

Pre-Arrival Guide for International Students and Scholars



Office of International Affairs



Dear new international Student, Scholar, Visitor:

The Jefferson community welcomes you as a new member, bringing with you your perspectives to promote intercultural exchange while participating in your program.

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) is here to assist you in understanding the regulations pertaining to your immigration status, including maintenance of your status, as well as help you transition to your new life in Philadelphia and Thomas Jefferson University.

Whether you have already been living in the United States, or are coming to Philadelphia from abroad, this Pre-Arrival Guide is designed to provide you with helpful information about settling into the city, learning about its resources, and preparing you to begin your program as quickly as possible.

You will need to attend a mandatory orientation with someone in The Office of International Affairs upon arrival to campus as well as complete all clearance processes.

Please read this guide carefully before you begin your visa application process (if you need a visa), and prior to starting your onboarding steps. We all hope that you have safe and easy travels to Philadelphia.

All Office of International Affairs staff can be reached at uia@jefferson.edu.

Sincerely,

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Table of Contents

I. HOW TO APPLY FOR A VISA	5
A. J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa	5
B. 10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Non-Immigrant Visa	7
II. J-1 PRE-ARRIVAL REQUIREMENTS.....	8
A. Orientation	8
B. Immunizations.....	9
C. J-1 Exchange Visitor Health Insurance.....	9
Minimum Requirements for Jefferson J-1 program participation	9
III. ACCOMMODATIONS	10
A. Short-term Housing	10
On-campus Residence Hall.....	10
Off-campus Accommodation	10
B. Long-term Housing	10
University Apartments	10
Off-campus Housing.....	10
Types of Off-campus Housing	11
Lease.....	11
C. Utilities.....	11
IV. TRANSPORTATION	12
A. Getting to Center City Philadelphia.....	12
B. Commuter Services at Jefferson.....	12
C. Getting Around	12
Transportation Apps.....	12
Public Transportation	12
D. Other Modes of Transportation	13
Driving	13
Taxicabs	13
Ridesharing.....	14
Bicycles.....	14
V. COMMUNICATION SERVICES.....	14
A. Cell (Mobile) Phone	14
VI. MONEY MANAGEMENT.....	15
A. United States Currency.....	15
Paper Money	15

Coins	15
B. Currency Exchange	15
C. Banks and Banking Services.....	15
Opening a Bank Account	16
ATM	16
VII. IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS.....	16
A. Jefferson ID Badge	16
B. Driver’s License or State Photo ID Card.....	16
C. Philadelphia (PHL) City ID	16
D. Social Security Number (SSN).....	17
VIII. SAFETY AND SECURITY.....	17
IX. WEATHER	17
X. PREPARING FOR TRAVEL.....	18
A. When to Travel.....	18
B. Prepare in Advance	18
C. Packing Checklist.....	18
Carry-on Items.....	18
For Checked Luggage.....	18
What Not to Bring	18
XI. Resources for J-1 Scholars.....	19
A. Jefferson Postdocs.....	19
B. English Language Courses.....	19
C. Cultural Community Resources in the Greater Philadelphia Region.....	19

I. HOW TO APPLY FOR A VISA

A. J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa

The visa is a stamp in your passport which allows you to enter the United States. The expiration date is the date up to which you are permitted to enter or re-enter the U.S. using that particular stamp.

**Canadians do not have to apply for a visa but must still pay the SEVIS fee and enter the U.S. on J-1 status.*

- 1) **Review all the materials to make sure there are no misspellings or other mistakes on your documents.** If everything is correct and accurate, you may use these documents to apply for a visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest you. If corrections need to be made to your visa application materials, please contact oia@jefferson.edu.
- 2) **Pay the I-901 SEVIS Fee after receiving your I-20**
 - a) Go to the I-901 Fee website [here](#) and click “PAY I-901 FEE”
 - b) Fill out the next page on personal information. The form requires the SEVIS Identification Number on the DS-2019. This number is in the upper right-hand corner of the I-20 and begins with an N and has 10 digits.
 - c) The “Program Number” on your DS-2019 is: P-1-03534
 - d) Check that the information is correct on the following pages.
 - e) Print at least two copies of the receipt: You must bring the receipt with you to the visa interview AND when you travel to the U.S.

