

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK 2023-24

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**WELCOME!**

Welcome to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. I hope this handbook addresses many of the questions you have about studying and living in the United States. Please review all the information enclosed; you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

My office is located in the Morrison Building, in room M104 in Student Affairs. I am available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and can be reached by email at [akurialamillo@mcad.edu](mailto:akurialamillo@mcad.edu), or by phone at (612) 874-3628. For immigration emergencies after 5 p.m. please call Public Safety at (612) 874-3700.

I look forward to working with you during your studies!

Sincerely,



Alicia Kuri Alamillo  
International + Exchange Advisor



## ACADEMIC LIFE

### ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Regular attendance to all classes, punctuality, active participation, and good note-taking skills are important and expected.
2. If classroom content is presented too fast to comprehend or write down, students should ask the instructor for clarification.
3. Students should pay close attention to instructions given at the beginning of the course about the manner in which the class will be conducted and how grades will be determined.
4. Students receive a printed syllabus for each course at the beginning of the semester. The syllabus outlines the course's objectives, the material to be covered, due dates for assignments, examination dates, texts to be purchased or obtained from the library, the professor's name, office location, and office hours.
5. The Learning Center, located adjacent to the Library, can help students produce written assignments that meet accepted standards in any class.
6. Student engagement in the form of discussion and debate is encouraged and preferred over respectful silence.
7. During discussions, the manner in which criticism is expressed is important. Students show respect by acknowledging their classmate's or professor's point of view and then offering a different point of view for consideration.

### ADDING OR DROPPING A CLASS

During the first five days of a semester, students may add or drop classes. This is called the Add/Drop period. The deadline for adding classes can be found on the [Academic Calendar](#) posted on the main MCAD website. After this deadline, any classes dropped will appear with a notation of 'W' on a transcript and no classes may be added.

International students are required to maintain full-time enrollment every Fall and Spring semester. This is defined as 12 credits for undergraduate students and 9 credits for graduate students. You may not drop below this minimum required number of credits except under extremely limited circumstances. In order to drop below full-time, a student must be authorized in advance by the International and Exchange Advisor. If an international student drops or withdraws from all classes, they must leave the country within 15 days.

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**ADVISING AND REGISTRATION**

Exchange students are pre-registered for classes, but degree-seeking international students are required to register for classes at specific times announced by the Student Affairs Office via email.

Each semester, students must meet with their advisor prior to registration to get help with which classes to register for. Once given clearance from their advisor, students will be able to register online through their MY MCAD Registration tab.

Although they receive guidance from staff and faculty, students are responsible for accurate registration; credit is granted for only those courses for which a student is properly registered.

**CLASSES**

A typical undergraduate MCAD liberal arts course involves two and a half hours of lectures each week. There are usually assigned readings, quizzes and tests, a mid-term examination, and a final examination, as well as one or more research papers or projects.

Each MCAD studio class meets for five hours of lectures, demonstrations or directed studio time each week.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

There are some student behaviors in the United States that a student may find surprising or that would be considered disrespectful in a student's home country.

For example, students may sit in class with their feet up on the chair or desk in front of them. Students may interrupt lectures to ask questions, or even to raise objections to what is being said. In general, none of these behaviors denotes disrespect unless done in a belligerent or aggressive manner. One way in which an American student shows respect for her or his teacher is by being an active participant (commenting or questioning) in class.

**GRADES**

The grading system used by most U.S. colleges and universities to evaluate students' academic performances is based on a four-point scale. The average of a students' grades is called a Grade Point Average (GPA). Undergraduates are expected to graduate with a C average or better. An international student's visa or I-20 will not be revoked if a student fails a class, however, it will put them at risk for academic probation. Part of the agreement a student makes when accepting student status in the U.S. is to make good faith and timely progress toward their degree, with the intent of graduating.



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<b>GRADE</b>	<b>POINTS</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
A	4.0	Excellent
B	3.0	Good
C	2.0	Average
D	1.0	Passing
F	0.0	Failing

**GRADUATION**

Students must fill out an "Intent to Graduate" form in the Records Office during their last semester at MCAD. Note: If a student intends to apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training) to work for 12 months after graduation, students must notify the International and Exchange Advisor four months before their graduation date. OPT cases can take 90 days to approve through United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

**HOMEWORK**

Homework assignments are usually outlined in a course syllabus. International students may be surprised by the amount of daily and weekly assignments, and by the fact that grades are based on these assignments, not just the final examination. Studio classes also have homework, usually due the next week at the beginning of class. The class will usually have a critique or discussion about every student's art work.

**INTERNSHIPS**

Internships are practical work situations or training experiences that allow students to apply what they have learned in class. MCAD offers academic credit for internships, but not all students are required to complete an internship. There is no internship requirement for MFA students.

International students can only enroll in an internship if it is required for their major, regardless of whether it is paid or unpaid. A student is required to apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) through the International and Exchange prior to beginning work. Students are only eligible to receive CPT authorization if they have been enrolled as a full-time student for at least one full academic year. A student is limited to 12 months of full-time CPT, which may be accumulated throughout their MCAD experience. There is no limit to the amount of time a student may work part-time on CPT. Students cannot volunteer at a for-profit company.

**LEARNING CENTER (LC) AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

MCAD's Learning Center is an interdisciplinary academic support center that includes Accessibility Services for students with disabilities.



