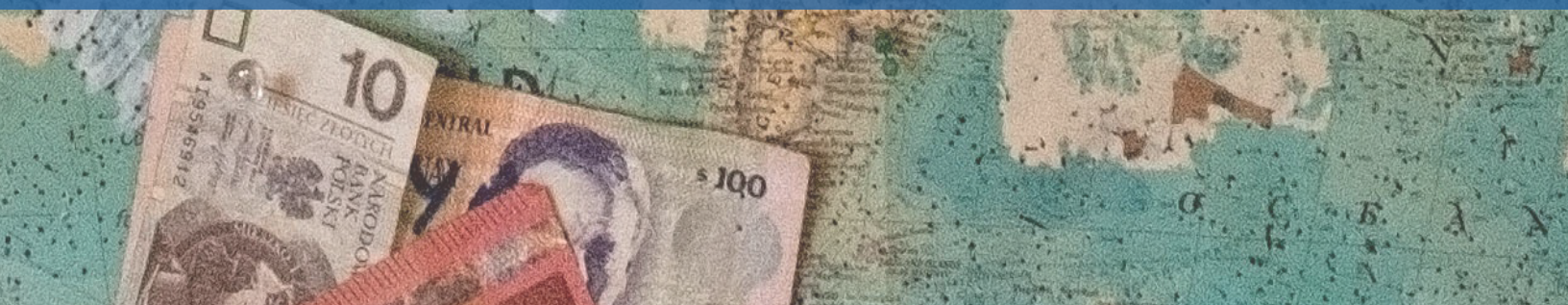




WESTCLIFF
UNIVERSITY
Educate. Inspire. Empower.



F-1 International Student Handbook 2018-2019



Provost Office



Welcome to Westcliff University!

Congratulations! You have been accepted to Westcliff University and have been granted an F-1 visa.

As you surveyed your options and have chosen Westcliff University, I believe you should become aware of the environment in which our University is located, as we are very proud of our surrounding community.

Westcliff University is headquartered in Irvine, California. Irvine is a part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Irvine is about 1 hour south of Hollywood, 15 minutes east of the Pacific Ocean, 90 minutes southwest of the Big Bear Ski Resort (elevation – 8,805 feet), and 90 minutes north of San Diego and Mexico. It is also about 4 hours west of Las Vegas. We also have a campus in Cerritos, California, which is about 40 minutes north of Irvine.

Irvine was chosen in 2008 by CNNMoney.com as the fourth best place to live in the United States. In 2012, it was ranked sixth nationally. In September 2011, BusinessWeek magazine listed Irvine as the fifth best city in the United States. Irvine consistently ranks as the safest city in America with a population over 100,000. In 2014, Irvine was named the best-run city in the U.S. by 24/7 Wall Street. Irvine is home to many corporations, particularly in the technology and semiconductor sectors.

What distinguishes the educational experience at Westcliff University in the marketplace is its relevant practicality. Our professors are very active in the industries about which they teach and are exceptionally well respected by both their professional and academic peers.

We look forward to seeing and talking with you on our campus in the months ahead. In the meanwhile, if you should have any questions or comments you want me to address, please feel free to contact me. For inquiries and information regarding international student affairs, you are welcome to contact our International Affairs Department at intlservices@westcliff.edu.

Warm regards,

David C. McKinney, Ph.D.

Provost

Westcliff University

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INTRODUCTION

Adjusting to life in the United States may be a tremendous change and overwhelming, but this handbook is designed to alleviate the stress and anxiety students may feel and assist in a smooth transition for that adjustment process. This handbook will guide students to:

- a. Understand all of the documentation necessary for their trip to the United States;
- b. Attend and maintain status at Westcliff University; and
- c. Become oriented to life in the United States.

COMING TO WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY

Moving to a new country can be very exciting and a life-learning experience. Adjusting to a new culture, such as our American culture, may take some time and patience. Some of the initial challenges international students encounter with the American culture may start with the clothing style, and mannerisms between people. However, this just represents the differences between cultures and the rich learning experience students will acquire when living abroad.

As students become familiar with the new culture and surroundings, students will notice the commonalities and difference between their culture and the U.S. Students are highly encouraged to be aware of the cultural customs and nuances, but still maintain their own standards and values that reflect who they are as their own unique individual.

Westcliff University's International Affairs and Student Services team are here to help international students acclimate with orientations, workshops, and events that can help with understanding life and culture at Westcliff University.

International Affairs: intlservices@westcliff.edu

Student Services: studentservices@westcliff.edu

NOTICE OF TRAVEL PLANS

Students who have been approved for a student visa must make their travel arrangements in advance to be able to report to Westcliff University within 30 days of the start date. Students' itinerary should be emailed to the admissions representative and staff from the Department of International Affairs to advise the University when the student plans to arrive in the U.S.

