



**MIDDLESEX**  
Community College

**OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL &  
MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS**



# International Student Handbook



# Welcome!

On behalf of the International and Multicultural Affairs staff, we want to welcome you to the United States and Middlesex Community College! This international student guidebook was developed to ease your transition to your new environment by providing you with some useful information to which you may refer to while you are a student at MCC.

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### **Website:**

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/internationalstudents/>

### **Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/mccmulticulturalaffairs>

You are always welcome to  
drop by our offices, whether  
you just want to say "Hi" or if  
you have a specific issue you  
would like to discuss.

**We love hearing from you!!**





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# Where to Turn for Answers

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**Contact:**  
**\*Academic  
Advisor**

- Select Courses
- Academic challenges
- Questions with the Curriculum
- Changing major



**Contact:**  
**Professor  
Teaching the  
Course**

- Details about a specific course
- Late assignments
- Difficulty understanding a lecture
- Absences



**Contact:**  
**Counseling  
Office**

- Personal & adjustment problems
- Dealing with stress
- Relationship issues or family concerns



**Contact:**  
**Student  
Information  
Center**

- Requirements for graduation
- Registering for courses
- Change your password in your MyMCC account



**Contact**  
**Student  
Accounts**

- Payment options and payment plan set up
- Tuition issues
- Refund/-Withdrawal Policy

\*An Academic Advisor will be assigned to you according to your major.

# Immigration Policy & Procedures

# Contact the International Office

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For details about the policies and procedures of the services below, please meet with an International Student Advisor, email or call us. The information below is only meant to give you an idea of some of the services and the best time to request them.

## **Procedure**

## **When to Request**

Change of Local Address

Report within 10 days of the move.

Travel Signature

At least 2 weeks prior to travel.

CPT – Curricular Practical Training

As soon as possible before CPT semester.  
Deadline is by 1st day of class.

OPT – Optional Practical Training

At least 60 days **before** the completion of your program.

Program Extension Request

Before your program completion date on your I-20.

Reduced Course Load Request

Before dropping or withdrawing from any class. Requires approval. Conditions apply.

Social Security Number Support Letter

Immediately after verification from your supervisor.

Transfer Out

Within 60 days after completion of program. Provide letter of acceptance at new school.

Reinstatement to Active Status

Immediately, but no later than 5 months after termination of status.

Change of Status

At least 3-4 months **before** program start date

Change of Program

Within 30 days after the end of your current program



# Important Terms about your Immigration Status

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## **F-1 Visa:**

For F-1 students, the visa in your passport is an entry document that allows you to enter the U.S. You can remain in the U.S. after it expires, but the next time you return to your country, you must obtain a new F-1 visa (usually in your home country). You cannot renew an entry visa from within the U.S., only from U.S. embassies abroad.

## **F-1 Status:**

Your visa status category determines what rules you have to follow while you are in the U.S. Visa status includes tourist (B-2), work (H-1B) and student (F-1).

## **Change of Status:**

If you change to F-1 status within the U.S., you have F-1 visa status, but you do not have an F-1 visa. You are just like any other F-1 student within the U.S. However, the next time you choose to leave the U.S., you must go back to your country to get the F-1 status.

## **Duration Lawful F-1 Status:**

On an I-94 for F-1 students, it says "D/S" in place of an expiration date. "D/S" means duration of status and it means you can stay in the U.S. as long as you follow the rules for maintaining lawful F-1 status.

## **Out of Status:**

Once you have fallen out of status, the International Advisor cannot sign your I-20 for any reason. You must get back in status either within the U.S. through reinstatement (fewer students can now qualify for reinstatement), or by leaving the U.S. and re-entering with a new I-20 (which may be difficult).



Immediately upon arrival to MCC, you must contact the International Student Office and provide a copy of your passport, I-94 card, visa, I-20 and current address/phone number.

# Definition of a “Full-Time Course load”

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You probably know you must be “full-time” every semester. However, many students get confused about exactly what that means. It means that you must register for and complete 12 credits each fall and spring semester.

These 12 credits CANNOT include:

- ✦ **“W” grades that were not authorized by an International Advisor.** The International Advisor can only authorize certain exceptions and if you withdraw from the course before talking to us, we cannot authorize you – you are out of status.
- ✦ **“I” classes carried over from last semester (“Incompletes”).** You can receive an “I” grade, but you must also register for 12 new credits the following semester, even if you are also trying to complete coursework from last semester.
- ✦ **Transfer credits or CLEP credits awarded that semester.** We encourage you to seek transfer or CLEP credits. But you must still take at least 12 credits in the classroom each semester.
- ✦ **Concurrent Enrollment (Taking Courses at another School)**  
At the discretion of the International Advisors, you might be allowed to take a course at another college. You must have a legitimate reason, such as an unavoidable course sequence problem. Usually you must take at least 9 credits at MCC. USCIS (Immigration) requires that you receive permission before registering elsewhere.

You may note that above list does not include “F” grades. It is true that a couple of scattered “F” grades will not make you fall out of status. However, if you get many “F” grades (particularly all in one semester) we might consider you out of status and you might have trouble transferring. We also could not extend your 1-20 if your graduation is delayed because of “F” grades.

If you are having serious problems affecting your academic performance, TALK TO US, so we can provide support and options.

# Extensions

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires that you finish your program of study by the completion date on your I-20. If, during the course of your studies it becomes necessary to extend your I-20, the International Student Office can provide I-20 extensions to those who are eligible and apply in a timely fashion.

## Eligibility Criteria

In order to obtain a program extension, you must show that you have continually maintained status and that the extension is needed for compelling academic or medical reasons, such as a change of major, unexpected degree track issues, or a documented illness. Delays in completing your program caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extension approval.

Extension of stay can be granted only for documented academic or medical reasons. You may be eligible for an I-20 extension if the following criteria are met:

1. The delay was caused by documented academic or medical circumstances
2. You have sufficient financial resources to fund your studies and living expenses
3. The extension is requested in a timely manner, with sufficient time for processing before the current expiration

**If your program end date has expired or you do not meet the eligibility requirements to apply for a program extension, it will be necessary to file for reinstatement to F-1 status with USCIS, for which you will have to pay a substantial fee.** In addition, failure to apply for an extension of stay in a timely manner is a violation of F-1 regulations, which can carry heavy penalties. An I-20 which has already passed the program end date cannot be extended.

## How to Request an Extension on your I-20

First, meet with your academic advisor to obtain your recommendation of your degree program. Complete the Extension form **(Appendix A)**. Once you have prepared all of the extension request materials, you must submit them in person to the International Student Advisor. It is recommended that you submit the extension request at least 1-2 months prior to the expiration of your current I-20 form.

Be sure to keep this new I-20 and all previous I-20 forms that you have been issued.

# Reduced Course Load (RCL)

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International students should not drop below full time enrollment (12 credits) until they have received authorization from the International Office. Students who drop below full time enrollment without proper authorization will be considered out of status. International students who plan to be enrolled for part time studies must submit the Reduced Course Load (RCL) form and required documents (**Appendix B**). There are only a few exceptions to the full time enrollment requirement for the fall and spring semesters.

## **Medical RCL**

The International Office may authorize a medical RCL due to a temporary medical condition with an appropriate doctor's letter recommending the RCL for medical reasons. If a student cannot enroll for any courses due to the medical condition, the letter from the medical professional must state this.

### **Requirements of Medical RCL:**

1. Letter from licensed physician, medical doctor, or licensed clinical psychologist that recommends student to take less than the minimum 12 credits required for full time enrollment
2. Receive prior approval from the International Office and academic department before dropping classes
3. No more than 2 semesters total of Medical RCL

## **Final Semester RCL**

The International Office may authorize a final semester RCL for students who are in their last semester of study and only have a few credits remaining to meet academic program requirements. Students may request a RCL due to final semester only once per degree program.

### **Requirement of Final Semester RCL:**

1. Letter from your academic advisor stating the number courses that are remaining to meet their academic program requirements.

## **Academic Difficulty RCL**

Students may request an RCL due to academic difficulty only once per degree level. You must be enrolled for at least half the required full-time course load (6 credits). Students who receive an academic difficulty RCL must resume a full course of study in the next available semester in order to maintain status.