***NOTE FOR APPLICANTS FROM NIGERIA, GHANA, KENYA OR CAMEROON:**

Currently, the SEVP system is unable to accept credit card payments from persons of *Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, or Kenya*. If you are from one of these countries, you can pay the SEVIS fee by Western Union Quickpay, or by regular mail. Instructions are provided on the ICE website [here](#).

You *do not* need to pay the SEVIS fee if:

- You are transferring institutions
- Extending your program
- You are applying for a J-2 dependent visa, or
- You have paid this fee and have been denied a visa within the last 12 months

For information to specific questions about the SEVIS fee, go to the FAQs on ICE’s website [here](#).

- 3) **Find your local U.S. Consulate [here](#) and follow instructions to schedule an interview for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa.**

Schedule an appointment with the US Embassy or Consulate that has jurisdiction over your place of residence to apply for the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa. You should also review the website for the specific consulate or embassy you will visit for the visa appointment.
- 4) **Complete the DS-160 Visa Application Process:**
 - a) Complete the visa application [here](#)

b) Pay the visa application fee by following instructions on the U.S. Consulate's website

5) Prepare and take the following documents to your visa interview:

- a) A passport valid for at least six (6) months
- b) Form DS-2019
- c) Proof of SEVIS fee payment
- d) A receipt for the visa application fee
- e) Completed Visa Application Form DS-160
- f) Financial Support Documentation (e.g. job offer letter for postdocs)
- g) Invitation Letter from the department at Thomas Jefferson University for scholar/researcher or program acceptance letter from the College for J-1 Student
- h) Information that proves that you will return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community
- i) Marriage Certificate and Birth Certificate for dependents (spouse or any children), if applicable. You must have (a) DS-2019(s) for any dependents who wish to join **you**. Contact us (ويا@jefferson.edu) if you need to request these forms if you haven't yet.
- j) Two photographs, 51mm x 51mm (2in x 2in) each, in the prescribed format (see the website [here](#) for measurements)

6) Interview for a J-1 Visa

Remember that the purpose of the interview is to prove that your student visa is consistent with the reason why you are going. Try to obtain the full name of the officer who interviewed you, as well as her/his contact number. Additional points to remember when preparing for your interview can be found in the section [here](#).

Important Note: If your visa application is denied, before you leave the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, obtain a written explanation of the specific reason you are denied the visa and ask about re-application procedures. OIA might be able to advise you on next steps if you obtained the contact information of the officer and the specific reason.

7) Traveling to the United States

Exchange Visitors are prohibited from entering the U.S. more than 30 days in advance of the program start date identified in Item 3 of the Form DS-2019, so plan your U.S. entry accordingly. Please contact ويا@jefferson.edu and your inviting department with your expected arrival date in Philadelphia. For more information regarding traveling in the U.S., check ICE's website [here](#). We have also compiled the checklist to prepare for travel in the section [here](#).

What to expect at the Customs and Border port of entry

When you land in the United States, you must go through U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) with your valid immigration documents to gain admission. For information on what to expect, please visit the Department of Homeland Security pages [here](#).

Important Note: Have Jefferson's Campus Security phone number 215-955-8888 on hand in case you have issues at the port of entry. The Security Department can connect you with the Office of International Affairs. You also have a right to request that the Border Officer call the Security Department.

B. 10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Non-Immigrant Visa¹

1) Ties to Your Home Country

Under U.S. law, all applicants for non-immigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must, therefore, be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective researcher, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, research objectives, long-range plans and career prospects in your home country.

Each person's situation is different, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter that can guarantee visa issuance. If you have applied for the U.S. Diversity Green Card Lottery, you may be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be that you applied for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate. If you overstayed your authorized stay in the U.S. previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation if available.

