

Jl Student GUIDE

***GEO EXCHANGE
VISITOR
STUDENT***

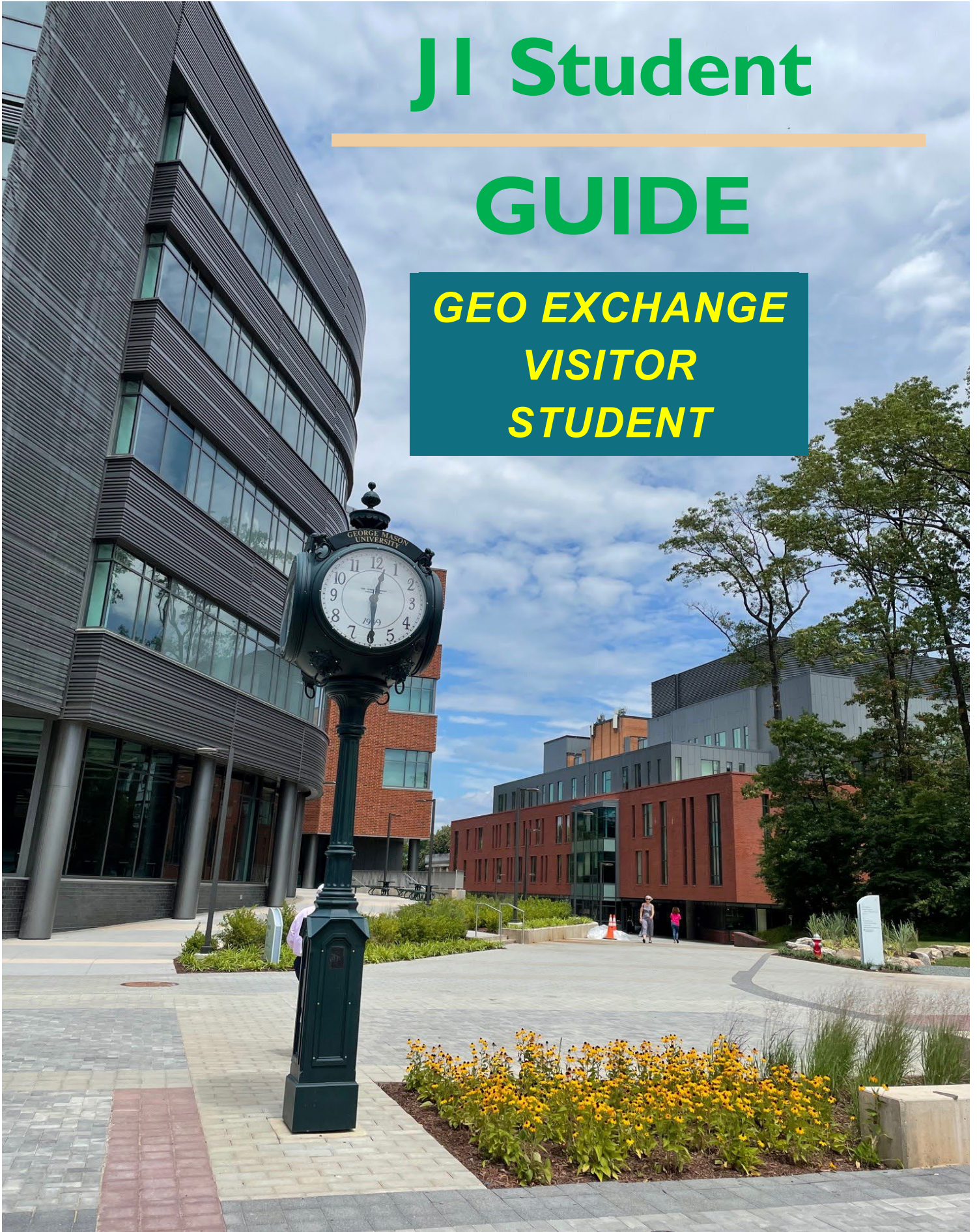


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Photo by Evan Cantwell/Creative Services

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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Dear Exchange Visitor Student,

We are glad to welcome you to our Exchange Visitor Program at George Mason University! The Exchange Visitor Program, also known as BridgeUSA, operates under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Its purpose is to provide you with an opportunity to participate in an educational and cultural program in the United States, return home to share your experiences, and encourage Americans to participate in educational and cultural programs abroad. 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, GMU complies with regulations and compliance administration outlined in 22 CFR Part 62 and other government guidance related to J-1 students. As a participant, it is your responsibility to comply with 22 CFR Part 62 and follow OIPS guidance. As the Alternate Responsible Officer for GMU's exchange visitor students, I am writing to provide information that you will need to prepare for your trip to the U.S.

