

WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA: A GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



In this handbook, you will find information on the following topics:

- First Steps at the University
- The American University System
- Housing and Service Options
- Immigration and Tax information
- Additional Helpful Information



PREPARED BY:

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Revised Spring 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This manual contains hyperlinks that will automatically connect to additional information on the internet. Click on any [blue text](#) throughout the manual to be automatically connected to the internet links. Click on the **red text** below to go directly to any section in this manual.

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	Welcome Students!	4
1.2	International Student Services Office Hours and Location.....	4
1.3	A Brief History of the University of South Carolina.....	4
1.4	Campus Activities	5
1.5	Community Resources for Internationals	5
1.6	Important Campus Phone Numbers and Web Links	6
2	FIRST STEPS AT THE UNIVERSITY	8
2.1	Orientation	8
2.2	Advisement.....	9
2.3	Additional Registration Requirements	9
2.4	Registration	10
2.5	Tuition and Fee Payment	11
3	THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM.....	12
3.1	The Semester System.....	12
3.2	The Credit System.....	12
3.3	The Grading System.....	12
3.4	Keys to Academic Success in the U.S.	12
4	HOUSING AND SERVICE OPTIONS	13
4.1	Living On-Campus (University Housing - Welcome)	13
4.2	Undergraduate Housing	13
4.3	Family/Graduate Housing.....	13
4.4	Living Off-campus.....	14
4.5	Housing Terms	15

4.6	Furniture and Household Items	17
4.7	Telephone Service.....	18
4.8	Wireless/Cellular Phone Service Options.....	19
4.9	Banking.....	19
4.10	Postal Services.....	21
4.11	Health Care	22
4.12	Student Health Services	22
4.13	Personal Safety	25
4.14	Police Assistance and 911	26
5	IMMIGRATION AND TAX INFORMATION.....	27
5.1	Important Immigration Documents	27
5.2	Maintaining Student Status.....	28
5.3	Terms and Types of F-1 Employment Authorization	29
5.4	Terms and Types of J-1 Student Employment Authorization.....	30
5.5	Travel Outside the U.S. and Re-entry	31
5.6	Tax Information.....	32
5.7	Social Security Information.....	33
6	ADDITIONAL HELPFUL INFORMATION.....	34
6.1	Your Initial Arrival	34
6.2	International Students with Children.....	34
6.3	English Classes for Adults.....	35
6.4	Additional Academic Terms.....	35
6.5	Where to Turn for Answers.....	37

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Welcome Students!

This handbook was compiled by [International Student Services](#) in order to familiarize new international students with the University of South Carolina. The office provides services for international students, including pre-arrival assistance, specialized orientation programs, immigration counseling, and individual consultations to resolve problems related to academic, personal, and cultural adjustment issues.

Students from more than 100 countries around the world come to the University to pursue their educational goals. We are dedicated to serving the international education needs of all University students, and providing services and support to both international students and American students wishing to study in other countries. Our goal is to provide professional, caring services to our students while providing them with a world of opportunities.

1.2 International Student Services Office Hours and Location

[International Student Services](#) is located on the University of South Carolina, Columbia campus. We are in the [James F. Byrnes Building](#), Suite 123, at the corner of College and Sumter streets. On the University campus map, we are **Number 1**.

Our regular office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00pm, EST. The office is closed during University holidays (refer to the [Academic Calendar](#) for the University's holiday schedule). Students may meet with one of our international student advisors by appointment. Appointments are available Tuesday through Friday between 9:00am and 4:00pm. Call 777-7461 or e-mail intlprog@sc.edu to schedule an appointment.

1.3 A Brief History of the University of South Carolina

Chartered in 1801 as South Carolina College, the University still remains on its original site in Columbia, the state capital. The campus has grown from its origins of one building on [the Historic Horseshoe](#) to 155 facilities on 358 acres. The Columbia campus offers more than 350 undergraduate and graduate courses of study. Programs range from arts and sciences to business, law, medicine, and other professional studies, many of which have been nationally and internationally recognized for their academic excellence.

You may find additional links to University history, news, information, and resources at the [University Highlights](#) website.

1.4 Campus Activities

International Student Services coordinates campus-wide efforts to promote cultural and educational programs which encourage interaction between American and international students. Each semester the staff at International Student Services organizes various activities and events such as those listed below. We hope that you will participate in our activities and programs!

International Education Week

International Education Week occurs once a year during the fall semester as a national effort to promote international education and cultural awareness. A variety of events and activities, such as foreign feature films and documentaries, art displays, panel discussions, and debates are just some of the programs organized by students, faculty, and staff taking place throughout the week.

Student Voices

Student Voices is a program held several times throughout each semester. The program allows students an opportunity to provide feedback to the International Student Services staff and the campus community regarding programs and services, such as orientation and cultural adjustment.

Thinking Globally

Thinking Globally sessions are presented across campus to the University's [University 101](#) classes to promote global understanding. Together with an International Student Services staff member, a panel of international students visits first year classes to share cultural experiences with American students. If you are interested in participating in Thinking Globally, please contact International Student Services for information and application forms.

World Night

World Night is an annual event sponsored by the International Students Association that showcases the international community on campus. The celebration is held in late February at the Russell House where students can enjoy live music, traditional dance, international food, and a fashion show.

If you are interested in participating in any of these events or have any program suggestions, please contact [International Student Services](#).

1.5 Community Resources for Internationals

There are several organizations that provide a variety of services and support to internationals new to the Columbia area.

[Columbia Council for Internationals](#)

The Columbia Council for Internationals (CCFI) is a volunteer organization of people that provide [hospitality](#) and [special programs](#) for international students and scholars in the Columbia community. Students can participate in any of the following CCFI programs and activities: Community Host Program, Free Friday Luncheons (noon on Fridays at the ELM Center at 728 Pickens Street), airport arrival assistance, and the Furniture Loan Program. Please [contact CCFI](#) for additional information and available programs.

[Student Organizations](#)

There are a variety of student organizations on campus that represent students from countries and regions all over the world. These organizations welcome both American and international students as members. Organizations may offer assistance and advice to guide students through the first few weeks and months at the University. A complete list of international student organizations can be found [here](#).

[Columbia World Affairs Council](#)

The CWAC is a non-profit organization based in Columbia, which promotes and facilitates international activities in the region. The Council also provides a platform through which area businesses and organizations can gain the knowledge and tools needed to succeed in the international arena. For more information, call 252-2197.

1.6 Important Campus Phone Numbers and Web Links

When dialing campus numbers from a campus phone, you may dial “7”, then the last 4 digits of the number. To dial an off-campus phone number from a campus phone, press “9” then dial the local 7 digit phone number. The area code in Columbia is (803).

University Information	777-7000
Emergency Services	911
<u>Campus Police</u> (non-emergency) (<u>Map</u>)	777-4215
<u>Escorted Campus Transportation Service (APO Escort)</u> (A FREE campus service available from 8 pm-midnight, Sunday through Thursday)	777-3825
<u>Career Center</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-7280
<u>Counseling & Human Development Center</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-5223
<u>Division of Student Affairs</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-4172
<u>Bursar's Office</u> (<u>Map</u>) (Includes Accounts Receivable, Fees and Refunds, and Legal Residency offices)	777-4233
<u>Gamecock Newspaper</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-3888
<u>Garnet & Black Magazine</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-1149
<u>Graduate School</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-4243
<u>Family & Graduate Housing</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-3157
<u>Housing Department</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-4283
International Taxation Coordinator (<u>Map</u>)	777-2076
<u>International Student Services</u> (<u>Map</u>)	777-7461

[Libraries \(Links to Maps\)](#)

○ Thomas Cooper Library	777-4866
○ Business Library	777-6032
○ Educational Film Library	777-2858
○ Law Library	777-5942
○ Math Library	777-4741
○ Medical Library (Off campus)	733-3344
○ Music Library	777-5139
○ Newsfilm Library	777-6841
○ Science Library	777-3151
○ South Caroliniana Library	777-3131
Orientation & Testing (Map)	777-2780
Payroll Department (Map)	777-4227
Physical Education Center/Campus Recreation (Map)	777-5261
Sexual Assault Services (Map)	777-7619
Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center (Map)	576-9376
Student Government (Map)	777-2654
Student Media (Map)	777-3888
Thomson Student Health Center (Map) (Includes links to Insurance and Hard Waiver offices)	777-3174
Undergraduate Admissions (Map)	777-7700
University Bookstore (Map)	777-4160
University Technology Services (Map)	777-1777
University Registrar (Map)	777-5555
Writing Center (Map)	777-2078

2 First Steps at the University

New international students are welcomed to the University campus during orientation week, which includes mandatory intake activities and a variety of fun events scheduled during the first few days of each semester.

2.1 Orientation

Orientation refers to the period of time before the first semester when new students settle into their new community and plan for the upcoming school year. A veteran student, tour guide, or sponsor often provides orientation tours, familiarizing new students with the layout of the campus, campus regulations, social climate, location of important buildings, and other useful information.

International Student Services offers orientation sessions every fall and spring semester specifically designed for new international students. **This is the first step in the intake process and must be completed before students continue in the orientation process, receive academic advisement, and become eligible to register for courses.** During the session, all immigration documents are reviewed and copies are made for each student's file. Information is provided on immigration regulations, American culture, campus orientation, and other relevant matters.

On their first visit to the office, International Student Services will provide each new international student with a schedule of events occurring throughout the orientation week. Careful review of this schedule allows students to take advantage of the many events offered throughout the week and to organize their free time around important activities.

****In addition to the International Student Services orientation, all international students are required to attend additional orientation sessions, depending on each student's individual classification:***

Undergraduate (new and transfer) students: The orientation session includes an overview of the University's guidelines, requirements, advisement, and the registration process. Additionally, students meet with an assigned academic advisor, complete language testing (proficiency and/or placement), and eventually register for courses. The session lasts one full day and will be offered on several days at the beginning of each semester. **Students are recommended to register for an orientation session ahead of time.** Details about the orientation sessions and registration are available at: [Undergraduate Orientation and Testing Services](#).