### **Requirements of Academic Difficulty RCL:**

1. Letter from your academic advisor or professor verifying the difficulty of the course or improper course placement

### **Reasons Unacceptable for a Reduced Course Load**

Financial difficulties  
Medical illness of family member  
Child care issues  
Suspension from academic program  
Working on incompletes from a previous semester

# Maintaining F-1 Status

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As an international student, you **must**:



- ☐ Maintain full-time enrollment in the Fall and Spring semesters (12 credits)
- ☐ Maintain satisfactory academic progress
- ☐ Maintain a valid SEVIS Form I-20
- ☐ Maintain a valid passport (note the 6 month rule)
- ☐ No unauthorized employment
- ☐ File timely applications for extension of program, changes in academic level, graduation, or for post-completion Practical Training
- ☐ Report address changes within 10 days to the International Advisors and the Student Information Center

# How to Maintain Status After MCC

## **Grace Periods**

Regardless of your plans after you leave MCC, you must maintain your lawful F-1 status by following the **grace period regulations**. A grace period is time in which you may legally be in the U.S. after you stop studying. By the last day of your grace period, you must do one of three things:

1. Obtain a new 1-20 with an issue date within the grace period
2. Apply for a change to a new status
3. Leave the U.S.

Overstaying past your grace period may have serious consequences. If you remain in the U.S. but do not do one of the above three things, you will fall out of status.

If you remain 180 days past your grace period, you may be subject to a three-year bar to gaining any entry to the U.S. and if you remain one year past your grace period, you may be subject to a ten-year bar to the U.S.

## **How long is my grace period?**

You normally have a 60-day grace period after your last day of your last semester at MCC. However, if you withdraw from all MCC classes in the middle of the semester, you do not get this 60-day grace period.

- ✚ If you notify us (in person or by email/voicemail) that you must withdraw mid-semester, you have one 15-day grace period. You must tell us the reason for the withdrawal and your future plans (leave U.S., transfer, etc.).
- ✚ If you do not notify us before withdrawing from MCC, you get no grace period at all. This means if you withdraw from MCC and do not get a new 1-20 (or change status, or leave the U.S.) the next day, you would be out of status.

If you must leave the U.S. urgently for a family emergency, we will work with you to get the paperwork completed as easily and quickly as possible.



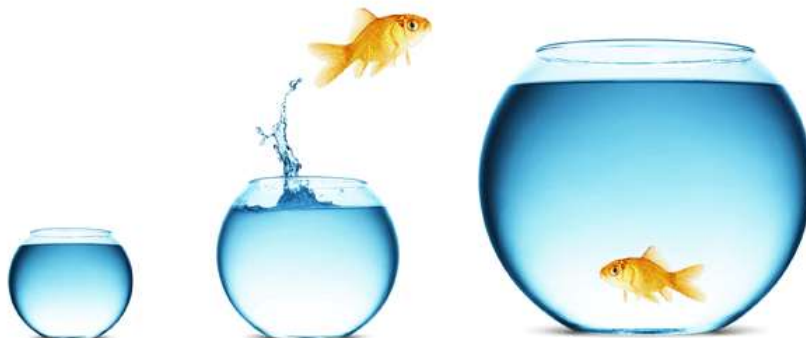
## **Transferring to a New School**

The Department of Homeland Security requires that F-1 students complete a "school transfer" when changing to a new school. Your student record in SEVIS will then be released from Middlesex Community College and sent to the institution to which you are transferring. You will then be issued a new Form I-20 from the new institution. The four steps below must be followed before the SEVIS record can be released to your new institution.

1. Notify the International Student Advisor of your intention to transfer to another institution.
2. Provide proof of acceptance to your new institution. Email or bring a copy of your acceptance letter to the international student advisor's office. You must do this in order to be released to your "new" school.
3. Schedule a "release date" with the International Student Advisor for your F-1 record to be transferred to the new institution. Your new Form I-20 from your new institution cannot be issued until after the release date has been reached (unless you are traveling before reporting to transferring school, in which case talk with your new institution about your travel plans).
4. Complete the F-1 SEVIS Transfer Request Form and submit it to the International Student Advisor's office as soon as possible.

***Important: If you are completing (or have completed your program of study or Optional Practical Training, you only have a 60-day period following this completion to have your F-1 record transferred to the new institution. Your F-1 student status ends 60 days after you complete your program of study or OPT!***

Please contact the International Student Advisor if you have any questions about transferring.







# Employment

# On-Campus vs Off-Campus Employment

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Employment opportunities for international students are limited by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations. Only students who have maintained their immigration status and academic standing are eligible for employment.

**Do not work without proper authorization.**



**On-Campus:** Students on an F-1 visa may work on-campus without permission from the USCIS. They are free to pursue an on-campus job. While classes are in session, F-1 students may work part-time on-campus (i.e. no more than 20 hours per week). During school vacation periods and academic breaks they may work full-time on-campus, as long as they are returning to classes the following term.

**Off-Campus:** Students on an F-1 visa may work off-campus only under certain circumstances. Working off-campus requires special authorization and is available only in certain circumstances (i.e. curriculum practical training or severe economic need)

**International students may not be “self-employed,” which means you may not provide professional services for a fee or work as “independent contractors.”**

# Work Options

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## What is considered On-Campus employment?

### Working for Middlesex Community College!

- ✦ Employment is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session – Accumulated total of all jobs.
- ✦ Full-time (21 hours or more per week) during school vacations- summer/winter break.
- ✦ Work on campus does not need to be degree related.
- ✦ No formal authorization is required
- ✦ If you transfer to another school you are no longer authorized to work at Middlesex Community College.
- ✦ You may not work during “grace period” following degree completion.

## What is considered Off-Campus employment?

### Practical Training

#### 1) **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

To be eligible for this category you must have had F-1 student status for one academic year (nine months). A job offer is required to be eligible to apply for curricular practical training with a completed CPT Request form (**Appendix C**). While there is no limit to the length of time you may be employed in curricular practical training, any student who works for twelve months or more in full-time curricular practical training automatically loses the eligibility of any optional practical training after completion of studies. Curricular practical training is defined as:

- ✦ Non-credit training that is required for ALL students in the degree program as part of the established curriculum (e.g. required internships as published in the school catalogue).
- ✦ Training programs taken for academic credit which are an integral part of the established curriculum, but are not required (e.g. field study courses as published in the school catalogue).

#### 2) **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

To be eligible for this category you must have been in F-1 Student status for one academic year (nine months). You must complete a OPT Request form (**Appendix D**). A job offer is not required to be eligible to apply for optional practical training. You are eligible for a total of twelve months of full-time optional practice training per degree level. You may apply for periods of practical training before completion of your studies. Any time of OPT used before graduation is deducted from this 12-month period.

# Social Security Numbers

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If you have been authorized you to work either ON or OFF campus, and you meet Social Security's eligibility requirements, you can get a Social Security number.

A US social security number is used to report wages to the government. The Social Security Office will only issue a social security number to those students who have secured a job on campus or those who have been approved for Curriculum Practical Training (CPT) or Optical Practical Training (OPT).

## How do you apply for a Social Security number?

You must report to one of your International Student Advisors prior to applying for a SSN number with a completed SSN Request Form (**Appendix E**). Taking these actions will ensure the SSN can verify your immigration status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

To apply for a Social Security number:

1. Complete an [Application For A Social Security Card](#) (Form SS-5); and
2. Show an original documents proving your:
  - a. Immigration status
  - b. Work eligibility
  - c. Age
  - d. Identity
3. Take your completed application and original documents to your local Social Security office.

151 Warren Street  
Suite 300, The Gateway, Bldg. 11  
Lowell MA, 01854

## Immigration status

To prove your immigration status, you must show us the current U.S. immigration document, I-94, *Arrival/Departure Record*, issued to you when you arrived in the United States. If you are an F-1 or M-1 student, you also must show your I-20, *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status*.

## Work eligibility

You must provide a letter from your International Student Advisor and a letter from your employer that:

1. Confirms your current school status
2. Identifies your employer and the type of work you will be doing
3. States your employment start date and the number of hours you will be working
4. Is signed by your supervisor's name and telephone number

***If you are authorized to work in curricular practical training (CPT), you must provide your Form I-20 with the employment page (page 2) completed and signed by your school's designated official.***

The Social Security Office cannot process your application if:

- 🔥 Your on-campus or CPT work begins more than 30 days from your application date

### **Age**

You must present your birth certificate, if you have it or can easily obtain it. If not, we can consider other documents, such as your passport or a document issued by DHS, to prove your age.

### **Identity**

The Social Security Office can accept only certain documents as proof of identity. An acceptable document must be current (not expired) and show your name, identifying information and preferably a recent photograph. The Social Security Office will ask to see your current U.S. immigration documents. Acceptable immigration documents include your I-94 with your unexpired foreign passport.

***All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The Social Security Office cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents, or accept a receipt showing you applied for the document.***





# Filing U.S. Taxes

# Filing U.S. Taxes

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## **U.S. Tax Information for International Students**

These following guidelines are for informational purposes only and should not be considered financial or legal advice. Please consult your own tax or financial advisor with any questions.

Taxes are often complicated – even for those native to the United States. This section is designed to offer general guidelines only for federal income tax obligations, including determining tax residency and which forms must be filed and when.