Orientation and Arrival at George Mason

The Office of International Programs and Services will host a required in person orientation program in the morning of Thursday, August 21st, 2025. Thus, you will need to arrive at GMU *by Wednesday, August 20th at the latest*. More information is located here: <https://oips.gmu.edu/attend-orientation/>. As part of your required orientation program, there will be a J-1 compliance meeting to review important rules and responsibilities for J-1 students. In addition, an online pre-arrival meeting to answer predeparture questions will be offered.

I wish you safe travels to the United States!

Sincerely,

Christine A. Bodziak

International Advisor

cbodziak@gmu.edu

OBTAINING A U.S. VISA

Print and review your DS-2019 form confirming all information is correct. Contact your J-1 advisor if you have any questions. Read the front and back of the DS-2019 form and sign the EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION on the bottom of page 1 of the DS-2019 form. Include the date and location (city and country) of where you signed the form.

Steps to Obtain a U.S. Visa

- Have on hand your passport and your Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (DS-2019 Form)
- Have ready a digital photo that meets the requirements
- Find the website of the U.S. consulate in your country of residence here:
<http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- **Confirm if there are any additional documents or fees needed for this particular consulate**
- Open a record in the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and pay the *required* SEVIS fee (901 fee) at <https://fmjfee.com/i901fee/> Currently, the fee is \$220
Note: Your SEVIS number is the number that begins with the letter "N" in the top right of your DS-2019 form
- Print the SEVIS fee payment receipt
- Complete the Visa Application Form (DS-160)
- Print the DS-160 confirmation page and payment receipt
- Pay the MRV/visa fee when you schedule your interview. The fee is \$185. Please note, the visa and SEVIS fees are valid for a year, but are nonrefundable. Costs are subject to change

Approximate wait time to receive a visa appointment can be found under Global Wait Times on the following Department of State website:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>

However, wait times can change at any moment especially closer to the start of the semester. Read the consulate's updates regarding visa processing on their website and follow the specific consulate on social media for any important updates. **Contact your J-1 advisor immediately at cbodziak@gmu.edu if you are not able to secure a visa appointment before August.**

Bring to your Visa Interview, the following PRINTED documents:

- Your GMU acceptance letter
- Your OIPS welcome letter with OIPS contact information.
- Proof of funding documents
- Printed copies of your DS-160 confirmation page, your DS-160/visa (MRV) fee receipt and your I-901 SEVIS fee receipt
- Your DS-2019 Form
- Your passport
- Photo per specific consulate's requirements
- **Check the consulate's website to confirm if any additional fees or documents are needed per the consulate's requirements**

Be prepared, honest, polite, and confident when presenting yourself to the consular officer during your visa interview. They may ask what you plan to study, why you selected GMU, and what your plans are after your program. Practice your answers before your interview so that you can respond efficiently. You may be asked to show your admission letter from GMU, proof of financial support, proof of strong ties to your home country, etc. The consular officer will review whether you have sufficient funds to cover expenses and confirm your non-immigrant intent. Consular officers have the sole authority to either grant or refuse the visa.

Please note that there is a chance refused applications may be flagged for administrative processing if the consular officer determined they did not have adequate information to verify if you are eligible for a visa. Please notify your J-1 advisor immediately if your application was flagged for administrative processing so we can advise you on next steps.

Visa processing can vary from consulate to consulate. Once your visa stamp is added to your passport, review it and reach out to your GMU J-1 advisor if there is anything that does not match up with your DS-2019 form.

As of April 27, 2023, the Department of State no longer requires an original DS-2019 with wet blue ink signature of the Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer for processing. Thus, scanned DS-2019 forms that are sent electronically (with black or blue ink signature or with a digital signature from the sponsor) and then printed and signed in ink by the exchange visitor (under Exchange Visitor Certification) are also valid for visa processing, entry, or re-entry to the United States.