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The Center supports equitable access to education; runs the Peer Mentor Program; and offers online and in-person assistance with writing, software, time management, study skills, and professional development.

**+ ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

Accessibility Services provides reasonable accommodations and focused time on the needs of students with disabilities. These services are provided to ensure equitable access to education for students who self-disclose a documented disability.

**+ PEER TUTORING**

- Writing tutoring is offered on course assignments, professional documents, and graduate assignments
- Software tutoring is offered on software and technical skills associated with MCAD courses.

**+ SUCCESS COACHING**

Student success coaching includes topics like time management, planning, organization, working through assignments, motivation, and more.

**+ PEER MENTOR PROGRAM**

The peer mentor program pairs new, incoming students with a mentor and a small cohort of fellow students to aid in the transition to college or a new semester. The Program offers support for study skills, time management, transitioning to college and more.

**OFF-CAMPUS STUDY**

International students are eligible to apply for MCAD study abroad opportunities. See the International and Exchange advisor for details and restrictions.

**ONLINE LEARNING**

Online learning courses are limited for F-1 students. F-1 students may only take one online course, equivalent to 3 credits per semester. Registering for additional online courses is not permitted under any circumstances.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without acknowledgement of their source. The consequences of proven or even suspected plagiarism can be severe (for example, a failing grade or expulsion from class or MCAD). Borrowed words and ideas must always be clearly documented.

In general, a paper, homework assignments, quizzes and tests should all be completed individually, and evidence (or even suspicion) of collaboration can result in a failing grade for the work or expulsion from the class or MCAD. Studying with others is a good idea, but before

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students collaborate with others on homework, papers or tests, they should make sure the professor has specifically authorized such collaboration.

**REDUCED CREDIT LOAD**

Undergraduate international students are required by US immigration law to be enrolled in classes full-time, defined as 12 credits for undergraduate students and 9 credits for graduate students. Anything below these minimum credits is considered a reduced credit load. Students must receive authorization from the International and Exchange Advisor to carry a reduced credit load.

**SUMMER CLASSES**

Attendance at another college during the summer break (May-August) does not require permission by the International and Exchange Advisor nor require transfer of the I-20 form if the student intends to return to classes at MCAD the following Fall semester.

**TRANSCRIPTS**

Transcripts are also known as "academic records". A transcript is proof of classes taken and contains the titles of classes and class number. Transcripts indicate whether a student is an undergraduate or graduate student and show credits, grades, and GPAs. It also lists a student's address and MCAD identification number.

To request a transcript, contact the Records Office. International exchange students are given one official transcript at the end of the semester for personal records. A second official transcript is mailed to the International Student Advisor or Mobility Coordinator at their home school.

**TRANSFERRING**

Students who are maintaining status may transfer from one USCIS-approved school to another. Any student intending to transfer should see the International and Exchange Advisor to complete a Transfer Recommendation Form. Any student who has fallen out of status at MCAD is not eligible to transfer and must apply for reinstatement at the home or first school.

**WITHDRAWING FROM MCAD**

A student must complete a Notification of Student Withdrawal form and meet with the International and Exchange advisor to withdraw. Students have five years to return to MCAD before needing to reapply through the Admissions Office. If a student withdraws, they no longer have F-1 status, and must depart the U.S. within 15 days.



## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

### ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

U.S. laws concerning the sale and consumption of alcohol may seem very liberal or very constraining to students, depending on a student's nationality. The legal drinking age in the United States is 21 years old. MCAD has specific policies to restrict the consumption of alcohol on campus. Refer to the Student Handbook for more details.

In many parts of the U.S., public buildings are designated "smoke free", meaning that you cannot smoke in any part of the building. There may also be signs posted on the doorways asking an individual not to smoke within 20 feet of the entrance or exit. Be prepared to see "No Smoking" signs in most offices, classrooms, restaurants and stores.

### BANKING

The U.S. is a check and credit culture, not a cash culture. Students are advised not to carry more than \$50 - \$100 cash on their person. It is best to use credit or debit cards for everyday purchases and transactions.

#### + CHECKING AND SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

Students who will be in the U.S. studying for more than six months should consider opening a checking account in addition to a savings account. If a student decides to open a U.S. bank account, they should bring their I-20, passport with visa stamp, I-94 card, letter of verification, class schedule or transcript and an IRS form W-8BEN. After opening an account, the bank will issue a debit card, which allows a person to deposit or withdraw money from their bank account using an ATM. Debit cards can also be used to access your bank account funds to pay for purchases, in a similar way to credit cards.

#### + CREDIT CARDS

Unlike debit cards, credit cards do not draw funds directly from your bank account. A credit cards allow people to make purchases even when they have no money immediately available. Although credit cards are convenient, they can carry interest rates as high as 23% if the balance is not paid in full every billing cycle.

### CAFETERIA

Adjusting to new types and preparations of food can be one of the most challenging aspects of moving to a different country. Changes in diet can affect emotional, mental and physical well being, so it is important that students eat a balanced and healthy diet. Upon request, MCAD cafeteria staff are available to answer questions about ingredients, food preparation, and dietary restrictions or preferences, including allergies.

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The cafeteria is open during Fall and Spring semesters when classes are in session. The hours are Monday-Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served during these times. The cafeteria features hot daily specials, made-to-order sandwiches, hamburgers, fries, salads, smoothies, and other beverages.

**CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

All new students experience a period of adjustment when starting college or university. This is even more true for international students, who find themselves adjusting to a new culture and way of life. No matter how well prepared a student is for their move to the U.S., they are likely to experience some level of anxiety or stress related during the process of cultural adjustment. This is sometimes referred to as “culture stress or shock.”

**+ PHASES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

1. **HONEYMOON:** Students notice superficial differences such as dress, language and nonverbal behaviors but these do not feel stressful. The excitement of being in a new environment makes everything feel manageable.
2. **NEGOTIATION:** Students experience feelings of tension, stress or anxiety as the lack of familiar cultural cues becomes overwhelming. There may be frustration or anger because everyday activities like communicating, making friendships, getting around, and engaging in class require more effort and energy. This is a normal and expected reaction to living in a new culture.
3. **ADJUSTMENT AND ADAPTATION:** Students know what to expect in the new culture and develop routines or problem-solving skills that help them deal with cultural differences.

**+ SYMPTOMS OF CULTURE STRESS**

- Anger, irritability or getting easily frustrated
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood swings - feeling happy and then feeling sad
- Feeling homesick
- Changes in appetite - eating more or less than you usually do
- Changes in sleep - sleeping a lot or being unable to sleep
- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches



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**HOW TO GET HELP**

Not everyone experiences culture shock/stress the same way. Some students may have a lot of these symptoms, or just a few. It is important to keep in mind that this experience is normal, expected, and can be managed. The first line of defense is to keep active, participate in community activities, and stay engaged with classmates and peers.

We have many resources available at MCAD to help you navigate the process of cultural adjustment. You may make an appointment with the International and Exchange Advisor during office hours, or contact the Counseling Center, which is free of charge for all MCAD students.

Any physical symptoms, such as headaches, should be checked out by a physician before a student assumes they are symptoms of culture shock. For after hours emergencies, students should go to the Public Safety desk.

**HEALTH CARE**

The U.S. has a complicated health care system that is difficult to navigate, even for people who grew up here. There is no universal or nationalized health care that many international students are used to in their home countries. Wait times for appointments with doctors may be longer and it may be challenging to know where to go when they are feeling sick or are injured.

There are four main places a student can go for medical care: a doctor's office or health clinic, an urgent care center, or an emergency room. Below is an outline of where to go based on the urgency of the situation.

**+ DOCTORS OFFICE**

It is recommended that new students find a primary care doctor in their health insurance network who can learn their health history and see them for non-emergency situations. Appointments usually need to be scheduled at least a week in advance. A primary care doctor can make referrals to medical specialists.

**+ HEALTH CLINIC**

These clinics can be found inside many large U.S. pharmacies or stores, such as CVS, Target, and Walgreens. They have nurse practitioners or physician assistants who take walk-in appointments to treat simple conditions or minor injuries such as a cold, flu or an ear infection. Retail health clinics usually do not make referrals to medical specialists.

**+ URGENT CARE CENTER**

If a student needs care for minor illnesses or injuries outside of regular business hours, an Urgent Care center is a good option. These centers are staffed by physicians and offer a wide range of services to treat situations that are urgent but not life-threatening.



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**+ HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM**

Emergency rooms are commonly referred to as 'ERs' and are designed to treat life-threatening, or acute illness and injuries that require immediate attention.

**HEALTH INSURANCE**

MCAD requires all incoming and returning degree-seeking international students to purchase MCAD's health insurance policy. International exchange students may purchase MCAD's insurance policy, or a US-based insurance plan that is comparable to MCAD's.

Dental work and eye examinations are not covered by MCAD health insurance and are very expensive in the U.S. Students are encouraged to bring an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses in case of loss or damage. In addition, they should bring a supply of doctor's prescriptions or medication that they take regularly.

**PAYMENT SERVICES**

International students that do not have a domestic (United States) bank account may initiate a bank wire using [flywire](#) International Payment Services. For security purposes, this is the only international bank wire service that MCAD offers. Look for the [flywire](#) logo on your [MAX Account](#) menu of payment options, at checkout.

You will be directed to [flywire's](#) MCAD student dashboard where you will create your own personal [flywire](#) account and login credentials. Choose your preferred payment method - bank transfer or credit card - and receive detailed payment instructions to print or save to your phone for easy reference.

[Flywire](#) receives, converts and delivers the funds to MCAD, notifying you each step of the way. Any problems or questions regarding Flywire can be addressed to Student Accounts in the MCAD Business Office.

**RELIGION**

The U.S. is a multicultural society founded on tolerance and mutual respect. A student should not hesitate to seek out opportunities to practice religious beliefs. Organized religious groups of many denominations can be found close to the MCAD community. For local chapters of an organization or directions, see the International and Exchange Student Advisor.

**ROOMMATES**

Living with others can be an enriching yet challenging experience. For students living on-campus, resident assistants (RAs) assist in completing a roommate agreement during the first weeks of the school year. Whether a student is living on or off-campus, it is important they



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have a candid discussion about daily living expectations with their roommates. This will ensure students are best prepared to contribute to a living situation that feels positive and fits everyone's needs.

