



International Programs and Services

Dear China 1+2+1 Exchange Visitor Student,

We are glad to welcome you to our Exchange Visitor Program at George Mason University! The Exchange Visitor Program operates under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The purpose of the Program is to provide you with opportunities to participate in educational and cultural programs in the United States and return home to share your experiences, and to encourage Americans to participate in educational and cultural programs in other countries.

Exchange Visitors enter the United States on a J visa. Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) regulates Foreign Relations. Part 62 regulates the Exchange Visitor Program. As a designated sponsor, George Mason University complies with the regulations and compliance administration outlined in 22 CFR Part 62. As a participant of the Exchange Visitor Program, you are expected to comply with 22 CFR Part 62.

Once you have received your Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (DS-2019 Form), please check the dates and biographical information carefully to make certain everything is correct. You are allowed to enter the United States up to 30 days before the program start date listed on your Form DS-2019. You also have a 30-day grace period at the end of the program which allows you to stay up to 30 days in the United States after your program end date.

Once you have arrived in the United States, you must check-in with the Office of International Programs and Services to have your SEVIS record validated. SEVIS validation is a legal requirement. On the 21st day past your start date your SEVIS record will automatically be invalidated, which will significantly complicate your stay at GMU.

Check List

CCIE will work with you to obtain your visa.

Please bring the DS-2019 form and your SEVIS receipt (I-901) and visa fee confirmation page (I-160) to a U.S. Embassy or Consulate when you apply for your J-1 visa along with any additional documents required for your particular consulate. The consular officer will review whether you have sufficient funds to cover expenses. Consular review of financial documentation can range from a very cursory review to a very detailed review of both the form and content of the documentation. The consular officer must be "satisfied" that the funding exists and is sufficient, which means the consular officer has a great deal of discretion in determining whether sufficient financial support exists.

Important Steps

Step 1

Take English placement test (TOEFL, IELTS) in China by June 15 and have official scores sent to George Mason University. Scores must be received by July 15.

Step 2

Send your housing preference to china121@gmu.edu by June 30.

Step 3

Download the app [Blackboard App for Students on your smartphone](#)

Blackboard App for Students is a free mobile and tablet-optimized app for iOS, Android, and Microsoft. This app gives Mason students access to their Blackboard course content on a variety of mobile devices. The first release of Blackboard App includes the ability to access courses, view course content, take tests, participate in discussions, and join Collaborate sessions.

Link: <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/coursetools.cfm?categoryname=Bb%20Mobile>

Step 4

Submit your Mason ID Photo at: <https://orientation.gmu.edu/submit-your-mason-id-photo/>

Step 5

Pay full-year cost via Flywire: <https://flywire.com/school/gmu> by July 31, 2020 (Please make sure to include your G#:).

Step 6

Have your health provider in China complete the Immunization Form and upload the form to online portal: <https://gmu.medicatconnect.com>

To learn about immunization requirements and translation resources, go to Student Health Services website or send an email to immunize@gmu.edu.

Step 7

Visit the OIPS Welcome Desk and Attend Orientation

OIPS Welcome Desk

Once you have arrived in the US, you will need to complete several tasks before your classes begin. If you are not sure how or where to start, please visit the OIPS Welcome Desk on the fourth floor of SUB I between Monday, August 10 and Friday, August 21, 11 am - 4 pm (the OIPS Welcome Desk is closed on Saturdays and Sundays). Our OIPS Welcome Desk Assistant, will help you to find the right resources and answer any questions you may have.

Info Sessions

In August, the OIPS team will host a number of info sessions to help you with your transition. More information can be found here: <https://oips.gmu.edu/welcome/>

Orientation

Date: orientation days are held the week before classes begin. Exact dates will be announced during the Spring 2020 semester for Fall 2020.

Click [here](#) to view the schedule. Exchange students are automatically registered for orientation. If you are unable to attend the orientation due to late arrival, please contact Jonathan Carmona at jcarmon2@gmu.eduThe same as exchange students

Step 8

Complete International Student Check-In

All new international students are required to check in with the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). This is the key step to let Mason know you have arrived. Not doing so could cause problems with a variety of administrative requirements. Bring your DS-2019, Passport, Visa and International Student Check-In Sheet to your Check-In appointment. More information about your Check-In appointment will be sent Summer 2020.

