



New International Postdoctoral Scholar Checklist

This checklist has been developed to assist you in your transition to UC Irvine. The items are arranged in sequential order. The outline below lists the respective task headings within the checklist. More detailed information follows in the subsequent pages. Note: some websites may not be active at all times. If you have questions, contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at: (949) 824-5196 or by email at [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#).

Disclaimer: The International Center is the authority on campus in regards to immigration issues. Visit the International Center website for the latest information about Visa and immigration related issues.

Before You Arrive

1. Pay the \$180 USD SEVIS fee
2. Pay VISA Application Fee
3. Schedule VISA Interview Appointment
4. Contact Your Department
5. Establish Your Annual Budget
6. Find Housing
7. Make Airline Reservations
8. Make Hotel Reservations
9. Arrange for Shuttle Services
10. Getting Around UCI
11. Review Your Health Insurance Benefits
12. Make Final Preparations Before Going to the Airport
13. Gather Your Documents for Entry into US Borders

After You Arrive

1. Check into the UCI International Center
2. Check in with the Department Personnel Coordinator
3. Obtain a Social Security Number
4. Enroll in the UC Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (Health Insurance)
5. Begin Your New Job
6. Activate Your UCInetID and Obtain Your UCI ID Card
7. Request Orientation Packet and Attend the Postdoctoral Scholars Orientation
8. Learn About Resources for Your Personal Daily Needs
9. Open a Bank Account
10. Obtain a Credit Card
11. Apply for a California Driver's License
12. Visit the UCI Postdoctoral Scholars Website for Extensive Resources
13. Access Professional Development Resources
14. Find Additional Sources of Funding



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15. AntPac: Library Research Resources
 16. Ride the OCTA Bus
 17. Buy a Car
 18. Life at UCI
 19. File a Tax Return: Mandatory for All Postdoctoral Scholars
 20. Keep Your Information Current and Safe
 21. Stay in Touch with the International Center



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

1. Pay the \$180 USD SEVIS I-901 Fee

You need to have your DS-2019 in order to pay this fee. To pay over the internet, enter the credit card number at the stated website. Submit payment with the I-901 form. To pay by check, fill out the application online, print out the internet generated coupon and mail along with a check to the stated address. To pay by money order, mail a check and the I-901 form to the stated address.

[Pay online](#)

2. Pay VISA Application Fee

As part of the J-1 Visa application process, an application fee must be paid to the U.S. Department of State. Contact the Consulate to ask for the method of payment and the forms because the procedure varies from place to place.

[Information](#)

3. Schedule VISA Interview Appointment

Contact your local US embassy or consulate to schedule an interview to approve your visa. You must bring these items to the interview:

- DS-2019 (make sure all the details are correctly filled by UCI and that you can be in the US by the proposed start date)
- DS-2019 (for J-2 dependents if applicable)
- Verification of financial support (can be stated in letter from Department)
- Evidence of residence abroad and intent to depart after completion of program (make sure you can prove that you're a permanent resident in your home country)
- Current passport (for avoidance of later problems make sure it's valid at least for the whole time of your appointment)
- Non-immigrant visa application
- Photographs
- Visa fee
- SEVIS fee (printed proof of payment)
- Visa reciprocity fee (if applicable)

** Canadians are visa exempt. They just need to present the Notice of Approval or DS-2019 at the US border.



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

4. Contact Your Department

If you have any questions regarding how to make a smooth transition to UCI, please contact your department.

Also, [Mary Frances Ypma-Wong](#) in the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Graduate Division is a resource for you. Either email (m.ypmawong@uci.edu) or telephone at (949) 824-5196.

5. Establish Your Annual Budget

Plan your budget for the year early. You must have enough money to live on during your tenure with UCI. Take into account the average rent you'll have to pay, and other monthly expenses. For more information visit [Housing](#).

Proof of the amount of funding must be provided and will be noted on the DS-2019. Minimum support is \$1,600 per month for a J-1 exchange visitor, \$450 per month for a J-2 spouse. This is the minimum. When coming to America, do not carry a large amount of cash with you. Instead, use traveler's check or bank cards to transfer or withdraw funds from your bank account to cover your initial expenses. There are banks that have international agreements and don't charge transaction fees. Ask your home bank.

