Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The Brooklyn College International Students Guide provides a general explanation of immigration, government, and college policies as well as information on living in New York City.

Over the next few years, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)—the agency within the Department of Justice of the federal government that controls the borders of the United States and provides services to non-U.S. citizens who are in the country legally—is expected to change its regulations and procedures substantially. The following areas are likely to be affected:

- Fees paid to the INS by students when they begin or change programs, schools, or status.
- Required health and accident insurance for students and their dependents.
- Limitations on the authorization of off-campus employment.
- Limitations on the grace period following the completion of a program of study.
- Electronic reporting of student status to the INS.

For the most up-to-date information, contact the Brooklyn College Office of International Student Services, 1105B James Hall, (718) 951-4477,

Do not rely solely on this document for accurate and current information.

Throughout your studies at Brooklyn College, the International Students Program will:

- Provide vital immigration guidance.
- Keep you up to date on important legal information.
- Advise you regarding your personal, cultural, and other concerns.
- Advocate for you.
- Centralize any information you need to know.
Important Documents and Terminology

International students are responsible for understanding the role of various documents and the meaning of frequently used terms that apply to their status in the United States, as described below. These documents and terms are used throughout this guide, so take time to familiarize yourself with them.

B-2 visa (prospective student)

Students who are overseas and are not certain which school they would like to attend should advise a U.S. consular official that they wish to obtain a B-2 temporary visitor visa, with "prospective student" indicated on it. The consulate will issue the B-2 prospective student visa and note the intent to change to student status in the student’s passport. If students obtain a B-2 visa without telling the consulate of their intent to study in the United States, they will have difficulty applying for a change to student status after their arrival.

B-2 visa (temporary visitor for pleasure)

Students who entered the United States on a B-2 visa (temporary visitor for pleasure) who wish to study at Brooklyn College often experience difficulties in changing to F-1 students status and are forced to return to their home countries to apply for a student visa before reentering the United States on student status.

Certificate of Finance

Students who (1) have been admitted to Brooklyn College, (2) have documented their ability to finance their education, and (3) need a student visa to enter the United States to study will receive a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or IAP-66). This document certifies eligibility for F-1 or J-1 status. It must be used when applying for an entry visa and shown to an immigration official at the time of entry into the United States in order to enter in student status.

Duration of Status (D/S)

Duration of Status (D/S) is the length of time for which international students are allowed to remain in the United States as long as they are pursuing full-time studies and are complying with all immigration regulations. D/S is not for an indefinite period of time; it is based on the completion date on the I-20 or DS2019, plus a sixty-day grace period for F-1 students and a thirty-day grace period for J-1 students. D/S may be extended by applying for a program extension at least thirty days prior to the expiration of the current I-20 or sixty days for the IAP-66.

Employment Authorization Document

The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is a photo ID card issued by the INS to nonimmigrants who are authorized to be employed. It is evidence of permission for F-1 students to engage in optional practical training and off-campus employment based on economic hardship and for J-2 dependents to engage in any type of employment on or off campus. (See the chapter "Employment.") Students apply for the EAD with form I-765.

Entry visa
A visa is a stamp in one’s passport issued by a U.S. consulate abroad that authorizes students to apply for admission into the United States at the port of entry. It cannot be obtained in the United States. A visa stamp specifies the type of immigration status students will hold (e.g., F-1, J-1), the date until which they may enter the United States, and the number of times they may enter before they must apply for a new visa (one, two, or “multiple” [i.e., any number] until the expiration date). The length of validity of each type of visa is determined by an agreement between a student’s home country and the U.S. government and is not necessarily tied to the length of his or her program of study.

All international students (except Canadian nationals) requesting F or J immigration status must have a valid visa stamp at the time of entry into the United States.

Nonimmigrant students who intend to study full time are issued either an F-1 student visa or a J-1 exchange visitor visa. A student’s accompanying dependents who do not intend to study full time receive an F-2 or J-2 visa.

Usually, an application for a new visa must be made in person at a U.S. consulate or embassy outside the United States. The validity period of the visa stamp does not determine the length of time a student may remain in the United States; length of stay is determined by the date on the I-94.

It is possible to be in the United States legally with an expired visa. Once a student leaves the United States, however, he or she will need a valid visa to reenter. There are a few exceptions to this regulation. (See the chapter “Travel Regulations.”)

**F-1 student**

An F-1 student is a nonimmigrant admitted to the United States to pursue a full course of study. An F-1 student’s education is usually financed by personal, family, or institutional funds.

**I-20**

The I-20 is the Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 student status. On this form, Brooklyn College certifies to the U.S. government that a student has met all admissions requirements, has been accepted to the college for a full course of study, is eligible for a student visa, and has the financial resources to study and live in the United States without working illegally.

The I-20 is a record of F-1 status throughout a student’s stay in the United States and must be presented to an immigration official upon entry into the country. F-1 students must carry either an initial or recertified I-20 (and financial documentation) each time they leave the United States if they intend to return to continue their studies or practical training.

The I-20 is a two-page, three-sided form: Pages 1 and 3 are electronically transmitted to the Department of Homeland Security. All international student must retain an original copy of the Form I-20. Students are required to keep all I-20s issued to them throughout their student status (including new I-20s that reflect updated information, such as a transfer to or from a college) no matter how long they remain in the United States or how many times they travel abroad.

Brooklyn College urges students to make copies of both sides of the I-20 and store them separately. Students who lose or were not issued an I-20 may obtain a replacement form from the International Students Program. (See the section “Obtaining the I-20.”)

**I-94**

Form I-94 is a record of a student’s nonimmigrant status and permission to stay in the United States. This small white card is stapled into the student’s passport by an immigration officer.
upon entry into the United States. It shows the immigration status, the date and port of arrival, and the date until which the student has permission to stay. The I-94s of those in F or J status will usually be marked with D/S, which refers to the completion date on their Certificate of Eligibility (the I-20 or DS2019).

The I-94 is also called the Arrival/Departure form because students receive a new I-94 each time they enter the United States and surrender it each time they leave. Students retain this form only when taking short trips to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. (See the chapter “Travel Regulations.”)

Brooklyn College urges students to make copies of both sides of the I-94 and store them separately.

I-538
The I-538 is the Certification by Designated School Official. It is used to inform the INS of a student’s application for F-1 program extensions, optional practical training, curricular practical training, and work permission stemming from unforeseen economic hardship.

I-539
The I-539 is the application for a change of status within the United States (e.g., from B-2 prospective student to F-1 student).
It is also used to regain legal F-1 status in certain situations—an application known as reinstatement.

I-765
The I-765 is the application for the Employment Authorization Document.

DS2019
The DS2019 is the Certificate of Eligibility for nonimmigrant J-1 exchange visitor status. This document is issued by the program sponsor (the college, government agency, or other organization sponsoring the visit) for presentation both at a U.S. consulate abroad to obtain a J-1 exchange visitor visa and to a U.S. immigration official upon entry into the United States. The completion date on the DS2019 must not expire before notification is made of an extension of the program of studies to the United States Information Agency (USIA), the government agency that regulates J exchange visitor activities.

The DS2019 is a four-page form: The pink page, when properly recertified by an International Students Program adviser, serves (for the period of its validity) as a reentry document after short trips abroad and is retained by the student; the other pages are kept by the program sponsor and the U.S. Department of State, the federal agency that regulates the Exchange Visitor Program.

Brooklyn College urges students to make copies of both sides of any IAP-66 stamped by the INS and store them separately.

Immigration status
Nonimmigrants who enter the United States are classified by the INS according to the purpose of their stay. This classification, known as "immigration status," is noted on the I-94. Students are in either F-1 or J-1 status and their dependents are in F-2 or J-2 status.

Students’ immigration status is generally the same as their entry visa classification. When students arrive in the United States, a customs or immigration official retains the arrival portion of
the I-94, notes their immigration status on the departure portion, and staples the I-94 departure card into their passport. The I-94 departure card is a nonimmigrant’s “temporary resident permit” to remain in the United States. Students with an F-1 entry visa usually have “F-1” written on the I-94 card by an immigration official when entering the United States. Unlike the entry visa, immigration status may be changed in the United States.

F-1 and J-1 immigration status

There are several important differences between F-1 and J-1 immigration status, as described below.

Source of funding. As opposed to those in F-1 status, students in J-1 exchange visitor status are supported by funding other than personal or family resources. Such funding may come from the U.S. government or the student’s home government, an international organization, or the college. Students who are supported by personal or family funds are ineligible for J-1 status and must come to the United States to study in F-1 status.

Two-year home-country physical-presence requirement. J-1 students may be subject to the two-year home-country physical-presence requirement (Immigration and Nationality Act 212(e), as amended). Students subject to this requirement must return to their country of citizenship or permanent residence for two years following the completion of the exchange visitor program if (1) the stay is partially or entirely financed directly or indirectly by the U.S. government, the home government, or an international organization for the purpose of international exchange; or (2) the government of the student’s country of citizenship or permanent residence has filed with the U.S. Department of State a list of skills or knowledge considered to be in short supply in that country.

J-1 students who are subject to this requirement may not change to another immigration status—A (diplomat) and G (international organization employee) excepted—without first fulfilling the requirement. After fulfilling the requirement, they may apply for entry into the United States on an immigrant visa or on specialized work visas (H or L).

Under some circumstances, however, J-1 students may apply for a waiver, but it is difficult to obtain. The process must be initiated at least one year before the expiration of their permission to remain in the United States. The J-1 coordinator may provide information about the application process but may not assist with these applications. Students must notify the J-1 coordinator if they apply for a waiver and should understand that individuals who receive waivers then become ineligible for extensions of J status.

The J-2 dependents of J-1 students who are subject to the requirement are also subject.

There is no two-year home-country physical-presence requirement for F-1 students or their dependents.

Medical insurance. Students in J-1 status and their dependents are required to have comprehensive medical coverage in order to fulfill U.S. government regulations. Insurance other than that offered through the City University of New York (CUNY) may cost as much as $3,000 per year in excess of the usual living expenses.

Change of status

Nonimmigrants may change their status in the United States if they are in lawful status at the time of application. They must submit applications together with Form I-539 to the nearest Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrant Services (BCIS) office. If the BCIS approves the change of status, it will note the change on the I-94 card.
Changing status does not provide a visa. Individuals who have changed status in the United States and who leave the country must apply for a new visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad.

From J-2 to J-1. To apply for this change of status, bring the following to the J-1 coordinator:

- Letter of admission to Brooklyn College
- Evidence of financial support (e.g., sponsor letter)
- Passport
- Form I-94
- Letter written by the J-2 visa holder requesting a change to the J-1 category so that he or she may pursue full-time studies.

The J-2 visa holder will be asked to sign two documents:

- A statement of understanding regarding the two-year home-country physical-presence requirement, and
- A statement indicating that the original J-1 spouse may not be allowed to change to J-2 to prolong his or her stay in the United States and that the original J-2 spouse may not be allowed to return to J-2 status to remain with his or her spouse after completing studies.

In addition, the J-2 visa holder must complete a Request for Form DS2019, indicating degree, source, and amount of financial support, and expected graduation date. He or she will then complete and sign the back of the white copy of the DS2019.

From J-1 to J-2. To apply for this change of status, bring the following to the J-1 coordinator:

- Passport
- Form DS2019
- Form I-94 of the J-1 visa holder
- Copy of marriage license

The J-1 visa holder should write a letter stating the reasons why he or she is applying for a change to J-2 status (e.g., to accompany a spouse while he or she completes studies in the United States).

Processing this change of status usually requires six to eight weeks. The J-1 coordinator will notify the student when the documents have been returned from the INS. Students who receive the documents directly from the INS should notify the J-1 coordinator.

J-1 student

J-1 students are nonimmigrants who have been selected to participate in the Exchange Visitor Program. Generally, they are financially sponsored by an educational institution in the United States or abroad, the U.S. or an international government, or a private agency in support of international educational exchange.

Nonimmigrant

A nonimmigrant is a person who is in the United States temporarily. Most nonimmigrants, including all F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents, must have an established residence abroad to which they intend to return.

Passport
A passport is a formal permit to travel abroad and return to the issuing country. With few exceptions, it is issued by one's country of citizenship. All individuals in F and J status, except Canadian citizens, are required to have a passport valid at least six months into the future at all times. Canadians must present valid passports only when entering the United States from outside the western hemisphere.

It is the student’s responsibility to renew a passport before it expires. Information is available from a student’s national consulate in New York City or embassy in Washington, D.C.

The International Students Program will provide any appropriate documents a student’s government may require.

Applying to Brooklyn College

Prospective students educated outside the United States are required to submit the documents listed below for the admission review process. All documents must indicate the student’s full name and be accompanied by official documentation to substantiate any name change (e.g., marriage certificate, court documentation, passport). They must be in the student’s native language with an original English translation sent from his or her previous university or institution to either Brooklyn College or the applicant in a sealed envelope.

Graduate students

Applicants for admission to a degree or advanced certificate program in the Division of Graduate Studies must have graduated with an acceptable baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and have completed an approved undergraduate program of study.

In most programs, a minimum grade point average of B in the undergraduate major and a minimum average of B- on the record as a whole is required. The international applicant’s undergraduate degree must be equivalent to an American baccalaureate degree; that is, it must encompass the required professional and liberal arts training required for that degree in the United States.

All applicants educated outside the United States should file their applications one month prior to the specified deadline. This will help facilitate the special process required for evaluating foreign documents. International students are not eligible for provisional or nondegree admission. Applicants for admission to the Division of Graduate Studies should apply to the Office of Graduate Admissions. A nonrefundable fee of $40 is payable when the application is filed. Credentials submitted with an application become the property of Brooklyn College and will not be returned to the applicant.

Applicants may apply to the Division of Graduate Studies either by completing a paper application or by filing an on-line application. Applicants who choose to file a paper application may obtain an admissions packet from the Office of Graduate Admissions by providing them with their mailing address. The complete admissions packet, including transcripts from undergraduate and any graduate institutions, letters of recommendation, TOEFL scores, and any other examination scores required by particular departments or programs, must be submitted by the specified deadline to the Office of Graduate Admissions, 1602 James Hall, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210. Any questions or concerns may be e-mailed to: adminqry@brooklyn.cuny.edu
Applicants who choose to apply on-line may do so at www.brooklyn.cuny.edu by clicking on “Admission.” Applicants who choose this option must arrange to have all supporting documents as described above submitted to the Office of Graduate Admissions, 1602 James Hall, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210.

The required materials for consideration include:

v -Graduate application form. Applicants may apply to only one graduate program at a time.

v -Application processing fee of US$40. Please send check or money order payable to Brooklyn College. Write your name and address on the front of the check. The application fee is not refundable.

v -Two letters of recommendation. Request a letter of recommendation from two individuals who are familiar with your academic background and who can write in support of your potential to do successful work at the graduate level.

v -Official transcripts or mark sheets from all universities and colleges attended. Request an official transcript from every university and college you have previously attended. Applicants who are accepted but who had not completed their bachelor’s degree at the time the application was submitted will need to submit a final transcript showing completion of their bachelor’s degree before they can register at Brooklyn College.

v -Certificate of Finance. Graduate program applicants holding or applying for a student visa (F-1) must submit a Certificate of Finance along with their application. This requirement applies whether you are a new student, a transfer student from another university in the United States, a student transferring to Brooklyn College from another CUNY campus, or a Brooklyn College student transferring from one program to another. The Certificate of Finance verifies that you have available the sum of $22,872 to meet your estimated expenses during the first year of study in the United States. The form must be completed fully and signed by the applicant and sponsor. A certified bank statement or other fiscal evidence of financial ability must be attached to this form.

v -Supplementary materials. Some graduate programs require supplementary materials. Please consult the graduate admissions application or contact the department of the program you are interested in for additional requirements. External examinations may include:

v -Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)
Educational Testing Service (ETS)
225 Phillips Boulevard
Ewing, New Jersey 08628
Telephone: (609) 771-7670; E-mail: gre-info@ets.org

v -Miller Analogies Test (MAT)
Teachers College, Columbia University
Center for Educational and Psychological Services
New York, New York 10027
Telephone: (212) 678-3262 or (800) 622-3231

v -Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST)
New York State Teacher Certification Examinations (NYSTCE)
National Evaluations Systems, Inc.
30 Gatehouse Road
P.O. Box 660
Amherst, Massachusetts 01004-9008
Telephone: (413) 256-2882 or (800) 309-5225
TOEFL. International applicants whose native language is not English or who were educated in a country where English is not an official language must take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and submit the results of that test with the application for admission. The minimum acceptable TOEFL score is 500 (or 173 in the computer-based version), but applicants should note that some programs require significantly higher TOEFL scores. Applications and further information regarding the TOEFL may be obtained from:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
Educational Testing Service (ETS)
P.O. Box 6151
Princeton, New Jersey 08541-6000
Telephone: (609) 771-7100; E-mail: toefl@ets.org

Undergraduate students

Applicants for admission to the Division of Undergraduate Studies may apply either by completing a paper application or by filing an on-line application on the CUNY Web site, www.applyto.uapc.cuny.edu. Students who wish to file a paper application should forward their complete mailing address to Office of Admissions, 1107 James Hall, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210, and we will mail an application form to them.

The following items must accompany the application:

- Application fee. There is a nonrefundable fee of US$40 for freshman applicants and US$50 for transfer applicants.
- A secondary school transcript and diploma/certificate. Postsecondary school transcripts must come directly from the issuing institution. In the event the student’s documents are unattainable, the student should submit a written request to UAPC to accept the hand-carried student copies. Two postal receipts at least a month apart should be submitted as proof of attempt to receive documents. The final decision on all documents submitted is at the discretion of the coordinator of international admissions at UAPC.
- TOEFL scores. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an examination required of all students interested in attending CUNY who are on temporary visas and whose native language is not English. Applicants should request that official scores be sent to UAPC. The minimum acceptable TOEFL score is 500 (or 173 in the computer-based version). If you need additional information concerning the TOEFL, contact the Office of Admissions Services, (212) 997-2869.

Guidelines for official translations of documents

All translations must be prepared using the same format as the original document. All information must be translated verbatim; no interpretation or evaluation of information should be included. The translation must be typed on agency or institution letterhead or stationery, signed by the translator, and include a signed statement from the translator attesting to his or her familiarity with the foreign language.

Translations completed by the following organizations are acceptable:

- The consulate or embassy of the country that issued the documents or organizations whose translations are verified by the consulate or embassy of that country.
- A translations service or agency.
v -An immigrant or refugee association.

Translations by the following are not acceptable:
  v -The student or members of the student’s family.
  v -An individual, unless he or she is affiliated with any of the organizations listed above.
  v -Faculty members from schools abroad.
  v -A notary public.

All translations will be reviewed and compared to the original documents. Brooklyn College reserves the right to reject any translations that do not follow the guidelines stated above.

### Admission to Brooklyn College

#### Estimate of expenses for the academic year

The academic year at Brooklyn College runs from September to June. Below are estimates of expenses students should expect to incur during that period.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Graduate Students</th>
<th>Undergraduate Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and fees</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>$8,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and school supplies, and living expenses (including medical and clothing)</td>
<td>10,872.20</td>
<td>8,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$22,872.20</td>
<td>$17,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimate of summer expenses</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
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#### Obtaining a student visa

Once students have been officially accepted to Brooklyn College in either F-1 or J-1 status, they must apply for a U.S. student visa.

Note: Canadian nationals do not need entry visas. Those who wish to enter the United States for purposes of studying should request F-1 status at the border and must present the Form I-20 to an INS inspector. Otherwise, they will be in B-2 tourist status and will be ineligible for the special privileges allowed those in student status until they have been in an immigration status appropriate for studying (B-2 tourist status does not qualify) for at least nine consecutive months. Canadians must also have an I-94 to confirm current F-1 or J-1 status.

#### Students outside the United States

F-1 student status for new students. To qualify for an entry visa, which specifies your status in the United States, you must bring your I-20, financial documents, valid passport (plus passports and financial documents for each dependent), and two passport-size (37 mm x 37 mm) photographs of each visa applicant over age sixteen to a U.S. consulate. If your family name is different from your dependents’ name, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship.

Original documents must accompany your application. Consular standards for visa eligibility may be considerably more rigorous than those for an I-20. The consular officer requires the same (and possibly additional) financial documentation you provided Brooklyn College. You will be required to show this documentation again at your port of entry in the United States.
You must complete Form OF-156 (Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form) and any supplementary forms required by the particular consulate. A consular officer may require evidence (in addition to the certification on your I-20) of English proficiency sufficient to pursue your proposed program of studies.

Applications must be made in person. Some consulates, however, permit applications to be made by mail, with interviews if needed. The length of visa validity, number of entries permitted, and application fee are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country’s policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students.

U.S. government regulations require you to attend the school that issues the Certificate of Eligibility you present when you enter the United States. Since you plan to enroll at Brooklyn College, use the college’s I-20. Students who entered the country with documents issued by another school may find it very difficult to transfer to Brooklyn College unless they have attended the other school full time for at least one academic session.

Individual procedures and the amount of time required to obtain a visa vary from country to country. The consular officer has the final word on your application; his or her judgment is not subject to review. If, for any reason, you encounter difficulties, contact the International Students Program.

F-1 student status for continuing or transferring students. The procedure for students who are moving from one program of study to another at Brooklyn College or transferring from another university to Brooklyn College to complete a degree or begin a new program depends on their circumstances.

Students with a valid F-1 entry visa in their passport do not need to go to a U.S. embassy or consulate, nor do they need to have the name of their previous school crossed off their visa page or have “Brooklyn College” written in their passport. However, they will need a new I-20, which reflects their new program of study at Brooklyn College. When they enter the United States with their valid Brooklyn College I-20, they should be prepared to present financial documentation.

1 Tuition and fees are set by the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York and are subject to change without notice.

Students with an expired F-1 entry visa bring their new I-20 to a U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain a new F-1 entry visa.

J-1 exchange status (student category) for new students. To qualify for an entry visa, which specifies your status in the United States, you must bring your IAP-66, financial documents, valid passport (plus passports and financial documents for each dependent), and two passport-size (37 mm x 37 mm) photographs of each visa applicant over age sixteen to a U.S. consulate.

If your family name is different from your dependents’ name, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship.