The International Student Office staff is not trained to provide assistance with taxes but will provide you with information on basic Internal Revenue Service (IRS) publications and forms, and access to an online nonimmigrant tax filing website that can assist you with the tax process.

If you are an international or exchange student who was present in the United States in the past tax year, you may be required by law to file one or more U.S. Federal and State Tax forms even if you have had no U.S. source of income. ***The U.S. tax year runs from January 1st to December 31st, with a filing deadline of April 15th.***

### **What is a Tax Return?**

In the United States, federal income taxes are prepaid by our employer(s) based on the estimate of liability provided by the employee on the Form W-4 (usually completed by the employee at the time of hire). The taxes paid by the employer are then withheld from the employee's paychecks. Since the amount withheld is only an estimate, employees are given a yearly opportunity to reconcile the amount taken out with how much was owed.

The name of the form on which the reconciliation is made is called the "tax return." A tax return is filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), an agency of the U.S. government. In some cases, filing the tax return results in a refund from the IRS because the amount of money withheld was higher than necessary. However, sometimes a taxpayer does not have enough withheld and must send a payment to the IRS with his/her tax return.

## **Forms You May Need to Complete:**

### **Federal:**

1. Form 8843 "Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition"
2. Form 1040 NR EZ or Form 1040 NR

### **State:**

3. Form 1-NR/PY



## Who Must File a Tax Return?

1. If you had no U.S. income and are a nonresident for tax purposes, file Form 8843.
2. If you had U.S. income and considered a nonresident for tax purposes, file Form 1040 NR or the Form 1040 NR EZ and Form 8843.
3. If you had U.S. income and are considered a resident for tax purposes, file Form 1040 or Form 1040 EZ.

## Tax Treaties

Some individuals benefit from a tax treaty between their country and the U.S. that decreases the amount of tax they owe the federal government (not the state). To determine if some of your earnings are exempt from federal taxes, see IRS Publication 901.

## What is Considered Income?

Nonresidents, for tax purposes, are taxed only on their U.S. income. With a few exceptions, this means that any income received from outside the U.S. is not considered taxable in the United States. Residents, for tax purposes, are taxed by the United States on their income from anywhere in the world.

Sources of U.S. income may include on-campus employment, practical or academic training, scholarships, fellowships, and any other compensation received for labor. "Income" is not limited to wages paid in cash, but also includes any portion of a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship from a U.S. source that is applied to housing and meal expenses. The portion applied to tuition, fees, and books is not considered income. If scholarship money is provided directly to the student by check or cash, however, it is fully taxable even if the student intends to use it to pay for tuition, fees, and/or books.

## Determining Tax Residency

The IRS divides everyone into two categories for tax purposes - resident and nonresident:

4. Residents: all U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents ("green card" holders), and nonresident aliens for immigration purposes who have met the Substantial Presence Test (see *next page*).
5. Nonresident aliens: all others, regardless of immigration status.

The **Substantial Presence Test (SPT)** is how the IRS determines when nonresident aliens have been in the United States long enough to be considered residents for tax purposes. One must be present in the United States for a total of 183 days over a period of 3 years to pass the SPT and be considered a resident for tax purposes, however, individuals in F, J, M, or Q status do not count days during the time they are "exempt individuals."

### The rules for “exempt individuals” are:

- F, J, M or Q students and their dependents are “exempt individuals” for a period of five years throughout their lifetime. During the time individuals in F, J, M and Q status are “exempt individuals,” they will remain nonresidents for tax purposes even though they are present in the United States for more than 183 days. Once they leave “exempt individual” status, days of presence will be counted and they may become a resident alien for tax purposes. The Substantial Presence Test is detailed more fully in IRS Publication 519.



### Identification Numbers:

You must have either a Social Security number or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) to complete all tax forms **except Form 8843**.

- Social Security Numbers (SSNs):
  1. For information regarding obtaining a Social Security number, please see the section on "Social Security Numbers."
- ITIN Numbers:
  1. The IRS issues ITINs to foreign nationals and others who have federal tax reporting or filing requirements and do not qualify for SSNs. The ITIN is a nine digit, tax processing number issued by the IRS. ITINs are not valid identification outside of the tax system. By law, an individual cannot have both an ITIN and an SSN.
    - Form W-7 and instructions for obtaining an ITIN can be found at:  
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw7.pdf>



### Resources:

1. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA):
  - The VITA program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$54,000 or less, persons with disabilities and limited English speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.
  - To Find a VITA site go to their website at:  
<https://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/>
2. Basic Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publications:
  - IRS Publication 513 provides an excellent overview of tax regulations for international students/visitors.
  - IRS Publication 519 "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens" contains the "Substantial Presence Test" which helps determine your residency for tax purposes.
  - IRS Publication 678-FS "Foreign Student & Scholar Text for Use in Preparing Returns"
  - IRS Publication 901 "U.S. Tax Treaties" describes tax treaties that may affect your filing.
  - IRS Publication 4011 "For Use in Preparing Federal Tax Returns for Nonresident Aliens"
3. Obtaining Forms and Assistance:
  - Slater International Center will display some standard IRS tax forms and publications in February.
  - Pick up forms and publications at the Boston IRS office or any public library
  - Download federal forms from the IRS web site at:  
<http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>
  - Download State tax forms at:  
<http://www.dor.state.ma.us/forms/formsIndex/taxformsPERSONAL.htm>
  - For help with federal income tax return or to order federal tax forms, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 or go to <http://www.irs.gov>.
  - For help with your state income tax return, call the Massachusetts Department of Revenue at 617-887- 6367 or go to:  
<http://www.mass.gov/dor>.



# Travel and Reentry

# Travel and Reentry

## PLEASE TAKE NOTE:



You should have a discussion/obtain approval from the International Student Advisor PRIOR to travel in order to avoid complications. You **must obtain prior approval from International Student Advisor** if one of the following applies:

- ✦ If you are planning to be away for a period longer than one week at any time during the official semester start and end date (i.e., any absence taking longer than a one-week period during the semester dates, must have our permission)
- ✦ If you are planning on returning to school after the semester start date

**Students are not permitted to be on a leave of absence from Middlesex Community College** (without prior approval from the International Student Advisor). This pertains to any type of leave, academic leave, personal, medical leave, military leave, etc.

## Visa Stamp Renewal - Check your Passport

If the visa stamp in your passport which correlates to your current legal status in the U.S. (F-1) is expired and you are traveling outside the U.S., you will be required to visit a U.S. Embassy or Consulate to obtain a renewal of the same visa status.

If you have changed your status while in the U.S. and are now legally holding a different status than the visa stamp last recorded in your passport, you will need to apply for the new visa category at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas before returning to the U.S.

## VALID F-1 VISA STAMP

- ✦ Some students will need to renew their passports during the course of their studies or post-completion training period. If the visa is still valid at this time, there is no need to apply for a visa renewal. Students in this circumstance should travel with both passports: the expired passport containing the valid U.S. visa, and the valid passport, which does not contain a visa stamp.
- ✦ If the F-1 entry visa stamp in your passport has expired and you plan to travel outside the United States, you must go to a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad to obtain a new F-1 visa. F-1 visas may never be renewed inside the United States. Students should generally allow 2-8 weeks for processing. Students engaged in post-completion OPT should be aware that it can be difficult to renew an F-1 visa during OPT. Contact the consulate for an appointment prior to finalizing travel plans.
- ✦ Some students will also be subject to Security Advisory Opinions because of their countries of national origin, citizenship, fields of study, or at the discretion of the Consular Officer. Security Advisory Opinions commonly take one month, but may require as long as 4-6 months in rare cases.

## IMPORTANT SITES:

- 🌐 **US Embassies or Consulates** <http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- 🌐 **Reciprocity Fees** (which apply to certain countries)  
<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/fees/fees-reciprocity-tables.html>

### **Students On F-1 Post Completion Optional Practical Training (Post OPT)**

**It is not advisable that you travel outside of the U.S. until you have received an approved Employment Authorization Card (EAD).** Although the F-1 regulations are not completely explicit on this point, it is understood that the OPT EAD card must have been issued before the student departs the U.S. This is the practice that is recommended by both International Student Advisors and immigration attorneys.

If you travel during Post OPT status, you should contact our office during advising hours to ensure that your employment information is correctly updated on SEVIS, as well as your U.S. address.



You will also need the following documentation in order to re-enter the U.S. with the proper F-1 status:

1. A valid passport (valid 6 months beyond the expiration date of your Employment Authorization Card);
2. A valid Post OPT I-20 Form, signed by our office within the last 6 months;
3. A valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport. If you need to renew your visa stamp while you are away from the U.S., be mindful of the fact that the U.S. Embassy or Consulate will need to be convinced of your ties to your home country and intent to return after your Post OPT time.
4. A letter from your Post OPT Employer. The letter must be on original letterhead, have an original signature and have a current date. It should include your name, title, and more importantly verification that you are still employed there. This letter should not include start and end dates;
5. Photocopies of the last three pay statements to further evidence your employment.
6. **Do not re-enter in tourist status.** IF you do, you will cancel your F-1, Post OPT Status and will no longer have work authorization.

