

Francis Marion University INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDE

2019-2020



Welcome!



Welcome to Francis Marion University! Our faculty and staff look forward to your arrival. Until then, this guide will assist you in making your travel arrangements, planning your course of study and taking advantage of all FMU has to offer. If at any time before, during or after your stay I can be of assistance to you, please let me know.

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Immigration, Admission & Immunization

Once you are admitted to FMU, you will need a SEVIS I-20 (F-1 students) or DS-2019 (J-1 students) document - a three page form signed by our Francis Marion University's director of admissions or another SEVIS-designated school official. When you are issued your I-20 or DS-2019, you will then need to schedule an appointment at your nearest United States Embassy or Consulate to obtain your student Visa, which will allow you to pursue a course of study in the United States. At your appointment, you will need to bring your passport, proof of online payment of your SEVIS fee (usually approximately \$200) and other documents the consulate may require.

Entry to the United States is limited to 30 days prior to your semester start date (see "Arrival and Departure," below). Remember that while you're in the United States, you will need to maintain your full-time student status to keep your passport valid and to report changes in your address or major to Dr. William Daniel or another SEVIS designated school official. For more information on American immigration laws and regulations, visit the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at www.uscis.gov.

If you wish to leave and re-enter the United States, you must carry your U.S. Visa, passport, and I-20 or DS-2019 documentation signed by the designated school official. You must also be sure your entry Visa (stamped in your passport) remains valid for additional entries. When entering the United States, you must have these documents on your person and available for inspection by United States Customs Officials.

To attend FMU, you must also have submitted an immunization form showing that you have received the following vaccinations:

- Completion of primary series for DTP and Polio
- Two doses of MMR Vaccine (measles, mumps, and rubella) administered after your first birthday and at least 30 days apart
- A tetanus booster within the last ten years
- A tuberculosis skin test (PPD) administered within the last year

If you have not completed your immunization form or received the inoculations necessary to study in the United States, you will not be allowed to attend classes. If it is very important that you receive the required inoculations and return the immunization form to me.



Florence & FMU

Florence is in the center of the Pee Dee region of South Carolina and was established in 1871 as a railroad hub in a primarily rural, agricultural area. In the past several decades, however, Florence has become a major medical, financial and industrial center. Situated at the intersection of two major interstates, Florence is near a number of exciting tourist destinations. Ninety minutes to the east is the Grand Strand and Myrtle Beach, one of the most popular vacation areas in the United States. About two hours south is Charleston, established in 1670 as a major colonial "port town" and the site of the cannon shots that began the American Civil War. Directly west is Columbia, the capital of South Carolina and the largest city in the state.

Florence has a population of about 65,000 and is enjoying an exciting renaissance thanks to the recent additions of FMU's Performing Arts Center, a new library, a theatre, galleries and restaurants that serve Chinese, Indian, Thai, Mexican and, of course, American food.

Francis Marion University is about twelve kilometers from downtown Florence; a local bus service is available to shuttle FMU students (at no charge) from campus to almost any part of town. Our 468-acre campus, originally a plantation, is known for its beautiful foliage and landscaping. The University's modern classroom buildings, laboratories, and residence facilities provide a safe, comfortable learning environment for students, and our library is one of the best in the state.

Arrival & Departure, Fall & Spring

Please book your plane tickets for arrival at Florence (South Carolina) Regional Airport; I or one of my colleagues will greet you at the airport (or train/bus station) and take you to your apartment on campus. If you choose to arrive at a different airport or city, it is your responsibility to arrange transportation to Florence. Ordinarily, flights to Florence are available only through Charlotte (North Carolina) on American Airlines. The airport code for Florence is FLO.

If in your travels you encounter a delay or cancellation, please let me know. My office number is **843-661-1679** and email is cjeffcoat@fmarion.edu.



FALL SEMESTER

Students attending FMU during the Fall 2019 semester should arrive on Friday, 16 August or Saturday, 17 August. Students arriving by bus or train should arrive on the same date. Please let me know your itinerary as soon you know it! On Sunday, 18 August, members of the FMU faculty will take you to Walmart so you can buy groceries and supplies, and the following weekend we'll take you to Myrtle Beach, weather permitting, so bring a swimsuit.

On Monday, 19 August, we'll conduct an Orientation and attend to some business, including paying for your housing and (if applicable) your meal plans. Your classes will begin on Tuesday, 20 August.