Exchange Students: Additional mandatory orientation sessions vary by exchange program. Students will receive information about additional sessions upon acceptance into an exchange program, including reporting dates, program requirements, and mandatory orientation sessions.

Graduate students: After attending the initial International Student Services orientation, graduate students should visit their individual academic department and the [Graduate School](#) for additional orientation session information.

2.2 Advisement

All University students are assigned to an academic advisor. Academic advisors assist students in deciding which classes to take each semester based on an academic plan, available courses, and degree program. Academic advisors also help with questions or decisions about particular degree programs throughout the school year.

The [Master Schedule](#) of classes is a listing of all of the courses offered at the University of South Carolina each semester. Students may consult this listing before advisement in order to tentatively plan class schedules. Additionally, the [Academic Bulletins](#) (undergraduate and graduate) contain information about degree programs, admission criteria, curriculum outlines, and brief course descriptions. Printed copies of either bulletin may be obtained from the [Undergraduate Admissions](#) or [Graduate School](#) offices.

- **Undergraduates**

Undergraduate students are assigned to an academic advisor at the undergraduate orientation session (noted above in [Section 2.1-Orientation](#) of this manual). The [Office of Student Orientation and Testing Services](#) administers exams and may provide a complete list of times and places for academic advisement each semester.

- **Graduate Students**

Graduate students must make an appointment to meet with an academic advisor through their individual department.

****All students must work with an academic advisor on course selections before permission to register for courses is granted. Advisors may be able to suggest alternative courses to replace those that are "closed" (courses are already full) or unavailable (courses may have been cancelled by the department). Students should plan to meet with an academic advisor as soon as possible as classes are limited to a particular number of students (or available seats) and popular classes often fill up very quickly.***

2.3 Additional Registration Requirements

In addition to course approval from an academic advisor, the following requirements must be fulfilled before students are eligible to register for courses:

Immunizations

Proof of immunity to Rubeola (measles) and Rubella (German measles) is required of all students enrolling at the University of South Carolina. The [immunization form](#) may be downloaded and submitted to the Immunization Coordinator at the [Thomson Student Health Center](#), located behind the Russell House. Students may also fax the completed form to 803-777-3955. The form must be signed by a doctor, verifying immunity. If students cannot provide appropriate verification before arriving on campus, the required immunization shots can be administered at the campus health center upon arrival. Contact the Health Center at 803-777-9511 for the current prices of immunizations, as prices are subject to change. Students must also provide proof of a recent test for tuberculosis, with a PPD test (Mantoux), within 12 months of the beginning of the semester. This test may also be administered at the [Thomson Student Health Center](#) for \$16 USD.

Language Proficiency

The University requires all **graduate students** to take the [English for Foreign Students](#) (ENFS) exam. Native English speakers and students that have a degree from a U.S. institution are exempt from the ENFS exam. Exam dates and times are listed in the International Student Services' orientation schedule.

Foreign Language Placement Exams

All students who register for foreign language classes must take a language placement exam during orientation week, regardless of their previous experience with the language. The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures administers placement exams with dates and times varying each semester and by department. Exam placement and testing details may be found at the [Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures website](#).

Mathematics Placement Exams

All **undergraduate students** who enroll at the University must take a math placement exam unless they have college-level credit from previous institutions accepted by the current major or college of enrollment. No knowledge of calculus is required for the exam. Calculators are not needed and are not allowed. Additional information about the content of the Math Placement tests, including sample tests, can be viewed at <http://www.math.sc.edu/placement/>. For additional information concerning the Math Placement Tests, contact the Department of Mathematics at 803-777-4224.

Health Insurance

All University students are **REQUIRED** to have comprehensive medical insurance as a condition of enrollment. Students may purchase the [University-sponsored health insurance plan](#) which provides coverage and benefits at a competitive price and meets the University insurance coverage requirements. The health insurance premium is automatically added to a student's bill for courses each semester.

If students already have health insurance and choose not to enroll in the University-sponsored plan, proof that their policy meets the University minimum coverage requirements must be provided by completing the [Hard Waiver form](#). **This form must be completed ONLINE.** If it is determined that minimum health insurance requirements are met, the insurance premium fee will be removed from a student's bill so the student will not be charged. Additional information about the "Hard Waiver" process is available at the [Student Health Services website](#) or at the [Pearce and Pearce website](#).

If you wish to speak to someone regarding health insurance, the Health Insurance Assistance Office (HIAO) is located in the Thomson Student Health Center, Room 313. The office is open to students from 9 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and 2 to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You may also contact them by phone at 803-777-1916 or e-mail HIAO@gwm.sc.edu.

2.4 Registration

After an academic advisor has approved a course list and students have completed orientation, advisement, and pre-registration requirements, students can register for classes. **Registration is done through the Visual Information Processing (VIP) system.** VIP allows students to access their student records and perform a variety of important tasks, such as adding and dropping classes, accessing and paying fees, applying for on-campus housing, entering contact/personal information, and checking grades.

In order to log in to the VIP system, students must enter a student number (the nine-digit number issued to you at admission or your Social Security number, if you have one) and [PIN](#). A demonstration of the VIP system is available at [VIP Demo: Entry](#).

If students are unable to register during the normal registration period, they must contact an academic advisor for late enrollment advice. Students may be able to register late, but may have to pay a late registration fee. More information about registration fees and payment deadlines is available at the [Office of the Bursar](#).

2.5 Tuition and Fee Payment

There are three methods from which students may choose to pay tuition and fees: 1) the VIP system, 2) by mail, or 3) in person. **Credit card payments are not accepted in-person at anytime. Credit card payments may only be made on VIP.** Additional fee deadlines and refund information is available at the [Office of the Bursar](#) website.

1) Payment on VIP:

Payments can be made on VIP using a credit card, available financial aid, and/or electronic transfer. To pay fees, login to VIP then go to the "Financial" section. Click on "Show Me Fees, Tuition, and Payment". Look over the bill to make sure all charges (housing, meal plans, Carolina Card, etc.) are included and accurate. If you wish to make changes to optional fees, please go to the "Show Me Optional Fees" menu. Once your bill is correct, click on "Pay Fees" and follow the steps indicated. After successfully completing the fee payment process in VIP, you will be given a payment confirmation number for your records.

Payment by credit card must be completed through [VIP](#). A convenience fee of 2.5% is charged on each credit card transaction made on VIP. The University accepts MasterCard, Discover, and American Express. **As of Fall 2007, the University of South Carolina no longer accepts VISA as a payment option for tuition and fees.**

Payment using electronic transfer of funds allows students to avoid paying a convenience fee and gives students the option to pay fees over VIP from a checking account. In order to use this method, students must complete the [Authorization Agreement for Electronic Credit Entries form](#). The form must be on file with the Bursar's office three weeks before the date students wish to pay online through VIP.

2) Payment by Mail

Students paying fees by mail must first print a copy of the bill from [VIP](#) by clicking on "Show Me Schedule and Bill" in the Financial menu. The bill must be signed and included with the check or money order (in USD or drawn from a U.S. bank). Checks are made payable to the University of South Carolina.

Payments for the full balance due must be mailed to:

**Bursar's Office
1521 Greene Street
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208**

Mail-in payments must be received in the Bursar's Office by 5:00 p.m. on the mail-in payment deadline date. Please allow sufficient time for mail delivery.

3) Payment In-person

Students may pay tuition and fees in person (using a check, money order, or Traveler's Cheque) at the [Bursar's Office](#) in the Petigru Building. The week before classes begin, payment is made in person at the University Coliseum (Greene Street entrance) each fall and spring semester. Dates for fee payment week may be found at the Bursar's Office under: [What's Happening](#)).

3 The American University System

3.1 The Semester System

The academic year is composed of fall and spring terms; each is approximately 16 weeks in length. In addition, there is a three-week May term, as well as two four-week summer sessions.

3.2 The Credit System

The University uses a credit system in which each course has a specific number of “credit hours”, representing the number of hours that are spent in class each week. Most classes meet for 3 hours per week and are therefore, 3 credit hours. A normal course load for undergraduate students is 12 to 15 credit hours (or 4 to 5 courses) per semester. International undergraduate students must take a least 12 credit hours each semester in order to meet minimum student visa requirements. Full-time graduate study is considered 6 to 12 credit hours each semester. International graduate students are required to enroll in 9 credit hours or if the student has an assistantship, 6 credit hours to maintain minimum student visa requirements.

3.3 The Grading System

Academic performance in each course is evaluated by letter grades which have a corresponding value or number (refer to the [Office of the University Registrar: Valid Grade Legend](#)). At the end of each semester, students receive the number of credits corresponding to the number of courses that are successfully completed. A student’s grade-point-average (or GPA) is determined by dividing the sum of grades by the total number of courses taken each semester. More information about calculating GPA is available at the [Office of the University Registrar: Rules for Computing GPA](#). Additionally, the Registrar website has a [GPA Calculator](#).

3.4 Keys to Academic Success in the U.S.

Students may have to adapt their study habits to the American educational system, which emphasizes continual evaluation in the form of tests, papers, projects, quizzes, and participation in class discussions throughout the semester, in addition to exams at the end of the semester. Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions. Some professors take attendance and will include class participation, attendance, and exam grades in the calculation of final grades.

In the classroom, students are encouraged to ask questions and to express their opinions, even if they differ from those of the professor. In some classes, students may be asked to prepare a short lecture or presentation to deliver to the class.