Original documents must accompany your application. Consular standards for visa eligibility may be considerably more rigorous than those for an IAP-66. The consular officer requires the same (and possibly additional) financial documentation you provided Brooklyn College. You will be required to show this documentation again at your port of entry in the United States.

You must complete Form OF-156 (Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form) and any supplementary forms required by the particular consulate. On occasion, a consular officer may require evidence (in addition to the certification on your DS2019) of English proficiency sufficient to pursue your proposed program of studies.
Applications must be made in person. Some consulates, however, permit applications to be made by mail, with interviews if needed. The length of visa validity, number of entries permitted, and application fee are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country’s policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students.

U.S. government regulations require you to attend the school that issues the visa certificate with which you enter the United States. Since you plan to enroll at Brooklyn College, use the college’s DS2019.

Individual procedures and the amount of time required to obtain a visa vary from country to country. The consular officer has the final word on your application; his or her judgment is not subject to review. If, for any reason, you encounter difficulties, contact the International Students Program.

J-1 exchange status (student category) for continuing or transferring students. The procedure for students who are moving from one program of study to another at Brooklyn College or transferring from another university to Brooklyn College to complete a degree or to begin a new program depends on their particular circumstances.

Students with a valid J-1 entry visa in their passport do not need to go to a U.S. embassy or consulate, nor do they need to have the name of their previous school crossed off their visa page or have “Brooklyn College” written in their passport. When they enter the United States with their passport and new IAP-66 from Brooklyn College, they should be prepared to present financial documentation.

Students with an expired J-1 visa in their passport or a J-1 visa for a category other than “student” must go to a U.S. embassy or consulate with their new IAP-66 to obtain a new J-1 entry visa.

Students already in the United States

F-1 student status for those not currently in F-1 status. Students who do not plan to leave the United States before beginning studies at Brooklyn College and are in an immigration status other than F-1 are required to change their status by application to the INS. Changing status in the United States is potentially problematic; students should consult the International Students Program for more information.

F-1 student status for transferring students in F-1 status at another institution. F-1 students who were previously enrolled at a U.S. institution and plan to enroll at Brooklyn College must notify the INS either by entering the United States with Brooklyn College’s I-20 or, if they do not plan to leave the United States before attending Brooklyn College, by having the International Students Program make notification of the transfer within the first forty-five days of enrolling at the college. Failure to comply with this regulation has serious consequences: Students who overstay their authorized period for even one day may have their entry visa voided and may be barred from entering the United States for a five-year period. Students should come to the International Students Program within two weeks following registration to complete the procedure.

Students who are not planning to leave the United States should comply with the following procedure:

- Notify the designated official at your school of your intention to transfer.
- Sign and date pages 1 and 3 of Brooklyn College’s I-20.
- Register at Brooklyn College in the first available term after leaving the previous school or the first term after a summer period. No semester off, except for the summer, is permitted by the INS to transferring students.
Within fifteen days of your registration at Brooklyn College, come to the International Students Program with your passport, I-94, I-20 from Brooklyn College, I-20 from your previous school, proof of registration at Brooklyn College, and evidence of full-time status at your previous school. This may be your previous I-20 (if it has been recertified in the last term of your studies and establishes full-time status), a letter from your international student adviser, or a transcript.

The International Students Program will approve the transfer, if it is permissible, and notify the INS that the transfer has been completed by sending page 1 of the I-20 to the INS to update your record. We will return pages 3 and 4 of the I-20 to you with a notation on the back that the transfer has been completed. If the International Student Program cannot approve the transfer, you must apply to the INS for reinstatement.

F-1 student status for continuing students in F-1 status at Brooklyn College. Students who are completing one program at Brooklyn College and are planning to pursue another degree or program at CUNY must notify the INS. For students who leave the United States and reenter with the I-20 for the new program, notification occurs when the new I-20 is processed at the port of entry. Students who do not leave the United States must notify the INS within the first forty-five days of beginning their new program. Failure to comply with this regulation has serious consequences: Students who overstay their authorized period for even one day may have their entry visa voided and may be barred from the United States for a five-year period. Students should come to the International Students Program within two weeks following registration to complete the procedure.

J-1 exchange status (student category) for those not currently in J-1 status. Students who do not plan to leave the United States before beginning studies at Brooklyn College and are in an immigration status other than J-1 student category are required to change their status by application to the INS. Changing status in the United States is potentially problematic; students should consult the International Students Program for more information.

J-1 exchange status (student category) for transferring students in J-1 status at another institution. J-1 students may transfer from one program sponsor to another only if the purpose of the transfer is to complete the original educational objective for which they entered the United States. The “responsible officer” of the program from which they are transferring must sign the transfer section of the IAP-66 that Brooklyn College has issued only if he or she agrees that the transfer is for the purpose of completing the original objective and is consistent with the goals of the Exchange Visitor Program. When this completed form has been returned to the International Students Program, we will return the pink copy to the student and notify the USIA of the change in program sponsorship by forwarding the yellow copy to them.

Those who are in a J-1 category other than student are not permitted to transfer to student category in most circumstances. In general, a change in category represents a change in objective and is not permitted by the USIA. Students may request an exception to this policy from the USIA and should consult the International Students Program for information.

J-1 exchange status (student category) for continuing students in J-1 status at Brooklyn College. J-1 students who are completing one educational program at Brooklyn College and are planning to pursue another degree or program at CUNY must notify the USIA. Those who have been in the United States for some time may have an I-94 card, which includes a date specifying when they must leave the United States. If this date is approaching, they are required to file an extension of stay application and pay a fee to the INS. Consult the International Students Program for more information.
If the I-94 card includes the notation D/S, the International Students Program must send the yellow copy of the new IAP-66 to the USIA to inform them of the changes in students’ educational activity. Students must bring their passport, I-94 (and those of their accompanying dependents), and DS2019 to the International Students Program so that we may complete the procedure in a timely manner.

**Students who will be accompanied by dependents**

Students whose spouse and/or dependent children will accompany them to the United States or will join them after they arrive must provide the Office of Admissions with additional documentation showing their ability to meet their dependents’ expenses. Upon receipt of this information, Brooklyn College will send students the form needed by their dependents to apply for an F-2 or J-2 entry visa.

Other family members must obtain a B-2 tourist visa, which allows for an initial visit of six months. The International Students Program recommends that students arrive and settle in before bringing family to New York. The costs and living conditions in New York may be more than what they anticipated. To obtain the I-20 or IAP-66 to bring dependents to the United States, students must demonstrate sufficient funds to cover the day-to-day living and health insurance expenses of their spouse and all children.

**Obtaining the I-20**

Form I-20 cannot be issued until the Certificate of Finance form (see below) has been completed and returned with all the necessary supporting documents.

Graduate applicants should send all documents to the Office of Admissions, 1107 James Hall, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210-2889. Undergraduate applicants should send their educational documents to the University Application Processing Center, P.O. Box 350136, Brooklyn, New York 11235.

**Certificate of Finance**

You must certify that you have at least US$17,830 available for your first academic year of study. This amount does not include travel expenses to and from your country. In computing your resources, bear in mind that you will not be permitted to work and that Brooklyn College cannot provide any financial assistance. If you will be accompanied by any member(s) of your family, you need to include at least an additional $5,000 for each person.

Note: If your country restricts currency exchange into U.S. dollars and you expect to receive funds from your country, enclose a letter from your central bank or submit an official letter from the appropriate government agency guaranteeing the transfer of funds to the United States, the amount available, and the duration of the permit.

At the time of enrollment, this Certificate of Finance must be fully and properly completed. If your sponsor is not a relative, he or she must submit a letter describing his or her relationship to you and reasons for sponsoring you. Persons in the United States who are not U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents are not acceptable as financial sponsors.

Follow these instructions for submitting supporting bank and financial documents:

- Submit an original letter on official stationery or a certified true copy from a bank or other financial institution (issued within past year).
- Make sure that letters provide the specific amount of funds available. The amount must total at least $17,830 (plus $5,000 per dependent) for one academic year.
- Have all letters signed and dated within less than one year from when you plan to enroll.
- Do not alter, change, or modify any information on the letter(s).
- Attach an official English translation for all documents that are not in English.

Immunization requirements

New York State law requires all students to submit to Brooklyn College a Student Immunization Record form proving immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella. The following constitutes proof of immunity:

- two doses of measles and one dose each of mumps and rubella, or
- blood test results showing immunity to each disease, or disease history with dates for mumps and/or measles. (Disease history is not valid proof of immunity for rubella.)

If your immunization record is not in English, you will be required to submit an official translation along with the original record. All students—even those who may be exempt because of age (if born prior to 1957), medical reasons, or religious belief—must complete and submit the form with the appropriate documentation before they can register. Questions regarding immunization requirements should be directed to the Health Programs Office, 1115 Plaza Building, 951-4266 or 4505.

Reactivation of application for the next semester

Undergraduate students who attend Brooklyn College but would like to be considered for the next semester should send a written request to the Office of Admissions, 1107 James Hall, to reactivate your application for the following semester. Accepted students may reactivate their application for one year only. Graduate students must also make a written request. Due to the number of qualified graduate applicants who apply each semester, admission cannot be guaranteed; all applications are subject to review by departments and/or admissions.

Address and other personal information changes

If you have moved or any personal information has changed since the time you applied, report your new information to the Office of Admissions, 1107 James Hall, as soon as it is available.

Payment policy

An essential step in the completion of your registration is to pay for your courses. After registering, you will receive a bill that specifies a date by which full payment must be made. If full payment is not received by the Bursar’s Office by this date, your registration may be canceled and you will have to re-register at a later date.

Students will not incur any financial liability if they withdraw from a course prior to the first day of classes. They will, however, be responsible for all or part of their tuition plus the activity or consolidated fee if they withdraw during the semester. The penalty schedule is printed in the Schedule of Classes under “Tuition Refund and Student Liability.”

Bring enough money in U.S. dollars to pay for your first semester’s tuition in full ($3,800 plus student fees), buy books, and live on for at least the first month (approximately $800–$900, if you are single).

Change of degree level
F-1 students who complete one degree at Brooklyn College and wish to pursue a second program must apply for a new I-20 within thirty days of completing the first degree. J-1 students must apply before their expires. This application may be processed in the United States, as long as the individual is in valid status.

School transfer for current F-1 students
F-1 students pursuing a full-time course of study at another school that the INS has authorized them to attend may continue their F-1 status at Brooklyn College if they are officially accepted. Follow the guidelines below.

- After receiving official notice of acceptance to Brooklyn College, notify the school you are attending of your intent to transfer and ask them to complete the School Transfer Form.
- Follow the procedures to obtain a new I-20 from Brooklyn College (see page 15).
- Complete the student certification portion on your new I-20AB from Brooklyn College and return it to the International Students Program within fifteen days.

Immigration Policies and Procedures
Like all nations, the United States has laws governing foreign nationals residing temporarily within its borders. F-1 and J-1 students must comply with these laws, especially those related to immigration. Many immigration laws carry harsh and swift penalties for violations of regulations. Students who violate the terms of their immigration status face the loss of status and all benefits, including work permission, and possibly the immediate cancellation of their visas and a ten-year bar to reentry to the United States.

The staff at the International Students Program are employees of Brooklyn College, not of the U.S. government. One of their primary roles is to serve as an intermediary between the international student and the U.S. government. They are registered with the government to carry out the F-1 regulations on behalf of the college.

The staff does not “report” students’ activities to the INS or to the U.S. Department of State. However, they are required by law to respond to certain inquiries from these agencies. With the advancement of computerized record keeping in the U.S. government, information will be more frequently and easily obtained.

Although the International Students Program provides information about and assistance with U.S. immigration regulations and procedures, students are ultimately held accountable for their actions. Ignorance of the law (e.g., being unaware of an application deadline) is not an excuse. A student’s eligibility to remain in the United States is contingent upon knowledge of and compliance with immigration laws.

The following information provides general guidance only. Because laws and regulations change frequently, it is important to consult the International Students Program for the latest information and to understand how it applies to your individual situation. Stop by the office periodically and carefully read any mail the International Students Program sends.

The most important thing to remember is that you must have a student visa when entering the United States. If you are from a country that permits a round-trip airline ticket for entry as a visitor or tourist, you will be permitted to stay for only ninety days and will not be able to change your tourist visa to a student visa while in the United States.
If you are undecided about your plans to study in the United States or there was not enough time for Brooklyn College to process your I-20AB, ask a consular officer for a B-2 visa with prospective student indicated on it. If you already possess a B visa (tourist), you may request that prospective student be added. If you enter the United States without an I-20 AS, bring documents with you in order to verify that you have sufficient financial support for your studies in the United States for one full year should you decide to study.

Note: Canadian students are not required to have a passport or a visa and may enter the United States by presenting a valid I-20 AS and financial documentation at the point of entry. It is understood that you intend to enter the United States temporarily and solely to pursue a full-time program of study, and that you have a permanent residence outside the United States. However, Canadians must present valid passports when entering the United States form outside the western hemisphere.

If you are overseas, have been accepted by another school, and have already been granted a student visa to enter the United States to attend that school, U.S. government regulations require your attendance at the issuing school—not Brooklyn College—for at least one semester.

Maintaining legal status in the United States

International students must take full responsibility for maintaining their legal status in the United States with the INS. If you familiarize yourself with your obligations early on, you should find it easy to maintain your legal status. If, however, you allow yourself to fall “out of status,” it may be extraordinarily difficult to reinstate yourself with the INS.

As your immigration status monitor, Brooklyn College has legal obligations, which are met by the International Students Program. The office is required to notify the INS when you terminate your studies at the college, enroll for less than a full-time program, or fail to make normal full-time progress toward your academic objective.

In order to maintain legal status, you should do two things: 1) Read and follow the “Instructions to Students” on the back of either page 1 of your I-20 (if you will be in F-1 status) or page 3 of your IAP-66 (if you will be in J-1 status), and 2) follow the guidelines below. If you do both of these, you will maintain legal status in the United States and be able to reenter in student status when you travel. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to come to the International Students Program.

1. Keep your passport valid. (See page 8).

2. Maintain full-time enrollment (twelve credits per semester for most programs at Brooklyn College) and normal full-time progress toward your degree or certificate. The measure of normal progress is the rate at which the average full-time student in your department advances toward the degree or certificate. Working to complete courses or projects designated as incomplete from previous semesters is not maintaining normal progress. If you find yourself in this situation, come to the International Students Program.

   Students who are not taking a full course of study must apply for part-time enrollment (PTE) approval at the International Students Program within the first two weeks of the semester. Students who do not have a PTE approved by both the academic department and the International Students Program risk INS penalties.

3. Accept no employment of any kind, either on or off campus, without written permission from the Office of International Student Services and, if necessary, the BCIS. Working without proper authorization is the most serious violation of INS regulations. The I-94 and I-20 both include the statement, "Warning: a nonimmigrant who accepts unauthorized
employment is subject to deportation.” It is extremely important to consult with the International Students Program before you accept an offer of employment or begin to work. We will advise you whether it is possible for you to work and assist you with the appropriate documents. F-1 and J-1 students who are authorized to work are permitted to work a maximum of twenty hours per week during the academic term.

4. -Have medical insurance at all times. Regulations require those in J status to have very comprehensive medical insurance covering the student and all dependents. If you are not sure whether a certain insurance plan covers all necessary items, ask the International Students Program for more information.

5. -Be sure you meet eligibility criteria before you transfer to colleges in the United States.

   a. -If you are leaving the United States between the completion of a program at one college and the beginning of your program at Brooklyn College, the notification of change in educational institutions will be made when you reenter the United States with proper documentation (I-20 or IAP-66) from Brooklyn College.

   b. -If you are not leaving the United States, you are required to transfer supervision of your immigration status to Brooklyn College by notifying the INS of your change of institution within fifteen days of registering at Brooklyn College. In order to be eligible to transfer, you must have maintained F-1 or J-1 status at your previous college and be able to provide documentation that you are financially able to attend Brooklyn College. Refer to the instructions for transferring students in F or J status in the section “Obtaining a student visa, students already in the United States” (see page 13).

6. -Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay in the United States. Immigration regulations include severe penalties for overstaying one’s permitted period of time. Depending on the length of the overstay, one may be barred from entering the United States for up to ten years.

   a. -F-1 students are permitted to stay for the period of time reasonably required to pursue a full course of study in an educational program or a series of educational programs, and any periods of practical training, plus sixty days in which to depart from the United States, transfer schools, or apply for a change of status. If you must remain in the United States for a program of study beyond the D/S authorized on your I-20 (see item 5, “. . . and complete studies not later than [date].”), you must request a program extension through the International Students Program. Apply thirty days before the completion date on your I-20. At that time, you will need to establish valid academic reasons for exceeding the time limit. To continue at Brooklyn College in a different academic level (e.g., to study for a master’s degree after completing a bachelor’s), you must also apply for an extension. You must verify your admission to the new program and your ability to finance the program. The International Students Program will issue a new I-20 indicating your correct academic program.

   b. -J-1 students are permitted to stay for the period of time reasonably required to pursue a full course of study in an educational program or a series of educational programs, and any periods of academic training, plus thirty days in which to depart from the United States, transfer schools, or apply for a change of status. If you must remain in the United States for a program of study beyond the D/S authorized on your IAP-66
(see item 3, “... and complete studies not later than [date]”), you must request a program extension through your visa sponsor (the J-1 coordinator). Come to the International Students Program at least sixty days before the completion date on your IAP-66. After establishing valid academic reasons for exceeding the time limit, a new IAP-66 must be issued and the USIA notified of the extension.

7. Once you have completed your studies and any authorized practical or academic training, you must leave the United States or change to another immigration status within the time allowed. In view of the serious repercussions for overstaying, it is essential that you neither let your visa certificate (I-20 or IAP-66) expire while you are continuing your academic program nor remain in the United States beyond your D/S.

Guidelines for Maintaining F-1 and J-1 Status

- Register and complete each semester as a full-time student.
- Make sure your passport is always valid.
- Ensure that your Brooklyn College I-20 or IAP-66 is "activated" by the INS or the International Students Program, as appropriate.
- Apply for any program extension at least thirty days before the expiration date in section 5 of your I-20 or at least sixty days before the expiration date in section 3 of your IAP-66.
- Do not leave the United States without having your documents reviewed by the International Students Program.
- Do not work either on or off campus without obtaining written authorization in advance from the INS or the International Students Program, as required.
- Report any change of address to the Office of the Registrar within ten days of the move.
- File a federal income tax form for every year you are in the United States, even if you have no income.
- F-2 and J-2 dependents must also file. (See the section "Filing tax returns and obtaining refunds."
- Contact the International Students Program before transferring colleges, changing academic degree, taking a leave of absence, or registering for part-time course work.
- Contact the International Students Program immediately if any of your immigration documents are lost or stolen.
- Do not seek immigration advice from your department, friends, or family—they may unintentionally give you incorrect or outdated information.

Arriving in the United States

When you arrive in New York, you will be directed to the U.S. Customs/INS station. If you must take a connecting flight to
New York (usually to John F. Kennedy International Airport), you may be required to follow the U.S. Customs/INS procedure upon your first landing in the United States.

An immigration officer will examine your documents and may ask a few questions about your reason for coming to the United States. The officer will stamp your I-20 or IAP-66 and give you a temporary Arrival/Departure permit (Form I-94). Make sure the officer notes the correct visa status on your I-94, which indicates the purpose of your admission to the United States and the length of time you may remain. Everyone entering the United States to study receives this form. The I-94 is very difficult to replace, so keep it in a safe place along with your passport and I-20 or IAP-66.

An international assistance desk at the arrivals area of the airport provides free maps and information on accommodations and transportation. Baggage may not be left at the airport. Small trunks and suitcases may be transported by taxicab. The charge for carrying a trunk in a cab is usually about $2; there is no charge for carrying suitcases. Porters will help you take your luggage to a cab; you should tip them according to the number and weight of your pieces (about $1 per piece).

If requested in advance, a YMCA International Student Service representative will meet you at your port of entry, help you obtain temporary lodging, and advise you on travel arrangements in the United States. Service is free. You may contact the YMCA International Student Service, 236 East 47 Street, New York, New York 10017; telephone, (212) 727-8800; telex, ISS 620675; cable, FORSTUDENT. Requests must include your name, nationality, age, sex, port of entry, date and time of arrival, airline and flight number, connecting airline and flight number, destination in the United States, sponsorship, if any, and requirements for temporary lodging. A passport photo is helpful.

Getting Started at Brooklyn College

As a new student at Brooklyn College, you may feel that you need to know everything at once and that college life is overwhelming. You will soon find that numerous resources are available to assist you. Start your journey by following this checklist of things that you should do within the first two weeks of classes.

_____ 1. Check in at the International Students Program, 1105B James Hall, within five business days of arriving in New York City. Bring your passport, I-94, and I-20 or DS2019. We must check your documents to make sure that your first or most recent entry to the United States was handled properly. We will also collect your local address and emergency contact information and provide an overview of U.S. immigration regulations. This is an ideal time to ask us questions, find out how to get necessary information, and receive important updates. Check-in is usually conducted as an individual meeting with a staff member of the International Students Program.

Students who were enrolled at another U.S. institution for a degree or certificate must report to the International Students Program within ten days of arriving at Brooklyn College with their valid passport and their I-20 or DS2019 from both the college previously attended and Brooklyn College.

_____ 2. Photocopy your passport, I-20 or DS2019, visa stamp page, I-94, and all identity or important documents. Immediately store the copies in a location separate from the originals. It is
much easier to replace lost or stolen items if there is a record.

_____ 3. Submit a Student Immunization Record form and a copy of your immunization records to the Health Programs Office. These records must prove your immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella, as required by New York State law. You will not be able to register for classes without completing this step.

_____ 4. Register for a full-time course load (at least twelve credits) per semester. Enrollment for fewer than twelve credits without the approval of the International Students Program subjects a student to possible loss of lawful status in the United States.

_____ 5. Pay the registration bill, which includes tuition and fees.

_____ 6. Obtain a Brooklyn College ID card. You may obtain the card by bringing your current registration bill/receipt to the Photo ID Office, 0202 James Hall.