Keep in mind four crucial points in terms of daily living with roommates: communication, commitment, consideration, and mediation. When people are open to communication, problem-solving becomes easier. Students must realize their responsibilities managing their relationships and commit to let their roommates know when they are dealing with stress. It is likely that students will be able to work out most of their problems amongst themselves. However, if nothing seems to work and things seem unresolved, students should seek mediation. (Adapted from Boston College's off-campus housing services.)

**SOCIAL LIFE**

International students are highly encouraged to get involved in campus life as a way to make new friends, build a sense of community, and help in the process of cultural adjustment. There are many organizations and groups eager for new members. They include the Student Union (SU), Students in Design, Draw League, Photographers Club, Animation Club, 3D Club, Audio Lounge, Anime Club, Soccer, Bike Club, Comic Heads, and more.

**STUDENT HOUSING**

1. Students can stay in their campus apartment during semester break and spring break. Move out deadlines for students leaving at the end of the Fall or Spring semesters will be communicated via email by MCAD Housing. Students who want to live on campus during the summer must complete a summer housing application, and pay for summer housing at the beginning of each month. Students do not need to be enrolled in summer classes to live on campus during the summer.
2. Students who rent an apartment off-campus, may be entitled to a property tax refund. People must file federal and Minnesota State taxes by April 15. Refund checks are mailed by the state government in August.
3. Students who live on campus or close to MCAD can be escorted to their apartment by a Public Safety Officer. Students who live off-campus can be escorted to their car whether it is in the parking lot or on the street.
4. MCAD strongly recommends that all students living on or off campus purchase personal property insurance. The college does not accept responsibility for students' personal property. Students may already be covered through their parents, however if they are not, the Housing Office has brochures from an independent insurance agent. Property insurance protects students against fire, theft, water damage or vandalism of such items as cameras, TVs and computers.



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5. There is a lost and found box at the Public Safety desk. If valuable things are lost off-campus, students should contact the police to ask if filing a report is necessary.
6. Emergency drills: Fire drills are held once per semester in campus housing. Students are required to evacuate the building when they hear a siren. Students may be fined \$10 for not evacuating.
7. Tornado sirens are sounded from neighborhood schools and community centers on the first Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. Students should not be alarmed and do not need to seek shelter.

**TRANSPORTATION**

**+ BICYCLES**

Minnesota law gives cyclists the same rights and privileges as motor vehicle drivers. Cyclists have the right to ride on the road and must know the applicable traffic laws and act accordingly. Minnesota law calls for cyclists to ride with the flow of traffic and as close to the right side of the road as practical, except in limited situations. Wearing a bike helmet is an inexpensive form of insurance against traumatic injury. When purchasing a bicycle helmet, look for a sticker that indicates if it meets the Snell Memorial Foundation or ANSI standards.

MCAD is a proud sponsor of Nice Bike, a Minneapolis public bicycle sharing program. A kiosk is located in front of the Main Building. Generally, bikes are available from April to November. For subscription information, fees, maps and usage details, see the Nice Ride website.

**+ Cars**

A state driver's license and car insurance are required in order to own and drive a car in the state of Minnesota. The Minnesota No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act requires that every car and motorcycle operated in Minnesota is covered by proper no fault and liability insurance. If you have questions about how to get a state driver's license, consult with the International and Exchange Advisor.

**+ Metro Transit Bus and Light Rail**

The current local fare for regular bus and light rail during non-rush hours is \$2.00 and \$2.50 during rush hours (Monday-Friday 6:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.) Buses accept \$1 bills and U.S. coins. If a rider needs to travel on more than one bus to reach their destination, they should ask the driver for a transfer when they pay their fare. A transfer is good for unlimited rides in any direction for up to 2 1/2 hours, but does not apply to Downtown Zone fares. Schedules and maps can be found on the Metro transit website.



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**+ Taxis**

- Airport: Super Shuttle, [supershuttle.com](http://supershuttle.com)
- Local: Red and White Taxi 612.871.1600, [redwhitetaxi.com](http://redwhitetaxi.com)
- Blue and White Taxi: 612.333.3333, [blueandwhitetaxi.com](http://blueandwhitetaxi.com)
- Uber (Smart phone required), [uber.com](http://uber.com)
- St. Paul & East Suburbs: Suburban Taxi 612.522.2222, [suburbantaxi.com](http://suburbantaxi.com)

**TRAVEL**

If a student leaves the U.S. for 5 months or less, they may be readmitted using the same I-20 form. If a student leaves the U.S. for more than 5 months, a new I-20 form must be issued by the International and Exchange Advisor.

When traveling, a student should always have a valid passport, I-20, visa, current proof of financial support (and EAD card during OPT), and proof of full-time enrollment in the form of a transcript or class schedule.

If a student exits the United States on an expired visa, they must go to a U.S. Consulate office and get a new one. Travel within the U.S. and territories is not restricted and no special documents are required. However, it is extremely important that students carry their passports and valid documents in the event they need to present them to law enforcement officials. Customs and Border Protection officers regularly stop rail and auto traffic within 100 miles of the U.S. border to check immigration documents.



## IMMIGRATION

### CANADIAN STUDENTS

Canadian students do not need to obtain a visa to enter the United States. However, students must have a passport to prove citizenship and identity. In addition, a student needs an I-20 issued by MCAD and proof of financial ability in order to enter at the U.S. border.

### CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

CPT is work authorization that allows a student to work in a job related to his/her field, on or off campus, as long as it is required for their major. To be eligible, students must have been enrolled full-time for at least one full academic year and be in legal F-1 status. Students may not begin employment until they have CPT authorization and a new I-20 listing the employer, address and job description.

Currently, internships are required for the BSc and BFA programs but not for MFA students. Since MFA students are not required to have an internship, one must be recommended and approval granted by both the mentor and MFA Program Director prior to employment. By MCAD's guidelines, students are required to spend 120 hours working in an internship to earn 3 credits.

According to immigration law, a student may accumulate up to 12 months of working on an internship throughout an undergraduate degree. This training may be full-time or part-time. For immigration purposes, there is no limit to the amount of time a student may work part-time. Full-time CPT for 12 months or more forfeits all Optional Practical Training (OPT).

### EMPLOYMENT

There are very strict rules and regulations governing employment for international students in the U.S. It is important that students always consult with the International and Exchange Advisor before accepting any kind of employment, on or off-campus, including freelance or volunteer work. Receiving a benefit in exchange for services rendered (free room and board for baby-sitting or free meal in exchange for freelance work) is considered to be employment and is in violation of immigration law. For off campus work permission based on Unforeseen Financial Change (limited eligibility), see the International and Exchange Advisor.

### EMPLOYMENT (ON-CAMPUS)

Only degree-seeking students are allowed to work on-campus. Employment is limited to 20 hours per week during the school year, but can increase to 40 hours per week during school breaks. Students do not need to obtain authorization from the International and Exchange Advisor to work on-campus, unless they do not yet have a Social Security Number. However, all

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employment should still be reported to the International and Exchange Advisor. International students are not eligible to sell their artwork during Art Sale, but they may donate artwork to be eligible to apply for an international student scholarship. Exchange students are not eligible for the scholarship, but may still choose to donate their work to the Art Sale.

**I-20**

The I-20 is a legal document which a student must present to a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad to obtain an F-1 visa. The I-20 must be presented at Customs and Border Protection at the airport each time a student travels abroad and returns, and must reflect accurate and up-to-date information.

Changes in name, country of citizenship, major, degree program, financial resources and addition or deletion of F-2 dependents (spouse or children) must be reported to the International and Exchange Advisor so that a new, updated I-20 form is issued. Students are advised to keep all I-20 forms ever issued to them, as they will be required if they choose to return to the U.S. at a later date, for example as a Ph.D. candidate, as a spouse of a U.S. citizen, or as a "green card" holder/permanent resident.

**I-20 COMPLETION DATE**

The I-20 reflects an expected program completion date. Students are allowed to pursue full-time studies up to that date. The completion date does not include 12 months of Optional Practical Training which a student may apply for based on graduation.

If a student completes a program before the expected completion date, the International and Exchange Advisor must change the I-20 to reflect this date. After graduation, students have a grace period of 60 days to depart the U.S., gain admission to a new program of study and obtain a new I-20, or apply for a change of visa status.

If a student is unable to complete a program by the completion date for academic reasons, they must be granted a program extension and permission by their academic advisor. A letter explaining the reason for the delay in completion and new expected completion date must be submitted to the International and Exchange Advisor before the I-20 is changed.

If a student is ill and cannot complete their academic program, a letter from a physician verifying that the illness prohibits the student from maintaining full-time progress will need to be submitted to the International and Exchange Advisor, along with a letter from the academic stating the new expected date of completion of all degree requirements.

Students unable to complete their program of study by the expected completion date and who fail to extend their I-20 before it expires will violate their legal status and overstay their visa.



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**I-20 GRACE PERIOD ELIGIBILITY**

Department of Homeland Security regulations automatically give a 60-day grace period to F-1 students who complete a program of study. The 60-day grace period is calculated from the I-20 completion date. Students authorized for Optional Practical Training have a 60-day grace period beginning on the date their OPT expires.

Students who withdraw from their program of study are not eligible for a 60-day grace period. Based on prior approval from the International and Exchange Advisor, students have a 15-day grace period in which to depart the U.S. Students are strongly encouraged to obtain the 15-day grace period approval to avoid problems re-entering the U.S. in the future.

**I-94**

An I-94 is the DHS Arrival/Departure Record that is issued to people who are admitted to the U.S. and hold a non-U.S passport. If you need to access your I-94 number for obtaining a driver's license, social security card, etc please go to <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search>

**MAINTAINING LEGAL STATUS**

International students are admitted to the U.S. for "Duration of Status" indicated with a notation of "D/S" on their I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. This means that a student is allowed to remain in the U.S. for as long as their legal student status is maintained. It is your responsibility to understand the rules and regulations that will allow you to maintain your legal student status:

- 1. Attend the school specified in your I-20 or DS-2019**
- 2. Keep your immigration documents current and valid at all times.** Your passport must be valid for at least six months at all times, your student visa should be unexpired if you plan to travel outside the United States, and your I-20 should be endorsed for travel at least once a year by the International and Exchange Advisor. Always apply for an extension at least 30 days in advance if you will need to continue your program after the program end date printed on your I-20.
- 3. Maintain full-time enrollment throughout every Fall and Spring semester** (12 credits for undergraduate students and 9 credits for graduate students). You may not drop below the minimum required number of credits in the Fall and Spring except under extremely limited circumstances. In order to drop below full-time, a student must be authorized in advance by the International and Exchange Advisor. Getting a grade of W (withdraw) is considered a drop even if a student completed all course requirements. Classes taken as an "audit" do not count toward the full-time credit requirement. Always consult with the International and Exchange Advisor before dropping, adding and



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withdrawing from any classes.

