

USC International Academy

PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE



USC University of
Southern California

WELCOME TO THE TROJAN FAMILY!



Congratulations on your choice to study at the University of Southern California, one of the world's leading research universities. We are delighted to welcome you to Los Angeles and the USC campus. The following pages will help you prepare for your departure and provide answers to many of the questions you may have upon arrival.

When you pursue studies at USC, you are joining a diverse community of scholars committed to addressing the critical issues that face our global society in the 21st century. You can look forward to rigorous preparation for your future studies and career in the stimulating setting of a vibrant world center.

Our team of helpful and friendly staff is available to help you with any questions or problems you may have before you depart and after you arrive.

Your journey to success begins now and we are dedicated to making sure you take the right steps along the way.

FIGHT ON!

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BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Get your visa

Book housing

Arrange transportation from airport

Pay your program fees





VISA &
IMMIGRATION

VISA & IMMIGRATION

» GET YOUR STUDENT VISA OR TRANSFER YOUR I-20 TO USC INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES AND NEED AN F-1 VISA

1. Verify that the information in your Form I-20 and admission letter is correct:

- Name
- Birth date
- Country of birth
- Country of citizenship

» If the information is correct, print the entire document, read the information on page 1 and 3 of the I-20, and then sign and date in the spaces that are provided on page 1.

» If you find a mistake, mark it and notify USC International Academy immediately. We will correct the mistake and send the corrected I-20 to you as soon as possible.

2. Schedule an appointment for your visa interview at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of your nearest United States Consulate or Embassy: www.usembassy.gov. Make an appointment in person, by phone, or online depending on the consulate or embassy's requirements.

3. Pay the I-901 (SEVIS) fee before the visa interview and print the receipt.

After scheduling your visa interview, you will need to pay the non-refundable I-901 Fee (also known as the SEVIS Fee). The \$350 fee can be paid online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>. Print the I-901 Fee Confirmation (receipt) and bring it with you to your visa interview.

4. Bring all required documentation to the visa interview.

Successful visa interviews require preparation. Please check your local U.S. Embassy website for information on which documents to prepare and bring with you to the interview. If your dependents (spouse and children) will stay in the U.S. with you, you must provide proof of your relationship (e.g. birth certificate, marriage certificate). Allow 1-2 weeks for processing after the visa interview.

VISA DELAYS

If you are unable to obtain a visa before your program's start date, please notify USC International Academy as soon as possible:

- info-international@usc.edu
- +1 (213) 740-0080

For the most up-to-date information on visas and travel to the United States, please visit:

- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Student Process Steps](#)
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Guide to Studying in the U.S.](#)

IF YOU ARE STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES AND WANT TO TRANSFER YOUR I-20 TO USC INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

If you are transferring to USC International Academy from another U.S. institution, your current school must release your SEVIS record before the Academy can issue you a new I-20. To do this, please complete the [Transfer-In Form](#) and then take it to the immigration adviser at your current school. The adviser will update your SEVIS record so that your new I-20 can be created.

USC INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY SCHOOL CODE: LOS214F00291002



HEALTH

HEALTH

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The below USC Health Requirements are in place in January 2023 but may be changed at any time as dictated by the local laws and regulations. Students will be receiving regular email updates before and after their program start date.

The University of Southern California requires ALL international students receive:

- **2 doses of MMR** (measles, mumps & rubella) vaccine
- **Tuberculosis screening (blood test) Tspot or Quantiferon Gold**
- **2 doses of varicella** (chickenpox) vaccine
- **Meningococcal:** Menactra or Menveo, most recent dose must be on or after your 16th birthday. This requirement is for students 21 years old and under.
- **COVID-19 vaccines**

For more information about health requirements please [click here](#). Students should be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before coming to campus. Other vaccines can be administered during or shortly after Orientation. To determine whether immunizations are required individually, the USC Health Center will administer a blood test that will be scheduled after you arrive at the International Academy (usually after Orientation Week). If immunizations are required, they will be administered by the USC Health Center, which will also administer the tuberculosis screening. The Academy and Health Center staff will help you fill out the necessary forms and create a personalized immunization schedule.

