

Baltimore City Community College

International Student Handbook

*Rules, Regulations & Resources
for F-1 Visa Students at BCCC*



Baltimore City Community College

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

Welcome Message from the Coordinator of International Student Services

Welcome to Baltimore City Community College (BCCC). We are delighted that Baltimore City Community College is your college of choice to pursue higher education and training.

BCCC offers an exciting learning-centered environment with dedicated and committed faculty and staff. The American faculty, staff and students are friendly, courteous and eager to meet you. Your presence enriches the diversity of our community and we are glad you chose us to participate in this educational exchange.

The College is an urban institution with three locations in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. The Admissions Office is here to assist you in preparing your admissions papers, securing the I-20, becoming acclimated to your new home, and supporting your efforts to observe the laws and regulations of the College and the United States.

We offer our best wishes to you for the months ahead as you pursue your educational goals at Baltimore City Community College.

William N. Hug, PDSO
Coordinator of International Student Services
Admissions Office

INTRODUCTION

We hope the information in this document proves to be helpful during your studies at BCCC.

We are delighted that you have chosen BCCC to pursue higher education and training. BCCC serves a population of over 10,000 students, over 300 of whom are studying in the USA on an F1 student visa. More than 100 countries are represented here among students, faculty and staff. The Admissions Office is pleased to provide this handbook for nonimmigrant F-1 visa students. It does not, however, include all the immigration and visa matters that may affect you while you are in the United States.

If you comply with all the immigration, civil and criminal laws of the United States, you should not encounter any legal problems during your stay in this country. If in doubt, contact an International Student Advisor. Our discussions will be kept confidential. Clarification and help will be provided to assist you as much as possible. If the situation warrants, you will be referred to professional legal counsel for further assistance.



WHERE TO GO WITH QUESTIONS

Questions	Contact	Liberty Campus	WDCED
Academic matters	Academic Advisor or Student Success Specialist http://www.bccc.edu/advising	Academic Department or MNB Room 20	ELI Department
Admission	Admissions Office http://www.bccc.edu/admissions	MNB Room 02	WDCED front counter for referral
Add/Drop	Academic Advisor or Student Success Specialist http://www.bccc.edu/advising	Academic Department or MNB Room 20	WDCED front counter for referral
Health Care	Academic Advisor or Student Success Specialist http://www.bccc.edu/advising	MNB Room 20	WDCED front counter for referral
Book Supplies	Book Store http://www.bccc.edu/bookstore/	MNB Room 13	(must go to Liberty Campus)
Placement Test	Testing Center http://www.bccc.edu/testcenter	MNB Room 06	WDCED front counter for referral
Identification Card, Parking	Public Safety https://www.bccc.edu/Page/23	MNB Room 51B	WDCED front counter for referral
Immigration Matters	International Student Advisor http://www.bccc.edu/international	MNB Room 02	WDCED Catch shuttle to Liberty Campus
Joining a Club	Student Activities Office http://www.bccc.edu/studentlife	MNB Room 09	(must go to Liberty Campus)
Passport Information	International Student Advisor http://www.bccc.edu/admissions/international	MNB Room 02	WDCED front counter for referral
Payment Methods	Student Accounting Office http://www.bccc.edu/paymentoptions	MNB Room 27	WDCED Cashier's Office
Testing	Testing Center http://www.bccc.edu/testcenter	MNB Room 57	WDCED front counter for referral
Placement and Career Services	Career Development & Job Placement https://www.bccc.edu/domain/22		Call for appointment: (410) 986-5455

Questions	Contact	Liberty Campus	WDCED
Transcripts	Student Accounting Office http://www.bccc.edu/transcripts	MNB Room 27	(must go to Liberty Campus)
Registration	Registration Office http://www.bccc.edu/registration	MNB Room 08	WDCED front counter for referral
Student Employment	International Student Advisor http://www.bccc.edu/international	MNB Room 02	WDCED Catch shuttle to Liberty Campus
Traffic Violations	Public Safety https://www.bccc.edu/Page/23	MNB, Ground Floor, Room 51B	(must go to Liberty Campus)
Vehicle Registration	Public Safety https://www.bccc.edu/Page/23	MNB, Ground Floor, Room 51B	(must go to Liberty Campus)

Abbreviations:

WDCED=Workforce Development & Continuing Education Division,
Harbor (710 E. Lombard Street)

BIO Park= BIO Park Campus (801 W. Baltimore Street Baltimore MD 21201)

MNB= Main Building, Liberty Campus (2901 Liberty Heights Ave, Baltimore, MD 21215)

Many student services are available via the Student Portal. Go to the BCCC homepage (www.bccc.edu) and choose Student Portal (or go directly to <https://portal.bccc.edu/regent/>).

If you are unable to find an answer to any of your questions, call the International Student Services Office, (410) 462-8360 or 410-462-7458.

COLLEGE COMMUNITY

Admissions Office

The Admissions Office is part of Enrollment Services in the Student Affairs Division. All foreign-born students, immigrant or nonimmigrant, are eligible to receive assistance and services from this office.

The office is responsible for assessing the needs of international students, providing thorough information on immigration regulations and procedures, advising international students effectively, orienting students to the policies and expectations of the institution, its culture, our educational system and the country in general, facilitating the enrollment and retention of international students and fostering an international dimension within the institution and the community at large.

Students are encouraged to visit the offices of the International Student Advisors on a regular basis to get to know them. The International Student Advisors are:

William N. Hug, PDSO

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wnhug@bccc.edu or international@bccc.edu

Sung Yoon Kim, Ed.D., DSO

International Student Advisor

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skim@bccc.edu or international@bccc.edu

We strive for all international students to feel comfortable about discussing their problems with the International Student Advisors in a confidential and positive atmosphere. If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns, please feel free to address them with your International Student Advisors. You will find us ready to assist you with any educational and personal needs.

All students are to abide by the rules and regulations at the College, and the applicable local, state, and federal laws while in the USA. Students' rights and responsibilities are outlined in the College Catalog and our website, including here:

[*Student Code of Conduct \(including Academic Integrity and Sexual Harassment policies\)*](#)

[*College Catalog and Academic Calendar*](#)

[*BCCC Public Safety information*](#)

[*Campus and national resources for sexual harassment, domestic violence, and other issues of safety*](#)

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CLUB

The International Students Club was organized in 1991 to provide support for international students while helping them to adjust culturally and academically to BCCC, to provide participation in or initiation of such activities and projects that are in the interest of the members and general interest of the BCCC community and to broaden the knowledge and awareness within the BCCC community about other cultures.

NOTE: All new F-1 visa students are required to join the International Students Club community via Canvas. Directions on how to join the club via Canvas are available at New International Student Orientation, or during appointments with an International Student Advisor.

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IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

This section provides a summary of information for nonimmigrant F-1 visa students. It does not, however, include all the immigration and visa matters that may affect you while you are in the United States.

Immigration regulations, forms and procedures change frequently. If you have questions about your visa or immigration status or how a particular law applies to you, consult the International Student Advisor. Advice from friends, faculty or other offices may be incorrect or out-of-date. Be careful, because lack of knowledge about the law does not exempt you from your responsibility to comply with immigration regulations.

Congress makes immigration law. The USA PATRIOT ACT of 2001, as amended, regulates the flow of aliens into the United States for temporary or permanent residence. The Act is administered and enforced inside the U.S. Department of Homeland Security/United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The address of the Baltimore USCIS District Office is:

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
George H. Fallon Federal Building
31 Hopkins Plaza
1st Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

You need an appointment to be serviced at the USCIS Baltimore Information Center. Visit www.infopass.uscis.gov to schedule an appointment.

The main regulations governing F-1 visa can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations: 8CFR § Sec. 214.2(f). A summary of the most common issues start on page 10 of this document. A user-friendly website provided by the government is at:

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

If you need to consult a lawyer, one source for a referral is the non-profit association of immigration lawyers, which can be found at: <http://www.AILA.org>

MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 VISA STATUS

The College's International Student Advisors must report regularly to USCIS the status of every F-1 student associated with the College. We report who is currently enrolled (including those who are not attending but who appear on the USCIS list as having previously attended) or engaged in post-graduation Optional Practical Training (OPT). If you are maintaining your status, this information is relatively routine and will not affect your continued stay in the United States.