Step 9

Pay Fees

1. Pay health insurance, housing charges and meal plan (if you were assigned housing without a kitchen) by Monday, August 24, 2020, 4:30 pm. GMU's Cashier's Office is located in SUB I, room 1501.

George Mason has partnered with Flywire to streamline the tuition payment process for our international students. Flywire allows students to pay from any country and any bank. They also offer excellent foreign exchange rates, allowing you to pay in your home currency (in most cases) and save a significant amount of money, compared to traditional banks. You will be able to track the progress of your payment throughout the transfer process via a student dashboard and you will also be notified via email when your payment is

received by Mason. If you need to make an international payment, please visit Flywire. Payment installment plans: <http://studentaccounts.gmu.edu>.

Step 10

Complete the Module Rules, Rules, Rules!

The Blackboard organization “International Student Launchpad” is a virtual one-stop shop for F-1 and J-1 students. The Blackboard organization is structured like an online course and consists of several instructional modules. Note that the word “module” does not refer to computer programming but rather to an educational component or section of a course. The section “Know the Rules” features the instructional module “Rules, Rules, Rules!” This module will educate incoming international students about important rules and regulations, including Immigration Compliance, The Honor Code and Student Conduct.

Incoming international students will be enrolled in this module and will receive an email on how to access it after classes start. The quizzes will open in mid-September. All students are required to complete the module “Rules, Rules, Rules!” within two weeks. A hold will be put on the account of students who fail to complete the module by the deadline. Students who have a hold on their account will be unable to register for classes for the next semester and/or request a transcript from the University Registrar.

Housing

Students will be assigned a dormitory room on-campus for the first year (fall and spring semester) at Mason. Students may stay in on-campus housing until the end of the final summer school session in early August. If students stay on-campus through the end of August, there is an additional housing fee until the fall semester begins.

Students live on the Fairfax campus for their first year. Additional on-campus housing information, as well as different housing rates, can be found at housing.gmu.edu.

Starting from the first summer, students are able to live off-campus. Students are responsible for finding, negotiating for, securing and personally paying for all off-campus housing and handling any financial and/or legal issues resulting from living off-campus. GMU has an off-campus housing office that provides tips and resources for searching for off-campus housing at <https://och.gmu.edu/>. During the summer, there are fewer on-campus housing options available.

Housing Scams – There has been an increased number of international students becoming victim of a variety of scams including ones that involve off-campus housing. If you are looking at ads, watch out for deals that seem too good to be true (excellent location or quality of housing, but at a much lower price than usual), misspelled words in the ad, the contact person does not answer your questions, and/or requires that you exchange money/wire money before seeing the property. Please review the helpful presentations at the off-campus students website before signing a lease to learn about scams and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant: <https://och.gmu.edu/resource>

Please update your address on Patriot Web whenever you move to a different location within ten days of moving. This is a U.S. government law for international students. If you do not update your address and phone number as required, GMU would have to end your China 1+2+1 program.

If selecting on-campus housing for the second or third year at Mason, students are required to make a housing deposit during the previous spring. Your housing charges will be on your Student Account bill for the fall.

Depending on your on-campus housing option, a meal plan may be required. With a meal plan, a select number of meals will be on a student’s campus ID card allowing you to eat at The Globe, Southside and Ike’s. For information on meal plans, go to: <https://masondining.sodexomyway.com/meal-plans/>.

Health Insurance

U.S. laws require Exchange Visitors and their dependents to maintain health insurance for the entire period of J-1 status in the United States. Federal regulations require the following:

1. Medical benefits of **at least** \$100,000 U.S. per accident or illness
2. Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000 U.S.
3. Expenses associated with medical evacuation of the Exchange Visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$50,000 U.S.
4. A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

The George Mason University Health Insurance plan is offered by [UnitedHealthcare StudentResources](#) and meets the above mentioned requirements. Students are automatically enrolled in this plan. Along with your DS-2019 you will get a Newly Admitted International Student Welcome letter from the Student Health Insurance office that explains the health insurance requirement and fees. Failure to pay the health insurance fees by the deadline will result in termination from the exchange program. More information can be found on the [Student Health Services Website](#).