We recommend that you bring a letter from your current institution if you are currently in a degree-seeking program or employed at their institution and that after your internship/visit in the United States you will be returning to your institution to complete your program or continue your employment.

2) English

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches!

3) Speak for Yourself

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

4) Know the Program and How It Fits Your Career Plans

If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study/research/consult/observe/teach in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to engage in that program of activity rather than to immigrate. You should be able to explain how your research activity in the U.S. relates to your future professional career when you return home.

5) Be Brief

Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what

¹ Source: [NAFSA](#) (modified to include J-1 Exchange Visitors)

you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers short and to the point.

6) Additional Documentation

It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time if you're lucky.

7) Not All Countries are Equal

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many researchers have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their research program in the United States.

8) Employment

You are only allowed to be employed in the U.S. for research that relates to your main program objective on your DS-2019. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.

9) Dependents Remaining at Home

If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support them, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

10) Maintain A Positive Attitude

Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied the visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

Before applying for your non-immigrant visa at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you are strongly advised to consult the U.S. Department of State website [here](#) to obtain the most up-to-date information about the application process.

II. J-1 PRE-ARRIVAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Orientation

All J-1 Exchange Visitors must attend International Affairs' Mandatory Orientation. Per regulations, an orientation for students is required to go over regulations that you must abide by as a J-1 Exchange Visitor. A date will be emailed by International Affairs in advance.

J-1 Students must attend their program orientation. This orientation is separate from OIA's orientation and will discuss academic information related to your program.

B. Immunizations

Everyone coming to Jefferson must undergo a health screening in the Jefferson Occupational Health Network for Employees & Students (JOHN) prior to the beginning of an assignment. The [Volunteer/International Visitor Immunization Form](#) must be completed prior to arrival for review at the JOHN. For more information, visit the JOHN's website [here](#). **Please note that any incomplete or inaccurate documentation will delay your clearance.** If you have any questions about immunization clearance, contact jeffuhs@jefferson.edu.

C. J-1 Exchange Visitor Health Insurance

The U.S. Department of State **requires** all J-1 Exchange Visitors and their J-2 dependents to have health insurance for the full duration of their J program. Willful failure to obtain health insurance requirements will result in the termination of your exchange visitor program. Minimum requirements for health insurance coverage are found in [22 CFR 62.14].

Minimum Requirements for Jefferson J-1 program participation

- Medical benefits of at least \$250,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$100,000
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness.

Find the category below to learn how to meet the insurance requirement.

Category	Do I need to buy health insurance?
<input type="checkbox"/> A scholar employed by Jefferson who will receive health benefits immediately	NO, but you must sign up on time for Jefferson's health insurance benefits with human resources.
<input type="checkbox"/> A scholar employed by Jefferson or Jefferson-affiliations who will receive health benefits on the first day of the month following your employment start date.	YES, UNTIL the first day of the month following your employment start date. You must first sign up on time for Jefferson's health insurance benefits through human resources
<input type="checkbox"/> A scholar employed by Jefferson affiliates who will receive health benefits	MAYBE. You must assure that health insurance starts at the start of your program. You may need to purchase separate medical evacuation/repatriation insurance covering the whole period of your program.
<input type="checkbox"/> A scholar who is not employed by Jefferson or Jefferson affiliations	YES. Visit our website to see the list of health insurance companies on J-1 Health Insurance here .
<input type="checkbox"/> A full-time student at Jefferson	YES. All students are required to have health insurance. Check to see if the current Jefferson student health insurance meets the minimum requirements or if you have to obtain another insurance. Having another insurance requires that you

	get formally waived out of the Jefferson health insurance plan through the Office of Student Life and Engagement.
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Things to remember when you buy health insurance

- OIA only accepts plans by insurance providers **with U.S. contact information**. Otherwise, you must enroll in an **eligible insurance plan from a U.S. insurance company**
- You must show proof of health insurance at the check-in appointment with OIA

III. ACCOMMODATIONS

A. Short-term Housing

On-campus Residence Hall

Thomas Jefferson University has one short-term residence hall—the Martin Building (201 South 11th Street). Contact the Office of Housing and Residence Life [here](#) directly for more information.