Any time students feel unsure about what is expected of them in class or of some aspect of the material being presented, they should ask the professor for clarification. If students do not ask questions, the professor assumes that students understand all the material that is presented. Other students, professors, academic advisors, and counselors can offer guidance to new students beginning studies.

Tip

[The University Writing Center](#) provides free assistance with all types of writing assignments and free consultations to students. Working with the student, the Center will provide feedback to help students accomplish writing goals. Although the staff will not evaluate or grade writing assignments, they will help students with vocabulary and to formulate ideas. The Center offers individual tutoring and a “quick-fix” service called the Writer’s Hotline, for specific questions about grammar, punctuation, and spelling. It is recommended that students call and make a daytime or evening appointment. For the Writer’s Hotline, please call 777-7020, or for an appointment, call 777-2078.

4 Housing and Service Options

The University offers a variety of reasonably priced on-campus housing options to undergraduate and graduate students (singles and families). If students choose to live off-campus, there are also a variety of apartments and student-oriented housing complexes that offer many options, such as campus shuttle transportation and high speed internet connection.

4.1 Living On-Campus ([University Housing - Welcome](#))

On-campus housing is a term referring to university-operated rooms and apartments that are located on university property. These are sometimes called residence halls, dormitories, or dorms. On-campus residents have easy access to the libraries, computer equipment labs, sport and recreation facilities, food services, and, above all, classes. Students also have the greatest possible opportunity to interact with other students and to make friends.

Please consider when selecting housing that since most U.S. students return home during semester breaks and holidays, some residence halls may also close during these periods. International students that cannot travel home or elsewhere during this time must find an alternative place to live while the halls are closed. Undergraduate residence halls that do not close during holidays and between semesters include the East, West, and South Quads and Bates West. Carolina Gardens and Cliff Apartments remain open for graduate students.

4.2 [Undergraduate Housing](#)

Please Note:
Freshmen are required to live on campus. Freshmen students living on-campus are required to purchase at least a 10-meal plan. Bates House undergraduates may also be required to purchase at least a 14-meal plan. Detailed meal plan information may be found at: [Carolina Dining Services](#).

Living on-campus is a benefit for new students because residence halls are conveniently located and provide basic furnishings (beds, chest of drawers, desks, etc.). However, students are responsible for providing their own linens, blankets, pillows, and other household necessities.

Many residence halls are single-sex only; options are available for married students. Therefore, visitation policies for members of the opposite sex are strictly maintained. The University has 4 visitation policies that vary by hall. Policy details and additional housing information may be found at: [University Housing](#).

4.3 [Family/Graduate Housing](#)

There are limited on-campus housing options that accommodate students with families and single graduate students. Cliff Apartments and Carolina Garden Apartments are maintained by the University Housing Department. These apartments are almost always at full occupancy and therefore require advance registration in order to obtain a room or apartment.

Once rooms are full, students may be put on a waiting list for the next available vacancy. Students with families must provide proof of marriage and/or birth certificates for each child when applying for housing. For more information, please contact the Office of Family and Graduate Housing at 803 777-3157 or via e-mail: fam_grad@gwm.sc.edu.

4.4 Living Off-campus

Many international students, particularly graduate students, prefer the independence of living off-campus. In some cases, students find off-campus living to be more affordable because costs can be shared with roommates. Students should, however, keep in mind that rent will only be part of the total monthly expenses. Utilities (telephone, water, and electricity), appliances, furniture, food, and transportation should also be calculated into a monthly budget. When choosing an apartment students should consider several factors including cost, proximity to campus, and safety. Below are some resources students may use to research off-campus housing options:

International Student Services' Housing Message Board

This site is dedicated to helping international students as well as returning study abroad students settle in to life at the university. Students can browse the [Housing Message Board](#) for potential furniture for sale, apartments, and roommate postings.

Off-Campus Student Housing

With a registered e-mail address, students may search rental properties, find roommates, and post notices on the message boards at [University of South Carolina Off Campus Housing Service](#).

The Apartment Finder/The Apartment Guide

These booklets list several apartment complexes, along with features that each apartment offers, located in and around the Columbia area. Free copies of these publications are available at a variety of locations across campus, at grocery stores, gas stations, or newspaper boxes. Listings are also available under "College" at [ForRent.com](#) and [Apartment Guide](#)

Local Newspaper

The State contains a section called "[Classifieds](#)". This section lists many rooms, apartments, and houses available for rent in the Columbia area. The listings are updated on Thursday and Saturday each week.

The Gamecock

The Gamecock, the campus newspaper, also lists housing vacancies and is available at the Russell House, campus newspaper boxes, and in most campus buildings. *The Gamecock* is published Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and weekly during the summer months.

Campus Bulletin Boards

Many academic departments have bulletin boards in various locations that list housing vacancies, student activities, items for sale, and campus jobs.

"For Rent" Signs

Often "For Rent" signs are posted at private houses, in windows, or on front lawns throughout neighborhoods that are within walking distance from campus. A telephone number and/or other contact information is usually provided on each individual sign or posting.

International Student Groups

There are several international student organizations that may be able to help locate available rental properties in Columbia. For more information, refer to the list on the [International Student Organizations website](#).

4.5 Housing Terms

There are many different off-campus housing options, varying in both amenities and living arrangements. Some of the terms most frequently used in rental advertisements are as follows:

Apartment: Usually these are one or more bedroom units with a full kitchen and bath facilities. Sometimes apartments are sections of a house that have been turned into a private apartment, such as the lower level of a house. Apartments located in large complexes may offer swimming pools, exercise facilities, tennis courts, and other extras which add to the price of the rent. Apartments can be either furnished or unfurnished and may or may not include utilities.

Condominium: These units are similar to apartments but are maintained privately rather than by a landlord. Condominiums (or condos) frequently must be purchased rather than rented and may have additional monthly or annual maintenance fees.

Duplex: This arrangement has two apartment units that are attached to form one building, resembling a house. The apartments are self contained and completely separate, sharing just the central wall.

Lease: A "lease" is a binding legal contract between the resident and the property owner or landlord. **When residents sign a lease, they are obligated to pay the landlord monthly rent for the full duration of the lease.** Leases range from 5 months to 12 months. A lease is usually very difficult to cancel or alter without financial penalties. Therefore, **potential residents should thoroughly read and completely understand a lease before signing it.** Students should be reasonably sure that the housing contract can be fulfilled and should intend to live in the leased space throughout the duration of the lease. With permission of the landlord, residents may be allowed to find a tenant to take their place for the remainder of a housing contract if the resident is unable to fulfill it. This is called a sublease. Residents that sublease an apartment remain responsible for their tenant's actions. Any questions regarding concerns or problems with a lease agreement may be addressed to: [Apartment Association of Greater Columbia](#) at (803) 252-0532 or [e-mail](#) .

Rent: Rent is the monthly fee an individual pays to live in their residence. It is important that students understand what is included in a rental price. Additional costs may include heat, electricity, gas, and water which are not included in the price of the rent. In most cases, these costs are not included and students are responsible for obtaining and maintaining these services. In addition, off-campus expenses may be greater than on-campus expenses. For example, most apartments are equipped with basic appliances such as stove and refrigerator, but students are required to purchase or rent a bed and other furniture, as well as kitchen equipment, a telephone, and other items. Rent is usually due, in full, at the beginning of each month.

TIP: There are many off-campus housing options, varying in both amenities and living arrangements. Some of the terms most frequently used in rental advertisements are as follows:

a/c = air conditioning
apt = apartment
avail = available
ba = bathroom
br/bd/bdrm = bedroom
bsmt = basement
ch/ca = central heat/central air
co-ed = both female and male tenants
condo = condominium
d&d = dishwasher & garbage disposal
dinrm/dr = dining room
fl = floor
hdwd fl = hardwood floor
htd = heated
incl = included
kit = kitchen
lg/lge = large
livrm/lr = living room
mi = miles (distance)
mo = month, per month
pets OK = pets allowed
prkg = parking
req/req'd = required
sec dep = security deposit
stu = studio
util = utilities
w&d or w/d = washer and dryer
w/ = with
w/o = without
w/w = wall-to-wall carpeting

Renter's Insurance: Renter's insurance protects against losses caused by fire, theft, or vandalism. This kind of insurance covers personal belongings in the rented unit. It also protects students from legal liability for damage to the property or to the property of other renters in the building caused by a fire or other accidents. The cost of insurance, while relatively low, varies depending on the value of a renter's personal possessions. When buying insurance, it is wise to get rate information from two or more different insurance agents. Insurance agents' names and telephone numbers may be found in the [Yellow Pages](#) or [Yellow Book](#) of the local telephone directory under "Insurance."

Room: A single room in a house or apartment which may have a private entrance and kitchen and bath facilities. In most cases, the renter has a private bedroom/living room but the bathroom and kitchen are shared with other household members.

Roommate: Students may choose to rent an apartment or house with another student(s), or roommate(s). In these cases, the rent and utility costs are usually divided equally between each person sharing the apartment or house. While it may be cheaper to live with roommates, be sure that students are compatible. Questions like: Do you mind if your roommates smoke? Do you need a quiet study environment? Do you mind if your roommates are messy? Do you mind if your roommates drink alcohol or have pets? Considering your responses to these types of questions before deciding to share an apartment or house will ensure a better living experience.

Security deposit: If signing a lease, students will typically be required to pay a security deposit to the property owner which guarantees that the terms of a rental agreement will be respected. Usually the security deposit is equivalent to at least one month's rent. Before signing a lease, students should carefully inspect the apartment and ask the landlord to make note of any pre-existing damage so charges will not be applied. The security deposit is returned to the renter when the lease expires if, after an inspection, the apartment is in good condition and rent has been paid every month throughout the lease.

Studio Apartment or Efficiency: A studio or efficiency is smaller than an apartment and typically the kitchen and living/bedroom are just one large room. Both the kitchen and bath facilities are usually very minimal.