PREPARING FOR U.S. ARRIVAL

There are many things to prepare before one embarks on a journey to a new country. It can be very cumbersome trying to figure out what to pack to move overseas. The following are a few required and recommended items:

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS TO CARRY ON THE PLANE

Students are highly recommended to carry their immigration documents on the plane with them. Please note students should not put any immigration documents in their checked luggage because they will be presenting these documents to a Customs and Border Patrol officer (CBP) when they enter into the U.S.

- Form I-20
- Valid Passport
- F-1 student visa
- Admissions acceptance letter

- Receipt of SEVIS I-901 fee
- Financial documents
- Other documents such as:
 - Health and immunization records
 - Transcripts
 - Degrees, diplomas, certificates

IMMIGRATION PROCESS AT THE U.S. PORT OF ENTRY

As mentioned above, students must be prepared to show the following documents to CBP upon arrival to the U.S. port of entry: I-20, passport, F-1 student visa, financial documents, admissions acceptance letter, and I-901 receipt of SEVIS fee.

Students who travel without all immigration documents needed to enter the U.S. might be denied of entry into the U.S. It will be up to the discretion of the immigration officer at the port of entry to allow students entrance into the U.S.

Students who enter in the U.S. by land will receive a paper form of the I-94. The I-94 card records the students' arrival and departure from the U.S.

Students who enter in the U.S. by air or sea will have their arrival recorded electronically and their I-94 can be printed from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>.

Canadian Citizens

Students who are Canadian citizens do not need to apply for a visa at a U.S. Consulate, but must enter the U.S. in F-1 status. Although Canadian citizens do not need visas to study or participate in an exchange program in the U.S, Canadian students do need to obtain an I-20 from the university, school or exchange program they plan to attend. Students who are Canadian must have the following documents to enter into the U.S: Canadian passport, original I-20, I-901 SEVIS fee payment, financial documents, and proof of ties to Canada.

I-515A form

If a student arrives at the port of entry and is granted entry to the U.S. with insufficient documentation, the student will receive an I-515A Form at the time of entry in order to stay in the U.S. for 30 days. Students who receive an I-515A form must report to the Department of International Affairs to meet with an international student advisor.

Biometric Procedure

At the port of entry, students should expect to experience the biometric procedure: digital finger scanning and photograph.

UPON ARRIVAL

Students should schedule arrival in the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to the first day of classes as identified on the student's I-20 form. Students are also required to report to the Designated School Official (DSO) at Westcliff University no later than three (3) days after their arrival. Students need to bring to this initial meeting, their passport, I-94 and I-20.

WHAT IS A DSO?

According to Study in the States, all SEVP-certified schools are required to have Designated School Officials (DSO) to communicate with SEVP, update F-1 student record, and help students maintain your student status by

providing advice, or helping your fill out important forms. While benefits like employment or driving are available to students in the United States, all F-1 students need authorization from their DSO before enjoying them. DSO's can assist with the following:

- Working in the United States
- Applying for a driver's license
- Applying for a Social Security number
- Changing your major, program, or degree level
- Changing your education level
- Transferring to a new school
- Being absent from classes
- Taking a vacation
- Traveling outside the United States
- Moving to a new address
- Changing your name
- Requesting a program extension

To contact a DSO, please email intlservices@westcliff.edu.

MAINTAINING VALID F-1 STATUS AFTER THE STUDENT ARRIVES IN THE U.S.

At Westcliff University, a student must take 6-12 credit hours per semester, depending on the academic program, to be considered a full-time student. F-1 students are required to maintain a full-time schedule to be considered "in status" for immigration purposes. If a student drops below 6-12 credit hours without prior approval, h/she is considered to be "out of status." The U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service (BCIS) require that the student be enrolled full-time. The student is officially permitted, with prior approval from the International Student Advisor, to take fewer credits only for one of the following reasons: a) illness; b) difficulty with the English language; c) unfamiliarity with American teaching methods or reading requirements; d) placement at an improper course level; and e) during his/her final semester of study.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

In order to fulfill the attendance requirements, students are required to attend at least 75% of the course unless otherwise specified in the syllabus. *Students who are receiving Title IV funding and have three consecutive unexcused absences will be withdrawn from the course.*

Professors reserve the right to fail students who do not meet the attendance requirement as referenced above.

Students enrolled in a Hybrid course must attend the On-campus Class Session to satisfy the attendance requirement for any given week.

An online student who does not participate in the Virtual Class Session (VCS) can earn attendance for the lecture **only** by watching the VCS recording and submitting a 1-2 page summary of the VCS class recording by the assigned deadline.

Absences: It is accepted academic philosophy that sustained attendance is essential to the overall educational value of a course of study in higher education. In order to achieve maximum benefit from educational activities, Westcliff University expects regular attendance from all students. Notices of absences that have not been received or approved by Administration are considered unexcused absences. Students are limited to one excused absence per course.

