

University of Houston  Clear Lake

PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Office of International Admissions and Programs • Orientation and New Student Programs



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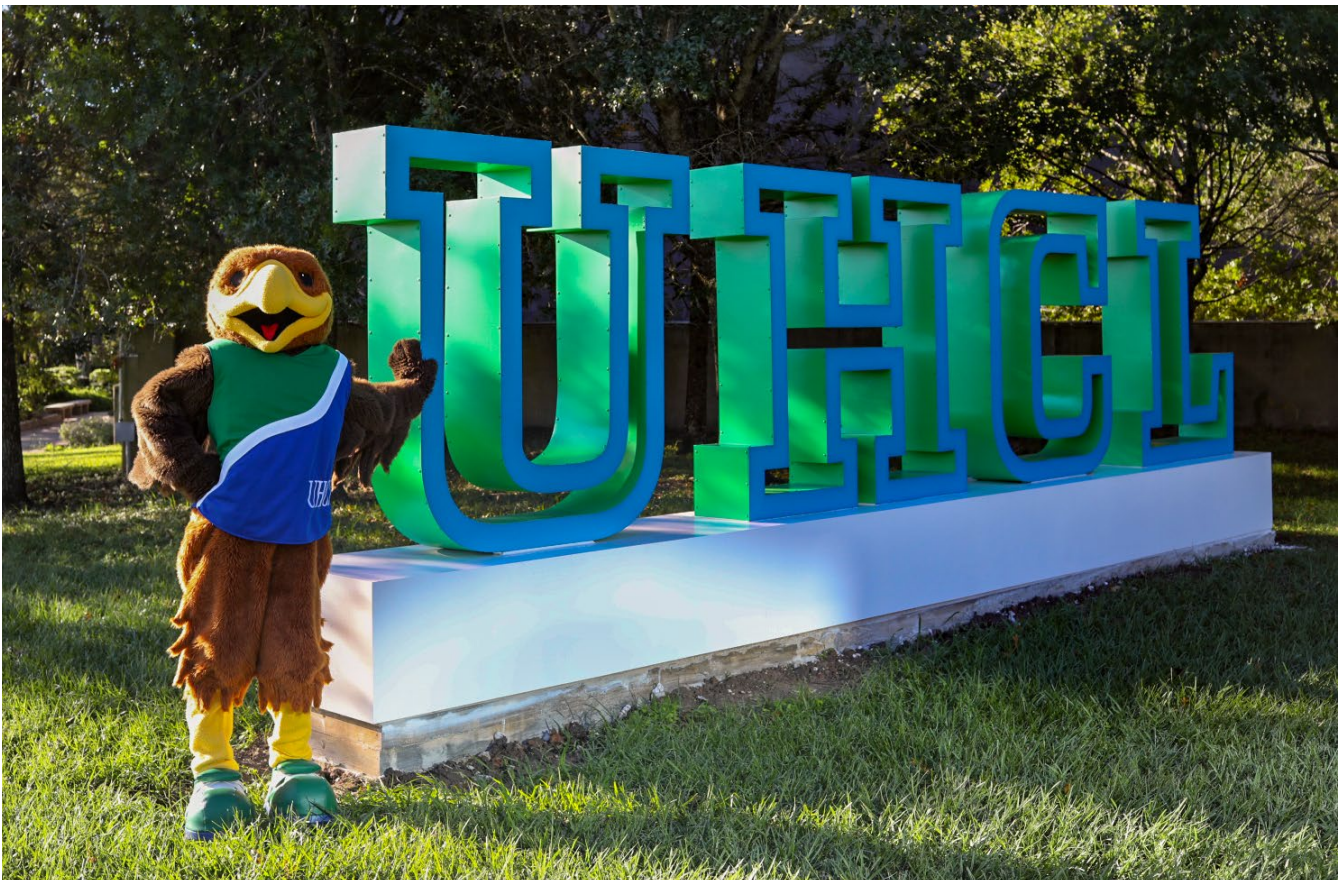
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Welcome!

Welcome to University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL)! We are looking forward to your arrival to the UHCL community and helping you prepare for this experience. In addition to settling in and preparing to begin your studies, you will also be adjusting to and living in a culture that may be quite different from yours. This handbook is designed to answer some of the questions you may have prior to arriving at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL).

We strongly recommend you read it carefully and keep it for future reference. The Office of International Admissions and Programs, and the Orientation and New Student Programs office are here to help with your questions. Please feel free to utilize all resources available to you. We wish you success as you begin this new adventure.








Orientation and New Student Programs

The Orientation and New Student Programs office assists you with orientation, adapting to U.S. culture and the education system, and campus engagement. We work to foster an inclusive and supportive environment to ensure every student has a positive and enriching experience during their time at UHCL.

Attendance at New International Student Orientation (NISO) is mandatory for all undergraduate international students and F-1 and J-1 graduate international students.