6. Find Housing

Housing may be expensive in Irvine. It is recommended you make housing arrangements before coming to Irvine. Your department may be able to assist you.

You should make plans to transfer money or have access to money to pay for your housing. You may be asked to pay first and last month's rent.

A list of housing options is posted on the [Graduation Division site](#). Current UCI postdocs are also a resource and contact can be made through the [Postdoctoral Scholar Association \(PDA\) Facebook](#) group.

Other: Other sites that can help you plan your move to Irvine include

- [UCI](#)
- [Irvine Public Schools](#) (if you have children)
- [City of Irvine](#)
- [County of Orange](#)
- [Orange County Register](#)
- [LA Times](#)

If you have further questions, contact [Housing Administrative Services](#) at 949.824.7247.



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

7. Make Airline Reservations

It is important to book a flight early to ensure that you arrive here within your scheduled plans. If you are arriving at any airport in the U.S., try to obtain a connecting flight to the [John Wayne Airport](#) in Orange County (SNA). The airport is located approximately three miles from the UCI campus. Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is the next closest, but is 40 miles from UC Irvine.

IMPORTANT: You may only make a plane reservation upon the arrival of the Visa Issuance. When making travel arrangements, remember you can enter the U.S. **no more than 30 days** before the program's start date on the SEVIS DS-2019 form.

8. Make Hotel Reservations

Try to make hotel reservations before you depart. Local hotels are listed [here](#).

9. Arrange for Shuttle Services

You should arrange for shuttle service or transportation for the day you arrive in California. Some shuttle websites are listed below. If you're landing at John Wayne Airport (SNA), you can take a cab to campus.

- [SuperShuttle](#)
- [Prime Time Shuttle](#)
- [Los Angeles World Airports](#)

10. Getting Around UCI

The Parking and Transportation Office offers an overview of the transportation services available to you. Be familiar with them before you arrive here, particularly if you're bringing your own car.

Visit the following websites for more information:

- [Campus Map of UCI & Directions](#)
- [Parking Permit Types](#)
- [Transportation Options](#)



BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

11. Review Your Health Insurance Benefits

As a postdoctoral scholar (employee, fellow, paid direct), you are able to select and enroll in the UC Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (PSBP).

** Please visit and familiarize yourself with this plan or visit [Garnett-Powers](#) to look at benefits and details about your health insurance plan. The deadline to enroll in the plan is 31 days from your starting appointment date.

** Postdoctoral scholars whose term is 3 months or longer are eligible for this insurance plan.

Remember, if you arrive prior to your appointment you are not insured and might want to have some kind of insurance from your home country.

12. Make Final Preparations Before Going to the Airport

The [Transportation Security Administration](#) offers helpful advice on what you need to know before you travel. Visit the website to know how you should pack your luggage, what items are acceptable or prohibited, and guidelines if you are traveling with children, etc. Remember that individual airlines charge differently for luggage.

13. Gather Your Documents for Entry into US Borders

All postdoctoral scholars flying into US borders need to have the following documents:

REQUIRED

- U.S. Visa (except Canadian students)
- Valid passport
- DS-2019

RECOMMENDED

- Letter of invitation from your department
- Proof of funding/financial evidence
- Receipt for the SEVIS fee
- Name & Contact information for your department and UCI International Center

Names should appear on all documents the way it appears on your passport. Always hand carry your documents. Do not put them in your luggage. Be prepared to answer questions regarding your reason for entering the country, how long you'll be staying and what you'll be doing here. It may be helpful to have a written statement to provide to customs officials.