You must upload a proof of each vaccination to the “Upload Documents” section of [MySHR](#) for USC Student Health Center verification. If you receive your vaccination at USC Student Health or Keck Medicine of USC, it’ll happen automatically (but please double check that your record shows the vaccines you received).

COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

Effective November 8th, 2021, all international students seeking to enter the United States by air are required to show proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before boarding a flight to the United States from a foreign country. USC [policy](#) also requires all students to be vaccinated for COVID-19 or submit a request for a [medical or religious exemption](#). Meeting this COVID-19 safety requirement is mandatory in order to start attending classes on campus.

Beginning January 5, 2023 at 12:01AM ET, there are new requirements for air passengers 2 years of age and older traveling to the United States from China, Hong Kong, or Macau, and those traveling from Seoul, Toronto, and Vancouver who have been in China, Hong Kong, or Macau in the past 10 days. These passengers, regardless of citizenship or vaccination status, are required to show a negative COVID-19 test result taken no more than 2 days before their flight departs. Those who had COVID-19 in the 90 days before their travel to the United States can instead show documentation of recovery from COVID-19.

If you are vaccinated against COVID-19, do not forget to pack your proof of vaccination- bring it to the airport in your hand luggage.

HEALTH *continued*

If you are NOT fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and are arriving from outside the United States, you will not be allowed to enter the USA.

Exceptions:

- Vaccine scarcity: Students and their dependents travelling on F & J visas from [certain countries with limited COVID-19 vaccine availability](#) are exempt from the vaccination requirement but have to comply with other requirements as listed [here](#).
- Students seeking exemption from the vaccination requirement due to medical conditions must show a letter from a licensed physician documenting the medical contraindication to the airline or aircraft operator before boarding a flight to the United States. USC requires students seeking medical exemptions to submit a formal request by completing a [Student Medical Exemption Request from COVID-19 Vaccination form](#); the completed form needs to be uploaded onto [USC Student Health Portal MySHR](#)
- More information can be found on CDC website [here](#).

If you are already in the USA and plan to seek an exemption from USC's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy, please fill out the appropriate [religious](#) or [medical](#) exemption form and submit it to [MySHR](#). Please allow 14 days for your request to be reviewed. Any student who is unable to receive a WHO-approved vaccination against Covid-19 must complete and submit a "[Vaccine Scarcity Exemption Form](#)" and upload it to the [Student Health Portal](#) as soon as possible.

Still unsure whether you can board a flight to the United States? Complete a quick anonymous [travel assessment](#) by answering a few questions; you will receive a customized response.

USC COVID-19 Resource Center (<https://coronavirus.usc.edu/>)

If you have any questions about COVID-19 or would like to notify the university of a case, please call 213-740-6291 or email covid19@usc.edu.

STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

All students at USC International Academy receive high quality medical insurance and access to the USC Student Health Center as part of the mandatory University Service Fee. This medical insurance policy covers students while they are participating in the program and helps cover the cost of care unavailable at the health center, including emergencies requiring hospitalization. As with all medical insurance policies, some restrictions apply.

For policy details, please [click here](#). It is not possible to get a refund (partial or full) of the University Service Fee, even if you have independently arranged medical and travel insurance.

HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA 101

The health care system in the United States may be very different from the health care system in your home country. For example, in China, patients usually walk in whenever they need to see a doctor and all payments are made before they leave. International students may find the information below helpful. The points below are general to health care in the U.S. but do not apply to all cases.

- 1.** You typically need to make an appointment to see a doctor in America. Unless you are visiting a walk-in urgent care clinic or an emergency room, you will need to schedule an appointment before seeing a doctor in the U.S.
- 2.** You typically need a referral to see a specialist, such as a dermatologist, allergist or physical therapist. This means you will need to ask your primary care doctor for a referral before you can see the specialist. You do not need a referral to see a gynecologist or mental health counselor.
- 3.** You may have a small fee or co-pay at the time of your visit. If you are on the Aetna plan and are confused about your bill, contact the USC Student Health Insurance Office.



HOUSING

HOUSING

» BOOK YOUR LOS ANGELES ACCOMMODATIONS

USC International Academy offers students a variety of housing options, including university dormitories and shared apartments. Apply as early as possible.

