

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS CENTER HANDBOOK





Location:

International Programs Center

Becky Paneitz Student Center

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Bentonville, AR 72712



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International Programs Center Handbook

Congratulations on joining the NorthWest Arkansas Community College Family!

The information provided below gives general requirements and advice on how to have a successful experience here at NWACC. Some of the information will be discussed at your orientation session, but it is your responsibility to read through the entire handbook. You should save a copy of the handbook and refer to it when you have any questions.

Disclaimer: This does not supersede nor replace the College Wide Student Handbook. It is the Responsibility of all International Students to read both the International Programs Center Handbook and the [NWACC Student Handbook](#).

Accreditation: NorthWest Arkansas Community College is regionally accredited with the Higher Learning Commission. Accreditation can be viewed [HERE](#).

I. Pre-Arrival Logistics

NWACC Application & Acceptance Process

- Apply for admission to NWACC. [Apply to NWACC HERE](#)
- Submit the following to internationalAdmissions@nwacc.edu:
 - Financial Statement Form. [FS Form](#)
 - Bank Statement (must be within last 6 months)
 - High School Transcripts and Diploma showing proof of graduation
(Translated to English)
 - College Transcripts (If Applicable)
 - Copy of Passport & current VISA/I-20/DS-2019 (if transferring)
 - If you are applying as a J-1 Scholar then please submit a copy of your job offer.
 - English Verification Check for Students(one of the following)
 - TOEFL Score: *(Test of English as a Foreign Language)*
 - Paper Based: **500** Computer Based: **173**
 - Internet Based: **61** NWACC's TOEFL Institutional Code: **9754**
 - IELTS Score: *(International English Language Testing System)*
 - Overall score of **6.0** or higher
 - PTE Score: *(Pearson Test of English)*
 - Overall score of **50** or higher
 - Completed at least 24 credit hours at another United States Institution)
 - Must submit Official Transcript as proof
 - Completed Comp I with a "C" or better
 - Must submit Official Transcript as proof
 - Graduate High School from an English Education System or Waiver from a United States Language School
 - Originate from one of the following countries:
 - English Verification Check for Scholars (one of the following)
 - TOEFL Score: *(Test of English as a Foreign Language)*
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 - Must submit Official Transcript as proof
 - Completed Comp I with a "C" or better
 - Must submit Official Transcript as proof
 - Graduate High School from an English Education System or Waiver from a United States Language School

- Originate from one of the following countries:

- English Verification Waived with Citizenship to one of the following Countries. (Passport Required)

Anguilla	Antigua and Barbuda	Australia
The Bahamas	Barbados	Belize
Bermuda	Botswana	British Virgin Islands
British Indians Ocean Territory	Cameroon	Canada
Cayman Islands	Dominica	Falkland Islands
Fiji	The Gambia	Ghana
Gibraltar	Grenada	Guernsey
Guyana	Ireland	Jamaica
Jersey	Lesotho	Liberia
Malta	Montserrat	Namibia
Nauru	New Zealand	Northern Ireland
Nigeria	Pitcairn Islands	Saint Helena
Saint Lucia	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Scotland
Sierra Leone	South Georgia	Soloman Islands
Saint Vincent and The Grenadines	The South Sandwich Islands	Trinidad and Tobago
Tonga	Turks and Caicos Islands	United Kingdom/England
Virgin Islands	Zambia	Zimbabwe

Note: You are not accepted to NWACC until you have received your approved/signed original I-20/DS-2019 from the International Programs Center. NWACC does not accept Reinstatements from other Institutions.

- Your I-20/DS-2019 must be an original document with a wet blue ink signature. Due to this, we must ship the I-20 to you instead of emailing it. Once you receive it, you must sign the document with a blue ink pen. To ship your I-20/DS-2019 to you from NWACC, please visit [UEMS HERE](#)

Passport

- All International students are required to obtain a passport before arriving to the United States.
- If you already have a passport, it must be valid at least six months beyond the end of your program. If it will expire before that date, you should apply immediately for a renewal passport.
- Participants must submit a clear and legible photocopy of their passport photo page prior to their arrival.

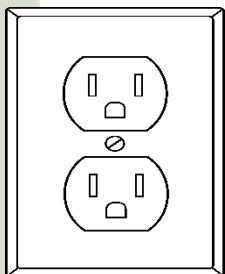
Visa

- A visa is an official document issued by the United States that gives formal permission to enter the country. You must possess a passport before applying for a visa.
- Students must schedule a visit with the U.S. Embassy in their country once they have received their official/signed I-20 from the International Programs Center at NWACC. This is an interview process which will issue you your F-1/J-1 Visa prior to departure. You may not enter the United States **without** this Visa status!
- Important note to non-U.S. citizens if you plan to Study Abroad: If you will be traveling using a passport from another country, it is important to research visa and travel restrictions and requirements. Many countries have very different visa rules depending on one's citizenship and passport type.

Packing Your Bag

Remember that you alone are responsible for carrying your luggage while traveling.

- International luggage allowance can vary by airline. Check with your airline carrier for weight and size restrictions and fees for excess baggage.
- In your carry-on, you should include one change of clothes (in case your luggage is lost), all important documents, all prescription medications, and an extra pair of eye glasses or contacts (if necessary).
- Before packing your entire wardrobe, think about what clothing is absolutely necessary. What is the climate of Northwest Arkansas? What type of clothing is common? How often do you need to dress professionally? Try to pack clothing that can mix and match well and be layered.
- Depending on where you are going and how long you are staying, it may be easier to buy toiletries in the United States. If you do decide to pack toiletries, place them in a Ziploc bag in your checked luggage. If you plan to put toiletries in your carry-on, know that there are very tight regulations on liquids; visit www.tsa.gov for specific information.
- Many appliances/electronics in America use a 3 prong charging cable. Converters can be purchased at many electronics stores in the U.S. If you will be in the United States for an extended period of time, it may be easier to buy



your desired appliances (such as a hair dryer or electric razor) here.