Students who fail to attend the entire required program will have a hold placed on their accounts, will not be able to enroll in classes the following semester, and may have their status impacted.

To learn more about orientation, please visit the [Orientation and New Student Programs page](#) of the UHCL website.

<p>CONTACT INFORMATION:</p> <p>Orientation and New Student Programs Office Student Services and Classroom Building 1st floor, suite 1.202 2700 Bay Area Blvd. Houston, TX 77058</p> <p> 281-283-2420</p> <p> orientation@uhcl.edu</p>	<p>FIND US ON:</p> <p> @uhclorientation</p> <p> @uhclorientation</p> <p> @uhclorientation</p>
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Office of International Admissions and Programs

The Office of International Admissions and Programs (OIAP), a division of Global Learning and Strategy (GLS), provides admissions and immigration advising to the University's diverse international student population. This population includes undergraduate and graduate students from 40+ countries, 8% of the total enrolled students, and all graduated international students for up to three years of Optional Practical Testing (OPT) and STEM OPT. OIAP services the visa and immigration needs of F-1 students, their dependents, and other non-immigrant visa-holders who seek advice.

OIAP handles international student admissions and advising related to the F-1 status, including, but not limited to:

- Facilitating admission for undergraduate and graduate international students with non-immigrant visas.
- Document drop-off for original transcripts and proof of degrees to finalize admission process.
- Initial I-20 issuance.
- Visa interviews.
- Travel and arrival to the United States.
- Maintenance of F-1 status.
- Immigration regulations.
- Change of status.
- Change of education level.
- SEVIS transfers.
- Travel and visa renewal for students and visiting family members.
- Paperwork (letters) required for banking, the DMV, SSN, or ITIN applications.
- I-20 updates including extensions and shortening.
- Leave of absence or final departure from the United States.
- Reduced course load authorizations.
- F-2 dependent documents.
- Employment authorizations (CPT, OPT, STEM OPT, severe economic hardship).
- Post-completion OPT and STEM OPT reporting.
- Transitioning to H-1B.

<p>CONTACT INFORMATION:</p> <p>Office of International Admissions and Programs Bayou Building Second floor, suite 2123 2700 Bay Area Blvd. Houston, TX 77058</p> <p> 281-283-2740</p> <p> intladvicing@uhcl.edu</p> <p> OIAP webpage</p>	<p>FIND US ON:</p> <p> @uhclgls</p> <p> @uhclgls</p> <p> @uhclgls</p>
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Preparing for Your Arrival

You are strongly encouraged to review Pre-Arrival Information found in this handbook and on our [UHCL International Admissions](#) website.

The checklist below summarizes the steps needed to make your transition to University of Houston-Clear Lake as seamless as possible.

Finalize Admissions Requirements

Submit any outstanding requirements, such as meningitis vaccination records (if under the age of 22) via E-Services. If you have not received your I-20 yet, please review your To Do List in E-Services to upload any outstanding items and ensure that your English proficiency test scores have been officially reported to UHCL.

Submit Original or Attested Copies of your Proof of Degree and Transcripts

As part of the admission process, many of you submitted your proof of degree and transcripts/mark sheets online via E-Services. In order to maintain compliance, you are required to provide OIAP with originals or appropriately attested copies of your degree and transcripts/mark sheets. Mark sheets must show all attempts at each course. Information about accepted attestations can be found [here](#).

You can mail them to our office or bring them with you to orientation. OIAP will accept documents during orientation or afterwards in the office.

A hold will be placed on your account that will prevent registration for your second semester at UHCL until the appropriate documentation is received.

Submit Official Test Scores

If you have not done so already, please pay to release your GRE/GMAT/SAT/ACT scores to University of Houston-Clear Lake.

A hold will be placed on your account that will prevent registration for your second semester at UHCL until the appropriate documentation is received.

E-Services Username and Password

Your user ID is your seven-digit student ID. If you do not know your user ID, call the Student Enrollment Center at 281-283-2722.

If you do not remember your password:

1. Navigate to the E-Services page.
2. Click "Request a new password?"
3. Enter your User ID.
4. UHCL will email you your password.

Housing

Research and coordinate your on- or off-campus housing. Review the resources and links on the following pages in this Pre-Arrival Guide.

Health Immunizations and Insurance

Make sure you have all the right vaccinations and have submitted the required health forms. International students are automatically enrolled in the university health insurance plan after they register for class. Please communicate in advance if you have a spouse or child who will be accompanying you. To learn more about waiving the UHCL health insurance, please visit the [Health Insurance webpage](#) for more information.

Pay Your Bill

On the [Student Business Services webpage](#), you will find various options for paying your bill, including bank wire transfers and Western Union wire transfers. Please be aware of all payment deadlines for the different sessions you may be registering for.

Register for New International Student Orientation

All international undergraduates and F-1 graduate students are required to attend New International Student Orientation. To register, please visit the [Orientation webpage](#).