Fall Break occurs 7-8 October; University housing will be open, but food services will be limited.

Exams will end on 10 December. You should book your return flights beginning that day. All students *must* be out of student housing by 14 December. Students may not remain in University housing during the winter break—that is, between semesters—so those intending to spend the academic year at FMU should make arrangements either to return home for the holidays or stay with a friend in the United States. Remember that travel during the winter months can be complicated by storms. Try to minimize the number of airports you travel through and be sure to allow yourself enough time to make connections.

SPRING SEMESTER

Students attending FMU during Spring 2020 will arrive in early January and depart in early May. The spring semester will feature an orientation, supply trip, visit to the historic port towns of Savannah or Charleston, and a week-long Spring Break for individual student travel. More details on Spring 2020 semester dates will be available by summer 2019.

Course Registration & Books

Before you travel to the United States, you should have met with your academic advisor to select the courses in which you will enroll. Incoming exchange students must maintain full-time status, which means enrolling in at least four 3-credit courses, which is equivalent to roughly 24 ECTS credits. You should choose courses that best suit your needs for your major area of study. A schedule of courses for Fall 2019 will be made available to you as a PDF by mid-April 2019; however, changes to your course selections can always be made throughout the first week of classes.

International exchange students attending FMU are eligible to take courses in our Honors Program, provided space is available. Honors courses are typically smaller (limit 15 students) and more challenging courses offered for our best students. Those courses are listed near the back of the class schedule.

Please send your selection of courses (be sure include the department abbreviation and section code, e.g., POLI-103-1) to me at your earliest convenience. You would be wise to include a few alternative courses, in case your first choices are full. I will try to register you for courses before you get here. Otherwise, I will see that you get registered on the Monday before classes start. On that day, we will also procure your FMU identification card, have you pay your housing and meal plan bills, and meet with a representative from the Dean of Students' Office.

Once your courses have been selected, you may purchase or rent your required textbooks at the Patriot Bookstore in FMU's Smith University Center. In most courses, you may also purchase Kindle or Nook-compatible books.

Housing & Meals

A room has been reserved for you alongside FMU honor students in FMU's on-campus Forest Villas apartments; these are four-bedroom suites with one kitchen/commons area and cost about \$3300 per semester. Laundry facilities are available in each of our residence areas and require special pre-paid debit cards.

Your bedroom will have a bed, a desk and chair, a closet and chest-of-drawers. We will provide you with certain items you won't be able to travel with - items you will need to return at the end of your stay. These include:

- Bedding - a pillow, sheets and comforter
- Dishes - plates, bowls, cups and utensils
- Ethernet cable
- Waste basket
- Hangers
- Pots and pans
- Desk lamp and some desk accessories, like scissors
- Clothes hamper

Payment for your apartment must be made the Monday before classes start. For more information about housing at FMU, visit <http://www.fmarion.edu/housing/>.



FMU offers several meal plans. These plans currently range in price from about \$200-\$1900 per semester and include everything from per-use blocks of meals to all-inclusive/unlimited services. The Grille - an indoor/outdoor restaurant - is available to all FMU students who may purchase lunch, dinner or late-night snacks with cash or with "Patriot Bucks" loaded onto their FMU identification cards. We also feature an all-you-care-to-eat buffet dining hall, a Subway sandwich shop, a cafe serving Starbucks coffee, and an on-campus convenience store.

For more information about FMU's meal plan, visit Aramark's (our dining provider's) website at: <https://fmarion.campusdish.com/>

Of course, you may choose not to purchase any meal plan and cook your own meals in your apartment.



Climate

South Carolina enjoys all four seasons. Summers call for shorts and light clothing, as temperatures range from 80 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (27 to 38 Celsius) during the day. The autumn months - October through December - are much more temperate though somewhat unpredictable; highs can reach 80 F (27 C), but freezing temperatures are not unusual. From January through April, temperatures can range from 20 to 75 degrees F (-7 to 24 C), so you should bring a heavy jacket and warm clothes. No matter when you're here, you'll want to have an umbrella, and may also want to bring items you regularly use or which might be more expensive in the U.S., such as cameras, watches, personal electronics, etc.

