WELCOME TO UMASS

UMass Amherst is the flagship public higher education campus in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, making a profound, transformative impact to the common good. Founded in 1863, we are the largest public research university in New England, distinguished by the excellence and breadth of our academic, research, and community outreach programs. At UMass Amherst, we offer 118 undergraduate degree programs as well as 76 masters and 48 doctoral programs.

For the ninth consecutive year, UMass Amherst is among the 100 “Best College Values” in public colleges compiled by Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine. Additionally, among Massachusetts colleges and universities, UMass Amherst ranks fourth in research grants from the National Science Foundation, behind only MIT, Harvard, and Boston University. We are on the forefront of advanced manufacturing, we are established leaders in data science, and we have 21 NCAA Division 1 sports teams!

Schools & Colleges of UMass Amherst

- College of Education
- College of Engineering
- College of Humanities and Fine Arts
- College of Information and Computer Sciences
- College of Natural Sciences
- College of Nursing
- College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Isenberg School of Management
- School of Public Health and Health Sciences
- Stockbridge School of Agriculture
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WELCOME HANDBOOK

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J-1 Immigration Checklist

Complete checklist in order to secure the proper visa and enter into the US easily and safely. Read carefully and complete in order.

☑ Be accepted to UMass Amherst

☐ Receive your DS-2019 Form. This will be sent to your study abroad office a month or so after acceptance into the program.

☐ Make your Visa Appointment. Now that you have your DS-2019 form, you are able to make an appointment for a visa interview at your closest US Embassy. To do this, follow these steps:

1. Pay the SEVIS fee (I-901) online. Go to http://www.fmjfee.com and select PAY I-901 FEE. Be sure to print out the receipt at the end of the transaction. Keep this document safe, you will need it.


Note: Visa applications submitted to US embassies located outside of your home country may not be accepted. Contact the US embassy directly for more information.

☐ Prepare the following documents to bring to your visa appointment:
  • Signed DS-2019 Form
  • Valid Passport
  • UMass Amherst Admission Letter
  • Financial support documents (i.e. bank statement or an assistantship offer letter)
  • Proof that you have close ties to your country (such as ownership of properties, businesses, etc.)
  • SEVIS fee receipt

☐ Receive your visa.
  • Double check your visa stamp for J-1 status
  • Verify that your personal information is correct
  • Gather your documents including the original DS-2019 form and passport with J-1 visa stamp for travel to the US. You MUST travel with these documents in your carry-on luggage. You will need them at US immigration to be allowed in the country.
  • To be safe, also carry-on any financial documentation and the SEVIS fee receipt.

☐ Pass through Immigration. Travel to the United States for your program!
  An immigration officer at the port of entry (immigration at the airport) will review your documents. You will receive an entry stamp on your passport and DS-2019 form. Make sure that the stamp indicates that you are on a J1 visa.

Note: You are allowed to enter the US up to 30 days prior to the start date on your DS-2019 form.
F-1 Immigration Checklist

Complete checklist in order to secure the proper visa and enter into the US easily and safely. Read carefully and complete in order.

☑ Be accepted to UMass Amherst

☐ Receive your I-20 Form. This will be sent to your study abroad office a month or so after acceptance into the program.

☐ Make your Visa Appointment. Now that you have your I-20 form, you are able to make an appointment for a visa interview at your closest US Embassy. To do this, follow these steps:

1. Pay the SEVIS fee (I-901) online. Go to http://www.fmjfee.com and select PAY I-901 FEE. Be sure to print out the receipt at the end of the transaction. Keep this document safe, you will need it.


Note: Visa applications submitted to US embassies located outside of your home country may not be accepted. Contact the US embassy directly for more information.

☐ Prepare the following documents to bring to your visa appointment:

- Signed I-20 Form
- Valid Passport
- UMass Amherst Admission Letter
- Financial support documents (i.e. bank statement or an assistantship offer letter)
- Proof that you have close ties to your country (such as ownership of properties, businesses, etc.)
- SEVIS fee receipt

☐ Receive your visa.