Make Travel Arrangements

We recommend international students to choose Houston IAH (George Bush International Airport) as their arrival airport because it is the most convenient airport for international arrivals. We highly encourage students to arrive in the U.S prior to New International Student Orientation.

Arrival in the United States and Check In

Houston Airports

The Orientation and New Student Programs office currently does not provide a complimentary airport pick-up service. Students are responsible for arranging their own pick up transportation.

Houston has two airports, George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), and William P. Hobby Airport (HOU).

- IAH is located approximately 22 miles (35.4 Km) north of downtown Houston and 43 miles (69.2 Km) from the UHCL campus.
- HOU is located approximately 9.5 miles (14.4 Km) south of downtown Houston and 15.4 miles (24.1 Km) from the UHCL campus.

Complete F-1 Check-in

You may arrive up to 30 days before the program start date listed on your I-20. The earliest date of arrival is shown on your I-20. We do not accommodate late arrivals after the first date of class. By the end of the first week of class, all students must complete the following:

- Complete the F-1 Student Check-In via the [ISD Portal](#). ***Please don't do this before you arrive in the U.S. because a copy of your I-94 arrival record is required.***

To ensure proper processing of SEVIS registration, all international students must upload the following documents to the F-1 Student Check-In:

- Form I-20 (F-1) with your signature on it
- Passport
- F-1 visa
- Most recent I-94 arrival record. You can obtain this on the [U.S. Customs and Border Patrol website](#).

F-1/J-1 Visa Regulations

All non-immigrant international students at University of Houston-Clear Lake must abide by both university policies and federal immigration regulations that govern their stay in the United States. When you sign the Form I-20, you are agreeing to follow all the rules and regulations governing your F-1 status.

OIAP assists and advises students on maintaining their status, but the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) considers it the sole responsibility of students to maintain the terms of their F-1 status. OIAP will help you navigate the government regulations to avoid pitfalls. These guidelines can help you.

1. Reporting

DHS requires that student visa holders check in with their school within 15 days of the start of the semester. Failure to report could result in possible loss of legal status and possible termination of the SEVIS record. OIAP urges all international students to complete F-1 Student Check-In on the [ISD Portal](#) no later than the first Friday of classes. OIAP will then report to the DHS on behalf of all our international students.

2. Contact Information

International students must report any changes to their address, name, or contact information within 10 days of the change. You should report these changes by updating your information in E-Services. Your SEVIS address in E-Services is the address where you live in the United States. If that address changes, you must report the change in E-Services. OIAP will send this information to SEVIS, and this satisfies the government requirement.

3. Academics

International students must register for and complete a full course of study each semester at the school that issued their I-20. The minimum course load per semester is:

- **Undergraduates:** 12 credits.
- **Graduates:** 9 credits.

Summer terms are optional, unless summer is your first or last semester in your program. If you do not register for and maintain the minimum credit hours during subsequent fall or spring terms, you will be considered out of status.

No more than one 3-credit online course per semester can count toward your full-time course load.

Course Modes Explained

Course Mode in E-services	Consideration for F-1 Status
Face to Face	Face to Face
100% Face to face w/supplemental web	Face to Face
< 50% online	Face to Face
> 50% online	Online
100% online	Online

4. Enroll Full-time

All students must register during the registration period before the semester begins. Any changes must be done by the Registrar's add-drop deadline. Failure to enroll full-time violates student visa status. Freshmen will receive assistance from their academic adviser in their college. Transfer students will receive assistance in their first semester from Transfer Advising. Graduate students should seek guidance from their academic advisor, faculty advisor or program coordinator. They can also [review the degree plan](#) and register for any foundation courses listed on their acceptance letter as required in the first semester. More information can be found on the [Academic Advising website](#).

5. Reduced Course Load

If you cannot complete a full course of study due to extenuating medical or academic circumstances, you must be authorized for a reduced course load with approval from your academic advisor and authorization in SEVIS from OIAP. You should inquire if you are eligible and submit the Request for a Reduced Course Load Form in the [ISD Portal](#).

6. I-20 Program End Date

If you are an international student who cannot complete your program by the program end date listed on the I-20, you must request OIAP to extend your program end date on your I-20. This must be completed at least two weeks before the I-20 program end date by completing the I-20 Extension Form in the [ISD Portal](#).

7. Changes to I-20 Information

International students must report any changes to their major, program level, or funding source within 10 days of the change. For changes to your major, these changes will automatically be made by OIAP after the change is made in E-Services by your academic department. An I-20 will be issued for you automatically; there is no need to request a new one.

8. SEVIS Transfers

If you are an international student who wishes to transfer from UHCL to another school, you need to have your SEVIS record transferred by submitting the F-1 Transfer Out Request in the [ISD Portal](#). You must submit a letter of acceptance from the transfer to school, and if still enrolled at UHCL, complete the Registrar's withdrawal process. SEVIS transfers are also necessary for graduated or OPT/STEM students who wish to enroll in a new institution for a new degree, but they don't need to submit a withdrawal to the Registrar because they have already graduated.