As a student, you must comply with immigration laws governing your stay in this country. You are required to always maintain your immigration status. It is your responsibility to keep track of immigration matters, although the International Student Advisor will assist you. To maintain your status, you must:

1. **Register every semester at BCCC** (the college you have been authorized by USCIS to attend). If for any reason you cannot register for a full time schedule prior to the beginning of each semester, you should discuss your situation with the International Student Advisor.

2. **Maintain your full-time student status every semester.** This means maintaining 12 credit hours or 18 hours in the English Language Institute (ask an ELI staff member if you are not sure). You must maintain full-time course enrollment throughout the semester.
 - a. If you register as a full-time student at the beginning of the semester and later drop courses, leaving you with less than a full-time course load, you are considered a part-time student, which violates your F-1 Visa status.

 - b. If you are having academic difficulties, meet with your instructor to ask for help. Actions such as auditing, dropping, or withdrawing from courses may cause you to become out of status with USCIS. See your International Student Advisor. Refer to # 2a above.

 - c. If one of your classes is canceled, it is your responsibility to regain a full-time schedule as soon as possible. You may need to meet with an Academic Advisor or Student Success Specialist immediately to register for a replacement class.

 - d. Regular F-1 rule: No more than one online education class (maximum 3 credits) per semester can be counted toward your full-time course of study. You may take as many online classes as you wish, but you must always have at least 12 credits overall, of which at least 9 credits must be in-person or hybrid classes.

The COVID exception is no longer in effect.

- e. If your I-20 is issued for English as a Second Language, no online/hybrid courses can count toward the minimum full-time enrollment requirement.
 - f. Credits received from CLEP or other proficiency exams, or transfer credits, do not count toward the full-time enrollment requirement.
 - g. If you withdraw from classes, you must make sure you finish the semester with a full-time schedule.
 - h. If you fail to pay your tuition on time, or if you do not attend class, **your classes can be dropped automatically**, which can affect your F1 visa status. (Refer to item #4 below)
3. **Attend classes regularly and make satisfactory progress** toward completion of your degree program or English training.
 4. **Remain current with your financial payments.** Please work with your sponsor to ensure you can pay your full bill at the time of registration. This means you should have at least \$3,700 to start classes your first semester, and every subsequent November and April to stay registered full-time as required by F-1 visa regulations. These regulations state that to remain in the USA on F-1 visa status, students must be able to afford the requisite tuition, fees, and living expenses during their entire program. More information about paying your school fees is available at www.bccc.edu/paymentoptions. If BCCC withdraws you from your classes due to non-payment or late payment, you may not be allowed to be reinstated into those classes. If that happens, you would then have to leave the USA or apply for reinstatement to F-1 status (refer to the section below on Reinstatement- p.29).
 5. **You must follow USCIS procedures if you want to change schools**, whether in the middle of your program or after receiving a degree. Before you can transfer to a new school you must submit to a BCCC International Student Advisor a completed BCCC SEVIS Record Transfer Out Request Form, along with your acceptance letter to the new school. It is your responsibility to make sure your SEVIS record is transferred from one school to another in time to make all deadlines (of each school and of immigration regulations). Each school has its own unique transfer-in and transfer-out procedure that you must follow. Federal regulations require your SEVIS record to be released to your new school no later than 2 weeks prior to the beginning of classes at the new school.
 6. **Do not work on/off campus without the written authorization from USCIS or the International Student Advisor** (see Employment Authorization). If authorized, students are allowed to work full-time during summer and winter

sessions and spring break but *must limit all employment to 20 hours per week or less during the spring and fall semesters*. You must maintain full-time enrollment, or your employment will become illegal. All employment must be reflected and kept current on your current I-20.

7. **Obtain a new SEVIS I-20 whenever you make a change in degree levels or major.** This includes changing from Optional Practical Training to a new degree, from one associate degree or a second associate degree, to change of major, for transfer to another institution. If you plan to change your degree program (major), you must notify the International Student Advisor within 10 days. If you are changing from English Language Institute (ELI) classes to a credit program, you will need a referral from an authorized ELI staff member and an International Student Advisor. You will be required to complete a full international student application, including all new financial documentation before you will be issued an I-20 for your new program. All financial documentation must be presented in the original, so plan if your documents must be sent from outside the USA.
8. **Report a change of name and address for yourself and your dependents to the Admissions Office within 10 days of the change.** First, change your address using the Panther Portal. Then email a BCCC International Student Advisor to let us know about your address change, so we can change your address in the SEVIS system. If you have a pending case with USCIS, you should also report the change to USCIS using Form AR-11 (<https://www.uscis.gov/ar-11>).
9. **Apply for extension of stay 30 days in advance to the program end date listed on your I-20.** You will need to explain why if you are not able to complete your degree within the period specified on the SEVIS I-20. (See Extension of Stay). You will need to present updated proof your sponsor **wants to and can** continue to support you during the extended period, using the same criteria found on the Twelve-Month Budget (found at www.bccc.edu/international).

NOTE: The list above is not exhaustive. Immigration regulations and interpretation constantly change. Please refer to this complete handbook, all the governmental websites listed, and consultation with your International Student Advisor, as well as any legal counsel necessary, to determine if you are maintaining your F-1 visa, depending on your situation.

IMMIGRATION TERMS, DOCUMENTS AND FORMS

Admission Number: Each nonimmigrant is assigned an eleven (11) digit Admissions number by USCIS upon entry to the USA. The number appears on your Form I-94. This identification number will remain the same if you remain in status in the USA. Your admission number is in the USCIS database (and often SEVIS) and it is used to track enrollment, transfers between schools, travel abroad, employment authorization, practical training and other matters. If you leave the USA, you will be assigned a new admissions number upon reentry. To get your most recent I-94, go to www.cbp.gov/i94 .

Dependent: Spouse and children (up to age 21) may be included in the F-1 student's SEVIS record. For BCCC to add a dependent to a student's SEVIS record, the student/applicant must add each dependent's name to the Dependent Request Form (part of the BCCC international application) and provide the DSO a copy of that dependent's passport. Once the dependent has a visa, an entry stamp that Customs places in the passport, and an I-94 record, the student (F-1) must provide that initial and any subsequent document to the DSO in a timely fashion. If the F-2 dependent is of age to attend school in the USA, they must enroll in school until the age of 18. If any F-2 dependent wants to study full-time at a college, they must apply for a change of status through USCIS to receive an F-1 visa status. F-2 children will automatically lose their F-2 status on their 21st birthday. They should meet with an immigration lawyer well before turning 21 to avoid this.

Designated School Official (DSO) (or Primary Designated School Official-PDSO): Often referred to as the International Student Advisor or Foreign Student Advisor, the DSO is authorized to issue and sign your I-20s. You should consult the DSO for all school matters that may affect your F1 visa status. Other staff at the school may be helpful, but always double-check with your DSO about anything that relates to your maintenance of your F1 visa status. When in doubt, contact your DSO when:

- you are considering changing your major,
- moving (if your address changes in the USA or your home country),
- changing your name,
- inviting a dependent to join you in the USA,
- extending your I-20,
- changing your sponsor,
- before seeking employment or changing employers,
- traveling,
- transferring to or from your current college.

Make sure you know how to reach all the DSOs at your school, and how to best make an appointment with each of them.

Duration of Status: Noted as "D/S" on the Form I-20, the Form I-94, and stamped in your passport. It refers to the length of time you are authorized to stay in the USA. Duration of status is defined as the period during which you are pursuing a full course of

study in an educational program or series of programs and any periods of post completion Practical Training, plus 60 days (in which) to depart the USA. Your duration of status is valid only if you have maintained your F-1 status. No employment is authorized during the 60-day period. The F-1 visa is unlike most other nonimmigrant visas, in that there is no specific expiration date. You are responsible for noticing when your **program end date** expires on your Form I-20, and requesting an extension, if necessary, no later than 30 days before this date. Note: Duration of Status is not valid indefinitely. There are several circumstances under which you must apply for an extension to stay, even if you have maintained your student status. See your International Student Advisor for more information.

F-1 Student Status: F-1 students should have in their possession the I-20 document. A Form I-20 is required for travel and re-entry to the USA. An endorsement by the International Student Advisor on the back of the I-20 within the previous 12 months (or six months if engaging in OPT) is necessary to re-enter and to be re-admitted in your current nonimmigrant visa status. You must consult with the International Student Advisor if your document has not been endorsed within the year and you are traveling outside the USA or if you need to apply for a new visa while you are traveling.