Tardiness: Tardiness is a disruption of a good learning environment and is discouraged. A student is considered to be tardy to class if they arrive 10-40 minutes after the class starts. Students who arrive to class more than 40 minutes after the class starts are considered absent. In addition, four tardy marks is equivalent to one absence. Therefore, faculty will strictly monitor students for their punctuality and students will be marked down if they arrive late. These absences will follow according to the attendance policy and may put your status at risk.

Evaluating Attendance Percentage: The attendance percentage is determined by dividing the total hours attended by the total number of hours scheduled.

Students who have three unexcused absences for the first two weeks of instruction will have their course cancelled. Cancelled courses will not appear on a student transcript or registration and will not be considered as courses attempted. F-1 students will be terminated if their courses are cancelled since they will not be enrolled full-time.

After the student arrives, he/she will need to stay aware of his/her obligations as an F1 visa holder. If students do not maintain their valid F-1 visa status, they may not be allowed to return to or re-enter the U.S. if they leave and will not be eligible for practical training (CPT or OPT) or on-campus employment.

Here are some tips to assure that the student is in good standing during his/her time studying abroad:

DURING THE PROGRAM

A student may remain in the U.S. beyond the student's F-1 visa expiration date, as long as that student maintains a valid F-1 status and continuous full-time enrollment. The student must remain enrolled full time, attend class, and maintain passing grades. If the student is having difficulty in classes, notify the international advisor. If the student is unable to complete his/her program by the date listed on the Form I-20, the international advisor can help the student request a program extension.

The student's passport should be valid for at least 6-months in the future. The student's country's consulate or embassy can help extend his/her passport if needed. The student should carry a color copy of his/her passport with them along with his/her I-94 card for identification purposes.

Students should always notify their international advisor or office if they make any changes to their address, study plans, or visa status.

Each student receiving an I-20 will receive an 11-digit SEVIS Identification number that is maintained as part of his/her record. Updates are made to the student's record on a regular basis. Within 30 days of registering for classes, schools are required to report the following about each F-1 student: a) Whether the student has enrolled at the school, dropped below a full course of study without prior authorization, or failed to enroll; b) Current address; c) Start date of student's next session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter.

The following is to be reported within 21 days of its occurrence:

- a) Any student who has failed to maintain status or complete his or her program;
- b) A change in the student or dependent's legal name;
- c) A change in the student or dependent's U.S. address;
- d) Any disciplinary action taken by the school against him or her as a result of being convicted of a crime;
- e) Any other notification request made by SEVIS with respect to the current status of the student.

It is very important for the student to notify the Department of International Affairs of any changes that may affect the student's record and consequently his/her immigrant status.

TRAVEL: VACATION AND U.S. ENTRY

All F-1 students who travel internationally are required to request for a travel endorsement signature on the I-20 by the DSO. Without the travel endorsement signature, F-1 students may run into difficulties with an immigration officer at the airport when returning back into the U.S. A request can be sent by completing and submitting the International Travel Request Form to intltravel_vacation@westcliff.edu.

Prior to traveling internationally, F-1 students must consider the attendance policy and maintaining their I-20 status. Westcliff University has assigned breaks and holidays that will allow students to travel internationally without violating the attendance policy. Additionally, F-1 students can also request to take long vacations. The following section will include further detail on international traveling and vacation.

Traveling While School is in Session

F-1 students are highly recommended to travel during university designated holidays and/or university-approved annual vacations. The university can approve international travel during school breaks and/or holiday periods as long as students return before the next semester/session begins. Please note that there is a risk to traveling while school is in session as students may be questioned in detail by Custom and Border Protection (CBP) at the port of entry.

Short International Travel Requests

If students plan to leave outside of school breaks/holidays, their requests can only be approved under the condition that they will not fall out of attendance. For this reason, short international travel requests during the semester or while school is in session must meet this requirement, and even then will only be granted for extenuating circumstances.

Long International Travel Requests

If travel dates exceed the number of allowed absences and students are unable to maintain attendance, they may need to request for an ‘Authorized Early Withdrawal’ termination. Students will then have 15 days to leave the country and will have the option to request the DSO to reactivate the SEVIS record. It is advised that students requests for reactivation at least 60 days prior to the intended arrival date. Please note that the reactivation of I-20 is up to the discretion of SEVP.

Important Travel Documents

When traveling outside the U.S., international students must carry important travel documents including: (1) Valid Form I-20 with travel signature, (2) valid passport (within 6 months), (3) valid visa.

International Travel Request Approval Process

In order to travel internationally, F-1 students must have their request approved by the Student Service Department and the International Affairs Department. Upon approval of the travel request dates, the student will receive an international travel approval email through their Westcliff email address and the DSO will give a travel signature on the second page of their Form I-20.

Vacation

According to [Study in the States](#), “F-1 international students may take the equivalent of one academic term of vacation after completing a full academic year.” In order to be eligible for an annual vacation, [Study in the States](#) also states that F-1 students “must be enrolled in a full-course load of study during all the terms other than your annual vacation.”