9. Employment

There are strict limitations placed on the F-1 students' eligibility to work. Working without authorization is a serious violation of status and can lead to the termination of a student's SEVIS record.

- F-1 students may work part-time on-campus (less than 20 hours per week) while school is in session and full-time during school breaks, if the department allows it.
- F-1 students can only work off-campus if they are eligible and authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT) in advance. All other work (whether paid or unpaid) is unauthorized and a violation of F-1 student status. Engaging in unauthorized off-campus work is grounds for termination of an F-1 student's visa status.
- Working without pay is not the same as volunteering. OIAP recommends that you discuss the details of any volunteer experience with your international student adviser before participating.
- Students working on-campus or authorized to work off-campus in a paid position must apply for a Social Security Number by filling out an application with the Social Security Administration. It may take a few weeks to obtain a Social Security Number and card.

If you have any questions about these guidelines or your immigration status, the Office of International Admissions and Programs staff are available to help you. Contact us at intladvicing@uhcl.edu.

Additional resources can be found on [DHS website](#).



Getting Settled

As you prepare to begin your studies at University of Houston-Clear Lake, you will likely have many questions about getting set up with the resources and accommodations that you need to live and be successful at University of Houston-Clear Lake. In this section, we will provide you with some answers to frequently asked questions that other international students have before they arrive.

Topics Include:

- On-Campus Housing.
- Off-Campus Housing.
- Shopping.
- Weather in Houston, Texas.
- Setting up a bank account in the United States.
- Getting a Cell Phone.



Housing

Once you have received your visa, it is time to decide where you will live.

On-Campus Housing

You can choose to live in the university housing or find your own housing. Information about on-campus living options for both undergraduate and graduate students can be found on the [Student Housing and Residential Life webpage](#).

While off-campus housing may seem more economical, there are many benefits of living on-campus:

- **Convenience:** Location cuts down on travel time and transportation expenses.
- **Simplicity of Payments:** Utilities including internet are included in the price, so you have one payment rather than multiple bills for rent, utilities (electricity, gas, water, trash removal), internet access, and meals.
- **Security:** Campus safety officers patrol the facilities daily and are available if needed.
- **Maintenance:** Campus facilities staff maintain the property in good shape and respond quickly to make repairs if needed.
- **Residential Life Staff:** Community supervisors are trained professionals who are always accessible to help you connect to support services and fun programming, help with roommate conflicts, and so on.

Off-Campus Housing

If you prefer to live off-campus, we encourage you to begin researching as early as possible prior to your arrival in the United States. University of Houston-Clear Lake does not offer temporary housing, so if you have not confirmed your housing before your arrival, you may need to stay in a local hotel or with friends until you secure off-campus housing.

When searching for off-campus housing, it is important to know that the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in this area of Houston ranges from \$850 to \$1,500 or more per month. Expect to pay more than \$1,300 for a two-bedroom apartment and \$1,500 to \$2,000 for a luxury apartment. One-bedroom apartments usually house one to two people, and bedroom apartments usually house two to three people.

Local Apartment Search Engines

Please note that these search engines are not operated by the University of Houston-Clear Lake. You are responsible to inspect the property to determine whether it meets your needs. We also suggest you check online reviews on Google or Yelp. Use the city and zip code to search: Houston, TX 77058.

- [Zillow](#)
- [Apartments.com](#)
- [Apartmentfinder.com](#)

Additional expenses to consider are transportation and meals. If you live off-campus, you can explore commuter meal plans to be able to eat meals on campus. Additional information on housing in the U.S:

The Lease

A lease is a written agreement between a tenant (you) and landlord (person who rents the space to you), describing the rights and responsibilities of both parties. It is a binding legal document that makes the tenant responsible for minimal care of the rented property and for the monthly rent of a stated amount for a stated period of time. It specifies the landlord's responsibilities for maintenance and repair of the housing unit.

Since the lease contains very important information, it is crucial that you understand it before signing! Do not be afraid to ask questions. In the U.S., it is okay to question a legal agreement before you sign it. In fact, it is encouraged. It is very important that you understand all of the "fine print" because you will be held responsible for what is written once you sign the lease. If you do not feel comfortable reading it on your own, ask a friend to explain it to you before signing the lease.

While this is not official legal advice, here are some things that you may see on a lease. Additional items may be included.

- The amount of rent, the date the rent is due, and any late charges for late payments of rent
- The landlord's rules and regulations
- The tenant's rights and responsibilities
- Responsibilities for keeping the unit in good condition
- Who will pay for utility services (electric, fuel, cable, and others) and whether or not payment of utilities is included in the rent
- The amount of the security deposit, if any
- Information about required renter's insurance

Utilities

If you choose an off-campus housing option, you will also have to choose utility service providers. Unless you are renting a room in someone's home, or your apartment includes utilities, you will have to call and arrange to turn on your gas, electricity, and water. The leasing office and/or your landlord should be able to provide you with a list of local service providers. Often, they may have a preferred or approved service provider list.

