to access your foreign accounts through your own debit or credit cards- check with your bank in your home country before you leave to find out if you will be able to access cash. Cash withdrawals at ATMs in the U.S. will carry a sizable processing fee. Students may also receive an international wire transfer once you set up an account with a local bank here.

U.S. currency has the following primary denominations: \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 bills. The bills are all the same color and size. Coins are 1 cent (a penny), 5 cents (a nickel), 10 cents (a dime) and 25 cents (a quarter). The size and color of the coins do not have any correlation to their value.

### Paying your Fee Bill

Undergraduate fee bills for Fall semester are issued by the UConn Bursar in June and are due August 1<sup>st</sup>. Spring bills are issued in November and are due January 8<sup>th</sup>. Graduate fee bills are issued in July for the Fall semester and in November for the Spring semester. Graduate bill payment is due the Friday prior to the start of the semester. You

will be notified via email to your UConn account when a bill has been issued. Please note: Your fee bill will adjust with any changes in your credits enrolled, housing, meal plans, and health insurance. Your fee bill must be paid in full prior to attending Orientation. Any student with a past due balance will not be able to adjust their class schedule until the balance is paid.

**The University's only approved and accepted method for international payments is Western Union GlobalPay for Students.** Payments can be sent in foreign currency or USD through a variety of options. To initiate payment, please go here: <https://student.globalpay.wu.com/geo-buyer/universityofconnecticut#!/>

Please note: Your payment to UConn should only be for payment to your fee bill. Any funds required for personal living expenses must be sent directly to your personal U.S. bank account. Overpayments from international sources will be returned to the originating account, and cannot be issued as a refund to the student. For more information on the Bursar's Office, including all accepted payment methods, please visit [www.bursar.uconn.edu](http://www.bursar.uconn.edu).

## Opening a U.S. Bank Account

All U.S. bank accounts must follow rules and regulations set for banks by the U.S. government. While banks may offer different services and incentives for opening an account, no one bank is considered "better" than the other. Students can choose where they want to open a bank account based on a number of factors, which may include hours they are open for service, location, and whether they offer any incentives for students to open accounts.

You will need to open a "checking account" to pay for your day-to-day expenses and bills. The checking account is usually free for students to open, and you may or may not be required to keep a minimum dollar balance in the account. Banks in the U.S. generally do not allow you to "overdraft" your account (have a negative balance). If you are a student, ask if the bank offers a student checking account.

What to bring to the bank to open your account:

- Identity and immigration documents (passport, I-20/DS-2019, I-94 print out)
- UConn Student ID Card and admission letter (if you have one- this may be needed to open a student account)
- Social Security or ITIN Number (if you have one –this is NOT required to open a checking account)
- Money to deposit

Students from some countries may have to wait a few days before your bank account can be finalized. Do not panic if this happens to you, but be sure that you have a way to access money in the meantime. After your bank account is set up, talk with your bank about the best way to transfer money to your account from your home country.

You can withdraw money from your checking account and make payments in several ways:

- by visiting the bank and filling out a withdrawal form to withdraw cash from your account
- by debit card, which is like a credit card that is linked to your checking account, and can be used to make purchases at stores, or withdraw cash from ATMs (cash machines)
- by writing a personal check out to the person or business, you are paying. If you live off-campus, you will probably need to write a check to pay your rent. If you need to mail a payment, never send cash – instead use a check. If you need help to write a check, ISSS staff can assist you. You may purchase personal checks from your bank for regular use, or if you only need to pay by check on very few occasions, you may request the bank to issue a check on your behalf (a bank check).

- by money transfer apps or websites like Paypal or Venmo.