Off-campus Accommodation²

Hotels that offer discounts for hospital/university are found [here](#).



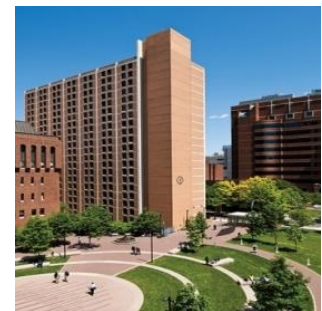
B. Long-term Housing

University Apartments

University apartments have year-long leases and offer a variety of living space options. You can choose among studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom or 3-bedroom apartments. University apartment buildings include laundry rooms, professional front desk staff, 24-hour emergency services, and a residence life program. For more information, contact the Office of Housing and Residence Life [here](#).

Off-campus Housing

The Office of Housing and Residence Life provides off-campus housing postings online [here](#).



² Please see the terms and conditions for each website you use. Office of International Affairs assumes no responsibility for their use.

Types of Off-campus Housing

Rooms

Renting a room generally implies sharing common spaces (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, living room) with other residents.

Apartments

The number of rooms in the U.S. means the number of bedrooms. In Philadelphia, there is a variety of apartment options, from studios to multiple bedroom apartments. A studio apartment has a bathroom and an open space that serves as a kitchen, bedroom, and living room.

Houses

Students or visiting professionals who are here with their families may want to rent an entire house. You can usually locate houses for rent through the previously mentioned websites, real estate agents, or personal contacts with landlords or renters who are vacating a house.

Lease

A lease is a binding legal document between a tenant and landlord, describing the rights and responsibilities of each. Read the lease carefully in order to see its duration, which utilities are included and all the restrictions. As a tenant, you are responsible and contractually obligated by this lease. You may need to contact the gas, electric, or water companies to start service in your home.



When you sign a lease, you will usually have to pay a "security deposit" which usually amounts to one month's rent. The landlord will return the deposit to you within 30 days after you leave the apartment if you have paid all of your rent, left the apartment and appliances clean and undamaged, and have not been evicted.

In addition to a security deposit, many landlords require payment of the first and last month's rent before you move in. Therefore, it can cost up to three month's rent to move into an apartment. As a newcomer, you will most likely not have a credit history in the United States. If you have a credit history in your home country, bring a copy of it with you. You may end up paying more for the deposit until you establish your credit history here.

Philadelphia landlord-tenant law, along with the Philadelphia housing codes, guarantees minimal living standards in rented rooms and apartments. Landlords are required to provide adequate winter heating and regular insect control. If you make any special agreements with the landlord concerning repairs or alterations, *make sure those agreements are written into the lease, signed, and dated.* (Many Americans consider it essential to have important agreements written down and signed.) Check more details [here](#).

C. Utilities

Once you have your housing, you may need to contact companies for services such as gas, electricity, and water.

Philadelphia Gas Works, Check the nearest locations [here](#), (215) 235-2050

PECO Energy, 2301 Market Street, (215) 841-4000, Check the website [here](#).

The city of Philadelphia provides water, sewer, and trash removal service to Philadelphia residents.

Check Water services [here](#).

Sewer services [here](#).

Check Trash removal services [here](#).

Talk to your landlord about utilities and trash removal requirements.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

A. Getting to Center City Philadelphia

The Philadelphia International Airport is in the southeastern-most region of the city, 12.4 miles/ 19.9 km from Center City. You can get to Center City by rental car, public transportation, taxi, and limousine. Go to the Philadelphia International Airport [here](#) or call their 24-hour phone numbers for general information at 215-937-6800 or 215-937-6937.

If you are coming from other airports, check the appropriate airport website for more information.

B. Commuter Services at Jefferson

Anyone with a Jefferson ID badge may be eligible for discounts on public transportation and parking through the Commuter Services Office. Find more information in their website [here](#). The office is located in the Jefferson Bookstore, at 1009 Chestnut Street.