Shopping

The Clear Lake area of Houston that surrounds University of Houston-Clear Lake has a number of shops within walking distance from campus. University of Houston-Clear Lake offers a shuttle service to apartments that are nearby campus. Weekend grocery trips are planned by the Parking and Transportation department to Kroger (a grocery store). The Houston Metro bus system also has several park and rides in the Clear Lake area, making it convenient to get to downtown Houston. The list below lists some shopping options within a 3-mile radius of campus. Although it is quite detailed, this is not an exhaustive list of shops in the area.



SUPERMARKETS

- **H.E.B**
2.6 miles from campus
- **Kroger**
1.4 miles from campus
- **ALDI**
2.5 miles from campus



SPECIALTY MARKETS

- **Raj Grocers**
3.4 miles from campus
- **Vishala Grocery**
4.4 miles from campus
- **Hong Kong Food Market**
14.6 miles from campus
- **H Mart**
36.6 miles from campus
- **Motherland African Food Market & Halal Meat**
36.4 miles from campus



SUPER STORES

- **Target**
1.9 miles from campus
- **Walmart**
4.3 miles from campus



PHARMACIES

- **CVS**
0.4 miles from campus
- **Walgreens**
0.7 miles from campus



CONVENIENCE STORES

- **Dollar Tree**
0.4 miles from campus



POST OFFICES

- **U.S. Postal Service (inside Ace Hardware)**
1.2 miles from campus
- **U.S. Postal Service**
3.8 miles from campus

Transportation

University of Houston-Clear Lake is located in the Clear Lake area of Houston, Texas, where there are several transportation options available to students. We encourage you to review the summary below and explore the routes and websites linked to make sure you feel confident that you know how to get where you want to go once you arrive in the United States. If you are planning to get a U.S. driver's license, we will provide more information about the process during orientation.

Shuttles

University of Houston-Clear Lake provides a shuttle around campus and between nearby apartment complexes. To review the shuttle schedule, please visit the [Parking and Transportation webpage](#).

Buses

Houston Metro

- The Bay Area Boulevard and El Dorado Boulevard park and rides are the closest transportation hubs to UHCL that can take you into Houston and beyond! The Hawk Express Shuttle does stop at the Bay Area Park & Ride at various time throughout the day. Check the schedule on the [Parking and Transportation website](#).
- Explore the [Metro website](#) to learn how you can get around the city of Houston by public transportation

Ride-Share

- [Uber](#)
- [Lyft](#)

Bicycles

Some students invest in a bicycle for their time at UHCL. Don't forget to purchase a helmet!



Weather in Houston, Texas

Houston's climate is variable throughout the year. Visit the [Weather Spark webpage](#) for more information about Houston's yearly weather patterns.

For international students not accustomed to a tropical environment, the summer months may take a period of adjustment. It is important to consume plenty of fluids during those hot periods. Because of the varied weather in this area, it is advisable to have suitable articles of clothing. In the summer, comfortable, lightweight clothes made from breathable material (e.g., cotton, linen) are suggested. Due to summer rains, you are encouraged to have an umbrella and raincoat. Also, it is helpful to have sweaters and at least one heavy coat for the wintertime, as well as closed-toed shoes.

Major storms

The Houston-Gulf Coast region is susceptible to hurricanes, tornadoes and heavy rains. With the heavy rains, this area is prone to flooding. If you are unsure of what to do if a storm or hurricane occurs, ask a local resident for their advice or refer to the OIAP Hurricane Evacuation packet in Appendix D. It is extremely important that you take severe storms and other weather incidents very seriously.

Hurricanes

Hurricanes are dangerous occurrences that begin as tropical storms, but develop pronounced rotary circulation with a constant wind speed of 74 mph or more. They have three components: wind, heavy rains, and a storm surge. As they move over the Gulf of Mexico, they often gain strength and can cause severe damage and loss of life.

Tornadoes

Tornadoes are powerful, twisting windstorms that can measure up to several hundred yards (or meters) in diameter and may produce winds of more than 300 mph. Although not customary to this region, tornadoes often form after a hurricane has passed through the area. These storms usually occur in the spring and early summer and can be very destructive. When the National Weather Service issues a *tornado watch*, it means that weather conditions are reasonably likely to produce tornadoes. Tornado watches are broadcast on all radio and television stations. A *tornado warning* means that a tornado has actually been seen. If you hear a tornado warning, immediately seek shelter as indicated.

Setting up a Bank Account in the United States

Most international students, like large numbers of American students, have limited monetary funds. It is best to manage your money wisely in order to make sure it lasts as long as possible. It is important to be cautious about spending money until you have become accustomed to the value of the dollar and have developed a thorough realization of what your essential living expenses will be. It may be helpful to track your expenditures for a few months until you become accustomed to your average spending.