**You have a 60-day grace period beyond the completion date of your EAC card.**

You may not work during this 60-day grace period. If you depart the U.S. to Canada, Mexico or elsewhere outside of the U.S. during this period, you will be unable to re-enter in F-1 status. You may, however, use this time to transfer your F-1 program to another school or to apply for a change of status with USCIS to another non-immigrant visa classification.

**Travelling to Canada & Re-entering the U.S. from Canada**

If you are interested in visiting Canada, be sure to check the Canadian Consulate General's official website in New York for the most current information. You are no longer permitted to apply for a Canadian visa in person, but you can drop off your paperwork in person. **Please visit their website.** <http://can-am.gc.ca/new-york/index.aspx?lang=eng>

You will need to complete the necessary visa application process, and submit the paperwork as per their instructions. *(Be sure to follow their instructions carefully.)* Typically, you will be required to mail in your documentation. If approved, your Canadian entry visa and documentation will be returned to you. In certain cases, you may receive a notice requesting an in-person interview to pick up your documentation.

Depending on your country of citizenship, you may need a Canadian visa to enter Canada. Also, depending on your country of citizenship, it could be a lengthy visa application process, as they may need to process a security check (i.e., *Administrative Processing*). Their address is:

Canadian Consulate General  
Immigration Section  
1251 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020-1175)



F-1 holders are allowed to re-enter the U.S. from Canada with expired F-1 stamps provided they are re-entering within a 30-day period and have a valid passport (valid at least five years beyond the expiration date of their Form I-20).

**NOTE: If you are traveling to Canada for the sole purpose of applying for a U.S. visa at a U.S. Consulate, you are not guaranteed approval.** You may be subjected to a long security check. Be sure to first discuss your travel plans with the International Student Advisor. Third Country Nationals visiting Canada for the purpose of applying for a U.S. visa may be denied. It is always risky to enter Canada for this purpose.



### IN BRIEF, TO RE-ENTER U.S. WITH LEGAL STATUS:

1. You must have a valid passport upon re-entry to the U.S.
2. Your passport must be valid at least six months beyond your approved stay as per your visa document
3. Valid visa stamp for the status that you are returning to F-1
4. Do not re-enter in tourist status, as it will cancel any other status. Upon arriving in the U.S., always check i-94 record from [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94) to ensure you entered with appropriate status
5. Do not travel with a pending petition at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
6. OPT students will need an employment verification letter

### Traveling Within U.S. Only

If you are traveling within the United States only, make sure to carry your original passport and visa document (i.e. Form I-20, Employment Authorization Card, etc.) If you are traveling far away from home or by bus, train, airplane. **For local travel/close to home, simply carry pdf copies of above documentation on your cell phone.**

# Remember to ASK QUESTIONS!





# Transportation

# Obtaining a Driver's License

If you plan to drive in the U.S., you may apply for a Massachusetts Driver's License. To obtain an application, visit <http://www.massrmv.com/rmv/forms/21042.pdf>

## **Nearest Registry of Motor Vehicles:**

77 Middlesex St  
Lowell MA 01852  
(978) 368-8000



## **All students applying for a Driver License must bring with them the following immigration documents:**

1. I-94 Card (can be accessed at [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94))
2. Passport
3. Visa Document (Form I-20)

In addition to the above, you must also bring each of the below:

### **1. Proof of Massachusetts Residency**

- ✦ If you live off-campus, you may provide a copy of your lease
- ✦ A utility bill (gas, electric, wired telephone, wired cable, or heating oiled deliver bill) (no more than 60 days old) that contains the applicant's name and residential address;
- ✦ Bank Passbook with applicant's name and residential address;
- ✦ A bank statement or transaction-related document (no more than 60 days old) on a form generated by the issuing bank and displaying the bank's name and the Massachusetts mail address, and the applicant's name and residential address, received through mail by applicant;
- ✦ A checkbook with the applicant's pre-printed name and residential address;
- ✦ ATM/Debit Card statement with name and Massachusetts residential address (no more than 60 days old).

### **2. Signature Verification**

- ✦ Canceled personal check (copy acceptable if printed on a sheet with other cancelled checks and issued as part of a monthly statement by the bank), with a signature of applicant and preprinted residential address on the check and dated not more than 60 days earlier.
  - This requires you to have a checking account. If you do not have a checking account, you must sign up for one through a local bank. Once you have an account, you can simply consult your bank to assist you in providing the required copies of a cancelled check.

### 3. Date of Birth Verification

- ✦ An RMV letter from the International Student Office, which will contain your birth date
- ✦ Translated Birth Certificate from your home country (must be translated by a certified translator)

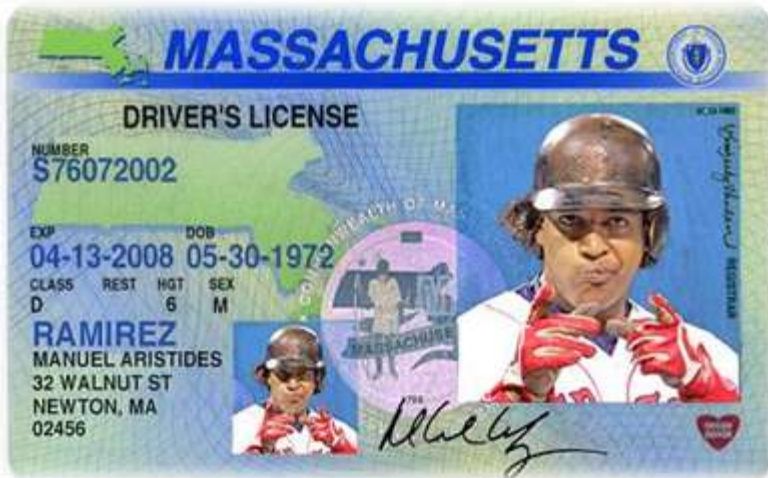
### 4. Social Security Card or Social Security Denial Letter

- ✦ If you do not have a Social Security number and do not have a job offer, you are not eligible to apply for a Social Security Number. If this is the case, you will want to obtain a Social Security Denial Letter from the Social Security Office.

151 Warren Street  
Suite 300, The Gateway, Bldg. 11  
Lowell MA, 01854

You will want to check with the RMV in regards to International Driver Licenses & Driving Privileges for Foreign Licensed Drivers. Depending on your home country, you may be able to use a valid driver license from your home country to drive in Massachusetts. If your home country's license is not issued in English, you must first obtain an International Driving Permit in your home country.

The International Driving Permit is **valid for only one year** from your date of entry into the U.S. For more detailed information about driving with a foreign license, you may want to read Frequently Asked Questions on International Driver Licenses & Driving Privileges for Foreign Licensed Drivers: <http://www.massrmv.com/rmv/forms/21317.pdf>



# Public Transit to Shopping & Dining

## **Lowell Regional Transit Authority**

**(OFF CAMPUS)**

<http://lrta.com/>



**Take outbound bus from the Kennedy Center Train Station to shopping center of choice:**

Tewksbury Bus (Bus #12) goes to Rte. 38 Shopping

### **Stores Located on Rte. 38 in Tewksbury, MA:**

Market Basket Grocery Store, Pets Plus, Donna's Donuts, Homegoods, Walgreens, Tewksbury Paint & True Value, Main Street Liquors, Friendly's Ice Cream & Restaurant, Advance Auto Parts, Farm Valley Foods, Blockbuster Video, Walmart (further down the street from this shopping Center – ask bus driver), Dollar Tree

North Chelmsford Bus to Westford Street (Bus #5) or Middlesex Street (Bus #17) goes to Drum Hill Shopping

### **Stores Located on Drum Hill Rd. Lowell, MA:**

Walmart, Payless Shoes, Dunkin Donuts, Radioshack, Sears, Carvel Ice Cream & Bakery, GameStop, FedEx, Autozone, I Party, Sherwin Williams Paint & Wallpaper, Small World Communications, Starbucks, Panera, Moe's Southwest Grill, D'Angelos, Damien's Dancewear, Applebees, Verizon Wireless, McDonald's, Mattress Giant, Taylor Rental, Annie's Bookstore, Bank of America ATM, Paper Store, CVS/Pharmacy, Market Basket Grocery Store, etc.

### **Local Malls:**

Burlington/Lahey Bus (Bus #14)  
75 Middlesex Turnpike Extensions,  
Burlington, MA

<http://www.simon.com/mall/burlington-mall/map>



Burlington Mall is the biggest mall  
in this area!