_____ 7. Attend Orientation.

_____ 8. If you have or plan to obtain an on-campus job, such as a graduate teaching or research assistantship, you are required by law to have a Social Security number. It is not the same number as the Brooklyn College-issued ID number or the Individual Tax Identification Number. (See the section “Social Security number” for further instructions.)

_____ 9. Contact your consulate in New York City. Most countries have representatives here. Consulates provide such services as emergency assistance, cultural programming, and tax treaty information. Some countries require that their citizens who are abroad register at the nearest consulate.

Academic Information

As students advance through the U.S. higher educational system, the academic program becomes increasingly specialized. The system may be quite different from that of your home country. There is no central ministry of education; institutions exercise considerable autonomy in determining their academic procedures and policies. In fact, even the professors within a given college conduct their classes differently from one another. There are, however, characteristics common to most U.S. colleges and universities, including Brooklyn College, as described below.

The calendar

Brooklyn College's academic year is composed of two semesters of approximately fifteen weeks each. The fall semester begins in September and ends in December; the spring semester runs from February through May. Summer courses are offered over two short terms of six weeks each. The winter break is approximately five weeks, from mid-December through January, and spring break is one week in March or April.

Registering for classes

All students are required to read and are expected to understand the Brooklyn College Bulletin, a catalog of course offerings and college policies, procedures, and facilities. It is a contract between the college and its students. Students are bound by the policies of the Bulletin in force during the semester of initial enrollment. You may obtain a Bulletin in the Admissions Office.
Before you meet with your academic adviser, prepare a list of questions about what courses you would like to take, what courses are required, and how many electives you must take.

To maintain lawful status in the United States, F-1 and J-1 students must register and complete a full-time course load of at least twelve credits every semester. No summer study is required. A course carries a specified number of credit hours, referring both to the number of hours per week that a class meets and the number of credits earned toward a degree. For example, by successfully completing one two-credit, two three-credit, and one four-credit course, a student earns twelve credits toward a degree.

It is not advisable to take extra courses the first semester. Undertaking too many courses when you first arrive may be discouraging and result in poor academic performance. Even if English is your first language, you need time to adjust to the pace and style of U.S. teaching. Speak to other students and your academic adviser for assistance in arranging an appropriate course schedule.

Students must earn a specific number of credits to graduate. Graduation requirements are listed in the Bulletin.

Course structure

There may be a period of adjustment to the new educational system before you reach peak performance. International students may not initially earn the grades they hoped for, but their grades usually improve as their knowledge of English increases and they become acclimated to the new system. Following are descriptions of what undergraduate and graduate students may expect in their courses.

Undergraduate courses

The structure of undergraduate courses varies depending on the content, the instructor’s teaching style, and the number of students. In a lecture class, the professor often follows a prepared outline and may use films, slides, or other visual aids. It is recommended that you take notes on information that is emphasized, as it will most likely be covered on examinations. Questions are usually encouraged, but in a large class the professor may limit them to topics directly related to that day’s lecture. You may visit faculty members during their office hours for extra assistance. Upper-division undergraduate courses in the social sciences and humanities tend to have small classes or seminars devoted almost entirely to discussion.

Most undergraduate classes have a final examination at the end of the semester. Many also have a midterm examination. Additional tests or quizzes may be given with greater frequency. There are usually two types of examinations. Objective examinations are designed to measure students’ knowledge of particular facts. Questions may require students to choose the most appropriate from a series of answers (“multiple choice”), indicate whether a statement is correct (“true or false”), or identify a term or passage of text (“identification”). Subjective examinations require students to write essays to demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge on a given topic.

Some courses require students to write a term paper based on study and research. It is often assigned early in the semester and due toward the end. A term paper is a time-consuming project. The grade received usually constitutes a significant portion of the final grade.

Graduate courses
Generally, graduate students have smaller classes. Classes in the social sciences and humanities tend to be almost entirely discussion in nature; those in the sciences may be lecture and lab oriented. Graduate students are less likely to be tested on material in an individual class; instead, professors assign papers and projects. They often have a final thesis or project that is required for the master’s degree, which may be done in conjunction with a course or independently, depending on the department’s requirements.

Student-faculty relations

The relationship between students and faculty members varies, depending on the individuals. Students are expected to contribute to, and are often evaluated on, their participation in class discussion. It is not disrespectful to question or challenge the professor; in fact, it is viewed as a healthy sign of interest and original thought. International students may be surprised by American students’ behavior in the classroom. Americans are likely to be dressed casually and may speak to the professor informally.

Some professors run more formal classrooms than others. Observe the classroom environment during the first week and adapt accordingly to the degree you are comfortable. Always be respectful.

It is beneficial to meet with professors outside the classroom. You may visit the professor during his or her office hours, which are often announced in the first class and posted by the professor’s office door.

Teaching assistants

Teaching assistants (TAs) are graduate students who have demonstrated excellence in their field and are working toward a degree. Their responsibilities vary from department to department. TAs may assist faculty by running recitation groups or laboratories or by grading papers or exams.

Methods of evaluation

A student’s progress is evaluated frequently, usually several times in a single academic course. Faculty members have varying methods of evaluation: some use fixed scales; others use a formula based on competition, commonly referred to as “grading on a curve.” Evaluation may be based on examinations, in-class essays, or original papers written outside of class. Be sure you understand your professors’ expectations, grading criteria, and evaluation procedures.

Brooklyn College uses the most common grading system in the United States—letter grades. The grades A, B, C, D, and F have equivalent numeric values used in computing the grade point average (GPA): A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0. The GPA is calculated by adding the products of the numeric value of each course’s grade and the respective numbers of credits and dividing the sum of the products by the total number of credits taken. The table below provides an example of how to calculate a GPA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Received</th>
<th>Numeric Value of Grade</th>
<th>Number of Credits for Course</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4 x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4 x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3 x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2 x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 39
Total GPA: $39 \div 12 = 3.25$

Plagiarism

A fundamental value of American education is a belief in the ownership—and therefore the sanctity—of an individual’s ideas. Like an item of property, an idea belongs to the person who first expressed it. Using another person’s ideas in one’s work without citing the source is viewed as presenting that person’s idea as one’s own and therefore constitutes stealing, or plagiarizing. Although collaborative work and sharing in the scholarship of others without acknowledging their contribution is acceptable and ethical practice in many parts of the world, in the United States such practice is viewed as a serious violation of academic integrity and the penalties attached to such activity are severe.

Plagiarism is the most serious form of academic fraud and may result in failure of a course or expulsion from Brooklyn College. Plagiarism includes:
- Presenting as your own a phrase, sentence, or passage from another writer’s work without using quotation marks.
- Presenting ideas from the Internet as your own.
- Using another student’s work and placing your name on it.
- Purchasing a term paper or research.
- “Collaborating” with one or more students and submitting the same paper under your individual names.
- Submitting the same paper for two or more courses without the knowledge and expressed permission of all instructors involved.
- Permitting another student to use your work for a class.
- Copying another person’s paper, math or physics problems, computer programs, lab results, etc.
- You must acknowledge every source accurately and completely. If you quote anything from a source, use quotation marks and identify the source, including the page number, in a footnote.

Common academic terms

Academic adviser—one who assists students in planning their academic program.
Add a course—enter a course in which you were not enrolled at the beginning of the semester.
Comps—written or oral comprehensive exams, usually for master’s or Ph.D. students after the completion of all coursework needed for a degree.
Dissertation—independent research required to obtain a doctoral degree.
Drop a course—withdraw from a class.
Final—last exam of the semester.
Flunk—(colloquial) fail an exam or course; to receive a grade of F.
GPA—grade point average.
Incomplete—temporary grade given to a student who is doing passing work in a course but cannot complete all the requirements during the term. The student must have a valid reason and must complete the requirements within a period of time acceptable to the professor.
Major—student’s primary field of study.
Midterm—exam given in the middle of the semester.
Quiz—short test, sometimes given without warning.
Registrar—official recorder of students’ academic information, such as courses taken and grades received.
Registration—procedure of officially enrolling in classes at the beginning of the semester.
SIMS—Student Information Management System, Brooklyn College’s computerized records of students’ academic programs.
Transcript—official record of a student’s grades and courses.

Rights and Responsibilities

The U.S. Constitution guarantees certain rights to all people living in this country. In general, international students enjoy the same constitutional protection as do citizens and permanent residents.

However, international students are subject to immigration laws that do not apply to citizens and permanent residents. These laws regulate nonimmigrants’ entry to the United States, the conditions under which they may remain in the country and reenter it after traveling abroad, and eligibility for such immigration benefits as employment or change of status.

International students enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, protection from unreasonable searches and seizures, and the other protections included in the U.S. Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

You may express your views freely and join with others to express and publish ideas, popular or unpopular, as long as these expressions are made in an orderly and peaceful manner. Federal, state, municipal, and college rules protect citizens and international students from most forms of discrimination, such as color, national origin, race, and religion.

The concept of individual rights carries with it a fundamental belief in individual responsibility. Ignorance of the law is not a valid defense against prosecution for violations. All visitors are expected to know and obey the laws of the United States, some of which are listed below.

- A driver’s license is required to drive an automobile. Drivers are required to know and obey traffic laws.
- Automobiles must be insured.
- It is illegal for individuals under age twenty-one to purchase and consume alcohol. It is illegal to sell or give alcohol to someone who is under twenty-one.
- It is illegal to sell or use illegal drugs.
- It is illegal to abuse one’s spouse or children. Parents are required to supervise all children under age eighteen.

Convictions

Some international students fear that if they are convicted or even accused of a violation of any law, they will be deported immediately and automatically. This is not true. In most cases, conviction of a misdemeanor or minor offense, such as petty theft, disturbing the peace, and drunkenness, will have no effect on their immigration status.

Conviction of a more serious offense involving “moral turpitude” (e.g., drug possession, prostitution, or a crime for which a student is sentenced to at least one year of prison), however, may result in deportation. Immigration law provides for the possible deportation of any person who is a narcotic addict or who is convicted of a violation of any law or regulation relating to the illicit possession of or traffic in narcotic drugs or marijuana.
Public benefits

International students are not eligible for government-funded programs. Individuals in F or J status should never accept public benefits from federal, state, county, or local government agencies—doing so may result in the loss of student status, denial of visas at consulates abroad, and a bar to reentry to the United States. Public benefits include Medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, subsidized housing, and all other aid programs funded in whole or in part with government funds.

Cooperation with state social service agencies makes it possible for the INS and the U.S. Department of State to identify nonimmigrants who accept public benefits.

Nonimmigrants are prohibited by U.S. law from becoming a “public charge” (someone who is financially dependent on government funds) in the United States. When nonimmigrants apply for visas, they are required to show documentation of sufficient funds to cover all of their living expenses and those of their dependents during their stay in the United States. All individuals in F-1 and J-1 status must have adequate health insurance for themselves and their dependents to cover medical costs.

By accepting public benefits, international students declare themselves unable to meet their financial obligations and thereby render themselves ineligible for F-1 or J-1 status. Frequently, social service agencies, hospitals, or public housing administrators unwittingly encourage international students to apply for public benefits because they are unaware of the regulations governing nonimmigrant status or they do not know the immigration status of the individuals they are advising. Furthermore, although the U.S. citizen children of nonimmigrants may be eligible for public benefits, by accepting those funds the children’s parents acknowledge their inability to support their dependents and thus risk being judged to have violated the conditions of their F-1 or J-1 status.

Employment

The purpose of F-1 and J-1 status is to facilitate and complete a full-time course of study. Although both classifications allow for employment, it is secondary to the degree program and is permitted only insofar as it supports the study objective.

F-1 and J-1 students may not undertake any employment on or off campus without written authorization from the International Students Program or the INS. Working without such authorization is illegal—a violation of INS regulations that may result in immediate loss of status and deportation.

With proper authorization, F-1 and J-1 students may work on campus up to twenty hours per week while classes are in session and full time during vacation periods. On-campus employment is limited to the Brooklyn College campus. After completing one academic year of full-time study, F-1 and J-1 students may be eligible for off-campus employment.

They may also be eligible for employment authorization based on severe and unforeseen economic hardship. Employment authorization based on economic hardship is meant to remedy a temporary situation; it is not intended to fund a degree program. To be eligible, F-1 students must have completed a full academic year in student status, and the nature and severity of the economic hardship must be sufficiently proven and documented to the INS. Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with final approval for F-1 students from the INS, and for Brooklyn College-sponsored J-1 students from the J-1 coordinator.
Finally, F-1 students are eligible for practical training; J-1 students are eligible for academic training (see below).

Students who are interested in applying for any form of work permission must first contact the Office of International Student Services.

Finding a job in your field of study is an education in itself and may be an extremely successful and rewarding experience. Should you choose to work, take advantage of all the resources available to you: Career Services, your faculty adviser, faculty and friends in your department, newspapers and professional journals, etc.

Practical training

Practical training—employment related to one’s field of study—is a privilege of F-1 status. It offers eligible students valuable opportunities to supplement their education with work experience in their field of study during vacation periods, during the college year after completion of all course requirements, and following the completion of their degree. Permission to engage in practical training may be granted only after students have been in valid student status for one academic year, except in graduate programs that require it from the first semester.

Pick up the appropriate guidelines from the International Students Program. Be sure you meet the basic eligibility requirements before you make plans for practical training. Before you begin work you will need explicit authorization from the International Students Program or the INS. F-1 students may be eligible for both curricular practical training and optional practical training.

Curricular practical training

Curricular practical training, authorized by the International Students Program, is employment that is part of the curriculum required of all degree candidates for which academic credit is given. Although students are not limited in the amount of curricular practical training they may utilize, those who have been authorized for twelve months or more of full-time curricular practical training are ineligible for practical training after completing their degree.

Optional practical training

Optional practical training (OPT), authorized by the INS and recommended by the International Students Program, encompasses practical training before and after completion of studies and is limited to a total of twelve months.

Working off campus for any reason (including hardship) during enrollment at Brooklyn College usually precludes eligibility for OPT permission after graduation. Students who apply for permission to work off campus before graduation, even if they do not actually work, will not be able to work after graduation under OPT.

Students do not need a job offer to apply for OPT. However, because OPT is authorized by the INS for specific dates and may not be cancelled easily, it is highly recommended that a student have a job offer so as not to waste OPT time. INS processing takes two to three months.

Academic training

Academic training—employment integral, not merely related, to an exchange visitor’s academic program—is a privilege of the J-1 immigration status. It may occur during or after the completion of studies. J-1 students must have been in good academic standing for one semester before becoming eligible for authorization. In general, a maximum of eighteen months is allowed for academic training;
certain post-doctoral research positions may qualify for up to thirty-six months. A job offer is required before academic training can be authorized.

You must apply for academic training within thirty days of completion of a course of study. To apply, bring the following to the J-1 coordinator:

- Passport
- Form I-94 (and those of accompanying family members if an extension of stay is necessary)
- Form DS2019
- A letter from your academic adviser recommending academic training and explaining its goals and objectives. The letter must include a detailed description of the training program, the location, the name and address of the training supervisor, the number of hours per week, and the beginning and ending dates of proposed employment. It should clearly indicate that the work to be performed is directly related to the degree program or course of study completed.

These should be sufficient evidence of employment eligibility for the completion of the Form I-9 (Certification of Employment Eligibility) required of all new employees. Should you encounter difficulties with these procedures, contact the International Students Program.

If your IAP-66 is valid, no extension of stay will be required. If an extension of stay is needed, see the instructions in the section “Maintaining legal status in the United States.” A letter authorizing the academic training period will be issued by the International Students Program.

Dependent employment

INS regulations do not allow any circumstances under which the spouse (F-2) of an F-1 student may apply for work permission while in the United States. The spouse (J-2) of a J-1 exchange visitor, however, may apply to the INS for employment permission if he or she can demonstrate a need for supplemental support for himself or herself or their children. The spouse may not obtain work permission in order to support the J-1 student. Form I-765 is required to apply for J-2 work permission and may be obtained from the International Students Program.

U.S. Tax Requirements

Brooklyn College does not offer tax advice or assistance. The information in this chapter is only intended to provide a general sense of your legal obligations. For in-depth analysis and assistance, you must consult a professional tax accountant or attorney specializing in nonresident tax matters. It is the responsibility of each student to understand his or her own tax situation. Current tax information is available from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), (800) 829-1040.

Because of the difficulty students have understanding U.S. tax requirements and procedures, many ignore or otherwise fail to comply with tax laws. Although there often is not an immediate penalty for noncompliance, there usually is a severe penalty later. The U.S. government attempts to ensure that those who live in the United States pay their taxes. Tax records are reviewed at important junctures, such as when an application for permanent residence is filed with the INS.

All F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents are required to file federal tax Form 8843 (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition), even if they had no
income during the tax year and lived in the United States for only a few weeks or months during the year. Students who earn income must also file federal Form 1040NR (Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return) as well as state and city tax returns.

If you or your dependents hold F or J (student category) immigration status, you are usually considered a nonresident for tax purposes for a period of five “tax years.” A tax year begins January 1 and ends December 31. The entire year is counted toward the five years during which you must file as a nonresident for tax purposes regardless of the date you entered the United States. Your filing requirement depends on whether you have any U.S.-source income during the tax year.

Nonresidents for tax purposes whose earnings in the United States during a tax year are less than the amount of the “personal exemption” (a dollar amount specified in the instructions to Form 1040NR that changes each year but is approximately $2,300) pay no taxes.

Further information may be obtained on the Internal Revenue Service’s Web site (www.irs.ustreas.gov/forms_pubs/index.html), from the IRS office, or from the IRS Forms Distribution Center, P.O. Box 25866, Richmond, Virginia 23260. You may also call (800) 829-3676 to obtain IRS forms and publications.

Definitions and dates for federal tax purposes

Alien—an individual who is not a U.S. citizen.
Exempt individual—an individual who is not subject to the Substantial Presence Test (see below), which determines whether someone files as a resident or nonresident.
Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN)—a unique nine-digit code issued by the IRS for tax-related purposes to individuals who are required to complete annual income tax returns but are not eligible for a Social Security number (see below).
Internal Revenue Service—the federal agency responsible for collecting taxes and enforcing tax reporting and collection laws.
It is a division of the U.S. Treasury Department.
Nonimmigrant—an individual with a permanent residence abroad who is in the United States temporarily, such as those in F-1 or J-1 immigration status.
Nonresident—an individual who is in the United States temporarily for a relatively short period (usually less than five years). Although nonresidents are required to file an annual tax return, only their income from U.S. sources is taxed.
Resident—a U.S. citizen, U.S. permanent resident, or nonimmigrant who has been in the United States long enough to qualify to file as a resident. Residency is determined by the Substantial Presence Test.
Social Security—a term used to describe an agency, a card, and two types of tax. The Social Security Administration (SSA) is a federal government agency. The card contains a unique nine-digit identification number issued to qualified individuals primarily to determine eligibility for benefits through various forms of employment. The number is also used for tax record keeping; it is not the same as the ITIN or the Brooklyn College ID. The two taxes, known as FICA (Federal Insurance Contribution Act) and Medicare, are withheld from employment income to provide for retirement later in life. The amount withheld from a paycheck for FICA is 7.65 percent of total earnings, up to a certain salary level.
Substantial Presence Test (SPT)—a formula devised by the IRS to determine whether a nonimmigrant is a resident or nonresident for tax purposes.
Tax treaty—an agreement between the United States and another country to determine how the
country’s residents will be taxed when temporarily in the United States. (In this case, resident refers to tax residency.) A treaty may provide certain tax benefits and is very specific. Just because someone is a resident of a tax-treaty country does not mean that the person will automatically qualify for tax benefits.

Withholding—the retention of a given amount of a salary or wages by an employer on behalf of the government for tax purposes. Withholding is the portion of your check amount that an employer is required to pay directly to federal, state, and city taxation authorities in anticipation of your annual income tax obligations. The check you receive, therefore, is for less than what you earned during the pay period. The amount withheld is credited toward your tax bill so that most taxpayers will have to pay relatively little additional money at annual tax filing time; some taxpayers will even qualify for a refund if too much is withheld.

April 15—the last day to postmark an annual tax return if you are a resident or nonresident with U.S.-source income.

June 15—the last day for nonresident students and their dependents who do not have any source of U.S. income to file a 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ.

During tax season (January 1 through April 15), forms are available in post offices, libraries, and banks. Publications may be ordered by calling the IRS, (800) 829-3676, or by downloading them from the IRS Web site, www.irs.ustreas.gov/forms_pubs/index.html.

Scholarships and fellowships

Degree candidates do not pay tax on amounts received as scholarships or fellowship grants that cover tuition and such education-related expenses as required college fees, textbooks, supplies, and equipment. Expenses for room and board and other personal items are not considered educational expenses for the purpose of determining tax liability. Nondegree candidates must pay income tax on the entire amount of their fellowship award.

Portions of scholarships and grants for living expenses paid to F-1 and J-1 students who are engaged in degree programs, including nondegree study at institutions that offer degrees, are subject to U.S. income tax. The scholarship donor is required to withhold 14 percent of the taxable portions. Students who are receiving scholarships are required to apply for an ITIN or Social Security number.

Students who are exempt from payment of income tax on scholarships, grants, and fellowships under a tax treaty between the United States and their country of residence may claim exemption from the tax on the total scholarship payment. If your scholarship is paid to you through Brooklyn College, you may claim tax treaty benefits and prevent the withholding by completing IRS Form 1001 prior to receiving scholarship payment. Fill in your name, address, and foreign country of legal residence. In Item 1, check “Other Income” as the type of income from which you are claiming exemption and write in the name of the grant or scholarship you are receiving. If the tax treaty for your country places a limit on the length of time for which you may claim exemption from income tax, indicate on line 3 the years for which you will be exempt (see IRS Publications 519 and 901). A new Form 1001 must be completed every third calendar year. If Form 1001 is not filed before the scholarship is paid, refunds of withheld tax may be claimed within the calendar year. After the calendar year, refunds of withheld taxes may be claimed when you file your income tax return.

If your scholarship is paid to you by an agency other than Brooklyn College, that agency is responsible for providing you with information regarding what portion of your award is considered maintenance expenses.
Assistantships
Teaching, graduate, and research assistantship stipends are not scholarships or fellowships. Rather, they are considered payment for personal services and are subject to taxation. International students who are not eligible to claim tax treaty benefits must have taxes withheld from their paychecks and must file a tax return between January 1 and April 15 of the following year. (See sections “Tax treaties” and “Filing tax returns and obtaining refunds,” below.)