Opening a bank account in the United States will make it easier to manage your finances. It's also cheaper than withdrawing money from a foreign bank account. You can also pay your bills online and use credit/debit cards without large international banking fees. In addition, please try not to carry large amounts of cash with you or at your residence because it could be lost or stolen.

There are two types of bank accounts in the U.S.:

1. **Checking Account**

Great for day-to-day expenses. A checking account lets you make numerous withdrawals and unlimited deposits. You can use your checking account for living expenses, daily transactions, and paying bills. Many banks will offer online and mobile banking, so you can manage your money 24 hours a day. If you get an on-campus job, your checking account is where your paycheck will be deposited once you set up direct deposit. Direct deposit is the preferred method to receive your paycheck.

2. **Savings Account**

Perfect if you want to save money. A savings account requires a minimum deposit and provides a modest interest rate of return. Savings accounts are generally for money you don't intend to use for daily expenses. A savings account is also likely to have a limited number of free transfers/transactions.

How to Choose a Bank

You are free to open a bank account at any bank of your choosing.

Every bank in the United States offers different services to students. Make sure you read the account information carefully so you're fully aware of what service fees they charge.

Most students at University of Houston-Clear Lake find it convenient to link their bank account electronically through their automatic teller machine (ATM) debit card. Usually banks will not charge extra fees when you use your bank's ATM. When you use an ATM in a store or at other banks, you may be charged an extra transaction fee. Online account management and bill payment is standard, so make sure you understand how to set up this important service.

Important questions to consider when choosing a bank:

- What's the minimum balance required on the account?
- Are there extra fees if the balance goes below the minimum?
- What are the monthly service fees?
- Are there transaction limits?
- Does the bank offer online and mobile banking?
- Are there international transaction fees?

Documents You Will Need

- Your passport
- I-20
- I-94 Form (available at [Department of Homeland Security website](#))
- Your University of Houston-Clear Lake student ID card
- Proof of your living address in the U.S., such as a copy of your lease or utility bill

Important Things to Know When Using Your Bank Account

- You may be asked for your Social Security Number (SSN). F-1 students are not eligible for an SSN unless they have been offered an on-campus job or are in a period of work authorization. An SSN is not required to open a bank account or for a debit card, but it is required for a U.S. credit card.
- If you wish to deposit money into your account, you can take cash or a check to the bank, mail a check to the bank, or use a mobile app or an authorized ATM. Never mail cash to your bank.
- Be sure to have adequate funds in your account when you write checks or use a debit card. Spending more money than you have available can be very expensive. There may be overdraft fees charged by both the bank and the vendor.
- You should watch your monthly online statement carefully to ensure all transactions are parallel to your deposits and withdrawals.
- Never sign a personal check before you are ready to use it and never give someone a check with just your signature on it.
- It is very unsafe to carry large amounts of cash at any time or to keep large sums of money in your apartment.

UHCL does not endorse any specific bank and cannot make specific recommendations to you about which banking institution to use. There are several with branches near University of Houston-Clear Lake. Here is a sample:

- **Bank of America** | 112 Gemini Street
- **Wellby, powered by JSC FCU** | 1330 Gemini Street
- **Wells Fargo** | 1005 Bay Area Blvd.
- **Chase** | 2475 Bay Area Blvd.



Cell Phone Options

To avoid expensive roaming fees, it is a good idea to purchase a U.S.-based cell-phone plan upon arrival in the United States. You have three choices for cell phone plans:

1. **Using an unlocked cell phone from home and purchasing a new SIM card in the United States**

If you have an unlocked phone, campusSIMS is a great option for purchasing a new SIM card. The university often has a supply of campusSIMS cards that you can pick up once you arrive and set up your plan via a downloaded app or online.

2. **Buying a new phone and setting up a pre-paid plan to pay as you go**

A pre-paid plan is a more expensive option in terms of overall value but can be good if you are in the United States for a limited time or do not expect to use your phone much. You purchase the phone, which is usually rather expensive (at least \$50-60 for the simplest models), then purchase minutes as you go. It does not require a contract.

3. **Buying a new cell phone and setting up a contract plan to pay monthly**

Contract phones require that you buy a phone from a specific company. You must also sign an agreement for a one- or two-year plan. This will mean that, once every month, you will receive a bill for the use of the service. Contract plans generally require either a Social Security Number or a credit check.

T-Mobile is one carrier that does not require a contract, deposits, or a credit check to set up a contract, which makes it a great option for international students.

There are several cell phone providers located near the University of Houston-Clear Lake campus. Shop around, compare rates and services, and consider several important factors before you decide on a provider.

