



International Student Handbook

2010-2011

North Georgia College & State
University

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Welcome



Dear International Student,

My name is Jared Goodall and I am the International Student Advisor here at North Georgia College & State University (North Georgia). On behalf of North Georgia and the Center for Global Engagement I would like to welcome you to North Georgia for the 2010-2011 academic year. I believe that this year will be a wonderful year for all of us at North Georgia and wish you success over the coming months.

As your international student advisor, I am here to help you with difficulties that you may experience on campus as an international student. Also, I am here to help you with questions about your immigration status and maintenance. I want to make sure that your experience here at North Georgia is a great one and want you to know that I am here to offer any assistance you need. You may contact me anytime by phone, email, or coming by the office. My office is located in West Main Hall, Room 346. My office number is 706-867-2833 and my cell phone number is 404-394-3808. You may also contact me via email at jagoodall@northgeorgia.edu. If possible, please restrict calling to my cell phone to pressing issues and emergency calls only. My regular office hours are 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday.

We have created this international student handbook to assist you during your time here at North Georgia. The handbook covers a range of topics including culture shock and getting a driver's license, to important F-1 and J-1 regulations that international students need to know. Please read over it carefully and use it as a reference during your time here at North Georgia. If something is unclear in the handbook, please contact me. If there is a subject area that you would also like to see covered in the handbook, please let me know that as well.

Once again, I welcome you all to North Georgia for the 2010-2011 academic year and I look forward to working with you.

Thank you,

Jared Goodall
International Student Advisor

Adjusting to the United States: Helpful Tips for a Better Transition



Culture Shock

Most international students will experience some degree of culture shock – the process of cultural adjustment. The unique experiences that one has when traveling and being immersed in a different culture may also bring changes in emotions in terms of how the host country and the home country are viewed. Some of you have gone through some, or all of these phases already; others may be going through them for a second time; and for even others, this is all new.

There are several stages of cultural adjustment:

1. Pre-departure phase – This is the preparatory stage before traveling. It is what you go through in your home country before you leave to come to North Georgia. This includes deciding to leave home, choosing North Georgia, and making arrangements for your sojourn.
2. Honeymoon phase – Everything about the new country is exciting, interesting, and wonderful. You often feel like a spectator in this stage as you observe the US cultural patterns.
3. Hostility phase – The stark differences between your home country and the host country are overwhelming, and everyday tasks may become a hassle. The differences are no longer exciting, but instead are hard to handle and make you feel frustrated, angry, or resentful. People in this stage of adjustment often feel homesick and long for the familiar.
4. Humor phase – Gradually, the annoyances seem less so, and things that you found frustrating are now mere inconveniences or just “different.” Your sense of humor returns, and things seem to be much more bearable.
5. Effective adjustment phase – You are fully integrated into the host culture and no longer notice the differences or new ways of doing things.

To combat culture shock and prevent it from getting you down, try the following tactics:

- Stay busy. Explore the campus, city, and surrounding area.
- Do not call home too often. A short call home upon your arrival to verify that you have arrived is fine, but prolonged calls with friends and family can initially make you long for home.
- Exercise. Reduce stress and make yourself feel better by doing something that gets you moving.
- Do not allow yourself to just socialize with international students. After a while, US students will assume you have your circle of friends and you do not want to get to know anyone new. Do not limit yourself like that. Use your fellow international students as a support base, but do not fail to get to know people from the country whose culture you came here to learn.
- Learn all that you can about North Georgia. Become acquainted with all the facilities, and organizations that are available on campus. Take advantage of all the opportunities you have at your disposal.

- Do not be too hard on yourself. Recognize that adjusting to a new culture is very challenging. Keep in mind all the new things you have mastered since your arrival. Learn to laugh at your mistakes, and learn from them.
- Take advantage of the Counseling Center. Free, confidential counseling is available, so utilize the expert guidance and help.

Cultural Norms

People in the US attach a lot of importance to the ideal of equality for all. Although this dream has not been achieved yet, respect for individuals regardless of occupation, handicap, sex, race, or religion is expected. All individuals you meet deserve the same consideration and courtesy, whether they are professors, students, doctors or janitors. People in the US tend to be rather independent and tend to think for themselves. The concept of individual rights is important, especially the right to free speech.

Also, freedom of religion is a basic tenet of US society. People tend to be involved in their community, which usually involves the local church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship. Churches often organize recreational activities and also perform a wide array of services for the local community-dinners, tutoring, free English lessons, etc.

US culture is increasingly more informal. The way people dress, act, and treat each other is generally considered to be relaxed, informal, and not rigidly structured. Certain occasions are more formal than others, so take your cue from other people until you feel comfortable gauging just how formally to act, dress, or speak.

Your own cultural norms may conflict with accepted behavior in the United States. When a clash in beliefs, values, or traditions occurs, please try to understand the distinction in culture. Keep in mind that no one culture is right or wrong; they are simply different from one another. Observing the behavior that is happening around you is a good way to learn some of these generally accepted US norms.

If you have any questions about any of the US social customs described below, do not hesitate to ask a fellow student, or the CGE staff. Social customs tend to be vague, especially compared to other countries where the social life is more structured. It is not unusual to be confused at first, so please ask for explanations or help.

Manners

People in the US tend to be friendly, patient, and polite, and they expect the same treatment from others. "Please," "Thank you," "Excuse me," and "I'm sorry" are used frequently. Also, phrases said in casual passing, such as "How are you?" do not necessarily mean that the person wants to know how you are feeling. It is usually meant as another way to say "Good morning," or "Hello." An appropriate response is saying "Fine, thank you. How are you?" When departing, phrases such as "See you later" and "Let's get together sometime" are often meant as a casual goodbye rather than an actual invitation. When in doubt, please clarify whether it is an actual invitation or not.

People in the United States tend to wait in lines, wait their turn, and usually give others at least an arm's length of "personal space." Eye contact is also important. Generally, it is considered impolite to make phone calls before 10:00 a.m. and after 10:00 p.m., though these times can vary depending on a person's schedule (a fellow student may have a different bedtime than your professor).

Introductions

When meeting someone for the first time, a handshake is standard behavior, and many people introduce themselves rather than waiting for a formal introduction by someone else. “Nice to meet you” or “Pleased to meet you” is the standard response either after someone has been introduced to you, or after someone has introduced himself or herself. It is always better to address someone as Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr. at first rather than by their first name, especially if they are older than you—they can always tell you to call them by their first name if they feel that this form of address is too formal. Be prepared to explain where you are from and, if necessary, repeat your name several times and explain how to pronounce it.

Invitations

You may be invited to certain events by personal invitation, which can be printed, handwritten, or verbal. If you are invited and you cannot attend, you may politely turn down the invitation. However, accepting an invitation and then failing to show up is inconsiderate. If you are not sure whether or not you can attend, say so and if possible, call to indicate your plans. If you are invited to someone’s home for the first time, it is customary to bring the person a small hospitality gift, such as flowers, a small token from your home country, or some other inexpensive item. If you are unsure about what type of gift may be appropriate, ask. If you are invited to a meal or refreshments and you have special dietary restrictions, it is considered polite to inform your host of these restrictions in advance, preferably at the time you accept the invitation. When expressing thanks to a host, a short letter or card is sufficient.

Dating

The norms and traditions of dating in the United States are difficult to explain. To date a person implies that you would like to know him/her better. Going to social events together indicates an enjoyment of the other person’s company rather than implying a serious commitment.

US women and men are generally treated equally. As a result, dating norms and acceptable behavior are subtle, implied, and constantly changing. Many students prefer to go out in groups or date casually, often meeting for a date in a pre-determined location and sharing the cost of the date. The person who does the asking is generally expected to be the person who pays for the date, though it is polite to offer (once, without insisting) to pay your share and see if your offer is accepted.