## Working and SSN

International students may work in on-campus positions up to 20 hours per week. "On Campus positions" mean you are working for UConn, and the job is located on-campus. Graduate Assistantships are on campus positions and count toward the 20 hours per week that you may work. F-1 students do not have to apply for special work permission from ISSS to work on campus, and the work may begin in the 30-day period before the "Session Start Date" listed on the Form I-20. J-1 students may only work from the program start date on the DS-2019, and they must apply for written work authorization letter from ISSS before they may begin working on campus. **International**

**students may not work in any off-campus jobs, except with special authorization from the ISSS office or the U.S. government.**

Students who have employment must apply for a U.S. Social Security Number (SSN). The SSN is a number issued by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for tax purposes. Only students who have employment are eligible to get an SSN. New international students must complete immigration document check-in with ISSS and must obtain a letter from ISSS before you apply for your Social Security Number. At the beginning of each semester, Social Security Administration staff visit the Storrs campus to take your SSN applications. Students at other campuses may apply at their local Social Security Administration office. See the ISSS website for further details (Resources Tab). Students who apply directly at the local SSA office should wait about two weeks after completing the immigration document check-in, before applying for the SSN.

## Study Requirements

International students are required to study on a full time basis each semester. Full time means at least 12 credits for Bachelor's students, 9 credits for Master's and Doctoral students or 6 credits for Master's and Doctoral Students who have Graduate Assistantships. Exchange students who enroll in Bachelor's level courses must carry at least 12 credits, and exchange students who enroll in Masters/Doctoral level courses must carry 9 credits. JD students must carry 12 credits, and UCAELI students must attend all IEP classes.

## Intro to U.S. Culture

U.S. culture may be very similar to or very different from your own culture. Many people learn about U.S. culture through movies, television or other media, but you will find that in reality it is very different from how it is portrayed in the news or popular culture. Here are some important aspects of U.S. culture, keeping in mind that there is also a lot of cultural variety in the U.S., and not everyone will share these same values. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of these generalized values as it can help to explain certain behavior that you may encounter, and can help to guide appropriate behavior in certain situations:

**Individualism:** The United States is very individual-oriented, instead of group oriented. Individual freedoms and rights are valued, and "standing out" can be seen as a good thing. People may put their own needs before the needs of the group. Individual privacy and space is valued. This part of

**Following Rules/Objectivity:** In the United States, people are generally expected to follow published rules and procedures for getting things done, and exceptions are not typically allowed for individual circumstances, or based on personal relationships.

**Timeliness:** It is important to be on time to meetings, appointments, interviews, class. This means arriving at or just before the start time. For social engagements, there is a little more flexibility to be a few minutes late, but if you will be significantly late, you should let the person know.

**Friendliness:** Americans can be very friendly to strangers, but this friendliness may come off as superficial, or not genuine, if you are not accustomed to this. For Americans, this friendliness is a polite gesture, but it may take longer for friendships to develop. Once a friendship develops with an American, the nature of that friendship, in terms of responsibility to each other, may be different from what you might expect. While friends certainly support each other, often a person's individual needs or space may still take priority.

**Personal appearance:** Americans are very self-conscious of their own hygiene. Daily showers and grooming are important in their daily routine to avoid body odors. Strong perfumes are usually not recommended, as some people can be allergic or sensitive to the smells.

**Diversity:** The United States is a multicultural country and you must treat all with tolerance and respect, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, culture or ethnicity. It is important that while you are in the U.S. that you try to understand the environment you are living in, including the very complex history of race and cultural diversity. For some international students, coming to the U.S. may be the first time you are perceived as a minority, or through a cultural lens different than your own, in regards to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or identity.

This may be disorienting for you, and we encourage you to reach out to ISSS or the UConn Cultural Centers if you need support.

**Financial modesty:** While consumerism is part of U.S. culture, it can be considered socially improper to show one's wealth or talk about one's money. This is especially true at a place like UConn – it is a public, rural institution and UConn students come from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Students with Families

International students may request dependent visas (F-2 or J-2) for their spouses, or unmarried children under the age of 21. If you requested a dependent I-20/DS-2019 for family members from ISSS, you should have received these with your Form I-20/DS-2019. You do not have to pay a separate SEVIS fee for your F-2/J-2 dependents. If they will not accompany you to the United States at this time, you may also request their visa documents later.