[Additional Information](#)



AFTER YOU ARRIVE

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>1. Check into the International Center</p> <p>Visit this IC site for more information about check in. After completing this, you will obtain a confirmation sheet which you will need when checking in with you department personnel coordinator.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>2. Check in with your Department Personnel Coordinator</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>3. Obtain a Social Security Number</p> <p>You are required to obtain a Social Security Number (SSN) before any payment can be received. A SSN will also make it easier for you to open a bank account, obtain a credit card, or get insurance.</p> <p>Do the following to begin the process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to UCI International Center SSN Information to begin applying for it. Documents required for J-1 Scholar are: Passport, Visa Stamp, I-94, DS-2019 and invitation Letter from Hiring UC Irvine Department. 2. Visit the nearest Social Security Office: 26051 Acero Road, Mission Viejo, CA <p>You may need to wait a day or two after arriving in the US for your arrival status to be updated in the system. It takes approximately 2-6 weeks to receive your SSN which you will receive in the mail. Banks and landlords sometimes ask for your SSN but be sure to verify why the number is needed and use discretion when giving it out. Visit Social Security for more information about your SSN.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>4. Enroll in the UC Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (Health Insurance)</p> <p>As a postdoctoral scholar (employee, fellow, paid directs), you are able to select and enroll in the UC Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (PSBP).</p> <p>** This plan is administered by Garnett-Powers.</p> <p>You can complete the enrollment process to receive health insurance on the Garnett-Powers website. <u>You have 31 days from your starting appointment date to enroll in benefits.</u></p> <p>Contact your department or Kwame White for questions regarding the enrollment process. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) also sponsors quarterly Benefits Q & A sessions which are posted on the OPA Orientation site.</p> <p>** Postdoctoral scholars whose term is 3 months or longer are eligible for this insurance plan.</p>



AFTER YOU ARRIVE

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>5. Begin Your New Job</p> <p>You must report to your UCI Department Administrator by the program start date on your DS-2019. If you cancel plans to do research or teach at UCI, or postpone your arrival date you must inform the academic department and the International Center as soon as possible. Your J-1 program must be validated in SEVIS immediately after the start date in section 3 of your DS-2019.</p> <p>You are required to apply yourself to the work described as your primary purpose. You may be authorized to do additional tasks according to the DS-2019 (i.e. teaching a course, participate in a conference) as long as the activities relate to the purpose of your exchange, they don't interfere with your primary purpose stated in DS-2019, and you get written authorization in advance.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6. Activate Your UCInetID & Obtain Your UCI ID Card</p> <p>You will receive notification to activate your UCInetID (used to access e-mail, campus resources, etc.) through your personal e-mail account. The time of the issuance of the UCInetID varies from department to department. Contact your department to find out when you can activate yours. Also contact your department for assistance on how to obtain the UCI ID card.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>7. Request an Orientation Packet and Attend the Postdoctoral Scholars Orientation</p> <p>Email Mary Frances Ypma-Wong (m.ypmawong@uci.edu) to request an Orientation Packet. Attend the Postdoctoral Scholars Orientation to learn additional details about the programs and services designed to support you in your endeavors and meet other Postdocs. Campus resources will be shared as well as other relevant information.</p> <p>Download a copy of Campus Resources for Postdocs which contains information about UCI resources which facilitate Postdoc orientation and everyday workflow.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>8. Learn About Resources for Your Personal Daily Needs</p> <p>Our "Visit UCI Webpage" has information about local supermarkets, post offices, churches, on-campus and off-campus dining facilities, shopping destinations, utility companies, furniture rental companies, and more.</p>