Smoking

Smoking in the United States has continued to fall out of favor, with the exception of college and university campuses. Smoking is banned in most public places such as restaurants, hospitals, stores, and schools. If you smoke, it is always appropriate to ask if, and where, you are permitted to smoke. If you are at someone’s home, it is generally customary to smoke outside, unless your host is also a smoker and indicates that smoking indoors is permitted.

Alcohol

Purchase, possession, and consumption of alcohol in the United States is restricted to individuals who are 21 years old and older. Also, you cannot be in a public place (street, park, etc.) with an open container of alcohol. This law applies to everyone, even for those over 21 and also includes having an open container in a car driven by a non-drinking driver. Violations involving alcohol can lead to arrest or fines. It may also lead to sanctions by the university. When purchasing alcohol, you will likely be asked to “show ID” (show the store clerk proof

that you are at least 21 years of age). An acceptable form of ID is your passport, your driver's license, or your state ID card.

Please do not drink and drive, keeping your own and others' safety in mind, and do not accept a ride from someone who has been drinking. Drinking and driving is a serious offense in the US and will result in hefty fines, suspension of your driver's license, significant legal trouble, and imprisonment. Please call a taxi or a friend who has not been drinking if you must have a ride home.

Time

The concept of time is very important to most people in the US. Classes, plays, concerts, public meetings, dinners, and other events begin as scheduled. Being late is generally not accepted and is considered rude behavior, as if the person being made to wait is less important than the person keeping them waiting. Setting appointments or scheduling a specific time to meet is common practice. If you know that you will be late to a meeting or appointment, a phone call to explain your tardiness is generally expected along with an apology. "Late" is being more than 5 or 10 minutes behind your scheduled time. If your appointment is with a dentist, medical doctor, or other professional, arriving more than 10 minutes late generally indicates that you have skipped your appointment, and you will likely be charged a fee for failing to call to cancel or to inform the receptionist of your anticipated late arrival.

Hygiene

People in the US are very much aware of their personal hygiene. They tend to shower daily, and deodorants are universally used. Clothing is worn one day and then a different outfit is worn the following day. Many people also change from one type of outfit to another, depending on the activity that will be taking place later that day (you may wear a t-shirt and shorts to class, but you would put on khakis and a more formal shirt to go to a party or to dinner at your professor's house).

Shopping

In the US, prices are fixed, so trading and bargaining do not work, except when you are purchasing a car. Bartering with the salesperson may be effective in this circumstance.

Generally speaking, there is an abundance of stores in the US and comparing prices at several stores before buying is a good practice. When shopping, use the shopping cart or basket that the store provides. Also, keep receipts so you can return unused or unwanted items. Generally, you can return items up to three months after purchasing them; however, some stores prohibit you from returning items that were bought during a sale.

There is a sales tax in Georgia on most items sold. The tax in Dahlonega is currently 7% of the cost. Therefore, if an item costs \$1, you pay the seller \$1.07. In most countries, sales tax is already included in the price, but in the US this tax is levied when you make the actual purchase.

Tipping

Tipping is a prevalent custom in the United States. In restaurants, customers are expected to tip the waiter or waitress between 15% to 20% of the total amount of the bill. If your car is parked by a valet attendant, you should generally give him or her a dollar or two. The attendant who checks your coat at a restaurant or other event should also receive a dollar or two. When you get a haircut, you are generally expected to tip your stylist 10% to 15% of the cost of the haircut. Bellmen in hotels and airport skycaps generally receive one dollar per bag, unless they are extraordinarily helpful and go out of their way to assist you. Room service attendants

should generally receive a 15% to 20% tip, and the pizza delivery person should also receive a tip of at least 10% to 15% of the price of the pizza. Taxi drivers should be tipped approximately 10% to 15% of the cost of the fare.

Clothing

What people wear in your home country may be different from what people wear in the United States. Generally, people in the US are fairly casual in their dress, with the exception of formal occasions. If you are invited by written invitation to a party, generally, the invitation will include some information about dress. If no information is included with the invitation, you may be able to guess the attire based on the activity. Generally, a suit or jacket and tie are reserved for semi-formal occasions, a tuxedo is reserved for very formal occasions, and a nice pair of pants with a collared shirt or sweater is acceptable casual wear. Jeans are very informal and khaki pants are less informal depending on the type of shirt they are paired with. For women, there are various types of pants, skirts, or dresses that are appropriate for any occasion. Shorts or casual pants are worn for informal occasions.

Clothing Sizes

Women's Clothing

Japanese	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21
US	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22
British	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44
Continental	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50

Collar Sizes, Men's Shirts

Japanese	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
US	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5	17
British	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5	17
Continental	36	37	38	39	40	41	42

Men's Suits, Overcoats, and Sweaters

Japanese	S		M		L		LL
US	34	36	38	40	42	44	46
British	34	36	38	40	42	44	46
Continental	44	46	48	50	52	54	56

Women's Shoes

Japanese	23	23.5	24	24.5	25	25.5	26
US	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9
British	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5
Continental	36	37	38	38	38	39	40

Men's Shoes

Japanese	24.5		26		27.5	28	29
US	5.5	6.5	7.5	8.5	9.5	10.5	11.5
British	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Continental	39	40	41	42	43	44	45

Weights and Measures

Though a few things are measured using the metric system in the United States, most are not. Below are some common Metric equivalents to standard US measurements:

Temperature

32° Fahrenheit (F) = 0°C (32° F is freezing)
40° F = 5°C
50° F = 10°C
60° F = 16°C
70° F = 21°C
80° F = 27°C
90° F = 31°C
100° F = 38°C
212° F = 100°C (212° is boiling)

Length

1 inch (in.) = 2.54 cm
1 foot (ft.) = .31 m
1 yard (yd.) = .91 m
1 mile (mi.) = 1.61 km
[12 in. = 1 ft.]
[3 ft. = 1 yd.]
[5280 ft. = 1 mi]

Volume

1 teaspoon (tsp.) = 5 ml
1 fluid ounce (fl. oz.) = 29.6 ml
1 pint (pt.) = .47 l
1 quart (qt.) = .95 liter
1 gallon (gal.) = 3.79 l
3 tsp. = 1 Tsp.
[16 Tsp. = 1 cup]
[4 cups = 1 pt.]
[2 pt. = 1 qt.]
[4 qt. = 1 gal.]

Weight

1 ounce (oz.) = 28.4 g
1 pound (lb.) = .45 kg
[16 oz. = 1 lb.]

Area

1 square foot (sq. ft.) = .093 m²
1 acre = 4046.48 m²
1 square mile (sq. mi.) = 2.59 km²
[1 sq. ft. = 144 sq. in.]
[1 sq. yd. = 9 sq. ft.]
[1 acre = 4840 sq. yds.]

Speed

1 mile per hour (mph) = 1.6 km/h

Electric Current

The standard US current is 110 volts, 60 cycles alternating current (A.C.). Appliances running on 220-240 volts will not work in the US. Most appliance or hardware stores will carry current conversion kits that will work on appliances.

For a conversion calculator, please visit <http://www.sciencemadesimple.net>

General Information and Settling In

Finances

Paper money is available in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, and higher. Coins are available in denominations of \$.01 (the penny), \$.05 (the nickel), \$.10 (the dime), and \$.25 (the quarter). There are also a few types of \$1 coins that are easily confused with quarters, but these are not in wide circulation.