Pheasant Lane Mall Bus (Bus #19)  
310 Daniel Webster Hwy,  
Nashua, NH

<http://www.simon.com/mall/pheasant-lane-mall/map>



Pheasant Lane Mall is TAX FREE!

# MCC Inter-Campus “FREE” Shuttle

The shuttle operates during the Fall and Spring semesters only on a fixed route with no stops between the Lowell and Bedford campuses.

**MONDAY - THURSDAY 7:00 am - 9:30 pm**

**FRIDAY 7:00 AM - 4:00 PM**



Depart Lowell	ETA Bedford	Depart Bedford	ETA Lowell
7 a.m.	7:30 a.m.	8 a.m.	8:30 a.m.
8:30 a.m.	9 a.m.	9:30 a.m.	10 a.m.
10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	11 a.m.	11:30 a.m.
11:30 a.m.	12 p.m.	12:30 p.m.	1 p.m.
1 p.m.	1:30 p.m.	2 p.m.	2:30 p.m.
2:30 p.m.	3 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	4 p.m.
4 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	4:45 p.m.	5:30 p.m.
5:30 p.m.	6 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	7 p.m.
7 p.m.	7:30 p.m.	8 p.m.	8:30 p.m.
8:40 p.m.	9:05 p.m.	9:05 p.m.	9:30 p.m.
9:30 p.m.	10 p.m.		





# Medical Resources

# Health Insurance

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Chapter 15 of the General Laws of Massachusetts requires that all students enrolled in nine or more credit hours participate in the College Student Medical and Accident Insurance Plan.

***The health insurance fee must be paid in full in order to receive coverage.***

The requirements may be waived for students who already have comparable health insurance by completing a waiver form that can be found by clicking on the waiver link listed below.

**You must CREATE AN ACCOUNT at Gallagher Student**

(<https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/user-login.php?idField=1194>)

**For a summary of benefits [Check here](#)**

(<https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/view-brochure.php?idField=1194&KosterWebSID=u63t0ceidgui1ojbigsfq8lgh3>)

## **MCC's Health Insurance Coverage Policy**

Due to the expansion of course offerings in non-standard terms at MCC (specifically the Allied Health program courses and Weekend College program courses) and the resulting staggered class starts and registration timeframe, MCC's policy on required health Insurance coverage is as follows:

- ✦ *Middlesex will require students enrolled in 9 credits or greater to have health insurance (either through MCC or comparable coverage on their own as defined by state) for the following effective enrollment periods.*
  - **Fall semester** – Courses that start within four weeks (two weeks before and two weeks after) of MCC's standard 15 week term.
  - **Spring semester** – Courses that start within four weeks (two weeks before and two weeks after) of MCC's standard 15 week term
- ✦ *In order for students to be deemed enrolled in 9 credits for health insurance coverage purposes, all courses comprising the 9 credits must be taken concurrently.*

# Required Immunizations

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## Required Immunizations

In order to attend classes at any Massachusetts university or college, state law requires that all full-time students (enrolled in 12 or more credits) and all Health Program Division students (full and part-time, regardless of age), must provide a medical record of immunizations.

### What are the required immunizations (shots)?

- **Tdap** (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)
  - One lifetime dose after 2006
  - Td (Tetanus, Diphtheria) not sufficient
- **MMR** (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)
  - 2 dose series
  - Students **born prior to 1957** will be considered immune, and exempt from MMR documentation (with the exception of Health Program students)
- **Hepatitis B**
  - 3 dose series
- **Varicella** [chicken pox]
  - 2 dose series OR
  - Physician verified history of disease
  - Students **born prior to 1980** will be considered immune, and exempt from Varicella documentation (with the exception of Health Program students)

### Where can I get immunizations (other than my doctor's office)?

If you have insurance, check with your local pharmacies to see if they give shots. Another option is the **Lowell General Immunization Clinic** at the Saints campus offered at certain times during the week.

### What happens if I don't submit my immunization records?

Students who do not complete the immunization law requirement by submitting immunization/shot records will be **placed on hold for grades, future registrations, and transcripts.**

### How can I submit my immunization records?

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • <b>Email</b>               | • <b>Fax</b>                   |
| ◦ records@middlesex.mass.edu | ◦ <b>Bedford:</b> 781-280-3826 |
|                              | ◦ <b>Lowell:</b> 978-656-3424  |

### Does it matter if I submit them to Lowell or Bedford?

Immunization records can be submitted to either office.

### How can I obtain these records?

- Completed records from your physician's office
- Laboratory reports of immune titers (blood tests) for Measles/Rubeola, Mumps, Rubella, Hepatitis B, and Varicella

\*Unable to get records from any of these sources? Call us at 978-656-3235 (Lowell) or 781-280-3765 (Bedford) for additional information.

# Student Health and Wellness

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## **Personal Counseling**

Personal counselors help students with a wide range of concerns, such as family problems, alcohol and drugs, relationship conflicts, and college-related stress. In cases where the student requires extended therapy, a referral listing is available.

To make an appointment contact: Marie Sims at 978-656-3258



## **Dental Clinics**

Reduced cost dental care is available to MCC students, faculty, and staff as well as to the general public, at the College's dental clinics in the Health, Science & Technology Center on Middle Street in Lowell. The Dental Hygiene clinic (first floor) services include x-rays for adults and children, cleaning, pit and fissure sealants, and athletic mouth protectors. For appointments, call 978-656-3250 or visit the [Dental Hygiene Clinic website](#).

## **Fitness Center**

A fully equipped fitness center with trained staff is located in the Student Center, opposite the bookstore, on the Bedford Campus. It is open to all full and part-time students. The Center, which contains cardiovascular and strength training equipment, is open during the fall and spring semesters Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Visit the [MCC Fitness Center website](#) for more information.

# Scholarship Resources

# Scholarship Opportunities

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## **MCC Foundation Scholarships**

The MCC Foundation is a private 501 c (3) organization that provides annual scholarships for enrolled MCC students. Enrolled students may apply for awards in the fall. Awards are applied to a student's spring semester.

There over 40+ different scholarships available to MCC students. To explore more options and apply go to their website at:

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/foundation/default.aspx>

## **Transfer Scholarships**

A number of scholarships are available to MCC students planning to transfer from MCC to bachelor's degree programs. Opportunities to apply can be found at the following website: <https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer/scholarships.aspx>

## **External Online Resources:**

*Abroad Planet Scholarship Resources*

Online community of international students studying in the United States.

<http://resources.abroadplanet.com/scholarships/0>

*College Board*

Free online financial aid source for scholarships, grants, and loans for all college bound students, including permanent residents and international students wishing to study in the United States.

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>

*FastWeb*

Free online scholarship search service.

[https://www.fastweb.com/registration/step\\_1/](https://www.fastweb.com/registration/step_1/)

*International Education Financial Aid*

Free online scholarship search service designed for international students.

<https://www.iefaf.org/>

*International Scholarships*

Free online scholarship database for international students wishing to study worldwide.

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

*Mobility International USA*

Free online scholarship resource for non-U.S. citizens with disabilities.

<http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/fundingtous>

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*

Free online searchable database for scholarships to international students.

<https://en.unesco.org/>

# Living in the U.S.

# Housing

Although, these rental agencies and websites might help you to find an apartment these are not affiliated with or endorsed by Middlesex Community College.

<b>UNIVERSAL APARTMENT RENTALS, INC..</b> 114 University Ave. Lowell, MA 01854 Phone: 978-454-999 Email: <a href="mailto:Mikesegal2003@yahoo.com">Mikesegal2003@yahoo.com</a>	<b>HERITAGE PROPERTIES</b> Vice President Mindy Diamantopoulous 1201 Westford St. Lowell, MA 01851 Phone: 978-458-0001 Fax: 978-459-0173 URL: <a href="http://heritageprop.net/">http://heritageprop.net/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:mdiamant@heritageprop.net">mdiamant@heritageprop.net</a>
<b>LAKESHORE REALTY</b> Helen McCobb- Property Manager 200 Lakeview Avenue Dracut, MA 01826 Phone: 978-957-4442 Fax: 978-957-4381 Email: <a href="mailto:lakellp@aol.com">lakellp@aol.com</a>	<b>PRINCETON PROPERTIES</b> Terence F. Flahive 1115 Westford St. Lowell, MA 01851 Phone: 978-458-8700 Fax: 978-458-8701 URL: <a href="http://www.princetonproperties.com/">http://www.princetonproperties.com/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:tflahive@princetonproperties.com">tflahive@princetonproperties.com</a>

The following are online resources you use to find a room and apartment:

**THE LOWELL SUN** URL:  
[www.Lowellsun.com](http://www.Lowellsun.com)

**RENT.COM** URL:  
[www.rent.com](http://www.rent.com)

**RENTNET.COM** URL:  
[www.rentnet.com](http://www.rentnet.com)

**APARTMENTS.COM** URL:  
<http://www.apartments.com>

**RENTNET.COM** URL:  
<http://www.rentnet.com>

**CRAIGS LIST** URL:  
<https://boston.craigslist.org/>

**\*\*Limited Housing units available in the Inn & Conference Center.  
Contact your international student advisor for more information.**



Once you find an apartment or room, your living arrangements will be lease (usually six months, nine months or one year) or “at will”. The lease is a formal written agreement between the landlord/landlady and the tenant. It specifies all the conditions (amount or rent, condition of apartment at time of moving in, etc.) if you live there on a formal basis. If you sign the lease, both you and the landlord are bound by law to follow it for the term of the lease. The advantages in having a lease are that the landlord(s) can’t ask you to leave easily and that he/she can’t raise the rent arbitrarily.