- Do not bring any valuable items that are irreplaceable. If you plan to take a laptop, get it insured in case of damage or theft and make sure it is charged.
- Leave enough room in your luggage or bring an extra bag for souvenirs and other items you may purchase while in Northwest Arkansas. Check the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol website (www.cbp.gov) and your home countries laws about returning with excess items.
- The International Programs Center has partnered with CampusSIMs to simplify your telephone process. Once accepted, we will mail you a CampusSIM card along with your I-20/DS-2019. You are not obligated to use this if you do not wish. However, this CampusSIM card will allow you to use your International Phone within the United States as soon as you land. All you need to do is put it in your phone and setup a subscription services with CampusSIMs before you fly out.



Booking a Flight

NorthWest Arkansas Community College has partnered with StudentUniverse to



simplify your purchasing process of plane tickets and short-term hotels for your first few days/weeks while in Northwest Arkansas. The prices on this site are comparable to any search engine and pre-populates the destination for you which is Bentonville, AR (Airport XNA). New and returning students may use this by clicking the program link "NorthWest Arkansas Community College – International". Provide your closest airport to your home and then search for plane tickets.

The service may ask for students to verify their student status. In order to do this, you would need to submit two of the following three items: Acceptance Letter, I-20 Document, and/or NWACC Student ID. Do not be alarmed if you are not asked because this is an audit for the service and done randomly across all users.

When to Arrive?

The most common question new students ask is, "When should I arrive?" This is a very important question and can greatly affect how your first semester goes. We highly recommend you arrive in Northwest Arkansas **at least 7 days** before the start of class. Many students will have severe Jet Lag which can hinder their start at NWACC. Jet Lag takes several days to get over and it is important to have that past you before classes begin. This will also grant you additional time for Advising, Finding a place to live, obtaining your textbooks, et cetera...

Many students struggle and are at a greater risk of failure if they do not arrive until the week of or the weekend before classes start. Don't fall into that group!

New Student Orientation

As an International Student/Scholar, you will have two orientation sessions to attend. It is expected to complete the Online (Remote) Orientation before arrival and then attend the International On-Campus Orientation once you arrive. The Online (Remote) Orientation is completed through blackboard and will take you 45 mins to 1 hour to complete. International On-Campus Orientation generally occurs the week prior to class starting. Please email internationalAdmissions@nwacc.edu to inquire on future dates and sign up.

Testing Center

All NWACC students must complete or submit prior Standardized Testing with the college prior to first enrollment. This will allow Advising to know your current level of understanding and enroll you in the appropriate courses. There are two common tests that students take. Most International Students take the Compass. Please click [HERE](#) for more detailed info.

ACCUPLACER – Is done on-campus at the testing center. The cost is \$25 per attempt. You will need to go to Records to request the test, then pay at Treasurer's Office, and finally take the receipt to Testing Center to start your test. All three locations are in the same building. The average completion time is around 3 hours. International Students are **not allowed more than 2 attempts**. Accuplacer has a free study app which you can find [HERE](#). The cost is \$10.00 USD.

ACT – Not done on-campus. Must be completed at the University of Arkansas Testing Center. If you wish to take this route then you must take the exam at least 2 weeks prior to the start of class. It can take up to two weeks to receive the results.

Housing

There is an off-campus housing site which can help you find housing [HERE](#). You may search for housing on our site, on craigslist, another internet based site, or via the local newspaper. It is recommend to have an apartment setup prior to arrival so you are not in a frantic search for a home during your first semester at NWACC.

Ozark Regional Transit (ORT)

ORT is public transportation between Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and

Fayetteville. This service is provided at a reduced rate using [Token Transit](#). You must enroll in this service before you can ride. You may find the daily routes [HERE](#).

- Routes going by NWACC Monday-Friday include:
 - [Route 11](#)
 - [Route 51](#)
 - [Route 490](#)

Finances in Northwest Arkansas

How much money you need and the best way to use money in town will depend on the length and location of your stay, as well as your own personal spending preferences. Before leaving your home country, research the United States:

- How much do meals cost in restaurants?
- What about entertainment?
- How much does local transportation cost?
 - NWACC offers free transportation with Ozark Regional Transit to any current NWACC student. [ORT Website](#)

Finding answers to these questions can help you better determine a budget before you leave.

To help with your budgeting, remember that eating in restaurants or buying drinks can quickly deplete your funds. You can save a lot of money by getting most of your food at grocery stores and carefully budgeting how much you spend on food and drinks. It is also important to pace your shopping. Many people rush to buy souvenirs and gifts during their first few weeks in America, only to find the same gifts at a lower price elsewhere. Shop around first to find the best deals.

Remember to take into account the American dollar's value in foreign currency. A good website to consult for up-to-date exchange rates is www.xe.com.

Cash

It is highly recommended to have about \$100 worth of American Dollars before you even arrive in America. This will be useful for buying food and drink or paying for transportation upon arrival, if necessary. Before leaving the U.S., ask at your local bank if you can get currency for your home country. If you cannot easily get currency before leaving, plan to exchange or withdraw money at the airport or port of entry.

On a day-to-day basis, you should keep as little cash on your person as possible. If you must carry a large amount of cash, you may want to purchase a money order or cashier's check at a local bank to avoid theft.

Exchanging Money

You can exchange money at banks and bureau de change either in the U.S. or Internationally. These institutions generally charge a commission fee and the exchange rate will not be as favorable as if you withdrew money from an ATM. If possible, avoid exchanging money at airports, where exchange rates may be higher.

ATM / Debit Cards

Many International students open up bank accounts in America while studying. Each bank is different and you must follow their rules and regulations in order to utilize their services. Generally speaking, banks will want you to have a Tax ID number or a co-signer to open an account. Tax ID numbers are only given out to working non-immigrants. [Tax ID Number Application](#)

Credit Cards

Credit cards are a popular option for many U.S. Citizens to pay for things. However, it may be difficult for an international student to obtain one. Each Credit Card Agency is different and you must follow their rules and regulations in order to utilize their services. Generally speaking, credit card agencies will want you to have a Tax ID number or a co-signer to open an account. Furthermore, they will want you to have some form of credit beforehand. Most international students do not obtain a credit card during their stay here. [Investopedia link on Credit Cards](#)

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks, which can be cashed for local currency in foreign countries, can be purchased at any bank, AAA travel office, or American Express office in the U.S. The benefit of traveler's checks is that they can be replaced if lost or stolen; be sure to write down the numbers of your checks and keep that information separate from the checks themselves. However, many people now find that traveler's checks are inconvenient to cash and prefer to rely on ATMs. Despite this, you may still decide that it is beneficial to have traveler's checks on hand in case of an emergency.