Please note that the USC International Academy offers shared rooms only to students who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

For prices, go to:

www.international.usc.edu/accommodations

To make a reservation, pay \$150 Housing Processing Fee (to find out how you can make the payment go to: www.international.usc.edu/fees). Once payment is received, the Academy will make a housing reservation for you. You will receive an email with information on how to finalize the arrangements.

USC INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY HOUSING OFFERS:

- Electronic key system to enter building and access residential areas
- Convenient access to campus and its facilities
- On-site staff who provide guidance, cultural adjustment support and social activities
- High-speed wireless Internet
- Basic cable TV and electricity service
- A non-smoking environment
- Furnished shared rooms; cooking and laundry facilities included
- Parking available for an additional fee

Residents receive basic bedding and a small towel. Pots, pans, cutlery, and dishes are provided for communal use in the apartment kitchen.

HOUSING CONTRACTS

Housing contracts are signed for the length of each session or term.

HOUSING FEES

Please note that a full payment for your accommodation is required to finalize the reservation. All housing fees are non-refundable.

RENTING YOUR OWN ROOM OR APARTMENT

Once you arrive in Los Angeles, it may take two weeks to one month to find housing off campus; families may need more time. If you choose to rent your own apartment or room, be prepared to pay a security deposit (usually the equivalent of one month's rent) in addition to the first month's rent. Many landlords require a 12-month rental agreement.

HOTELS NEAR THE USC CAMPUS

Short-term accommodations may be available at the USC Hotel. Please see hotel information below to make a reservation.

USC HOTEL

Across the street from the USC campus
1-833-2-BOOK-USC • <https://uschotel.usc.edu>

AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION



AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION

» ARRANGE YOUR PICK-UP FROM THE LOS ANGELES AIRPORT

STUDENTS WHO BOOKED INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY HOUSING

Students who will stay in housing arranged by the Academy can sign up for an airport pick-up service from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) with no additional cost.

Follow these steps to reserve your shuttle:

Email your flight details to info-international@usc.edu at least 1 week before your arrival.

You will receive an instruction sheet and confirmation number to give the shuttle driver when you arrive at the airport.

REMEMBER

- You do not need to pay for this service at the airport.
- Please carefully review and follow the instructions you receive by email regarding arrival transportation.
- If you are not able to email your arrival form to the Academy at least 1 week before your arrival, please make your own shuttle arrangements (read the next section for more information on this).

STUDENTS WHO ARRANGED THEIR OWN HOUSING

Students who arrange their own housing are able to sign up for the free airport pick-up service but can only be dropped off at the USC International Academy.

USC has two main campuses: University Park Campus and Health Sciences Campus. The International Academy and USC Housing are located on or near the University Park Campus.

You can travel from the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) to the University Park Campus via:

- Taxi (approximate cost is \$60–\$70)
- Commercial airport shuttles. Several companies operate minivan services. The approximate cost for one passenger is \$20–\$30. For further assistance, inquire at the Visitor Information booths on the upper and lower levels of Bradley International Terminal. Many airport shuttles can be booked on-line in advance.
- FlyAway Shuttle Service bus from LAX to Union Station (\$10–\$12). From Union Station Bus Plaza transfer to the Intercampus Shuttle bus (free) to UPC (University Park Campus). The Intercampus Shuttle schedule can be found [here](#). It will drop you off at Jefferson Boulevard and Hoover Street. You would need navigate to your housing from there.

USC CREDIT UNION



PAYMENT

PAYMENT

» PAY YOUR PROGRAM FEES

Your program fees are due before the first day of classes.

PROGRAM FEES CAN BE PAID IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- [Flywire](#)
- Credit card: Visa, Mastercard or Discover ([online](#) or in person)
- [Wire transfer](#)
- Cashier's check or money order in U.S. dollars
- Traveler's check in U.S. dollars

For more details including online payment and wire transfer instructions, please visit:

www.international.usc.edu/fees

SPONSORED STUDENTS

If you are sponsored by your government, your company, and/or a non-profit agency or institution, **you must submit your financial guarantee or support letter before the first day of your program.** If you are unable to provide us with a financial guarantee or support letter, you must be prepared to pay the full balance of your tuition and service fees on or before the first day of classes.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE UNIVERSITY SERVICE FEE?