Tax treaties
The United States has more than fifty tax treaties with different countries under which their citizens may be exempt from all or part of U.S. income taxes. Although there are fundamental similarities among them, the treaties vary in significant ways in terms of the benefits they offer to students, the type of income covered, the total amount of the exemption, and the number of years one can claim the benefit. Although some treaties exempt 100 percent of some types of income, most treaties exclude only a portion of students’ earnings, including assistantships. Brooklyn College withholds tax on your earnings unless you make a claim for exemption by treaty.

Countries with which the United States has tax treaties are listed in IRS Publication 901. The International Students Program provides copies of this publication, which details all tax treaties but does not interpret them. Existence of a tax treaty does not automatically mean that a citizen of that country is exempt from paying taxes. For a full analysis of tax treaty benefits, students must consult a tax professional or their consulate.

Claiming exemption from taxes based on a tax treaty
Individuals holding assistantships and fellowships who are eligible for treaty benefits may claim those benefits by filing the required forms with the Payroll Office. Individuals are responsible for their own tax decisions and for notifying the Payroll Office when their tax treaty benefit ends.

1042S form
Nonresident recipients of fellowships and individuals who have claimed tax treaty benefits receive a 1042S statement of income. A portion of the income reported on the 1042S is subject to federal and state taxes, depending on education-related expenses and whether any portion of the income is exempt by treaty. See IRS Publications 519, U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens; 520, Scholarships and Fellowships; and 901, U.S. Tax Treaties.

W-4 form
Because the United States requires employers to withhold tax on wages paid, all employees must fill out a W-4 form before going on payroll. Based on projected earnings and the number of allowable exemptions, this form determines the amount of money withheld from one’s pay for the IRS and the New York State Division of Taxation. Completing it incorrectly may mean that you will owe taxes when filing a return the following year.

Nonresidents are required to check “single” (regardless of marital status) in section 2 unless they are married to a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Most nonresidents are not allowed to claim any dependents, so they must write “1” (for themselves) on line 5. Exceptions to this are citizens of Canada, India, Japan, Korea, and Mexico—countries that have agreements with the United States. In addition, you must request that an additional amount of $4 per week be withheld on line 6, since your nonresident tax rate is different than a resident’s and the taxes withheld are based on resident taxable deductions.

Taxpayers must have withheld, or make quarterly estimated payments of, an amount equal to 90 percent of their estimated current year’s tax or 100 percent of their prior year’s liability, whichever
is less. U.S. law allows substantial penalties for under-withholding of federal taxes. It is better to have the money withheld and then refunded in the next year when you file your tax return than to risk having to pay the tax, plus interest, plus the penalty, if you make a mistake.

W-2 form

In January, everyone who was on a payroll the previous year receives from the employer a W-2 form, a statement of the amount of money withheld from total earnings for Social Security, federal, state, and local taxes. Each W-2 has four identical pages: one to be submitted to the IRS with the federal tax return, one to be submitted with the state tax return, one to be submitted with the city tax return, and one to be retained.

Social Security number

Everyone who is employed in the United States must obtain a Social Security number, which the U.S. government uses to identify wage earners for tax purposes. The number is printed on a light blue Social Security card. The Brooklyn College ID number assigned to new international students is not the same as the Social Security number—it is not valid for use outside the college or for payroll purposes within the college; rather, it is a student identification number to maintain attendance and grade records.

To obtain a Social Security number, students must have written authorization from the International Students Program or the INS to work; J-2 dependents must have employment authorization from the INS. J-2 dependents who do not have work authorization and F-2 dependents are not eligible for Social Security numbers and must apply to the Internal Revenue Service for an ITIN, which must be obtained prior to filing tax returns.

Even if you are not employed, it is necessary to have a Social Security number as an identification number for registration with the college. You must make a formal application to receive a Social Security number if the fourth and fifth digits of your nine-digit number are zeros—a “dummy number” that was temporarily assigned to you and that must be replaced with a valid Social Security number. The International Students Program arranges for a representative from the Social Security Administration to come to campus during Orientation in the fall to accept applications for a Social Security card. If you are unable to attend Orientation, you will need to submit an application in person at a Social Security Administration office, two of which are listed below. You must first come to the International Students Program with your passport so that we may give you a letter to facilitate your application.

The Social Security card issued to nonresident students may specify that it is “valid only with employment authorization.” Students may use this card number if their employment has been properly authorized by INS or the International Students Program.

Security Social Administration offices
2250 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11210
6011 Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11219
625 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number

Social Security numbers or Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) are needed to file federal and state income tax returns. If your dependents (those in F-2 immigration classification or J-2 immigration classification without employment authorization documents) in the United States do not have a Social Security number, they must apply to the IRS for an ITIN.
If, in the past, they were assigned an ITIN without filing an application, that number is no longer
valid. They must apply for another (nontemporary) number at the appropriate office and receive it
before filing their tax return. They must bring their passport, 
I-94, and I-20 or IAP-66.

Filing tax returns and obtaining refunds
Nonresidents for tax purposes who have income from a source in the United States (e.g.,
international students who have assistantships, fellowships, or on- or off-campus jobs) must file
Form 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ plus attachments between January 1 and April 15 for the preceding
tax year. Nonresidents for tax purposes who have no earned income must file Form 8843
between January 1 and June 15 for the preceding tax year. Nonresident tax returns should be
filed with the Internal Revenue Service Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19255.

Individuals who have earned income in the United States and who fail to file an income tax return
may later be required to pay fines and interest charges in addition to any taxes owed.

In some cases, taxpayers are due a refund because too much money was withheld from their
pay. If a refund is due, the IRS sends a check directly to the taxpayer. It is not possible to
receive a refund without filing a return. On the other hand, if additional tax is due, the taxpayer
must send the IRS a check for the full amount with the return by the April 15 deadline.

Social Security tax
With very few exceptions, all people who work in the United States are required to pay Social
Security tax (FICA). Generally,
F-1 and J-1 students enrolled in and employed by an academic institution are exempt from Social
Security taxes for that employment. In general, they are exempt from FICA taxes on other types
of authorized employment during the first five years
in the United States, during which time they are classified as nonresident aliens for tax purposes.
J-2 dependents, however, must pay Social Security tax.

If FICA has been withheld in error, the employer must provide a refund by filing a claim on Form
941C with the IRS. If you are unable to obtain a refund in this way, you may file a claim on Form
843 with the IRS office to which your employer pays Social Security taxes. If you do not know
which office this is, write to: Internal Revenue Service Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19255.

If FICA was withheld in error and your employer is a state or local government organization,
including educational institutions, you may request a refund from the local government employer
or college administrator.

Federal income tax
F-1 and J-1 students and J-2 dependents must pay federal income tax on wages earned in the
United States. The following is a summary of U.S. government requirements. For more detailed
information regarding your tax obligations, obtain the appropriate forms and publications 519,
520, and 901 from the International Students Program. These and all other forms and
publications may also be obtained by calling (800) TAX-FORM.

The federal tax obligations of foreign nationals are determined by several factors: immigration
status, length of residence in the United States, purpose for being in the country, intent to return
to the home country or to remain for an extended period in the United States, country of
citizenship, and type of income. Different combinations of these factors result in different tax
obligations.
Unless otherwise classified by a tax treaty, F-1 and J-1 students are nonresidents for tax purposes their first five years in the United States. After five years, they are presumed to be residents and must justify any continued filing as nonresidents to the IRS. Nonresidents pay tax only on income earned in the United States; may claim only one personal exemption regardless of the number of dependents (citizens of Canada, India, Japan, Korea, and Mexico excepted) and may not take the standard deduction (unless classified as residents by tax treaty) and must therefore itemize deductions. Most F-1 and J-1 students with income file Form 1040NR-EZ. Those with more complex income situations file Form 1040NR.

New York State and New York City income taxes
Students who earn income in New York, even if it is exempt by treaty from federal income tax, will probably owe New York State and New York City income tax. Students who live in New York file as residents of New York; those who live in New Jersey file as nonresidents of New York and as residents of New Jersey. State tax forms are available in libraries. New York tax returns are filed between January 1 and April 15 for the previous calendar year. In most cases, you must file New York State Form IT-203 and New York City Form NYC-203.

Travel Regulations
Students wishing to travel outside the United States must consult with the International Students Program prior to departing to ensure their documents are in order. They are advised to carry copies of their financial documentation and proof of full-time status from the registrar or academic department when traveling. Students traveling to a country other than their country of citizenship must contact that country’s consulate in New York City or embassy in Washington, D.C., to find out if they need a visa.

Traveling within the United States
If you plan to travel within the United States, you do not need special permission or a new visa. However, we recommend that you take your passport, I-94, and I-20 or IAP-66, especially when traveling near any border areas in the United States, even if you do not plan to cross the border.

Traveling to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean
F-1 and J-1 students who plan to travel to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean (but not Cuba),2 or Saint Pierre and Miquelon for fewer than thirty days need to keep their I-94 with them upon exiting the United States. Tell the immigration official at the port of exit that you intend to stay outside the United States for fewer than thirty days. Make sure an immigration adviser signs your I-20 or DS2019 before you travel. The I-20 or DS2019 must have been signed by an International Students Program adviser within the last year; no one else at Brooklyn College is permitted to sign them. If there have been substantial changes from the information printed on the I-20 or DS2019 (e.g., a change in funding or field of study), the International Students Program must issue a new document. Students who are out of status must meet with an International Students Program adviser to discuss whether travel abroad is prudent.

You may need an entry visa to enter Canada. Check with the Canadian Consulate General, 1251 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York, (212) 596-1700.
You may also need an entry visa to enter Mexico. Furthermore, all visitors to Mexico are required
to have a tourist card. Information is available from the Mexican Tourist Office, 405 Park Avenue,
Suite 1401, New York, New York, (212) 838-2949.

Returning to the United States
It is not necessary to obtain a new visa to reenter the United States following travel of fewer than
thirty days to the destinations specified above. When you return, present your valid passport, I-
94, expired or current visa, and I-20 or DS2019 that had been signed by an International
Students Program adviser before you departed.

Traveling to other countries
F-1 and J-1 students traveling to destinations other than those specified above will surrender
their I-94 when they depart the United States to the airline, which submits it to the INS. You
should not surrender any other immigration documents when
you leave.

2 -The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Trinidad and Tobago, the
Leeward and Windward Islands, and other British, Dutch, and French territories or possessions in or bordering the
Caribbean Sea.

Returning to the United States
v -Travel with a valid passport that will not expire while abroad.
v -Have your I-20 or DS2019 recertified as needed. In order to do so, you must have
maintained full-time student status
and be able to provide financial documentation covering all expenses for one year for both you
and your dependents. Request recertification of your I-20 or DS2019 from the International
Students Program at least five business days before you plan to leave.
v -F-1 students should recertify their I-20 once each semester that they travel. If you do not
travel abroad, it is not necessary to have the I-20 recertified. J-1 students must recertify their
IAP-66 once a year as long as it is valid.
v -You must have an unexpired student entry visa stamp valid for further entries in your
passport. If you have overstayed your immigration status since issuance of your last visa, your
visa is no longer valid and you are required to obtain a new one only in your country of citizenship
or residence. See below for more information.
v -Individuals who entered the United States in one nonimmigrant status and changed to
another must obtain an F-1 visa to reenter the United States properly. Although it is possible for
individuals who have been in the United States legally to apply for a visa at any U.S. consulate or
embassy, it is generally easier to obtain a nonimmigrant visa in the home country.
There are several ways to obtain a visa:
v -Apply at the U.S. consulate or embassy in your home country when you go home for a visit.
v -Apply at a U.S. consulate or embassy in some other country when you are traveling abroad.
v -Apply in Canada or Mexico. You must schedule an interview in order to apply for a
nonimmigrant visa at a
U.S. consular border post in Canada or Mexico. An appointment may be made in the following
ways:

? -Call (900) 443-3131 (in Canada, (900) 451-2778). A per-minute fee will be charged for
this call on your telephone bill. Not all phones can access this number; check with the
telephone operator if you are having trouble connecting.
Call (888) 840-0032. A flat fee will be charged per minute, payable only by credit card. Visit the Visa Appointment Reservation System’s Web site, www.nvars.com. A flat fee ($6.25 Canadian) will be charged, payable by credit card. Appointments may be scheduled up to one month in advance. After the appointment is scheduled, you will receive an application and information about the appropriate post. Many of the posts require a fee (preferably in cash) in advance of the processing.

Some consulates may require an appointment (even in your own country) or may have an extensive processing time. Check to see if the appropriate Department of State has a Web site or request the consulate’s address and phone number from the International Students Program. You will need the following documents to apply for a new visa:

- Your passport.
- An up-to-date I-20 or DS2019, complete with the endorsement of the International Student adviser on the back for travel purposes.
- A letter of good standing, also called an enrollment letter, which is available from the Office of the Registrar.
- Copies of your Brooklyn College transcript.
- Proof of financial support. You should be able to verify the amount shown on your I-20 or DS2019 with a personal bank statement, research or teaching assistantship verification letter, or sponsor letter and sponsor’s bank statement.
- Proof of your ties to your home country. Because you are applying for a nonimmigrant visa, you will need to show that you intend to remain a permanent resident of your home country and return there after completing your studies. This is a nonspecific item. Such proof may be in the form of job offers from home, letters from friends and family, or evidence of ownership of a residence or property in your home country.

Travel for F-2 and J-2 dependents
Dependents of F-1 or J-1 students must obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 for F-2; DS2019 for J-2) before traveling abroad if they will be reentering the United States unaccompanied by the F-1 or J-1 principal. The I-20 or DS2019 issued to dependents is a replication of the F-1’s or J-1’s Certificate of Eligibility, which is annotated as being for use by dependents. Dependents also should have documentation showing sufficient funds to cover expenses (as shown on the I-20 or DS2019). Those wishing to return to the United States in F-2 or J-2 immigration status may not be permitted to reenter unless the F-1’s I-20 or the J-1’s DS2019 is valid at the time of the dependent’s reentry. Otherwise, with one exception, documentary requirements are essentially the same as those for F-1 and J-1 students. The exception is that J-2 dependents require a special letter from their sponsors in addition to an DS2019.

Travel after completion of studies
F-1 students are required to leave the United States sixty days after completion of studies unless they have applied for and received permission for practical training. J-1 students must leave thirty days after completion of studies unless they have applied and received permission for academic training. Those who leave the United States are not allowed to return in F or J status unless they have (1) been admitted to a new program of study and have the required documentation, or (2) received authorization for academic or practical training before departure.
To reenter the United States, you must have a properly endorsed I-20 or DS2019, a valid passport, and a valid visa (as described above), plus the required proof of academic or practical training authorization. F-1 students are required to have an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) authorized by the INS; J-1 students obtain authorization from the International Students Program or the Immigration Affairs Office.

Students outside the United States have no basis for returning to the United States in F-1 status after completing their program of study unless they were authorized for practical training before their departure and have a valid INS-issued EAD. If you leave the United States without the EAD, you will not be allowed to reenter in F-1 status or be employed under F-1 practical training following completion of your degree.

If you will need a new entry visa stamp, speak to an International Students Program adviser before making travel plans. It may be more difficult to obtain a student visa while on practical or academic training as the issue of intent to return to your home country will be sometimes harder to prove once you have finished your degree and want to return to the United States to work.

Planning Your Budget and Finances

The approximate cost of tuition, fees, and living expenses for your first year is included on your visa certificate. This estimate is conservative—it is extremely difficult to live in New York City for less than this amount. It does not include, for example, thesis expenses, photocopying, or the cost of having papers typed for you. If you plan to remain in the United States during summer vacation periods and your visa certificate lists costs for only nine months, you will need additional funds amounting to 30 to 35 percent of your nine-month living expense figure. Married students accompanied by their family should be prepared to provide additional funds of at least $500 per month for their spouse and $250 for each child.

Plan to have your funds for tuition, fees, and living expenses available before each academic term. You will be notified when payments for tuition and fees are required prior to the general registration period. If your country’s currency exchange regulations require confirmation of your expenses for tuition or maintenance before permission is granted for dollar funds, contact the Office of Admissions for certification as soon as possible. Be specific regarding your needs. To obtain funds to cover your study expenses in later years, you may request monetary exchange letters from the International Students Program.

We recommend that you bring approximately $2,000 in U.S.-dollar travelers checks to cover immediate expenses for books and supplies, cold-weather clothes, and such settling-in costs as security deposits for rent, telephone, and utilities.

It is wise 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 living expenses will be.

The transfer of funds from your home country to the United States may take several days or weeks depending on the financial regulations of your country. Ascertain in advance how long this process takes and plan your expenditures accordingly.

Financial aid

Very little financial aid is available to international students; most aid derives from U.S. government sources and is restricted to U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Remember,
when you applied for your Brooklyn College I-20 or DS2019, you had to prove that you had all the funding required for tuition and living expenses for each year of your degree program.

Some departments, however, do provide teaching or research assistantships for graduate students. Check with your department for details.

Banking

It is dangerous to carry or keep in your residence large amounts of cash; instead, deposit money in a bank. You may want to open a checking account, often referred to as a currency account in other countries, which will allow you easy access to your money while keeping it secure and possibly earning interest.

To open an account, you will need your passport, I-94, and I-20 or DS2019. Take your Brooklyn College ID card, Social Security card, and all identity documents issued by your government. Finally, do not forget to bring your money or checks for deposit. Contact the International Students Program if you are unable to open an account.

There are three kinds of checking accounts: basic, regular, and checking with interest. The appropriate account for you depends on the number of checks you will write each month and the amount of money you will retain in your account.

- A basic checking account often assesses you a service charge of approximately fifty cents for each check you write. Some banks permit you to write only a limited number of checks per month. If you do not plan on writing many checks, this type of account might be best for you. This account does not earn interest.
- A regular checking account allows you to write as many checks as you need, but it usually does not earn interest and most likely charges a monthly service fee.
- A checking with interest account requires you to maintain a minimum monthly balance to earn interest; if you do not, there usually is a charge. There may also be a service charge.

You should never send cash in the mail. Most people pay their bills with personal checks. Preprinted personal checks will bear your name and address. Because there is a small cost in ordering such checks, do not do so until you have settled into one residence. In the interim, the bank will issue you a temporary supply of generic checks without the printed information.

Writing a check

- Write the date (month/day/year) on which you are issuing the check on the top line on the right.
- Write the name of the person or business to whom you are making the payment.
- Write the amount of the payment in Arabic numerals. Put the first digit directly after the dollar sign, leaving no space for another person to alter the amount by writing in an additional number.
- Write the number of dollars and cents in words on the next line. Begin writing on the far left end of the line and fill the entire line with your writing.
- On the line marked memo, make a note of information for your records.
- Sign your name as it is printed on the check.
- Immediately after you write a check, record in your check register the check number, the date it is written, the name of the payee, and the amount. Calculate the balance remaining in your account. For example, if the check was written for $25.50 and the account balance was $225.50, the new balance is $200. Record any money you deposit into your account as well.
It is very important to keep an ongoing balance of your account. A fee, usually of at least $30, is charged each time you “overdraw” your account, that is, write a check for more money than you have in the account. “Bouncing a check” or “writing a bad check”—both terms for overdrawing an account—is a serious infraction and will remain part of your permanent credit record in the United States.

Each month the bank will send you a statement of your account. Make sure your record of the balance coincides with the bank’s. The statement will reflect amounts subtracted from your account by the bank for service charges or for printing personalized checks. Enter these amounts in your check register.

Some banks will also return to you on a monthly basis your canceled checks—checks cashed by the payees. This serves as a legal receipt of payment and should be retained with your financial records. This is being done less frequently as banks automate their systems. Many banks offer on-line banking, which allows you to access your account through a Web site. They may also secure your permission to write checks for you, thus handling payments as electronic transfers. Discuss the details of these newer systems with your bank.

**Consumer guidelines**

Americans have an abundance of material goods available to them. Some international students find the amount of choice overwhelming. Billions of dollars are spent on advertising to convince consumers which product is the so-called best. It is a good idea to comparison shop, to take time to look at the components of competing products to determine the best value or searching for the same item in different stores.

Although consumers are awarded certain legal rights to protect them from being “scammed” (taken advantage of), it is important to use common sense and to become an educated consumer. Below are tips for the sensible consumer.

- “You can’t get something for nothing” is a particularly relevant expression in New York City. Be very careful about merchandise offered at a greatly reduced price, especially if it is sold by a street vendor. It may be damaged, stolen, or misrepresented in any number of ways. Another cliché, “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is,” should be taken seriously.
- Obtain a receipt when paying for goods or services. You need to keep some receipts, such as one from a grocery store, for only a short time. Other receipts, such as one for a computer, should become part of a permanent record. It is a good idea to create an organized record-keeping system.
- Consider the implications of how you pay for an item. Paying cash results in less paperwork for you and the merchant. Personal checks create a “paper trail,” which is handy in case a receipt is lost, but many stores will not accept them as a form of payment. Credit cards also create a paper trail, but interest is accrued if charges are not paid in full each month. (See the section “Credit cards and charge cards,” below.)
- When complaining about a product or service, keep a record of your actions. Start with a telephone call or in-person visit. If your complaint is not satisfactorily handled, you may wish to speak to the person’s supervisor. Make note of when you talked to someone, who it was, and what was said. Another option is to put the complaint in writing. Often, the person who is persistent will get results.
- Keep the warranty and operating instructions for any appliances or electronic equipment you purchase. A registration card must often be completed at the time of purchase and sent to the company to initiate warranty coverage.
v -Check the total of any receipt immediately. It is much easier to correct a mistake at the point of sale than later on.
v -Be skeptical. If a company is soliciting your business, have them put the offer in writing. Do not be pressured into making an immediate decision. Some companies use telephone solicitation to recruit new customers. Never give out your credit card number in response to an unsolicited telephone call. Should someone call and state that you have won a prize but there is a fee to have it sent, do not respond and do not give any personal information.
v -Many stores allow customers to put an item “on hold” for several hours or one day. This enables the consumer to comparison shop, secure in the knowledge that the item originally seen is still available without having to purchase it. Many stores also allow for “layaway” purchases. The customer pays a percentage of the total cost each month and the item is held in the store until it is paid for in full. Note that there is often a time limit and interest charges associated with layaway plans.
v -Generic brands—items that carry the store’s label rather than that of a “name brand”—are available in an array of merchandise, including food, drugs, and small electronic appliances, at greatly reduced costs.
v -Pay bills on time. Companies often assess a late charge.
v -“Outlet” stores carry name brand, or designer, merchandise at reduced rates. Usually the merchandise is from a previous season, is a discontinued item, or may be damaged. Familiarize yourself with the merchandise prior to visiting an outlet store to ensure that the prices offered are truly “bargains.”