- **T-Mobile** | 1501-B Bay Area Blvd, Webster
- **AT&T** | 1333 Bay Area Blvd, Webster
- **Cricket** | 540 El Dorado Blvd, Webster
- **Verizon Wireless** | 19222 Gulf Freeway Suite A, Friendswood

Important questions to consider when choosing a phone plan:

- Are pre-paid plans available and is this a good option for you?
- What are the rates for calls, text messages, data transfers, and so on? Keep in mind cell phones in the U.S. charge for both incoming and outgoing calls and texts. There is usually an additional fee if you want to include wireless internet on your phone plan. Is a deposit required to sign a contract? Will it be returned in full at the end of your contract?
- If you have to terminate a contract early, will you be charged a penalty or lose your deposit?
- Are you able to use your own phone or are you required to purchase a new phone? If you plan to use your own phone, be sure to obtain the code needed to “unlock” your phone for use abroad.

Academic Differences

All students are required to know the information in the [Student Handbook and Code of Conduct](#).

Here are some general differences to help you understand the American classroom. As an international student, studying in a U.S. classroom can be a life-changing experience. You will be able to express yourself freely, make friends, build your confidence, and challenge your friends and professors on topics in class. Many international students find very noticeable differences between classroom culture in the United States and in their home countries.

1. Academic Structure

An undergraduate student usually enrolls in four or more 3-credit courses a semester to maintain full-time (12 credits) standing. Graduate students usually enroll in three (3 credit) courses a semester to maintain full-time (9 credits) standing. You will be assigned an academic or faculty advisor who will assist you with choosing your courses, discuss your overall academic plans, and answer any general academic questions.

2. Classroom Procedures

During the first week of classes, the instructor will hand out a syllabus that will outline the course objectives, required textbooks, chapters to be covered, due dates for assignments, attendance policy, and the grading policy. The syllabus will include the instructor's office location and contact information. One major difference you will find is that grades are based on weekly assignments, papers, and projects, rather than exams only.

3. Expect Diverse Teaching Styles

Professors may use lectures, class discussions, or both. Most classes meet on a regular schedule once, twice, or three times a week. The teaching style of the professor can determine the amount of student participation in each class. Some instructors prefer a more formal style of lecture, with a possible question and answer period at the end.

Others prefer a more conversational style and encourage interaction throughout the class. When expressing your views in class, be ready to share, explain, and possibly defend your ideas in a respectful manner.

4. Ask If You Don't Understand

If students are confused about something in class, it is expected that they will ask the professor before or after class. If the issue requires a longer conversation, students may make an appointment to see the professor during office hours. In U.S. academic culture, there is no shame associated with not understanding something in a course, even if it has been presented in a class lecture. Professors respect students who work hard toward fully understanding the material, so don't wait until just before the exam to seek clarification. Ask as soon as you realize you don't completely understand the material.

5. Attendance Matters

Your course instructor will inform you of the attendance policy at the beginning of the semester. Regular attendance is expected of all students. It is likely that attendance will affect your grade. Missing more than two classes or being excessively tardy could result in a lowering of your final course grade. If you must miss a class, email your professor before the class meets to let them know of your absence.

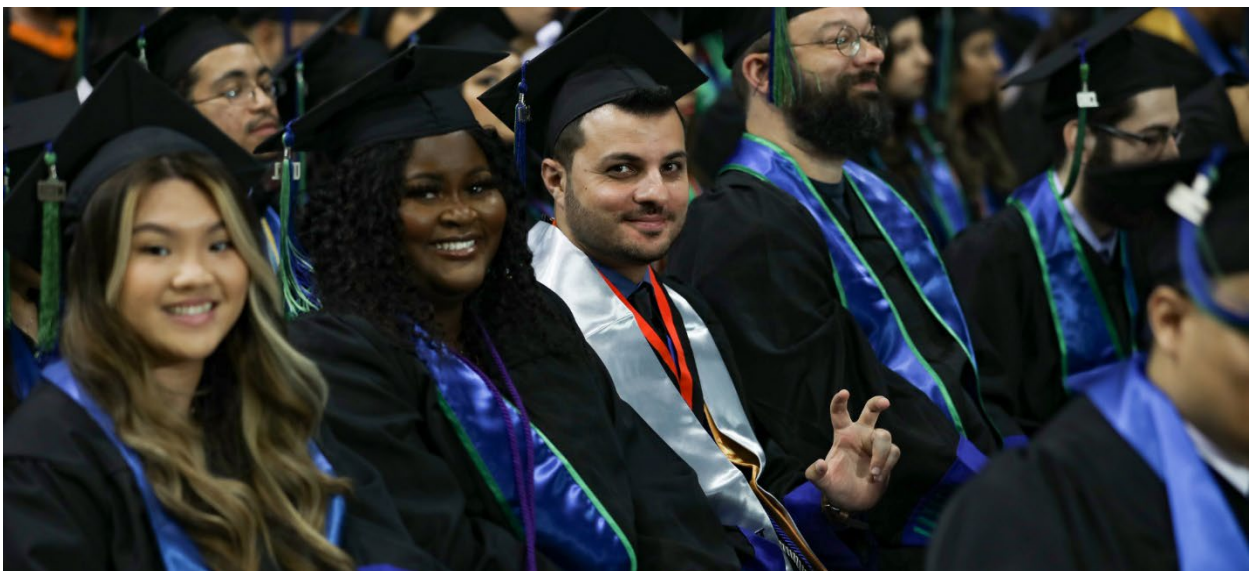
6. Class Participation

Many professors encourage class participation and often expect it. In some courses, it is part of the overall grade. If you feel hindered from participating because of your English proficiency, we strongly advise you to discuss this issue with the professor and your international student adviser, especially in your first semester. There may be an option for a reduced course load.