C. Getting Around

Transportation Apps

You can download various transport apps onto your phone to help you navigate your way throughout the greater Philadelphia region.

- Transit- provides real-time public transit data to determine the true location of buses and trains
- Google Maps- helps you plan the fastest routes to a specified location for traveling by foot, car, or public transportation
- City Mapper- similar to Google Maps, helps you find the fastest route combining bus, subway, train, and walking

Public Transportation

SEPTA

SEPTA is Philadelphia's local public transportation system that operates buses, subways, trolleys, local trains and regional rail throughout the Philadelphia area. You can download the SEPTA app to view transportation schedules and stay updated on any delays.

Buses, Subways, and Trolleys

You can acquire route maps at train stations, in our office or at SEPTA. The base fare for buses, subway and trolley is \$2.50 (subject to increase), payable upon entering. *Exact change is required.* Monthly transpasses (bus, subway or trolley) cover up to 240 rides for one month.

Regional Rail

Trailpasses (train or regional rail) cover up to 240 rides on public transportation for one month. The cost varies depending on the destination.

SEPTA Key

Septa Key is a reusable card that can be used for the subway, bus or trolley, and regional rail. You can purchase Septa Key in subway stations at a Fare Kiosk. At the Kiosk, you can also view your electronic Travel Wallet Account to load/reload a fare onto your Key card and check the balance. You can also add a trailpass or transpass to your Travel Wallet. Kiosks accept credit, debit, and cash.



The Kiosk also sells a Quick Trip which is a single ride fare for customers without a Key Card.

In order to receive a discount for each ride, first register your card at the SEPTA Key website [here](#). Once you create an account, you can choose to have your card automatically reloaded, view your balance and look at your trip history.

PATCO Hi-Speed Line

This rapid transit system links Philadelphia with Southern New Jersey. The closest PATCO stations to Jefferson are located at 8th & Market Street and 9th/10th & Locust Street. For more information go to the PATCO website [here](#).

D. Other Modes of Transportation

Driving

Individuals who possess a valid foreign driver's license from their country are authorized to drive in Pennsylvania for up to one year from their date of entry into the United States, or upon expiration of their foreign license, whichever comes first. You may also use your international driving permits. Check out the DMV website for more information [here](#).

Taxicabs

Taxi (or "cab") service is generally more expensive here than it is in other countries. Taxis have meters that show the fare. It is customary to pay an additional 15 percent of the fare as a "tip," or gratuity.

Ridesharing

The two most common ridesharing apps that are used in Philadelphia are Lyft and Uber.

You will need to have a U.S. debit and credit card along with a local U.S. number to book a ride. Both companies use individual contractors to pick up passengers and have options to rideshare or be the only passenger. It is a convenient way to get around the city if it is late at night or public transportation is not near and accessible to your destination. Check the license plate and the name of the driver is correct before getting in the car.

Bicycles

Bicycles are a convenient way to get around the city. Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia is a resource to look at maps and get information on getting around by bike. Find more information on the website [here](#).

Google Maps also provides a feature which allows you to find a bicycle route to your destination. You can access Google Maps either by app or website [here](#).

If you do not have your own bike, bike rentals are possible through various Indego locations. Check the Indego website [here](#).

V. COMMUNICATION SERVICES

A. Cell (Mobile) Phone

You can buy prepaid cell phone plans and pay monthly for the services you use as most cell phone providers offer prepaid plans. You may also apply for a cell phone plan that has a contract. There are various providers in this area (i.e., Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, Xfinity, and T-Mobile). If you are on payroll with Thomas Jefferson University, you may be eligible for employee discounts and perks at mobile carriers.



VI. MONEY MANAGEMENT

A. United States Currency

Paper Money

All U.S. paper money is in the same size and color. Denominations include \$1 (often called “a buck”), \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. Paper money for amounts larger than \$100 is not usually seen in public circulation.



Coins

American coins come in two colors and four sizes. Smaller-sized coins are not always lower in value than larger coins.