Gratuities and tips
Generally, service charges are not included in bills. It is expected that these charges will be covered by tips, an acronym for “to insure proper service.” Tips often constitute the primary income of service employees who earn a small hourly wage. For satisfactory service in a restaurant, tip 15 to 20 percent of the check’s pretax subtotal. Taxi drivers are generally tipped 10 to 15 percent of the fare. Other workers routinely tipped are luggage handlers at airports ($1 per bag), bell captains and housekeepers at hotels, and anyone providing a personal service (e.g., a manicurist or hair stylist). If service is unsatisfactory, you may tip less than the suggested amount or not at all. Tips are not expected in take-out restaurants, cafeterias, or fast-food establishments.

Credit cards and charge cards
It has become relatively easy for international students to receive charge cards, which are valid for a credit in a particular store, and credit cards. Students who obtain these cards find them to be extremely helpful, especially upon arrival in the United States when they need to make many purchases. Students should be cautious in using these cards and carrying a large amount of debt. The interest on charges may be more than 20 percent and the card holder is responsible for payment of all charges plus interest if the total amount owed is not paid in full each month.

Adjusting to U.S. Culture
“I’ve been to the United States so many times, I practically live there.”
“I’m Canadian, so I don’t expect any adjustment problem in New York.”
“My parents and I have lived in four different countries, so I’m sure I can handle the United States.”
“I’ve been reading lots of U.S. magazines and watching lots of U.S. movies. I’m confident I’ll make it there.”

These quotes from international students may sound familiar. In this age of information overload, it may be tempting to believe one can learn much of what there is to know about another country without going there. This is especially true with a high-visibility country like the United States. In reality, of course, living in another country takes on many more nuances and dimensions than one might anticipate, no matter how well one prepares for it. Even if you visited the United States as a tourist, you are likely to feel different now that you will be living here for several years.

The normal and inevitable feelings that most international students experience while adjusting to another culture are known as culture shock. Culture shock is caused by the loss of the familiar—your environment has changed, people communicate differently, and most important, no one knows who you are in terms of your family, likes, dislikes, status at home, and achievements. It may be a feeling of sadness at missing your family, favorite food, or native language. It may be frustration over the long lines in New York, the difficulty in speaking English all day, or the competitiveness in finding an apartment. It may take the form of a constant stomachache, a daily headache, a skin rash, or a lack of appetite. It is something that people experience differently; it may last weeks or months and may even occur more than once.

The four stages of culture shock

Cultural shock has four distinct stages. Because the first stage of culture shock, known as cultural adaptation or the “honeymoon stage,” is a type of euphoria, it may lead you to believe that the transition will be easy. Although it cannot be avoided, culture shock may be less stressful if anticipated.

The honeymoon stage
Common thoughts:
- Isn’t this exciting?
- Aren’t they interesting?
- I can’t wait to tell ______________ about this.
- Everything here is so ______________!

Characteristics:
- You are observing the new culture and familiarizing yourself with the new environment.
- You are meeting helpful and friendly staff and professors.
- You are making new friends.
- You are seeing and doing new things and enjoying a new world.
- You are proud that you can make yourself understood in English and that you can understand the native speakers.

The conflict stage
Common thoughts:
- We would never do that in my country!
- Why can’t they just ______________?
- These people are so ______________!
- I only have ___ months before I go home.

Characteristics:
- You have little time or opportunity to make friends.
- You feel isolated, out of place, tired, sick, depressed, angry, or frustrated.
You spend a lot of time with members of your home culture complaining about the host culture.

- You experience problems with the subtleties of the target language.
- Your expectations are unmet.
- You feel homesick.

The critical stage
Common thoughts:
- Why shouldn’t they say or do that?
- We say or do that too, but differently.

Characteristics:
- You choose to become an “explorer” in the new culture.
- You accept the challenge of self-reflection.
- You assume responsibility for your own cultural adjustment.

The recovery stage
Common thoughts:
- I don’t understand them like I do.
- I’m beginning to like this.

Characteristics:
- Your language skills improve noticeably.
- You begin to understand the actions of the members of the host culture.
- You have made friends in the host culture.
- You develop a greater tolerance for what is strange and new.

A prescription for culture shock
You may do many things to minimize the discomfort of culture shock and maximize your experiences in the United States. Following are some suggestions from American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States.

Ask questions
Ask such practical questions as “Where may I find foodstuffs from my home country?” or “Where is the nearest bank?” but also ask questions about people’s opinions and experiences. Ask for their reactions to events, newspaper articles, and television programs.

Learn and practice local English
American English varies by region. Watch television, listen to the radio, read local newspapers, and talk with people you encounter during your daily routine.

Take field trips
A field trip is a visit to a place where you can observe what happens. Yours may be conducted by going to the grocery store, riding the subway, attending a church service, or performing volunteer service. You will be amazed at how much you can learn simply by observing.

Talk with experienced international students
Brooklyn College has a large population of international students whose experiences may be an invaluable resource for you. Do not limit yourself to members of your own culture; be adventuresome.

Observe social interactions
Notice what people say and how they say it when they greet an acquaintance, are introduced to a stranger, or take leave of a friend or someone they have just met. Watch for variations with age, sex, and apparent social status.

**Read**

An abundance of materials exists about your new national, regional, and local host cultures. Newspapers, magazines, and the library are excellent resources.

**Reflect**

An essential part of cultural adaptation is taking time to reflect on what is happening to and around you. Because academic demands are rigorous, reflection will not happen unless you purposefully reserve time for it. Ask yourself such questions as:

- What did I expect from my study abroad experience?
- What can I do to make my experience more constructive and interesting?
- How is this experience preparing me to meet my goals for the future?

**Meeting new people**

Students often ask how far they must go in adapting to the United States. There are two extreme responses to this question. Some people completely reject the new culture. They refuse to make any changes and are unwilling to try new foods, learn a new language, or change daily habits. They find it difficult if not impossible to function in a new country and sometimes want to return home immediately because they are so uncomfortable with having to deal with so many new experiences.

At the other extreme are people who completely assimilate into the new culture to the degree where it seems that it is the native culture. Most people, however, find a position somewhere between the two extremes.

The following suggestions may facilitate your adjustment:

- Learn and observe. A word, phrase, or gesture that means one thing in your country may mean something very different in the United States. Watch how people greet each other, how they express disagreement, and if communication styles change when talking to a professor vis-à-vis a friend.
- Try not to judge. American customs, habits, and ideas, and those of international students from countries other than yours, are simply different. Do label everything as “good” or “bad.”
- Show a sense of humor. You will likely make mistakes as you explore the United States. Laughing at your mistakes may help you learn from them, and people will offer a friendly response.
- Become involved. The more you put into an experience, the more you will learn from it. Make an effort to meet people, form friendships, and participate in activities.

**Words of wisdom from a returning international student**

What were your first days in New York like?

I didn’t know much about New York except for what was presented in Hollywood movies. My first impression was that New York was not very safe. I was so scared
that I wouldn’t even take a taxi because I thought the drivers might rob me. I found out later that taxis are actually quite safe, but from time to time the drivers take advantage of foreigners by going a longer route.

I really enjoy those early memories because I never knew that I could do everything by myself, like settling down, opening a bank account, and going to Orientation without knowing a single person.

How did you meet people and make friends?
Joining a club is a good way to start because its members share a common interest. People who have something in common often get along with each other, so never miss the chance to talk to strangers in club meetings.

Meeting new people and making new friends in the beginning of the school year doesn’t mean that you’ll be expected to stick with them for the entire year. In the beginning, everyone’s going through a transition period and looking for the right person and the right lifestyle. If you do not want to hang out with someone, you don’t have to. Simply move on to someone you feel more comfortable with.

Did you ever feel homesick? If so, what did you do?
I never felt homesick and actually enjoyed all the freedom, but I know many others who did. The only advice I can give is to tell some friends about it and spend time with them. As time passes, you will be able to shift your attention to your new life. Also, it’s always a good idea to hang out with a friend when he or she is feeling homesick because the friendship will be stronger after overcoming this transitional period.

Do you have any advice for new students?
Don’t be afraid to be yourself. Similar kinds of people attract each other, so don’t be afraid that you won’t make new friends. But watch out for having too much fun in New York—always make sure you have a good balance of academics and leisure. And watch out for your budget because in New York, money flies faster than a jumbo 747.

You would also benefit from developing a support network. Think about your country and your life there before coming to the United States. How would you respond to the following questions and situations?

v -When you were accepted to Brooklyn College, with whom did you share the news? Were they happy for you? Did they say they would miss you while you were abroad? What other reactions did they have?

v -If you were in an automobile accident in your country, who would visit you in the hospital? Who would visit you several times? Who would offer to help after you returned home?

v -If you were feeling sad or depressed, would you share your feelings with others? Are there only certain family members or friends with whom you would discuss these matters? How would they respond?

v -If something wonderful happened, whom would you invite to celebrate with you?

In all these situations, you may turn to family members, friends, teachers, and other people whom you know, trust, and like, and who are willing to share your life. They are the people who provide companionship and are concerned about you, to whom you turn in times of need, and to whom you can express your true emotions—and vice versa.
You formed this support network slowly, person by person. When you left home, you left your network behind. It still exists but because of the physical distance it is more difficult to turn to these people. You need to develop a new support network in the United States that will serve the same purpose as the one you had at home. You will feel better about being here after meeting some friends with whom you can share your thoughts and feelings. If you join a student organization, attend a particular place of worship, or attend activities on campus, you may meet people who will become part of your growing support network. If you do not develop such a group, you will be isolated and homesick.

In the United States, people are willing to look outside their families and close friends to develop a support network. For example, they might seek out a professor whom they respect, a counselor, or the clergy to discuss personal problems, professional issues, and important decisions they must make. Many Americans see these people as “experts” or objective observers and are willing to consult them.

Brooklyn College has numerous resources to help students resolve problems, meet other students, and assist in emergency situations. These include the International Students Program; the Office of Student Life, which serves all Brooklyn College students; and a variety of counseling services that are available to all students who wish to discuss their concerns in a confidential manner.

Meeting Americans

Americans often seem very friendly, even when you first meet them. But many observers from abroad have the impression that friendships among Americans tend to be shorter and less intense than those among people from other cultures. Because Americans are taught to be self-reliant and live in a mobile society, many avoid deep involvement with other people. Further, Americans tend to compartmentalize their friendships, having “friends at work,” “friends at college,” a “tennis friend,” and so on.

Following are suggestions on how to make American friends:

- Be patient if Americans are ignorant of some aspect about your home country. Use the opportunity to educate and share in a polite and brief manner.
- Seek out Americans while they are at leisure, such as eating in a cafeteria or sitting in a lounge or a park.
- Spend time away from your compatriots to be with Americans.
- Be persistent. Persevere through the disappointments with superficial interactions.
- Know what topics Americans like to discuss. On a college campus, these usually include classes, professors, homework, music, clubs, movies, sports, and vacation plans.
- If an American invites you for a meal or snack in a restaurant, he or she might expect you to pay for your food. Do not assume that he or she will pay for you just because you were invited.
- Learn more about the United States and its culture.
- Join one of the many clubs at Brooklyn College.

Cultural characteristics of Americans

Some international students come from very homogenous societies in which most people have the same racial, linguistic, and religious background. The United States, on the other hand, is extremely diverse, with large numbers of people from different backgrounds. Even with this
diversity, it is possible to identify certain characteristics, attitudes, and practices common among Americans.

It is important to understand American customs and expectations. This does not mean that they are the best or that you should change your lifestyle. You may like and adapt some practices or ways of thinking and discard others. Either way, knowledge of the unwritten rules that Americans live by will benefit you in everyday academic and social life.

New York City has a long, rich history as a port of entry to the United States. One out of every three residents of New York City is born outside the United States and a significant number of those born in the United States have moved to New York City from other regions. Therefore, although New York City is very American in its representation of the diversity of this country, it does not truly reflect the behavior and values of those who were born here. To experience U.S. culture in all its variations, international students are encouraged to travel to other regions of the United States.

Following are generalizations of the mainstream culture, but you will find many individuals who are exceptions to any or all of them.

**Individualism**

Americans generally believe the ideal person is self-reliant. Most Americans see themselves as separate individuals, not as representatives of a family, community, or other group. They dislike being dependent on other people or having others depend on them. Some people define this trait as selfishness; others see it as a healthy freedom from the constraints of family or social class.

It is assumed that Americans:

- need to be alone sometimes and prefer to take care of problems by themselves;
- are ready to “do business” very soon after meeting, without spending much time on preliminary conversation;
- act competitively; and
- are proud of their accomplishments and expect others to be proud of their own accomplishments.

**Equality and informality**

Americans are taught that “all men are created equal.” While they violate that idea in some aspects of life, they adhere to it in others. They treat each other informally, even in the presence of great differences in age or social standing. Some people view this kind of behavior as a lack of respect; others see it as a healthy lack of concern for social ritual.

Examples of this behavior include:

- People waiting in line do not let someone of a higher status who just arrived step ahead of them.
- Adults routinely use each other’s first names upon introduction.
- More people are “dressing down” (wearing casual clothes rather than business attire) in the workplace on Fridays and during the summer.

**Punctuality**

Americans place considerable value on punctuality. They tend to organize activities on a schedule. As a result, they may seem hurried, always running from one thing to the next, and
unable to relax and enjoy themselves. International observers sometimes see this as being ruled by the clock, sometimes as a helpful way of ensuring that things get done.

Generally, for professional appointments, such as your class or a meeting with your professor or adviser, you should arrive within five minutes of the time you agreed to meet.

There is more flexibility in social life, especially with the challenges of transportation in the densely populated New York metropolitan area. Some invitations are based on a set start time, such as when dinner, a movie, or a play begins, and people are expected to arrive within ten minutes of the specified time.

Invitations to a party or gallery opening are more casual. Americans often arrive at such events “fashionably late”—up to an hour after the event has started. When in doubt, ask the person who is issuing the invitation in order to avoid confusion or hurt feelings.

**Materialism**

Success in the United States is often measured by the amount of money or the quantity of material goods a person accumulates. People who accrue money and goods by means of hard work, cleverness, and persistence are admired. Some international observers see this as a lack of appreciation for the spiritual or human things in life; others recognize it as a way of ensuring a comparatively high standard of living. Not only is the amount or worth of the material items valued, but there is often a priority on obtaining the latest version. The United States is a culture that tends to view change as an improvement.

Examples of this include:
- purchasing a new car, not because the old one is in disrepair, but in order to have the latest model;
- the constant “upgrade” of electronic equipment, such as a stereo system or computer; and
- the vast array of even such simple products as aspirin, paper towels, or bread.

**Friendship**

Americans are curious and may ask you many questions. Some questions may appear uninformed and elementary, so be patient when answering them. You may be the first person from your country whom they have met and they may have little understanding of life in your country. Most Americans are sincerely interested in learning more about you and your culture.

American friendships may be transitory and are often established to meet personal needs in a particular situation. The casualness of friendship patterns allows people to move freely into new social groups, which usually form around work, school, shared interests, or places of residence. Most Americans readily welcome new people into their social groups. They have many interests and engage in a variety of activities, so the warmth expressed in one meeting, while genuine and sincere, may be confined to that occasion. Close friendships are the result of repeated interactions between individuals as they identify similarities in point of view and share a variety of experiences.

**The role of women**

A strong feminist movement in the United States aims to ensure that women have responsibilities and opportunities equal to those of men. Although women have not yet achieved this equality in many aspects of society, they play a fairly public and visible role and have more responsibility
and authority than in many other countries. At the same time, some people may find that American society is more sexist than their own in certain respects.

You may find the dress and behavior of women quite different from that in your home country. Some students have difficulty adjusting to situations in which a woman is in a position of authority. What some people consider the “proper” role for women is considered by others to reflect sexism and male chauvinism.

- Many women hold positions of leadership, whether at the national level in elected and appointed positions or at Brooklyn College, where women direct offices and academic programs and serve as deans, vice-presidents, and chairpersons.
- More and more women work outside the home, even if they are married. Approximately 70 million American women (49 percent) are in the workforce. It should be noted, however, that women on average still earn less than men, approximately seventy-three cents for every dollar a man earns.
- Fields and professions that were unwelcoming to women in the past have seen remarkable growth of women in their ranks, including medicine, law and law enforcement, and engineering.

Conversation
The informality of American culture permeates verbal and nonverbal interactions. Casual conversation (“small talk”) touches on the weather, sports, jobs, friends, and experiences. Students spend a lot of time talking about classes, professors, and homework as well as social activities. Americans are less likely to casually discuss religion, salary, and politics. Unique to city living is the casualness with which personal expenses, such as apartment rent, may be broached.

During the flow of a normal conversation, Americans usually take turns speaking—no one speaks for a prolonged uninterrupted period of time. They prefer to avoid arguments and long periods of silence.

When talking to someone, Americans alternate between looking into the listener’s eyes and looking slightly away. When they are listening, they look almost constantly at the speaker’s eyes. Americans tend to distrust people who do not look at their eyes while talking to them.

Nonverbal communication is secondary among Americans. Do not expect them to understand unspoken cues that are recognizable and frequently used in your culture.

Slang
As is true with people throughout the world, Americans have developed certain peculiarities in their everyday language. Some words are unique to a certain group of people and often change quickly and become outdated.

Below are definitions of common American slang. Those followed by an asterisk (*) are impolite, profane, sexist, or obscene and may be highly offensive or insulting. Students who want a thorough and useful guide to profane or vulgar vocabulary and to polite terms for sexual and toilet activities may wish to obtain An International Student’s Guide to Dangerous English, published by Early Publications, P.O. Box 281, Rochelle Park, New Jersey 07662.

Ass*—stupid or insensitive person; person’s buttocks
Bar—place that serves alcoholic beverages
Bastard*—illegitimate child; a crude, insensitive male
Big deal—important event; may be used sarcastically to refer to something that is not important
Blue or have the blues—feel depressed  
Bogus—nonexistent, fake  
Bombed—intoxicated by alcohol  
Booze—liquor  
Born again—hold strong, fundamentalist Christian beliefs  
Buck—a dollar  
Bummer—unpleasant experience  
Burned out—exhausted, dull, or lifeless as a result of excessive drug use or overwork  
BYOB—Bring Your Own Bottle/Beer/Booze, most often seen on an invitation to a party  
Check in—get in touch with someone; arrive at a hotel  
Check it out—look at something or someone  
Check out—sign a book out of a library; try to learn something new; leave a hotel  
Chill, chill out—relax; a command to stop what you are doing  
Commuter—someone who lives at home and uses transportation to get to work or school  
Cool—something good or unusual  
Cop—police officer  
Couch potato—lazy person who spends a lot of time watching television  
Cram—study frantically the night before a test  
Crash—stay overnight at someone’s place, usually without notice or formal arrangement; to go to sleep after being very tired  
Drag—inhal e a cigarette; something that is boring; women’s clothing when worn by a man  
Drop in—visit unexpectedly  
Fed up—disgusted with or tired of  
Gay—homosexual  
Gross—something vulgar or crude  
Groupies—loyal fans of a celebrity or musician  
Hangout—a regular meeting place for friends  
Hang out—relax  
Hangover—the physical aftermath of heavy drinking, such as headache or nausea  
High—under the influence of marijuana or other drugs  
Hold, hold on—wait, often used while on the phone  
Horny*—wanting to have sex  
Hot—sexually attractive; stolen merchandise  
ID—identification card  
Joint—marijuana cigarette  
Junk food—food of little or no nutritional value  
Ligh ten up—relax, do not be so serious  
Make ends meet—budget within one’s income  
Mall—a cluster of stores in one specific area; a shopping center  
Pill, the—contraceptive birth control pill  
Piss*—urinate  
Pissed*—annoyed  
Piss off*—make someone angry  
Pot—marijuana  
Psyched—excited about something that is about to happen  
Rowdy—loud, noisy, obnoxious  
Straight—ultraconservative; heterosexual  
What’s up?—common greeting. “What's happening?”

Hygiene
Americans believe that the natural smells of people’s bodies and breath are unpleasant. Most Americans bathe or shower daily—or more often if they engage in vigorous exercise—use an underarm deodorant, and brush their teeth at least twice a day. In addition, they may rinse with a mouthwash or chew mints or gum in order to be sure their breath is free of food odors. They usually do not wear the same clothes more than once during a week, often discarding them to be washed after one use.

It is common for women to shave their legs and underarms and to use perfume every day; many men use a scented cologne or aftershave lotion. Most Americans will quickly back away from a person who has “body odor” or “bad breath.” This may be the only signal that they are offended by another person’s body odor or breath; most Americans will not verbally relay it.

Working

Whether you have a job in the library or computer lab or teaching responsibilities as a graduate assistant, you may find the following guidelines useful.

- Arrive at work punctually. If you must be late or miss work, notify your supervisor as soon as you can.
- Complete and submit your timesheet thoroughly and promptly.
- Ask questions about any assignments or procedures you do not understand.
- If you encounter difficulties in carrying out an assigned task, tell your supervisor immediately.
- Carefully follow any safety and health rules.
- Be neat and clean.
- When appropriate, offer to help other employees with their tasks.
- Avoid treating your supervisor with what Americans would consider excessive deference. Notice how other employees at your level address the supervisor and try to follow their example.
- Be friendly and sociable with other employees.
- Treat everyone—men and women, superiors and subordinates—with respect.
- Periodically ask your supervisor, “How can I improve?”
- Show a positive attitude. Avoid complaining and gossiping, and be cheerful and constructive in your dealings with others.

