

Admission of International Students

VCU Office of International Education

Procedures and Guidelines

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PURPOSE

The Office of International Admissions processes undergraduate and graduate applications for non-U.S. citizens and non-U.S. residents and evaluates academic credentials for visiting scholars and for new VCU employees whose international academic credentials must be evaluated as part of the hiring process. The role of International Admissions is to facilitate the application process to VCU of all international applicants by following the necessary steps as quickly as possible in processing an application, by evaluating academic credentials, by working with the graduate programs to streamline their decision process, and, by being responsive to all student inquiries and requests.

The purpose of this document is to define the basic steps of the international application process and how International Admissions meets its responsibilities in the international student application process to the University, including the many graduate programs, and to the students themselves.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS DOCUMENT

All faculty and administrative staff and students needing understanding of the basic elements of the international student application process at VCU.

CONTACTS

The Office of International Education officially interprets these guidelines and procedures and shall revise or eliminate any or all parts as necessary to meet the changing needs of Virginia Commonwealth University. Please direct questions to the Office of International Education.

PROCEDURES

I. Academic Performance Evaluation

After receipt and processing of application, the student's documents, including transcripts, will be given to the VCU International Credentials Evaluator for evaluation of the student's past academic performance. The VCU International Credentials Evaluator will have the responsibility of evaluating past academic performance for all international students applying to VCU, for visiting scholars, and for new VCU employees whose international academic credentials must be evaluated as part of the hiring process.

II. Admissions Decisions

Undergraduate Admissions. For international students applying to undertake a Bachelor's degree at VCU, the official admission decision will be made by the VCU International Credentials Evaluator following all guidelines established by the University. These guidelines include past grade point average and indications of proficiency in English established by SAT scores, TOEFL scores, IELTS scores, or by successful completion of English composition courses at U.S. accredited institutions.

The one exception to this process will be undergraduate international students applying to the VCU School of the Arts. In this case, once the International Credentials Evaluator has evaluated the student's past academic performance, all application documents, including portfolio, will be sent to the VCU Art Foundation program (<http://app.art.vcu.edu/portfolio/login.php>) for an admission decision. Art Foundation will notify the VCU Office of International Admissions of the admission decision by submitting the "International Undergraduate Admissions Action Sheet" (see RELATED DOCUMENTS).

For accepted undergraduate international students, the acceptance letter from the VCU Office of International Admissions, which is the official acceptance letter from VCU, will detail any “conditions” and/or “provisions” on admission (e.g., student must bring VCU a final official high school transcript with graduation date; student must take the VCU English Language Program (ELP) placement test and may be required to take ELP classes before being fully admitted to his/her academic classes).

Graduate Admissions. For international students applying to undertake a Master’s degree, Ph.D. degree, or a post-baccalaureate undergraduate certificate or post-baccalaureate graduate certificate, the admission decision will be made by the program to which the student is applying. All application documents sent by the applicant will be forwarded to the applicant’s program, with the academic evaluation done by the VCU International Credentials Evaluator. The Program Director will notify the Office of International Admissions of the admission decision by submitting the “International Graduate Admissions Action Sheet” (see RELATED DOCUMENTS).

For accepted international graduate students, the letter of acceptance, which is the official notification from VCU, and which is sent on behalf of the Dean of the Graduate School, will detail for the student any “conditions” or “provisions” on admission established by the student’s department or school (e.g., VCU must receive the student’s official GRE score; student must take certain foundation courses, etc.). It is the responsibility of admitted graduate students to review the VCU Graduate Bulletin and to become aware of all policies included in the Bulletin.

III. Immigration Documents*

International students who have been accepted to VCU for study require immigration documents from the Office of International Admissions or the Office of Immigration Services so that students can apply for a student visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in their home country.

International students who are applying to a degree program at VCU and who are self-funded will receive from the Office of International Admissions a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration Transfer-In Clearance form (I-20). This document is generated by International Education from the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The student will take the I-20 to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in his/her country to apply for an F visa.

International students who are coming to VCU as special non-degree-seeking students (e.g., for a semester, summer, or year) and students coming into a degree program who are being sponsored by VCU or by an official outside agency (e.g., the Fulbright Program) will be issued a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (DS-2019) which they will take to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate

in their country for a J visa. Of these students, those who are self-funded at VCU or are sponsored by VCU will receive their DS-2019 from the Office of Immigration Services. Those who are being sponsored by an outside organization will receive their DS-2019 from the outside organization.

All immigration documents generated by any department of the VCU Office of International Education are generated for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Consequently, these documents are official U.S. documents and will be created with strict adherence to all U.S. and U.S. Department of State guidelines and regulations. Only persons at VCU authorized by the SEVIS System to sign I-20's or DS-2019's will be permitted to sign.

*In some cases, students may be in the U.S. with a visa or immigration status which already allows part-time or full-time study (e.g., H-1B or H-4 or I-485). These "immigration documents" guidelines will not apply to these students.