TRAVELING TO THE UNITED STATES

You can enter the United States up to 30 days before the program start date indicated on your DS-2019 form. Also, you have a grace period that allows you to stay in the U.S. for up to 30 days after the end date of your J-1 program before departing the U.S. Note that any time after you enter the U.S. with your DS-2019 issued by GMU until your final departure, your objective is to participate on the GMU exchange program. Recreational travel around the U.S. and preparing for your program and preparing for your departure from your GMU program would be the only appropriate activities. Please consult with an OIPS J-1 advisor if you have any questions.

Your visa permits you to travel to a U.S. Port of Entry. For most travelers, this is an international airport in the U.S. where you present yourself to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer after disembarking from your flight. Be prepared, honest, polite, and confident when presenting yourself to CBP officials. Place these important **printed** documents in your carry-on luggage during your flight when you travel so that they are readily available:

- Your passport with valid visa
- Your DS-2019 form, **Bring the paper version that was signed/stamped by the consulate!**
- Your admission letter
- Your OIPS welcome letter that has our contact information
- A print out of your classes from Patriot Web
- Your proof of funding documents
- Emergency contact information both in the United States (if applicable) and in your home country
- The address where you will be staying

Present **your passport, DS-2019 form that was signed by the consulate, and entry visa** to the immigration official at the U.S. port of entry. They may ask questions that will require you to show some of your supporting documents. If they have additional questions, they may direct you to a secondary inspection site. Note that they may search electronic devices upon entry. Please keep in mind that your visa only allows you to travel to a U.S. Port of Entry. The Customs and Border Patrol officer makes the final decision on allowing travelers to enter the United States.

Almost everything in the United States can be paid using a credit card, so you should have one with you when you arrive. You will use it for your living expenses and might need it in an emergency. Do not carry a large amount of cash with you. If you must enter the U.S. with cash, we encourage you to use traveler's checks, which are more secure and can be replaced if lost.

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

<https://oips.gmu.edu/transportation/>

ARRIVAL AND ORIENTATION

The Office of International Programs and Services will provide a pre-arrival virtual meeting and a required in-person orientation program. More information about the in-person orientation is located here: <https://oips.gmu.edu/attend-orientation/> Please note that there are some separate meetings depending upon if students are F-1 or J-1 students. **The J-1 orientation starts the morning of Thursday, and August 21st thus you will need to arrive before that day.** If living on campus, the Housing office will provide separate information about move-in dates and times. GEO will also provide you with information regarding any separate GEO orientation activities. More information about the pre-arrival meetings will be sent by email by early June.

Once you have arrived in the United States, OIPS will validate your SEVIS record to confirm that you have arrived and started your program. In order for us to do so, each J-1 student must complete the J-1 online check-in process on the OIPS website. For the check-in process, you will need to know your G#, your local address, U.S. phone number (if applicable) and emergency contact information. You should plan to complete the J-1 check-in form as soon as possible *after arrival*, but no later than August 29th. You can only complete the check-in form AFTER arriving in the U.S. as you need to upload your most recent I-94 record. Please follow this link to start the check-in form after you arrive in the U.S:

<https://oips.gmu.edu/international-student-check-in-form-for-j-1-students/>

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 U.S. It confirms that you have been legally admitted to the U.S. in a specific visa status, and for a specific duration of time. For 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. CBP officers 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> Print this record to carry with your DS-2019 form to show your status when requested by immigration officials or 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. 1051-0111
Expiration Date: 11/05/2014

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 69001333663 Print

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.

HOUSING

You can find additional information about on-campus housing options at housing.gmu.edu. Please review floor plans and understand that on-campus housing often requires a meal plan and sharing a bedroom. **Remember to read the information dates section** that lists when on campus dining halls open and close for the semester and during breaks so that you can plan your budget accordingly. Students can also view all open dining options by checking the “**What’s Open Now**” website.

If you decide to live off-campus, we recommend working with Contemporary Student Services (CSS) for your off-campus housing search: <https://contemporary.gmu.edu>. Read the Renter Resources and Renter Education sections of their website. Understand the cost, availability, and schedule for public transportation to and from campus. If the apartment is on a bus route, check to confirm the bus schedule in case the nearest bus does not operate on weekends or evenings. Housing scams occur, so please read over the CSS and OIPS resources and information about renting in Fairfax and to protect yourself.

You can also find a variety of tips on the OIPS website at: <https://oips.gmu.edu/offcampus/>

Tip: The current minimum proof of funded needed is to meet very basic living expenses for a single student at GMU. The cost of living in the metro Washington, DC area is one of the highest in the United States and actual living costs will vary greatly depending on lifestyle choices. Thus, it is very important that you research the cost of housing and other living expenses before you travel to the U.S. and budget accordingly.