Understanding the U.S. Health Care System

THE COST OF U.S. HEALTH CARE

Your health insurance may not cover the full cost of your doctor's visit, hospitalization or medication. Please review the rules related to the plan you choose to understand fully what is covered. Here are some of the terms defined:

Premium

The amount you pay to your insurance company for your insurance policy. This is paid on a monthly or a yearly basis, depending on your insurance plan.

Co-Pay

The co-pay or co-payment, is the amount you are expected to pay directly to the healthcare provider at the time you receive medical treatment. This is usually a small amount and varies depending on your insurance.

Deductible

The deductible is a part of the medical bill that you are expected to pay in addition to the co-pay. Insurance plans usually specify the amount of a medical bill they cover and the amount you must pay. The deductible is usually described as a flat amount or as a percentage, depending upon the policy. Generally high premiums have a lower deductible while lower premiums have a high deductible.

In many cases, the doctor's office or hospital where you seek treatment may not bill your insurance directly. They may require you to pay them directly and for you to be reimbursed by your health insurance company.

Information on the Possible Applicability of the Affordable Care Act

The general rules regarding applicability of the individual mandate of the ACA and availability of ACA-compliant coverage also apply to J nonimmigrants, but that the minimum levels and types of coverage are still required as a condition of J-1 or J-2 status, even if those nonimmigrants are additionally subject to the ACA's individual mandate. For more information please visit: <https://shs.gmu.edu/insurance/resources/>

Scams Targeting International Students

There has been an increase in scams targeting international students. In addition to the housing scams mentioned earlier, other scams target students to obtain personal information (identity theft) or to obtain money. Scammers could be strangers posing as another student, university official, US or home government official or police. They may send you a form in the mail that looks like a legitimate government form asking for personal information, or they may send an official looking letter stating you are about to be arrested or deported due to failure to pay a bill or due to a crime that you did not commit. They may approach you on social media or post an ad selling something, renting an apartment or looking for a roommate. Their social media profile will look real. They have a way to use “real” government numbers in the caller ID. Before you arrive to the US and during your stay, be on the lookout for the following:

- If you see something for sale and the price is too good to be true, it may be a scam
- A sense of urgency is created; you need to pay a deposit immediately or lose the opportunity
- A caller demands payment immediately by wire transfer, third party payment site or gift cards.
- If a person states you are a victim of identity theft and provides proof telling you some personal information that they know (which they found on social media or stole before contacting you).
- If they offer to “transfer” your call to the police (they will just transfer to another scammer)
- If they are demanding or threatening. If the caller makes you feel scared, makes you promise not to hang up the phone and not to tell anyone else
- If they ask for your personal ID numbers and passwords
- They offer to pay something for you, but pay more than the amount and then ask for you to refund them the difference

Scammers also have been known to contact the family of an international student using similar techniques. Please keep in mind that the US government would not demand payment over the phone immediately. If you receive a suspicious call or if you receive a suspicious email or letter, please alert OIPS. Please refer to the links below for helpful resources to educate yourself about protecting yourself from scams:

- <https://www.usa.gov/housing-scams#item-211837>
- <https://www.usa.gov/identity-theft>
- <https://oig.ssa.gov/newsroom/scam-awareness>
- <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog>
- <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/pass-it-on/imposter-scams#>
- <https://youtu.be/i4nCy6Xs6R8>

Safety and Well-Being During Your Exchange Program

Your safety and well-being during your J-1 program are among our highest priorities. We would like to remind you of resources offered by GMU and inform you of the requirements for reporting health and safety incidents to OIPS.

GMU has a [Mason Ready website](#) with links to campus offices and resources to assist in emergency and disaster preparedness including the university's [Active Threats Awareness and Prevention Video](#). If you have not yet signed up, please register your cell phone number with the [Mason Alert](#) Emergency Notification System to receive timely information about campus emergencies.