IV. English Language Program

Any student, graduate or undergraduate, who does not meet the University required scores indicating proficiency in English (e.g., TOEFL scores, IELTS scores) will be tested by the English Language Program (ELP) upon arrival at VCU and may be required, based on the result of the student's placement test, to take ELP classes before being fully admitted to his/her academic classes.

Minimum acceptable scores for undergraduates are SAT verbal 400 or higher, TOEFL iBT 79-80 or higher and IELTS 6.0 or higher. Minimum acceptable scores for graduate students are TOEFL iBT 100 or higher and IELTS 7.0 or higher.

V. In-State Tuition

Tuition is determined by the student's residency status. Residency refers to the present, fixed home of an individual to which he or she returns following temporary absences, and at which the individual intends to remain indefinitely.

The student's residency classification will determine whether tuition will be calculated at the in-state or out-of-state rate. Eligibility for in-state tuition is governed by provisions 23-7.4:1, 23-7.4:2 and 23-7.4:3 of the Code of Virginia. Initial eligibility determinations for international students with respect to in-state tuition will be made by the Office of International Admissions only after an offer of admission is granted. Subsequent determinations, necessary clarifications of the initial determination, and appellate procedures are administered by VCU's Residency Officer as governed by Code 40-120-270.

As determined by the above Code, some international classifications **may be eligible** for in-state tuition. These include (but are not limited to) Diplomatic visas

(A visa), Temporary Worker in a Specialty Occupation (H visa) or Permanent Resident Status pending (I-485). Additional information on residency status can be found at Student Accounting's website located at <http://www.vcu.edu/enroll/sa/tuition/residency.html>

Eligible students are sent the Application for In-State Tuition Form either by electronic or postal mail (see RELATED DOCUMENTS) upon acceptance to the University and with preliminary evidence that the student's visa/immigration classification may qualify him/her for in-state tuition.

VI. Housing

International students may live on-campus or off-campus. Many international students prefer to live off-campus for increased privacy and/or for cultural considerations. The Office of International Student and Scholar Services helps international students find suitable off-campus housing. International students, both graduate and undergraduate, are encouraged to contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services if they want off-campus housing.

International students who want on-campus housing are also encouraged to contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services for help in locating appropriate on-campus housing.

VII. Medical Health Insurance

International students with **F visas** studying at Virginia Commonwealth University **are required by VCU** to have medical health insurance for themselves and their dependents.

The Office of International Education strongly recommends that students obtain a policy from a company having an office/representative in the U.S. in order to make the billing process by their health care providers easier. OIE also recommends that students obtain a policy with a policy year minimum benefit of \$250,000.00 and at least a \$1,000,000 life-time benefit and with coverage for medical evacuation (returning a seriously ill student to his/her home country) and repatriation of remains.

International students studying at Virginia Commonwealth University with a **J visa are required by U.S. regulation** to have medical health insurance for themselves and their dependents (for more information on minimum benefit requirements see "Medical Insurance Requirements for All J-1 and J-2 Visa Holders" in RELATED DOCUMENTS).

International students should contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services for information on medical health insurance in the U.S.

VIII. Immunization Records

All full-time international students at VCU **are required by the Code of Virginia** (Section 12-7.5) to provide documentation of their immunizations by a licensed health professional. Students are encouraged to bring with them from their home country the completed VCU Certificate of Immunization (see RELATED DOCUMENTS), available from Student Health Services, which will be presented to VCU Student Health Services. Student Health Services may require the student to obtain additional immunizations, if necessary.

All VCU international students, regardless of enrollment status, must be checked for tuberculosis (TB). The U.S. Public Health Service and the Centers for Disease Control recommend that tuberculosis skin testing (PPD) be performed on all individuals who may be at increased risk for tuberculosis disease. Students with positive PPD results will be required to get a chest x-ray, and the results will be provided to VCU Student Health Services.

The Office of International Student and Scholar Services will help international students get their PPD test and will provide transportation, if necessary, to the Richmond City Department of Health if students need a subsequent chest x-ray.

International students who have questions or concerns about their immunization records or tuberculosis test should contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services or Student Health Services for guidance.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- International Application forms:
 - Virginia Commonwealth University Application for International Students
http://www.vcu.edu/oie/ia/ia_app_forms.html
 - Undergraduate Application for In-State Tuition
http://www.ugrad.vcu.edu/pdfs/vcu_instate_application.pdf
 - Graduate Application for In-State Tuition
<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/pdfs/vatuition.pdf>
- International Graduate Admissions Action Sheet
- International Undergraduate Admissions Action Sheet
- Medical Insurance Requirements for all J-1 and J-2 Visa Holders
<http://www.vcu.edu/oie/pdfs/J-1%20InsuranceReqs.pdf>
- VCU Certificate of Immunization
<http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/immunizations/>
- VCU Graduate Bulletin: <http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/graduate/>