- 4. Avoid registering for online courses.** You are allowed to take one online class (3 credits total) to count towards a full course of study during each term or semester. Registering for additional online courses is not permitted under any circumstances.
- 5. Maintain an acceptable grade point average (GPA) and abide by all school policies.** MCAD student policies and standards are published in the MCAD Student Handbook.
- 6. Fulfill all financial obligations to the school by the end of each semester.** Financial obligations include tuition, fees, insurance, and any fines on your student account. If you are financially supported by an agency or organization, it is your responsibility to fulfill the requirements outlined in your sponsorship agreement, and ensure that timely payments are made to your student account.
- 7. Provide the International and Exchange Advisor and USCIS with an updated residential address within 10 days of any change** (moving into a new apartment or dormitory). Post office box numbers are not accepted as a residential address. You must also report your change of address to the MCAD Records Office, Financial-Aid Office, Career Services, and Alumni Relations offices when applicable.
- 8. Report any changes in name, country of citizenship, financial resources, majors, or degrees levels to the International and Exchange Advisor.** Students are required to immediately report these changes in order to have their SEVIS record updated.
- 9. Notify the International and Exchange Advisor if you plan to transfer to another school.** Students must submit an International Student Transfer Form and complete all the necessary immigration procedures before transferring to a new school.
- 10. Inform the International and Exchange Advisor within 60 days of completion or termination of your program of study.** Students have 60 days to leave the U.S., receive an I-20 for a new program or school, or apply for a change to another immigration status with USCIS.

**OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)**

Students can work in a job related to their field of study while receiving monetary compensation. This is called Optional Practical Training (OPT) and students may be authorized for this work while school is in session, during vacations or after graduation. Part-time practical training, 20 hours per week or less, will be deducted from the available practical training at one-half the full-time rate. Applications may be submitted to USCIS 90 days before employment begins. A



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student is eligible for up to 12 months of full-time OPT employment. Post completion OPT must be requested prior to graduation and completed within 14 months of a student's graduation. The time to process OPT applications is approximately 90 days. Applications are processed in the order in which they are received. An additional twelve months of OPT can be granted for every change in academic level (BFA to MFA, MFA to Ph.D.). See the International and Exchange Advisor for application instructions.

**+ PERIODS OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Students may not accumulate more than 90 calendar days of unemployment during the 12 month period of initial post-completion OPT. Employment must be 20 hours per week or more. Volunteer work or unpaid internships in your field count as employment. Keep written documentation of all employment. If you have accumulated 90 days of unemployment, you will no longer be in F-1 status. Students are required to report the name of employer, address, job description, supervisor, website, phone number, address and employment start date to the International and Exchange Advisor.

**+ TRAVEL DURING OPT**

Under normal circumstances, a student who has both (1) an EAD for post-completion OPT or receipt notice and (2) a job or job offer, should not experience difficulty reentering the US. However if either of these two conditions is not met, the student assumes the risk of not being allowed to re-enter the U.S. For travel out of the U.S. during OPT, keep a valid passport, valid F-1 visa, valid I-20, valid travel endorsement on page 3 of the I-20 signed by the ISA, documentary evidence of funding, evidence of past full-time enrollment at MCAD (official transcript), EAD card and employment letter (from your company on letterhead stationery). Always check with the International and Exchange Advisor before leaving the country.

**PASSPORT**

A passport is a legal document issued by a student's country of citizenship. It must be valid at all times for six months into the future during a student's stay in the U.S. Passports may be renewed through an embassy or consulate in the U.S. Passports act as international students' primary document for identity.

When filling out any form use the exact spelling and name as it is written in your passport, NOT including hyphens (-). If you have a middle name, enter it as it is written on your passport and include it on all paperwork for consistency.

Federal law does not allow a F-1 visa holder to enter the U.S. or be employed in the U.S. if their passport is expired.

**OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT BASED ON UNFORESEEN FINANCIAL CHANGE**

Special work status is available for students who have unforeseen financial circumstances. A student must provide proof that there is an unforeseen severe economic hardship beyond the



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student's control and that other employment opportunities on-campus are not available or are insufficient. A student must apply for this status before beginning any work off-campus. The authorization process may take up to 120 days. A student cannot work until they have received an EAD card (Employment Authorization Document) from USCIS.

Employment is limited to 20 hours per week during the school year, but can be 40 hours per week during vacations. The I-20 must also reflect the change in authorization. Authorization ends upon the program completion date or school transfer and lasts for a period of one year or less. An extension is possible if a student is enrolled in the same program and can document that the financial situation persists. Students must have been in legal F-1 status at MCAD for at least one academic year to be eligible.

**SOCIAL SECURITY CARD**

A social security number can only be issued to a degree-seeking international student if they have been offered a job on-campus. The closest Social Security Office is located at Suite 1, 1811 Chicago Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404 and open from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except federal holidays.

**STATE IDENTIFICATION CARD**

The primary identification for international students is their passport. However, it is recommended that degree-seeking students also obtain a Minnesota state identification card. State I.D. cards are not the equivalent of a driver's license and cannot be used for identification at U.S. airports.