Penny = 1 cent = \$0.01



Nickel = 5 cents = \$0.05



Dime = 10 cents = \$0.10
(smallest US coin)



Quarter = 25 cents = \$0.25

B. Currency Exchange

Although those traveling internationally can exchange currency at Philadelphia International Airport, other locations in Philadelphia are available as well. We suggest looking up exchange rates at different locations in the city to get the best exchange rate. Find more information on Travelex [here](#) and CXI [here](#).

Do not carry large amounts of cash with you or keep it at your residence. Instead, deposit it in a bank.

C. Banks and Banking Services

Banks offer services such as savings and checking accounts, safe-deposit boxes, international currency exchanges, and loans to qualified customers and varying interest rates. In choosing a banking service, make sure that the federal government (FDIC) insures it. You can look up your bank [here](#) to confirm it is FDIC insured.

Opening a Bank Account

To open a bank account, you will be required to show evidence of your legal immigration status and a local address in the United States. Some banks do not require a social security number to open an account but you may need two forms of identification documents (ID). There are numerous banks near Jefferson. Many banks allow you to pay bills via the internet. Inquire at your bank if you are interested in this service. Check the banks near Jefferson [here](#).

ATM

The ATM is a device through which bank customers can make deposits or withdrawals at any time of the day, any day of the week, using a plastic card and a secret PIN (personal identification number). Instructions for operating the automatic teller are given on the machine itself. If there is a fee, you will be notified and allowed to cancel the transaction. Fees range from \$1 to \$3 per transaction. Debit cards may also be used to purchase items or pay for services.



ATMs are located at banks, supermarkets, shopping centers, and in Jefferson's campus buildings.

VII. IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS

A. Jefferson ID Badge

Thomas Jefferson University visitors, students, and staff members receive a Jefferson ID card, which is required for entry into buildings on campus.



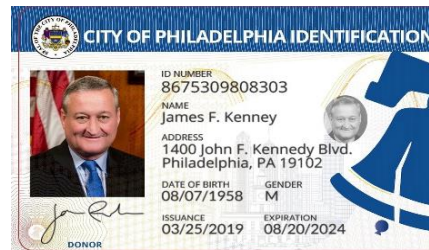
B. Driver's License or State Photo ID Card

While a passport can be used as proof of identity, most Americans use a driver's license as an ID card. You can also apply for a Pennsylvania State ID card if you will not be driving. For more information click [here](#).



C. Philadelphia (PHL) City ID

The PHL City ID provides a secure and affordable photo identification card for individuals living in Philadelphia. It is a quick and easy process and especially beneficial for those who do not prefer to always have their passport with them. Click [here](#) to learn more.



D. Social Security Number (SSN)

The Social Security Number is a tax identification number that is often used for many other purposes, such as applying for a driver's license or phone services. J-1 Exchange Visitors may only apply for an SSN two weeks after arrival in the U.S., and F-1 students may only apply once they obtain work within F-1 regulations. Information will be provided during your check-in at OIA.

VIII. SAFETY AND SECURITY

As Philadelphia is a large city, please be aware of your surroundings and properly secure your personal property. Avoid using outside ATM machines, taking public transportation alone late at night and walking in poorly lit areas.

In case of an emergency, **dial 911**.

This is the emergency number used across the U.S. for immediate assistance in case of a fire, medical emergency or any criminal activity.

Jefferson University Center City Campus provides its own campus security service:

- Dial 811 from a campus phone or 215-955-8888 from a cell phone to connect you with campus police
- University Escort Service- This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if you are in need of a walking escort on the University or Hospital campus.
- Blue-light E-phones- in various locations on campus and connects you directly with campus security with the push of the button. You must speak when you push the button. Security will quickly respond.



IX. WEATHER

Philadelphia experiences all four seasons with temperatures ranging from 24°F (-4°C) in the winter (which may feel colder because of the wind) to 87°F (31°C) in the summer (which may feel hotter due to the humidity). To prepare for Philadelphia weather please look at the table below.