The term F-1 comes from the F section of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that governs the student visa. You can access the most updated section of regulations through the USCIS website (<http://www.uscis.gov>). Navigate to the Laws and Regulations section of the site and find the link for 8 CFR (which means Title 8, Code of Federal Regulations). Once you access 8 CFR, go to 8 CFR PART 214, and then Sec. 214.2, f. Other immigration-related laws are found on the USCIS website. Read this entire handbook to gain a better understanding of your F-1 visa status.

Form I-94: Currently, every time you enter the USA, an electronic record of your entry is created, called an I-94 record. This used to be a small white Arrival-Departure card stapled in your passport by an immigration inspector at your port of entry. It states the place and date of your admission to the USA, your nonimmigrant classification (F-1), your name, date of birth, country of citizenship and when your initial period of authorized stay expires. The I-94 record also contains your Admissions Number. If you were issued a card I-94 on your last entry to the USA, you will be asked to submit this card when you leave the USA.

After April 30, 2013, Arrival/Departure records started to be created electronically upon arrival. Sometimes the visitor will receive an annotated stamp in their foreign passport. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issues an electronic Form I-94 to all travelers. All visitors who enter the USA should review and print out a copy of their Form I-94: www.cbp.gov/i94. An instructional video showing how to retrieve the I-94 number is available at www.CBP.gov.

Form I-134: Affidavit of Support Form is used by Immigration to verify and record the financial status of potential sponsors of F-1 students. The form can be found on the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-134.pdf>

Form I-539: This Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status is used to either change from one non-immigrant status to another, or to regain a non-immigrant status after falling out of status. If you come into the USA on a visitor or tourist visa, you must complete this form if you wish to change to student visa status. The Form I-539, Form I-20, Form I-134, Form I-94, and other supporting documents should be submitted to USCIS at least 30 days before your current visa expires. To be approved, the initial begin date of the I-20 (either January 10, May 10 or August 10) must be no more than 30 days after the expiration date of your current visa status (check your I-94 or other USCIS documentation). It is also used when applying for nonimmigrant reinstatement to student status (see **Reinstatement** p.29). It requires the signature of the International Student Advisor and an application fee required when submitted to USCIS (**online**). The form can be found on the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-539.pdf>

Form I-668: This is the formal document name of the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) photo ID card. The EAD provides an employer proof of identity and proof of employment eligibility. If you have been approved for employment by USCIS, they will mail you the EAD card. To extend your employment authorization, you must file a Form I-765 in a timely manner. Make sure your International Student Advisor has a copy of your EAD card as soon as it is issued to you and consult them at least 3 months prior to the EAD card's expiration date.

Form I-765: This Application for Employment Authorization is used to apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). An application fee is required; Forms I-765 and other supporting documents must be submitted to USCIS. Check with your International Student Advisor before filing this form, as it often requires you to send a new I-20 along with this form. The form can be found on the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765.pdf>

Form I-901: The *Fee Remittance For Certain F, J and M Nonimmigrant* form is use to pay the fee to support the F, M and J nonimmigrant reporting system SEVIS (Law 104-208, Subtitle D, Section 641). If you are subject to this fee and do not pay it, you will not be issued an F visa or be admitted to the United States. If you are in the United States and apply for a change of status, you are subject to this fee. If you do not pay it your application will not be processed. For more information, consult: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>

Immigrant Visa (see Visa)

Non-immigrant Visa (see Visa)

Out of Status: If you fail to maintain your F-1 status, or do not apply for extension of stay before your program end date expires, or do not comply with the terms of your admission to the USA as outlined; you are considered "out-of-status". You are no longer entitled to any benefits, and you run the risk of being asked to leave the USA. To regain your legal status, you must apply to USCIS for reinstatement. Refer to Form I-539 below.

You are out-of-status if:

- a) you have not maintained full-time enrollment through the entire semester,
- b) you have accepted unauthorized employment on or off campus,
- c) you have stayed in the USA beyond your authorized period.
- d) you take too many online classes,
- e) you have not made academic progress toward completing a course of study declared on your I-20 (See section on "Reinstatement")

Passport: All nonimmigrants are required to possess and keep current a valid passport issued by their country of citizenship. If your passport expires within a year, make sure to find out from your embassy how to renew your passport. To stay in the USA on F-1 visa your passport must always be valid at least 6 months in advance. If you are traveling outside the USA, you will not be allowed to reenter if it is not valid at least six months after your return date to the USA. Failure to keep it valid renders a nonimmigrant out of status (and consequently, not eligible for extension of stay or change of status as well as subject to deportation). Questions regarding passport renewals, extensions, or replacements should be addressed to the nonimmigrant's embassy or consulate here in the USA. While it is not necessary to always carry a passport while in the states, it must be taken with you when leaving and re-entering the USA. The passport expiration date should not be confused with a visa expiration date (always indicated on the visa stamp inside the passport) or expiration of a particular period of stay as indicated on one's I-20, I-94, etc. If your passport is lost or stolen, you should immediately report it to the police department serving the area where it was lost or stolen. Your embassy may require a copy of an official police report.

Program end date: Every Form I-20 issued has a program start date and program end date. The program start date is the date that you are expected to report to the college to start your program. The program end date is the date the college expects you to complete your studies. If you intend to complete your studies before the program end date listed on your I-20, you must discuss this with your international student advisor at the beginning of your last semester. If you do not think you can finish by your program end date, you must discuss this with an international student advisor as soon as possible and request an extension (refer to the section below on **Extension of Stay**). No later than 30 days prior to your program end date.

Reinstatement: To remain in the USA after falling out of status, you must file for reinstatement within five months of the event that caused you to fall out of status. You must usually demonstrate to USCIS using Form I-539 and supporting materials including a new I-20, and a letter explaining that you fell out of status through no fault of your own. Refer to the section on reinstatement on p. 29.

SEVIS: Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>) is an interactive website managed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service tracking foreign students and their dependents (F-1 and F-2) and exchange visitors while they are in the United States. As of January 30, 2003, the issue of a

SEVIS Form I-20 became mandatory. As of that date all foreign students must present a Form I-20 issued through SEVIS to be admitted to the United States. The Office of Admissions is required to report and process any changes to the student record in SEVIS including changes in name, address, enrollment status, travel, I-20 extension, transfer, employment authorization, reinstatement, etc.

SEVIS ID Number: This refers to a 10-digit number preceded by the letter “N” on your SEVIS I-20 [located on the first page, in the top right corner above the barcode (i.e.: N0123456789)]. The SEVIS ID number will remain the same on each I-20 you receive, even when you transfer from one school to another. Please memorize this number or keep it in place you can refer to at any time, in case your International Student Advisor or a government official asks you for the number.

SEVIS I-20 Certificate of Eligibility: To obtain an F-1 nonimmigrant visa you will need to apply at a U.S. Embassy or consulate overseas (or in any case that you need to file a Form I-539: refer to **Form I-539** below). You will first complete a visa application and pay a fee. Then you will need to present a letter of admission along with all necessary documents; a valid passport, health report, proof of financial support, proof of English proficiency and a certificate of eligibility (Form I-20) issued by the Admissions Office at BCCC. The officer issuing the visa at the consulate will put a visa stamp in your passport if he or she believes you meet the necessary requirements.

Before the Office of Admissions can issue a certificate of eligibility (Form I-20) we must have on file a copy of your admission application, some personal information about any family members that will be accompanying you, your current mailing address and proof of adequate funding (affidavit of support). Proof of funding consists of funds equal or greater than the estimated amount of tuition, cost of living, and other miscellaneous fees. This funding may be from personal or family funds, U.S. or home country government funds or programs, your employer, a sponsoring agency organization, or other guarantors. Documentation must be in the form of a dollar amount and specific letter of sponsorship (if not your own funds) and current, original statements from a bank officer certifying the current and average balance in U.S. dollars of at least a year’s expenses. Students are not allowed to sponsor other students. The Admissions Office issues the I-20 for F-1 visa students.

An I-20 documents that you are in the USA legally and are authorized to attend a particular school as a full-time student. This document should always be kept with your passport and in your possession. You do not surrender it, even if you are traveling out of the USA. If the SEVIS I-20 is to expire before you have completed your studies, it must be updated 30 days prior to expiration.

Do not confuse your visa with your SEVIS I-20; they are different documents and serve different purposes. The visa which the US Embassy or Consulate places in your passport allows you **to apply for admission** to the USA at port of entry. Your SEVIS I-20 allows you to **enter and stay** in the USA as a student for a specified period.