Budgeting for your Exchange

If you need assistance with budgeting, GMU has a variety of financial wellbeing resources to help with budgeting wisely for your entire program. The Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) offers a variety of programs and also has a recorded webinar about creating a budget and managing credit: <https://ssac.gmu.edu/money-talks-series/>



Photo by Lathan Goumas/Office of Communication and Marketing

HEALTH INSURANCE

Exchange Visitors and their dependents must maintain health insurance for the entire period of J status in the United States. Some of the requirements of the U.S. regulations are 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 GMU Health Insurance plan is offered by Aetna Student Health. It meets and exceeds the requirements. The Student Health Insurance provides an International Student Welcome letter explaining that international students are automatically enrolled in the health plan.

Health Insurance Fee

The fee amount (premium) is listed here: <https://shs.gmu.edu/insurance/international/> Fall semester students will be billed for the Fall insurance premium and it is due the first day of Fall semester classes. **Academic year students will be billed twice.** First, the Fall insurance premium will appear on their student account before the first day of classes. It is due the first day of Fall semester classes. Next, Academic year students will be billed for the Spring/Summer premium which is due the first day of Spring semester classes. **Please note that there is not a Spring only option and the summer portion of the Spring/Summer premium cannot be separated.** The Spring/Summer insurance covers the grace period and could also be used as proof of insurance for any post-completion Academic Training through August 15th.

Per regulation 22 CFR 62.14(i) a willful failure to maintain health insurance will result in termination from the exchange program. Waivers are only allowed if another insurance plan meets the requirements detailed on the [Student Insurance website](#). Thus, it is important to pay the insurance fee by the deadline as it is one of the GMU rules governing our exchange visitor program.

Sponsored students who receive scholarships that cover the insurance fees must work with the Third-Party Billing Office in Students Accounts to ensure they have a copy of your sponsorship letter. Sponsored students must follow up with their government sponsor to confirm that invoices are received and are in process. You can find more information about the plan and how to access your health insurance benefits at: <https://shs.gmu.edu/insurance/resources/>

If you are bringing a spouse or child with you on a J-2 visa, you will need to show proof of health insurance for your accompanying dependents that meets the requirements. Please reach out to your J-1 advisor before purchasing any plan to request the Health Insurance agreement that lists important details needed to meet all the requirements. You may either select the GMU plan for dependents or enroll in another plan. Insurance must be valid for the entire program dates listed on the DS-2019 form with no gaps in coverage. Please follow the link below to learn more about enrollment options for dependents:

<http://shs.gmu.edu/insurance/international/>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Review the plan dates when considering your health insurance coverage. J-1 students arriving before the start of their Aetna Student Health coverage may want to purchase supplemental insurance coverage until the health plan start date. Fall semester students may want to purchase additional insurance if they are staying in the U.S. during the grace period and do not plan to depart the U.S. before January 1, 2026.

Dental Insurance: The plan does not include dental insurance, though a supplemental plan may be purchased. Students should consider visiting their dentist in their home country before departing for the U.S. Dental procedures in the United States, even with dental insurance, can be very expensive.

The Spring/Summer plan starts on January 1st and ends on August 15th. The Fall plan starts on August 16th and ends on December 31st.

Tips for selecting a health insurance provider for post-completion Academic Training or for any accompanying dependents:

Please reach out to your J-1 advisor before purchasing any plan to request the Health Insurance agreement that lists important details needed to meet all the requirements. There are many health insurance providers available and the options can be overwhelming. When selecting an insurance plan, you should select a plan that meets your individual needs and the minimum J requirements mentioned earlier. A plan that worked for your friend or colleague may not be the best option for your family. You should carefully review the details of any insurance plan you are considering. Some plans have a higher deductible than others. Some may require you to pay out-of-pocket and submit claim forms for re-imbursement. Consider your budget, the healthcare needs of your family, and the ability to meet the terms of the specific insurance plan.