Emergency Funds

If you find that you do not have enough money, or if you are unable to withdraw money from an ATM, there are a few different options available:

- Western Union can quickly transfer money almost anywhere worldwide and charges a service fee based on the amount sent. For more information, visit www.westernunion.com.
- MoneyGram International is a company similar to Western Union. For more information, visit www.moneygram.com.

Financial Aid/Scholarships

Generally Speaking, International Students are not eligible for federal financial aid. This requires a Social Security Number or Tax ID to apply. Please inquire directly with Financial Aid [Here](#) to research more.

Scholarships are given to students with various backgrounds and International Students are eligible for many of them. As soon as you apply at NWACC and receive your I-20/F-1 Visa then it is highly recommend to apply to as many scholarships as possible. The more applications then the greater chance of success! You may inquire about Scholarships [Here](#).

Communications in Northwest Arkansas

There are many different ways to communicate home while you are in the United States. Below are some suggestions that may be helpful during your program.

Telephone

Basics: Almost all of International students are in a time zone different than their home country. When calling home, keep in mind the time difference to avoid calling at inappropriate times. When dialing an international number, it is necessary to include the access code and the country code before the phone number. Note that international numbers often have a different set of digits, and the first digit may be dropped when dialed from overseas. A helpful website for the current times worldwide and international dialing codes is www.timeanddate.com.

Cell phones: Check with your current cell phone provider if your phone will work while in Northwest Arkansas. Even if your phone is capable of receiving service abroad, this can be an expensive option. Some participants choose to buy a "pay as you go" phone upon arrival in the United States. While this can be useful and inexpensive for

calls made within your North America, it can still be a costly option for calling home. Some rental phones allow free incoming calls; however, the person calling you would still be charged. Before purchasing a phone, research the costs in order to find the most affordable option.

Landlines: If you are staying with a host family, do not assume that you are free to use their phone. It is often more expensive to use a landline for overseas calls, even when using a calling card. Talk with your host family about appropriate phone use.

Pay phones and calling cards: Pay phones in North America are coin-operated and you can use a calling card on them, but they are hard to find in Northwest Arkansas. Calling card rates vary, so research your options to find one that is reasonable. They can be purchased in the United States or in your home country, in airports, train stations, post offices, convenience stores, et cetera. Even though calling from a pay phone offers less privacy and can be hard to find, it is generally the most affordable traditional option.

Voice Over IP: If you have internet access, you may be able to use software that allows you to make free or inexpensive calls over the internet to other computers and even to landlines and cell phones. These services require a microphone, and voice quality may not be as good as a traditional phone. Video chat is also possible and requires a webcam. Some of the programs to offer this service include Skype, Google Talk, AOL Instant Messenger, Windows Live Messenger, and Yahoo! Messenger. These are the cheapest options.

Internet

Computer access: Internet access is very common throughout North America. NorthWest Arkansas Community College offers it free to any students on-campus and many stores will offer it free while you are a patron. Most students sign up for internet access at home so they do not have to travel to use it. Check different providers for the best rates and quality.

Blog/Online Journal: An easy way to share your daily life in Northwest Arkansas with friends and family at home is through an online journal, also called a blog. The advantage of blogging over email is that you do not have to send large,

lengthy emails that may clog inboxes. Blogs can also be therapeutic during times of homesickness. Some sites that offer free blogging are LiveJournal, Blogger, and Wordpress.

Mail

It is often very easy to send mail internationally, though delivery times will take longer than within the U.S. For important and/or time-sensitive materials, you can rely on worldwide companies such as FedEx, UPS, or DHL.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC) – NOT NWACC ID

ISIC is an internationally accepted student ID card that is available to full-time students. It offers advantages such as:

- Proof of student status;
- Discounts on flights, buses, trains, and ferries;
- Discounts on entertainment, attractions, and entrance fees to museums and cultural sites;
- Discounts on hostels, hotels, restaurants, and shopping; and
- Access to free 24-hour, multilingual ISIC Emergency Help Line.

Cards can be purchased at several Northwest Arkansas travel agencies. For more information, visit www.isic.org.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is designed to pay for unexpected costs incurred while traveling, such as those related to trip cancellation and lost baggage. Travel insurance is not a substitute for health insurance coverage abroad and is completely optional. For participants who are interested in purchasing travel insurance, more information can be found at www.inext.com.

II. Health & Safety

Medical and Dental Check-Ups

NWACC strongly recommends that all participants visit a physician and receive a dental check-up prior to departure. Let your doctor know where you are considering traveling and the nature of the program abroad. Ask your doctor if they have any concerns about your health; even minor health issues can become more serious through the stresses of adjusting to a new culture. If you regularly take medications, discuss plans for advance prescriptions and/or reactions to watch for (e.g., some medications make people vulnerable to sunburn, et cetera.). See "Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs" below for more information.

Certain countries may require a physical examination before a visa can be issued. Your program coordinator will provide more information.

Immunizations/Tests

Some immunizations are required for study at NWACC. We require Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine and the Tuberculosis (TB) Test prior to enrollment. You may arrive in Northwest Arkansas without these complete, but you cannot enroll in classes until you submit health records showing that you have received your vaccinations. It is strongly recommend you obtain these vaccines as soon as you can.

Health Insurance Coverage

NWACC requires that you purchase the college approved health insurance prior to enrollment of courses. NWACC's International health provider is CISI. The health insurance is charged to your account once in fall and once in spring (Note: Spring health insurance will cover Summer). You must pay this charge and show your receipt to the International Programs Center in order to get the hold removed and enroll in courses. We do not waive NWACC health insurance due to other health insurance enrollment! **Please do not purchase any U.S. Based Insurance before arrival.**

Once purchased, CISI will send you health insurance cards which you will take with your persons and show any time you need medical or drug assistance.

It is advised if you have health insurance in your home country that you maintain that during your stay in Northwest Arkansas in the event you must return home or travel back for vacation.