On the other hand, a tenant “at will” is an informal agreement (usually spoken) between the tenant and the landlord that the tenant will live there as long as it is mutually suitable to both the tenant and the landlord. It is generally agreed, however, that you will maintain the apartment in a clean and reasonable manner. The advantage in being a tenant “at will” is that you only have to give thirty days’ notice before you plan to move out.

You will be expected to pay the first and last month’s rent (as a security deposit) before you move in. The security deposit will be returned to you when you move out and the landlord approved of the condition in which you left the apartment. If the landlord does not approve of the condition of the apartment, they can keep part or all of the security deposit.

In most apartments, you will pay for your own utilities (i.e. gas, oil, heating, electricity, telephone, etc). Also, pets and smoking are not allowed in some apartments so make sure to ask your landlord before signing your lease.

**Before signing a contract with a landlord, be sure to ask yourself (or the landlord) the following questions:**

- ✚ Are utilities (water, heat, electric, etc.) included in the monthly rent?
- ✚ Do you feel safe in the area and in the building? Are there proper locks on the doors?
- ✚ Is there a washer/dryer in the building?
- ✚ Am I sure that I can afford this place?
- ✚ How much is the security deposit?
- ✚ Is it a yearly or month-to-month lease?
- ✚ Does the landlord live in the building? How can you contact him/her?
- ✚ Is there parking (if you have a car)?

# Banking

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## **Setting up Bank Accounts:**

One of the first things that you will need to do when you arrive in the area is to open a bank account. There are many banks in the Lowell area, some of which offer special student accounts. Information about banking services can be obtained from bank staff at the branch offices.

To open a bank account, you will need:

1. Passport
2. MCC Student ID number or proof of enrollment
3. Foreign address
4. Local address
5. Your deposit (a sum of money required to open the account)

Note: **You do not need to have a Social Security # to open a bank account.** Until you obtain a Social Security #, **you simply need to complete Form W-8 at the bank which will be provided by the bank.**

When you open your bank account, make sure to ask any questions you may have about purchasing and payment protocol in the US. Also, have them **clarify all fees and rates** they may charge for certain transactions. For example, most banks will charge a fee for use of non-bank ATMs.

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Note that some businesses prefer certain methods of payment over others and may restrict what they accept from their customers. Methods of acceptable payment in the US include:

- ✚ Cash
- ✚ Credit or debit card (e.g. Visa, Discover, Mastercard)
- ✚ Check
- ✚ Money Order



**Credit cards** are widely used in the US. Make sure you carefully read all terms of agreement and verify all details before accepting any offers. You have the right to refuse any offer you do not want or are unsure about.

<b>Pro</b>	(differs from bank)	<b>Con</b>	(differs from bank)
	Convenient Special offers Discounts Cashbacks Accumulate Credit		Annual fee Interest rate Late payment fee Damage Credit if not pay in time Risk of Fraud

## Local Banks close to MCC



### **Santander Bank**

489 Merrimack St, Lowell, MA 01854

Phone:(978) 458-4065



### **Enterprise**

222 Merrimack St #1, Lowell, MA 01852

Phone:(978) 459-9000



### **Mills 42 Credit Union**

83 Merrimack St, Lowell, MA 01852

Phone:(978) 328-5100

# Middlesex Community College Policy

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## Smoking

Today, public buildings in the United States are almost entirely “smoke free”, meaning that you are not permitted to smoke inside. Some restaurants may still have smoking “sections” but these, too, are becoming less and less common. Nearly all restaurants and bars have banned smoking. In general, smoking is only permitted in outdoor areas.

*If you are a guest in someone's home, office, apartment, etc., you should always ask permission to smoke before doing so.*

Smoking is prohibited on all property owned or operated by Middlesex Community College. This consists of all buildings, all grounds, including exterior open spaces, parking lots, on-campus sidewalks, roadways and driveways, recreational spaces and facilities; and in all college-owned or leased vehicles.



## Drug Policy

All international students are responsible for following **FEDERAL** immigration regulations. Federal laws are established at national level, and Federal laws override State laws.

**As an international student, you are subject to FEDERAL law.**

Massachusetts State law will allow the legal sale of marijuana to people 21 and over as of July 1, 2018. This State law decriminalizes marijuana.

**HOWEVER, FEDERAL LAW STILL PROHIBITS USE OR POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA.**

Federal Agents consider marijuana use, even in Massachusetts, an **ILLEGAL ACTIVITY**.

When you enter the U.S. at an airport or border, your social media accounts, texts, and email are all subject to search. Evidence of marijuana use (such as photos or texts to friends about buying or using) can be reason enough for agents to refuse entry.

**YES, YOU CAN BE DEPORTED OR BARRED FROM ENTRY INTO THE U.S. FOR EVIDENCE OF MARIJUANA USE OR PLANNED MARIJUANA USE.**

The new Massachusetts State law does not change this Federal policy. Please use extreme caution when joking about drug use or illegal activity on your social media accounts, texts, or phone.

## Alcohol and Drugs

**It is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drink or be in possession of alcohol.** It is also illegal to be drunk in public and to drive after drinking. If you drive while you are drunk, you may be sent to jail, have to pay a fine and lose your driving privileges. It is against the law for you or your passengers to have an open container of alcohol (even an open can of beer) in your car. You can also get a ticket for riding a bicycle while drunk! Get a designated driver (someone who agrees not to drink) or call a taxi if you have been drinking and need to go home.

*\*These laws may seem constraining to you if you come from a country with very liberal alcohol laws, but you are obligated to follow US laws while you are in the country.*

### **The following are considered crimes and can get you arrested:**

- fighting in public; other acts of violence
- minor in possession of alcohol (under 21)
- public intoxication
- open alcohol containers in public
- DUI (Driving Under the Influence) / BUI (Biking Under the Influence)
- violating the noise ordinance (after 10pm Sun./Thurs. and after 12 midnight Fri./Sat.)
- urinating in public
- arson



# American Values

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It may help to know something about the values that shape Americans' attitudes and behaviors. As you consider these values it is important to remember that:

1. U.S. society is made up of a diversity of ethnic groups and cultures that have helped shape American values;
2. Some individuals and groups have a set of respected values that are quite different from those of mainstream America;
3. People's attitudes and behavior are based on their values.

**Individuality:** Americans are encouraged at an early age to be independent and to develop their own goals in life. They are encouraged to not depend (too much) on others including their friends, teachers and parents. They are rewarded when they try harder to reach their goals.

**Privacy:** Americans like their privacy and enjoy spending time alone. Foreign visitors will find U.S. American homes and offices open, but what is inside the American mind is considered to be private. To ask the question "What is on your mind?" may be considered by some to be intrusive.

**Equality:** Americans uphold the ideal that everyone "is created equal" and has the same rights. This includes women as well as men of all ethnic and cultural groups living in the U.S. There are even laws that protect this "right to equality" in its various forms.

The general lack of deference to people in authority is one example of equality. Titles, such as "sir" and "madam" are seldom used. Managers, directors, presidents and even university instructors are often addressed by their first or given name.

**Freedom:** The cornerstone of American Culture. The Constitution of the United States of America ensures that the people retain certain rights and freedoms. It limits the influence the Government has on the personal lives of the Citizens. Americans who respect the rights of other Citizens are free to work, play, worship, travel, and live as they please.

**Time:** Americans take pride in making the best use of their time. In the business world, "time is money". Being "on time" for class, an appointment, or for dinner with your host family is important. U.S. Americans apologize if they are late. Some instructors give demerits to students who are late to class, and students at most universities have institutional permission to leave the classroom if their instructor is 10 or 15 minutes late.