Money

Foreign currency is not available in most U.S. cities, and local businesses (including FMU) accept only U.S. currency. You should therefore consult with your bank about the safest and most convenient means of carrying and transferring funds during your stay. It is possible, for instance, for your funds to be transferred to a U.S. bank before you arrive so that they are available immediately upon your arrival. And while you should of course not travel with a large amount of cash, you will probably find it most convenient to exchange at least some of your local currency for U.S. dollars before your departure or when you arrive at a major U.S. airport.

Most vendors in the U.S. also accept major credit cards, such as Visa or MasterCard. If you wish to open an account at an American bank, you should bring your student identification, passport, and funds for deposit, and know what type of account you'd like to open. A checking account, for instance, will allow you to write checks to make purchases and pay bills. Most retailers will accept a personal check on any U.S. bank as long as you can show proper identification. A debit card will allow you to withdraw or deposit money to your bank account using an automatic teller machine (ATM) and to make purchases at stores that accept the card.

Student Health Services

FMU's Student Health Center is located just across the street from campus and is available to all FMU students who are ill, injured or for any reason in need of medical assistance. There is no fee for an office visit.

Because medical emergencies do occur, FMU requires that all international students have health insurance up to at least \$100,000 in medical coverage and coverage for medical evacuation. If a student arrives without adequate insurance, he/she will not be allowed to register for courses.

Academic Life



As you may know, the American undergraduate baccalaureate degree typically takes four years to complete; these years are referred to, in order, as the *freshman*, *sophomore*, *junior* and *senior* years. Courses for freshman are generally numbered 100-199; courses for seniors are numbered 400-499, but exchange students may take *almost* any course they wish.

The academic year begins with the fall semester, which runs from mid-August through early December. The spring semester runs from early January through early

May. As do many universities, FMU also offers concentrated summer semesters.

Academic course loads during the fall and spring semesters average about 15 credit hours - or five 3-hour courses. Some courses also require a one-credit-hour lab or practicum component.

On the first day of each class, you will probably be issued a syllabus describing the professor's expectations concerning attendance, participation, involvement and grading policies. *It is important that you clearly understand what is expected of you in each class!* If you find yourself experiencing difficulty in any of your courses, you are strongly encouraged to seek assistance from your professor during his/her office hours. Your professor may also refer you to CASA, the Center for Academic Success and Advisement, where students can access advice for their academic careers from dedicated counselors, schedule one-on-one sessions in the University's renowned Writing Center, or set up time with a tutor in math, science or other subjects and is located at www.fmarion.edu/casa/. For more about other resources, such as Rogers Library or Disability Services, please visit <http://www.fmarion.edu/academics/>.

Grades at FMU, as at most American universities, are issued according to a four-point scale:

- A (four points): excellent performance
- B (three points): good performance
- C (two points): acceptable or mediocre performance
- D (one point): minimally acceptable performance - sometimes unacceptable.
- F (zero points): failing.

How these grades translate back to your home institution will be determined by your registrar. Typically, students at FMU are encouraged to maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average (gpa) to remain in good academic standing.



Athletics and Recreation

FMU competes inter-collegiately in the Peach Belt Athletic Conference in 12 varsity sports, including basketball, cross-country, volleyball and tennis, and our brand new Griffin Athletic Facility is home to our baseball, softball and soccer teams. Our campus also features a number of recreational facilities - including two swimming pools, a gym, volleyball and racquetball courts and spacious athletic fields - that are available for use by students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and for use in intramural competition in such sports as flag-football, soccer, badminton and table tennis.

Working on Campus

International students holding an F-1 or J-1 Visa may work under limited circumstances. Please discuss your specific employment options with the international programs staff. The campus Human Resources office (<http://www.fmarion.edu/hr/>) lists and may help students secure part time employment, though such employment is not guaranteed. Off-campus work is subject to limitations and must be authorized by the Department of Homeland Security.

Driving Privileges

Drivers from some countries—Canada, France and Germany, for instance—may obtain a South Carolina driver's license without taking a test other than a vision test. Applicants from other countries must take a driving test—written and road.

We look forward to meeting you!

On behalf of the entire FMU community, I am very pleased you've chosen to study at FMU and to avail yourself of the many excellent academic opportunities we offer. Keep in mind also the wide array of athletic, cultural and social events that we know will help you meet many new friends and enhance your visit to FMU. Please visit our website at <http://www.fmarion.edu/> and, again, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.