Utilities: Most rental units require residents to arrange for their own utilities (including electricity, gas, water, and telephone service). Some services may require an initial deposit and the resident must usually be present while a service is initiated or installed. Below are some local service companies that provide basic utility service:

Electric and Gas Service
[SCE&G](#)
1400 Lady Street
(803) 799-9000

Local Telephone Service
Please see [Section 4.7-Telephone Service](#) in this manual.

Water
Columbia Water Department
1225 Laurel Street
(803) 545-3300

The deposit amount required by each utility company varies, but the initial deposit may be up to \$200 for each service. Each month, students receive a bill from each company, detailing services, charges, and payment due dates. When an account is closed, the initial deposit will be refunded. However, in some cases, the deposit may be applied toward the monthly bill if the account remains open for more than one year.

Residential Neighborhoods in the Columbia Area:

Close to campus (biking/walking distance of up to 2 miles or about 3 km): Downtown, Five Points, Greene Street, Olympia, Shandon, and Elmwood Park.

Two to five miles (3 to 8 km) or a short 5 -15 minute drive to campus: Cayce/West Columbia, Forest Acres, Melrose Heights, Midlands Tech, Millwood Avenue, and Richland Fashion Mall.

Five to ten miles (8 to 16 km) from campus or a 15 - 45 minute drive: Broad River Road, Dutch Square, Fort Jackson, Garners Ferry Road, VA Hospital, Harbison, St. Andrews, and Irmo.

Common questions you may ask your new landlord:

- How much is the monthly rent/security deposit?
- How long is the lease? Is there a charge to break the lease?
- What is included in the rent? Are utilities included? What is the average monthly cost?
- Are there laundry facilities in your apartment or in the building? If not, are they nearby?
- Is the apartment furnished? Will I have my own kitchen or will I share with other tenants?
- How many people are sharing the house? Will I share the room with anybody?
- Is parking available? If not, where can I park?

4.6 Furniture and Household Items

In addition to buying new furniture, there are several ways to obtain inexpensive furniture and in some cases, borrow or rent items while studying at the University:

International Student Services' Housing Message Board

Students can browse the [Housing Message Board](#) for potential furniture for sale.

Garage/yard/moving sales: Classified advertisements in local newspapers list a variety of community sales and events. People moving or cleaning their houses often have garage or lawn sales, selling excess goods at reasonable prices. Most items are used and for the best selection, it is best to arrive at the sale as early as possible.

Church Bazaars: These public sales are held at various churches around the area. These community events are similar to garage sales and items are usually donated by church members and sold at the bazaar for a moderate price. The purpose of this event is to raise money for the church or one of their charitable projects. Local newspapers frequently announce these sales in the classified advertisement section.

The Carolina Trader: This is a newspaper devoted to advertising second-hand furniture as well as used cars, clothing, and other items. The Trader costs 50 cents and is sold at many local grocery stores and gas stations.

Thrift Stores: Thrift stores sell used goods that have been donated by people in the community. Check the telephone book for local addresses and phone numbers of thrift stores in the area.

Rental Companies: Furniture may be rented from a variety of companies for a monthly fee. These items range from complete living room suites to kitchen appliances and electronics and maintained by the company. Local rental companies are listed under "Rental-furniture" in the telephone book.

Bulletin boards: Students often post notices or flyers advertising furniture and other items for sale on bulletin boards that are posted in many buildings around campus.

4.7 Telephone Service

Telephone service is provided by local and/or long distance companies. Local telephone companies provide local or regional telecommunication services; long distance companies provide national and international services. Some companies may provide both services.

On-campus housing provides local telephone service. However, students living off-campus are responsible for obtaining their own local telephone service. There may be a fee to initiate telephone service, ranging by company, and once service is established there will be a monthly phone bill (approximately \$25 for the basic phone plan).

Local service customers must provide their own telephone in order to receive local phone service. Telephones may be purchased at stores such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, CVS, Radio Shack, Target, Circuit City, Walgreen's, or any hardware store. Some local service (landline) companies are:

[BellSouth](#)
(803) 780-2355

[Sprint](#)
(800) 877-7746

Connect
Telecommunications Inc.
6920 N. Main Street
Phone: 1-803-754-8088

[IDT](#)
(888) 802-0082

CBX Communications
Home Telephone Service
2210 Rosewood Drive
Phone: 1-803-765-1987

EZ Tel Inc
1601 Taylor Street
Phone: 1-803-933-9995

[MCI](#)
(803) 254-8887

In addition to the above local services providers, there are other companies that may provide students with long distance telephone service. For more information about available services and rates for each company, contact information is available in the Yellow Pages under "Telephone Companies" or online at [Yellow Pages](#) or [Yellow Book](#). Additionally, you may browse all telephone services providers at [SuperPages.com](#)

If students do not choose to sign up with a particular long distance company, an operator assisted long distance call may be placed by dialing "0" on a local phone. Operator assisted calls are billed on the local account along with the usual local service.

Telephone Directories

With any new telephone service, a local telephone directory which lists all local telephone numbers will be provided. The directory contains the Yellow Pages which includes a listing of businesses in the area, along with contact information. In the front of the directory, there is a list of area/country codes, dialing instructions for making international calls, and other information that may be helpful.

Telephone Numbers and Area Codes

Telephone numbers in the United States have seven digits. In addition, there is a three-digit area code designating a particular area of the country. **The area code for Columbia and the central region of South Carolina is 803.** Area codes should only be used for making long distance calls outside of your area code.

TIP: To make a long distance call to someone in the United States, but out of your area code, dial 1 + (three digit) area code + (seven digit) local number.

Phoning On Campus

To call from an on-campus telephone to another on-campus telephone, dial only the last five digits of the number. To call from an on-campus telephone to an off-campus telephone, first dial 9 and then the seven digits of the local number. For other dialing instructions and international calls, detailed information is available in the front section of the University telephone directory.

4.8 Wireless/Cellular Phone Service Options

Listed below are some local “international friendly” wireless/cellular phone companies. These companies will allow international students to sign up for service without a U.S. social security number (SSN) but may require a deposit or contract to begin service. In each case, the deposit and/or contract (for a specified length of time - i.e. one year) required to obtain wireless/cellular service will vary by company.

CBX Communications ([map](#)) 1-803-765-1987

Carolina Wireless ([map](#)) 1-803-933-0863

[Cingular \(AT&T\) Wireless \(\[map\]\(#\)\)](#)

Harbison	1-803-407-0695
St. Andrews Road	1-803-612-8475
Lexington	1-803-359-9103
Forest Dr	1-803-790-1776
O’Neil Court	1-803-419-8899

[Verizon Wireless \(\[map\]\(#\)\)](#)

Broad River	1-803-781-6899
Two Notch Road.	1-803-865-6300
Columbiana	1-803-749-4500

Mobile South LLC ([map](#)) 1-803-462-9733

Palmetto Cellular Inc ([map](#)) 1-803-462-1200

[Palmetto Wireless](#)

Broad River	1-803-781-6899
Forest Acres	1-803-790-0144

[Sprint PCS \(\[map\]\(#\)\)](#)

Bush River Road	1-803-772-1267
Sparkleberry Lane	1-803-788-6221
Forest Dr	1-803-787-7288

4.9 Banking

Managing finances is one of the most important and challenging aspects of a successful and enjoyable academic experience. Students should plan their budget carefully by considering all the possible expenses that might occur. The [estimate of expenses](#) provides information about costs for tuition, books, housing, meals, and personal expenses.

Graduate students that have an assistantship will receive a paycheck from the University twice each month for the period of the assistantship. Some money will be withheld from each paycheck for federal and state tax obligations. Tuition is reduced for students with graduate assistantships and arrangements can be made to have tuition payments automatically deducted from each paycheck. Tax information is in [Section 5.6](#) of this manual.

Banks and Banking Services: Each state in the U.S. has its own banking system. Banks may operate locally, regionally, in several states within a region, or nationally. Depositing funds or any other transaction through an account when in another state may be difficult and/or take several days to complete. However, there are alternatives for obtaining and depositing money from an existing account while traveling outside of the state (see “Automatic Teller Machine” below).

Opening a Bank Account: Most students open a local bank account as soon as they arrive in Columbia. To set up an account, students must provide a local address, student identification card or Social Security number (SSN), passport, and an initial deposit. Minimum required deposits to open an account vary by bank.

Banks offer many different financial services. Students should compare the available services and costs of several banks before choosing one. One bank may be more conveniently located, have lower usage fees, or may have more automated teller machines (ATMs) around town. ATMs allow students to perform basic banking services with a bank card, such as check deposits, transfers, or cash withdrawals. Banks also compete for students' business and may offer special accounts exclusively designed for new students. Local banks are listed in the local telephone directory and may provide additional details on available accounts and services.

ATM Machines: Most banks operate Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), which are located all over the country. ATMs may be found in banks, shopping malls, on campus, and other convenient locations. These machines make it possible for customers to deposit, withdraw, or transfer funds conveniently, even when the bank is closed. Banks may charge a usage transaction fee or monthly fee for using its ATM system.

When students open an account with a bank that operates an ATM system, a plastic ATM service card will be issued. Included with each card is a personal identification number (or PIN) which identifies the individual bank customer and functions as a password, allowing access to accounts through the ATM system. **Students should protect their PIN at all times and not give the code to anyone.** Furthermore, do not reply to emails requesting PIN's or other sensitive information. Making cash withdrawals may be made from other bank's ATMs but there may be an added transaction fee.

Checking Account: A checking account permits clients to write personalized checks for purchases and bill payments. Most people in the U.S. pay bills (rent, utilities, etc.) with personal checks by sending them through the mail. Additional online options for bill payment may also be available and vary by company. **Cash should never be sent through the mail.** Checking accounts make it easy to keep records of purchases and payments and have the advantage of providing clients with immediate access to funds.