You will want to open a bank account within a few days of your arrival. There are several types of accounts available. Checking and savings accounts are the two most common ones. A checking account allows you to deposit money and then write a check or use a debit card to pay for your purchases. A checking account may or may not have a monthly fee or service charge, and some checking accounts require you to maintain a certain minimum balance. Also, some checking accounts are interest bearing and others are not. A savings account is a good place to store funds that you do not need to access on a daily basis. Ask your bank clerk for a complete explanation of the types of accounts that are available. Your bank may also offer other services, such as foreign currency conversion, travelers' checks, bank drafts, and money orders. Money deposited in banks is generally insured for the amount of the account, up to \$100,000. For good resources on banking, budgeting and finances, visit <http://www.themint.org>. To find a local bank, visit <http://www.yellowpages.com>

Automated Teller Machines (ATM's) dispense cash, allow transfers, and accept deposits 24 hours a day. ATM's are accessed by the account holder's debit card. This debit card allows you to withdraw money directly from your account. If you use an ATM that is not affiliated with your bank, you may be charged a fee for using this service. See <http://themint.org/spending> for more information.

You may wish to open a credit card account, but be sure to read the fine print, and pay attention to the interest rates that the credit card company will charge you for any unpaid balances. Credit cards allow you to make purchases even if you do not have any money available for that purchase, which means that you are essentially borrowing money from the credit card company. As a result, credit card debt is a big danger, so be careful to keep track of your expenses, and try to pay the balance in full each month. Be aware that it is sometimes difficult for international students to acquire a credit card issued by a US bank. You may receive unsolicited mail from credit card companies informing you that you have been pre-approved to receive a credit card, but most of these credit card companies require US citizenship or permanent residence status to qualify. See <http://themint.org/owing> for more tips and helpful information.

Housing

There are a limited number of on-campus living options currently at North Georgia. Many international students live off-campus in Dahlonega, Dawsonville, Gainesville, Cleveland and other surrounding towns. If you are interested in living on campus please contact Residence Life at 706-864-1900 or visit their website at: <http://www.northgeorgia.edu/ResLife/>

Living in an apartment or house off-campus requires that you make a security deposit and sign a lease or rental agreement. A security deposit is usually equivalent to one month's rent. Paying a deposit means that you have expressed interest in the property and intend to live there. It essentially "holds" the property for you until you move in. The security deposit will be returned to you when you move out, provided you leave the apartment in good condition. When you move into the apartment, you sign a lease or rental agreement. This is a binding legal

contract between you and the landlord. When you sign a lease, you are obligated to pay the landlord monthly rent for the duration of the lease. Therefore, before you sign you should be reasonably sure that you can live with your decision for the duration of your lease. Never sign a lease unless you are completely satisfied with the apartment and surrounding property. Sign only when you understand all the terms of the lease. When you sign, you also agree to be responsible for any damages that occur while you live in the apartment or house. You must give 30 days notice to your landlord before you move out, in writing, and you will need to remove your name from the lease.

As soon as you have confirmed where you will live, it is a good idea to immediately contact the local utility providers to set up service for your telephone, water, electricity, gas, and cable or DSL service. In some cases, hook-ups can take up to two weeks, so be sure to take care of this immediately. Utility companies usually charge a fee for connection of services and may also require a deposit, so be sure to ask about any charges or deposits that will be associated with your service. Usually, you will have to make an appointment and be present in your apartment or house when the utility providers arrive to initiate service. If you are not present, the provider will not connect your utility, and you will have to reschedule and be present at a later time in order to have your service connected.

When you vacate the apartment, it should be left clean, including the refrigerator and oven. At the time you vacate, do not leave anything behind and surrender your keys immediately. When you vacate, you must call each utility company and order the service disconnected or be responsible for usage after you leave. You must give a forwarding address for final bills, or go in person to close these accounts.

Renter's insurance will cover your possessions in the event of theft, fire, flood, or other disaster. This insurance is available for any type of room or apartment you rent. When you purchase this insurance and something happens to your belongings, the insurance company will provide you with full or partial replacement value for your possessions depending on the situation. This insurance is optional, so you might want to weigh the risks and benefits of purchasing this type of insurance. If you have expensive equipment, many valuables, or would rather be "safe than sorry," you may want to consider purchasing renter's insurance. This insurance will bring some peace of mind when unforeseen circumstances occur. To find a local insurance provider, you may use <http://www.yellowpages.com>

Land and Mobile Telephones

NOTE: Due to the wide use of mobile phones in the United States, public phones and phones in residential housing on campus have been disconnected and are no longer available.

If you want to call your friends and family using a land line telephone, using a calling card is probably the most financially savvy way to do so. You can buy calling cards at most grocery stores and convenience stores. There are also several websites where you can purchase calling cards. The websites <http://www.callingcards.com> and <http://www.phonecards.com> usually have very good rates for dialing internationally. When purchasing a calling card, follow the instructions. These will tell you the number to call and the authorization number to enter. The time used talking on the phone will be deducted from the card. After each call, you will be told how much money and time is left on your card.

If you want to call collect, dial "0" and the operator should assist you. The option of calling collect is not available to most countries. You may also want to establish an account with a long distance company, so you can dial directly. You may choose any long distance carrier to provide this service to you. Shopping around and calling different carriers may pay off to find the best rate to your country. The following is the procedure for making a direct international call:

1. The international access code is 011
2. The country code (listed in the telephone book)
3. The city code
4. The local telephone number

For domestic long distance calls, dial 1+the city code+ the local telephone number. For calls in Dahlonega, dial the city code and the local telephone number. Local calls are free.

If you wish to purchase a mobile phone, there are various calling plans, service providers, and options available. There are currently four major mobile phone service providers that serve the Dahlonega area: Verizon Wireless, Sprint, AT&T Wireless, and T-Mobile. These providers have both pre-paid/temporary plan options and contract agreement options. Be sure to carefully compare plans before choosing a mobile phone provider. Many of the contract options require at least a one-year service contract and once chosen, the contract is very hard (and expensive) to terminate.

Skype and Other Internet Communication Options

If you and the person you are speaking to both have an internet connection, speakers and a microphone, the most cost effective form of voice communication would be through the use of Skype or an equivalent. Using Skype, both parties can talk for free over their internet connections. You can also call land lines using Skype by setting up a Skype-Out account and pre-paying for phone time. For more information on Skype please go to: <http://www.skype.com/welcomeback/>.

Also if you are on the internet, you can use one of the many instant messaging services like msn, aim, and yahoo to connect with your family back home and your new friends in the United States. Also, you can use social networking sites like facebook and myspace to stay connected. If all else fails for internet communications, there is also the old standby of regular email.

You will almost always have access to a computer with internet while on campus, even if you do not have your own. Internet communications are a good and cost effective way to stay in touch.

Safety and Legal Issues

Police in the United States are trustworthy and fair about enforcing laws and procedures. As an international student, you are subject to the laws of the federal US government and the Georgia state government, and are expected to be aware of those regulations. You are also entitled to the same protections as US citizens. If you break the law, you are expected to know your rights and responsibilities. You may want to read and become familiar with the advice offered by the American Civil Liberties Union, available at the following Web site: <http://www.aclu.org/issues/criminal/bustcardtext.html>.

Though most safety tips are common sense, it is important to be aware of your surroundings at all times. Always lock your apartment or car door. Always let roommates know where you are going, what you are doing, how long you plan to be gone, and who is accompanying you. Avoid walking alone at night. Avoid carrying large sums of cash or valuables with you. Do not open the door to strangers. Do not divulge personal information about yourself or where you live to people you do not know. Walk briskly and purposefully when in unfamiliar areas and do not act lost, even when you are. When a situation makes you uneasy or uncomfortable, do not ignore your instincts.

To report an emergency where someone needs immediate help, dial 9-1-1. This number will connect you with emergency services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tell the emergency dispatcher the exact nature of the

emergency, and do not hang up the phone until instructed to do so. Calling “911” will dispatch the police, fire department, or a hospital ambulance. If you need to reach the local police in the event of a non-emergency, simply dial “0” and an operator will connect you. To reach the University Police, dial 706-864-1500. Dialing “911” as a joke or prank is illegal and can result in fines or even criminal prosecution.

Transportation

Bicycles can be bought new or used through advertisements in the school or local paper, or through local stores.