Sometimes workers encounter problems associated with their jobs. For example, they might believe that they are being treated unfairly or unreasonably or that another employee’s behavior is making it difficult for them to carry out their responsibilities. When this happens, generally the worker will first speak directly with the person with whom he or she has the problem. If that does not work, the next step is to talk to the supervisor, and then, if there is no resolution, the supervisor’s supervisor.

National holidays

The United States celebrates several national holidays on the Monday nearest the date of the event the holiday commemorates. The purpose of this is to create three-day weekends (i.e., Saturday, Sunday, and Monday). Other holidays are celebrated on the same date each year. Many businesses and all government offices close in observance of national holidays. Except for Thanksgiving and Christmas, retail stores tend to stay open on national holidays but with shorter hours.

The holidays listed below are celebrated by a significant number of Americans. Some are legal holidays on which government offices are closed; some are business holidays on which most businesses except gas stations, food stores, and drug stores are likely to be closed.
New Year’s Day (January 1)—The major celebration of the new year takes place the night before, December 31, New Year’s Eve. It is common for people to have parties and to have a traditional champagne toast at the stroke of midnight to welcome the new year. It is also customary to blow horns or whistles, embrace friends, and kiss lovers at midnight. New Year’s Day is a legal and a business holiday.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (third Monday in January)—The birthday of the U.S. civil rights leader is a legal holiday.

Presidents’ Day (third Monday in February)—Presidents’ Day is a legal holiday commemorating the birthdays of U.S. presidents.

Memorial Day (last Monday in May)—This legal and business holiday honors U.S. soldiers who died fighting in wartime.

Independence Day (July 4)—Parades, fireworks, and flags commemorate the adoption of the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1776. This is a legal and business holiday.

Labor Day (first Monday in September)—This legal and business holiday honors U.S. workers.

Columbus Day (Monday closest to October 12)—This holiday commemorates the landing of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus in North America in 1492.

Election Day (first Tuesday after the first Monday in November)—Most municipal, county, state, and national elections are held on this day. Although it is not a legal or business holiday, people are usually permitted to leave work briefly to vote.

Veterans Day (second Monday in November)—Veterans Day is a legal holiday honoring veterans of the armed services.

Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November)—Thanksgiving is a harvest celebration stemming from festivities in the original U.S. colonies. It is a legal and business holiday when families gather and have a traditionally large meal that includes turkey and pumpkin pie.

Christmas (December 25)—A legal and business holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ with feasting and gift giving. Santa Claus, a mythical figure, is said to visit the homes of children on the night of December 24 and leave gifts for them while they sleep.

Daylight saving time
Daylight saving time is achieved by advancing the clock one hour. This occurs on the first Sunday in April and ends on the last Sunday in October, when the clocks are put back one hour. Newspapers and radio and television stations give frequent reminders so that it will be hard for you to forget to change your clocks and watches.

Living in New York

New York City is one of the most exciting—and one of the most expensive—cities in the world. Following is important information that will help you make the most of your time in “the Big Apple.”

Things to bring from home
We recommend that you bring the items described below with you. You should not, however, bring electrical equipment. Appliances in the United States operate on a different system and the plug size is probably different from that in your country. Even with an adapter and electrical current converter, your appliances will not operate well. Plan to buy electrical devices when you arrive.

**Medications**
Bring any medication that you take regularly (e.g., for allergies) or that you might not be able to afford here.

**Familiar decorations**
Bring anything that will make your new room your home for the next year, such as tapes of music and a Walkman or tape player, posters, and pictures of your family and friends.

**Cultural items from your country**
Items from home may help you to overcome the initial awkwardness of meeting new people by providing something to share and talk about. Consider bringing posters, colorful calendars, books, slides, videos, pictures, and maps.

**A variety of clothing**
As on most campuses in the United States, Brooklyn College students wear everything from old, torn jeans to nice pants and skirts, but most students prefer jeans and T-shirts. Popular shoes include sandals, boots, sneakers, or hiking shoes. New York weather varies greatly from summer to winter. You will need lighter clothing for autumn and spring, shorts for summer, and a warm coat, hat, scarf, gloves, and heavy sweaters for winter. If you do not have winter clothes, you may buy them here at reasonable prices. Do not forget to bring clothing appropriate for outdoor or sporting events. There is a pool on campus, so bring a swimsuit, too.

**Important documents**
Bring all the original documents and certificates that you think you will need—for example, to transfer your credits—as well as copies of them and of your important health records.

**Weather**
During the summer, June through September, the weather is often hot and humid and requires lightweight clothing. The temperature ranges from 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius) to the 90s Fahrenheit (above 32 degrees Celsius).

Winter, late December through March, is marked by sudden and extreme weather changes; several cold days may be followed by days of moderate temperatures. The temperature ranges from 20 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit (-7 to 7 degrees Celsius) and occasionally drops to zero Fahrenheit (-18 degrees Celsius). Days with snow or rain alternate with periods of clear and bright weather. The area around Brooklyn College may be quite windy. Warm overcoats, scarves, and winter boots are necessary. Because all college buildings are heated, clothes of medium weight provide the maximum comfort.

Rain falls throughout the year, so it will be helpful to have an umbrella and raincoat.

**Dressing appropriately**
The cold New York winters may come as a shock to students from warmer climates. Low temperatures are even more uncomfortable when the wind is blowing. You will hear the phrase “wind chill” factor in weather reports. Wind chill is the temperature of still air that would have the same effect on exposed skin as the combination of current wind speed and air temperature. The lower the air temperature and the stronger the wind, the lower the wind chill factor. Thus, the temperature may be 15 degrees Fahrenheit but it may feel as if it is -5 degrees because of the wind.

Layering your clothing will keep you warmer in the winter by trapping air between the layers that will be heated by the body and serve as insulation. Select clothes designed for cold weather. Tight clothing inhibits blood circulation, which makes it harder for the body to stay warm. However, it is important that clothing fits snugly at the wrists, ankles, neck, and waist to prevent warm air from escaping. When you go out, leave few areas of your body exposed, especially on a windy day. Cover your head and ears with a hat or hood. Choose warm fabrics. Natural fibers, such as cotton and wool, allow perspiration to evaporate from the skin, keeping you warmer. Clothes in the United States list the fiber content on a label attached to the garment.

Layering also allows you to regulate your temperature by either adding or removing a layer if you get too hot or cold. In the spring and fall, the temperature fluctuates more, so, for example, even though you know it will be a very warm day, it is quite cool in the morning and you might put on long pants and a sweater. By noon, the temperature rises and your sweater may be too warm. Fortunately, if you had put on a T-shirt under your sweater, you may take off your sweater and enjoy the sunshine in your short-sleeves. By the time evening arrives, you will be happy to have your sweater with you.

Housing

Brooklyn College does not have dormitories or housing accommodations. Students who need housing should arrive in New York at least two weeks before classes start and spend a lot of time looking. Housing in New York is expensive; low-cost housing may take considerable time to locate.

Note: Brooklyn College provides housing information solely for the convenience of its students. The college does not endorse or recommend any housing. Housing arrangements are the exclusive responsibility of the student.

Apartments, furnished rooms, and shares are available in the college neighborhood. Notices to the college from landlords with available accommodations are posted on the referral board, outside the Housing Referral Office, 1303 James Hall. Most landlords will handle applications in person only, so you must be in town to make arrangements.

Finding an apartment may be a pleasant experience or a harrowing one depending on how well informed you are about the associated legalities and regulations. For your convenience, the Housing Referral Office has a copy of the Tenant’s Rights publication. If you need further assistance, we may be able to refer you to a local community agency specializing in housing needs and problems.

Using a broker (a real estate agent) to locate an apartment is expensive, as there is often a fee that equals at least one month’s rent. Generally, it is best to try to find something on your own first or through the housing referral board.

Other sources of housing are advertisements in such newspapers as the New York Times, New York Newsday, Daily News,
New York Post, Village Voice, New York Press, and several Brooklyn neighborhood newspapers. Some papers have Web pages and may also be available in other cities and countries.

Last, you may call Education Housing Services—Student Housing, a private supplier of student-oriented housing (not affiliated in any way with Brooklyn College), (800) 297-4694.

If you are not familiar with New York City, you may wish to purchase one of the many guidebooks that contain information about transportation, neighborhoods, and other aspects of the city.

Unless you are able to obtain housing in advance of your arrival in the United States, we advise you not to bring your family with you. Send for them only when you have found suitable quarters.

**Temporary housing**

If you do not have prearranged housing in New York, temporary housing is available, but it may be quite expensive. Temporary accommodation may be possible at the locations listed below. Note that all locations are in Manhattan and all phone numbers are in the 212 area code. (When calling from Brooklyn, dial 1-212 before the number.)

International House—a private residence hall for international and U.S. students attending educational institutions in New York City that offers rooms and apartments to students and their families; 500 Riverside Drive; telephone, 316-8400; fax, 316-1827. Rates range from $30 to $100 per night. Application is required.

New York International American Youth Hostel—891 Amsterdam Avenue; telephone, 932-2300. Temporary accommodations are available at $20 a day (plus $3 for non-American Youth Hostel members). Advance reservations are recommended.

Sussex House—a residence facility for college and university students; 260 West 41 Street; telephone, 719-3700; fax, 719-0234; e-mail, info@sussexhouse.org; Web site, www.sussexhouse.org. Rates range from $700 to $1,200 per month.

YMCA—dormitory-style housing for both men and women is available in three YMCAs in Manhattan. Costs range from $45 to $50 per night (approximately $225 to $250 per week). If you are interested in long-term (full-semester) discounted rates, contact the YMCA Central Reservation Office (the Y’s Way), 308-2899.

- McBurney Y—215 West 23 Street; telephone, 741-9210.
- Vanderbilt Y—227 East 47 Street; telephone, 756-9600.
- West Side Y—5 West 63 Street; telephone, 875-4100.

Housing may also be found at the following Manhattan locations.

- 92 Street YMHA—1395 Lexington Avenue, 427-6000.
- Bard Hall—50 Haven Avenue, 304-7000.
- Chelsea Center Hostel—313 West 29 Street, 243-4922.
- Clarion Hampshire Hotel—224 West 49 Street, 246-5252.
- Empire Hotel—44 West 63 Street, 265-7400.
- Excelsior Hotel—45 West 81 Street, 362-9200.
- Hotel Consulate—5 West 63 Street, 246-5252.
- International Student Center—33 West 88 Street, 787-7706. No rooms are available August 20–30.
- Landmark Guest Rooms at Union Theological Seminary—3401 Broadway, 280-1313.
- Malibu Studios Hotel—2688 Broadway, 222-2954.
- Millburn Hotel—242 West 76 Street, 362-1006.
Temporary housing for women

The YWCA Judson Post Hall residence provides dormitory-style housing exclusively for women at 30 Third Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11217; telephone, (718) 875-1190. Rates for single rooms are either $68 or $79 per night and a security deposit is required. Community-style rooms include a kitchen and bathroom. Twenty-four-hour security is also provided.

Types of apartments

An apartment is a complete, private living unit within a building of similar units. None of the facilities are shared by residents of the building, with the possible exception of the building’s common laundry facilities and storage areas. A studio or efficiency apartment usually has two rooms—a bathroom and another large room that serves as the kitchen, bedroom, and living room. Studios are designed for a single occupant. One-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments with separate kitchen, dining, and living rooms are available at a considerably higher cost.

An unfurnished apartment has a refrigerator and a stove; the renter must obtain all other furniture and items. A furnished apartment includes all furniture but not linens (sheets and towels) or cooking and eating utensils. An unfurnished apartment costs less to rent and many students furnish it with second-hand (previously owned) furniture bought at a thrift store or from other students. There are many more unfurnished than furnished apartments in New York City. A tenant (renter) normally pays electric, gas, and telephone utilities, which are billed on a monthly basis.

The lease

When renting a room or an apartment, always request a lease. The lease is a binding written agreement between the tenant and the landlord (owner) that specifies the tenant’s responsibilities and dates of occupancy as well as all relevant charges, such as rent, electricity, phone, and any other costs charged to the tenant. Without a lease, you have no binding agreement and your landlord may alter arrangements previously agreed upon.

Leases often contain exclusions; for example, you may not be permitted to have children or pets. Before you sign a lease, be certain that you understand its terms. Make sure you can keep the apartment for as long as you wish but that the lease is not binding for more time than you need. Find out whether you can break the lease with one or two months’ notice to the landlord. In the absence of such a provision, you may be required to pay rent until the end of the period covered, even if you move out. Also, check if the lease allows you to sublet your apartment to someone else in your absence. Find out how to arrange for repairs of appliances and other items.

Once you have an apartment, it may take a few days to get your utilities. Consolidated Edison (“Con Ed”), the electric company for New York City, and Verizon, the telephone company, make appointments over a span of several hours (usually between 9 a.m. and noon, or noon and 5 p.m.) You will need to be very flexible and realize this is a one-time inconvenience. If you need to establish service or have any questions, contact the companies at the following:

Con Edison: telephone, (800) 752-6633; e-mail, customerservice@coned.com; Web site, www.coned.com.


Students are advised to obtain renter’s insurance to provide for the replacement of belongings in case of fire or theft. It is a relatively inexpensive investment that can save you hundreds or thousands of dollars in case your belongings are damaged or stolen.
Questions to ask about off-campus housing

v What is the rental price of the apartment? __________________________

v How many bedrooms does the apartment have? _______ Bathrooms? ______

v How many tenants may legally share the apartment? ______________________

v How close is the apartment to campus? ________________________________

v Where is the nearest bus stop? ______________ Subway station? ______________

v What utilities are included in the rent? Electricity? ____ Gas? ____ Cable TV hookup? ______

v What furniture and/or appliances are in the apartment? _________________

v Where is the nearest laundry? _________________________________________

v Who is responsible for maintenance and repairs (landlord or tenant)? __________

v Is a short-term lease available (e.g., semester, six months, nine months, summer only)? __________

v What is the price difference between a short-term and a long-term lease? __________

v Are sublets allowed? ________ How are they handled? ______________________

v Is an application fee required? ____ What is the required security deposit? ____ Is the application fee credited to the security deposit? __________

v Is there a play area for children? ____ How close is a public park? ____

v What neighborhood school will my child(ren) attend? __________________ How close is it? ______________________________

v What is the pet policy? ____________________________________________

Rental procedures

Following these procedures will ease the process of renting an apartment:

1. -Have an extra copy of the financial guarantee (bank or sponsorship statement) used to obtain your visa as evidence of your ability to afford a year’s rent. (Your visa authorization document, I-20 or IAP-66, is not a financial guarantee. You do not have to show your immigration documents to your landlord for any reason.)

2. -Find a roommate(s) to help you share the cost of an apartment if you cannot afford it on your own.

   v -Consult the academic department you will be entering, the international student organizations representing your region of the world, and rental advertisements posted on campus on the housing board.

   v -Compare smoking habits, study habits, dietary customs, etc., with the people with whom you propose living.

   v -Discuss and agree to arrangements for handling bills, ordering telephone service, maintaining the apartment, entertaining guests, buying groceries, cooking, watching TV, and listening to the radio.

3. Look for an apartment that suits your budget and your needs.
v -Ask many questions, such as those recommended in the section “Questions to ask about off-campus housing.”

v -All apartments have a legal occupancy limit. Check that the number of roommates with whom you plan to live is within the legal occupancy limit for the apartment.

4. Make an application for the apartment of your choice. Apply for only one apartment.
   v -Ask if your application involves a fee.
   v -Is your application binding, that is, are you making a commitment to sign a lease if your application is approved?
   v -You will be asked for a financial guarantee (your bank or sponsorship statement) to prove that you can pay the rent.

5. If your application is approved, you will be asked to pay a security deposit and the first month’s rent.
   v -The landlord will hold the security deposit during your rental of the apartment. When you terminate your lease, the landlord must send you an itemized bill for any unpaid charges due on the apartment and the remainder of your security deposit.
   v -Your careful maintenance of the apartment and your timely payment of rent protect your chances of having your security deposit refunded.

6. Read the lease contract carefully and sign it with all your roommates.

7. -Inspect the apartment and make a damage checklist during your first week there.
   v -Detail any damage and/or lack of cleanliness.
   v -Photograph the apartment to document any damage.
   v -Deliver the damage checklist, dated and signed by everyone living in the apartment, to the landlord or apartment manager as soon as possible to provide evidence of the condition in which you receive the apartment and for which your security deposit should not be charged when you terminate your lease.

8. Apply for electric and telephone service.

9. Give your new address to the Office of the Registrar to ensure that you will receive college mail.

10. Ask the landlord or apartment manager to help you with any unfamiliar appliances.

11. Request maintenance and repairs in writing to your landlord or apartment manager. Keep a copy of your requests.

12. -Pay your rent before the late penalty period each month. Payment by registered mail with a return receipt requested provides evidence of your timely payment.

13. -Renew or terminate your lease in writing before the renewal/termination date.

Rental termination procedures
1. Notify your apartment manager in writing before the renewal/termination date on your lease.
2. Arrange the payment of utility and phone bills with your roommates. Exchange forwarding addresses. The last person out may receive all the bills.

3. Request the checkout procedure in writing from the landlord or apartment manager.

4. Clean the apartment thoroughly. It must be at least as clean as the checkout procedure requires in order to eliminate charges to your security deposit.

5. Compare your original damage checklist with the current condition of the apartment.

6. Ask the landlord or apartment manager to inspect the apartment with you.

7. You should receive an itemized bill for final charges with the balance of your security deposit within a month of your departure.
   - Your photographs and copies of the original damage checklist, repair requests, and mail receipts of your rental payments support you in any challenge of charges made to your security deposit.
   - Enclose copies of all the above in a letter to the landlord or apartment manager with an explanation of any difference of opinion about charges made to your security deposit.

Living with a roommate
Living with a roommate may be challenging, especially if you are not accustomed to sharing a room. A good idea is to discuss your living habits before any problems arise. Here are some questions to discuss:

   - How do you feel about overnight guests?
   - Do you mind music when you are studying in the room?
   - When do you usually go to sleep? Are you an early or late riser? If one person goes to bed or gets up earlier than the other, what courtesies should be followed not to disturb the person sleeping?
   - If you do not smoke, how do you feel about others smoking in the room?
   - If you purchase items for the room jointly—a small refrigerator or a rug, for example—how will you determine who keeps the item if one person moves out?
   - How do you feel about sharing food? Will each person have his or her own food?
   - How do you feel about alcohol?
   - Are there any particular habits the other person should be aware of?

Housekeeping
Keeping your apartment clean and neat may prevent conflicts with roommates as well as make you more comfortable. The following guidelines will give you some insight into what is considered clean in the United States.

Keeping the kitchen clean
American kitchens are less open to fresh air than kitchens in some parts of the world. Grease and oil in the air tend to accumulate on walls and on the tops of appliances and cabinets. These areas should be cleaned regularly to avoid the development of unpleasant odors, especially if you fry food frequently. Keeping crumbs off the counters, cleaning spills, and sweeping the floors will prevent attracting insects and rodents.
Defrosting the refrigerator. A refrigerator should be defrosted when the frost (ice) around the freezing unit becomes thick. Empty the refrigerator, turn it off, unplug it, and let the water from the melting frost drip into a tray or pan, which you can empty the sink. You may speed the process by putting a pan of boiling water in the refrigerator beneath the frosted area. Wipe the inside with a solution of water and baking soda. Some refrigerators defrost automatically. Check with your landlord about how to take care of yours.

Disposing of trash. Ask your landlord for your area’s schedule for trash and garbage pickup. Find out where to place garbage if you live in an apartment building. Recycling cans, newspapers, glass, and other items is mandated by law; noncompliance may result in fines.

Kitchen measures. Americans use volume rather than weight in measuring quantities for most recipes. They also use the term ounce as both a weight and a fluid measure: sixteen ounces is either one pound or one pint (two cups). The following table may help you decipher recipes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Measurement</th>
<th>Liquid Grams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon (tsp)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tablespoon (tbsp)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 2/3 tbsp</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 tbsp or 1 cup</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cups or 1 pint or 1 pound</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 cups or 1 quart</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ovens and oven temperatures. Some ovens have self-cleaning settings. Those that do not should be cleaned occasionally by hand. Ask your landlord for instructions.

Oven temperatures in the United States are in degrees Fahrenheit. To convert temperatures in Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit temperature and divide by 1.8. Some common temperature conversions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fahrenheit</th>
<th>Centigrade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boiling</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room temperature</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezing</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oven setting:
- Low or slow: 140–250°F 70–121°C
- Medium low: 250–300°F 121–150°C
- Medium/moderate: 300–350°F 150–180°C
- Medium hot: 350–400°F 180–200°C
- Hot: 400–425°F 200–220°C
- Very hot: 425–450°F 220–230°C
- Extremely hot: 450–500°F 230–250°C

Keeping the bathroom clean

Although Americans generally do not clean and polish a bathroom daily, they believe that it should be kept relatively clean and free of odors. Flush the toilet after each use. Most tampons may be flushed in the toilet along with toilet paper, but all other materials should be thrown in a wastebasket. Men should raise the toilet seat to urinate and lower it when they finish.

Transportation
**Subway**

The New York City subway operates all day every day, although late-night and weekend service is reduced. Subway trains run about every two to five minutes during rush hours (6:30–9:30 a.m. and 3:30–8 p.m.), five to twelve minutes during nonrush hours, and twenty minutes during late-night hours. Express trains skip certain stops. A subway station may house one or many subway lines, usually but not always in both directions.

Passengers use a prepaid MetroCard (swipe card) to enter the station area. MetroCards may be purchased in any amount. A one-way trip costs $1.50 and transfers between connecting lines are free. Unlimited Metro Cards are sold in daily ($4), weekly ($17), and monthly ($63) rates, allowing unlimited travel during that time period. If you will not use the subway often, it is worthwhile to purchase a card in $15 denominations, which allows for one free ride per $15 spent.

If you are unsure which subway to use to reach your destination, call the Mass Transit Authority (MTA), (718) 330-1234, or visit the MTA’s Web site, www.mta.nyc.ny.us/nyct. Free maps are available at all stations.