Writing a Check: Checks are essential in conducting business transactions in the United States. When writing checks, most stores will require identification (e.g., driver's license with current address, student ID, and/or passport).

Savings Account: Unlike most checking accounts, "saving accounts" earn interest on the balance in the account. Students planning to deposit large quantities of money into a new account should consider an interest earning savings account, rather than a checking account. Withdrawals may be made from a savings account, but checks may not be available with some savings accounts. **Many students open a savings account and a checking account at the same bank** so that they may transfer money from the interest-bearing savings account into a checking account as needed.

Safety Deposit Box: A safety deposit box, available at most banks, is a secure place to store valuable possessions such as an airline ticket, expensive jewelry, foreign currency, or any important documents. At most banks, safety deposit boxes are available for a monthly fee.

Debit Card: A debit card, also known as a "check card", allows withdrawals and deposits into a bank account using an ATM and to make purchases at stores that accept the card. Some debit or check cards carry a credit-card logo (such as MasterCard or Visa), and may be used in place of a credit card or check. **Debit cards are not credit cards, however, and may be used only when sufficient funds are available in an existing account.**

4.10 Postal Services

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is the main provider of mail service in the United States. Other services like United Parcel Service (UPS) and Federal Express (FedEx) compete with the USPS in the areas of express mail and package delivery. Below is a list of post offices on or near the campus:

[Student Mail Center](#)

Russell House Basement
Phone : 777-4109

Main post office

1610 Assembly Street
Phone: 803-733-4643

[University post office](#)

[1600 Hampton Street](#)
Phone: 777-3168

Five Points post office

2108 Greene Street
Phone: 799-0701

Local post office contact information is listed in the Blue Pages in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government, Postal Service".

Students living off-campus should have all mail delivered directly to their residence. Students in on-campus housing are assigned a campus mailbox where all mail is delivered. Mail is delivered each day, except Sundays and federal holidays. The USPS requires a complete mailing address and return address on each envelope or package sent. Mail may be deposited in one of the blue mailboxes located throughout the city or dropped off directly at the post office. Mail must have sufficient postage, meeting weight and size guidelines. Stamps are available at the University of South Carolina post office in the basement of the Russell House.

All changes of address should be reported to the post office and updated in [VIP](#) as soon as possible.

Post office boxes (or PO Boxes), where students may have their mail delivered, are also available for a monthly fee at most major post offices. **However, for immigration purposes, a street address, rather than a PO Box must be indicated as a local address in VIP. The USCIS will not accept PO Box numbers as a local address.**

ZIP Codes: The U.S. Post Office requires a zip code, similar to a postal code, on every piece of mail with a U.S. destination. This is the last line but a very important part of a U.S. address. It is usually a five-digit number but the more detailed hyphenated nine-digit number zip code may also be used. An online [zip code locater](#) is available at the [USPS website](#).

International Mailings: Each country has different regulations governing letters and parcels received and handled by the postal service. A country's postal regulations may differ for contents, weight, dimensions, and exterior wrapping of parcels and envelopes. The USPS website has information on the [postal guidelines, regulations, and rates](#) for most countries.

Insurance: Cash should never be sent through the mail. Otherwise, most letters or packages sent through the USPS will be safely delivered. For additional protection of packages and parcels, [insurance](#) is available at the post office.

Campus Mail: The [University mail service](#), referred to as Campus Mail, delivers mail on campus free of charge. It provides service between academic departments, administrative offices, and libraries. Special campus mail envelopes, called inter-office envelopes, are available at most university main offices. Students living on campus receive a mailbox as part of their housing. Student mailboxes are located at the [Student Mail Center](#) in the basement of the Russell House.

4.11 Health Care

The cost of health care in the United States is quite high. A serious illness or accident could cost thousands of dollars in medical bills. **Therefore, it is a University policy that all international students MUST purchase adequate health insurance coverage.**

University-Sponsored Health Insurance: The University offers a competitive [health insurance plan for students](#). Additional coverage is also available for spouses and dependents. New international students receive University-sponsored health insurance information in their orientation packet. The University's insurance coverage will be added and paid as part of a semester's tuition and fees during the registration period. For more information about the campus health insurance plan, you may visit [Pearce & Pearce, Inc.](#) or telephone at 1-800-222-6491.

Insurance Coverage: Health and accident insurance do not cover all medical expenses. In general, 80-100% of the costs that result from accidents and serious illnesses, including hospitalization, medical tests, and the services of doctors and nurses, is covered. In most cases, health insurance does not cover the following:

- Routine visits to the doctor
- Visits to the emergency room when an emergency has not occurred
- Medications a doctor prescribes for routine illness
- Routine dental work
- Vision examinations or eye glasses

Coverage under each health insurance policy varies widely. Policies that provide more comprehensive coverage are generally more expensive. Students should compare several different policies before choosing one that is most suitable and meets the University's minimum requirements.

4.12 Student Health Services

[Counseling and Human Development Center](#): The Counseling and Human Development Center ([CHDC](#)) is nationally accredited and offers office-based psychiatric and psychological care and counseling, plus provides a variety of outreach programs and services. A wide range of mental health services including individual and group counseling, biofeedback, testing, and brief psychiatric intervention are available at the Counseling and Human Development Center. For an appointment call 777-5223.

[Sexual Health and Violence Prevention Programs](#): Sexual Health & Violence Prevention and Research provides a range of services for students on issues of sexual health, sexual assault, relationship violence and hate crimes. 24-Hour Crisis Assistance is also available by calling the University Police Department at 777-4215. The police can put you in contact with the on-call advocate from Sexual Health & Violence Prevention and Research. The center is located in the lower level of the [Thomson Student Health Center](#). For appointments, please call 777-8248.

Health and Wellness Programs: These nationally accredited programs provide students with health education, individual screening and assessment, specialized support services, and operates and/or presents a variety of wellness programs and events throughout the year. Campus Wellness Programs is located on the lower level of the [Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center](#). This component of Student Health Services offers a wide variety of health education services to students including:

- "Open Door" peers provide one-on-one health-related consultations
- Personalized smoking cessation workshops
- Percent body fat measurement estimations
- Cholesterol screening
- Stress management
- "Lighten Up" weight management program
- Consultation with a registered dietitian

No appointment is needed and most services are free. For more information, call 777-8248.

Thomson Student Health Center (TCHS): The Thomson Student Health Center offers a range of medical services. It is staffed by physicians, nurse practitioners, and registered nurses in a variety of specialties. The Health Center deals with routine health problems, family planning, gynecological problems, and mental health issues. Laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, and physical therapy services are also available. The TSHC is located behind the [Russell House](#) (student life center building) between Sumter and Pickens Streets. Appointments for routine health needs are strongly encouraged. Call 777-3175 to schedule an appointment in the General Medical Clinic or 777-6816 in the Women's Care Clinic.

Regular Semester Hours
Monday - Friday:
8am to 5pm
Sundays: 4pm to 8pm
(urgent care only)

Summer Hours
Monday-Friday:
8:30am to 4:30pm

The TCHS is closed during all holidays.

Fees and Payment: Consultations at the Health Center are free of charge for students who have paid the University Health Center Fee. During the Fall and Spring Semesters, the Health Fee is included in the established University Fees paid by all full-time students (undergraduates taking 12 or more hours and graduate students and professional students taking 9 or more hours) and graduate assistants.

Students who have not paid the University Health Center Fee may still use the Health Center but will be charged for each visit. During Maymester and Summer sessions, the Health Fee is included in the tuition and fees paid by all enrolled students. During semester breaks, **all** students must pay a fee to see a health care provider. There are additional charges for laboratory, pharmacy, and X-ray services provided by the Health Center.

Spouses of students are allowed to use the Health Center on a fee-for-service basis. Children and other dependents are not eligible to receive care at the Health Center.

Students who need hospitalization, emergency or specialty care, or other health services that are not available at the Health Center will be referred to community health care providers of the student's choice.

Emergency Care: The TSHC cannot provide emergency service. Students that require emergency assistance should go to the nearest hospital emergency room. There are three facilities close to campus:

- [Palmetto Health Richland](#) (434-7000), located at the Harden and Broad Street junction
- [Palmetto Baptist Medical Center](#) (771-5010), located at 1330 Taylor Street (at junction of Sumter and Taylor Streets)
- [Providence Hospital](#) (256-5300), located at 2435 Forest Drive (just off Two Notch Road and Forest Drive).

IMPORTANT TIP: In an emergency you may call **911** from an off-campus phone or from a campus phone for assistance.

Benefits Under the Emergency Accident and Illness Plan: All students that pay the Health Fee portion of the University Fees are covered under an emergency treatment Accident and Illness Health Insurance Plan (A & I Plan). A & I is a secondary supplement or in-excess plan that ONLY applies in emergency conditions, paying up to \$500 of out-of-pocket expenses not covered by the student's primary plan. Contact the Health Center Business Office at 777-1478 for additional information and details about the A & I Plan.

Medical Care for Families: Many students seek medical care outside of the University by asking someone they trust to recommend a doctor or dentist. Students may also look in the local [Yellow Pages](#) or [Yellow Book](#) directories under "Physicians" or "Dentists."

Most U.S. families have one doctor that provides routine medical examinations and treats general medical problems. If specialized care is necessary, a family doctor (often called a general practitioner) can make a referral to the appropriate specialist. Student's doctor choices and available services vary depending on the type of health insurance purchased.

4.13 Personal Safety

American movies, television, and news reports often convey the impression that serious crime in the U.S. is widespread, or not just in major cities but all over the country. In fact, the rates of crime and violence vary greatly and are much higher in some parts of the country. Although it is the capital of South Carolina, the city of Columbia is fairly small and therefore experiences less crime than many large U.S. cities. There are, however, certain precautions that students should take in order to protect themselves and their property.