Educating yourself about the safety and security of your environment can be different in the U.S. than in your home country. There are a number of campus and local resources that will assist you in understanding crimes in the area and crime prevention. GMU's Department of Police and Public Safety publishes a daily [Crime and Fire log](#) so that you can be informed about the crimes that have occurred on campus. If you are travelling off-campus, other cities and counties provide a similar log often called a police blotter. The [GMU Department of Police and Public Safety](#) has links to other area law enforcement websites and also information regarding promoting awareness and responding to campus violence.

Rave Guardian Public Safety App: This is free public safety app that used offers a variety of features for safety including a virtual safety option and a panic call button to alert GMU Police. It's free at [iTunes](#) and the [Google Play store](#).

As a model well-being university, GMU strives to provide everyone in the campus community with the support to thrive together. Please check out [Mason's Well-Being University Initiative](#) and discover links to online well-being assessments, campus offices and campus events that promote well-being.

GMU's [Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#) offers educational programming, one-on-one consultations, and resources in the areas of interpersonal violence, personal wellness, and alcohol and drug use.

GMU [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) provides important resources for students. In addition to having counselors on staff for guidance, they also have crisis hotlines, a text line and an online chat. They offer information online and also workshops focusing on a variety of issues such as stress reduction, suicide prevention and eating disorders. CAPS also provides a referral for off-campus services. On the CAPS website, you can also find [Learning Services](#) for tutoring assistance and academic skills workshops. CAPS has [Multicultural Resources](#) with links to Disability Services; LGBTQ Resources; and the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education (ODIME). On the [ODIME website](#), you can find information about reporting an incident that was motivated by bias (act of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, violence or criminal offense that appears to be intentional and motivated by prejudice or bias).

[GMU's Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#) provides high quality health care, counseling, health education and prevention services to George Mason University students. They have clinics on the Fairfax, Arlington and Sci-Tech campuses. For assistance when the clinic is closed, SHS has an after-hours nurse advice hotline (703- 993-2831) and a list of after-hours urgent care centers (walk-in clinics) on their website.

If you are working, either on-campus or off-campus as part of Academic Training, it is important that you feel safe and are treated fairly in your work environment. The "[Know your Rights](#)" Pamphlet you received during your visa interview also details your rights as an exchange visitor. Please remember to review approval requirements for on-campus and off-campus employment at [the OIPS website](#) or visit our office.

In certain cases, we are required to report incidents concerning the Health and Safety of Exchange Visitors. These reports are submitted directly to the US Department of State.

Please inform us if you are involved in any of the following types of incidents:

- lost or stolen immigration documents (i.e., passport and visa)
- theft of intellectual property or violations of export controls
- serious illness or injury
- incident involving litigation or the criminal justice system (incidents with police including arrests or court system)
- incidents involving sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation
- other incidents that involve health and safety (e.g. if you are involved in a natural disaster, civil unrest or outbreak of violence)
- if you become aware of a death of another exchange visitor or if another exchange visitor is missing.

There may be situations not listed where we can help you resolve an issue affecting your health or safety. Please also reach out to us if you have been a victim of a scam or fraud.

Please reach out to us with any concern or question you have, and we will help you sort it out. **We share the goal of the US Department of State** that you have whatever assistance you need, and that you understand how a situation may affect your J-1 status.

We also need to know how to reach you, and by law you must update your contact information (address and phone number) within 10 days of making any change. In addition, if your permanent address in your home

country changes or your emergency contact person either here or abroad changes, please inform us right away.

Remember, for an urgent or life-threatening emergency, call 911 for immediate assistance. While on-campus, you can report suspicious activity, crimes, and emergencies to Mason Police at 703-993-2810 (non-emergencies) or 9-1-1 (emergencies). Remember to report to OIPS any emergencies INVOLVING AN EXCHANGE VISITOR'S HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE by calling (703) 993-5673 or emailing to ichizhov@gmu

The Department of State also provides a 24 hour/7 days a week J-1 Visa Emergency Hotline toll-free number at 1-866-283-9090. The Hotline number is reserved for the use of current J-1 visa exchange visitor participants, or individuals calling on their behalf, in need of immediate contact with the State Department to address a matter concerning their health, safety or welfare. More information about the Department of State and J-1 program can be found at: <https://j1visa.state.gov/> GMU students can also find links to many of these resources on the [OIPS website](#).