AFTER YOU ARRIVE

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>9. Open a Bank Account</p> <p>Checking accounts allow checks to be written and savings accounts offer a place for you to keep your money while earning interest. When you open an account, an ATM card will be given to you so you can retrieve money anytime. <u>It is NOT safe to carry large amounts of cash.</u></p> <p>To open a bank account at most banks you need 2 valid forms of identification and a local mailing address to receive mail. <u>For international scholars, a passport, a copy of your DS-2019 form, offer letter and UCI ID card are usually sufficient.</u></p> <p>Banks sometimes have “hidden” fees so be sure to inquire about all possible fees. Not all banks require a US Social Security Number but you will have more services if you have one (tell them that you’re applying for one and will submit it later. The International Center has provided this bank listing).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>10. Obtain a Credit Card</p> <p>Credit cards are used commonly for transactions and allow one to establish a credit history. It is considered a safer way to withdraw money than carrying cash with you. Obtaining a credit card will ease the process of making payments. Most banks offer secure credit cards; you might consider obtaining two credit cards in case one become problematic.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>11. Apply for a California Driver’s License</p> <p>Details are posted here: California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schedule an office visit to the DMV Office. 2. Complete application form DL 44, give a thumb print, have your picture taken, provide your Social Security Number (you can start the process before you have it), verify your birth date or legal presence, and provide your true full name. 3. Note the requirements for forms of ID and residency documents. 4. Pay the \$33 application fee. 5. Pass the following exams: vision exam, traffic laws and sign test, and the driving test. <p>If you have a license from another country, you have to take the driving test.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>12. Visit the UCI Postdoctoral Scholars Website for Extensive Resources</p> <p>The UCI Postdoctoral Scholars Website has been specially created to meet your needs. The website features resources for academics & research, finding additional sources of funding, career and job opportunities, technology, and leisure activities. Be sure to note the individual pages listed on the top left.</p>



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<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>13. Access Professional Development Resources</p> <p>The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs maintains a Career Development webpage with upcoming events.</p> <p>Sign up for free Affiliate Membership with the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA)</p> <p>Membership includes subscription to NPA’s quarterly newsletter (Postdocket), periodic e-mail Alerts (E-Alerts), and access to all NPA website content. You must have your UCI e-mail address to enroll.</p> <p>Sign up for free institutional sub-account membership with the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD).</p> <p>Membership includes access to a wide range of professional development resources. You must have your UCI e-mail address to enroll.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>14. Find Additional Sources of Funding</p> <p>Postdoctoral Fellows are eligible for funding through extramural and internal sources. Visit here for more details and comprehensive information to find funding for your research.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>15. AntPac: Library Research Resources</p> <p>As you begin your research here, it is important for you to know where to access current information. Search for materials in all of UCI’s libraries. A detailed description for postdocs is posted here.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>16. Ride the OCTA Bus!</p> <p>Get unlimited access to the Orange County Transportation Authority’s (OCTA) bus system 24 hours a day through the “University Pass” program. University Pass Membership offers reduced-rate usage of the transit system, good from July 1st to June 30th. Stop by the UCI Transportation and Distribution Services Office to purchase your University Pass Membership Card. You need to be on UCI payroll for them to provide you the pass.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>17. Buy a Car</p> <p>Once you have obtained a California Driver’s License, you can purchase a car. Visit Samarins to find resources on how to buy the right used car. You can also check the ads on University Hills for used cars.</p> <p>Remember that to drive in California, you need to have automobile and liability insurance. You must carry the minimum monetary limits: \$15,000 for injury/death of 1 person/accident; \$30,000 for 2 people; \$5,000 for property damage per law. Evidence of financial responsibility must be carried in the vehicle (the most common is the insurance identification card).</p>



AFTER YOU ARRIVE

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>18. Life at UCI</p> <p>Start making Irvine your home by exploring the resources available to you on and off campus. Click our "Visit UCI Webpage" to find information on stores, dining, travel destinations, and other services at or around UC Irvine.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>19. File a Tax Return: Mandatory for All Postdoctoral Scholars</p> <p>You must report your annual income by filing a tax return between <u>January 1 and April 15</u> for the previous tax year. To do this, you must have your Social Security Number.</p> <p>The International Center organizes a Tax Workshop with a representative from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) each March to assist with your questions. The time and location of this workshop is available every February of each year.</p> <p>Additional resources and information can be found at the IRS Homepage and the National Postdoctoral Association website.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>20. Keep Your Information Current and Safe</p> <p>Contact the International Center immediately if your DS-2019 appointment should change. Make sure to also keep your passport current and take care of all of your important documents. Put them in a safe place. If you travel outside the US (except Mexico and Canada) you will have to get a signature on your DS2019 form from the international Center. If you'll get a new I-94 at reentry you'll have to submit this to the International Center.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>21. Stay in Touch with the International Center</p> <p>Every time you enter the USA check in with the International Center. Also keep the International Center updated with your telephone number and e-mail address and go there if you need any additional forms, information, or signatures.</p>

[Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#)

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