THE COST OF U.S. HEALTH CARE

Your health insurance may not cover the full cost of your doctor's visit, hospitalization or medication. Review the rules related to your plan to understand fully what is covered. **The GMU Student Health Insurance website has an excellent resource for understanding insurance terms with links to the Aetna website:** <https://shs.gmu.edu/insurance/resources/>

Here are some 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/>

Photo by Evan Cantwell GMU



DURING YOUR PROGRAM

Full-time Program Participation

GEO students are required to participate in their program by **enrolling** in a full-time schedule of classes, **attending**, and **completing** their courses (taking final exams or completing any other required project if an exam is not given for the course). If a GEO exchange student is having difficulty meeting these requirements, GEO and OIPS will suggest on-campus resources in order for you to meet the program requirements including meeting with a Success Coach.

Full-time participation requirement is for all J-1 students in order to participate in the program even if they do not plan to transfer back all the credits to their home university. **Students who are not following the J-1 regulations are considered out of status which is grounds for program termination.**

Most students take classes at GMU's main campus in Fairfax. **If you enroll in a class at another GMU campus, please let OIPS know so we can add that location to your site of activity in SEVIS.**

Online and Hybrid Courses

J-1 students may only enroll in one three credit online or hybrid course as part of their full-time enrollment requirement. If you are interested in taking more than one 3 credit hybrid/online course, you must first register for the minimum full-time requirement (12 credits for undergraduate, 9 credits for graduate every Fall and Spring semester), before registering for any additional online or hybrid courses. NOTE: A hybrid course that meets for 60 percent or more face-to-face may be counted as an in-person course for J-1 student compliance.

The OIPS Website

The OIPS website has many resources regarding J-1 student responsibilities, remaining in status, employment, program extension procedures and much more at: <https://oips.gmu.edu/j-1-students/>

Updating your Address and Phone Number

By law **you must update your contact information (address and phone number)** within 10 days of making any change. If you move off-campus, for the first time or any subsequent time, you must update your own address in Patriot Web. Off-campus housing addresses need to be listed as "off-campus residence" and not "permanent address" as international students only have permanent addresses outside the U.S. If you do not update it correctly, your SEVIS record will not be updated. In addition, if your permanent address in your home country changes or your emergency contact person either here or abroad changes, please update this on Patriot Web too. If you live **on-campus**, you *do not* need to update your address. The Housing office will update it. If you decide to obtain a U.S. cell phone after a few weeks in the United States, please remember to update this in Patriot Web and let OIPS know.

Employment, Volunteering, Internships, Training Opportunities

GEO students may work on-campus after their program is validated and have received signed written authorization from an OIPS J-1 advisor. Also, they may seek an off-campus training experience that may start after their first semester. Off-campus experiences must be approved as Academic Training.

Any work/training/internships performed while you are physically in the U.S. must be pre-approved by OIPS and meet J-1 requirements. It is important that you understand what type of work/employment/training activities need approval by OIPS while you are in the U.S. Some volunteer opportunities may need authorization by OIPS. Thus, do not start any type of work/employment/training/internship or volunteer activity without consulting a J-1 advisor first. Unauthorized employment is a serious offense and grounds for termination of your program.

Work is limited to a total of 20 hours each week except during official breaks. Students seeking on-campus employment must be employed by GMU or by an OIPS approved on-campus employer. OIPS will review options during orientation and also host an employment workshop at the beginning of each semester. University Career Services is a great resource for international students to find on-campus jobs or off-campus opportunities for Academic Training. Check out the Events section of their website to find when employment fairs take place. In addition, they offer Handshake, an online platform to search for on-campus jobs or off-campus Academic Training opportunities. Students sign into Handshake using their GMU netid and password. However, as nondegree students, if you are having trouble accessing Handshake, reach out to Career Services to request that your Handshake account be activated.

Cultural Activities

Pursuing studies at George Mason University as an Exchange Visitor Student is also a commitment to engage in cultural activities in the U.S. and to share your culture with Americans. OIPS offers a variety of cultural programming for our international students. Read the OIPS weekly newsletter, follow us on social media, and check out our website to find out about events and programs. Additionally, GEO will also share information about a variety of engagement opportunities. We encourage you to become involved in campus and local organizations and clubs. Mason 360 is a great resource to find campus groups and activities: <https://mason360.gmu.edu/> If you need assistance to locate any additional resources, please do not hesitate to contact us. We also want to recognize and celebrate your participation in cultural events during your program. Please share with us any significant involvement or achievement. In the past, GMU J-1 students have been involved in student government, OIPS iCafes, GMU club sports, student research symposiums and campus award ceremonies to name a few.

SAFETY AND WELLBEING RESOURCES

Your safety and well-being during your 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.