When riding the subway:

- Look for the colored globe outside the station entrance. A green globe indicates the station is open, a red globe indicates it is closed, and a yellow globe indicates it is open during certain hours only. A sign should be posted indicating the operating hours.
- Wait for the train near the station booth during nonrush hours.
- Stand away from the edge of the platform, behind the yellow line.
- Do not try retrieve something you drop on the subway tracks. The “third rail” contains six hundred volts of live electricity.
- Go to the station booth and ask an agent for help.
- Do not sleep on the train.
- Ride in the center car, near the conductor, during nonrush hours.
- Change cars if you are bothered by other passengers or feel uncomfortable.
- Do not ride by yourself in an empty subway car. Move to another car with other passengers or the conductor at the next stop.
- Watch your bags and backpack, especially on a crowded train. Place backpacks in front of you for safety.
- Do not display money or jewelry.
- Be aware of pickpockets. Do not keep your wallet in your back pocket, where it is easily accessible.
- Keep alert if you notice a commotion. It could be a pickpocket’s trick to divert your attention.
- Do not give money to panhandlers (beggars). It is illegal to panhandle on the subway and could endanger you by allowing someone to see where and how much money you are carrying.
- Do not lean against subway doors or ride or cross between subway cars.
- Use the emergency cord at the end of each car only to prevent an accident or injury. If someone becomes ill between stations, do not pull the cord while the train is in motion, as the train will stop, preventing medical professionals from reaching the sick passenger. Instead, pull the cord or notify the conductor of a sick passenger only when the train is at a station.

**Bus**
Exact change ($1.50 in coins) or a MetroCard is required for a one-way bus ride. The MetroCard may also be used for a free bus transfer within two hours of a subway ride. When you are ready to get off the bus, press the signal tape two blocks before the stop to give the driver time to stop safely. For more information, call the MTA, (718) 330-1234, or visit the MTA’s Web site, www.mta.nyc.ny.us/nyct.

**Taxi**

New York City taxicabs, generally called taxis or cabs, are yellow. If the medallion number, which is posted on the small sign in the middle of the roof, is illuminated, the cab is available. Taxis may not refuse to take a fare within the five boroughs of New York City—the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. If you have any difficulty, note the driver’s medallion number and call the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, (212) 382-9301. Check the seat for all of your belongings when leaving. Be sure to obtain a receipt, which contains the taxi number, in case you leave an item.

Taxis are easiest to find in Manhattan. Those living in the other boroughs may use a private car service instead. Because car services do not drive through the streets for fares the way taxis do, it is necessary to call for a “pick up.” Car services are listed in the yellow pages of your local telephone book.

**Car**

New Yorkers generally find car ownership to be a burden. In addition to maintenance and repairs, car owners must spend substantial money on insurance, registration, parking, and gas. Because owning a car is a considerable ongoing expense, students are advised to try life in the city without one.

Driver’s license. A driver’s license is required to operate an automobile anywhere in the United States. New York State honors a valid driver’s license issued by any other nation to a resident of that nation. Drivers must obtain a license in the state in which they reside, even if they already have a license from another state. You should not apply for a New York State license unless you become a resident of New York.

To obtain a New York State driver’s license, you must pass a written test, attend a five-hour class, and pass a road test. If you have a license from another state, you may be exempt from the class and road test. If you have a license from any nation other than Canada, you must complete all three steps. Your international license is valid for driving but not for waiving the tests and course for new drivers. When you receive your New York State license, you must surrender your international license. It will not be returned to you.

Call the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), (212) 645-5550, to find the nearest location at which you can obtain the manual needed for preparation for the written test and a list of documents required to establish identity and date of birth. You may obtain certain applications at the DMV’s Web site, www.nydmv.state.ny.us, or by e-mail, nydmv@dmv.state.ny.us.

When you apply for a New York State driver’s license, you must provide either your Social Security number or a letter from the Social Security Administration stating that you are not eligible for a Social Security number.

Buying a car. Carefully assess your needs before investing in an automobile. If you find you require a car, you may purchase a used car rather than a new one for substantially less money from a car dealership or from an individual who advertises through classified ads or on bulletin
boards. Take a friend who is both knowledgeable about cars and familiar with the purchasing process with you.

If you buy a car, the title or certificate of ownership must be transferred to you from the previous owner. In addition to the price of the car, you must pay sales tax on the purchase price when you register it at the DMV.

Insurance. New York and New Jersey require all car owners to carry liability insurance. You are liable if a car you own causes injury or death to another person or damage to someone else's property unless the accident is clearly not the fault of the driver. If you are legally liable for injuries, death, or damages, you could owe hundreds or thousands of dollars if you are not insured.

Collision insurance pays for repairs or replacement of your car if it is in an accident. It covers only the replacement value of the vehicle, so people generally choose to carry it only on cars that are relatively new or very expensive.

Comprehensive insurance covers losses caused by storms, thieves, and vandals.

Communication

Telephone
Regional companies provide local telephone service and new connections and maintain telephone lines. National companies provide long-distance service. Neither service is affiliated with the government.

Telephone units may be purchased at a variety of stores. To connect your telephone, contact Verizon at (718) 890-1550 or www.verizon.com. There is usually a one-time service charge for a new connection. Numerous options and special features, such as touch-tone, call waiting, call forwarding, and three-way calling, are available. Ask the representative to explain any services you wish to obtain. Your monthly service charges will depend on which services you select. Your monthly telephone bill is itemized to show all charges and individual calls.

For overseas calls and calls outside the area served by the local telephone company, you must choose a long-distance company. The quality and cost of services vary from company to company. Some companies provide special plans offering savings. Contact the companies for specific details before making your final selection.

Telephone books
Most individuals who have telephones are listed alphabetically by last name in the residents listings of the White Pages telephone book. Their address, zip or postal code, and telephone number follow the name. Only the person paying for the telephone service is listed; individuals living with the person are not. There is a charge for having an unlisted number.

Business and professional people are listed alphabetically by the business name or family name in the business listings of the White Pages.

The Yellow Pages, so-called because the pages are yellow, contain alphabetical listings of businesses by type of business (for example, accountants, airline companies, architects).

Emergency telephone numbers
Emergency telephone numbers are listed on the first page of the telephone book. The most important number is 911. Dial only those numbers to reach police, fire, or ambulance services immediately. Use 911 only for extreme emergencies. Consult the phone book for suitable nonemergency numbers.

**Toll-free numbers**
Many companies, such as airlines, car rental agencies, and hotels, offer toll-free telephone numbers. A toll-free number begins with the prefix 800, 888, or 877. There are no charges for calls made to these numbers.

**900 numbers**
Many businesses and fundraising companies, especially those advertising on television, have telephone numbers beginning with the prefix 900. Calls to these numbers are not free, costing from fifty cents to $50. Read the small print in the advertisement before calling a 900 number.

**Mail service**
Mail is delivered to residences once a day, Monday to Saturday, except federal holidays. Place outgoing mail in the blue mailboxes on any street or take it to any post office. Posted inside the mailbox door is the schedule for when mail is picked up from that box.

Postage for your mail varies, depending on its size and weight. Check with any post office or the United States Postal Service’s Web site, www.usps.com.

**Child Care and Schooling**
Child care in New York City is limited and tends to be expensive, so it is important to plan ahead. Costs vary with the age of the child, the type of care, program hours, and the community in which it is provided.

Preschools and day-care centers typically serve children ages three to five; some provide before- and after-school services for school-age children. Generally, preschools provide half-day sessions and day-care centers offer full-day programs. All schools or centers caring for seven or more children under age six for more than five hours per week for more than one month a year must be licensed by the New York City Department of Health.

After-school or extended day-care programs are provided in a variety of settings, including public schools. These programs provide child care during the early mornings or late afternoons when parents are at work, in school, or otherwise occupied.

Family child care is provided in an individual’s home for infants and pre-school and school-age children. Individuals who care for more than two children other than their own must be registered or licensed by the state. The care provider must be at least eighteen, have one to two years of experience caring for children, and participate in regular training. In addition, regulations stipulate the number and ages of children being cared for. For example, there are to be no more than two children under age two, with a maximum of five children, or a maximum of six children if none of those cared for are under age two.

In-home care, sometimes referred to as “babysitting” or “nanny care,” offers the advantage of providing care in your own home. It is the most expensive form of care and is not licensed.
Finding child care

Brooklyn College's Early Childhood Center sometimes has space available for your children. For more information, call the center, (718) 951-5431, and identify yourself as a Brooklyn College student.

Personal networking is another good way to find child care. Speak with neighbors, classmates, and colleagues about the programs in which their children are enrolled.

Consider the items below when searching for child care. If you have any reservations about the type of care being offered, trust your instincts and keep looking.

**The caregiver**

- Can you talk with the caregiver?
- Does the caregiver seem to genuinely enjoy children?
- For how many children is the caregiver responsible? Is the caregiver organized and able to give each child individual attention, or is he or she struggling just to manage the group?
- Does the caregiver have previous experience working with children or any education or credentials in child development?
- Does the caregiver encourage parents to visit, observe, make suggestions, or participate in the program?
- Does the caregiver regularly evaluate and communicate a child's progress?
- Does the caregiver understand what children are interested in and capable of doing at different stages of their growth?
- Does the caregiver use a calm voice and talk to the children in ways they can understand?
- Does the caregiver have methods of dealing with certain behaviors that agree with your own?
- Does the caregiver wash his or her hands before and after diapering, wiping noses, and preparing food?

**The environment**

- Does the facility have a current license, registration, or listing certificate available for examination?
- Is the facility and its equipment safe for children of all ages—with no sharp corners, soft fall zones under play equipment, covered electrical outlets?
- Is there enough indoor and outdoor space for children to play and move freely and safely? Is there a safe, clear area where infants may crawl?
- Is there enough space and equipment—cribs, cots, mats—for napping?
- Is there a clean and safe place to change diapers?
- Are medicines, cleaning supplies, and sharp objects stored out of the reach of children?
- Is the noise level too loud, too quiet, or just right for children busy at play?
- Is there a cozy place where a child may spend time alone?
- Does the area look inviting, fun, and designed for children?

**The children**

- Do the children look happy?
v How many children are in one group? Is the group small enough to allow them to participate in varying activities?
v Do children seem to enjoy being with the caregiver?
v Are they given choices or are they told what to do?
v -Are there a variety of toys and materials for children to play with, such as art supplies, blocks, books, puzzles, and soft toys?
v -Are they appropriate for their ages and abilities? Are there things that would be fun and safe to feel, see, hear, and smell?
v Can children easily access the toys and materials?
v Are there routines and rules that children can understand and follow? Are they fair and consistently upheld?
v Are children given time each day for quiet and active play and for indoor and outdoor play?
v -Are there plenty of opportunities for them to participate in creative experiences such as art activities, dramatic play, music, and reading?
v Are they fed nutritious snacks and meals throughout the day?

Questions to ask yourself
v Have I examined the policies and do they match my needs and the needs of my child?
v Would I trust this person to care for my child?
v Will my child be comfortable and happy in this setting?
v Has my child had a chance to visit the setting?
v -Have I contacted my local child care licensing office to review the compliance history of the facilities I am considering?

Further tips
Communication with the caregiver is vital and will help ensure good care for your child. Talk to the facility director or family home provider about their policies and make sure to read and sign a contract. A contract should address fee payments, late fees, facility holidays, and who provides snacks and meals. Many facilities and family homes share weekly activity plans and menus. If this information is not routinely shared, ask if it can be provided to you.

If you are unhappy or concerned about something the caregiver is or is not doing, discuss it with the caregiver or director as soon as possible and try to work out a solution.

Monitor your child’s care program. Continue talking to the caregiver and to your child about what he or she did during the day. If your child does not want to return to care, talk together and find out why. Also, talk to the caregiver if anything unusual seems to have happened.

Finding schools
Public school education (grades 1 to 12) in the United States is free and compulsory. Homeowners and apartment renters pay taxes directly or indirectly and thus earn the right to enroll their children in the public school system. If you would like to enroll your child, call the New York City Board of Education, Office of Zoning, (718) 935-3555, and tell them where you live. The office will provide you with the local community school district in which you live and the name, address, and phone number of the school for which you are zoned. Call the school to
determine how to register your child. They will need proof of your address and proof of immunizations for each of your children.

Child abuse and neglect

In the United States, there are laws aimed at protecting children from physical abuse from their parents or caregivers. A parent or guardian who abuses a child or does not provide adequate care or supervision may be reported to the New York City Administration for Children Services. Severely neglecting a child’s basic hygiene or feeding may also be reported by neighbors or teachers as an offense called “denial of critical care.” Inadequate supervision, such as leaving a child alone for long periods of time, may also be investigated.

Teachers, neighbors, police, and the Department of Human Services are committed to keeping children and property safe. With that in mind, you will want to teach your children to stay away from streets and parking lots when playing, to respect other people’s property, and to obey laws. It is also wise to teach children not to go with people they do not know in order to avoid the potential for kidnapping.

Safety and Security

Security officers and police

In the United States

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is responsible for the internal security of the United States. Occasionally, the FBI questions international students. You are not required to answer any of their questions unless they have a court order mandating a reply. If an FBI agent does not have a court order, you may simply say that you prefer not to answer. Doing so will not affect your immigration status.

However, federal regulation requires international students to answer any questions related to their immigration status asked by INS officers.

In New York City

If you are in an emergency situation, dial 911 from any telephone. The call is always free, even from a payphone. A 911 call should be made with discretion. It is appropriate to call 911 when a crime is in progress or when someone is seriously injured or endangered. Do not call 911 to report a crime after the fact, such as an apartment or car break-in. Such crimes should be reported by using the nonemergency number of the appropriate police station (precinct).

New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers patrol the city and are always available to assist you. Locate your local precinct and note the telephone number. When considering living in a particular area, ask the local police officers their opinion of the crime rate and get some safety tips for that locale.

At Brooklyn College

Brooklyn College has its own security force to guard the college’s buildings, ensure that all visitors to campus are here for college business, and assist the college community in emergencies and with nonemergency safety concerns. The security officers are also good sources of information about campus activities. They are not NYPD officers, but they have a working relationship with them. If you need help on campus, you may always go to or call the Department of Campus and Community Safety Services, 0202 Ingersoll Hall, (718) 951-5511.
Students, faculty, and administrators are required to show their Brooklyn College ID card when entering the campus. This helps the security officers ensure that anyone on college property is connected with the college or is here for legitimate college business. The ID card is valuable and there is a fee to replace it, so handle it with care.

**Con games**
A con or confidence game is an elaborate scenario created by a criminal in order to obtain your money or possessions. These skilled criminals are quite believable and can make an accident or unusual situation seem real. Afterward, victims feel embarrassed at being fooled and by the fact that they lost their money or belongings. Report any such crimes immediately to the Department of Campus and Community Safety or to the NYPD.

Here are some ways to avoid being a victim of a con:

- **Never make cash transactions in secret.** Discuss any large transaction with a banker, spouse, parent, friend, or someone else you know and trust.
- **Avoid taking strangers to your apartment.**
- **Avoid riding with strangers, either in their car or yours.**
- **Do not give money to strangers unless you can spare it and do not expect to get it back.**

Some common examples of con games include:

- **A card game on the sidewalk.** It may appear that other people are winning or that you can win, but you will not. These are staged games and you will inevitably lose your money.
- **A person who finds something of value, usually a bag of money, that he or she offers to split with you, but to do so, the person wants something of value from you as a sign of trust.** By the time you get your part of the “money” you will find it is pieces of paper with no value.
- **A person posing as a fortuneteller who tells you that your problems are due to a curse that can be removed by paying him or her.**
- **A request for a donation to a charity that does not exist.**

**Personal safety**

**Romantic relationships**
Heterosexual. Social rules governing romantic relationships in the United States are changing and may be loose and unclear. Young unmarried people generally associate with members of the opposite sex more freely and informally than they do in many countries. The relationship between two people of the opposite sex might be as platonic as a brother-sister relationship, an acquaintance with romantic overtones, or a passionate involvement. They may or may not have plans to marry each other or anyone else.

When getting together, Americans tend to “do something,” such as go to a movie, a concert, or dinner. This is called a date because the meeting time and place are agreed upon in advance. Dates may be initiated by either person and do not necessarily lead to romantic relationships.

If you are attracted to someone and suggest an occasion to meet, be sensitive to the reply. Look for signs that tell you whether the person is interested. The person may indicate lack of interest by giving a vague excuse as to why he or she is not available. On the other hand, the person
may have a genuine conflict; listen for cues such as a request for a rain check to reschedule the date, which indicates interest.

The question of who pays for the activity should be clarified. Each person might pay his or her own way. If the person seems definite about wanting to treat (pay for both), you might plan another evening to reciprocate. Often the burden for determining this lies with the person who issued the invitation. One way to bring up these negotiations is to ask something like, “How much will the tickets be?” or “Is that an expensive restaurant?” which may then lead to a discussion about expenses.

When Americans accept a date or indicate interest in a person, they are not necessarily expecting or expressing a commitment to sexual involvement. A date implies no commitment of any kind other than an agreement to meet at a given place and time. Going to someone’s home is not a commitment to sexual involvement, although some people perceive it that way. Students are advised to avoid going home with someone until they know and trust the person. If a woman or man says no to sex or otherwise indicates unwillingness, do not attempt to persuade the person to change her or his mind.

The question of sexual involvement is complex. You will find a wide range of attitudes and practices in the United States. There are few, if any, reliable ways to guess what a person’s attitude about sexual involvement might be. The media tends to convey the idea that all Americans are readily available for sexual activity. This is certainly not true, especially as there has been an increased concern about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Americans generally follow their personal values, feelings, and thoughts when considering whether to become intimate with another person. Sexual involvement is the personal and private business of the people in the relationship. Most unmarried people who are sexually active with a “significant other” do so because they genuinely care about each other, and the two of them regard sex as a natural way of showing their affection.

Many people have negative opinions about individuals who engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. Thus, people’s sexual involvement is usually not a matter of widespread knowledge. Somewhat of an exception to this is the case of two unmarried people who live together. Such arrangements are not uncommon. They almost always involve couples who are committed to a continuing relationship with each other, and their relationship might be known to many people.

Homosexual, bisexual, and transgender. Not all romantic relationships are heterosexual. New York City has a sizable homosexual (gay and lesbian) and bisexual population. A homosexual is a person who has a sexual and/or romantic interest in persons of the same gender. A bisexual is a person who has a sexual and/or romantic interest in persons of either gender.

Homosexuality and bisexuality may be more visible in the United States than in some other countries, but this does not mean it is universally accepted here. If you do not feel comfortable witnessing two men holding hands or two women kissing, you have the right to ignore them. You do not, however, have the right to harass them.

Another word you may hear is transgender—someone whose gender identity and expression differ from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity and of their biological sex. Gender identity is an individual’s internal sense of being male or female.
Tips for a first date

- Always carry money, even if your date is paying, in case of emergency.
- Never let your date take you somewhere unfamiliar. Always know the address and location of where you are.
- Decide beforehand who will pay.
- If at any time you feel uncomfortable, leave. Listen to your intuition.
- Dress comfortably.
- Respect your date when you hear “no.” NO means NO!
- Be on time. However, if the person is late, do not let it spoil the date; remain pleasant.
- Introduce your date to a friend or acquaintance.
- Tell a friend where you are going or leave the information on your own answering machine as if you were calling a friend.
- Choose public places, such as theaters or restaurants, for first meetings.

Preventing date/acquaintance rape—women

- Communicate your sexual desires and limits clearly. Your words and behavior may create conflicting messages. Never give mixed messages.
- Learn to be assertive, to express your feelings, and to say “no.” You do not have to be nice if you feel threatened; protecting yourself is more important.
- Be an active partner in relationships and share decisions about what to do, where to meet, and when to be intimate.
- Exercise caution. Have first dates in public places. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Whenever possible, try to provide your own transportation.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable or think you may be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.
- Leaving a party or other social event with someone you have just met may be extremely dangerous as you may be placing yourself in a vulnerable position.
- Avoid anyone who insults or belittles you, talks negatively about women in general, is physically violent, or does not respect you or your decisions.

Preventing date/acquaintance rape—men

- Understand that forced sex is never acceptable and that rape is a felony.
- Stop if someone says “no,” is reluctant, or is not clearly consenting. Never take silence as consent.
- If you feel you are getting a mixed message, speak up and ask for absolute clarification.
- Respect the word no. When a woman says “no,” believe her.
- Do not assume that a woman wants to have sex if she drinks heavily, dresses in a particular manner, or agrees to go to your home. Do not assume that if a woman agrees to kissing or other sexual intimacies, she is also willing to have sexual intercourse.
- Never have sex with anyone who is drunk or has passed out.
- Seek professional help if anger and/or violence is a problem in your relationships.
Safe use of alcohol
The use of alcohol may be more regulated in the United States than in your country. No one under twenty-one may legally obtain or consume any form of alcohol, including beer, wine, and such spirits as rum, scotch, or vodka. A bar or restaurant serving alcohol will ask for proof of age before serving young adults. Laws against public intoxication and consumption of alcohol, even if someone is of the legal drinking age, are strictly enforced. It is against the law to walk along the street with an opened alcoholic beverage, even if it is in a paper bag or in a different container from the one in which it was sold. In either case, you may be given a summons.

The city of New York sets up checkpoints where drivers will be stopped; if they are found in violation, their car may be seized. For more information about penalties, visit the Department of Motor Vehicles Web site, www.nydmv.state.ny.us.

v -If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Alternate between drinks with and without alcohol and always eat something before and while drinking.

v -Do not accept a drink from anyone you do not know well. Never turn your back on your drink.

v -Alcohol impairs your judgment, so if you have any doubts about the situation you are in, follow your instinct and leave.

v -Practice "contagious responsibility." If you think someone you know is doing something risky, do not be afraid to speak up.

Safety tips
On campus
v -People not affiliated with Brooklyn College may occasionally gain access to the campus. Be alert and avoid isolated areas in buildings whenever possible.

v -Secure your office doors when working alone or if you must leave for a few minutes. If you are alone late at night or on the weekend, notify college security of your presence and schedule.

v -Report suspicious occurrences or persons to college security.

v -Keep small items of value—purses, wallets, money, jewelry—out of sight. Watch valuables in lounges, libraries, and dining halls.

v -Never leave personal belongings unattended.