Some students choose to purchase automobiles. They are a great convenience, but can be very expensive. It is wise to compare base prices, additional costs, and get advice from experienced people not involved in selling cars. Consumer Reports magazine is a good reference on most US and foreign cars and is available at newsstands and libraries.

Used cars are less expensive than new cars, but the buyer must be willing to take the risk of car trouble and repair costs. Any reputable person selling a used car will allow you to take the car to a garage mechanic to be thoroughly checked before you decide whether or not to buy it. Mechanics will charge for this service, but having the car checked is a wise precaution to avoid buying a car in bad condition.

Plan your purchase before you visit a car dealer: the age and type of car you want, price, down payment, and terms of financing. You should make a note of the Blue Book value of the car, which is available at most banks and on-line at <http://www.kbb.com>. When you visit the car dealer, explain to the salesperson that you do not intend to buy a car now, but that you plan to shop around and compare prices. Do not permit the salesperson to urge you to make a quick decision.

Taxis are available in Dahlonega, however, these are not the best choice financially. In Dahlonega, it is hardly possible to hail a taxicab, so calling a taxi company is necessary. When calling, please be prepared to state the exact address from where you wish to be picked up. Please visit <http://www.yellowpages.com> to find local taxi companies.

Driving

You must have a driver’s license to operate a motor vehicle in the United States. Your international driver’s license authorizes you to drive in the US, but local laws and driving procedures may be very different from those in your home country. You may wish to obtain a Georgia driver’s license.

If you already have a driver’s license, you will be asked to surrender your home country license before a Georgia license is issued. Please contact your country’s embassy or consulate to ask them what the procedure is for retrieving your driver’s license or applying for a new one when you leave Georgia. Please visit <http://www.embassy.org> for a listing of embassies and consulates in the United States. If you do not have a license, you will need to take a written test and a driving test in order to obtain your Georgia driver’s license.

To apply for a driver’s license, you must also show proof of identification (passport, I-20 or DS-2019, and I-94 card), a social security card or letter from the Social Security Office stating that you are ineligible for one, and proof that you reside in the state of Georgia by showing a utility bill or bank statement, and a copy of your rental contract/lease agreement. If you have all appropriate documentation, you will be required to take a written and road test in order to get a Georgia license. A \$20 fee is required at the time the license is issued that is payable by cash, check, money order, Mastercard or Visa. For more information on required documents, go to <http://www.dds.ga.gov/drivers/DLdata.aspx?con=1741471757&ty=dl>.

If you do not have a driver's license and do not wish to get one, you may apply for a Georgia ID card. This card has the exact same information as a driver's license. In order to get a state ID, you need to show the same proof of identification and residency as you would to get a driver's license. The cost of a state ID is \$20 for five years or \$35 for a card valid for 10 years. State IDs and driver's licenses serve as an official form of ID in the US, and they are helpful to have when wanting to open a bank account or conduct other personal business matters.

You can apply for a driver's license or state ID at one of these nearby Department of Driver Services locations:

**1010 Aviation Blvd
Gainesville GA. 30501**

Office Hours

**Tuesday - Friday 7:30 - 6:30
Saturday 7:30 - 12:00**

**4055 County Way
Cumming GA. 30028**

Office Hours

**Tuesday – Friday 8:00 – 6:00
Saturday 8:00 – 12:00**

In order to operate a car in the US, you need to have car insurance. Georgia requires all drivers to have liability insurance, however, if you limit your coverage to this type of insurance, only the car of the other party with whom you might be involved in an accident is insured. It does not cover the damage to your own car. For this type of coverage, collision insurance must be purchased. Please let your insurance company advise you on what coverage is best for your vehicle and situation. There are many car insurance companies, and you should shop around to get the best rates. To get a better insurance rate, it is helpful to have a Georgia driver's license rather than one from your home country. Learn more about car insurance at <http://www.carinsurance.com>. To find a local insurance provider, you may use <http://www.yellowpages.com>.

All drivers are responsible for knowing the driving regulations of the State of Georgia. You can find out all driving rules in Georgia by downloading the current Georgia Driver's Manual, which is available online at <http://www.dds.ga.gov/drivers/index.aspx>.

If you break the law and are spotted by the police, the police officer will indicate that you need to pull over by turning on a siren and by flashing the car's blue lights. As soon as you can do so safely, pull over to the right side of the road without impeding the flow of traffic or turn into a parking lot. Park the car, but do not get out. Roll down the window when the officer approaches, and be courteous, even if you are angry or puzzled about why you were pulled over. You will need to provide the officer with your driver's license, proof of auto insurance, and the car registration. If you are issued a ticket, you will probably be subject to a fine, and you may be required to appear in traffic court. If you are issued a warning, you will not need to appear in court or pay a fine, and you should thank the officer for only issuing you a warning.

If you are involved in an accident involving another car, call the police immediately and alert them to the need for an ambulance if you or other passengers are injured. It is best to avoid a confrontation with the other driver, so it might be a good idea to avoid speaking to the driver until the police officer arrives.

Taxes

All international students in the United States must obey a United States law, which means that international students need to file tax documentation for any year that they were in the United States. Failure to file tax documentation can have a negative effect on a student's immigration status and may prevent a student from attaining other visa statuses. The international student advisor is trained to aid students with preparing their Non-Resident tax returns and documentation. International students may make an appointment with the

international student advisor to do their taxes starting the week after North Georgia's spring break in March until April 14th.

Health Insurance

Health insurance in the United States is essential. Unlike many countries around the world, medicine is not socialized, so the government does not pay for doctor's visits, visits to the hospital, or any other type of medical care. Since an accident or illness can be very expensive, adequate insurance coverage is required. NORTH GEORGIA requires all international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa to carry medical insurance through Pearce & Pearce, Inc. Payment is due along with your tuition and fees each term that you are enrolled.

You must carry this card with you at all times in case you encounter an emergency and need to see a doctor. For the 2010-2011 academic year, the insurance premium will be \$507 for the fall term and \$653 for the spring and summer terms. To learn more about your benefits go to Pearce and Pearce's North Georgia insurance homepage at <https://www.pearceandpearce.com/PearceSite/Schools/GA/NGCSU/>. Also, by going to this website you will be able to set-up your student account, print a temporary ID card, waive coverage, and do a network provider search.

Your insurance does not cover expenses related to vision and dental health. There are various independent vision care centers that can offer eye exams, glasses, and contact lenses for a fairly reasonable price. A visit to the dentist for a cleaning and check-up typically costs less than \$100, but any sort of dental work (fillings, crowns, extractions) is very expensive. Purchasing a separate dental insurance policy may be a worthwhile investment. To find out more about the details of the medical insurance that you must carry and the optional dental insurance that you may buy, please visit www.studentinsurance.com. Also, please be aware that the Pearce and Pearce, Inc. insurance contracts with certain, but not all local doctors and clinics. Please visit the website and perform a "Network Provider Search" to find out which doctor and clinic you may visit.

Illness

In the event that you become sick, it is advisable that you visit the Student Health Clinic as soon as possible. The staff there will evaluate your illness and refer you to a doctor or to the hospital emergency room depending on the seriousness of your illness. An ambulance should be summoned for any life-threatening emergency, but all other sicknesses should first be evaluated by the Student Health Clinic.

Academic Integrity

Academic standards and practices are influenced by culture. What is considered appropriate academic behavior in your home country might be different from what is appropriate in the US. The US definition of academic honesty is based on the cultural values of individualism, fairness, the idea that individuals must work independently, using original thinking, creativity, and invention. This means that plagiarism and cheating are not allowed. Plagiarism is defined as copying the work of someone else and not naming this person as your source. In the US, this will be perceived as an attempt to utilize the ideas or words of another person as your own.