You can also find a variety of resources also on the [OIPS website](#) including important information on the [J-1 Student website](#). There may be situations not listed here where we can help you resolve an issue affecting your health or safety. Please reach out to us with any concern or question you have, and we will help you sort it out and direct you to the appropriate resources. In addition, we want you to understand how a situation may affect your status in the U.S.

When You Need Personal Connection and Support

- [Mason 360](#): is GMU's student engagement platform. It has information about a variety of student organizations and campus events.
- GMU's [Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#): SSAC offers programming, consultations, and resources in the areas of interpersonal violence, respondent services, financial wellbeing, personal wellness, and alcohol and drug use. They also have information on the [Patriots for Recovery](#) support group.
- [A GMU Success Coach](#) can act as a resource to assist you with academic, personal, and career goals.
- [TimelyCare](#) offers 24/7 on-demand mental health access from your phone.
- Psychological Services offers the [Stepped Mental Health Care Program](#) providing an emotional support line and counseling.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#): CAPS provides free and confidential short-term mental health services to students. In addition to having counselors on staff for guidance, they also have a crisis hotline available 24/7, a text line, and an online chat. They offer [online information](#) and in-person and [virtual workshops](#) focusing on a variety of issues. There [are also in person support groups](#) focusing on such issues as healthy relationships, managing anxiety, traumatic experiences support, women of color empowerment, queer empowerment, balanced living, graduate student support group and men & masculinity. CAPS also provides referrals for off-campus services.
- The CAPS website has [Multicultural Resources](#) with links to [Disability Services](#); [LGBTQ+ Resources](#) and other offices. The LGBTQ+ website lists resources such as a Peer Mentoring Program, Trans Closet, a map of [Gender Inclusive Restrooms](#) on the Fairfax campus and an events listing by the [Queer Student Leadership Council](#).
- [Contemporary Student Services \(CSS\)](#): offers resources for off-campus housing, renter rights and responsibilities resources, and a variety of other resources. The office serves off-campus students; pregnant and parenting students; and married, divorced, and widowed students; veterans and military affiliated students; and transfer students. Additional student parenting resources can be found here: [Student Parenting Resources](#)
- [Graduate Student Life](#)- resources and events tailored specifically to graduate students.

Well-being Resources

As a model well-being university, GMU strives to provide everyone in the campus community with the support to thrive together.

The Center for the Advancement of Well-Being: Discover links to online well-being assessments, campus offices, and campus events that promote well-being. Students may want to take advantage of:

- Resilience Resources: Learn about the importance of resilience for your wellbeing.
- Mental Health First Aid Training: Great opportunity to take for credit or noncredit.
- Thriving Together Series: a series of articles on diverse well-being topics.

How to Access Healthcare

- GMU's Student Health Services (SHS) provides high quality health care, counseling, health education and prevention services to George Mason University students. Students need to first call 703-993-2831 to speak to a nurse before scheduling an appointment. For assistance when the clinic is closed, SHS has an after-hours nurse advice hotline at 800-466-0386 and a list of after-hours urgent care centers (walk-in clinics) on their website. They also have a webpage with details about COVID Services.
- The Student Health Insurance office has details about the insurance coverage and fees for international students and links to insurance plan documents. In addition, there are tips on how to understand your insurance and health education resources including how to enroll dependents in the plan or add dental insurance. There is also a link to the GMU Aetna Student Health site where you can print your ID card and search for a doctor or pharmacy.

When You Need Academic Tutoring or Time Management Assistance

- Learning Services offers online academic coaching and academic success workshops. They have an online library of video presentations on topics such as: Anxiety, Time Management, Notetaking and Studying among others. These workshops are a great resource for international students to also become better acquainted with American academic culture! They also have a guide on how to be a successful online learner.
- A GMU Success Coach can act as a resource to assist you with academic, personal, finances, and career goals.

Emergency and Disaster Preparation Resources

- The Mason Ready website: GMU resources to assist in emergency and disaster preparedness.
- Active Threats Awareness and Prevention Video: Educate yourself about these important issues.
- Mason Alert Emergency Notification System: receive timely information about campus emergencies.
- National Weather Service Forecast Office: resources to monitor severe weather such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods or wildfires in our area or when you travel.