- » Textbooks and course materials
- » Health Insurance & TB screening*
- » Access to campus facilities: fitness, recreational, banking, medical, dining, computer, and library
- » Use of USC Student Health Center and access to staff clinicians*
- » Student services: USC ID card, USC email account, information technology support, and Orientation
- » Airport shuttle van pick-up from LAX to USC

** Some government sponsors provide students with a separate medical insurance*

PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

USE THIS CHECKLIST TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE PACKED EVERYTHING YOU WILL NEED AND THAT YOU ARE WELL PREPARED FOR YOUR TRIP TO LOS ANGELES.

Passport, visa, and other forms of identification

Remember to bring your passport and any other form of personal identification you may need while abroad (e.g., your driver's license and/or international driver's license). Make sure your visa is valid for entry to the U.S.

Acceptance Letter, I-20, and I-901 fee payment receipt

Pack your USC International Academy Acceptance Letter, I-20 and I-901 fee receipt in your carry-on luggage so that it is easy to find it when you are going through immigration procedures at the Port of Entry. Check for the latest information on US entry requirements by going to the [US Department of State website](#) and the [US Center for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

Your address in the USA and airport pick-up confirmation

Write down your full address in Los Angeles and keep it in your hand luggage for easy access when you arrive at the Los Angeles Airport. You will need this information for immigration procedures at the Port of Entry. If you booked USC International Academy Housing, bring the Housing Contract.

Traveler's checks in low denominations and/or credit cards

Store these safely.

Appropriate clothing

Wear layers on your flight in case you get hot or cold after arrival due to the change of temperature. Los Angeles generally enjoys warm and sunny weather all year, but cools down during winter and early spring. We advise you pack for moderate temperatures. Don't forget to pack face-masks.

Adaptor for electrical appliances

Standard voltage in the U.S. is 120 volts. You may need to bring a plug adaptor.

Vaccination records and prescription medication (if applicable)

Pack your vaccination records, including COVID-19 vaccine certificate. Make sure you have them in your carry-on luggage. Make sure your medication is in the original, labeled containers to facilitate airport security and customs screening.

Laptop, mobile phone and/or wireless device

USC provides free WiFi across the University Park and Health Sciences campuses.

Official academic transcripts in sealed envelopes

(Pre-Master's and Master's Preparation students only).

We recommend against bringing any food, plants, and animals into the United States. If you have questions about bringing these items into the U.S., visit the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection website](#).



ARRIVING IN LOS ANGELES

ARRIVING IN LOS ANGELES

ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

You can enter the United States up to 30 days before the program start date listed on your USC I-20. Be sure to have the following documents in your carry-on luggage and ready to present to the immigration officer at the airport:

- Form I-20
- Passport with F-1 visa
- SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt
- Please check <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html> for the latest information on U.S. entry restrictions and requirements

FORM I-94

Most students will not receive a paper I-94 card upon entering the U.S. As of 2013, this process is mostly electronic. As soon as you enter the U.S., go to the [DHS website](#) and download your I-94. Immigration officials will/may stamp your passport with your admission category, date of entry, and duration of status. However, if you do receive a paper I-94 when you enter the U.S., do not lose this form! We will make copies of the paper I-94 and/or the stamp in your passport during Orientation and you may need it to leave the country. To access the I-94, please [click here](#).

EMAIL IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

To make sure you are eligible to begin your studies, you will need to submit copies of your immigration documents to USC International Academy.

After you arrive in the U.S., please copy and scan OR take a photo of the **front page of your I-20, passport (photo/ID page), visa** and **I-94 form** and email the files to i2o-international@usc.edu.

ORIENTATION

All incoming International Academy students **MUST** attend Orientation. More information about Orientation will be emailed to you before the program start date.