- Double check your visa stamp for F-1 status
- Verify that your personal information is correct
- Gather your documents including the original I-20 form and passport with F-1 visa stamp for travel to the US. You MUST travel with these documents in your carry-on luggage. You will need them at US immigration to be allowed in the country.
- To be safe, also carry-on any financial documentation and the SEVIS fee receipt.

☐ Pass through Immigration. Travel to the United States for your program!

An immigration officer at the port of entry (immigration at the airport) will review your documents. You will receive an entry stamp on your passport and I-20 form. Make sure that the stamp indicates that you are on a F-1 visa.

Note: You are allowed to enter the US up to 30 days prior to the start date on your I-20 form.
Visa Transfer Checklist

Complete checklist in order to secure the proper visa and enter into the US easily and safely. Read carefully and complete in order.

- Be accepted to UMass Amherst
- Receive your I-20 or DS-2019 Form.

- Renew your F-1 or J-1 Visa, if needed. Refer to the J-1 or F-1 Immigration checklist for visa instructions.

Additional Notes:

- The SEVIS fee is a one-time fee for a specific SEVIS ID. If your SEVIS record has been transferred to UMass Amherst by your previous school, you will have the same SEVIS ID. For more information, please visit: www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq.htm

- If you are not planning to travel outside of the US before you start your program at UMass Amherst, you can remain in the US with your new UMass I-20 or DS-2019 and a valid passport.
SPIRE System
SPIRE is the University’s secure online student information system. Students use this system to register for courses, view/pay their Bursar bill, view holds, select/view housing assignments, change meal plans, etc. You will need your Net ID and password to log in to SPIRE.

If you have NOT yet received your Net ID and/or password to your email account, contact the Information Technologies department.

Forgot Your NetID or Password?
If you cannot remember your NetID or IT Account password, go to SPIRE. In the upper right corner, under IT Accounts, click Password & NetID Help, then follow the prompts.

Need IT help?
Contact the IT department by email or phone.
Email: it@umass.edu (from your UMass email account)
Call the Help Center at 413-545-9400
UMass Email

You will need your Net ID and password to log into your UMass email. Log in at http://apps.umass.edu. You can also configure your email account on your computer or mobile device using email software.

This is your official email account for the time you are at UMass Amherst: all electronic University communications will be sent to this address. We encourage you to check your email before you arrive on campus.

Can't Access Your UMass Amherst Email?

Your UMass Amherst email is powered by Google, but Google may not be available in your home country. International students who cannot access their UMass Amherst email from a country outside the United States may need to use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to create a secure connection between their computer and the UMass Amherst network. This will enable you to access your University email even if Google is not available in your country.

To set up VPN on your computer, tablet, or mobile device, and access your University email:

1. Go to umass.edu/it/vpn
2. At the bottom of the page, under Top Support Center Articles, click the link corresponding to your computer's operating system (e.g., Install & Configure Junos Pulse VPN Client for Windows). A page with step-by-step instructions will open.
3. On the instructions page, skip the section Get Added to a VPN Group. We are providing you with the information you need on this page.
4. Follow the steps to obtain and install VPN software.
5. Once installed, open the software, then follow the steps to configure your VPN connection. When prompted for:
   - Your User Name, enter your NetID.
   - Your password, enter your IT Account password.
   - The group or realm name, select or enter UMASS (all upper case).
   - The server URL, enter sslvpn.umass.edu.
6. Connect to the VPN server.
7. Once your VPN connection is established, go to http://apps.umass.edu and log in with your NetID and IT Account password to access your email.
International Student Orientation

International Student Orientation provides information on services and arrival support specifically for International Students. This includes:

• Arrival and campus move in process.
• Trips to the mall so you can buy the essentials!
• Connecting you with cell phone companies and banks so that you can open accounts without having a social security number.
• Information on health insurance, legal and safety issues and U.S. culture.
• Information on “academic honesty” to help International students avoid plagiarism.
• Food and fun on arrival day: a group lunch, a BBQ dinner, dancing, and local trips with other International students to help with making new friends.
• Immigration session and SEVIS information to students to help maintain their status.