Public Safety, Crime Prevention, and Conduct Education Resources

Educating yourself about the safety, security, and acceptable conduct in your environment can be different in the U.S. than in your home country. There are several campus and local resources that will assist you in understanding crimes in the area and crime prevention and education. There are also on-campus offices that provide information and services regarding conduct issues. 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).

- GMU Department of Police and Public Safety: has information regarding awareness and responding to campus violence. Their website includes an FAQs including what to do if you are stopped by police. They also have links to other area law enforcement websites and important campus resources.
- Crime and Fire log: GMU's Department of Police and Public safety publishes this daily so that you can be informed about crimes that have occurred on campus. If you are traveling off-campus, other cities and counties provide a similar log often called a police blotter.
- Campus Assistance: If you ever feel unsafe walking across campus, call (703) 993-2810 and a police cadet can escort you to your destination.
- Rave Guardian Public Safety App: A free public safety app offering a variety of features including a virtual safety option and a panic call button to alert GMU Police. It's free at iTunes and the Google Play store.
- Scam Awareness Website: OIPS created this website to educate the international community at Mason about how to protect themselves from losing money and identity theft.
- Student Conduct- has resources and information about what is misconduct and information about support, process, and sanctions.

Understanding your Rights and Responsibilities

- GMU Student Rights and Responsibilities: are listed in the university catalog. This section also lists what steps can be taken for various concerns and lists the responsibilities of all students. **It is important that you read through this section so that you can understand the policies and procedures of the university as many policies and procedures may be different than your other university experience(s).**
- The Ombuds Office is a confidential resource for students, staff, and faculty to facilitate communication and acts as a resource to help foster an environment of respect, honesty, fairness, and integrity and to bolster a supportive working and learning climate at GMU.
- The "Know your Rights" Pamphlet: If you have been approved by OIPS to work, it is important that you feel safe and are treated fairly in your work environment. Exchange visitors receive this pamphlet during your visa interview. It details the rights of non-immigrants while working in the United States. Please remember to review approval requirements for on-campus and off-campus employment at the OIPS website.
- Updating Your Chosen Name and Pronouns: GMU supports students who wish to identify in Patriot Web their chosen first name, gender identity, and pronouns.

Required Incident Reporting

Please note that GMU will need to report to the Department of State, on or before the next business day, any of the following incidents that occur that involve an exchange student. Students should report promptly to the Office of International Programs any of the incidents listed below and other incidents that may bring the sponsor's exchange program into notoriety or disrepute [22 CFR 62.13(d)]. Further details about reporting will also be provided during orientation.

- Port of Entry Issues. (found inadmissible resulting in withdrawal of application for admission, expedited removal or Notice to Appear).
- Exchange Visitor Death
- Exchange Visitor Missing, Absconder, or Overstay (i.e., whereabouts unknown or intentionally left the program without notifying sponsor)
- Serious Behavioral Problems (e.g., substance abuse, bullying, or harassment)

- Serious Medical Issues (e.g., cancer diagnosis, surgery, or any condition requiring hospitalization of 48 hours or more)
- Serious Mental Health Concerns (e.g., suicidal ideation or attempt, eating disorder, self-harm, psychiatric hold and/or hospitalization, or early program end due to mental health) • Sexually-Related Incident or Abuse (e.g., incident or allegation involving sexual exploitation, harassment, assault, or misconduct)
- Incident Involving the Criminal Justice System (e.g., arrest, charges, incarceration, detention, or other law enforcement involvement) • Incidents Involving Child Protective Services • Fraud (e.g., visa, immigration, or financial fraud or scam)
- Theft of Intellectual Property or Violations of Import/Export Controls • Lost or Stolen Immigration Documents (e.g., lost or stolen passport/visa or stolen Form DS-2019)
- Unsuitable Host/Work Conditions (e.g., incident or allegation involving workplace bullying, harassment, discrimination, hostile work environment, or work hours and/or wage-related issues)
- Actual or Potential Negative Press (i.e., incident expected to bring DOS, the sponsor, or the Exchange Visitor Program into notoriety or disrepute)
- Foreign Government Involvement (including Foreign Embassy or Consulate Involvement)
- Litigation (Lawsuits) or Other Legal Actions (related to the Exchange Visitor Program, in which a sponsor, site of activity, or an exchange visitor may be a named party)
- Public Security Incident or Natural Disasters Directly Involving Exchange Visitor Safety (e.g., bombing, shooting, other acts of violence, civil unrest, fire, tornado, flood, or hurricane)
- Proscribed Antisemitic Actions (e.g., physical actions directed towards Jewish individuals and/or their property, community institutions, or religious facilities that violates the law or university rules)
- Serious Violations of University Conduct Rules: (e.g., participation in a building occupation, participation in an unauthorized encampment, disrupting classes, intimidation, harassment, assault)
- Terrorist Activity, Endorsing or Espousing Terrorism: (e.g., engaging in terrorist activity; membership in a terrorist organization; endorsing or espousing terrorist activity)