During a university-approved annual vacation, F-1 students’ SEVIS I-20 records will remain in ‘active’ F-1 status. They may study part-time, travel internationally, travel within the U.S., and/or do Curricular Practical Training (CPT) (must also be enrolled in the internship course).

Students requesting vacation must review the policy below, complete the Vacation Request Form, and submit it to intltravel_vacation@westcliff.edu. Please be sure that any outstanding balance is cleared with the Billing Department before submitting a request and that requested vacation start and end dates reflect the academic calendar's session dates.

All requests must be submitted by the deadline, which is a minimum of 3 weeks prior to the vacation request start date. Any submissions after the deadline will not be accepted. Vacation requests will *not* be approved if student is entering or on their *last* semester.

Vacation Eligibility

F-1 students must meet the following requirements of their respective program level in order to request for vacation time (All credits must be accumulated at Westcliff University, transfer credits and internship courses do not count):

Undergraduate Level

- **Summer:** Undergraduate students must attend at least 2 consecutive sessions at Westcliff University before requesting a vacation.
- **Non-Summer:** Undergraduate students must have been enrolled in a full course of study for at least one academic year (24 credits) at Westcliff University before requesting for a vacation.

Graduate Level:

- **Summer & Non-Summer:** Graduate students must have been enrolled in a full course of study for at least one academic year (18 credits) at Westcliff University before requesting for a vacation.

Upon request before the application deadline and if determined eligible, students may be approved for vacation for one full semester and can *only* be granted vacation from the start of a given semester:

- Fall Semester Session 1
- Spring Semester Session 3
- Summer Semester Session 5

Any required program courses or concentration courses that are not offered upon returning from vacation will require students to enroll in other courses to maintain a full course load of study.

EMPLOYMENT/PRACTICAL TRAINING AND VOLUNTEERING

Any F-1 students working off-campus must be authorized. Without proper work authorization, off-campus employment would be considered a violation the student's F-1 status. Consequences include loss of legal immigration status in the U.S., possible deportation, and an impact on future attempts to request for another visa to enter into the U.S.

In order to maintain valid F-1 status, a student must not work in the United States, unless the employment is specifically authorized under one of the following categories:

- Employment authorized because of severe economic hardship

- Special Student Relief program employment, which is based on the on-campus and economic hardship employment categories
- Certain employment sponsored by international organizations
- Curricular and/or Optional Practical Training

All students enrolled in graduate degree programs are required to take an internship course and engage in an internship as it is a graduation requirement. The required internship is an integral part of the established curriculum here at Westcliff University. The internship course allows students the opportunity to gain practical training and real-life experience pertaining to their current program of study. The internship course is worth one credit each semester. At least one semester of an internship is required for all students to complete prior to graduation. Domestic and F-1 students have the option to acquire an internship opportunity either on-campus or off-campus. On-campus part-time internships (20 hours or less) are on an availability basis and do not require Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Off-campus internships will require CPT authorization for F-1 students. CPT can be paid or unpaid, and can either be full or part time. We can offer assistance in finding an opportunity through our career services department and we can also guide you through the CPT process. Engaging in an internship provides students with networking, educational, and career advancement opportunities. The university also can be more flexible with scheduling on-campus internships that could benefit the busy lifestyles of students.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

Practical training may be authorized to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled in a full course load for one full academic year. Students can be authorized for 12 months of practical training and become eligible for another 12 months of practical training. An employment authorization for practical training can be requested if the position is directly related to his or her degree. The two types of practical training available are Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

- **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

CPT is authorized by the DSO who updates the student's SEVIS record with the student's employment start and end date; employer name and address; whether the authorization is for part-time or full-time CPT; and an explanation of how the employment is integral to the degree.

- **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

OPT is authorized by USCIS. There are the types of OPT:

- Pre-completion OPT
- Standard Post-completion OPT
- STEM extension OPT

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

CPT is an on or off-campus employment option for F-1 students, when the practical training is an integral part of the established curriculum or academic program. CPT employment is defined as "alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school." To qualify, the work experience must be related to the student's degree and h/she must enroll in an internship course (one credit). CPT can be paid or unpaid and part-time or full-time as determined by the employer. SEVP guidance states "compensation is not a consideration when determining whether an opportunity qualifies as CPT," but federal and state labor and wage/hour laws do still apply. Prior authorization by the Dean and DSO is required before engaging in CPT.

According to NAFSA Adviser's Manual 360, there is no regulatory limit on either the number of times or the length of time a student may engage in either part-time or full-time CPT. In addition, regulations do not prohibit multiple or concurrent CPT employers. However, F-1 students engaging in an aggregate of 12 months or more of full-time CPT (over 20 hours of work per week) will not be eligible for OPT. Engaging in part-time CPT (less than 20 hours of work per week) does not affect eligibility for post-completion OPT. The use of 12 months of full-time CPT only affects eligibility for optional practical training (OPT) at the same educational level.