Read this entire handbook to give a better understanding of your F-1 visa status.

USCIS: The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (<http://www.uscis.gov>) is one branch of the Department of Homeland Security. They interpret immigration regulations and laws. They approve certain types of employment authorization, requests for change of visa status, and requests to reinstate visa status.

USICE: The United States Immigration and Custom Enforcement (<http://www.usice.gov>) is one branch of the Department of Homeland Security. They maintain the SEVIS database (the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) “to track and monitor schools and programs, students, exchange visitors and their dependents throughout the duration of approved participation within the U.S. education system.” The I-901 SEVIS fee is paid to them to offset the cost of maintaining SEVIS, which contains over 2 million student records. They have arrest powers and control the borders of the USA.

Visa: A USA visa is affixed in one’s passport issued by a consulate abroad which will facilitate entry or re-entry into the USA if presented at the point of entry along with any necessary visa documents (such as an I-20). **It does not tell your current visa status.** It usually contains your picture, name, and seal of the USA. One cannot obtain a USA visa within the USA. It is generally valid for one or multiple entries and usually has an expiration date (which may or may not correspond to your authorized period of stay). One’s nonimmigrant visa stamp may expire while in the USA with no consequences if the person’s visa status is still valid. If you leave the USA and want to re-enter, care should be taken to find out whether the visa stamp in the passport is still valid. Upon re-entry to the US, USICE officials will check your documents. They will refuse you entry if the visa in your passport does not match your documents or is otherwise invalid or expired. For example, if you entered the USA on a visa other than the F1 visa and want to return to the USA on an F1 visa, you will need to apply for the F1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate (outside the USA). Nonimmigrants already in the USA may apply for a change to another nonimmigrant status if they desire and are eligible (consult with Office of Admissions for details). A spouse and/or unmarried children under 21 years may enter in (or change to) dependent status with appropriate visa and affidavit with additional support.

According to the US Department of State:

A visa allows you to travel to the United States as far as the port of entry (airport or land border crossing) and ask the immigration officer to allow you to enter the country. Only the immigration officer has the authority to permit you to enter the United States. He or she decides how long you can stay for any particular visit. Immigration matters are the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

There are two categories of U.S. visas: immigrant and nonimmigrant.

Immigrant visas are for people who intend to live permanently in the U.S.

Nonimmigrant visas are for people with permanent residence outside the U.S. but who wish to be in the U.S. on a temporary basis – for tourism, medical treatment, business, temporary work or study.

(Emphasis added. Excerpted from: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/whatis/index.html>)

Canadian citizens should refer to the U.S. Department of State's website, particularly the pages maintained by the U.S. Embassy in Canada, for U.S. entry requirements: http://www.amcits.com/student_exchange_visa_usa.asp

EXTENSION OF STAY

F-1 students are generally admitted to the United States for "duration of status" (D/S) as noted on their Form I-94, that is, the time needed to complete an educational program.

However, recent revisions in the USCIS law require that students extend their stay no later than 30 days before the expiration date on the SEVIS I-20. An F-1 student is permitted to stay in the USA provided that the student is in good standing with USCIS. To be granted an extension of your I-20 at BCCC, you will need to fill out a Request for I-20 Extension form, available through any International Student Advisor. You will need to plan to meet with your academic advisor to complete this form, and state how many more semesters you need to complete your program and list the reason(s) why you did not finish in time. **You will also need to prove your sponsor is willing and able to continue to sponsor you**, providing new financial documentation as described in the Twelve-Month Budget (found at www.bccc.edu/international). Since this process can take some time, it is recommended you start this process at the **beginning of your last semester** according to your program end date on your Form I-20.

If student is unable to complete their program in the specified time a request of extension of stay must be submitted to Office of Admissions. A new SEVIS I-20 will be issued.

Note: Make an appointment with your International Student Advisor to review the specifics.

CREDITS AND GRADES

At BCCC, a full-time course load is 12 or more credit hours per semester, or 4 -5 courses. This means that you will be in the classroom between 12 and 15 hours each week, or more if you take courses requiring labs. The professor uses numeric or letter grades to evaluate academic performance in each course. At the end of the semester, you will receive a number of credits corresponding to the courses you have successfully completed. Your credit hours are multiplied by your grades to determine your “grade point average” (GPA). GPAs provide a general indication of your overall academic performance.

The grading system used by BCCC to evaluate students’ academic performance is based on a four-point scale. Students are expected to enroll full-time and complete their studies with a C average or better.

Grade Points Undergraduate

Grade	Points	Undergraduate
A	4.0	Excellent
B	3.0	Good
C	2.0	Average
D	1.0	Passing
F	0.0	Failing

Make sure you understand how your professor will determine your grade, and what it takes to get the grade you want. Your attendance in the class (physically for in-person classes and logging in for online/hybrid classes) can determine not only your grade, but whether you are allowed to continue in a class during the semester. Failure to meet the attendance requirements set by the individual professor can cause you to be withdrawn from the class, which can cause you to lose your F-1 status.

Also make sure you review and understand how to remain in “Good “Academic Standing. Failure to maintain a certain minimum GPA (based on credits attempted) can cause you to go into Academic Probation.

Students on Academic Dismissal cannot be full-time. F-1 students on Academic Dismissal must leave BCCC. Students on any type of academic probation must be in good communication with their academic advisers to ensure they return to Good Standing as soon as possible (based on GPA and number of credits passed).

Remember: The central responsibility of an F-1 student is to be enrolled full-time in an authorized academic program, and to make academic progress toward that goal.

FOREIGN TRANSCRIPT EVALUATION AGENCIES

If you have completed college credits overseas (outside the United States) and wish to transfer them to Baltimore City Community College, you must have your official college transcript evaluated by one of the following accredited foreign transcript evaluation agencies which are current members of this organization: www.naces.org. The most popular agencies are (*listed in alphabetical order*):

Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.

Website: <http://www.ece.org>

World Education Services, Inc.

Website: <http://www.wes.org>

SpanTran

Website: <https://spantran.com/web/>

Please order a course-by-course evaluation to receive credit for individual courses.

We strongly encourage students to have the evaluation agency store a digital copy, which may require an additional cost. This allows students to retrieve the same report in the future – for use when students transfer to another school, or to present to a potential employer.

Please check the BCCC Admissions website prior to ordering, as the list of approved transcript evaluation agencies does change over time.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT FILES

To maintain certain records required by law and to provide informed advice, the Admissions Office keeps personal files on all F-1 students at BCCC. Among the contents of these files are admissions, immigration, and employment information.

Please note that according to both federal law, the “Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974”, (FERPA) and Maryland State Law, your file is confidential. An international student may, of course, have access to his or her own file upon advance written request. The College in most cases has up to 45 days to comply with your written request. Access to your academic file by others is allowed by law in certain circumstances. For example, departments may have access to file data if the information is directly linked to the fulfillment of their administrative or program responsibilities. Representatives of law enforcement or the Department of Homeland Security may also request access to your academic records. For the protection of the students, the Admissions Office monitors access to the files.

FERPA does allow the release of “directory” information, which includes student name, address, telephone number, major field of study, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and most recent educational institutions attended.

Your written authorization with signature must be submitted before the files can be released.

If you want someone to conduct school business on your behalf, make sure you consult the department in question to find out its procedure to designate someone as your representative.

PAYING FOR COLLEGE -For more info about all your payment options, check www.bccc.edu/paymentoptions

IMPORTANT: first-time students will need to pay their bill immediately, and then again every March/April and October/November to register for upcoming semesters. International students are strongly encouraged to register early to guarantee availability for all required classes. It also provides students the best choices of classes at the most suitable times and days possible.

Funds Transfer - Baltimore City Community College has partnered with FlyWire to provide an easy and secure method of sending international payments. You can now have friends and family send payments through FlyWire at www.flywire.com . FlyWire allows you to:

- Save on bank fees and exchange rates in over 48 currencies
- Pay from any country and any bank
- Receive multilingual customer support
- Track your payments from start to finish

Be sure to start the wiring of funds with sufficient time in advance of when your payment is due (3 business days prior to the payment due is recommended).

Deferred Payments – The Student Accounting Office has a link on the Student Portal, “Nelnet”, which will guide you in setting up a payment plan. You can use it for tuition & fees, and books. Students are assessed a fee to enter into this payment plan. If you set up the payment plan early, you can get the plan started with no deposit, and spread your payments over many months. If you start your plan late, you will have to pay 50% of your bill the day you set up the plan and will have fewer months to spread out your remaining credits.