NWACC's CISI health insurance will cover you for the first 30 days prior to the start of coursework. If you need to have a medical examination prior to the arrival in Northwest Arkansas (inside the U.S.) then keep a copy of your receipt and doctor's note so you can submit those to CISI once you paid for your semester's coverage.

Dental/Vision/Life/Car Insurance Coverage

NWACC does not supply/mandate Dental, Vision, Life, nor Car Insurance coverage to International Students. It is not required by the Federal government in relation to your VI\$A status. However, CISI will cover emergency dental visits with our plan. You may also shop around for your own coverage if you deem it necessary.

Prescriptions & Over-the-Counter-Drugs

If you are taking a prescription medication, you should bring an adequate supply upon arrival and coordinate with a local doctor's office for refills. Do not assume that medications that are easily available in your home country will be available in North America. You should pack all prescription medication in your carry-on in the event your checked luggage is lost, and all medication should be kept in the original prescription containers in order to facilitate clearance through customs.

It is important to note that some countries have restrictions on certain drugs or require a written note from your physician stating your diagnosis and why the medication is needed. Please talk with a physician to discuss any concerns you have about your prescription medication.

CISI Health insurance will help pay for any medications via the CISI Health Insurance Card once you have paid your health insurance charge with NWACC.

Jet Lag & Post-Arrival Sickness

Jet lag is the disruption of one's circadian rhythm caused by crossing several time zones during a flight. Jet lag affects people differently; symptoms may include loss of appetite, headache, fatigue, insomnia, irritability, and even mild depression. It is believed that eastward-bound flights are more disruptive than those going westward. Below are some tips for how to cope with jet lag:

- Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol during the flight to stay well hydrated.
- Exercise in your seat and move around the flight cabin as much as possible.
- If you reach your destination in the morning, stay awake until the appropriate local time to go to sleep.

Country Specific Risks

It is important to research any possible health issues in your destination country prior to departure. For example, if you are traveling to the tropics, the risks of suffering from traveler's diarrhea and contracting malaria are higher than they would be in colder regions. Learn how to protect yourself and what you need to do should you become ill.

Mental Health

Participants with a history of mental health issues (including, but not limited to, depression, anxiety, stress management, addiction, et cetera...) are encouraged to get a health check-up prior to departure and setup a local physician, psychologist, and/or psychiatrist. While studying in North America is an exciting experience, it can also be stressful. The added stress of adapting to a new culture while being far from your support network can magnify existing health issues. Talk with your physician, a close friend or family member, the International Program Director, or your program coordinator about your concerns and to develop positive coping strategies.

If you are taking medications to manage your mental health, it is important that you continue to do so and make plans to bring a sufficient supply. Interruption or change in type or dosage of such medications combined with travel stress can often trigger serious problems.

Alcohol & Drug Use

The most common source of problems relating to code of conduct and safety problems during college programs stem from alcohol and/or drug abuse problems. For students under age 21, alcohol is illegal. In the United States, you must be 21 years of age to both purchase and/or consume alcohol.

In almost all cases, alcohol or drug use will lead to impaired judgments that can place students at greater risk or lead them to make poor decisions.

For the purposes of study at NWACC, all participants are required to comply with the following statement:

While attending college funded functions and activities including, but not limited to: study abroad, student organization functions, class, and NWACC led trips off campus; students are responsible for refraining from the unauthorized or illegal use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs and/or alcohol. These functions include lodging and travel to and from events and anytime one is representing NWACC. Any student, regardless of age, that is found to be distributing illegal drugs and/or alcohol is subject to college disciplinary procedures as well as prosecution by local authorities. Alcoholic beverage consumption by those of legal drinking age shall not interfere with any scheduled program, nor shall it negatively impact other participants.

Students have a right to a smoke-free, drug-free, and alcohol-free learning environment. Students are responsible for interacting in ways which will not interfere with the educational process and/or any NWACC sponsored activity.

For students with pre-existing alcohol or drug abuse problems, you may wish to identify Alcoholics Anonymous chapters in the local region of travel or define other plans prior to departure to responsibly manage addictions.

Individuals caught with even a small amount of an illegal substance may face heavy fines, arrest, deportation, and/or incarceration; as guests in the United States,

International Students are subject to the local laws and punishments. NWACC is not responsible for legal counsel for an international student accused of a crime. Any participants caught with illegal substances will be subject to program dismissal and termination.

Food-Related Issues

Safety

Food is an important aspect of every culture, and what is described as “good food” is defined differently by different cultures. You may find that a typical meal is small or large by American standards or uses ingredients that you have never eaten. In the United States, food and drink are safe to consume. When you arrive in North America, talk with your program coordinator, your host family, or local students about food quality and what precautions, if any, need to be taken. The following tips will help you stay healthy when eating or drinking:

- Avoid uncooked meat.
- Never leave drinks unattended.
- Avoid products made from unpasteurized milk.

Special Dietary Needs

Participants who are vegetarian or who have special dietary needs should know that not all locations in America can accommodate their needs. If you have any dietary concerns, talk with the International Programs Director or with a physician. Please note: If you are staying with a host family, they are not required to make special meals tailored to your needs.

Eating Disorders

Participants who currently have or who have had an eating disorder may find studying in the United States particularly challenging. Before departure, it is important to not only talk with your physician, but also with the International Programs Director, who can help you find support networks once you arrive.

Road Safety

Driving accidents are one of the leading causes of death in the United States. Because road conditions and driving laws vary by country, international students must take extreme caution in operation a motorized vehicle. Riding or traveling with others who are not familiar with local road conditions or rules is

discouraged. For more information:

Visit the Association for Safe International Road Travel website

(<http://www.asirt.org>)

The U.S. Department of State's website on road

safety. (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html>).

Arkansas also has a website to assist with driving conditions on a day by day basis. (<https://www.idrivearkansas.com/>)

Basic road safety tips include:

- Know your route, destination, and current state of repair.
- Avoid traveling at night or in bad weather.
- Do not text and/or talk on the phone while operation a motor vehicle.
- Do not hitch rides or travel with strangers.