Plagiarism is one of the most serious violations of academic conduct standards in the US. Of course, when you are writing a paper you research many sources and then present or summarize other people's ideas. But you must name your sources and identify them when you are using their words and ideas. This also applies to the work of other students. Discussing ideas for a paper with friends is okay, but it is not acceptable to hand in papers that are the same as your friends', or to let someone else write your paper for you, even though the ideas are yours.

Cheating is defined as copying someone else's work or taking prohibited information or tools to an exam. Be sure that the work you complete is always your own, and be sure to ask about proper citations and references if you do not yet fully understand how to use them.

Class Expectations

Your instructor will give you a course syllabus, which contains all the information relevant to your course- expectations, required texts, suggested texts, assignments, exam dates, and additional course requirements. This syllabus is considered to be an implicit contract; by enrolling in the course, you accept the information and schedule that are outlined in the syllabus. Most instructors tend to follow the schedule printed in the syllabus, so generally you can count on the assignment and test dates listed on your syllabus.

Class attendance is usually required and often affects your final grade. It is important that you make every effort to attend class. When you cannot, try to obtain any notes and handouts that were missed during your absence. It may also be a good idea to meet with your professor during his or her office hours after an absence for any material you missed.

Adequate class preparation ensures that you can participate actively and productively in class on a voluntary or compulsory basis. Your professors should be addressed as "Doctor" or "Professor" followed by their last name unless they inform you otherwise. Though lively debate is sometimes the norm in classes that involve considerable class discussions, interrupting someone else while he or she is talking is considered rude, especially if the person you interrupt is your instructor. Looking someone in the eye when you speak to him/her or when he/she speaks to you is important; avoiding eye contact makes people uncomfortable and gives the impression of indifference.

All professors have scheduled office hours during which students can go talk to them to ask questions or discuss problems. Professors encourage students to visit them during their office hours. If you need additional time, you can also make an appointment to meet with your professor outside office hours.

North Georgia College and State University

Information for International Students



Tuition and Fees

All international students on F-1 and J-1 visas must be enrolled for 12 credit hours the first semester that they attend and every Fall and Spring semester afterward. Even though some students have some of their tuition and fees paid for through scholarships, all students are responsible for insurance fees and material fees related to enrollment in a certain class. Please make sure that you log into your Banner account to make sure that all your fees are paid. You can log in to Banner by going to <https://banner.northgeorgia.edu/>. Tuition and Fees will vary every year, so please visit the North Georgia Website for current tuition costs.

All international students are classified as NON-RESIDENT. This means that international students are required to pay out-of-state tuition. Some international students can receive waivers that will allow them to pay only in-state tuition. These waivers are scarce and require the student meet certain criteria. If you are able to get one of these waivers and do not meet or exceed this criterion, you will lose the waiver and will be required to pay out-of-state tuition.

NOTE: Full payment of tuition and fees by the posted deadline is expected. If you are not able to pay your tuition and fees possible consequences can be late fees, being unable to register for classes, being dropped from classes and even legal action against you. The events that result can also cause you to be terminated from your immigration status. Make sure that you stay informed on deadlines for payment and pay in full by the deadlines. Messages will be sent out about payment deadlines on your North Georgia email account, so make sure that you check it frequently.

Academic Advisors

Academic advising is an integral part of the educational program. Academic advisors are faculty members who help you think about academic, personal, and career goals, so you can plan a program of study that will enable you to achieve these goals. The advising process allows a student to understand the educational and career options available to him/her. The advisor approves specific courses required to complete the degree of the student's choice. The student maintains communication with the advisor throughout their academic career.

As a student at North Georgia, you will be assigned an academic advisor within the major you have selected. You can find out who is your assigned academic advisor is by logging into your Banner account. If you find another faculty member within your major other than your assigned academic advisor that you would like to be your advisor, you do have the option to change your academic advisor.

Grades

Assessment, evaluation, and grading will typically be explained in your course syllabus. A letter grading scale is the norm for universities in the US. NORTH GEORGIA uses the generally established 4.0 grade point system.

A= Excellent 4 on a 4-point scale
B= Good 3 on a 4-point scale
C= Average 2 on a 4-point scale

D= Poor/Passing 1 on a 4-point scale

F= Failing 0 on a 4-point scale

Your grade point average (GPA) is based on a 4-point scale. Your GPA is computed by first taking the grade you receive for a course and multiplying its numerical value by the number of credit hours for the course, then totaling the points earned by all courses and dividing by the total number of credit hours.

Depending on the course and the instructor, the grading scale may differ. For example, in some courses having a 90% or higher will earn you an A, whereas in some others, a 93% or higher will earn you an A. It is important to familiarize yourself with a course's evaluation process as described in the syllabus.

Regents' Test

All degree-seeking undergraduate students attending any University System of Georgia school must pass the Regents' Test, an exam consisting of two parts: a reading test and a writing test. Students are required to take the exam in their first semester of attendance at North Georgia. Students who have not passed either or both parts of the test or who have not taken the test in a timely manner are required to enroll in the appropriate Regents' remedial classes every semester of attendance thereafter until they pass both parts of the test.

Nonnative speakers of English must satisfy the Regents' Test reading and writing requirements in order to graduate. Students who will satisfy the requirement by taking the Regents' Test will take the test in its standard form, with no special accommodations, on their first attempt.

Students who are Nonnative speakers of English may request consideration for ESOL accommodations. In order to qualify for ESOL accommodations, students must demonstrate by their linguistic history that English is not their primary or native language. Requests for ESOL accommodations can be requested through the International Student Advisor. For full details on ESOL accommodation, please see appendix B.

Saints Card

Your Saints Card is your student identification card. During your first couple days on campus, go to the Saints Card Office in Hoag Student Center. This card allows you to use your meal plan, check out books and movies from the Library, attend campus events, and use the Rec Deck. To learn about more things your Saints card can do, please go to the Saints Card Office website at <http://www.northgeorgia.edu/SaintsCard/Default.aspx?id=3495>.

Motor Vehicle Permits and Parking

If you are able to purchase a car and want to drive it to campus, you will need to get a campus parking permit. All motor vehicles that are parked on campus must have a motor vehicle permit sticker, which is called a decal. University decals may be obtained at the Saints Card Office in Hoag Student Center. Please bring your ID, license plate number and temporary parking permit which you must print off of Banner to the Saints Office to receive your permit. Permits are issued for the school year and must be renewed each fall semester.

Students are only allowed to park in parking areas that are designated as student parking. There are currently two types of student parking on campus, commuter and resident. If you live off-campus you will get a commuter decal and will only be able to park in commuter student designated parking areas. If you live on-campus you will receive a resident decal and will only be able to park in resident student designated parking areas. If you are found parking in any other parking lot or space not designated for your decal, you will receive a ticket from Campus Police.

Mail

Any student enrolled at North Georgia can get a student mailbox. If you would like to open a campus mailbox please go down to the Campus Post Office in Hoag Student Center and talk to the Campus Post Office staff. They will be able to guide you through the process. There is a limited amount of campus mailboxes so please make sure that you open one quickly in order to be able to open one.

Smoking and Drinking on Campus

Smoking on campus is limited to designated smoking areas called “Smoke Shacks”. No smoking is allowed in ANY on campus facility, including dormitories and residence halls. Violators will be referred for disciplinary sanction.

Even though in many countries and other campuses even in the United States drinking is allowed if you are of a certain age, drinking is prohibited on North Georgia’s campus, anywhere and anytime! Students found to be drinking on campus will be subject to disciplinary action and will be subject to state and local laws as well. The state laws and consequences in Georgia and most of the United States are as follows:

The Law

- A.** It is illegal for persons under 21 years of age to possess, consume or purchase alcoholic beverages.
- B.** It is illegal for any person to furnish alcoholic beverages to persons under 21 years of age
- C.** It is illegal to furnish, sell, or provide alcoholic beverages to a person who is in a state of noticeable intoxication.
- D.** It is illegal to charge admission to events where alcohol is provided, unless a license for sale of alcoholic beverages has been obtained.
- E.** It is illegal for persons under the age of 21 to misrepresent (fake I.D.) themselves for the purpose of obtaining an alcoholic beverage illegally.
- F.** It is illegal in the City of Dahlonega to carry an open container of an alcoholic beverage.