Understanding the Two Year Home Country Residence Requirement

Some J-1 Exchange Visitors are subject to what is called the two-year home country physical presence requirement. The "two-year residence" requirement applies to J-1 Exchange Visitors in the following situations:

- If you receive any indirect or direct funding (including nominal travel grants) from your home government or a U.S. government agency at any point during your J-1 visa stay in the U.S.
- If your country of permanent residency and field of work are identified by your home government as being in short supply and consequently listed on the U.S. State Department's Exchange Visitor's "[Skills List](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/skill-list-by-country.html)." here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/skill-list-by-country.html>

Exchange Visitors are expected to complete their research, teaching or study objective within the time allowed on the J-1 visa. If your objective changes after you arrive in the US, you should know that the return-home requirement is enforced at the time that the Exchange Visitor or J-2 dependent requests an H-1B or U.S. Permanent Resident status. **Please note:** If you are subject to the home-residency rule, then any family members who entered the U.S. as J-2 dependents are also subject.

Exchange Visitors who are subject to this requirement must first return to their country of legal permanent residence for an aggregate of two years (24 months) or receive a waiver of the condition before they can change to H-1B or a U.S. Permanent Resident. Exchange Visitors who are subject to the return requirement may return to the U.S. in other non-immigrant categories including but not limited to F-1 student, exchange visitor on J-1 visa, B visitor and the O-1 foreign national of extraordinary ability.

What is an I-94 Record?

The I-94 record is the "Arrival/Departure Record" issued by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) whenever you enter the United States. This record confirms that you have been legally admitted to the U.S. in a specific visa status, and for a specific duration of time. For F and J visa holders the amount of time is indicated by the notation "D/S" which means you can be in the U.S. for the Duration of Status of your student program. The CBP officers will enter the I-94 data into an on-line registration system using your passport and visa stamp. You will be able to access an electronic version of the I-94 record by visiting <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home> This record can be printed when applying for immigration benefits, such as a driver's license or a Social Security Number (SSN).

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

Get I-94 Number I-94 FAQ OMB No. 1651-0111 Expiration Date: 11/30/2014

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 69001333663

Admit Until Date (MM/DD/YYYY): D/S

Details provided on Admission (I-94) form:

Family Name:	Testing
First (Given) Name:	Monday
Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY):	05/06/1985
Passport Number:	123000456
Passport Country of Issuance:	Mexico
Date of Entry (MM/DD/YYYY):	03/12/2013
Class of Admission:	J-1

IMPORTANT!
Please check that your online I-94 shows "D/S" and "J-1".
If your I-94 has something different, please contact ISS for assistance.

Banking and Driver's License Information

Banking:

For help with opening a bank account on campus, please visit:

Apple Federal Credit Union (inside Johnson Center)

Website: <https://www.applefcu.org/Appleweb/Locations>

Banks off-campus used by the Mason Community:

Bank of America (10440 Main Street, Fairfax, VA)

Website: <https://www.bankofamerica.com/>

Sun Trust (4020 University Drive, Fairfax, VA)

Website: <https://www.suntrust.com>

Driver's License:

If you plan to apply for a driver's license, OIPS can assist you. The closest DMV office is located inside Fair Oaks mall:

Address: 11805 Fair Oaks Mall, Fairfax, VA

Hours of operation: Monday—Saturday: 10:00 a.m.—6:30 p.m.

Please note that road tests are not given at this location. If the DMV requires for you to take a road test, then you may want to visit another location. DMV offices are also located in other locations in Fairfax, Prince William, Loudoun counties and Alexandria. Find other locations here:

<http://www.dmv.state.va.us/DMVLocator/>

Requirements for obtaining a driver's license:

<http://www.dmv.state.va.us/drivers/#eligibility.html>

Transportation from airports to George Mason University

Please follow the link to explore your transportation options from Virginia airports:

<http://transportation.gmu.edu/airportservices.html>

Campus Maps

<https://www.gmu.edu/resources/welcome/Directions-to-GMU.html>

Our office at the Fairfax campus is located in Student Union Building (SUB) I Room 4300 and is open from 8:30am – 5:00 pm M-F. Our walk-in hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm (no prior appointment required). Christine Bodziak, J-1 student advisor, has office hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

We look forward to meeting you!

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