To obtain a Minnesota I.D. card, a student should bring the following to the basement level of Midtown Global Market at 920 East Lake Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407:

1. Passport, visa, I-20 and I-94
2. \$18 cash or personal check
3. Official transcript with birth date written in margin

Students can apply for either a state I.D. or a Minnesota Driver's License. These are the standard forms for identification in Minnesota and are usually required when making financial transactions (for example when you write a personal check, make a large credit card purchase or buy alcohol or tobacco).

Every Minnesota resident who drives a car or motorcycle must have a Minnesota driver's license. The operation of a vehicle without a driver's license is illegal. It is also illegal to permit another non-licensed person to drive their vehicle. Driver's licenses can only be obtained by passing an examination on driving laws, an eyesight test and a driving test on the road. State I.D. cards and driver's licenses must be renewed every year to prove current student status and have a notation of "check status date." A letter from the Minnesota Driver and



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Vehicle Services (DVS) will arrive in the mail to remind students to renew. If you move apartments or dormitories, you must inform DVS. This requirement continues into extension time of F-1 status while on OPT.

**TAXES**

ALL degree-seeking students are required by U.S. tax laws to complete and mail the form 8843 to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) whether they earned money or did not work. Filing can protect students from being improperly taxed in the future. In order to file your taxes, you will need the port of entry and dates present in the U.S. calculated from your passport and I-94.

Forms: <https://www.irs.gov/>

**+ U.S. FEDERAL TAXES**

Forms W-2 and 1099, which show your income totals for tax filing purposes, are usually mailed to students in January. If you have not received these forms by February, contact your employer. Obtain a 1098 -T from the MCAD Business Office if you received a scholarship. It is your own responsibility to file your own taxes. The deadline for filing taxes is midnight on April 15.

**+ MINNESOTA STATE TAXES**

Once you have filed federal taxes, you must also file state taxes. State of Minnesota tax forms are simple to fill out after the Federal Tax Form is completed. To file an individual return and download forms M1 and M1W:

<http://taxes.state.mn.us/individ/pages/forms.aspx>.

If you rent an apartment off-campus, you may be entitled to a refund. In addition to the M1 and M1W, ask your landlord for a Certificate of Rent Paid (CRP). Then complete a Property Tax Refund Return form M1PR from

[http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/Pages/search\\_results.aspx?k=M1PR](http://www.revenue.state.mn.us/Pages/search_results.aspx?k=M1PR).

U.S. tax laws are equal in complexity to immigration law. MCAD staff are not certified personal accountants, and are legally unable to address individual concerns. For convenience, MCAD will provide access to a tax preparation software called Sprintax.

**VIOLATION OF STUDENT STATUS**

To avoid being in violation of your student status, you should never:

- 1. Work on campus more than 20 hours per week while school is in session.** You may work full-time during vacation periods (winter, spring, or summer break) as long as you were enrolled as a full-time student the semester before the break and intend to return to MCAD the next semester.



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- 2. Work off campus.** Any off campus employment requires advance authorization by the International and Exchange Advisor. Working off campus without authorization is considered a serious violation of immigration regulations and will result in the termination of your student status.
  
- 3. Take a leave of absence without approval from the International and Exchange Advisor.** If a student discontinues their program before graduation, they do not have a 60-day grace period to leave the U.S. With prior approval from the ISA, a student has a 15-day grace period in which to depart the U.S..

If you fail to "maintain legal student status" or are terminated from your program, you can no longer legally enter the U.S. with the I-20 issued from MCAD. Violation of your student status may result in:

- + Ineligibility to work on campus
- + Ineligibility to apply or pursue CPT or OPT
- + Ineligibility to apply or pursue off campus work permission
- + Ineligibility to receive an I-20 transfer recommendation from MCAD to another school
- + Ineligibility to attend a new school
- + Ineligibility to apply to DHS for a change of visa status

**VISA**

The visa is a stamp in a student's passport. It permits students to enter the U.S. It is a "knock on the door" to the U.S. and does not guarantee admission. Your visa may expire while you are in the U.S. without an impact on a students' status. If a student leaves the U.S. with an expired visa, they must apply for a renewal to re-enter the U.S. at a U.S. Consulate (preferably one in their home country). Students cannot renew visas while in the U.S. If you apply in a third country the Consulate may impose stricter requirements or be unwilling to renew a visa.

If a student wants a new visa, they must also obtain a new I-20, have a valid passport, a current photograph, and financial verification for the ability to pay tuition and living expenses while at MCAD. Students should also be prepared to provide the consulate with original transcripts from every school they attended in the U.S. and every I-20 from those schools. The student should request a letter of enrollment from MCAD before applying for a new visa.

If a student changes out of F-1 status (not a full-time student studying at MCAD), they should seek the advice of an immigration lawyer. The International and Exchange Advisor can only provide information and advice regarding student visas.