Penalties for Alcohol – Georgia

- A.** Alcohol possession and selling violations
 - 1. Up to 1-year imprisonment
 - 2. Up to \$1,000 fine
- B.** Driving under the influence
 - 1. One day to one year’s imprisonment
 - 2. Up to \$1000 fine
 - 3. Suspension of license for a minimum of six months
 - 4. Perform 20 to 40 hours of community service
- C.** Open-container - Dahlonega
 - 1. \$250 fine
- D.** Underage drinking - Dahlonega
 - 1. Up to \$1,000 fine
 - 2. Community service.
 - 3. Alcohol Prevention Classes
 - 4. Minimum 6 months probation

Getting Involved on Campus

There are many things to do on campus at North Georgia and numerous student organizations for students to get involved in. Student organizations are a valuable resource to make connections with other student, international or domestic. It is also a great way to experience new things.

International Student Association (ISA): The international student organization is a collective group of international and domestic students that are interested in learning about cultures from all over the world. The international student organization does numerous events over the course of the year including the International Food Festival, the International Dinner, and the Culture show. ISA also helps new international students adjust to campus life at North Georgia and has an international student mentor program that pairs new students with returning students.

Student Activities Board: The Student Activities Board is the planning and programming body for student activities on the North Georgia campus. Any student interested in a variety of campus activities can contribute her/his ideas and talents by actively participating on the board. The Student Activities Board, headquartered in the Student Center, is a comprehensive program of student activities planned and executed by enthusiastic students.

Other Student Organizations

Organization	Organization Type
American Marketing Association	Academic
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Developmet	Academic
Chinese Club	Academic
Collegiate Chapter of MENC	Academic
Collegiate Middle Level Association (CMLA)	Academic
Criminal Justice Association	Academic
Georgia Association of Nursing Students (GANS)	Academic
Health & Physical Education Majors Club (HPE)	Academic
Math Club	Academic
MPA Student Association	Academic
Political Science Student Association	Academic
Pre-Dental Society	Academic
Psychology Club	Academic
Society of Chemistry Students	Academic

Society of Physics Students	Academic
Spectrum Art Club	Academic
Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE)	Academic
Rugby Club	Club Sport
Step Team	Club Sport
Wrestling Club	Club Sport
Boundless Expression	General
Campus Girl Scouts	General
College Democrats' Club	General
College Republicans	General
Community Leadership Connection	General
Commuter Council	General
Dance Team	General
Environmental Awareness Club	General
Equestrian Club	General
Gamma Sigma Sigma	General
Gay Straight Alliance	General
Graduate Student Senate	General
Habitat for Humanity	General
International Student Association (ISA)	General
Invisible Children	General
Latino-American Student Organization	General
Mountain Laurels	General
NORTH GEORGIA Cyclops	General
NORTH GEORGIA Orchestra	General
Project Dignity	General
Saints of Anime	General
Singers, Le Belle Voci, Patriot Choir	General
Student Activities Board	General
Student Council of International Affairs	General
Student Government Association	General

Student Theatre Guild	General
Swing Dance Club	General
The Saint (Newspaper)	General
Service and Action Shooting Sports Program	General (Military)
Alpha Phi Omega	General/Service
Alpha Gamma Delta	Greek
Alpha Phi Alpha	Greek
Delta Zeta	Greek
Interfraternity Council	Greek
Kappa Delta Sorority	Greek
Kappa Sigma Fraternity	Greek
Panhellenic Council	Greek
Phi Mu Sorority	Greek
Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity	Greek
Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity	Greek
Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity	Greek
Sigma Chi Fraternity	Greek
Sigma Kappa Sorority	Greek
Sigma Nu Fraternity	Greek
Sigma Omega Fraternity	Greek
Alpha Kappa Delta (Sociology)	Honor Society
Alpha Phi Sigma (Criminal Justice)	Honor Society
Beta Beta Beta (Biology)	Honor Society
Council of Honor Societies	Honor Society
Iota Tau Alpha (Athletic Training)	Honor Society
Kappa Delta Pi (Education)	Honor Society
Mu Epsilon Delta (Health Sciences)	Honor Society
Omicron Delta Kappa (Leadership)	Honor Society
Phi Eta Sigma (Freshmen)	Honor Society
Pi Delta Phi (French)	Honor Society
Pi Gamma Mu (Social Science)	Honor Society

Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science)	Honor Society
Psi Chi (Psychology)	Honor Society
Rho Tau (Physical Therapy)	Honor Society
Sigma Delta Pi (Spanish)	Honor Society
Sigma Tau Delta (English)	Honor Society
Sigma Theta Tau (Nursing)	Honor Society
Scabbard & Blade (Military)	Honor Society
Pre-Law Society	General
La Table Rond	General
Dead Philosopher's Club of North Georgia	General
Hall Council	General
NGTV	General
Baptist Collegiate Ministries	Religious
Campus Outreach	Religious
Canterbury Club	Religious
College Life/Young Life	Religious
Latter Day Saints Students Association	Religious
Newman Club	Religious
Our Generation	Religious
The Well	Religious
Wesley Foundation	Religious

More information and current campus policies and regulations can be found in the North Georgia Student Handbook at <http://www.North Georgia.edu/StudentLife/Handbook/handbook.htm>.

Keeping your Status: Important F-1 and J-1 Immigration Regulations



For this section, some regulations discussed will be only for F-1 Students or only for J-1 students. If a regulation is only for F-1 Students an “F-1 only” in parentheses, (F-1 only), will appear. Example: **Optional Practical Training (OPT) (F-1 only)**. If a regulation is only for J-1 Students then a “J-1 only” in parentheses, (J-1 only), will appear. If the regulation is true for both, nothing will appear.

Maintain Valid Documentation

As an F-1 and J-1 student you must keep your immigration documentation up to date at ALL TIMES!!! This means that you must have a valid I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1), Passport, and I-94 at all times. Keeping these documents up-to-date is your responsibility. Failure to keep these documents up-to-date could result in loss of status.

If any of your immigration documentation is lost, please take steps to replace the missing item as soon as possible. If you lose your I-20, DS-2019 or I-94, please contact the current international student advisor in order to apply for a replacement. If you lose your passport please contact your nearest consulate or embassy in the United States to find out how you can receive a replacement.

NOTE: Your actual visa **DOES NOT** need to be valid **WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES**. Once in the United States your I-20 or DS-2019 becomes the documents that demonstrate that you are in status. A valid visa IS required if you leave the United States and want to come back.

Full Course of Study Requirement

All F-1 and J-1 international students are required to be enrolled full-time during the entire semester. At North Georgia, this requires enrollment in at least 12 credit hours. If an international student in F-1 or J-1 status falls below 12 credit hours, and they cannot return to the class, they will be terminated from status.

Online Classes: Increasingly, more and more classes are going completely online. If you are an F-1 or J-1 student you must be taking at least 9 credit hours of traditional classroom study to count as a full-time student. Any other classes taken above these 9 credit hours can be online.

Exceptions to the Full Course of Study Requirement

If you believe you meet the criterion for one of the exceptions below, please contact the international student advisor for more information on applying for the exception.

Academic Difficulty Exception: A student seeking this exception at North Georgia will not be considered for the exception after their first semester or if they are transferring in from another US institution. To be eligible for this exception, a student must meet one of the following conditions:

- Initial difficulties with the English language
- Initial difficulties with reading requirements
- Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods

- Improper course level placement

If a student does not meet one of these conditions, they will not be considered for the exemption under any circumstances.