Personal Safety:

- Always keep doors locked, even while at home.
- If someone knocks or rings the doorbell, do not open the door until you have identified the visitor. You are not required to open the door simply because someone knocks.
- Leave both an outside and an inside light on if you will be away from your room or apartment after dark. Unsafe situations are less likely to develop in well lit areas.
- Avoid walking alone at night, especially in areas of town or of the campus that are not well lit. Students should walk with a companion, use the campus shuttle, or try to find a ride in a bus or friend's car. If you must walk on a daily basis, vary your route as much as possible to reduce predictability. For more information about the Campus Shuttle routes and hours, visit the [Shuttlecock website](#) or call 777-1080. Additionally, contact the [Alpha Phi Omega Escort Service](#) at 777-3825 to learn about their free campus shuttle service (see page 25 of this manual, under "Campus Escort Service" for more details).

Protecting Your Valuables:

- Lock all doors to dorm rooms, apartments, houses, and cars.
- Do not leave valuables unattended, even briefly, on campus. Keep all valuable possessions with you at all times, even while in the library.
- Some campus bookstores ask patrons not to take backpacks or other bags into the store. The stores provide a place to leave bags or backpacks while students are shopping. However, valuables, such as cell phones or laptops, should still not be left in bags or backpacks. Instead, take valuable items out and carry them while shopping.
- Bicycles should be secured to a bicycle rack with a sturdy lock and chain or cable.
- If you are planning to take a vacation away from Columbia, make arrangements for a trusted friend to check their home every day. Many burglaries occur during semester breaks when thieves notice that students are not at home. The post office will hold mail while students are away; simply sign and submit a form at the post office. If students own many valuables, insurance may be purchased for most household goods, or plan to store personal items in a secure location.
- Campus Police offers a registry for students to indicate serial number s for valuable items. This is useful in the event of a theft. Contact campus police for more information.

TIP: If you are missing valuables and think you might have lost them on campus, contact the lost and found service at Russell House University Union Information Desk (777-3196).

4.14 Police Assistance and 911

Campus Police: In order to better protect and serve the University community, the campus maintains its own police department with the [Division of Law Enforcement and Safety](#).

- **On-campus emergency assistance may be reached by calling 911. If calling from a cell phone, indicate that you need the University campus police.**
- **In addition to emergency assistance from police, dial 911 on a local phone or 7-9111 on a campus phone for both fire department and/or ambulance service. An operator will send the appropriate emergency personnel to the reported location.**

IMPORTANT TIP: To contact the police in an emergency, call 911 from an off-campus phone.
--

Local Police: The main role of the [Columbia Police Department](#) is to protect Columbia residents and enforce local laws. The police expect residents to ask for help with such matters as lost or stolen property, noisy neighbors, or criminal activity witnessed in the neighborhood.

The Columbia police do not work for the U.S. federal government or any of its branches. If a student is convicted of violating a law, the student's name and the nature of the violation will be recorded in the Columbia Police Department's internal files, or police records. A record is kept for both minor and serious criminal violations. A student's police record may be given to government authorities including the Department of Homeland Security, if requested.

Campus Escort Service: [APO Escort Service](#) is sponsored by the Division of Law Enforcement and Safety and the Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity. As a service to the University community, APO provides free escorted transportation anywhere on campus. APO helps make night travel safer by operating a van which picks up and drops off people during late night hours. All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to take advantage of this free service. The service is available Sunday through Thursday from 8 pm to 12 am by calling 777-3825 (777-DUCK). On occasions when APO is not available, the University Police can assist students returning to cars or residence halls.

Emergency Call Boxes: The University has placed [emergency call boxes](#) in strategic locations all across campus. The call boxes can be easily identified by their bright yellow color and the red and blue lights that hang near them. To operate a call box, simply push the black button in the upper right hand corner of the box. The line will immediately be connected with a University Police Department dispatcher. Even if unable to communicate, the dispatcher is able to determine a student's exact location. **Call boxes are for EMERGENCY USE ONLY!** The following are examples of when the call boxes should be used: crimes in progress, fires, medical emergencies, or threats to personal safety.

Victim/Witness Program (777-8400): This program is designed to provide special assistance to persons who have been either victims of or witnesses to a crime. The Victim/Witness advocates serve as liaisons between the community, victims, witnesses, and the University Police Department, and provide friendship and support to victims and witnesses throughout criminal legal proceedings.

A Note on Alcohol Consumption: The legal age to purchase and/or consume alcohol is 21 in the United States. Laws regarding underage drinking and purchasing alcoholic beverages for persons under 21 are strictly enforced. Laws prohibiting driving while under the influence of alcohol are also strictly enforced. Violations of drinking and driving laws carry severe penalties and are considered very serious criminal violations.

5 Immigration and Tax Information

The following summary of U.S. immigration regulations is provided to give students basic information about their nonimmigrant visa status. Students should carefully read the immigration sections below that apply to their visa status. It is the student's responsibility to know and follow the regulations governing studying, working, or staying in the United States. Additionally, Tax and Social Security card information is provided below.

United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS): The USCIS is the U.S. government office responsible for enforcing immigration laws. USCIS is a part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security headquartered in Washington, D.C. For administrative purposes, the USCIS has divided the United States into several regions and districts, serving a large number of people. The USCIS district office that has jurisdiction over South Carolina is in Atlanta, Georgia.

INTLNEWS is the International Student Services e-mail service that provides updated immigration and campus news to international students. Students are automatically signed up to receive INTLNEWS when checked into International Student Services at orientation.

5.1 Important Immigration Documents

Passport: A passport is an international travel document issued to citizens by their government. The U.S. government expects students to keep a valid passport at all times. It is a good idea for students to check their passport expiration date on occasion. If there is less than six months remaining on a passport, students should apply for a renewal, extension, or new passport, as it may take several months for processing.

Only a student's home government may extend, renew, or issue a passport. Students should contact the [embassy or consulate](#) to inquire about forms, fees, procedures, and the time necessary to process a passport. If requested by the embassy, International Student Services will provide a letter to affirm a student's visa status.

If a student's visa is still valid and they are being issued a new passport, the expired passport should be retained. These two passports should then be kept together while traveling so the valid visa can be used for reentry to the United States. Otherwise students will need to apply for a new visa the next time they leave the country.

Visa: The entry visa is a stamp or seal in a passport, issued by a U.S. consular officer abroad. The visa notes the purpose of a student's visit, the last day a student can enter the United States, and how many times a student will be allowed to enter (usually one, two, or multiple entries). The visa is only a permit to enter the United States. It does not indicate how long students will be permitted to stay, nor does it have to be valid in order to remain in the United States. The visa is used for entry into the U.S. only.

A visa can be obtained only at U.S. embassies and consulates OUTSIDE the United States. There are many different visa categories. The type of visa is determined by the purpose of the visitor's entry into the U.S. Most of the University's international students are on F-1 student or J-1 exchange visitor visas.

I-94 Departure Card: The I-94 card (either a handwritten white card or a computer generated document) is issued by an immigration officer at the port of entry and should be stapled into a student's passport. It confirms that students are lawfully admitted to the U.S upon arrival. The I-94 also shows how long students are permitted to stay in the country.

For F and J visa holders, “D/S” is noted instead of a specific date in the right-hand corner of the I-94. “D/S” stands for “duration of status” and operates in conjunction with the dates listed on a student’s I-20 or DS-2019. Permission to stay in the U.S may be granted as long as student status is maintained and the ending date listed under program of study (on the I-20 or DS-2019) has not passed.

The 11-digit number in the upper right hand corner of the I-94 is a student’s permanent USCIS identification number. Once a student leaves the U.S., the I-94 card will be removed from their passport. Upon reentry, students will receive a new I-94. If you lose or misplace this card, you must apply for a new one. Applications for replacement I-94’s can be obtained from International Student Services. There is an application fee to be paid to the USCIS.

The SEVIS I-20 and the SEVIS DS-2019: The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a web-based system that maintains information on international students and exchange visitors in the United States. The SEVIS I-20 is the document used for obtaining an F-1 student entry visa. The SEVIS DS-2019 is used for obtaining the J-1 visa. When entering the U.S., students are required to present the SEVIS I-20 or the SEVIS DS-2019, a valid passport, a student visa (if applicable), and an I-94 card to immigration officials.

The I-20 or DS-2019 is used for many immigration purposes and students should keep it with their passport. The SEVIS I-20 or SEVIS DS-2019 includes a student’s correct institution, major, and degree program. Students are responsible for reporting updated information to International Student Services, if the information listed on in the SEVIS I-20 changes. J-1 students should consult with their sponsoring agency for changes that need to be made to their SEVIS DS-2019.

5.2 Maintaining Student Status

After entering the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status, students must adhere to all the conditions of their visa in order to remain in good status with immigration:

- Passports and SEVIS I-20 or SEVIS DS-2019 must be kept valid at all times.
- Students are only authorized to attend the school listed on their SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019.
- Students must register for and complete a full-time course of study in both fall and spring semesters. A full-time course of study is defined as 12 credit hours per semester for undergraduates and 9 credit hours for graduate students. Graduate students that have assistantships may be enrolled for 6 credit hours.
- Students must apply for a SEVIS I-20 or SEVIS DS-2019 extension before the expiration date, if more time is needed to complete a degree program.
- On-campus employment is limited to a total of 20 hours per week while school is in session (up to 40 hours per week during summer, spring, and winter breaks). **Please note that international students are not allowed to work off-campus without proper authorization.**
- **Any change of address must be reported to International Student Services within 10 days.** Students must update address information by logging in to VIP and entering the information in the Personal menu. International Student Services will then notify SEVIS of the student’s address change.

Students with additional questions about visa status and immigration should see an advisor at International Student Services (777-7461).