	Summer (June-August)	Fall/Autumn (September-November)	Winter (December-February)	Spring (March-May)
Fahrenheit	63°-87°	39°-77°	24°-44°	34°-73°
Celsius	17°-31°	1°-23°	-4°-7°	1°-23°
Appropriate Clothing	Short-sleeved shirts and shorts	Long-sleeved shirts, sweaters, light coat	Winter coat, sweaters, scarves, boots.	Long-sleeved shirts and pants

X. PREPARING FOR TRAVEL

A. When to Travel

You are permitted to enter the U.S. *30 days before the start date* on your I-20 or DS-2019.

B. Prepare in Advance

- 1) Contact your local bank and credit card companies to inform them of your travel plans
- 2) You may want to look into downloading pertinent maps and get Wi-Fi information ahead of time if your current cellphone plan doesn't support international cellphone usage.

C. Packing Checklist

Carry-on Items

Make sure any liquids brought in your carry-on are less than 3.4 ounces (100 milliliters or less) per item or they will be confiscated.

- Documents (carry them with you at all times)
 - Immigration documents (I-20 or DS-2019)
 - SEVIS fee receipt
 - Valid passport with a valid visa
 - Another picture form of identification (ex. Driver's license)
 - If you are a student:
 - Acceptance Letter
 - Proof of funding
 - Travel Insurance
- Money
 - Cash- as you may not be able to open a U.S. bank account immediately, you may need to bring at least two weeks' worth of cash in U.S. dollars.
 - Debit Card- you may need to notify your bank before you travel overseas and find out about international ATM fees
 - Credit Cards- you may need to notify your credit card company of international travel
- Address of accommodation and details on how to get there

For Checked Luggage

- Clothing and Shoes- prepare for the various weather conditions of Philadelphia by packing the appropriate clothing. See the Weather section.

What Not to Bring

Click [here](#) to take a look at the list of items that are prohibited for both carry-on and checked baggage.

XI. Resources for J-1 Scholars

A. Jefferson Postdocs

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs- provides all postdocs at Jefferson with an opportunity to participate in the Postdoc Buddy Program. In the program, a postdoc is paired with another postdoc at Jefferson and gets support related to settlement, navigating the city, and professional networking, etc. For more information click [here](#).

Jefferson Postdoctoral Association (JPA)- a liaison association for Jefferson postdocs. JPA can answer general information about settling in and provide social, professional events to all Jefferson postdocs. For more information click [here](#).

B. English Language Courses

The locations below provide English as Second Language courses for adults who wish to improve their English skills. Learn more about the classes offered by the Free Library of Philadelphia [here](#) and the Nationalities Service Center [here](#).

C. Cultural Community Resources in the Greater Philadelphia Region

Africa & The Caribbean

1. **African Cultural Alliance of North America** provides culturally sensitive social services, cultural programs, economic and workforce development programs, community engagement and development programs, and other services targeting mainly African and Caribbean immigrants in the United States. More information can be found [here](#).
Phone: (215) 729-8225
2. **Philly Nigerian Professionals** is a professional organization that aims to build and strengthen connections among Nigerian and Nigerian-American students and professionals through social, networking, professional development, and charitable events. But despite the name, you don't have to be Nigerian to be a part of PNP. PNP has members from all over the African Diaspora. More information can be found [here](#).
Phone: (267) 571-9849
Email: phillynaijaprofessionals@gmail.com

Asia

3. **Asian Arts Initiative** is a multi-disciplinary and community-based arts center in Philadelphia that advances racial equity and understanding, activating artists, youth, and their communities through creative practice and dialogue grounded in the diverse Asian American experience. More information can be found [here](#).
Phone: (215) 557-0455
Email: info@asianartsinitiative.org
4. **Council of Indian Organizations in Greater Philadelphia** is a non-profit organization formed primarily for cultural and educational purposes. They promote, coordinate, and support joint efforts in the social, cultural, educational, and charitable activities of the member organizations.

They provide civic and political education to the people of Indian origin and foster friendship and understanding between people of ASIAN-Indian origin and others. More information can be found [here](#).