Students are required to attend the ISO prior to the start of their first semester. You will receive an email from orientation@ipo.umass.edu with detailed information regarding the mandatory international student orientation that takes place before the first week of classes.
Legal and Safety Information

UMass Student Legal Services Office: located on the 9th floor of the Campus Center offers free legal services to all current students. They also offer notarization services, contact Legal Services for more information.

USCIS provides education material to help International Students avoid 'Identity Theft' and learn how to report and handle it if it happens to you.

Health Insurance

Full-time students will be automatically enrolled in the insurance plan at UMass in order to meet the State's insurance requirements.

International students are NOT eligible to waive any part of the UMass student insurance. Visit the UHS website for complete information regarding the University Health Services, UHS insurance coverage, as well as other services provided by UHS.

Required Immunizations

Massachusetts law requires certain immunization for college students before arriving at school. Students are also required to provide proof of these immunizations. Click here for more details.

If you have any questions, contact the New Student Immunization Program:
Email: nsip@uhs.umass.edu
Phone: (413) 577-5275
Signing Up for Housing

Before the semester begins (for fall starts this will be May-June and for spring starts this will be in October-November), Residential Life will send an email to your UMass email address about the online procedure for room selection. This email will walk you through how to “Request an Appointment” through the SPIRE system.

Once you have selected housing, if you would like to change your assignment, you must contact Residential Life.

For more information, visit the Living at UMass Amherst website or email their office using your UMass email address.

Overview of Residence Halls

UMass on-campus housing is spread across 7 residential areas. Each area is made up of several residence halls (often referred to as "dorms"). Click on the links below to explore the residential areas open to international students.

- Central
- North Apartments
- Northeast
- Orchard Hill
- Southwest
- Sylvan
- Commonwealth Honors College

Most students live in double rooms, but certain residence halls also offer the options of single rooms or suites (at a higher rate). All residence halls include high-speed Internet and laundry machines.

Residential Academic Programs (RAP)

This is an Academic Learning Community for first year undergraduate level students.

More information about RAPs can be found at; https://www.umass.edu/rap

Move In Procedures

You should arrive in time for the International Student Orientation. On this date, you will be invited to move into your residence hall. Please do not book your flight until you have received information about the orientation and move-in dates so that you do not miss orientation! Campus leaders will offer trips to local stores to buy items such as sheets, toiletries, decorations, and other things you will need for your first days on campus!

Luggage

If you are staying in the residence halls and want to ship your luggage to UMass Amherst before your arrival on campus, Residential Life will store your luggage at an off-campus storage facility at no cost to you. Check the Residential Life website or email for current information about the Luggage Program.

Arriving Early

If you arrive early, we generally suggest staying at Hotel UMass, as it is located on campus. You can find out about other lodging here. These hotels are not within walking distance to UMass, so additional transportation would be required.

Hotel UMass offers a discounted rate for students who stay at Hotel UMass during the days leading up to the International Student Orientation. Information is provided on the Arrival Day information linked on the International Student Orientation schedule.
Off Campus Student Life

This is an on-campus office that is dedicated to supporting the needs of off campus students. They offer many resources, special programs, and events to help you find off campus housing, stay connected to campus, and link you to your new off campus neighborhood.

See the Off Campus Student Life website for additional information.

Family Housing at UMass

Eligible students can apply to live in North Village Apartments. See their website for eligibility requirements.
Award Winning Dining Commons

Princeton Review has rated UMass Dining #1 for two consecutive years! We offer award-winning dining options all across campus, with four dining commons, eighteen retail cafes, Kosher and Halal options, two food trucks, UMass Catering, and the University Club.

The four Dining Commons at UMass Amherst are social and educational hubs on campus, and help to build community, encourage healthy living, and enrich the college experience.

