Hello and thank you for taking the time to watch this short pre-arrival video that will help you to prepare for your arrival in Washington, DC and George Washington University as an F-1 student.
We are so excited to welcome you to GWU! Located in the heart of the nation’s capital (Washington, DC) the GW urban campus offers you a world of opportunity.
The city offers a variety of museums, events, outdoor spaces, and foods from around the world as well as diverse neighborhoods to explore.
The city also allows each visitor the chance to explore with many opportunities that are free and walkable, such as monuments and memorials on the national mall or any of the famed Smithsonian museums. Within walking distance of GW you are able to explore, for example, the internationally recognized Cherry Blossoms near the Tidal Basin and Jefferson Memorial each Spring, walk along the reflecting pool of the Lincoln Memorial and even walk on the National Mall to one of the world renowned Smithsonian museums.
For those events that are not within walking distance, there is the extensive transportation system called WMATA which has a metro and bus system that can bring you all around the District of Columbia (DC), Maryland, and Virginia (also known as the DMV). GW even has its own metro stop - Foggy Bottom- GWU station.
GW is a welcoming campus proud of our diversity, with centralized spaces to study and hang out, world renowned faculty, and state-of-the-art buildings. You are certain to have an unparalleled academic experience.
Currently, we have over 130 countries represented on our campus.
We are excited for you to join our community and add your unique background and experiences! You are welcome here.
While you are an international student at GW, you will work closely with the International Services Office, also known as the ISO. The ISO has dedicated advisors to assist you through all of your immigration questions and help you maintain your F-1 status throughout your program. We are located in the Marvin Center on the Foggy Bottom campus, two blocks from the GWU-Foggy Bottom Metro station. We are open regular business hours and our contact information is listed here.
Before you arrive, please visit our website to find useful information to help you to prepare for your arrival at GW. Once you arrive on campus, this will be your primary source of information which you can access at any time. For example, you can find visa benefit information, request forms, and also schedule an appointment with your ISO advisor. Take some time before you arrive to become familiar with the website.
Because you are an F-1 student, you are required to check in with the ISO to provide your documents for visa compliance. You are able to begin this required check in process once you obtain your form I-20 by using the ISO international student portal called the ISO GateWay! You will use this portal throughout your academic program at GW so take some time before you arrive to become familiar and if you have questions about it or have difficulty accessing the ISO GateWay, please email us at iso@gwu.edu.
For example, not only will you check-in through the ISO Gateway, but you can also register for your ISO orientation and later submit benefit requests as well as requests to update your immigration record.
To log in after going to [isogateway.gwu.edu](http://isogateway.gwu.edu), click on the the blue log-in button!
You will be brought to your specific profile page where you can see all requests and info about your immigration status, and also submit new requests. Remember, right now your priority is begin your online check in through this portal and until you complete this process your home page may look slightly different.
Let’s talk about maintaining your F-1 immigration status. The ISO has three simple rules to help you remain compliant during your time at GW.

**Maintaining your F-1 Visa Status**

1. Keep your documents safe and valid for the duration of your program.

2. Update the ISO when changes to your program or major life changes occur so we can update your SEVIS record, and maintain full-time enrollment.

3. **If you are uncertain if something is allowed, ASK!** Your ISO advisor is here to help you navigate your immigration status and help!
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Keep your documents safe and valid for the duration of your program. What does it mean to keep your documents safe and valid?
These are the documents you must maintain throughout your program to remain compliant. Please review them for accuracy, and make sure they are not expired. We will discuss them further in depth during your ISO orientation but for now let us introduce them to you. To enter the US you will need to use your passport with your F-1 visa inside, your form I-20 Certificate of Eligibility from GWU. Upon arrival, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol will first stamp your passport as seen here and generate your electronic I-94 entry record.
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Our second rule is to update the ISO when any changes to your program or major life changes occur so we can update the SEVIS record, and also for you to maintain full-time enrollment.
All major changes affecting your F-1 status must be reported in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, also known as SEVIS. Please review the examples given here to understand the types of changes that must be reported. It is the responsibility of you, the student, to report changes to the ISO in a timely manner.

- Governmental database housing information about your specific visa status
- Must be updated within 10 business days with any changes in:
  - Name/Biographic information
  - Address, phone number and email address
  - Current enrollment
  - Employment and/or funding
  - Dependents (Spouse or children under age 21)
- Please check your e-mail regularly for updates regarding your immigration status and all ISO communications
- Information must be accurate for benefit requests (CPT, travel signatures, OPT, etc.)
Throughout your academic program you are required to be enrolled full time as an F-1 student. This means that 12 credits is required for undergraduate students and 9 credits are required for graduate level students. For F-1 students you are able to be enrolled in ONLY 3 credits per semester of online coursework. Please work with your ISO advisor before enrolling in online coursework.
Lastly, always ask if you are uncertain about anything for your visa status! We are here to help you navigate your immigration status so can benefit fully from your time in the United States. We look forward to helping you.

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Lastly, always ask if you are uncertain about anything for your visa status! We are here to help you navigate your immigration status so can benefit fully from your time in the United States. We look forward to helping you.
As an F-1 student there are many other benefits that you may be eligible for during your time here. We will go into further detail about the benefits listed here during your ISO orientation once you arrive.

Other Benefits Available

- Travel Signature
- On-campus employment
- Off-campus Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Post-completion Optional Practical Training
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Authorization to drop below full-time enrollment

All additional benefits are subject to eligibility requirements. Speak with your ISO advisor after you have arrived to GW for more information.
What can the ISO do for you?

- Maintainence of your F-1 SEVIS record
- F-1 immigration advising and benefit processing
- Campus referrals and resources
- GW community information
- Immigration workshops
- Events and cultural programming throughout the semester

In addition to immigration advising, the ISO offers many other services to include campus referrals, resources, events and cultural programming throughout the year. Please check our website and your official GW email for more information.
Now, remember, the ISO is here to support you with all your immigration needs. However, please know that your F-1 visa is your responsibility. If you are uncertain about anything regarding your visa status, speak with your ISO advisor first.

- Check your GW email frequently for immigration updates and communications from the ISO. This is your official U.S. email address.
- Complete your mandatory online check-in as soon as possible.
- Register for the appropriate ISO Orientation session you will attend. Attendance at orientation is mandatory and required by your F-1 visa regulations.

Now, remember, the ISO is here to support you with all your immigration needs. However, please know that your F-1 visa is your responsibility. If you are uncertain about anything regarding your visa status, speak with your ISO advisor first. Please be sure to check your GW email frequently for immigration updates and communications from the ISO. This is your official U.S. email address. Make sure to complete your mandatory online check-in as soon as possible via the ISO Gateway. And register for the appropriate ISO Orientation session you will attend. Attendance at orientation is mandatory and required by your F-1 visa regulations.
Thank you for your attention and time. For all the latest news and events from the ISO, follow us on Twitter and Facebook. We can’t wait to welcome you to campus and to see you at the ISO International Student Orientation.