General Safety Tips

Regardless of where you are in the world, you should always exercise safety precautions to protect yourself from theft, harassment, and assault. You will undoubtedly stand out as an International visitor which can make you more vulnerable, but you can be proactive to ensure your own safety. The following tips can help you to stay safe overseas:

- Learn about your host country and city before leaving home and talk with your host family and/or program coordinator upon arrival. What safety concerns are specific to this location?
- Avoid traveling alone, especially at night and in unfamiliar locations, but also avoid drawing attention to yourself.
- Do not flaunt your money, camera, cell phone, et cetera. Use some protection to keep your money and passport hidden under your clothing or in your bag. You may wish to keep a "decoy" wallet or purse with a small amount of cash that can appease a would-be robber demanding your money. Keep valuables locked up when you are not using them.

- Remember that even a small amount of alcohol can impair your judgment.
- Use common sense, be aware of your surroundings, and avoid confrontations.
- Avoid areas that appear to be unsafe.
- Install the “NWACC LiveSafe” App on your smart phone.
- Observe American culture and try to assimilate.
- **Most importantly**, do not get too comfortable in your new setting. Do not assume that once you know your way around, you will be completely safe.

Cultural Problems

Some problems arise due to cultural misunderstandings. Before leaving home, read and study as much about the North American culture and customs. (The next section of this handbook provides more information related to culture.) Listed below are things to avoid while staying in America:

- Avoid discussions of politics, religion, et cetera., with people you do not know well.
- Avoid arguments or discussions of controversial subjects with individuals who have been drinking.

Emergency Information

NorthWest Arkansas Community College’s application asked for emergency contact and demographic info. It is important that this information be constantly updated with any changes in your myNWACCconnection portal. [NWACC Emergency Procedures](#)

Emergency Protocol

Carry emergency contacts (cell phones and college contacts) with you at all times in case an emergency develops when away from the group. Should an emergency arise, contact the local officials (e.g. police, fire department, hospital, et cetera..). Your first responsibility is to remove yourself from harm’s way and then establish contact public services and NWACC officials. In the event of natural disasters or other catastrophic emergency, be aware of closest locations of US Consulates, Red Cross, or local police, hospital, and related emergency facilities. Phone home to let

family and friends know you are OK, but avoid talking to the media or spreading rumors if you do not have all of the information.

Instead let college staff manage media and college communications and worry about keeping yourself and those around you safe and calm.

Department of Public Safety

Every culture views the Police Department differently. It is important to know that the Department of Public Safety is here to protect and serve each NWACC student and employee. They are our allies and if you need assistance then please contact them at 479-619-4229. In the case of an emergency then please dial 911.
[DPS Main Page](#)

NWACC LiveSafe APP

Northwest Arkansas Community College is a participant in the "LifeSafe" App available on both iPhone and Android. Please sign up for this free service upon arrival. It will notify you dangerous storms, situations on campus, and misc. other information that all students need to know.



BC Alert

Benton County (where NWACC is located) has an emergency notification system called BC Alert. It is recommended for International students to sign up for this service so they receive text/email notifications about weather, emergencies, and need-to-know public news. You may find more information [HERE](#).



III. Culture

Culture: What is it?

Culture is an abstract concept that cannot be fully explained in one sentence. Some people make a distinction between “culture” and “Culture.” The first, little “c” culture, encompasses the beliefs, behaviors, and values that influence a particular group of people and are passed from generation to generation. This includes daily habits and routines, such as how people greet each other, what one eats, what one wears, et cetera. The second, big “C” culture is the refinement of those daily habits and routines. French crêpes, the Great Wall of China, Shakespeare, Bob Dylan, and *día de los muertos* are all examples of big “C” culture.

Before coming to the United States, read about the culture here. Remember to pay attention to little “c” culture as well as big “C” culture. The more you know, the less likely it will be that you commit a cultural mistake. Some cultural aspects that you might want to research include:

- How do people greet each other?
- What time are meals eaten? What is the biggest meal of the day?
- What is proper etiquette when eating with a group of people?
- What subjects are considered taboo to talk about?
- How should you dress?
- How are gender roles different from your home country?

Fitting In

Acceptable social behavior will vary from country to country, but there are some ideas that are universal. Below are a few things to keep in mind that will help you fit into the local culture: In any case, you should always be polite, respectful, and friendly.

- Humor is expressed very differently around the world. Americans tend to use a lot of sarcasm and slapstick humor, which may not translate well into another culture. It is common to feel offended at times. However, most Americans do not mean to offend.
- Observe how closely people stand and sit next to each other and the amount of physical contact they use. Americans tend to prefer a lot of personal space, but in other cultures, two people conversing stand only

inches apart. Likewise, some cultures find it odd that Americans hug each other, while Americans think it is awkward to kiss friends on the cheek.

- Some cultures may consider personal questions to be rude. It may also be rude in some cultures to talk too much about yourself. Americans are split, some ask personal questions/talk about themselves while others don't.
- Certain subjects, such as religion and politics, are considered taboo in many cultures and this can be true for North America as well. Conversations around these subjects may lead to heated debate and tense situations, so use caution if an American try to engage you in debate.

Stages of Cultural Adjustment

You will probably be excited about everything when you first arrive in your host country. However, that excitement may wane after a few days or weeks. When people immerse themselves in a new culture, they generally experience different stages of cultural adjustment. Listed below are the different stages with a description of each one. Not everyone experiences every stage of adjustment, and for some people certain stages may be repeated.

- **Honeymoon:** Almost everyone experiences this stage when they study in North America. Immediately upon arrival, you are curious and enthusiastic about everything in the new culture: the food, the buildings, the language, the way people dress, et cetera. You are settling into your new living arrangements, getting to know new people, and exploring your new city.
- **Engaging Culture:** As you become more involved in the host culture, you start to notice the differences between this culture and your home culture. You may find yourself missing the conveniences of home and wondering, "Why do they do things this way?" You may also feel more tired and have frequent headaches during this stage.
- **Culture Shock:** Many people, though not all, experience culture shock while in North America. This is the lowest point of cultural adjustment, during which you may feel that you hate being in the host country and want to return home. Culture shock can manifest itself in a number of ways, including: sadness, homesickness, loneliness, sleeping too much or too little, anger,

irritability, resentment, withdrawal or a sense of helplessness. See “Coping Strategies” below for suggestions on how to deal with this.