Remember, for an urgent or life-threatening emergency, call 911 for immediate assistance. If you have a non-emergency health concern that requires medical attention, reach out to Student Health Services. 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) 993-2970 or emailing ndeola@gmu.edu

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 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.

NEAR THE END OF YOUR PROGRAM

Program Completion

Your J-1 program end date on your current DS2019 is the last day of exams for that semester. You have a 30-day grace after your own last exam before leaving the U.S. Although you are allowed to remain in the U.S during your grace period, you cannot work or take classes. In addition, you will need to follow the housing rules for move-out. Once you depart the U.S. after your last exam, you also end the corresponding grace period.

Post-Completion Academic Training

If you are interested in participating in post-completion Academic Training, please attend the J-1 Employment Workshop. The date and time of the workshop will be sent via email closer to the beginning of the semester. More information about Academic Training can be found at: <https://oips.gmu.edu/academic-training/>

Future J-1 Programs

After you leave the U.S. at the end of your program, if you are considering returning to the U.S., keep in mind there is a 12-month bar on participation that impacts both J1 and J2 participants interested in returning in the J1 Research Scholar or Professor category. Please also check to see if your visa notes if you are subject to 212 (e) if considering certain other statuses.



Photo by Christine Bodziak/OIPS

THE TWO-YEAR RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

Some J1 exchange visitors are subject to Section 212(e) in the Immigration and Nationality Act; what is called the Two-Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement, the Two-Year Residency Requirement or simply, the Two-Year Rule. It applies to 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 stay in the U.S.
- If your country of citizenship or 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." here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/skill-list-by-country.html>

How to Fulfill?

To satisfy the home residence requirement, the individual subject to 212(e) must reside in the country of nationality or last legal permanent residence or be physically present in those locations for at least two years. It can also be an aggregate amount of two years if the person departed and returned to the country at various times. The two-year time period begins after the completion of the J1 program and the Exchange Visitor's departure from the United States. Exchange Visitors who are subject may return to the U.S. while they are still subject in other non-immigrant categories including but not limited to F-1 student, J-1 Exchange Visitor, B visitor and the O-1 foreign national of extraordinary ability. Exchange Visitors that are subject:

- Cannot pursue a change of status in the U.S. (with certain exceptions).
- *Apply for H, L, or K visa*
- Cannot change status in U.S. to a legal permanent resident/immigrant visa.

Exchange Visitors interested in applying for a waiver of the Two Year Residence Requirement can find more information on the Department of State's website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange/waiver-of-the-exchange-visitor.htm>. Change of status in the U.S. is not permitted if you are subject to 212(e) unless you obtain a waiver.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Banking and Driver's License Information

Wells Fargo is now the official banking partner of GMU. More information is here:

<https://shopmason.gmu.edu/banking/>

Banks off-campus near the Fairfax campus:

United Bank (10695B Braddock Road/University Mall, Fairfax, VA)

<https://bankwithunited.com>

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

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

TD Bank (11098 Fairfax Boulevard, Fairfax, VA)

<https://www.td.com>

Driver's License:

Information below is for students living in Virginia. If you are living at any point in Washington, DC or other state, you must follow their rules regarding driving and 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>

Campus Maps

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

Transportation

GMU provides a free campus shuttle for students who show their GMU ID. Students may also ride the Fairfax CUE buses with their ID. More information on these services along with parking information is located here: <https://transportation.gmu.edu/category/transportation/>

Other local transportation options are [Fairfax County Connector Buses](#) and [WMATA](#) metro trains and buses that serve the greater metropolitan area of Washington, DC.

Our office at the Fairfax campus is located in Student Union Building I (SUB-1), Room 4300 and is open from 8:30am – 5:00 pm M-F. Please visit our website at: <https://oips.gmu.edu/oips-is-online/> to confirm the most recent announcements regarding walk-in hours and virtual services for Fall 2023.

We look forward to meeting you!

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