Unlimited Meal Plan

All undergraduate students living in campus residence halls are required to purchase a meal plan. First-year and transfer residential students living in apartment and non-apartment style housing are automatically assigned to the Unlimited Plan. This plan includes:

- Unlimited access to all four dining commons!
- $250 Dining Dollars for use in any on-campus retail dining location
- 15 guest meal passes

If you wish to change your meal plan you can do this as soon as your bill is posted to SPIRE (see page 13). A change in meal plan will not appear on your bill immediately, but will NOT prevent you from paying your bill by the due date. You can change your meal plan before you pay your bill, and pay the adjusted amount (which you will calculate). You could also change your meal plan (up until the end of add/drop period), pay the amount shown, and a refund will be issued to you by the Bursars Office at a later date.
View Your Bill
Bills for undergraduate students are usually issued 3-4 weeks before the start of the semester.
Bills for graduate students are usually issued 2-3 weeks after the start of the semester.

The Bursars Office will send an email to your UMass student email when your bill is ready to view in SPIRE.

To view your bill, log onto your SPIRE account, click on “Main Menu”, then click on “Finances”, then click on “View/Pay Bill”.

Pay Your Bill
The due date for your payment is listed on your SPIRE account. All payments are due in full prior to the start of the semester. Please remit payment at least two weeks prior to the due date to allow for processing time.

All International students must use FLYWIRE to pay their bill:

Visit our FAQ page for questions about FLYWIRE.

Questions About Your Bill
If you have questions about your bill, contact the Bursars office
Email: bursar@admin.umass.edu
Phone: 413 545 2368
Clubs, Teams and Organizations
UMass Amherst students come from all 50 states and over 70 countries, making this small town in Western Massachusetts surprisingly diverse. The university’s clubs, organizations, and cultural centers are just some of the ways to find people on campus who share your background or interests. Clubs, teams, and social events are a great way to get to know your peers and make the most of your UMass experience.

Campus Pulse
Campus Pulse is your gateway to hundreds of campus activities, campus offices, and more than 200 student organizations. Through Campus Pulse, you can connect to like-minded communities and explore your interests.

We have hundreds of Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) that are supported by the University. Too many to list! But, if you are interested, there IS a club for you. Check Campus Pulse for the full list.

Campus Recreation
Campus Recreation provides comprehensive recreation and student development opportunities, as well as exceptional programs, services and facilities. These include the Recreation Center, two pools, Boyden Gymnasium, tennis courts, and much more. UMass offers a variety of intramural sports, group fitness sessions, and gym facilities. Membership is free for undergraduate students.

Intramural Sports and Sports Clubs
There are many student activities including intramural sports and sports clubs that you can take advantage of while here. Find one that suits your interest and it will make your stay at UMass a more enjoyable one.
Learning Resource Center (LRC)
The LRC is located on the 10th floor of the library and provides a full range of academic support services. Tutoring, study skills, tutor training and computer, video, audio aided instruction is available. If you find yourself having difficult with basic study skills, the Center for Counseling and Academic Development in Berkshire House has professional counseling services and workshops.

Tutoring Program
Tutoring provides academic support for students, in 1:1 or 2:1 settings, and addresses specific questions and comprehension challenges. We offer tutoring for a wide range of classes including all of the introductory STEM courses. Tutoring sessions are 60 minutes and all of our tutors are students who have previously excelled in the courses they tutor.
If a more specialized tutor is needed, reach out to the specific UMass department for additional tutoring offerings.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Program
The ESL Program offers courses in academic writing, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. The goal of the Program is to help non-native speakers of English master the formal conventions of academic English for both general education courses and courses in their major.
University Health Services
University Health Services provides comprehensive primary health care, urgent care, and mental health care. Advance appointments are best for routine care and minor problems, but it is also possible to make same-day appointments or visit the walk-in clinic. Services include immunizations, eye care, HIV/STI testing, and prescription refills.

Center for Counseling & Psychological Health (CCPH)
The Center for Counseling & Psychological Health offers confidential services in: crisis intervention; short-term therapy for individuals, couples and families; support and therapy groups; behavioral medicine; psychiatric services; eating disorders; assessments for attention deficit/hyperactivity and learning disabilities; suicide prevention training; and consultation and education.