- **Adjustment – Crisis – Frustration – Adjustment (cyclical):** While adjusting to the new culture, a crisis may occur that causes you to revert back to feelings of frustration with the new culture. In this stage, a crisis can be something as minor as not understanding a question. Though you probably will not reach the same low as you did while experiencing culture shock, this stage may occur more than once.
- **Integration:** In this stage, you become more and more integrated into the host culture. You feel more comfortable and at ease in your new surroundings, and begin to view the host culture through the eyes of the locals. You are even able to laugh at yourself when you make a mistake. As your time winds down in North America, you realize how much you will miss when you return home.
- **Re-entry and Reverse Culture Shock:** For some people, reverse culture shock is the most difficult part of studying North America. While you are excited to be with your family and friends, you may be frustrated that no one is interested in hearing your stories or seeing your photos. You might miss the routine that you developed abroad and your notion of “home” may have changed. The next section of this handbook gives advice on how to deal with reverse culture shock.

Coping Strategies

Being far from home and immersed in a new culture can be stressful, even for people who have experience traveling abroad. When you are in a low mood, it may be more tempting to make poor decisions in an effort to feel better. Listed below are examples of poor coping strategies, as well as strategies that are more positive. Participants are encouraged to write their own list of coping strategies that have worked for them during periods of transition and stress and to have it on hand in case it is needed while in America.

Poor Coping Strategies

- Avoiding others
- Staying in your room or apartment all day

- Eating excessively or skipping meals
- Turning to alcohol or drugs
- Escaping into sexual relationships

Better Coping Strategies

- Visit fellow students
- Find a local person with whom you can talk
- Practice your faith through prayer, meditation, reading, et cetera.
- Write letters or emails to family and friends
- Take a walk or otherwise spend time outside
- Meet with the program coordinator to talk about stress

Counseling for Students

If at any time college life or personal life become too much, we highly recommend for students to visit the Counseling Department of NWACC. This is a free service to students and is confidential. Coming to a new country, learning a new language, making new friends, paying bills, et cetera... can be a lot and we are here for you. Please do not feel ashamed to contact us. Your success is our success! If you are interested then please click [HERE](#) for more info.

Multicultural Students

Future students should research America before they visit in order to understand the cultural views of race and ethnicity. Students should also consider the impact of being far from their support network of family and friends. If you have any questions about what to expect in the United States, talk with the International Programs Center.

Some websites that may be useful for multicultural students include:

- http://www.internationalstudentguidetotheusa.com/articles/c_american_culture.htm
- NAFA: http://www.nafsa.org/Explore_International_Education/

Disabilities & Culture

Students should know that disabilities are culturally defined. Some cultures do not recognize certain disabilities, while in other cultures persons with disabilities are not necessarily treated with respect and dignity. Not all, but most disabilities, whether they be physical or mental, are understood and accepted in America. Others have discovered that the way of life in certain countries helps alleviate symptoms associated with the disability. Studying abroad is a challenge regardless of where a student goes, but through the experience participants learn more about themselves and their abilities.

Two websites that students may find helpful are:

- Mobility International USA: www.miusa.org
- World Institute on Disability: <https://wid.org/programs/international/>

Gender Culture

Gender norms and roles in the United States have become less defined and tend to be more fluid. The way that people are expected to interact with members of the same or opposite sex and perceptions of masculinity and femininity are culturally defined. Many cultures view gender norms and roles differently than the United States, learn about the cultural views to know what may be expected of you.

In the United States women and men should be treated equally and both sexes should be treated respectfully. Whistling, yelling, certain comments, and persistence are not considered compliments. This type of behavior is considered disrespectful and is not accepted.

LGBTQ & Culture

Cultures view sexual orientation and gender identity in many different ways. The United States has a significant LGBT population which ranges from being very open and transparent about their sexual orientation and gender identity to discrete and private. The federal government has extended marriage rights to same-sex couples. However, different areas across the United States are more supportive while some continue to be more discriminatory.

At NorthWest Arkansas Community College discrimination is not tolerated. It is important that the college provides a safe campus community for everyone.

Helpful Terminology:

- **Gender Identity:** The sense of “being” male or “being” female. For some people, gender identity is in accord with physical anatomy. For transgender people, gender identity may differ from physical anatomy or expected social roles. It is important to note that gender identity, biological sex, and sexual orientation are not necessarily linked.
- **Sexual Orientation:** The inclination or capacity to develop intimate emotional and sexual relationships with people of the same sex, the other sex, or either sex. One’s sexual orientation therefore may be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual. Orientation is not dependent on physical experience, but rather on a person’s feelings and attractions.

Resources:

- NWA Center for Equality
179 N. Church Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703
888-391-9222
- NAFSA: International Educators Association’s Rainbow Special Interest Group:
www.indiana.edu/-overseas/lesbigay/index.html
- Amnesty International: www.ai-lgbt.org or www.aiusa.org/outfront

- Lambda Legal
www.lambdalegal.org

IV. Being a Student at NWACC

Enrolling/Taking Courses

At NorthWest Arkansas Community College, you are expected to meet with an academic advisor before each enrollment session. You cannot enroll without meeting with them first. It is strongly advised to schedule an advising appointment as early as you can. [Schedule an Advising Appointment Here](#)

International Students are required to take 12 hours of coursework per semester in Fall and Spring semesters. 9 hours must be live in each of those semesters. You are allowed to take online/hybrid courses, but they cannot amass to more than 6 credit hours in any given semester. Summer is considered vacation for students and international students are allowed to stay inside of the United States and not take any courses during this time. However, International Students can take courses if they wish.

Incomplete grades known as "I" on the transcript do not count towards your full-time enrollment. You must finish all courses within the given semester.

Please Note: If an F-1 or J-1 student starts during the Summer semester and had no enrollment in the prior spring then they are required to take a full-time enrollment course load to meet SEVP guidelines. At NWACC, that is 12 credit hours with 9 hours being live in-person.

It is strongly recommended for international students here on a student visa to take 15 credit hours in Fall and Spring semester. This gives you room to drop a course if you need to. If you only enroll in 12 credit hours and you are doing poorly in a course then you must complete the course regardless or you will be out of status.