Quick Facts of CPT at Westcliff University:

- **Preconditions:** Undergraduate students must have been lawfully enrolled as a full-time student for one full academic year before being eligible for CPT. Graduate students can start CPT immediately if required by the program.
- **Location:** Students may engage in CPT at the employment location specified in the Employee Offer Letter provided to the Dean and the DSO during the CPT approval process.
- **Duration:** The DSO grants CPT for the duration of one full semester (two sessions) in which the students can request to renew their CPT every semester.
- **Hours per week:** Students who want to engage in part-time CPT are highly recommended to work 20 hours or less since full-time CPT can be considered if it is over 20 hours. It is between the employer and the student to determine whether the employment is part-time or full-time.
- **Field/level of work:** Must be an integral part of the student's established curriculum and related to the student's major field of study.
- **Offer letter from employer:** Must have an offer letter of employment signed by the employer describing the details of the student's job and responsibilities.
- **Effect on other work:** Use of full-time CPT for one year or more will affect the student's eligibility for OPT. Use of part-time CPT does not affect eligibility for OPT.
- **Approval process:** The student must submit the required documents (see below). The Dean and DSO will approve the CPT documents. Upon approval, the DSO will update the student's I-20 with CPT authorization. The student cannot begin CPT until the CPT employment start date is recorded in SEVIS. The DSO will also print out the updated Form I-20 reflecting the CPT authorization. The student will need this when completing Form I-9 for the employer. Please note that USCIS approval is not required, and no EAD is issued.
- **Attendance requirement:** Students must continue to maintain attendance and a full course of study in F-1 status during the period of employment. Students must also be enrolled in an internship course for the respective degree program throughout the period of employment. If the student violates the attendance policy, the student may be at risk of having his/her CPT cancelled.

CPT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Regulations require undergraduate students to complete one full academic year of study before engaging in CPT. Graduate level students may be required to start CPT immediately if it is integral to the program. In these instances, CPT is allowed in the first year of study. **All students engaging in CPT must be enrolled in an internship course within the program of study.**

Undergraduate Degree Level Students:

Undergraduate students must have been enrolled in school full-time for at least one academic year (24 credits) and must have maintained attendance with a valid F-1 status. Transfer credits from other U.S. educational institution may satisfy this requirement.

GPA Requirement for Undergraduate students

Student eligibility to participate in CPT while attending Westcliff University is subject to the following GPA requirements:

- Students earning a GPA of 2.50 or above are eligible for Full Time or Part Time CPT
- Students earning a GPA of 1.50 – 2.49 are eligible for Part Time CPT only
- Students earning a GPA of 1.49 and below are not eligible for CPT

Graduate Degree Level Students:

Graduate students may begin CPT immediately during their first semester, if CPT is required by their program.

GPA Requirement for Graduate students

Student eligibility to participate in CPT while attending Westcliff University is subject to the following GPA requirements:

- Students earning a GPA of 3.00 or above are eligible for Full Time or Part Time CPT
- Students earning a GPA of 2.50 – 2.99 are eligible for Part Time CPT only
- Students earning a GPA of 2.49 and below are not eligible for CPT

DURATION OF CPT AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CPT authorization will only be given for one semester (two sessions) if the student applies for CPT from the first session. However, if the student applies for CPT from the second session the CPT authorization will be given for one session. CPT can be renewed every semester by submitting a CPT Renewal form.

CPT Internship Course & Requirements

- All coursework is done online
- CPT courses are Pass/No Pass
- One credit per semester
- Students are required to answer weekly online discussion questions as a part of attendance on GAP
- Students must receive a 70% or above to pass the class

Note: If a student earns an overall failing grade in their internship course(s) in a given semester, then they will be ineligible for CPT in the following semester. Ineligible students may re-apply for CPT after one full semester.

CPT APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATIONS

How to Apply for CPT:

All CPT applications must be submitted to the CPT Department at the following emails:

- cpt_masters@westcliff.edu
- cpt_bachelors@westcliff.edu
- cpt_doctorate@westcliff.edu

Please allow around 7 working days to process the application.

In order to apply, the student will need to:

1. Submit a completed 'Request to Add CPT' form
2. Submit a completed 'Cooperative Educational Internship Agreement' form
3. Employee Offer Letter (including the correct start date, work location, job title/description)
4. Online Receipt of Tuition Payment including CPT course
<http://admissions.westcliff.edu/payment/>

After the student's CPT is processed onto his/her I-20, the CPT department will contact them via phone or email. At that time, the student can request a date and time to pick up his/her updated I-20.

Please note that students are required to participate each week by answering and responding to weekly discussion questions provided by the professor.

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYMENT OFFER LETTER

In order for the Dean to approve CPT, the Employment Offer Letter must be on original company letterhead that is signed by the student's supervisor. It must include the following:

- Name and address of employer
- Job Title and a detailed job description
- Specific employment start date and end date (end date, if applicable)
- Full-time or Part-time and the number of hours per week
- Supervisor's name, title, and contact information

Note: Please specify the branch/physical location of employment if it is different from the official employment headquarters.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

International students in the U.S. in valid F-1 immigration status are permitted by USCIS to work off-campus in Optional Practical Training (OPT) status both during and after completion of their degree. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization.