The number of monthly payments depends on the date of registration. If you have questions, you can send an email to: studentaccounting@bccc.edu.

SCHOOL TRANSFER

You are eligible to transfer to any other school if you are enrolled full-time at the school you were last authorized to attend during the semester immediately preceding the transfer or last preceding a vacation period. Be sure the school you wish to transfer to is authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to issue the Form I-20. If it is not, you cannot go there and maintain your F-1 status.

You must follow USCIS procedures if you want to change schools in the middle of a degree program or to begin a new degree program.

To complete a transfer of school, you must:

1. Notify the International Student Advisor at your former school of your intention to transfer, and request SEVIS release of your I-20 record to the new school. There may be a "transfer-out" form to be completed by the transfer-out school, and/or a "transfer-in/transfer eligibility" form to complete for the transfer-in school.
2. You must have your SEVIS record released to the new school no later than 15 days before the of beginning attendance at the new school, and no later than the day before your next classes start at your old school, or 60 days after your graduation date, or 60 days after your OPT ends.
3. Obtain a new SEVIS I-20 for your new school and read and sign it.

This notification procedure applies to students who are **in status** and were pursuing a full course of study the previous semester at their former school. If you are out-of-status, you can still transfer, but you must also apply to USCIS for reinstatement of student status, after an international student advisor at your new school issues you a new Form I-20 recommending the reinstatement. (See section on "Reinstatement" on p.29). You may attend classes at the new school while USCIS is deciding on your application. Some schools do not accept transfer students needing reinstatement.

Before transferring to another school, you must request BCCC release your SEVIS record. You must make this request in writing. Ask one of the BCCC International Student Advisors for the SEVIS Record Transfer Out Request Form. You will need to complete that form and submit it to a BCCC International Student Advisor along with the admission letter from your new school. Incomplete forms will not be processed. You must write on the form the new school's SEVIS School Code. You should ask for that code from your new school's International Student Admission officer or DSO/International Student Advisor. If you drop off your form outside of an appointment, it can take several days to process, so please plan accordingly.

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION

Employment means the rendering of services on either a part-time or full-time basis for compensation (financial or otherwise), including self-employment. An F-1 student may accept employment or engage in business only under certain conditions and in some cases, only after obtaining authorization from USCIS. After your first year in F-1 student status, you may apply for employment authorization using Form I-765 based on financial needs arising after receiving student status or need to obtain practical training.

Students who work off-campus without a work permit are in violation of their nonimmigrant status. USCIS will not reinstate your legal F-1 status if you are found to be working without authorization. You will be asked to leave the United States. There are no exceptions to the rule and no appeal process.

There are four categories of employment authorization for F-1 students:

1. **ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT:** An F-1 student may accept employment at the school he/she is authorized to attend without prior approval from USCIS; however, students must seek approval from the International Student Advisor. Employment will be authorized if the student is in good academic standing and is enrolled in a full course of study. On-campus employment is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session. You may work full-time during vacation periods. The International Student Advisor must endorse your Form I-20. BCCC limits campus employment to students who have successfully completed at least one full time semester on F-1 status.

2. **EMPLOYMENT FOR ECONOMIC HARDSHIP:** This type of employment authorization allows F-1 students to work if their financial situation has changed since arrival in the United States. Students must first seek on-campus employment, if available. **If the student is unsuccessful** then the student must prove and justify in writing financial need (such as the removal of financial support by sponsor, excessive medical bills, or another unforeseen economic crisis experienced by the sponsor or student since the student began his/her most recent program), and submit the following documents to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service: **Forms I-20 & I-765, two current passport-style photographs, and written justification of financial need with supporting evidence. (Fee required)**

Before you submit your documents to USCIS, you must include a new Form I-20 issued by your International Student Advisor, recommending this employment authorization. Therefore, you must meet with the International Student Advisor and submit all documents to him/her the international student advisor for review.

3. **PRACTICAL TRAINING:** Is a type of employment authorization that allows F-1 students to work off-campus in a job that is related to their major and not available in their home country. To qualify, you must have been pursuing a full course of study in a legal nonimmigrant status during the nine-month period immediately preceding the time of application for practical training.

Curricular Practical Training-CPT: is a type of pre-completion Practical Training. It is called "curricular" because it is related to your curriculum. Only those students who have registered for and been approved by their department to do an internship or clinical can participate in CPT. **All training experience must be an integral part of an established curriculum.** Training may be for academic credit or not-for-credit. Curricular Practical Training done while school is in session will be limited to 20 hours a week, during the semester the student is registered for the internship class. The International Student Advisor authorizes the beginning and ending dates of curricular practical training for a specific company or organization. CPT is approved by the International Student Advisor and certified in SEVIS.

Optional Practical Training -OPT (after graduation): BCCC only authorizes post-completion OPT. Application for post-completion practical training must be submitted no later than 60 days past your program end date listed on your I-20. If you graduate before the program end date listed on your I-20, then the deadline is 60 days after your last class (you should have consulted with the DSO/International Student Advisor before you graduated, to adjust the program end date on your I-20). However, it is highly recommended that you submit your application for OPT 90 days prior to the end of classes. (If you submit your application before these 90 days, USCIS will keep your money and deny your request.) The end date of the OPT cannot extend beyond 14 months past your program end date. A student may request permission for OPT from the International Student Advisor by submitting a recommendation letter from the Department Chair of his/her major accompanied by Form I-765. In making a recommendation for OPT, the International Student Advisor must certify in SEVIS that the proposed employment is directly related to the student's major area of study and commensurate with the student's educational level and issue a new Form I-20 to show Optional Practical Training is recommended. The student submits this Form I-20 to with the proper fee and the following documentation to the USCIS processing center. **Check <http://www.uscis.gov> for the current version of the Form I-765, filing fee, mailing address, and directions.** USCIS will adjudicate the application and issue an EAD for a maximum of 12 months. The EAD will not take effect before the student completes the course of study and will terminate no later than 14 months from the date of graduation.

OPT does not require that you find an employer before it is granted, but it is highly recommended. You cannot begin your employment (paid or volunteer) before the start date on the EAD card. You should not be unemployed for more than 3 months of any authorized OPT period. You are required to present to the DSO/International Student Advisor a letter on company letterhead from each employer. It should provide the name of the company, the address where you will work, your job title, whether it is part-time or

full-time, and your start date (end date, too, if that is known). As with CPT, the nature of your OPT employment should be clearly related to your degree program, volunteer work included. (**Fee required**)

Once you are approved for OPT, ICE will send you an email to the email address in your SEVIS record, asking you to activate your SEVP Portal account. You will be expected to update your address, email, and employment information on this Portal account, and/or with your DSO/PDSO. For more information about your SEVP Portal account, please refer to this website:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevp-portal-help>

If you want to travel between graduation and the end of your OPT, please discuss your options with your International student advisor.

***Note: USCIS forms and regulations are available at the USCIS website:

<http://www.uscis.gov>

The Social Security Administration has a publication that explains employment and Social Security Numbers, called "International Students and Social Security Numbers" -

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10181.pdf>

More links for information about employment while on F-1 visa:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/working-in-the-united-states>

<https://www.ice.gov/sevis/employment#tab0>

Contact an International Student Advisor for more information.

REINSTATEMENT

Reinstatement is a benefit granted at the discretion of the USCIS. An F-1 student who has overstayed his/her authorized period of stay or who has otherwise failed to maintain F-1 student status may be reinstated to lawful F-1 status only if the student:

- 1) is currently pursuing, or intends to pursue, a full course of study at a school that has issued the student a Form I-20; and
- 2) has not been employed without authorization; and
- 3) has established that failure to maintain student status was due to circumstances beyond his/her control or that failure to receive reinstatement would result in "extreme hardship"; and
- 4) is not deportable for any reason other than overstaying or failing to maintain status.

Application for reinstatement is made on Form I-539. You must prepare a letter explaining why you are out-of-status and convince USCIS to reinstate your F-1 status. Supporting documents are important.

Before you submit your documents to USCIS, you must include a new Form I-20 issued by your International Student Advisor. The International Student Advisor can assist you with the application process. You must include the proper fee when submitting your Form I-539 to USCIS. **You must file Form I-539 online.**

Note: To remain in the USA after falling out-of-status can lead to your arrest by USICE. If you are questioned by any U.S. law enforcement agency, due to suspected criminal activity you committed or witnessed, and you are found to be out-of-status with no reinstatement pending, you can be imprisoned, expelled from the USA, or denied re-entry to the USA.