UMass Disability Services
UMass Disability Services provides a wide variety of services to students with disabilities including accommodations for documented physical, medical and learning disabilities. An accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, job, activity or facility that enables a student or employee with a qualifying disability to participate equally. For example, the location of a course may be changed if the assigned room is inaccessible to a student with a mobility challenge. Access to specific accommodations is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For a list of frequently provided accommodations, visit the accommodations page.
IPO Buddies Program
Open to undergraduate students who are new to UMass, the IPO Buddies Program is a buddy/mentor program designed to enable you to meet current UMass students so he/she can help you transition into life in the U.S. and/or UMass Amherst community. Newly arrived students like YOU may need a friend to answer your questions and help you to adjust to a new academic and personal life here.

If you are interested in having a buddy to provide advice, support and friendship, please send a message to buddy@ipo.umass.edu.

Center for Women and Community
Provides innovative and informed education, leadership opportunities, advocacy, and support services that address the cause and impact of sexism and recognize the multiple oppressions experienced by women. We offer services to people of all genders within the diverse communities of Hampshire County, the Five Colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The Stonewall Center - LGBTQIA Center
Provides resources and support for LGBTQIA students, staff, and faculty at UMass Amherst and in the Five Colleges community, including workshops, social events, and HIV/STI testing (in cooperation with UHS).

Office of Religious and Spiritual Life
The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life offers a range of educational programs, individual and institutional advocacy, interfaith dialogue, and other bridge-building activities designed to foster an informed, caring and supportive campus community for students of all backgrounds and beliefs, and to promote a greater sense of meaning and purpose in students' lives.

There are also many religious and spiritual groups on campus that students are encouraged and welcome to join! Visit the ORSL website for more information.
Life in Western Massachusetts

The Amherst Area

UMass Amherst is located in Western Massachusetts and is one of the safest and most beautiful areas in the United States! Picturesque Amherst is laced with hiking trails, ponds, and bike trails to explore.

This area is home to four other universities (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, and Smith College) that make up the Five College Consortium. This large concentration of students means Amherst and the surrounding area is lively and full of restaurants, galleries, shops, and events for students. Additionally, UMass Transit makes it easy to get around Western Mass with free bus service.

Amherst is 90 miles (145 km) from Boston and 175 miles (282 km) from New York City. For travel to Boston, New York City, or other nearby cities, there are convenient bus services from campus or Amherst Center.

Downtown Amherst

Take a stroll through Amherst’s beautiful downtown to find markets, restaurants, shops, museums, and more.

Amherst has dozens of fun and affordable restaurants, whether you’re looking for Chinese, Mexican, Vietnamese, Thai, or Italian food. Downtown Amherst is also home to a variety of popular pubs, cafes, and American food options.

Hadley & Northampton

For even more shopping, parks, and nightlife, it’s easy to get to neighboring towns using the UMass Transit Services. Buses run regularly throughout the day and are free for students. Most local supermarkets are located in Hadley, as well as the Hampshire Mall. You will have opportunities to go there by bus on your first day of orientation in order to purchase bedding and other necessities to make your new room feel like home.

Northampton is home to Smith College and offers a flourishing downtown full of diverse restaurants, music venues, bars, cafes and quirky shops. Spend time outside in local parks, beautiful Smith campus, or in a variety of galleries and museums.
Welcome Center
The University of Massachusetts Amherst Visitor Center is located at 300 Massachusetts Ave, Amherst, MA 01003. Click here for a map of the campus.

Air and Ground Travel
The closest Airport to UMass Amherst is Bradley International Airport (BDL) in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. It is approximately 45 miles/80 km from campus and is an hour drive by taxi or pre-hired shuttle. Please note that flying into Bradley may require you to schedule an additional connecting flight through one of the larger U.S. airports.

Other international airports include Boston Logan International Airport (BOS), which is 95 miles/160 km away, and New York John F. Kennedy Airport (JFK), 145 miles/240 km away. UMass can be reached by either airport by bus or pre-hired shuttle. You can also take the train from JFK to Northampton, MA, then hire a taxi or take local transportation to campus. Northampton is 8.5 miles (13.7 km) from campus.

For information about ground transportation (taxis, shuttles, buses and trains), please visit our website. We urge you to do your research before purchasing your flight.
Visit the International Programs Office website for more details.