AT ORIENTATION, YOU WILL:

- Confirm your level placement.
- Pre-Master's & Master's Preparation students will only take a Placement Test if they did not officially report their English test scores by the deadline. Intensive English students will complete the English Placement Exam.
- Learn about safety, security, and emergency-preparedness on and off campus
- Submit your immigration documents for verification
- Get your USC student ID card
- Learn about resources, policies, and activities available to you
- Tour the USC campus
- Learn about your student visa and travel regulations
- Fill out important health forms for your immunization schedule
- Review your student handbook

WHAT TO BRING TO ORIENTATION

- Passport and Visa
- I-20
- Laptop

LOCAL INFORMATION

SAFETY

USC is committed to protecting students and educating them about how to protect themselves in Los Angeles' urban environment.

The USC Department of Public Safety, one of the largest campus public safety departments in the nation, works closely with the Los Angeles Police Department to ensure the university campus and surrounding neighborhoods remain as safe as possible. On arrival, the Academy will provide you with information on how to exercise caution in day-to-day situations, maximize personal safety and wellbeing, and make use of the extensive safety resources and services available at USC.

MANAGING MONEY

We recommend you have a minimum of \$2,000 USD at your disposal for immediate expenses. Do not carry large sums of cash with you when you travel. Your immediate costs include transportation and your first month's living expenses.

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

If you are staying in the U.S. for longer than three months you may wish to open a bank account. It is advisable that you check how to set up your bank account before you arrive, as rules, regulations and policies between banks vary. You may be required to bring a variety of personal documentation with you. If you decide to set up a bank account after you have arrived, make sure you are able to access your money at all times. Bank of America, Chase, and Wells Fargo are conveniently located close to campus.

GENERALLY, TO OPEN A BANK ACCOUNT, YOU NEED:

1. Passport
 2. Documents that prove you are currently enrolled at USC (I-20, Student ID, Admission Letter)
 3. A minimum deposit of \$200 or more
- Please note that these requirements may vary depending on the bank.

ACCESSING FUNDS IN THE U.S.

Depositing a check from your own country into your American bank account may take 7 to 30 days. A faster way to deposit money is by bank wire transfer. Generally it takes 2-5 days for the wired funds to be available. However, bank charges apply for each wire transfer (approximately \$10-\$40 USD).

AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINES (ATM)

Debit and credit cards are common in the U.S. You can apply for a debit card when you open your bank account. A debit card allows you to withdraw or deposit money and check your account balance. ATM machines can be found at banks, shopping centers, supermarkets, and on the USC campus.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

If you are depending on money from abroad for your expenses, you must become familiar with the foreign exchange requirements of your country. Make arrangements in advance so that you will have the necessary funds at regular intervals.

LOCAL INFORMATION *continued*

DINING ON CAMPUS

[USC Hospitality](#) provides a variety of dining options on campus. Students may eat at any of three student cafeterias or various other on-campus eateries. Optional meal plans may be purchased. Some students who live in USC International Academy housing have a meal plan included in their housing fees.

If you would like to buy a Meal Plan before arrival, please email us: info-international@usc.edu

LAWS & CUSTOMS

It is important that you understand the laws, rules, and customs that you may encounter while in the U.S. These laws may be very different to laws in your country. Please obey U.S. laws and respect U.S. customs. If you are unsure about U.S. laws, please ask and an Academy staff member will assist you.

IMPORTANT

- Minimum age to drink and purchase alcohol is 21. It is illegal to buy alcohol for anyone who is under the age of 21. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a crime.
- Minimum age to buy cigarettes is 21.
- Buying, selling and using illegal drugs is forbidden.

USC International Academy follows the policies established by the University of Southern California and the U.S. government. These policies may apply to academic behavior and integrity, immigration regulations, student accommodations, and more. Some of these policies include:

- Be punctual.
- If you decide to leave your program, USC International Academy has the right to terminate your I-20 and advise you to return home.
- In order to keep your USC International Academy student status you must attend a minimum of 80% of your classes.
- Inform USC International Academy if you are going to be absent from school for any reason.
- If you are sick, do not come to school. If your doctor excuses you from school for a long time, please inform a USC International Academy Immigration Advisor.

More details can be found in the [Academy's Terms and Conditions](#) and in your Student Handbook, which will be reviewed at Orientation.