The longer you stay in the USA after falling out of status, the longer you accrue "unauthorized presence". The longer that unauthorized presence, the longer you will be banned from the USA.

Due to the serious nature of the reinstatement process, very student will seek legal help. One source for legal advice is AILA, which has a free referral directory of its member immigrant lawyers.

***Note: Immigration procedures and regulations are available at these U.S. government websites:

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-539>

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2016/07/how-should-an-f-or-m-student-file-for-reinstatement>

Contact an International Student Advisor for more information.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Anytime you travel outside the United States (including Canada and Mexico) you must have your SEVIS I-20 signed by the International Student Advisor before you leave the USA. This signature is valid for one year, except for students on OPT. For students on OPT, this travel signature is only valid for 6 months. F-1 students who wish to visit their country of citizenship or permanent residence generally will be allowed to enter that country if they hold a valid passport or other travel document issued by that country.

We strongly recommend you schedule an appointment to meet with an International Student Advisor before purchasing your travel tickets, and no less than two weeks prior to any travel outside the USA.

You should plan to bring with you on your trip at least:

- An unexpired passport and any passport that contains your F-1 visa. Your passport may need to be renewed at your consulate in Washington, DC **before** you travel.
- A newly issued “travel” I-20 & travel letter (don’t just stop by to have I-20 signed)
- Copies of all forms I-20 **ever** issued to you (and your dependents, if they are also traveling)
- Official copies of transcripts (sealed, unopened) from all colleges attended, including BCCC. Remember that BCCC transcripts only reflect courses you have completed. You may need to designate someone to retrieve your official transcript once grades have been recorded for your last semester (discuss this with a staff member in Registration before you leave). If you took ESL classes at BCCC, make sure to order a transcript which reports credit and non-credit classes. Order an additional copy so you can examine it before you leave.
- Proof that you have pre-registered for the next semester.
- Proof of your sponsor’s current ability to support you through the end of your program (recent bank statements, currency conversions, affidavit of support)

For travel to any country other than the home country, you must check with the Embassy of the country you would like to visit to inquire about specific entry procedures. For a list of Foreign Consular Offices in the United States, refer to the US Department of State’s website: <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco/>

If you entered the USA on a visitor’s or other visa and changed your status to F-1 student visa while in the USA, you must apply to obtain an F-1 entry visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate before returning to the USA. In addition to the list above, bring proof that you changed your status to F-1 visa (Notice of Action, I-20 with approval stamp, I-94) and updated financial support documents from your sponsor(s) to the visa appointment. It is highly recommended that you travel with unopened, official transcripts issued you by all institutions you have attended while on your F-1 visa.

For a list of USA Consulates and Embassies around the world, refer to the US Department of State’s website: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.

When you return, you must meet with a DSO and bring your passport and I-94 (www.cbp.gov/i94)

DEPENDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

If you have an F-1 visa, you can apply for your spouse and/or children to obtain an F-2 visa. F-2 visa holders are dependent entirely on your status. If you are out-of-status, they are out-of-status. If you apply for extension of stay or change nonimmigrant status, their Forms I-94 must be included in your application to USCIS.

F-2 dependents cannot work in the United States **under any circumstance**.

If you wish to bring your family member(s) to the United States, you must first submit additional Affidavit of Support documents to the International Student Advisor and complete the BCCC International Student Dependent (F-2 Visa) Request Form (which you can find in the International Students Application). A sponsor other than yourself must assume full financial responsibility for the living expenses of your dependents while they are in the USA.

Since 2015, dependents on F-2 visa can study part-time. Those under 18 years old should study fulltime in a K-12 educational facility.

***Note: USCIS forms and regulations are available at the USCIS website:

<http://www.uscis.gov>

Contact an International Student Advisor for more information.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance is not required at Baltimore City Community College. But as an international student, we strongly suggest that you maintain health insurance.

We have now included the following language on our Forms I-20:

Health insurance is optional but highly recommended and factored into expected living expenses.

Depending on your health care needs, and those of your family, health care can become a significant expense, even with health insurance. Without health insurance, accidents or severe medical issues can become financially debilitating.

There are some health services available to Baltimore City residents at reduced cost: <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/programs/health-clinics-services>

Here is the link for Baltimore County residents:

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/health/coalition/index.html>

If your immigration status in the USA changes, or someone in your family, please review this information from Healthcare.gov:

<https://www.healthcare.gov/immigrants/immigration-status/>

The Maryland Health Connection was established by the State of Maryland to help residents of Maryland find healthcare: <https://www.marylandhealthconnection.gov/>

Most plans built specifically for F-1 visa students are private companies. We do not endorse any of these companies. Sometimes the companies send us information, which we pass along to you for comparison purposes only:

When seeking any insurance, there are key questions to ask, including but not limited to:

- 1) Does the company cover students in Maryland who have an F-1 visa and their dependents? Will the coverage be affected if the student moves to another state in the USA?
- 2) Does the company allow students to join as individual members? (BCCC does not have a group rate, and does not require health insurance)
- 3) Does the insurance company have a variety of plans available for students who are eligible based on questions 1 & 2 above? What do those plans cover?
 - a. Can you pick your own doctor?
 - b. Does your primary doctor have to refer you to a specialist, or can you visit a specialist on your own?
 - c. Does the plan restrict your choices to a list of pre-approved doctors, specialists, or hospitals?
 - d. What is your co-pay (the amount due at the time of the office visit, whatever the insurance does not pay)?

- e. Does the coverage pay for repatriation of remains in the cause of death of the student or dependents while they are in the USA?

Here are websites for some, not all, insurance companies (*in alphabetical order*) who operate in Maryland, or recently did, offering students on F-1 visa insurance (*again, we do not endorse any of these companies – please ask many questions to determine which might be best for you and your family*):

<https://www.culturalinsurance.com/> -

<https://www.culturalinsurance.com/students/coming-to-u.s.asp>

<http://www.ejsmith.com/>

<https://www.imglobal.com/international-student-health-insurance> -

<https://www.imglobal.com/img-insurance-plans>

<https://www.inext.com/>

<https://www.insubuy.com/international-student-insurance/>

<https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/> -

<https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/student-health-insurance/>

<https://intlstudent.org/> - General international student information, insurance terminology, and insurance plans

<https://www.isoa.org/> - How to choose the right plan: <https://www.isoa.org/ChoosePlan>

<https://www.studenthealthusa.com/> (Compass)

<http://www.visitinsurance.com/> - Brochure: <https://fliphtml5.com/bmahg/aedr/>

Contact an International Student Advisor for more information.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

A Social Security Number (SSN) can only be assigned to an F-1 visa student by the Social Security Administration. Almost always it requires the student prove proper employment authorization. Please refer to this publication by the Department of Homeland Security about this issue:

http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/F_M_SSA_factsheet_sept07.pdf

In all cases, before you start work at any employer, paid or unpaid, you must meet with an international student advisor to seek the proper employment authorization (refer to the section above entitled **Employment Authorization**).

An SSN is often requested of individuals seeking to open a bank account, apply for a driver's license, register a motor vehicle or complete a tax form. You **do not need** an SSN to open a bank account (or for the other activities mentioned) even if a number is requested and expected of a U.S. citizen.

As of October 1997, the Social Security Administration has implemented the following policy. Students on nonimmigrant F-1 visas are not permitted to apply for social security numbers, unless the following criteria have been met.

- 1) Student has been **approved for on-campus employment**
- 2) Student has been **approved for off-campus employment** for practical training or,
- 3) Student has been **approved for economic hardship or OPT**, (employment authorization card required).

Delays in Obtaining Social Security Numbers

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has implemented a new procedure requiring verification of all nonimmigrant immigration documents through the USCIS database before issuing social security numbers. This verification process can take up to 2 weeks or more if the applicant recently entered the USA.

Students must submit a letter from the International Student Advisor to the Social Security Administration verifying that one of the above criteria has been met. There are NO EXCEPTIONS. As a substitute for a Social Security Number, you may use an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), which can be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (see TAX information).

The Social Security Administration publishes several useful guides, including SSA Publication No. 05-10181, *International Students And Social Security Numbers* (<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10181.html>).

Note: If you lose your Social Security Card, the Social Security Administration will demand proof that you are currently authorized to work.