F-2 dependent spouses may study on a part-time basis in the United States, but may not work. J-2 dependent spouses may study part-time or full-time, and they may apply to the U.S. government for a U.S. work permit. F-2 and J-2 children may enroll in elementary and secondary school.

If your family will accompany you to the U.S., you must purchase health insurance for them. Public schooling in the United States is free, and your school assignment is based on your place of residence, unless you attend a private school or magnet school. All children who enroll in public school must have a medical examination and Connecticut State Health Form filled out by their doctor to be able to enroll in school. You will also need to provide proof of residency in your town to enroll children in school. Find more information about school enrollment on the website of the town where you will live, and on the ISSS Website under "Resources".

## Resources

### ISSS Advisor

As you prepare for your program in the United States, you may have many questions. International Student and Scholar Services is the office at UConn that can advise you on matters related to the visa application process and life at UConn as an international student. Students are assigned an ISSS advisor based on campus location, and your program of study. ISSS has offices at the Storrs, Stamford, the Law School and Hartford (Graduate Business Learning Center) campuses. Please see [iss.uconn.edu](https://iss.uconn.edu) > About > Staff Directory to find your assigned international advisor, and contact your ISSS advisor with any questions you have.

### Campus Cultural Organizations

UConn has **many** student organizations dedicated to a specific country or cultural theme. These organizations can provide incoming students with a point of contact at UConn of a current student who either comes from the same region, or shares an interest in the same culture. Visit <https://uconntact.uconn.edu/organizations> to search UConn organizations by keyword or campus, or you can select the "Cultural" organization category to view student orgs organized by country or culture.

Other student organizations based on specific interests are also a great way to get involved and meet others once you arrive.

### EducationUSA

EducationUSA is a U.S. Department of State network of advising centers around the world to help students prepare for study in the United States. Their website provides information about studying in the United States, and they sponsor in-country pre-departure orientation events at their advising centers. Visit: <https://educationusa.state.gov/>

## Helpful Contact Information

[UConn Offices](#)

International Student and Scholar Services	<a href="mailto:international@uconn.edu">international@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-3855
ISSS Stamford	<a href="mailto:lulu.dong@uconn.edu">lulu.dong@uconn.edu</a>	+1-203-251-9545
ISSS Hartford	<a href="mailto:neena.kapoor@uconn.edu">neena.kapoor@uconn.edu</a>	
ISSS Law School	<a href="mailto:leslie.lawrence@uconn.edu">leslie.lawrence@uconn.edu</a>	
Office of Undergraduate Admissions	<a href="mailto:beahusky@uconn.edu">beahusky@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-3137
Office of Graduate Admissions	<a href="mailto:gradschool@uconn.edu">gradschool@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-3617
Bursar (Student bills)	<a href="mailto:bursar@uconn.edu">bursar@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-4830
Registrar (Course Enrollment)	<a href="mailto:registrar@uconn.edu">registrar@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-3331
Center for Students with Disabilities	<a href="mailto:csd@uconn.edu">csd@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-2020
Student Health and Wellness	<a href="mailto:shs@uconn.edu">shs@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-4700
Counseling & Mental Health Services		+1-860-486-4705
Orientation (Undergraduates)	<a href="mailto:orientation@uconn.edu">orientation@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-4866
Residential Life	Use contact form on website	+1-860-486-2926
Off Campus Student Services	<a href="mailto:offcampus@uconn.edu">offcampus@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-8006
Public Safety – Storrs		+1-860-486-4800
Education Abroad (Storrs exchange students)	<a href="mailto:abroad@uconn.edu">abroad@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-5022
UCAELI (ESL Students)	<a href="mailto:register-ucaeli@uconn.edu">register-ucaeli@uconn.edu</a>	+1-860-486-2127

Please note that the UConn School of Law, UConn School of Social Work and UConn regional campuses may have separate offices for similar administrative functions. Check their websites for further details.

UPDATED: 02/12/2021