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**VISA CATEGORIES**

1. F-1: academic student (university or college)
2. J-1: exchange visitor (scholar)
3. F-2: spouse or child of F-1 student
4. J-2: spouse or child of J-1 visitor
5. M-1: vocational student or other non-academic student (community college)
6. M-2: spouse or child of M-1 student
7. H1B: speciality occupation
8. H2B: temporary worker (skilled or unskilled)
9. H4: spouse or child of H1, H2, H3 individual
10. P2: artists and entertainers in reciprocal exchange programs
11. P3: artists and entertainers in culturally unique programs

**+ Regaining Legal F-1 Status**

Following a loss of student status, there are two ways in which a student may regain legal their status:

1. Applying for Reinstatement of Legal Status with DHS.
2. Reentering the U.S. with a new "initial admit" I-20 form.

See the International and Exchange Advisor before pursuing either path. Students who are reinstated by DHS or who reenter the U.S. with an "initial admit" I-20 will be required to enroll as a full-time student for at least one academic year before becoming eligible to apply for off campus work permission and or CPT or OPT.

**+ DHS DECLARATION OF UNLAWFUL PRESENCE**

If a DHS official or immigration judge declares an individual to be unlawfully present in the U.S., the unlawful presence will begin on the date of the DHS decision - not on the



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date the student violated his/her status. Individuals who have been unlawfully present in the U.S. for more than 180 continuous days but less than one year are barred from admission to the U.S. (under any visa type) for a period of three years. Individuals who have been unlawfully present in the U.S. for one year or longer are barred from admission to the U.S. (under any visa type) for a period of 10 years.

**+ FAMILY VISITS**

See International and Exchange Advisor for letters of invitation for visiting family members needing tourist visitor visas. Bring the following information: dates of proposed visit, purpose of the trip, activities during visit (commencement), visitor's funding source (i.e. personal accounts).

International visitors to the U.S. from Visa Waiver Program countries (VWP) are required to apply for travel authorization online at [www.cbp.gov/esta](http://www.cbp.gov/esta). Filing is recommended 72 hours before travel begins and is valid for two years after approval. Visitors should check with the U.S. embassy website to make sure their country is still eligible for the VWP before travel, see [www.state.travel.gov](http://www.state.travel.gov) for details.



## WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

### **ACADEMIC ADVISOR (BFA) / DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE PROGRAM (MFA)**

- + Academic problems
- + Curriculum requirements
- + Switching major

### **CAMPUS SAFETY**

- + School ID
- + Late night escorts
- + Emergency medical or immigration problem

### **COUNSELING CENTER**

- + Culture shock / adjustment
- + Stress
- + Depression
- + Relationship issues

### **FINANCIAL AID OFFICE**

- + Financial aid & scholarships
- + International work-study funds (BFA)
- + Grad Assistant funds (MFA)

### **INTERNATIONAL AND EXCHANGE ADVISOR**

- + Maintaining legal immigration status
- + Employment and internship requirements
- + Transferring to another school
- + Visa problems
- + Applying for CPT or OPT
- + Travel while a student
- + Withdrawal from a class

### **LEARNING CENTER**

- + Assistance with writing & editing
- + Help with time management
- + Training on software & digital skill development
- + Learning disability accommodation

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**PROFESSOR**

- + Details about a specific course
- + Understanding a lecture or assignment

**RECORDS**

- + Request for unofficial & official transcripts
- + Course schedules
- + Add / Drop forms
- + Intent to graduate

**RESIDENT ASSISTANT (RA)**

- + Apartment maintenance issues
- + Lost keys
- + Roommate mediation

**STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICE**

- + General college questions
- + Clubs and student activities
- + Health insurance information
- + Local medical resources
- + Requirements for graduating and major field of study



## GLOSSARY

### **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY [DHS]**

DHS includes U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). DHS enforces immigration rules and regulations in the United States.

### **DEPARTMENT OF LABOR [DOL]**

The Department of Labor has the responsibility for interpreting and administering statutes related to workers and employment issues on campus, CPT and OPT.

### **DEPARTMENT OF STATE [DOS]**

The Department of State has the responsibility of managing U.S. embassies and consulates abroad and issues all visas.

### **DURATION OF STATUS [D/S]**

Duration of Status is used on the I-94 record to indicate that as long as a student abides by the law and maintains status, they can stay in the United States for as long as they are in school.

### **THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE [IRS]**

The Internal Revenue Service is responsible for taxes.

### **INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER [ITIN]**

For those students who cannot obtain a Social Security number who have not been offered an on-campus job. Used for claiming tax treaty benefits or paying taxes.

### **PRINCIPAL DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICER [PDSO]**

For every school campus, a PDSO must be assigned. At MCAD, the International and Exchange Advisor is the PDSO. The PDSO performs the following functions in SEVIS: creates, saves, updates, and submits records for students and their dependents, prints students' and dependents' I-20 forms.

### **STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR INFORMATION SYSTEM [SEVIS]**

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System is a web-based system for maintaining information on international students and exchange visitors in the U.S.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA)**

The Social Security Administration is responsible for social security numbers, which are needed to work on and off campus in the U.S.

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**SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER [SSN]**

A Social Security number is issued by the federal government to track an individual for the purposes of taxation, retirement and disability for workers.

**THE U. S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES [USCIS]**

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is responsible for adjudicating OPT petitions for employment, naturalization petitions for green cards and interpreting immigration law.

**THE U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION [CBP]**

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection is responsible for immigration inspections at U.S. ports of entry.

**THE U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT [ICE]**

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is responsible for security in the U.S. border, immigration investigations, detention, removal, intelligence policies and SEVIS.