On the street
v -Do not walk, drive, or bicycle while using headphones.

v -Keep your bag closed, zipped, and buckled. Place it on your lap or at your feet in restaurants. Do not hang it on the back of your chair or leave it on an empty chair.

v -Always have enough money for cab fare home and enough quarters to make telephone calls.

v -Carry a MetroCard whenever you go out, even if you are not planning on taking the subway or bus.

v -When you use an automatic teller machine (ATM) to withdraw cash, do not count it in front of the machine where others can easily observe the amount. Put the money away and count it in a private setting.

Do not use an ATM late at night.

v -Plan your route in advance.
- Walk assertively. An attacker looks for someone who appears vulnerable.
- At night, walk facing the flow of traffic and stay close to the curb. Avoid bushes and doorways where an attacker may hide. Walk in well-lighted and populated areas and stay out of parks. Be aware of your surroundings and of suspicious persons or circumstances.
- Travel with a friend whenever possible at night. If you must travel alone, tell a friend your route and promise to call by a certain time.
- If you are followed, walk quickly to a well-lighted and populated area. If you are followed by a car, turn and walk in the opposite direction. If you feel someone is following you, do not hesitate to call attention to yourself.

**At home**
- Obtain renter’s (tenant’s) insurance for your property. If any property is stolen, report it for insurance and recovery purposes.
- Report lost or stolen keys to your landlord and the police. Change your locks immediately.
- Know which of your neighbors you may call in case of an emergency.
- List only your first initial and last name on your mailbox and in the telephone book.
- Leave a few lights on when you go out. Use automatic timers for lights when you will be away for more than a day.
- Have your keys ready when approaching the door.
- If you find suspicious individuals loitering in your building or suspect someone is in your apartment, do not enter. Call 911 for help.
- Secure all locks, even if you are at home or only leaving your apartment for a few minutes.
- Never open your door without knowing who is on the other side. Install a peephole in the door and require repair people, salespeople, and meter readers to show identification.
- Never admit to strangers by phone or at your door that you are alone.
- Do not let strangers in to make telephone calls. Take the number and make the call for them.
- Keep a telephone near your bed. If you hear a burglar, do not give any sign of being aware. If you can safely call for assistance, do so. Avoid alerting or interrupting a burglar.
- Never indicate that you are not home or are on vacation on your answering machine message.

**Fire safety**
- Purchase one or two fire extinguishers and keep them near your kitchen and bedroom.
- Change smoke detector batteries regularly.
- Plan and practice an escape route. Learn the locations of fire exits and know at least two ways out. In apartments, make sure there is a fire escape for all floors above the ground level.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Do not overload extension cords. Replace all frayed or cracked cords.
- When cooking, never leave food unattended.
v -Never use water on grease fires; instead, cover the pan.

If you detect a fire in a building:
- Pull the fire alarm.
- Alert the occupants.
- Exit via the nearest stairway. Never use an elevator in a fire.
- Call 911 once you are safe.

If you are caught in a fire:
- Check the door. If it is hot, do not open it. Keep it closed and seal the door by stuffing towels, sheets, or rags under it—and over it, if there is a space on top.
- Close the doors behind you as you escape. If you leave through a door that you want to lock, take your key with you.
- Never use an elevator; use the stairs instead.
- Get down on the floor and crawl, as smoke and heat rise.
- If your clothing catches fire, drop to the floor and roll to extinguish it; never run.
- If you are confined to a room, signal for help from a window using a towel or sheet.

Automobile safety
- New York State law mandates that you wear your seatbelt.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Have your keys in your hand before reaching your vehicle. Check the interior before entering it.
- Lock all doors immediately after entering or leaving your car.
- If you are being followed, do not drive home. Stay on busy streets and drive to a public place or a police station.
- If your car breaks down, open the hood and attach a white cloth to the antenna. Stay in your car with the doors locked. If someone stops to help, remain in your locked car and ask them to call the police, a garage, or, if you are a member, an automobile club. If you are in a populated area, make sure your car is out of the way of traffic, lock it, and find the nearest phone to call for assistance.
- Use a steering wheel lock to protect your car from theft and a locking gas cap to prevent fuel thefts.
- Mount your stereo or car phone on a bracket that allows you to remove the unit when you leave the vehicle.

Cellphone Safety

Staying Healthy
Health care in the United States is very good but very costly. There is no national medical care system or insurance program. An enormous amount of money is invested in research, medication, and technology to prolong the lives of people with serious illnesses or unusual injuries. To protect yourself physically and fiscally, it is essential to understand how to use this system.

Visiting the doctor
It is a good idea to establish a relationship with a doctor by scheduling a check-up—an annual health examination. Appointments are also needed for routine or follow-up care. If you are an established patient of the doctor, you may call the office or paging service after hours if there is an emergency. If your doctor is not “on call” for emergencies, another doctor will be assigned to talk to patients. Determine which local hospital you would use in case of an emergency. Under New York City law, you have the right to be treated in any emergency room in the city. You cannot be turned away for lack of insurance or any other reasons. Emergency rooms should never be used for routine or nonemergency health care.

When you go to a doctor, whether for routine or emergency treatment, the first thing you will be asked to do is to fill out forms. These forms ask not only about your medical history but also that of your family, and the information becomes part of your permanent file in the office. Because you must provide information about your insurance, always carry an insurance ID card.

You may initially be seen by a nurse rather than a doctor when you enter the examination room. Nurses in the United States are well educated, have highly sophisticated training, and perform many functions that may be carried out only by doctors in other countries. The nurse measures and records your weight, blood pressure, and temperature and asks questions about your health. You may also be asked for a urine sample, which is one way a health care provider evaluates certain patient health signs. If you have never done this simple test, let the nurse know and ask for instructions.

The doctor comes in next, often scanning your chart while introducing himself or herself. Doctors have high status in the United States and are addressed by their title. The doctor may ask some of the questions the nurse already asked and will listen to your heartbeat and examine your eyes, ears, and throat while continuing to ask questions. A nurse may or may not be present in the room at this time. If you prefer a nurse to be present you may request this.

Before your visit, write down any questions you may have about your condition or the treatment and then record the answers the doctor gives. If you do not understand something the doctor says, ask him or her to repeat it. Write down all of the doctor’s instructions or ask to have a family member present to help. The doctor may ask you blunt questions about your personal habits, including your sexual activity, to make determinations about your health, not to make judgments. If you do not understand why a question is being asked, you may ask the doctor to explain its relevance to your medical care. It is not likely the doctor will spend time conversing with you about any aspect of your life other than health issues.

It is also important that you educate the doctor. If you have been self-treating any illness or health condition, bring the medication with you so the doctor can understand what you have been doing. The doctor may ask you to discontinue the medication so that it does not adversely mix with what he or she prescribes.

Normally, a doctor diagnoses an illness, prescribes medication if needed, and describes how long you should feel ill or uncomfortable so that you will know what to expect and when to seek further treatment if the illness is prolonged. The doctor may administer tests or send you elsewhere for testing. You may be told to call back for test results, which the doctor will give over the telephone or at another appointment. Many doctors’ offices have a policy whereby only the doctor gives test results to the patient, whether they are positive or negative.

Nurse practitioners and physician assistants also serve as health care providers under the supervision of physicians. They are licensed and practice under the rules and regulations of the state in which they work and have advanced medical education and clinical training. Many are nationally certified in their area of specialty. They may specialize in such areas as adult
ambulatory care, adult acute care, women’s health, pediatrics, and family and geriatrics. They are qualified to obtain medical histories and perform physical examinations; diagnose and treat such acute health problems as infections and injuries; diagnose, treat, and monitor such chronic health problems as high blood pressure and diabetes; order, perform, and interpret such diagnostic studies as laboratory work and x-rays; provide health maintenance, including annual physicals; and promote positive health behaviors and self-care skills through education and counseling. You may see either a doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant for your health care.

In addition to seeing a general practitioner, women should also see a gynecologist. A woman over age eighteen, even if she is a virgin, should visit a gynecologist annually. Tell the nurse and the doctor if it is your first time so they can make the visit as comfortable as possible. Although some aspects of the exam may be uncomfortable, they should not be painful. A sensitive gynecologist explains what the examination will involve before beginning.

Health insurance
Medical care in the United States is the most expensive in the world. One night in a hospital costs well over $1,000. The only way to avoid paying huge sums for medical care is to carry health insurance. Insurance protects against the need to meet the entire burden of expense by spreading the cost among a group of people.

Insurance does not cover all medical expenses in all cases. In fact, individuals usually have a copayment—a percentage of the bill, usually 20 percent, for which they are personally responsible. There are often items the policy will not cover at all, such as preexisting conditions—illnesses or injuries that occurred before the insurance policy began—and preventative care such as contraception. The most common preexisting condition is pregnancy. There is no free pregnancy care and it is likely that any clinics with subsidized costs are available only to citizens or permanent residents of the United States.

Brooklyn College Health Clinic
All Brooklyn College students, regardless of insurance coverage, are eligible to use the Health Clinic, 114 Roosevelt Hall. To schedule an appointment, call (718) 951-5580.

If you have a condition that the Health Clinic cannot treat, they will refer you to another health care provider or, if appropriate, to a hospital.

The Health Clinic does not provide services for the spouses and children of Brooklyn College students but may give referrals. They must obtain health care from private physicians. You may ask the Health Clinic, as well as friends, classmates, or relatives, for suggestions or look in the Yellow Pages under “Physicians.”

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)
The Health Clinic has educational information about AIDS. You are encouraged to make sure you understand how AIDS is transmitted so that you can protect yourself. There are also many organizations in the city dedicated to assisting people who have AIDS.

Counseling services
At some point in your college career you may experience conflicts or anxieties severe enough to interfere with your learning and personal growth. In the United States, seeking psychological
counseling is one way to help you understand and solve such personal problems as family concerns, loneliness, relationships, stress, and anxieties about sexual identity. In many cultures, seeking a counselor is generally not the first choice for students; they may consult a friend or religious leader instead. While these are avenues of help, they do not address concerns in the same way a counselor does.

The Personal Counseling Program, 1303 James Hall, (718) 951-5363, is a free service available to all Brooklyn College students. The program provides individual support, support groups, group counseling, and crisis intervention. A diverse staff of trained, experienced mental health professionals is available to assist you with eating disorders, cultural issues, and relationship, sexuality, and substance abuse. The hours are flexible and the staff is available for consultations and referrals as well. All consultations in both individual conversations and group settings are confidential. Nothing goes on your official record.

Counselors are trained to identify emotional and psychological challenges that students face while being sensitive to cultural and religious differences. They are patient and have experience working with international students for many years. Counselors do not judge students. They are sensitive objective listeners who help you find your own solutions.

Give counseling a try the next time you are confused, feeling down, or just need to talk. You may find it to be the best investment in yourself at Brooklyn College.

A healthy diet

It may take a short period to adjust to food in the United States. Typical meals include spaghetti or other pastas, hamburgers, salads, vegetable stir-fry, chicken, fish, pizza, and burritos. Americans tend to eat a light breakfast and lunch and save their largest meal for dinner, which is eaten earlier than in many other cultures.

Maintaining a healthy diet maximizes your energy and concentration for studies and for overall well-being. This may be harder to do in the United States, where prepared or processed foods tend to have high amounts of fat and sodium. With a student schedule and budget, it is easy to get caught in a “fast food” trap. Although there may be price and time advantages to eating fast food, the amount needs to be moderate in order to stay healthy. In New York City, you will be able to find many different types of food to supplement your diet, including food from your home country.

The following guidelines will help you reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and obesity.

- Eat a variety of foods. Select appropriate amounts of dairy, fruit, grains, meat (protein for vegetarians), nuts, and vegetables for vegetarians.
- Avoid too much sugar. Stay away from large amounts of salt, soft drinks, candies, cookies, and cakes.
- Avoid too much coffee and tea. If you drink large amounts of either, consider decaffeinated coffee or herbal tea to reduce intake of caffeine.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
- Drink at least eight glasses of eight ounces of water every day.

Tips for buying food
Plan a menu and make a list of foods you will need. Do not go shopping when you are hungry.

If you are going shopping in a supermarket (large store) for the first time, take someone with you who is familiar with the layout of the store and the types of food sold there.

Read the label on the package before buying any item. The nutritional content should be listed. Labels for perishable foods (e.g., cheese, eggs, meat, milk) will include a date by which the item should be purchased.

Many supermarkets publish weekly advertisements of discounted items and promotional “coupons.” Most often the discounted price advertised is honored only if the coupon is cut out of the paper and presented at the time of purchase. Coupons are also included in many newspapers, especially on Sundays.

Many stores have generic or “house” brands. These are the same types of products as name brands but are not advertised on television or in magazines. The quality is often similar and the cost is generally significantly lower.

Exercise

The importance of exercise to good health cannot be overstated. The benefits include weight maintenance, increased immunity to illness, and an overall sense of well-being. Although it may seem that the urban setting of Brooklyn College offers few opportunities for exercise, the college provides excellent, convenient facilities for exercising and working out, including an exercise room, outdoor track, indoor pool, and racquetball courts.

Going Home

Going home should be a joyous experience. Your family and friends will celebrate your return. You can once again enjoy the day-to-day things that are so important to your fundamental sense of self. The language, both spoken and unspoken, will be familiar and the behavior of people around you will no longer require interpretation.

Yet, going home may be more difficult than going to a new place. When students come to the United States they expect things to be different, to miss their families and friends and to have new challenging and confusing experiences. When preparing to go home, however, students may not anticipate how much has changed in their absence or, equally important, how much they have changed. Students typically report that they are surprised by how difficult their reentry into their home environment is and that they wish they had prepared themselves for it. As with any experience, the more you know about what to expect, the easier it is to cope. Knowing that your feelings are normal, that others who have returned after a sojourn abroad have had the same difficulties, may make readjustment easier.

No matter how hard you worked at preserving your traditional ways of doing things, you have adopted certain new practices in the United States. Even little things, like the way the telephones work and the way people greet you, have become part of your unconscious. Many students find that living on their own schedule, making their own decisions, and living with American roommates has had a profound effect on their views of the world and their expectations of what life should provide.
At home you may find it difficult to get back into the routine of doing things the way others do. There may be a great deal of pressure to conform to community standards. You may feel conflicted by your simultaneous resistance to this pressure and your desire to please your family and friends.

You may encounter envy and distrust. Some people may resent the fact that you have had an opportunity that they have not, but most people simply will have minimal interest in the details of your experience abroad. It is not because they do not care about you but rather, if they have not had a similar experience, because they are not likely to relate to what you tell them.

You may miss some of the material conveniences of a consumer society. It may be difficult to suppress your individualism in favor of the needs and expectations of family. You may find yourself somewhat alienated from those whose attitudes now conflict with yours. Often students find that they have picked up the American tendency to be quite direct and assertive, which may be frowned upon in their home country.

The political situation at home may look different now that you have had the experience of viewing it from afar. There may have been shifts in national priorities, policies, or your political views. If the political climate does not support your professional goals, you may be dissatisfied and frustrated.

You may not find the educational and research infrastructure to which you became accustomed in the United States. The training you received may not be relevant to the needs of your home country. You may feel there are barriers to improving your skills and you may not readily find education programs that enable you to keep up with developments in your field. You may face intense competition in the job market. Scientific terminology that has become part of your everyday vocabulary may not lend itself to adequate translation into your native language. You may find it extremely difficult to communicate what you learned to your colleagues, who may be resistant to change and may resent what they perceive to be your sense of superiority as a result of your education and training in the United States.

These feelings are not so different from what you experienced when you first arrived in the United States and found that people did not understand you, that you had to learn new ways of doing things, and that you were uncertain of your ability to succeed in a new environment. Once you were oriented and adjusted, your confidence and comfort level rose. Similarly, if you prepare for the return, you will be better equipped to handle your reentry.

There are many practical matters to which you must attend before you leave and after your arrive, and there are many less obvious things you can do to ease your transition, as described below.

**Before leaving the United States**

Before returning home, notify the International Students Program in person or in writing of the completion of your studies or academic or practical training and of the date of your final departure from the United States. Leave an address, either in your department or with the International Students Program, so that you can be contacted if necessary. Check with your country’s consulate to determine customs procedures for bringing such personal belongings as computers back with you.

If you intend to leave Brooklyn College but plan to remain in the United States to study at another college, notify us of your intention. You must also see your new college’s international student adviser within fifteen days after starting classes to complete the transfer procedure.

In addition:
- Obtain official copies of your transcript and diploma.
- Return all borrowed books and articles.
- Leave your forwarding address with the post office, the Office of the Registrar, and all companies with which you have credit cards, charge cards, subscriptions, utilities, and any other dealings.
- Notify your landlord in writing of your departure at least thirty days before you intend to leave.

Discuss how you will pay your last month’s rent—if you will use your security deposit or if that will be returned in whole or part, depending on the condition of the apartment.
- Notify the telephone, electric, and gas companies when to discontinue service. Arrange to have any deposits refunded.
- Pay all outstanding bills, including credit cards, charge cards, loans, library fines, and any college obligations.
- Consider donating usable items that you are not taking with you to a local thrift shop, house of worship, or homeless shelter.
- Obtain passports for any children born in the United States.
- Insure any belongings you are shipping to your home country.
- If you earned any income, communicate with the IRS about how to file your tax return from home.
- Get the address and subscription information for professional journals so that you can arrange to receive them after you return home.
- Get complete addresses, fax and telephone numbers, and e-mail for faculty, staff, and friends.

**After arriving home**

Once you arrive home, give yourself and your family time to work through what you are feeling. You may feel as if things are a little “off,” but you will not immediately be able to discern why. Everything will be familiar, but you may feel that something is out of place. Take time occasionally to think about what you are feeling and how your views of home and culture have changed.

Keep the following in mind:
- You will have a heightened awareness of how your home looks. Take advantage of that by keeping a journal. Look at it later and think about why you noticed the things you did and how your perceptions changed.
- People report that everyone says, “Tell me about your trip,” listens for a few minutes, then proceeds to talk about something else. Before long people stop asking altogether. Learn to give short responses, focusing on just one or two ideas about what you did while you were abroad. You might like to write down some ideas before you leave.
- Respond thoughtfully when you first return. Do not try to change the way things are done because you now know a “better” way. Show people that you appreciate the way things are, and as opportunities arise, integrate your new knowledge with local traditions.
v - Reserve judgment. Give yourself time to process what you learned and think through the larger impact of introducing new ways of doing things. What works in one situation may not work in another. Try new things gradually.

v - Be sensitive to other people’s feelings. Are they really not interested in your experiences or are they envious because they have not had the same opportunity?

v - Try not to idealize the United States or criticize your country—and vice-versa. Be careful about how you phrase comments about your country. Many international students are shocked when they first come to the United States at how free Americans are to criticize, but eventually they become comfortable doing the same. Do not forget that it may not be acceptable to speak so bluntly at home.

v - Expect a time of adjustment. Be flexible, keep your sense of humor, and relax.

v - Find alumni, graduates of other institutions in the United States or other countries, or Americans abroad with whom to discuss your experiences. They will probably welcome the chance to talk about their experiences too. Write your ideas and feelings to a friend you met here if you cannot find someone with whom to talk at home.

Useful Web Sites

General information

The Embassy Page: www.embpage.org. Links to embassies and consulates within the United States and throughout the world.

NAFSA: Resources for International Students: www.nasfa.org/students/students.html. Useful information on study in the United States from the Association of International Educators.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service: www.ins.usdoj.gov. Includes immigration law and regulations as well as frequently asked questions about citizenship, employment, green cards, etc.

U.S. State Department: www.state.gov. Shows U.S. consul address, phone number, and names of consular officials; displays links to U.S. consulates and embassies throughout the world; provides visa information for international students in U.S. colleges.

Finances


World news


News and Newspapers Online: www.uncg.edu/news. Links to worldwide news and newspaper sources on the Internet, from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Shodouka Launchpad: www.shodouka.com. Service to view pages containing Japanese characters without requiring Japanese language support in your browser or operating system.

World News Index: www.WNI.Harold.Nu. Links to almost all the daily news providers on the Internet.

English language

ESL Emporium: www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslplans.html. ESL lesson plans and resources.

LinguaCenter: www.deil.lang.uiuc.edu. Multimedia language laboratory of the Division of English as an International Language of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Resources for English Language and Culture: www.ohiou.edu/esl/english.

Studying English on the Web: www.aec.ukans.edu/LEO/english.


Yahoo—English as a Second Language: www.dir.yahoo.com/Social_Science/Linguistics_and_Human_Languages/Languages/Specific_Languages/English/English_as_a_Second_Language.

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Important Numbers at Brooklyn College

All telephone numbers begin with (718) area code.

Academic Advisement
3207 Boylan Hall
951-5471

Admissions Office
1203 Plaza Building
951-5001 (undergraduate)
951-5914 (graduate)

Bursar’s Office
1155 Boylan Hall
951-5188
Campus and Community Safety Services Office
0202 Ingersoll Hall
951-5511

Dean of Graduate Studies and Research
3238 Boylan Hall
951-5787

Dean for Student Life
2113 Boylan Hall
951-5352

Dean of Undergraduate Studies
3208 Boylan Hall
951-5771

Emergency Medical Service
021 Ingersoll Hall Extension
951-5858

Health Clinic
114 Roosevelt Hall
951-5580

Health Programs Office
1115 Plaza Building
951-4505 or -4266

Housing Referral Office
1303 James Hall
951-5363

Information Booth
1139A Boylan Hall
951-4748

International Students Program
1105B James Hall
951-4477

Library Café
Lower level, Whitehead Hall
951-4672

Magner Career Development Center
1303 James Hall
951-5363

Registrar’s Office
1118 Boylan Hall
951-5683

Other Important Numbers
Con Edison
(800) 752-6633

Internal Revenue Service
(800) 829-1040
(800) 829-3676

Metropolitan Transit Authority
(718) 330-1234

New York City Board of Education
Office of Zoning
(718) 935-3555

University Application Processing Center
CUNY Office of Admission Services
101 West 31 Street
New York, NY 10001-3503
(212) 947-4800

Verizon
(718) 890-1550

YMCA International Student Service
236 East 47 Street
New York, NY 10017
(212) 727-8800

DIAL 911 from any phone in case of emergency.