Rules established by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) govern the implementation of OPT, and all OPT employment requires prior authorization from USCIS and from their school's Department of International Affairs.

According to USCIS, a student can be granted to engage in temporary employment for three types of OPT:

- **Pre-Completion OPT:** Employment authorization that is given before graduation
- **Post-Completion OPT:** Employment authorization that is given after graduation (excluding thesis or equivalent)
- **STEM Extension OPT:** A 24-month OPT extension given to students who have STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) degrees/ major concentrations after post-completion OPT

Pre-Completion OPT

According to USCIS, that students may apply to participate after they have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year at a SEVP-certified college, university, conservatory, or seminary. If a student has been authorized to participate in Pre-Completion OPT, the student may work part-time (20 hours or less per week) while school is in session. If there is a school break or a student is approved for an annual vacation the student may work full-time (more than 20 hours per week). For more information, please see section under 'Vacation'.

Post-Completion OPT

F-1 students may apply to participate in Post-Completion OPT after completion of their program of study. To be eligible for Post-Completion OPT, the student must be in lawful full-time F-1 status for one full academic year, must be conditionally approved to graduate on a set program end date, has not accrued 12 months or more of full-time CPT, and must not have previously had OPT for the same degree level. If the student participated in Pre-Completion OPT for the current degree level, USCIS will deduct that amount of time from the authorization period for Post-Completion OPT.

STEM OPT Extension

Certain F-1 students who majored in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) may apply for a 24-month extension of their Post-Completion OPT. To find out more information in applying for STEM OPT Extension, please see USCIS webpage for [Optional Practical Training Extension for STEM Students \(STEM OPT\)](#).

Applying for OPT

To apply for OPT; students can contact the International Affairs Department to see if they are eligible. If eligible, the DSO will issue and endorse a new I-20 with OPT recommendation. Along with the OPT recommendation I-20, students will need to gather documents required for the type OPT they are applying for. Please check the USCIS website for more information on required documents. Students also do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT. The International Affairs Department can assist in reviewing OPT applications before they are mailed to USCIS. OPT application processing time may take up to 2-4 months so, students are recommended to plan ahead and apply early.

Authorization to Work

Students must not begin employment until they receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS. If they do not have employment upon receiving an EAD card under Post-Completion OPT, they are subject to the 90-day unemployment provisions. Moreover, the students should make sure to work closely with their school's Department of International Affairs. As with everything students will do while in the U.S., permission is based on maintaining lawful F-1 status and the Department of International Affairs is there to help them maintain that status throughout their stay.

OPT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

1. Employment must be "directly related" to the student's major
2. Student must maintain lawful F-1 status
3. Student must apply for OPT before completion of all work towards a degree
4. Students who have engaged in 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are not eligible for OPT
5. OPT is permitted for up to 12 months total (Pre-Completion plus Post-Completion). Any amount of time participating in Pre-Completion OPT will be deducted from Post-Completion eligibility. For instance, if a student does 3 months of Pre-Completion OPT, h/she will only be eligible for 9 months of Post-Completion OPT.
6. If students drops below the required credit load for any other reason, they put themselves out-of-status, which affects their employment and practical training eligibility, and they will need to be reinstated to proper immigration status. Please discuss any course load reduction with the international department.

VOLUNTEERING

Students who wish to engage in any ‘volunteer’ work must be sure it would not impact their immigration status. It is a very complex area in which immigration regulations and labor laws intersect. A common misconception between employment and volunteering is that employment is paid and volunteering is unpaid. However, based on U.S. labor laws, there is more to distinguish between employment and volunteering. Unpaid work may still be considered employment that necessitates F-1 off-campus work authorization.

Students must be aware of the relevant regulations so that both the student and the organization for which the student is volunteering would not inadvertently violate any laws and/or penalized for unauthorized employment. It is usually case-by-case since the facts surrounding the activity can vary and the laws other than immigration laws can be taken into consideration (i.e., labor laws). Labor laws governs the type of activities that constitute “employment” for which minimum wage must be paid. Therefore, if a non-immigrant engages in unpaid activity that would constitute “employment” under labor laws, then the student would be seen as employed. In this case, the employer would be at risk to pay fines and provide back pay under labor laws. Moreover, the non-immigrant would risk his or her immigration status if there was no appropriate work authorization.

According to the Department of Labor, a volunteer is an “individual who performs hours of service... for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.”

The Department of Labor considers a number of factors to determine whether an individual is a true volunteer. No single factor is determinative. Below list include the factors:

- Is the entity where the one plans to volunteer a nonprofit organization?
- Is the activity part-time?
- Are the services offered freely and without pressure or coercion?
- Are the services of the kind typically associated with volunteer work?
- Have regular employees been displaced to accommodate the volunteer?
- Does the worker receive (or expect) any benefit from the entity to which it is providing services?