# The American Classroom

Depending on the size of the course or who is teaching your classes, the classroom culture can be quite different from home. American classrooms may also be more student-centered than you are used to. Some other common practices that may be different in the U.S. include:

- ✦ Calling the professor by his/her first name (if they tell you to)
- ✦ The professor may not always greet you by name or say "goodbye" when class is over
- ✦ Informal/casual dress and behavior in class
- ✦ Students eating and reading in large classes
- ✦ Direct communication styles: speak up, speak fast, challenging the professor
- ✦ The professor's admission of learning from students
- ✦ The professor openly criticizing and complimenting students
- ✦ Students sometimes do group work for projects, etc.
- ✦ Oral presentations by students are often required
- ✦ The significance of plagiarism



# Plagiarism

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## **What is Plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

There are many different ways to show where you got your information from. If you use a quotation or simply borrow some ideas from an article or book, you must attribute or give credit to the authors and researchers whose work you are using to write your report. Failure to do this is called plagiarism which is stealing other people's words and ideas.

## **What does the MCC Honor Code say about Plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is a violation of MCC's Student Conduct Policies and will get you in trouble. So make sure you follow the proper guidelines and give credit to the right people in your bibliography!

The MCC Honor Code defines Academic Misconduct as:

**Plagiarism**, including any representation of another's work or ideas as one's own in academic and educational submissions.

**Cheating**, including any actual or attempted use of resources not authorized by the instructor(s) for academic submissions.

**Fabrication**, including any falsification or creation of data, research or resources to support academic submissions.

Honor Yourself Honor the Code: Retrieved from

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/deanofstudents/downloads/hcodeflyer.pdf>

## **What is Plagiarism Detection Software?**

MCC faculty use a plagiarism detection software. When a student turns in a paper in Blackboard, the software checks the internet and many databases to see if anything has been copied from another person's work.



# Social Life

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Your interaction with other people in your social life is an integral part of your stay in the United States. To make the most of it, get ready to introduce yourself in a positive way to fellow students, professors, and other people both on- and off-campus. One of your first introductions to social life on a U.S. campus will be "The International Student Orientation Program," coordinated by the International Student Office. Your orientation is meant to introduce you to other international students, and to prepare you for campus life. It is a great place to meet new people!

## **Friendship:**

Most Americans will tell you they have many friends. Their definition of friends/friendship may differ greatly than yours. An American's "friend" may be someone to eat lunch with a few times a semester, or go to a movie or party. Americans may have many of these "friends," which you may consider just acquaintances. In contrast, in your country the definition of a friend might be someone with whom you would share your most private secrets, with unlimited trust between you. Americans do also make those kinds of friendships, but they may have several of these "best friends" along with many "casual friends" described above. Invite them to a movie or dinner, but take it slowly at first. To develop good friends here, join a club on campus, continue to pursue your old hobbies from home and try new things! Most Americans enjoy getting to know people from other cultures.

## **Dating:**

You may be surprised by the informality of relations between men and women in the United States. Couples go out alone in the evening to attend a movie, concert, or party.

It is not unusual for a woman to ask a man to go out and for the couple to share expenses. Relationships between American men and woman of college age range from simple casual relationships to strong emotional and physical commitments. Also Americans can be a lot more casual about their sexuality and sexual relations than many other countries, so please get sound, neutral advice in these matters. If you are in doubt about correct behavior talk with American friends or with your international advisor.

# Tipping

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## Restaurants

It is common etiquette in the United States to leave a tip for your server at restaurants. Commonly, patrons will leave a tip equal to 15% of the total bill. If you were pleased with your service you might want to leave more, perhaps 20%, or whatever you see fit. You should leave your tip on the table when you leave the restaurant.

While you are not obligated to tip your server, it is considered rude to not leave anything. Waiting tables is a low-paying job in the US and most servers rely on their tips to make financial ends meet.



Customers generally do *not* leave tips at fast-food restaurants or cafeteria-style dining establishments (unless you had a server bringing drinks, etc.). In general, you leave a tip when you had someone serving you.

## Other Places

It is also customary to leave tips in other areas of the service industry. These include, but are not limited to:

- ✚ Taxi drivers
- ✚ Beauty shop/hairdresser/barber
- ✚ Bartenders
- ✚ Delivery people
- ✚ Hotel workers (bellhop, maids, etc.)

\*You might consider giving these service workers 10-15% of the total cost of your services.

# Lowell Attractions and Entertainment

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Home to intriguing galleries, artist studios and eye-catching public art displays, Lowell is bursting with creative energy. Lowell has long embraced the arts, transforming many of the City's historic mill buildings into artist live/work spaces, museums and galleries committed to showcasing local and national exhibits.

Artists of all ages and mediums, colorful galleries and world-class performance venues have created the foundation of the City's cultural scene. The designated Arts District demonstrates the City's commitment to fostering this important sector.

Here is a sampling of key cultural attractions you'll find in Lowell.

## **Art**

Ayer Lofts Gallery  
Arts League of Lowell  
119 Gallery  
Loading Dock Gallery  
University Galleries @ UMass Lowell  
UMass Lowell Center for the Arts  
Western Avenue Studios  
Whistler House Museum of Art  
Angkor Dance Troupe  
Camola Kids Dance Troupe  
Image Theater  
Lowell Memorial Auditorium  
Merrimack Repertory Theatre

## **Music**

Lowell Summer Music Series  
Lowell Gentlemen Songsters  
Lowell Philharmonic Orchestra  
New England Orchestra

## **Other Attractions**

New England Quilt Museum  
Pollard Memorial Library  
Textile Museum  
Boott Mills

Boarding House Park

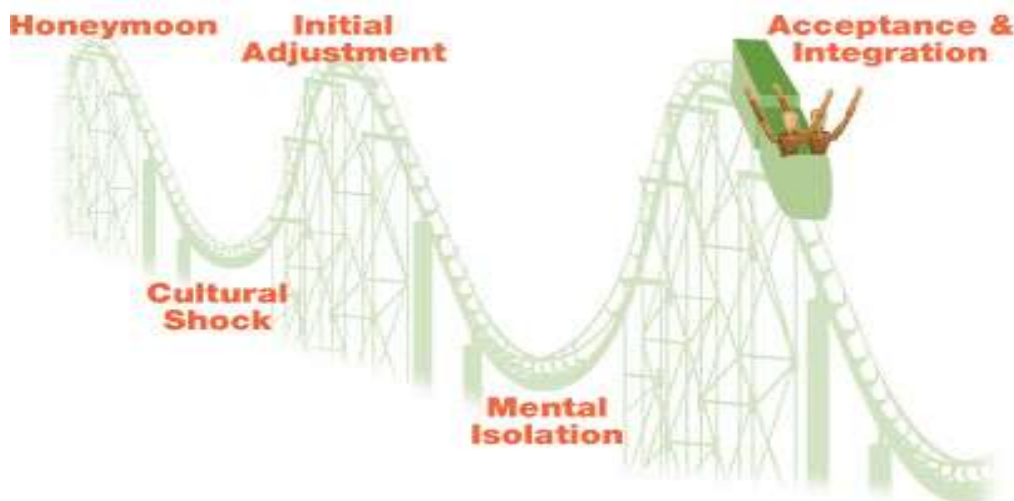


# Culture Shock

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You will probably notice that American values are, in some instances, quite different from your own. When you come to the U.S. the reality of these differences will be more evident. You will likely experience culture "shock" as you learn to adjust to the new culture and way of living. This is very normal and requires both time and patience.

Culture shock is defined as "the feeling of being confused or anxious when you visit a foreign country or a place that is very different from the one you are from." When you arrive in America, it is natural to be hyper-aware of your differences. You may even feel out of place. All of this is natural as you adapt to your new environment. New challenges always accompany new experiences. You may occasionally feel confused, unsure and uncomfortable in the United States. People may have different values and new ways of doing things that seem strange to you. You may feel that everything has changed, including your immediate support system of family and friends.



The excitement of living in a new country and environment, meeting new friends, tasting new cuisines, but at the same time being homesick, are common feelings expressed by new international students. Although Americans are friendly and welcoming to international students, sometimes their "openness and political correctness can be overwhelming". The details of housing arrangements, noise level in the dormitory, different means of transportation, too many choices and decisions to make, or frequent invitations to orientation sessions, can be mind boggling.

All of these things may contribute to “culture shock.” To minimize the shock, you will probably want to keep in touch with family and friends back home—but it is important to also identify new sources of support. People that you meet through the International Student Office or the Multicultural Center may also be a likely source of support. You could also contact relatives or friends who live in the United States to ask for their advice. You may also want to maintain a few habits here in the U.S. Perhaps you could continue to practice your own faith on a regular basis, with a group of like-minded individuals. Or maybe you enjoy jogging, playing chess, or cheering for your favorite sports team. While the activity will most likely be somewhat “Americanized,” it may offer comfort to do some of the things that you enjoy back in your home country.