7. Understand Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is one of the most important concepts to understand in U.S. academic culture. Even innocent violations can have serious effects on your academic career. The consequences for cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct can range from being given a failing grade on a paper, exam, or course to being suspended from the university, or, worse yet, you could be asked to leave permanently. Keep in mind that failure to maintain your full-time student status affects your immigration status, too. More information about academic integrity and policies can be found in the [Academic Catalog](#).

You will likely encounter these academic differences and perhaps others, too. There are many offices and departments at University of Houston-Clear Lake that are dedicated to helping students succeed. At New International Student Orientation, you will learn more about resources like the Student Success Center, Writing Center, Math Center, Office of Student Advocacy, and the Office of International Admissions and Programs. Their services are included in your student fees, and you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of them.



Student Life

Campus Events

The Orientation and New Student Programs, Division of Student Affairs, and recognized student organizations host international cultural activities throughout the year, including Global Buddies, Holi, Diwali, Lunar New Year, and Ramadan/Eid.

The international celebration, known as “International Education Week (IEW),” occurs in the fall at University of Houston-Clear Lake. IEW is a celebration of the diversity that exists on campus, with displays, food and entertainment from many countries, clubs, and organizations. UHCL invites you to participate in this grand event in any way you can, whether it’s dancing, setting up, serving food or planning. You won’t want to miss one of the biggest and best attended events on campus!

Global Buddies

The Global Buddies is a pairing program that connects new international students with domestic students to build a globalized community and enrich the overall campus experience. The program runs for five weeks and any UHCL student can take part in the program. To apply for the program, please email Firoj Gurung at Gurung@uhcl.edu.

Get Involved

The university has more than 100 student clubs and organizations. The Student Involvement and Leadership office fosters campus community through programs, resources, and opportunities for involvement that advance student learning and prepare students for success in the global community. Students can access [Get Involved](#) for a list of all student organizations and events happening on campus.

Campus Recreation and Wellness

The UHCL Campus Recreation and Wellness Center is available for students who have a university ID card. It offers fitness equipment and classes, a racquetball court, a running/walking track, two full-size activity courts (basketball/volleyball/badminton), and intramural team sports. The Rec Center also offers a juice bar and use of iMac computers. For more information and hours, visit [the Campus Recreation and Wellness page](#).



On-Campus Employment

International students are permitted to work on-campus at University of Houston-Clear Lake part-time (less than 20 hours per week) while school is in session and full-time (more than 20 hours per week) during the summer and official school breaks, if permitted by the hiring department. On-campus employment may only occur between the program start and end dates on a Form I-20.

If you obtain paid on-campus employment, you must apply for a Social Security Number. For instructions on how to apply, please review the information on [OIAP's F-1 Employment webpage](#).

F-1 students hired for an on-campus position must complete the necessary hiring paperwork with University of Houston-Clear Lake Human Resources (HR) prior to beginning work. Your hiring department and HR will assist you with the necessary paperwork.

Where to Find Available On-Campus Positions

On-campus positions are limited, so on-campus employment is not guaranteed. It may be difficult to get an on-campus job in your first semester in the United States. That's okay! Get involved on campus to boost your resume and apply to as many available positions as possible. Most departments will require you to apply online, including your resume and cover letter. Some positions may also include an interview.

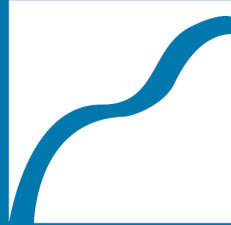
To view the available positions:

Go to [UHCL Handshake](#). If you do not have a Jobs4Hawks account yet, be sure to register for an account to get access to Handshake/Jobs4Hawks. If you have trouble logging in, please contact Career Services at careerservices@uhcl.edu.

You will be prompted to create an account. You may also upload your resume/CV. Once you have created your profile, you can select the "Position Type" drop-down menu and select "On-Campus Employment." You can view the various open positions and apply within Handshake/Jobs4Hawks. On-campus jobs listed as work-study positions are not available to F-1 international students as those are funded by the U.S. Government for U.S. Citizens as part of a financial aid package.

Good luck with your on-campus job search!





University of Houston Clear Lake

2700 Bay Area Blvd.

Houston, TX 77058

281-283-7600

www.uhcl.edu