To be considered a volunteer, the work performed by the student must meet the following criteria:

- No expectation of compensation,
- The services provided by the volunteer should not be the same services for which he or she was previously paid and/or expects to be hired and paid for in the future and the volunteer cannot displace a genuine employee;
- Services are performed for a non-profit organization for public service, religious or humanitarian objective. Work for a for-profit entity is considered employment and must be paid. The only exception is made for training programs where the trainee functions are supervised and provides no significant measurable work for the employer. The trainee must not take the place of a paid employee. There is also a difference between volunteer work and unpaid internship.

Volunteering refers to donating time with an organization whose primary purpose is charitable or humanitarian in nature, without remuneration or any other type of compensation (i.e. local homeless shelter, charitable food pantry, etc.).

On the other hand, an internship can be paid or unpaid, and must be authorized and related to the student’s major field of study. Please refer back to CPT in the previous section.

INTERNSHIP COURSE REQUIREMENT

All students enrolled in graduate degree programs are required to take an internship course and engage in an internship as it is a graduation requirement. The required internship is an integral part of the established curriculum here at Westcliff University. The internship course allows students the opportunity to gain practical training and real-life experience pertaining to their current program of study. The internship course is worth one credit each semester. At least one semester of an internship is required for all students to complete prior to graduation. Domestic and F-1 students have the option to acquire an internship opportunity either on-campus or off-campus. On-campus part-time internships (20 hours or less) are on an availability basis and do not require Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Off-campus internships will require CPT authorization for F-1 students. CPT can be paid or unpaid, and can either be full or part time. We can offer assistance in finding an opportunity through our career services department and we can also guide you through the CPT process. Engaging in an internship provides students with networking, educational, and career advancement opportunities. The university also can be more flexible with scheduling on-campus internships that could benefit the busy lifestyles of students.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

Students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) in their program of study. In order to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress, students must meet the following requirements:

1. **Qualitative (GPA) Requirement:** A Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) equal to or greater than 2.0 in undergraduate programs and 3.0 in graduate programs is required for graduation. In addition, at the end of each semester, students must have a CGPA equal or greater than 2.0 for undergraduate students and 3.0 for graduate students in order to be determined as making satisfactory academic progress.
2. **Quantitative (PACE) Requirement:** Students are required to complete his/her educational program in no longer than 150% of the published length of the program. The student agrees to complete the course within a maximum time frame of one and one half (1 ½) times the length of the course as stated in the enrollment agreement.

If a student fails to meet SAP requirements they will receive an official written notice of their probation status and will be advised to seek academic guidance from their Student Services Representative, the Dean of the relevant college, or the Director of Academic Affairs. F-1 international students placed on Academic Probation will also receive a written warning from the International Affairs Department detailing how probation status may impact a student's immigration status.

A student placed on Academic Probation have two semesters from the time he/she is placed on academic probation to achieve **both** GPA and PACE requirements as defined above. If a student is unable to meet SAP requirements within two semesters, then he/she will be dismissed from the program. F-1 students who are dismissed from the program will be subject to termination in SEVIS.

See the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy in the Catalog/ Student Handbook for more information.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Each student is expected to be an example of proper conduct. All students are expected to adhere to the University Policies laid forth in the Student Handbook- Catalog. The administration of Westcliff University has the authority to take appropriate action or administrative disciplinary measures if this Code of Conduct is not adhered to.

Threatening, Endangering, and/or Discriminatory Student Behavior

Physical abuse, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, verbal abuse, threats of any nature, intimidation, harassment, hostility, offensive, abusive, demeaning, coercive, bullying, stalking and/or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person, including *students, faculty, staff, and administrators* is strictly prohibited. Additionally, any unwelcome verbal, physical, or other (including all electronic mediums) misconduct which violates the university's policies on non-discrimination, harassment, alcohol and drugs, or the student code of conduct is strictly prohibited.

Any violation of policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action, suspension or dismissal, ***and will be permanently recorded on the student's record.*** Any suspended or dismissed student shall be given the right to appeal the administrative decision.

PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL

In the event that a student needs to withdraw from the program because h/she wishes to be transferred to another institution or have to return to his/her home country, the student must follow the withdrawal process for his/her specific request. The following section includes the process to withdraw from the program to transfer out or return home.

TRANSFERRING OUT

F-1 students are required to maintain legal status while studying in the U.S. This is also applicable while requesting to transfer out to another SEVP-approved institution. It is important to understand the university transfer policies and SEVP's regulations as it may affect your status during the transfer process. Students can be transferred out in *active, terminated, or completed* status.

All F-1 students must be enrolled in a full course load and maintain their status by attending classes until the transfer release date. F-1 students cannot request to transfer in the middle of a term and immediately stop attending classes. Such action would be a violation of status and, if it occurs, will result in the SEVIS record being terminated. Therefore, any students who stop attending classes prior to the transfer release date will be *terminated* for "Unauthorized Drop Below Full Course of Study".