5.3 Terms and Types of F-1 Employment Authorization

Students holding F-1 status have a number of opportunities for employment to supplement their classroom experience and personal funds. Although there are several options, it is critical that students have the appropriate form of work authorization and do not exceed the maximum number of hours per week authorized for work. **Working without authorization or working too many hours will result in the loss of F-1 status.** A loss of student status means that students are in the U.S. illegally and are no longer eligible for benefits offered under the F-1 student visa. For additional information about the terms or types of employment authorization listed below, please [schedule an appointment](#) with an international student advisor.

On-Campus Employment: Students maintaining F-1 status are permitted to work on the University campus for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year. During the summer and when school is not in session, students may be able to work up to 40 hours a week.

Off-Campus Employment: For an F-1 student to be eligible for off-campus employment, the student must be continuously and lawfully enrolled in USCIS-approved institution for nine consecutive months. The information below is a brief summary of all the types of off-campus employment options:

- *Curricular Practical Training (CPT):* CPT is a form of off-campus employment authorization that allows an F-1 student to participate in the University's Cooperative Education (Co-Op) Program, or a paid internship or practicum which meets the University's degree requirements.
- *Optional Practical Training (OPT):* OPT provides an opportunity for F-1 students to gain up to one year of experience in their field of study.
- *Economic Hardship:* F-1 students are eligible to apply for off-campus employment based on economic hardship provided that a student: (1) is in good standing and carrying a full course of study; (2) can demonstrate unforeseen economic hardship; (3) employment opportunities on campus are unavailable or insufficient; (4) has been in F-1 status for one academic year; and (5) acceptance of employment will not interfere with their studies.
- *International Organization* -This work authorization allows F-1 students to be employed by a select group of international organizations. Students must remain enrolled full-time during the period of employment. Employment may occur at any time during studies, but not after completion of studies. To discuss the process further, make an appointment with an international student advisor by calling 777-7461.

NEVER begin working off campus without authorization from International Student Services or the USCIS! This is a violation of your F-1 visa status.

F-2 Status: The spouse or child of an F-1 student enters the United States in F-2 status and is admitted for the same time period as the F-1 student. If the spouse or child does not accompany the student to the U.S., but intends to arrive at a later date, the student's U.S. institution must authorize the addition on the student's SEVIS I-20 or request a new document reflecting the change. The form is sent directly to the dependent seeking an F-2 visa so they may enter the U.S. in F-2 status. Any student wishing to bring a spouse and/or child to the U.S. should visit International Student Services to discuss the financial implications of the action and to have the necessary documents prepared. **Dependents on F-2 status are NEVER eligible for employment.**

5.4 Terms and Types of J-1 Student Employment Authorization

J-1 Status: A J-1 visa is issued to students participating in an exchange visitor program. To obtain a J-1 visa, students must be accepted by a U.S. institution through an approved exchange visitor program. The SEVIS DS-2019 should be presented to an American consular official when applying for a J-1 visa.

Program Sponsor: The agency issuing the SEVIS DS-2019 is called the student's sponsor. There are many exchange visitors on campus that are sponsored by institutions other than the University (e.g. IIE, LASPAU, USAID).

Change of Status or Category: People that are in J-1 status may be subject to a two-year foreign residence requirement and may not change to any other nonimmigrant status except a government official or international organization employee or representative. **Exchange visitors that enter the U.S. in one exchange visitor category, such as "researcher," are rarely permitted to change to another category.**

Extension of Stay: A J-1 exchange visitor may stay in the U.S. for one month after the completion date shown on the SEVIS DS-2019. If the program sponsor agrees to extend a program beyond the original completion date, an application for an extension of stay must be submitted. Exchange visitors that are at the University but are sponsored by some other organization must ask their sponsors for the SEVIS DS-2019 to affect an extension of stay. A J-1 exchange visitor's passport must be valid at the time an extension is requested.

Transfer to Another Program: A J-1 student who wishes to transfer to the exchange visitor program of another sponsor must have permission from their current sponsor to do so. Permission to transfer is granted only if the transfer is consistent with the exchange visitor's original purpose in coming to the U.S. The sponsor must agree to release a student from their program by releasing the SEVIS record to the new sponsor. The transfer must be completed before the student's SEVIS DS-2019 expires.

Exchange visitors with J-1 student visas may be allowed to work on-campus or off-campus after receiving written permission from a sponsor. The following types of work permission may be available:

- **On-Campus Employment:** A student may be eligible to work up to 20 hours a week during the academic year. Full-time employment not exceeding 40 hours a week is allowed during school breaks and annual vacations. Students must request written permission from their sponsor each semester or academic year.
- **Off-Campus Employment:** A student may be eligible to work up to 20 hours a week during the academic year when it is necessary because of serious, urgent, and unforeseen economic circumstances which have occurred since acquiring J-1 status. Students should submit written requests for off-campus work permission to their program sponsor.
- **Academic Training:** A J-1 student may request the sponsor's permission to engage in academic training. Academic training is work in the field that is related to the student's degree program. If the sponsoring agency approves the request, it provides a letter which authorizes academic training. Academic training is limited to 18 months and most students prefer to take advantage of academic training after graduation. For more detailed information, please contact [International Student Services](#).

J-2 Status: An exchange visitor's spouse or child may enter the U.S. in J-2 status as a dependent. Dependents may stay for as long as the J-1 person is authorized to remain in the U.S. A duplicate SEVIS DS-2019 must be obtained from the sponsor and sent to the spouse or child to obtain the J-2 visa.

J-2 Work Permission: A person in J-2 status may apply to USCIS for permission to accept employment. [International Student Services](#) has more information about J-2 work permission.

5.5 Travel Outside the U.S. and Re-entry

Students planning to travel outside the United States must have their SEVIS I-20 or SEVIS DS-2019 signed by one of the designated school officials at International Student Services (or by a program sponsor, for J-1 students). Students must also have the following documents in order to re-enter the U.S. in legal student status. **DO NOT PACK THESE ITEMS IN YOUR LUGGAGE WHEN RE-ENTERING THE U.S.! You must present these items to the immigration official before getting your luggage:**

- Passport, valid at least 6 months after your date of entry into the U.S.
- Valid visa (some exceptions exist for Canada, Mexico, and adjacent islands, see [Automatic Revalidation](#))
- I-20 or DS-2019 signed for travel in the past year
- I-94 card
- EAD card, if you are currently on Optional Practical Training (**It is also strongly recommended that you have a letter from your employer stating that you are fulfilling the OPT and acknowledging the period of travel.**)
- Financial certification (required by law, but you may not be asked to present it)

The following documents are helpful in verifying your activities as an F-1 student at the port-of-entry if an immigration official questions your immigration status:

- An Enrollment Verification Letter from the [Office of University Registrar](#)
- Copies of all previous I-20s issued to you
- Transcript of course work (See [Office of University Registrar](#) for details)
- Students on OPT or CPT should obtain a letter from an employer acknowledging the travel and salary amount.

5.6 Tax Information

International students are subject to U.S. taxes and must pay into the tax system while working in the U.S. International students are also required to pay taxes on money earned from grants, scholarships, and fellowships while in the United States. Generally, income taxes are withheld from a student's paycheck each pay period. If too much tax is withheld, students may be entitled to a tax refund at the end of the year. If too little tax is withheld, students must pay the amount owed. All working international students must file federal income taxes each year.

The amount of tax depends on the total income earned during a calendar year. A student's tax liability may be decreased if there is a tax treaty between the U.S. and the student's home country. Information on tax treaties can be obtained by calling the [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#) at 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676) and requesting [Publication 901](#). Information is also available from the international taxation coordinator, [Byrnes Building](#), # 212 (or phone: 777-2076).

W-2: A W-2 is an official statement of earned income that is sent to students in January or February for each prior calendar year. The official W-2 must be sent in with completed state and federal tax forms.

W-4 Form: Employers require that students complete the W-4 form before beginning work. The form indicates the amount of tax withheld from each paycheck at each pay period.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is the U.S. federal agency responsible for collecting income taxes. Students may address questions to the IRS by calling toll-free 1-800-829-1040 or visiting the [IRS website](#).

NOTE: All new students planning to work on campus **must** complete a tax form. After completing the tax form, students must meet with the international tax coordinator to complete a W-4 form.

South Carolina Tax Commission: International students are required to pay state taxes. The South Carolina Tax Commission can help students complete South Carolina tax return forms. Call 1-800-763-1295 or visit the [South Carolina Department of Revenue](#) for more information.

The Income Tax Return: Each year, taxpayers must submit or file taxes with the both federal and state governments in the form of a "tax return". A tax return is like an individual's report to the IRS that includes all income and tax activity for the previous year. Tax returns for the previous calendar year must be filed (mailed or electronically submitted) by **April 15 each year**. There are penalties if tax returns are filed after the April 15th deadline.

International Student Services cannot provide any assistance in preparing tax returns. However, many local companies provide tax assistance and prepare tax returns. Tax forms are available at the following locations:

- The [SC State Museum](#) located at 210 Gervais Street
- [Strom Thurmond Federal Building](#), 6th floor, 1835 Assembly Street
- South Carolina Tax forms (state only) may be downloaded at www.sctax.org.

Taxpayer Service Centers near campus include:

April Tax Services
(Five Points)
820 Pavillion Avenue
799-8666

301 Gervais Street
P.O. Box 125
Columbia, S.C. 29214
Phone:803-898-5000

5.7 Social Security Information

***Please note:
you must have
a job offer
before you can
apply for a
social security
number.***

What is “social security”?

Social Security is a retirement and medical benefits program administered by the U.S. government. The Social Security program is financed by mandatory contributions from employers and employees.

When do you need a social security number (SSN)?

Everyone that works in the U.S. is required to have a SSN. A SSN is not needed for most services, such as opening a new bank account. Individuals on the F-2 visa are not eligible to apply for a social security number.