During the transition from your home country to the U.S., the International Student Office coordinates orientation sessions for new students within the first few days of your arrival, to help you get acquainted with your new surroundings. Other forms of support will come from new friends, an academic advisor or Personal Counseling Office. In the U.S., many schools have therapists who have been trained to work with people just like you to discuss the types of new challenges you face. Most importantly, be prepared to open yourself to new experiences; be prepared to learn, not only in the classroom, but in your interactions with new people every day.

You may also notice that the real America is different than what has been portrayed by the media and pop culture. Hollywood movies, celebrities, TV programs, fast food, and other chain stores "are not necessarily good representations of a very complicated U.S.A.". Some of the campus communities can be much insulated and thus not represent the true American culture. "Hate-love confusion" and a little disappointment while transitioning and understanding the culture are normal, and you will adapt and accept gradually. Especially with communication styles: body language, eye contact, personal space, or facial expressions; it takes time to understand and adapt to these new ways of life.

<http://www.internationalstudentguidetotheusa.com/articles/culture.php>)

# Appendices

# F-1 PROGRAM EXTENSION REQUEST FORM

*\*\*Return completed form to the International Office\*\**

Appendix:

A

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Student I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form Start Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form End Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING PROGRAM EXTENSION

1. To be eligible for a program extension, you must be maintaining status, making normal progress toward completion of degree and have academic requirements remaining.
2. Extensions may only be granted to students who can demonstrate that they have compelling academic or medical reasons.
3. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extensions [8 CFR 214.2(f)(7)(iii)].
4. Extension requests will not be granted solely due to delays caused by employment such as Curricular Practical Training.
5. Must meet with International Student Advisor before request is approved.

### Checklist of required documents:

- ☐ Letter from Academic Advisor stating course work required to complete program and number of semesters needed
- ☐ A completed Financial Resources Statement and supporting financial documents
- ☐ Print - out of electronic I-94 or copy of paper I-94
- ☐ Copy of current I-20
- ☐ Unofficial transcript printed from Degreeworks Access

I certify I have read the request form instructions and information in full.

I certify the information I have provided is accurate.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# F-1 REDUCED COURSE LOAD (RCL) FORM

*\*\*Return completed form with required documents to the International Office\*\**

Appendix:

B

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Student I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form Start Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form End Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

International students should not drop below full time enrollment (12 credits) until they have received authorization from the International Office. Students who drop below full time enrollment without proper authorization will be considered out of status. International students who plan to be enrolled for part time studies must submit the Reduced Course Load (RCL) form and required documents. There are only a few exceptions to the full time enrollment requirement for the fall and spring semesters. Each exception has its own criteria.

Please indicate ☒ the reason why you are requesting to reduce your course load:

☐ **Medical RCL**

The International Office may authorize a medical RCL due to a temporary medical condition with an appropriate doctor's letter recommending the RCL for medical reasons. If a student cannot enroll for any courses due to the medical condition, the letter from the medical professional must state this.

**Requirements of Medical RCL:**

- Letter from licensed physician, medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist that recommends student to take less than the minimum 12 credits required for full time enrollment
- Receive prior approval from the International Office and academic department before dropping classes
- No more than 2 semesters total of Medical RCL

☐ **Final Semester RCL**

The International Office may authorize a final semester RCL for students who are in their last semester of study and only have a few credits remaining to meet academic program requirements. Students may request a RCL due to final semester only once per degree program.

**Requirement of Final Semester RCL:**

- Letter from your academic advisor stating the number courses that are remaining to meet their academic program requirements.

☐ **Academic Difficulty RCL**

Students may request an RCL due to academic difficulty only once per degree level. Academic difficulty could be due to the following reasons:

- Initial difficulty with English language or reading requirements
- Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
- Improper course placement

You must be enrolled for at least half the required full-time course load (6 credits). Students who receive an academic difficulty RCL must resume a full course of study in the next available semester in order to maintain status.

**Requirements of Academic Difficulty RCL:**

- Letter from your academic advisor or professor verifying the difficulty of the course or improper course placement

**Reasons Unacceptable for a Reduced Course Load**

Financial difficulties

Medical illness of family member

Child care issues

Suspension from academic program

Working on incompletes from a previous semester

# F-1 CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT) REQUEST FORM

Appendix:

C

*\*\*Return completed form to the International Office\*\**

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Student I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form Start Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form End Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is issued to students currently enrolled on a full-time basis at an approved educational institution to obtain work experience in their field of study. This is defined as an alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. The student receives academic credit for this training. CPT is granted by the college and the student's DHS Form I-20 is endorsed with the dates the student is eligible to work, as well as the number of hours per week. A student with CPT must present an original Form I-20 indicating CPT approval to an intended employer before employment may lawfully commence.

- ☐ Student must have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis at a DHS approved school for one full year before being eligible for CPT. Available only while student is in F-1 status, before completion of the educational objective.
- ☐ Students may engage in CPT only for the specific employer, location and period approved and recorded by the DSO in SEVIS.
- ☐ Must be an integral part of an established curriculum, in the student's course of study.
- ☐ Must receive written authorization from DSO, who records authorization in SEVIS and issues SEVIS 1-20 with notation, before work begins.
- ☐ Must continue to maintain a full course of study in F-1 status during the period of employment.
- ☐ F-1 students who engage in an aggregate of 12 months or more of full time curricular practical training, however, become ineligible for optional practical training (OPT).

CPT start date: \_\_\_\_\_ CPT end date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of CPT course: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of credits for CPT course: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester when you register for CPT course: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of employer where you will perform CPT:

\_\_\_\_\_

street number and name

\_\_\_\_\_

city, state, zip code

How is this employment related to your field of study?

I have read the International Student Handbook for Curricular Practical Training. I understand that I must receive written authorization on a new I-20 form from an International Student Advisor before my CPT begins. I understand that I have to be registered for a CPT course and receive at least one unit of academic credit. I understand that for summer CPT, I have to be registered for a CPT course and receive at least one unit of academic credit.

Signature

Date

*\*Please attach a copy of your job description to this form.*

# F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT) REQUEST FORM

*\*\*Return completed form to the International Office\*\**

Appendix:

D

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Student I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form Start Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form End Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is granted to students who wish to work in their field of study but are not going to work as part of their academic program. Students can work full time for one year after graduation. OPT must be completed within 14 months of graduation. For OPT eligibility, the student must apply with DHS for an EAD card. The F-1 OPT employment cannot begin until actually receiving the EAD card in hand from the DHS. Upon approval, DHS will mail this card directly to the applicant. Optional practical training (OPT) is defined in the regulations as "temporary employment for practical training directly related to student's major area of study".

- Student must have been lawfully enrolled on a full time basis at a DHS approved school for one full academic year before being eligible for OPT.
- Standard OPT is available for a cumulative maximum of 12 months per educational level.
- Full time employment can be requested for students who have completed all requirements for their degree.
- Must be directly related to the student's course of study.
- No offer of employment is required to apply for standard OPT, but the student is expected to work during the OPT EAD validity period. Students on post-completion OPT are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment.
- Student files 1-765 application with filing fee for EAD with USCIS lockbox facility. Work can begin only after receiving EAD issued by USCIS and on or after the start date on the EAD.
- An F-1 student may apply for post-completion OPT up to 90 days before the student's program end date. The application must be properly filed within 30 days of the date the student's DSO recommends OPT in SEVIS.
- Work done for OPT must be "directly related to the student's major area of study".
- Report the employer information to the International Office once the student has been hired.
- SEVP recommends that the student maintain evidence for each job documenting the position held, proof of the duration of the position, the job title, contact information for the student's supervisor or manager and a description of the work.

When do you expect to graduate? Semester: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

OPT start date: \_\_\_\_\_ OPT end date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(\*Start date must be within 60 days of your program completion date)*

Name of Employer (If applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address of employer where you will perform OPT:

\_\_\_\_\_

street number and name

\_\_\_\_\_

city, state, zip code

Where will you be seeking employment and how is this employment related to your field of study?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have read the International Student Handbook for Optional Practical Training. I understand that I must receive written authorization from USCIS and my approved EAD card before my OPT begins. I understand the responsibilities required to maintain status during my period OPT authorization.

Signature

Date

# F-1 SOCIAL SECURITY LETTER REQUEST FORM

*\*\*Return completed form to the International Office\*\**

Appendix:  
E

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Student I.D. #: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Field of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

MCC Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form Start Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

I-20 form End Date (section 5): \_\_\_\_\_

.....

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_, is a F-1 visa holder, is in full-time  
(Please Print Student's Name)

attendance at Middlesex Community College. This student is working or has been offered part-time  
employment at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Employer Name, department)

as a \_\_\_\_\_  
(Nature of Employment (e.g., tutor, orientation leader, SI leader, etc.))

on MCC campus. According to federal regulations, F-1 visa holders must have a Social Security number in order to be paid for any on-campus employment.

*Please attach a copy of the letter from the supervisor.*