TAX INFORMATION

All F-1 visa holders who were physically in the United States for one year, including those who did not work must file **Form 8843, Statement for Exempt Individuals with the IRS**. Student who have worked in the USA must file a federal income tax return for non-residents **1040 NR** or **1040 NR EZ** with **the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Treasury** by April 15 each year while in the USA. **Students who worked in the USA must also file a State Income Tax return form 505 or 505NR.**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that nonimmigrants with social security numbers indicate their SSN on the 1040NR tax return. Nonimmigrants without SSN must apply to the IRS for an **Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)** for themselves and their dependents to complete the 1040NR tax return. If you do not have a SSN and will not file taxes, but will be claimed as a dependent by someone else you must also apply to the IRS for an ITIN.

IRS Documents

Foreign Students guide: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/students/students-page-foreign-students> (if link does not work, search terms "Foreign Students" on www.irs.gov)

519: US Tax Guide for Aliens an IRS publication. The guide is helpful when preparing a nonresident tax return.

1040NR: US Non-resident Alien Income Tax Return. Many nonresidents complete the longer version of the return.

1040NR-EZ: US Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresidents Aliens with No Dependents. This is a simple version of the 1040NR. Most F-1 students who are nonresidents may file the 1040NR-EZ.

W-2: Wage and Tax Statement. A form issued annually by employers (normally during the month of January). Copies of the W-2 must be filed with federal and state tax returns.

W-7: Application for IRS Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

Call 1-800-829-3676 to request the 1040 NR or 1040 NR EZ income tax form or the Taxpayer Identification Number Application or refer to the Internal Revenue Service's website: <http://www.irs.gov>.

Free tax software is available from the IRS: <https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free>

Free tax assistance and financial literacy resources are available through the Maryland CASH Campaign: <http://cashmd.org/individuals-and-families/>, 410-528-8006; and the FREE Maryland Money Helpline 877-355-1763.

Local CASH Campaign locations are listed here: <http://cashmd.org/tax-partners/>

MARYLAND DRIVER'S LICENSE or MARYLAND STATE IDENTIFICATION CARD

HOW TO APPLY

The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration requires certain documents as Source of Proof when applying for a driver's license. You must bring original documents or copies certified by the issuing agency. Photocopies and documents with alterations or erasures will not be accepted. Effective July 1, 2004 all international students applying for a Maryland Driver's License or Maryland Identification card may only apply at one of the following MVA offices: Gaithersburg, Glen Burnie, Frederick, Beltsville, Bel Air, Waldorf, Salisbury.

Please refer to an MVA office or its website for the most updated list of acceptable documents:

<http://www.marylandmva.com/>

The MVA has published a website specifically for International Applicants:

<http://www.mva.maryland.gov/Driver-Services/Apply/international.htm>

Please follow the directions on the website listed above, and be sure to make an appointment using the S.A.V.E. system before attempting to visit the MVA. If you visit the MVA without first setting a S.A.V.E. appointment, you may not get complete information. Only a few MVA employees at each location have been trained fully to work with international applicants. This is why you should first book an appointment with a properly trained MVA employee, using the S.A.V.E. system.

More information about the nationwide SAVE system: <https://www.uscis.gov/save>

If you do not have a Social Security Card, you must meet with the International Student Advisor to receive further instructions how to apply for your Maryland Driver's License or Maryland State Identification card.

For more Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration Information, call the MVA Customer Service Center 1-800-638-8347 or refer to the MVA website:

<http://www.marylandmva.com/>

Immigration and Customs Enforcement also has an information sheet on this issue:

http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/dmv_factsheet.pdf

BANK ACCOUNT

How to open a Checking or Savings Account

Banks offer many different financial services. You may wish to compare the services and cost of several banks before choosing one at which to open an account. To open a Bank Account in Maryland **without a social security card** the following documents may be required:

- Valid passport
- Maryland Driver's license or Maryland Identification Card
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) see TAX information
- Proof of Residents in the United States
- Verification of School Enrollment
- Funds you wish to deposit

HOUSING

Most students enter into agreements with friends, family, or landlords. It is important, even with friends and family, to enter into written agreements about the terms of your stay- when your payment is due, when is it considered late, what is the late fee, how long does either party have to void the agreement, how does the agreement get extended, is there a deposit, is that deposit refundable, etc. Sometimes even during the rental application process you may experience discrimination.

Here are some resources to help you find rental properties, know your rights, and get help if you need to fight issues of discrimination or violations of your rights (in alphabetical order):

2-1-1 Maryland

<https://211md.org/tenant-rights>

Phone: 211 (just dial “211” from a phone and ask for tenants’ rights)

Baltimore (City) Rent Court Help

<https://www.courts.state.md.us/sites/default/files/import/legalhelp/pdfs/rentcourtbaltimore.pdf>

CASA

<https://wearecasa.org/legal-maryland/>

1-866-765-2272

Maryland Attorney General’s Office, Consumer Protection Division

<http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/CPD/landlords.aspx>

(410) 576-6500

Maryland Courts Self-Help Center

<https://www.courts.state.md.us/legalhelp/districtctselfhelpctr>

<https://mdcourts.gov/video/selfhelp/rent-court-tenants>

(410) 260-1392

Maryland Legal Aid

<https://www.mdlab.org/>

People’s Law Library of Maryland

<https://www.peoples-law.org/baltimore-city-rental-and-housing-laws>

<https://www.peoples-law.org/get-help>

<https://www.peoples-law.org/directory?combine=&county=All&category=4663>

<https://www.peoples-law.org/index.php/calendar>

Public Justice Center

http://www.publicjustice.org/en/legal_help/housing/

(410) 625-9409

DEPARTURE INFORMATION

The following checklist contains useful information to anticipate some of the questions you may have when leaving Maryland.

Housing

Notice of Vacating: Upon vacating the premises, the resident is responsible for leaving the place in the same condition it was at the beginning of occupancy, while allowing for normal wear. The apartment should be ready for the next resident. Most apartments require at least 30 days written notice prior to vacating the premises. If you paid a security deposit, don't forget to ask if all or part should be refunded to you. Be aware of the policies governing breakage of a lease.

Utilities: All utility companies should be called several days before leaving. If water or gas is not included in the rent, it is necessary to contact each company individually. These companies will need a forwarding address.

Telephone: Disconnect and pay all bills. Phone service companies often need at least 2 days' notice prior to departure.

Post Office: Notify the Post Office of change of address by completing the form they provide for this purpose. Additional information concerning the overseas mailing address for books and printed matter is available at the Office of Admissions. Specific questions should be directed to the Main Post Office located at 900 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21233 (410 347-4452).

Banks: Make arrangements with your bank to close out bank accounts, allowing sufficient time for all checks to be processed. If you are planning to travel in the USA, it may be advisable to maintain the accounts for a period of time and arrange to close them by mail.

Automobiles: If you plan to sell your automobile before you depart, allow sufficient for inspection and transfer of the title. You must notify your insurance company of your plans.

Immigration: Notify the Office of Admissions of your departure at least two weeks prior to leaving the Maryland area, so that we can alert the Department of Homeland Security. This can help determine if you are ever allowed to return to the USA.

Selling Unwanted Goods: You may have accumulated possessions that you will not be able to take with you. Yard sales and garage sales are very popular and are a very good way to get rid of unwanted items. You can advertise your sales on community bulletin boards and the local newspaper. Left over items can be donated to the Salvation Army or Goodwill Industries.

We hope you have found this handbook helpful in getting oriented to BCCC and to Maryland. Chambers of Commerce in all cities and towns have publications that you can pick up or have them mailed to you for more newcomer information.

REFERENCES

NAFSA Adviser's Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars, NAFSA: Association of International Educators: <http://www.nafsa.org>

FYI: Student memberships to NAFSA are described here:

<https://www.nafsa.org/about/membership>

NAFSA International Student Handbook; a Guide to University Study in the USA.
Association of International Educators

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): <https://www.uscis.gov>

United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP): <https://www.cbp.gov/>

United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE) web page:
<https://www.ice.gov>.