If a student meets all the requirements, the student will be permitted to take a minimum of 6 hours due to academic difficulty. If a student is granted a reduced course load due to Academic Difficulty, they must return to a full course of study in the next session. Once granted an Academic Difficulty exception, a student is ineligible for another reduction of course load due to Academic difficulty.

Medical Condition Exception: A student must provide documentation from a licensed physician or psychologist outlining the severity of the student's condition and the length of time the student will be required to be away from school. If the student will be out for more than one semester, new and recent documentation must be provided for each semester the student will be away. Medical Condition exceptions can only be granted for a maximum of 12 months over the course of a program.

NOTE: Students will not be granted a medical condition course load reduction in SEVIS at North Georgia if the student only brings a note from student health services saying that they will not be able to return to class for a certain amount of time due to illness. A note from student health services can act as supporting documentation but primary documentation must be from a license physician or psychologist.

Completion of Course of Study Exception: If a student is in their final semester of study at North Georgia they may be exempt from taking a full 12 hours if less than 12 hours is needed to complete their degree. If you are a student that needs less than 12 hours of classes to complete your degree and you are in your final semester, please contact the international student advisor to apply for the exemption.

Obeying Local, State, and Federal Law

The United States has three levels of laws: Local, State, and Federal. All laws must be obeyed while in the United States and ignorance of the law is not an excuse to be free of the consequences. Breaking any law can have an adverse effect on your schoolwork, immigration status, and/or life in general. If you are convicted of a misdemeanor it can mean up to a year in jail and subject to a fine. If you are convicted of a felony it can mean 1 year or more of jail time and a fine. If an international student is convicted of a felony, they will automatically lose their F-1 or J-1 student immigration status in most cases.

SEVIS Registration and Information Reporting Requirements

SEVIS registration occurs during the first 30 days of each semester that an F-1 or J-1 student is required to be enrolled during their program. Please make sure that you contact the international student advisor as soon as possible to correct any information that has changed like your address or a change of major if you have not done so already.

Name and address changes are required to be reported to the international advisor within 10 days of occurring. The address given must be the actual physical address in which you will be staying, not the address that your mail goes to. Failure to keep this information current could result in the loss of status.

Working

Working in the United States is highly restricted while in the United States on an F-1 or J-1 student visa. Since your primary reason for being in the United States is to be a student, unauthorized employment will result in the termination of status and can effect application for future statuses.

On-campus employment: International students are allowed to work on campus for a maximum of 20 hours a week while school is in session and up to 40 hours a week during school breaks and vacations. If it is your first time working, you will be required to apply for a social security card and fill out the necessary employment forms in the human resources department on campus.

Applying for a Social Security Card: The items required to acquire a social security card are as follows:

- An employment letter from the employing department on campus
- An international student advisor (DSO) approval letter
- A completed Social Security Application form (form can be found at <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>)
- I-20 or DS-2019, Passport, I-94

After you are able to gather all the required documentation, you must apply at a social security office. The closet office to Dahlonga is in Gainesville. The physical address of the social security office is:

SOCIAL SECURITY
SUITE 210
2565 THOMPSON BRDG RD
GAINESVILLE, GA 30501
Local: (770) 532-7506
Toll-Free: 1-800-772-1213

Once you have gone through the process and been approved, it will take about 2 to 4 weeks to get your social security card back. Since the office is in Gainesville, you will need to find a ride. If you are able to get two or three people together that need to go to the Social Security office, Jared Goodall, will be willing to drive some students over.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) (F-1 Only): CPT is work authorization while engaged in an internship or cooperative program through your academic department. To apply for CPT a student needs to provide a letter from his or her advisor saying that they approve of the internship, name of the organization, and the course number that the credit will be received and the student must also provide an internship offer letter from the organization in which the student is doing the internship for. The internship offer letter must specify the name of the organization, the offer of the internship to the student, the start and end dates of the internship, and a short description of what the student will be doing while at the internship. Turn in the NORTH GEORGIA CPT application form, the advisor letter and the internship offer letter to the International Student Advisor. The CPT application form can be found on the Center for Global Engagement website. CPT is authorized by the by the International Student Advisor and does not require USCIS authorization.

CPT can be granted for full-time or part-time. North Georgia will not grant anyone full-time CPT while class is in session if they are an undergraduate student. If a student accumulates more than one year of full-time CPT, they will not be eligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT). A student can have unlimited part-time CPT without effecting OPT.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) (F-1 Only): OPT is work authorization for practical work experience related to a student's major. There are two types of OPT: Pre-completion and Post-Completion. No matter which type of authorization you apply for, the maximum amount of time that a student can engage in OPT is 12 months. F-1 students applying for OPT must have completed 1 full academic year of their program before being eligible for OPT. All OPT does not require the student to find a job before applying, but only 90 days of unemployment is allowed during the 12 months of OPT.

Pre-Completion OPT is OPT that is done before an F-1 Student's program is concluded. Pre-completion OPT has the same restrictions as on-campus employment if approved. A student will only be able to work 20 hours per week while school is in session and up to 40 hours during school vacations and breaks. Pre-completion can be specified for up to 12 months and any pre-completion OPT counts toward the overall OPT 12 month total.

Post-Completion OPT is OPT that is done after an F-1 student's program is over. Post-Completion OPT must be full-time and requires the student to be employed for 20-40 hours per week. Post-Completion OPT can be submitted to USCIS from up to 90 days before an F-1 student's program end-date and up to 60 day after. A student can only participate in Post-completion OPT up to 14 months after their program end date. Post-completion OPT will end at the end of twelve months of employment or 14 months after his or her program end date, whichever comes first.

Applying for OPT is the same for both Pre and Post Completion OPT. Applying for OPT is a complicated process that is best done with the help of the International Student Advisor, so please make an appointment. The following documentation is required in order to apply for OPT:

- Copies of all former and current I-20's
- Copies of all former EAD cards (if applicable)
- Letter from registrar or academic advisor detailing current academic standing and date of completion of studies
- Copy of Passport
- Copy of I-94
- Two Immigration Style (Passport) Photos
- OPT authorization I-20
- I-765 USCIS Work Authorization Application
- I-765 Filing Fee (Check made out to the Department of Homeland Security), current filing fee can be found at:
<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=73dd59cb7a5d010VgnVCM10000048f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=7d316c0b4c3bf110VgnVCM1000004718190aRCRD>
- North Georgia OPT Application

Once all documentation has been completed, the application and supporting documentation will be sent to the USCIS service center for processing. OPT applications can take a significant amount of time to be returned, 2 to 3 months or longer in some cases, so please make sure to contact the international student advisor early in order to get your application in on time. Please contact the international student advisor for more information.

Severe Economic Hardship (F-1 Only): In some cases, students may be authorized to work off campus if UNFORSEEABLE forces have caused severe financial difficulties. If you believe that you qualify for severe economic hardship, please contact your international student advisor.

Extension of Program

J-1 Students: As a J-1 student the extension of the students program depends on the University System of Georgia's Board of Regents Office. Please contact the international student advisor for current information.

F-1 Students: For F-1 students, to be eligible for an I-20 extension a student must be in good standing (have a 2.0 grade point average or higher), provide a document from their academic advisor or the registrar stating their new estimated date of completion or documentation of a change of major, and the North Georgia extension of program application. If a student qualifies for an extension they will be issued a new I-20 with a new program end date within 5 business days.

Transferring Institutions

J-1 Students: International students at North Georgia on a J-1 visa may not transfer to another institution since their visa is based on North Georgia institutional exchanges.