Dropping Classes/Status

If you are an F-1 or J-1 Student then we highly recommend you meet with an International Programs Center employee before dropping any coursework. No matter the reason, if you drop below 12 hours of enrollment at any time then your I-20 will be Terminated and you must leave the country within 30 days.

The most common mistake is when International Students fail to pay, sign up for a payment plan, or miss the first 10 days of course. If any of these three occur then you will be dropped from the course and reduce your enrollment. If you drop below the minimum enrollment based on status then you will be Terminated.

It is advisable to enroll in 15 credit hours so you have the flexibility to drop a course if you need to unless it is your first semester. As long as you are in 12 credit hours with 9 hours being live in-person then you are within your required status.

Reduced Enrollment

International students are expected to enroll in their required credits each semester. However, if need arises to take less credits than required then International students are expected to meet with the International Program Center to determine if they are eligible for reduced enrollment prior to the semester starting. SEVP and the Department of Homeland security does allow for reduced enrollment in specific situations. All requests require supporting documentation to be approved.

Possible reason(s) for reduction:

- Initial trouble with the English language
- Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
- Improper course placement by NWACC officials
- Medical Condition or Illness (Requires a Physicians Support)

Please contact internationalprograms@nwacc.edu to inquire.

English as a Second Language

The English language can be difficult to learn and even more challenging while taking college coursework. The required "Standardized Testing" done by all International Students will let NWACC know of your current levels in multiple categories, one of those being English. If it is determined that you need assistance in strengthening your English proficiency then you will take courses with ENGC ([English College and Career](#)). You may find additional resources [HERE](#) during your transition to the United States.

Tutoring

NWACC offers free Tutoring to any and all who want it. Tutoring Center hours are located [HERE](#). If you would like assistance in writing papers then please visit this [LINK](#).

Honors Program

International Students who enroll in at least one honors course and have the minimum GPA of 3.5 and an ACT score of 25 or higher (or its placement test score equivalent) are eligible to be in the Honors Program. You may find more info [HERE](#).

NWACC Library

All students are encouraged to take advantage of the NorthWest Arkansas Community College Library. This is a free service to any students currently enrolled. You may reserve books, research data, study rooms, education equipment, et cetera... You may find more info [HERE](#).

NWACC Bookstore

International Students may buy their books on-campus. There are other locations though. Each person is free to find the required textbooks wherever they wish, but this can be difficult when you first arrive in Northwest Arkansas and are still settling in. NWACC has provided a bookstore in the first floor of the Becky Paneitz Student Center. You may also shop for textbooks online [HERE](#).

Computer Labs

NWACC has stationed computer labs all over campus for your convenience. You will log into these computers the same way you log into your email. These computers are on a public server and should be treated as such. Do not submit any personal or financial information into them nor should you use them for means other than collegiate study.

Technology Helpdesk

Anytime you are having technological issues then you need to contact the Technology Helpdesk at 479-619-4376 or [via online form](#). Do not contact the International Programs Center because we will not be able to assist. [Helpdesk Homepage](#).

Disability Resource Center

The DRC is state-funded and are here to help all NWACC students. They cannot make accommodations at the last moment though. You must contact them ahead of time if you need assistance on-campus. You may find more information [HERE](#).

Students who have Testing issues may also contact [Testing Services](#) to request private testing environments if the need arises.

Transfer & Transition Services

NorthWest Arkansas Community College strongly recommends that you finish your Associates Degree **prior** to transferring for a Bachelors. It is hard to predict what life throws at us and it is good to have one degree completed before continuing on with your next journey.

When students have reached 24 credit hours then they are eligible to transfer to any college of their choosing. Transfer & Transition Services is here to help facilitate and ease that process. You may access more information by click [HERE](#).

Employment while being a Student First

F-1 students are not allowed to work more than 20 hours in a given week. If you work more than 20 hours then you are out of status and will be Terminated. This employment must be on-campus or at an NWACC affiliated site.

(e.g. NWACC Bookstore on-campus qualifies, but Chick-Fil-A in Rogers does not)

It is highly recommend that F-1 students apply for positions thru the [NWACC Human Resource site](#) and keep their DSO/PDSO informed.

J-1 students are eligible to work part-time or full-time in a position/career in correlation with their declared Degree/Major of Study at a max of 18 months or until the end of their DS-2019 (whichever is less. An application for Academic Training (AT) is required in advance.

Please Note: If it is Summer and you completed Spring enrollment then you are free to work over 20 hours as long as you are not enrolled in courses and it is on NWACC Campus.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is the process of interning/working at a company in exchange for educational on-hand experience which will count as credit hours towards your degree. This process must be initiated with the International Programs Center by the DSO or PDSO before the semester starts. Do not start working without having your CPT approved by the P/DSO and a new I-20 signed or you will be Terminated. Please inquire at InternationalPrograms@nwacc.edu.

Pre-Completion Operational Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is for F-1 International Students which allows those have attended for 1 year to get on-the-job experience part-time in the career field of their degree. This process must be initiated with the International Programs Center with DSO or PDSO no earlier than 9 months after arrival. Do not start working without having your OPT

approved by the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services or you will be Terminated. Any Pre-Completion OPT will use some of your Post-Completion OPT allotment. Please inquire at InternationalPrograms@nwacc.edu.

Academic Training (AT)

AT is the process of interning/working at a company in exchange for educational on-hand experience which will count in conjunction with a J-1 Visa. This process must be initiated with the International Programs Center with the RO or ARO before the employment begins. Do not start working without having your AT approved by the ARO/RO and an Authorization letter or you will be Terminated. Please inquire at InternationalPrograms@nwacc.edu.

Holds

Anytime you cannot enroll in courses and you are a current student then you have a hold on your account. Holds are placed for a number of reasons, but they generally come when you have something outstanding that must be addressed before NWACC can allow future enrollment. This can be common and should not alarm you. Do not feel ashamed if you get a hold because all students get them at some point of time. To remove holds: You will be emailed as soon as one goes on and it will provide you with detailed instructions on how to remove it. You must complete the requirements before attempting to enroll in new courses or obtaining a transcript.