Department of Homeland Security – Study in the States:
<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students>

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Emergency Information

Police, Fire and Ambulance	911
Poison Control Center	410-706-7701
Temporary Housing/Shelters	410-361-4663
American Red Cross	410-358-8450

General Information – City of Baltimore

410- 396-3835

<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/answers>

Health Services

Baltimore City Health Department 410-396-9534

Coppin State University Nursing Center 410-225-2047
2553 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Bon Secours Family Care Center 410-362-3079
1940 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD

Mondawmin Medical Center 410-383-7030
1008 Mondawmin Mall
Baltimore, MD

Druid Family Health Center 410-396-1076
1515 West North Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Planned Parenthood 410-576-1414
www.plannedparenthood.org/maryland/

McCulloh Health Center 410-669-0990
501 Dolphin Street
Baltimore, MD

Wabash Medical Center 410-358-4400
5710 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities
<https://health.maryland.gov/mhhd/Pages/home.aspx>

Hospitals

Bon Secours Hospital 2000 W. Baltimore Street Baltimore, MD	410-362-3000
Good Samaritan Hospital 5601 Loch Raven Blvd Baltimore, MD	410-532-8000
Kernan Hospital 2200 Kernan Drive Baltimore, MD	410-448-2500
Sinai Hospital 2401 W. Belvedere Ave Baltimore, MD	410-601-9000
Union Memorial Hospital 201 E. University Parkway Baltimore, MD	410-554-2000
University of Maryland Medicine 22 S. Greene Street Baltimore, MD	410-328-8667 or 1-800-492-5538

Pharmacies

Rite Aid 3804 Liberty Heights Ave (by Garrison Ave) 2043 Mondawmin Mall Baltimore, MD	1-800-Rite-AID 410-367-5151 410-523-6315
CVS 5501 Park Heights Avenue 6828 Reisterstown Road 2509-2523 Pennsylvania Avenue Baltimore, MD	410-367-7802 410-764-3445 410-225-2091

Local Government Agencies

City of Baltimore website:

<https://www.baltimorecity.gov/>

List of City services:

<http://residents.baltimorecity.gov/http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/services/>

Baltimore County website:

<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/>

Baltimore City Department of Education	410-396-8700
Baltimore City Health Department	410-396-9534
Department of Social Services	410-361-4600
Baltimore City Temporary Housing/Shelters	410-361-4663
Medical Assistance	410-361-4728
Aid to Families with Children	410-361-4512
Housing Authority of Baltimore City	410-396-4271
Baltimore City WIC Program Places of Worship	410-396-9427
Greater Baltimore Temple 2909 Bloom Road, PO Box 690 Finksburg, MD 21048 http://www.baltimoretemple.org	410-861-8387
Vikatadamshtri Buddhist Center 2937 N. Charles St. Baltimore, MD 21218 http://www.meditationinmaryland.org/	410-243-3837
Bethel AME Church 1300 Druid Hill Avenue Baltimore, MD http://www.bethel1.org/	410-532-4273

Anointed House of Prayer (Apostolic) 2037 E. North Avenue Baltimore, MD	410-342-0700
Browns Memorial Baptist Church 3215 W. Belvedere Avenue Baltimore, MD	410-542-5700
Empowerment Temple AME 4217-4221 Primrose Avenue Baltimore, MD 21215 http://www.empowermenttemple.org/	410-542-1231
Heritage United Church 3106 Liberty Heights Ave	410-542-1204
St. Gabriel Catholic Church 6950 Dogwood Road Woodlawn, MD	410-944-2106
All Saints Church 4408 Liberty Heights Ave Baltimore, MD	410-542-0445
Beth Tfiloh Synagogue http://www.bethfiloh.com	410.486.1900
Ner Tamid Greenspring Valley Synagogue 6214 Pimlico Road Baltimore, MD 21209 http://www.mynertamid.com	410-358-6500
Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation 2001 Liberty Heights Ave Baltimore, MD 21217	410-523-4375
Shalom Baltimore http://www.shalombaltimore.org/	410-727-4828
Islamic Education and Community Development 3723 Gwynn Oak Ave Baltimore, MD	410-367-6704

Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam
1406 Garrison Blvd
Baltimore, MD

410-664-2747

Baltimore Masjid
514 Islamic Way
Baltimore, MD

410-728-1363

We welcome additions to this list. Please send an email to your International Student Advisor containing the contact information for the house of worship you would like us to add.

Child Care

BCCC has a child care facility which is available to all students, faculty and staff and the community. The acceptance of applications is based on the first to apply and availability of space for the child's age range. For more information please contact the Clarence Blount Child Development Center at 410-462-7760.

Utilities

Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE)

1-800-685-0123 or
410-685-0123

Verizon Telephone

410-954-6260 English
410-354-6250 Spanish

Transportation

Maryland Mass Transit Administration
(Bus, Metro, Light Rail and MARC train)
<http://www.mtmaryland.com>

410-539-5000 or
1-800-543-9809

Amtrak

<https://www.amtrak.com/home.html>

1-800-USA-RAIL

Bolt Bus

<https://www.boltbus.com/>

Greyhound Bus Lines
www.greyhound.com

1-800-229-9424

Megabus

<https://us.megabus.com/>

BWI/Thurgood Marshall Airport
www.bwiairport.com

1-800-1-FLY-BWI

Post Offices

Main Post Office 410-347-4452
900 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD
www.usps.gov

Gwynn Oak Branch 410-597-8877
6101 Liberty Road
Baltimore, MD

Attractions and Entertainment

1st Mariner Arena 410-347-2020
201 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD
www.baltimorearena.com

American Visionary Art Museum 410-244-1900
800 Key Highway
Baltimore, MD 21230
<http://www.avam.org/>

The Arena Players 410-728-6500
801 McCulloh Street
Baltimore, MD
<http://arenaplayersinc.com/>

Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts 410-752-8632
7 E. Redwood Street
Suite 500
Baltimore, MD 21202
<http://www.bop.org/>

Check out the many ethnic & other festivals:
<http://www.bop.org/index.cfm?page=events>

Center Stage 410-332-0033
700 N. Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD
www.centerstage.org

Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum 203 Amity Street Baltimore, MD www.eapoe.org	410-396-7932
Everyman Theatre 1721 N. Charles Street Baltimore, MD http://www.everymantheatre.org/	410-752-2208
Jewish Museum of Maryland 15 Lloyd Street Baltimore, MD www.jewishmuseummd.org	410-732-6400
Maryland Science Center 601 Light Street Baltimore, MD www.mdsci.org	410-685-5225
Maryland Zoo in Baltimore Druid Hill Park Baltimore, MD http://www.marylandzoo.org/	410-366-LION
Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall/ Baltimore Symphony Orchestra 1212 Cathedral Street Baltimore, MD http://www.bsomusic.org/	410-783-8100
Lyric Opera House 140 W. Mount Royal Avenue Baltimore, MD www.lyricoperahouse.com	410-685-5086
National Aquarium 501 E. Pratt Street Baltimore, MD www.aqua.org	410-576-3800
The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum 10 Art Museum Drive Baltimore, MD www.greatblacksinwax.org	410-563-3404
Oriole Park at Camden Yards 333 W. Camden Street Baltimore, MD www.orioles.com	410-685-9800

Pimlico Race Course 410-542-9400
Haywood and Winner Avenue
Baltimore, MD
<https://www.pimlico.com/>

Reginald F. Lewis Museum of 443-263-1800
Maryland African American History & Culture
830 E. Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
<http://www.africanamericanculture.org/>

The Walters Art Museum 410-547-9000
600 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD
www.thewalters.org

Baltimore Area Community Associations

Afropolitan Youth Association
<https://Afropolitanyouth.org>

Baltimore Association of Nepalese in America 410-244-5556
<http://www.banaonline.org/index.php>

Baltimore Jewish Council 410-542-4850
5750 Park Heights Avenue
Suite 329
Baltimore, MD 21215
<http://www.baltjc.org/>

Centro de la Comunidad 410-675-8906
3021 Eastern Ave
Baltimore, Maryland 21224
<http://www.centrodlc.org/>

Esperanza Center 410-522-2668
430 S Broadway
Baltimore, MD 21231

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and 410- 837-5445
Transgender Community Center of
Baltimore and Central Maryland
(GLCCB, or, the Center)
241 W. Chase Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
<http://www.glccb.org/>

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 8 W. 26th Street Baltimore, MD 21218 http://www.naacpbaltimore.org/	410-366-3300
Polish Community Association http://www.polishcommunity.com/	410-563-1800
Prantik: Bengali Association of Baltimore http://www.prantik.org/	
Russian Maryland Cultural Center http://www.mymcc.com/	443-527-4375
YMCA of Central Maryland http://ymaryland.org/	410-728-1600

We welcome additions or corrections to this list. Please send an email to international@bcc.edu containing the correction or contact information for the community organization in question.