What documents are needed to apply for a social security card?

Students must present a passport, SEVIS I-20 or SEVIS DS-2019, and letter from your employer with the following items along with the social security card application. **Original documents must be presented;** photocopies are not accepted. An SSN application is included in the International Student Services orientation packet.

Where can you obtain a social security card?

The [Social Security Administration](#) office is located in the [Strom Thurmond Federal Building](#) at 1835 Assembly Street (between Laurel and Richland Streets). The office may also be contacted by phone at (803) 929-7635 or toll free at 800-772-1213.

How is the social security number (SSN) used as identification at the University?

The University uses a student’s social security number as their student identification (ID) number. When students are admitted to THE UNIVERSITY for the first time, a student ID number is issued. **A University student number is not a social security number.** Eligible applicants may apply for a SSN at the [Social Security Administration Office](#) after they arrive on campus.

After receiving a social security number, students must use it as their University student ID number. To do so, students must take their SSN card to the University’s [Office of the Registrar](#) to update the number. International students that transferred from another U.S. institution and already have a social security number should also notify the [Office of the Registrar](#) and have their University student ID number updated.

What is social security tax?

Students often have questions about payment of a U.S. tax called the payroll tax or FICA. [Federal Insurance Contributions Act](#) (FICA) was implemented as a tax that provides benefits to retired workers. International students are not subject to this tax during the first five years they are in the U.S. However, J-2 dependents with work permission are subject to FICA. After five years of presence in the U.S., the payroll tax or FICA will be withheld from each paycheck.

6 Additional Helpful Information

6.1 Your Initial Arrival

The first U.S. city you arrive in is your “port of entry”. **Make sure you are carrying the following items on your person, NOT in checked baggage, when you arrive at your “port of entry”:**

- Your passport, stamped with the U.S. visa stamp
- Your Certificate of Eligibility-- I-20 for F-1 visa holders, or DS-2019 for J-1 visa holders
- The supporting documentation you provided to obtain your student visa (i.e. financial certification, proof of inoculations, etc.)
- Your official, original acceptance letter from the university

You will be issued an I-94 departure card at your Port of Entry in the U.S. Please keep this card with your passport and Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019) at all times. Be sure you leave the Port of Entry immigration office with all your documents and make sure that the Immigration official gives you back your I-94, passport, and supporting documents.

6.2 International Students with Children

South Carolina law requires children ages 6-16 years to be enrolled in school. Public education is available at no charge to children of international students.

Richland School District One offers a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) that teaches English to students whose first language is not English. The program is designed to facilitate the transition between the educational system of first language instruction and the American English educational system. There is no cost to enroll in the TBE program and it is available to any new student who enters Richland School District One in grades Kindergarten through 12.

Columbia is divided into districts (geographic units) with public schools in each district. Therefore, the location of a student’s home will determine where a student’s child can attend school. If student’s live on campus or near to campus, children will probably attend AC Moore Elementary School (333 Etiwan Ave., 343-2910).

For additional information regarding English classes and education, contact:

Richland One County School District
1616 Richland St.
Columbia, SC 29201
733-6000

Lexington County School District II
715 Ninth St.
West Columbia, SC 29169
796-4708

For student enrollment, the following documents may be required by local schools:

- Passport & Visa
- Birth Certificate
- Immunization Record
- Transcripts from Previous Schools
- Three Proofs of Residence (e.g. lease, bills)

Child Care: Once you are settled in your new home, you may need to find appropriate child care. The University offers on-campus care (infant to Kindergarten) at the University Child Care Center. You will also find a listing of nursery schools and daycare facilities in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. Daycares and nursery schools at churches tend to be a little less expensive than private centers.

6.3 English Classes for Adults

You may have a spouse or dependent child who is interested in improving his or her English language skills while in the United States. The following ESL programs are available in Columbia, either on or near the University campus:

- [Turning Pages](#) offers instruction in English-as-a-New-Language and several other programs of interest to ESL students. You may visit them at 2728 Devine Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29205, or phone by 803-765-2555, or contact them via e-mail at literacycolumbia@bellsouth.net.
- [English Programs for Internationals](#) (EPI) offers programs designed for students needing to improve their English for academic or professional reasons. In addition to the general intensive English program, EPI offers Carolina Business English; Graduate Orientation Summer Institute; and English for Foreign Students (ENFS) which offers two credit bearing courses for students enrolled at the University. For more detailed information, you may contact EPI at 777-3867, 207 [Byrnes](#).
- [International Ministry of First Baptist Church](#) (Columbia) sponsor a Friendship Program and English classes at all levels for students and their families. Please visit their website for more information.

6.4 Additional Academic Terms

Academic Advisor: A faculty or staff member assigned to each student to help and assist in forming the student's academic plans. Please be advised that academic advisors are *not* trained in immigration regulations that concern international students. ***Academic advisors are only responsible for providing advice and guidance about academics or particular degree program requirements.*** Students should *always* consult with an international student advisor if unsure of any special degree requirements, particularly if a program involves an internship.

If a degree program requires students to complete an internship, practicum, field placement, or any other form of off-campus employment, it is *the student's* responsibility to ensure that the work is approved by [International Student Services](#) and by USCIS ***before*** the employment begins. Failure to gain proper approval will result in the loss of valid student status and may cause other immigration problems.

Academic Integrity: In general, students in the U.S. academic system are expected to do their own academic work. This does not mean that students cannot ask other students to help with assignments. It is permissible and sometimes even advisable to seek help in understanding what is happening in a class and what a specific assignment is about. It is not considered proper, though, to have someone else complete an assignment for you or to copy answers or information from any publication without properly citing or crediting the original author.

Adding and Dropping a Class: Course registration is considered a formal contract between a student and the university. Once a student registers in a class, The University agrees to provide a class and the student agrees to pay tuition. There is a specified and limited period in which courses may be added or dropped. **Please note: Not attending class does not cancel course registration.** If students wish to drop or add courses, they should consult the [Master Schedule Online](#) or an academic advisor on the procedures to follow. Courses may be dropped for any reason, but it is ultimately the student's responsibility to make sure that degree requirements are met and that minimum student visa enrollment requirements are adhered to.

Attendance: Attendance policies vary from professor to professor. Some professors may take daily attendance and some may not have a specific attendance policy.

Credit Hours: See [Section 3.2 - The Credit System](#) in this manual.

Examinations: Students may be required to take several examinations (or exams) throughout the semester in each class. Exams are designed to test the student's knowledge from class lectures and discussions and any assigned readings or books used for the class. Although classes may have several shorter tests or quizzes during the semester, most classes will have a longer mid-term (given in middle of the semester) and final exam. There are two types of exams:

1. **Objective exams** test the student's knowledge of particular facts. There are five methods of testing found on objective tests:
 - **Multiple Choice:** Students must choose a response from a series of answers, selecting the most appropriate answer.
 - **True or False:** Students read a statement and indicate whether it is true or false.
 - **Matching:** Students match words, phrases, or statements from two columns.
 - **Identification:** Students identify and briefly explain a name, term, or phrase.
 - **Fill in the Blanks:** Students are given a sentence or passage with a word or statement missing and must write the missing information in the blank to make it complete and correct.
2. **Subjective exams** (also called written response or essay exams) require students to write responses to a question or statement. Subjective exams often focus on "the big picture" and test the student's ability to organize thoughts and relate learned material to a particular subject.

GA or Graduate Assistant: Graduate assistantships are offered through most academic departments and university offices on campus. International Student Services does not maintain a listing of available graduate assistantships. Students should inquire about assistantships by contacting the departments directly.

Grade Point Average: See [Section 3.3 – The Grading System](#) in this manual.

Major: A student's primary field of study.

Minor: A student's secondary field of study (if the student chooses to have one).

Plagiarism: Term referring specifically to the practice of copying from a book or other publication and not properly citing or referencing the author(s). This is a very serious offense at the university and can result in severe disciplinary action or expulsion.

RA: Research Assistant in graduate study or Resident Advisor in residence halls.

RHD: Residence Hall Director

TA: Teaching Assistant

Term Papers: Students may write many term papers and other essays while studying at the University. It is wise to complete papers well before the due date so that there is ample time to ask another student or professor for suggestions for improvement. Professors are often unsympathetic to students who do not submit papers in on time, especially papers that are assigned weeks in advance, unless a student has special or extenuating circumstances that resulted in the late paper. Do not be afraid to ask professors for clarification of their expectations for term papers.

6.5 Where to Turn for Answers

Contact your **academic advisor** if you need to discuss:

- Academic problems
- Curriculum requirements
- Trouble with your professor
- Difficulties with your English
- Changing academic major or area of study

Contact **the professor teaching the course** if you need to discuss:

- Details about a specific course
- Specific course or assignment requirements
- Late assignments
- Difficulty understanding a lecture

Contact the **International Student Services** if you need to discuss:

- Immigration status
- Visa problems
- Employment
- Transferring to another school
- Personal and adjustment problems

Contact the local office of the **Internal Revenue Service** at the Strom Thurmond Federal Building (1835 Assembly St.) if you need to discuss:

- Federal income taxes

Contact the **University Housing Office** if you need to discuss:

- On-campus housing

Contact **your residence hall manager** if you need to discuss:

- Heat, cooling, or ventilation problems in your dormitory room
- Problems with an electrical outlet
- Lost room keys

Contact the **University Registrar** if you need to discuss:

- Your schedule of courses
- Obtaining an official transcript

Contact the **Graduate School** if you need to discuss:

- Graduation requirements and major field of study (graduate students only)

Contact the **Thompson Student Health Center** if you need to discuss:

- Medical issues
- Health Insurance and waivers
- Immunization requirements

Consult the **University telephone directory** if you need to find:

- A professor, student, or department's address or telephone number