Transcripts

Transcripts are issued to students by the Records department in the Becky Paneitz Student Center on the 2nd floor once they have completed at least 1 credit hour. You must have no holds and a zero balance in order to obtain a transcript. [Request a Transcript](#)

Student Organizations

It is highly recommended for International Students to join student organizations. This creates a bond between current and new students which helps with the transition phase and Culture Shock. Furthermore, it provides lifelong friendships and experience. Some students decide to be an officer which provides experience that can go on your resumé. Please inquire what organizations are available at [HERE](#).

Fitness Center

NWACC offers a free fitness center to all currently enrolled students. It is located in the west wing of Burns Hall. Exercising on-campus is at your own will. We strongly recommend you receive medical approval from a physician before starting any workout routine. NWACC will not be liable for any injuries self-inflicted on the premises. More info can be found [HERE](#).

Study Abroad

The International & Student Life Center also offers Study Abroad opportunities to all International Students. This entails a week, two week, or month trip overseas to any of our approved programs. International Students are eligible to go and only need to attend at least 12 credit hours in one semester prior. Each student interested must validate whether a Visa would be required to enter the country of destination. Please inquire more at StudyAbroad@nwacc.edu or visit this [LINK](#).

Treasurer's Office

Paying for Courses

All students are expected to read the Treasurer's Office "[Financial Responsibility](#)" and pay for the semester in full by the **last Monday before** classes are scheduled to begin. If you are not paid in full by this time or enrolled in a payment plan via TouchNet then you will be dropped from your courses the next day (Tuesday). If this occurs then you must come in to see the International Programs Center staff **IMMEDIATELY** so we can assist and get you back in your courses. This could put you out of status and cause you to be Terminated.

Refunds

Refunds are only given out when there is a credit on a student's account as a result of an overpayment. You will get a 100% refund on courses dropped before class begins. However, you may not get a refund if you drop after the start of classes. Each student can determine a refund amount, if any, by click [HERE](#). Please note: Any Financial Appeals need to go to the Treasurer's Office and not the International Programs Center.

Taxes

Students that worked and wish to file income taxes must submit a copy of their 1098-t. This is a document validating the amount of tuition and fee charges, scholarships, third party awards, and/or waivers one received during the calendar year. More detailed info on 1098-t's by the Treasurer's Office is found [HERE](#).

Student Conduct

All NWACC students must adhere to the local, state, and federal laws while on-campus. Furthermore, NWACC is a smoke-free, drug-free, and alcohol-free campus. These activities are not permitted and could lead to disciplinary action. This could affect your status and could cause Termination. Please read more on the Student Conduct Policy and Title IX [HERE](#).

V. Student Completion!!!

Post-Completion Operational Practical Training (OPT)

OPT is for F-1 International Students which allows those who just recently graduated to stay in the United States for one year to get on-the-job experience in the career field of their degree. This process must be initiated with the International Programs Center with the DSO or PDSO no earlier than 60 days before graduation. Any Pre-Completion OPT may have used some of your Post-Completion OPT. Do not start working without having your OPT approved United States Citizenship and Immigration Services or you will be Terminated. Please inquire at InternationalPrograms@nwacc.edu.

Career Services Center

CSC was created to help all students land that first job. They can assist with Job Searches, Resumés, Cover Letters, Interview skills, et cetera... It is strongly recommended that you work with them if you plan to utilize OPT after you graduate. The best time to start searching for a job is at the start of your final semester with NWACC. You can find more info [HERE](#).

Graduation

Students are eligible to graduate once they have fulfilled all of the academic requirements of their chosen degree path with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher (out of a 4.0 grading scale). Students will need to apply for graduation in the semester they wish prior to the deadline. To file an application for graduation click [HERE](#) or for more general information click [HERE](#). Regalia can be purchased and obtained at the NWACC Bookstore in the Becky Paneitz Student Center.

Commencement

Commencement at NWACC is held once each year after the Spring semester. Students are allowed to graduate during any semester, but can only walk after the Spring. The commencement ceremony is generally held the first Saturday after the

Spring semester ends. Students who applied before the deadline to graduate and meet the preliminary graduation requirements will receive an information packet in April with details of the commencement ceremony. It is important to keep your address up to date so the information arrives at the proper location. More information about Commencement can be found [HERE](#).

Re-Adjustment & Reverse Culture Shock

While some International Students are able to seamlessly reintegrate into their home culture, others find it especially challenging. You may initially feel thrilled to be home with family and friends, but that excitement can give way to feelings of disappointment and frustration when they lose interest in hearing every story that goes along with the hundreds of photos that you took. You may also miss various things from your life in America, like certain foods, television shows, people, or stores.

Another problem is that students often return home with the expectation that nothing has changed while they were gone. However, regardless of how long a student is in America, it is inevitable that he or she will miss out on certain events, like weddings, birthdays, blockbuster movies, or big news stories.

For many students who experience reverse culture shock, it generally does not last as long as the initial culture shock you felt while in America. The following suggestions will help you to cope with your reverse culture shock, as well as continuing your international experience.

- Maintain contact with the friends that you made in America.
- Hang out with other Students who studied in America.
- Share your experience with students who are about to come to America.
- Submit a story about your experience to a local newspaper.
- Give a presentation at a local elementary school about the United States.
- Teach English at home or in other countries once you have finished school.
- If your study abroad program focused on language-learning, you can:
 - Check out books and magazines in that language from the library.
 - Watch videos, stream news shows online, and listen to music in that language.
 - Join a local conversation table.

NWACC Alumni Association

Stay connected with NWACC after you graduate and become a member of the NWACC Alumni Association. Being a member is FREE and allows you to stay connected no matter where your degree takes you. There are many benefits of being a member such as local  discounts and access to NWACC facilities. You can find more information online at this [LINK](#).

#NWACCInternational

NWACC's International Programs Center has two social media sites that encourages their participants to post pictures, start conversations, et cetera while studying at NWACC. You can find these sites by clicking the below Facebook and Twitter logos or copying and pasting the URL into your web browser. Please be aware that all posts will be reviewed by the International Programs Center before they go public to maintain student and college integrity. By posting on our social media sites, you are agreeing to allow NWACC to utilize each post for marketing, recruiting, and/or development strategies in the future. If you wish to have a photo or post removed then contact InternationalPrograms@nwacc.edu.



www.facebook.com/nwaccisao



www.twitter.com/nwaccisao