F-1 Students: International students at North Georgia on an F-1 visa may transfer to another institution. In order for an international student to transfer to another university they must first apply to the university in which they would like to go and be accepted. An F-1 student must then fill out the North Georgia International Student Transfer Application and attach with it the acceptance letter from the institution to which the student is transferring. An application for transfer can be delayed or denied if a student does not provide all documentation required for the transfer. Processing of transfer paperwork can take up to 5 business days.

Ending Your Program

J-1 Student: If you are a student on a J-1 visa, at the end of your exchange program you have up to 30 days after your program end date to leave the United States. Please inform the international student advisor near the end of your program when you will be leaving the United States.

F-1 Student: If you are a student on an F-1 visa, at the end of your program you have up to 60 days to either apply for OPT, transfer to a different program of study, change education levels, apply for a change in immigration status or leave the country. Please contact the international student advisor if you need more information on your end of program options.

Termination from Status

Termination from status can happen due to failure of a student to maintain the conditions of their program outlined above. If a student has done something to be terminated, the international student advisor will contact the student as soon as possible to try to resolve the issue. If the issue cannot be resolved or the student does not respond within two business days of being contacted, the student will be notified that they will be terminated and termination will occur immediately. If an international student is terminated from status, they must leave the country immediately.

Note for J-1 students: Since all J-1 students at North Georgia are only here for maximum of one year, if they are terminated there is no possibility for reinstatement if a violation of status and termination occur. Please make sure to stay in status to avoid this situation.

Reinstatement of F-1 Status (F-1 Only)

In the event that an F-1 student is terminated from status, if the student can demonstrate that the termination was outside of their control, the student may be eligible for reinstatement. Reinstatement for a terminated F-1 student is not advised in most situations since an application for reinstatement has to be submitted to USCIS for approval and the application must meet the F-1 regulation criteria listed below.

Under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(16) an F-1 student may be considered for reinstatement if the student:

(A) Has not been out of status for more than 5 months at the time of filing the request for reinstatement (or demonstrates that the failure to file within the 5 month period was the result of exceptional circumstances and that the student filed the request for reinstatement as promptly as possible under these exceptional circumstances);

(B) Does not have a record of repeated or willful violations of Service regulations;

(C) Is currently pursuing, or intending to pursue, a full course of study in the immediate future at the school which issued the Form I-20;

(D) Has not engaged in unauthorized employment;

(E) Is not deportable on any ground other than section 237(a)(1)(B) or (C)(i) of the Act; and

(F) Establishes to the satisfaction of the Service, by a detailed showing, either that:

(1) The violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond the student's control. Such circumstances might include serious injury or illness, closure of the institution, a natural disaster, or inadvertence, oversight, or neglect on the part of the DSO, but do not include instances where a pattern of repeated violations or where a willful failure on the part of the student resulted in the need for reinstatement; or

(2) The violation relates to a reduction in the student's course load that would have been within a DSO's power to authorize, and that failure to approve reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to the student.

If an F-1 student believes that he/she meets the criteria to file for reinstatement, please fill out the North Georgia Application for Reinstatement form and attach the supporting documentation listed on the application form to the international student advisor as soon as possible. Please be advised that a reinstatement I-20 is needed in order to apply so please do not attempt to apply for reinstatement completely on your own.

Helpful Departments On Campus and Other Sources of Information



Helpful Departments

- Center for Global Engagement – 343 West Main Hall – 706-867-2833
- Office of Multicultural Services – Mrs. Gena Trust – Barnes Hall - 706-867-2720
- Student Counseling – 210 Barnes Hall - 706-864-1819
- Student Disabilities - Mrs. Elizabeth McIntosh - 122 Barnes Hall – 706-867-2782
- North Georgia Campus Connection (Bookstore) – 2nd Floor, Hoag Student Center
- Academic Advisement Center – 205 Hoag Student Center - 706-864-1460
- Career Services – 114 Barnes Hall – 706-864-1951
- Business Office – 2nd Floor BB&T Building – 706-864-1407
- North Georgia Help Desk – 164 Library Technology Center – 706-864-1922
- Information Desk – Library Technology Center
- North Georgia Writing Center – 180 Library Technology Center - 706-867-2979
- North Georgia Public Safety – 706-864-1500

Other Sources of Information

- Student Handbook - http://apache.northgeorgia.edu/Stu_Lif/Handbook/handbook.htm
- InternationalStudent.com - <http://www.internationalstudent.com/>
- ForeignBorn.com - <http://www.foreignborn.com/>

Appendix A:

Dining Hall and Take-Out Box Policy

North Georgia College & State University: Dining Hall Guidelines

- The Dining Program at North Georgia Chow Hall is an “all you care to eat” dine-in facility.
- Dining Services offers a number of different meal plan alternatives that provide for a set number of entries per week into the dining facility, or an unlimited number of entries, depending upon which plan is purchased.
- “Unlimited Meal Plans” indicates an unlimited number of entries into the Dining Hall during the normal hours of operation. While visiting the Dining Hall, all patrons are welcome to eat as much as they would care to during that particular visit.
- Unlimited Meal Plan customers may use their meal plan to access the dining hall as many times as they wish per day. However, only one (1) meal can be redeemed at any one time. If an unlimited meal plan member wants to redeem more than one meal during a single visit to the Dining Hall, the additional entry must be paid for using Dining Dollars or other. Unlimited meal plans cannot be used to purchase meals for guests.
- ”All you care to eat” dining does not indicate that unlimited amounts of food are available to be taken out of the dining facility. Continuous dining services are provided in the Dining Hall throughout the day in order to provide customers the opportunity to dine at any time the facility is open. Except under specific circumstances outlined below, food is not allowed to be taken out of the dining hall.
 - Customers who have conflicts due to class schedule, work study, or official school activity, may request a To-Go Meal by completing a request form at the Dining Hall by 5:00 pm on the day before the take out meal is needed. Once the request is approved, the requestor will be able to obtain a To-Go box from the cashier.
 - If regularly occurring conflicts exist, the customer will only need to gain approval once per semester in order to get To-Go boxes on those days when the conflict occurs during the semester.
 - Take out boxes are available to customers who are ill and have communicated their illness to Student Health Services. Student Health Services will send an email to the Dining Hall, which will authorize the student for takeout services during their illness. With Student Health Services approval, students can send a friend or roommate with their meal card to pick up a take out meal. If a student does not have someone to pick up their meal, arrangements can be made with Dining Services to have the meal delivered to a specific location and time.
 - All Dining Hall customers are welcome to take a single item such as a piece of fruit, an ice cream (in a cone or disposable container), or a cookie with them from the Dining Hall as they leave the facility.

Appendix B: Rules Governing Granting of ESOL Accommodations for the Regents' Exam

Nonnative speakers of English must satisfy the Regents' Test reading and writing requirements in order to graduate. Students who will satisfy the requirement by taking the Regents' Test will take the test in its standard form, with extended time/double-time, on their first attempt.

Students who are unsuccessful in their first attempt may request consideration for ESOL accommodations through the Office of International and ESOL Services. In order to qualify for ESOL accommodations, students must demonstrate by their linguistic history that English is not their primary or native language.

On a second attempt at the essay test, a qualifying student will be given extended time/double-time, and topics will come from the North Georgia ESOL-approved list (a subset of approved Regents' Test essay topics). The student may use a dictionary for the entire time and may use a translation dictionary if desired.

On a second attempt at the reading test, a qualifying student will be given extended time to take the standard Regents' reading test. The student may use a dictionary for the entire time and may use a translation dictionary if desired.

On a third or further attempt at the reading test, the student will be given extended time to take the North Georgia alternate reading test. The student should be given a different form of the test at each administration.* Students may not review their graded Regents' reading exams, though they may request and be given an evaluation of the kinds of questions they missed.

*Form 1 will be administered in fall semesters, Form 2 in spring, and Form 3 in summer. A nonnative speaker of English who has not passed the reading portion of the Regents' Test in 5 semesters will be given a test other than the one scheduled for that semester.