Email: president@indiacouncil.org

5. **Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia** is a private non-profit organization that has inspired mutual curiosity, understanding, and collaboration between Japan and Philadelphia for more than 30 years through art, business, and culture. We operate: Shofuso Japanese House and Garden hosting over 38,000 visitors annually; produce the Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival with over 15,000 attendees; present a US-Japan Business and Public Policy Series; and provide Japanese arts, business, and cultural educational programming for all ages. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (267) 237-3550

6. **Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation** provides services focused on creating Chinatown as a regional destination, helping low-income families meet basic needs, empowering youth, preserving heritage, and promoting the businesses and residents of the Chinatown community and beyond. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (215) 922-2156

7. **The Korean Cultural Foundation** assists in fostering a better understanding of the Korean culture and to help reduce the gap between first, second, and third generations in the Korean community to preserve and promote Korean culture and heritage; develop Korean cultural activities that are appropriate for the local community. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (484) 213-4603

Email: info@kculfoundation.org

8. **The Mainline Indian Association** aims to promote local intracultural and intercultural connections by providing a forum for the fostering and sharing of Indian culture through educational, cultural, and social programs and activities. More information can be found [here](#).

Email: mainlineindianassociation@gmail.com

9. **The Philadelphia Korean Scholars Association** is aimed at promoting networking among Korean scholars in the greater Philadelphia area. PKSA warmly welcomes new Korean scholars in the region regardless of research fields and affiliations. PKSA holds bi-weekly meetings on Friday at 6 pm. More information can be found [here](#).

Email: pksa.scholar@gmail.com

Europe

12. **The America-Italy Society of Philadelphia** promotes a broader understanding of the Italian cultural and artistic heritage through a series of lectures, films, concerts, and language studies. It has several hundred members in the Philadelphia area who share a love for Italy by regularly participating in this program. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (215) 735-3250

Email: info@aisphila.org

13. **Turkish American Friendship Society of US** is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting better understanding and friendship between Turkish and American communities through educational, cultural and social activities. Giving a true and honest image of Turkey is important

to all of us, Americans and Turkish Americans and of major importance to our children. More information can be found [here](#).

Email: info@tafsus.net

Islamic Resources

14. **Al-Aqsa Islamic Society** has been established since 1989 to maintain the Islamic Identity and to protect and sustain the Islamic Community in Philadelphia. The task is fulfilled through many services this society offers to the Muslims and Arab Communities in the Greater Philadelphia area. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (215) 765-2743

15. **United Muslim Masjid** was established on October 11, 1994. Our goal is to build a strong Islamic community on Qu'ran and Sunnah; devoted to serving the religious, social and educational needs of the Muslim community of Philadelphia. More information can be found [here](#).

Email: info@ummonline.org

Latin America & Mexico

10. **Acción Colombia** aims to develop leadership in the Colombian and Latin American communities by fostering art, culture and civic participation in the Tri-State area of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (267) 338-6787

11. **Centro Nueva Creación** is a nonprofit with a mission to promote resilience in young people through educational enrichment and engagement with the arts and Latino cultures. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (215) 426-8762

Email: goodlands.director@gmail.com

12. **The Mexican Cultural Center** is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting understanding and awareness of the cultural and artistic diversity of Mexico and its influence in the Delaware Valley in the United States. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (215) 592-0410

Email: info@mexicanculturalcenter.org

Middle East

16. **Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture** is rooted in Arab arts and language and offers artistic and educational programming that enriches cross-cultural understanding and celebrates diversity. They serve youth and adults of all ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds while supporting the pursuit and affirmation of Arab American cultural identity and playing a constructive civic role within broader American society. More information can be found [here](#).

Phone: (267) 809-3668

17. **Shabahang** is a non-religious, non-political, non-profit organization. Since its establishment in 1990, Shabahang has served as a platform for cultural expression and intellectual discourse for Iranians and those interested in Iranian culture. Additionally, the organization fosters community engagement with its many events and scholarship opportunities. More information can be found [here](#).

Email: contact@shabahang.org