Additionally, F-1 students are required to be in good academic standing in order to maintain their legal status. Students who are on academic probation or have fallen below the required GPA for your program level prior to transferring schools will be transferred in terminated status for "Failing to Maintain Status". Students who are transferred in *terminated* status must file an application for reinstatement of status with the new school. It is the student's responsibility to confirm with the Transfer-In School that they will accept students in terminated status.

Furthermore, students requesting to transfer out must submit an acceptance letter from the new school with the start date of classes listed along with the new school's transfer-in form. Students will also need to complete

Westcliff University's transfer-out form/program withdrawal form and any other related documents and submit it to intlservices@westcliff.edu and studentservices@westcliff.edu .

In summary, in order to be transferred out in *active* status, students must:

1. Complete 2 consecutive sessions
2. Be in good academic standing
3. Must maintain status until transfer release date
4. Submit all required documents

Advising Sessions

As part of the transfer-out process, the F-1 student will be asked to meet with an advisor from Student Services and/or International Affairs Department to discuss the transfer out request. The advisor will discuss any concerns leading to the transfer out decision, will recommend any potential options available to support the F-1 student, and will ask for feedback on the student's experience at Westcliff University. After the advising session, it will then be determined if it is necessary for the student to meet with a secondary advisor or with the International Affairs Department to process the request.

Regarding any refund inquiries, please refer to the catalog for the Refund Policy and contact billing@westcliff.edu if you have any questions.

Transfer-Out Student Checklist:

- Meet with an advisor from Student Services
- Provide acceptance letter from the Transfer-In School
- Provide transfer form from the Transfer-In School
- Complete Westcliff University's F-1 Transfer and Program Withdrawal Form
- Contact Registrar's Office to ensure your financial account is cleared
- Meet with representative from the International Affairs Department

AUTHORIZED EARLY WITHDRAWAL

According to [Study in the States](#), F-1 status nonimmigrant students can request for a temporary absence or withdrawal from school due extenuating circumstances such as a family emergency, personal matter or another circumstance that calls for the student to leave the United States prior to their program's completion. Upon approval for a temporary absence or withdrawal from school, the DSO will grant an F-1 student an "[Authorized Early Withdrawal](#)" or a permitted temporary absence from their course of study. The DSO will change the student's I-20 status in SEVIS to 'Terminated' for 'Authorized Early Withdrawal' and student will be permitted a 15-day grace period to depart the United States.

However, please be advised that an F-1 status is based on an international student's full-time enrollment. If any of the following reasons apply, then you will need to submit a request for an 'Authorized Early Withdrawal':

Program Withdrawal, Temporary Absence, and/or Long International Travel

If you are planning to withdraw from the program or will be traveling internationally for an extended period of time due to an emergency (more than the allowed period for international travel), your I-20 record will need to be terminated under 'Authorized Early Withdrawal.' In addition, if you are only

leaving temporarily, you will need to take a 'Leave of Absence' from your program at Westcliff University.

Switching to Online Campus

If you plan to continue to study online abroad or and have other means of legally staying in the U.S., you have the option to switch to online courses and take an 'Authorized Early Withdrawal.' Please be sure to complete the 'Change in Program Location' Request Form and 'Change of Status' Form (if applicable).

Joining the Military

If you will be joining the U.S. military or Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program, please be sure to communicate with the International Affairs Department in order to coordinate when you will be leaving for basic training.

Implications of Authorized Early Withdrawal Termination

Upon termination of your SEVIS I-20 record, please note that all F-1 benefits including internship/employment (such as CPT, on-campus employment) will NOT be in effect. Additionally, when approved for an 'Authorized Early Withdrawal', the SEVIS records of your F-2 dependents will also be terminated which means that your F-2 dependents will not be able to remain in the U.S. as long as your I-20 record is in 'terminated' status.

SEVIS Termination Process

Once you submit your 'Authorized Early Withdrawal' (intlservices@westcliff.edu), the International Affairs Department will process the Authorized Early Withdrawal and Student Services will process any changes to your student record. Please allow 7-10 business days to process your documents. You will receive a confirmation email through your Westcliff email address confirming that your SEVIS I-20 record has been terminated under 'Authorized Early Withdrawal.' Please note that you will have 15 days to leave the United States from your termination date.

Your 'Authorized Early Withdrawal' request **will not be effective** until the university reviews and approves your request. Please make sure you are fully aware of the steps that you need to take in order to prevent any negative impact on your SEVIS I-20 record.

Before Your Departure from the U.S.

(Applicable Only to Temporary Absence, and/or Long International Travel Requests)

We recommend that you receive a travel signature on your most updated I-20. You will need that I-20 with travel signature in order to come back to the US. Please submit the following documents:

- Copy of your valid passport
- Copy of your valid visa
- Copy of your flight schedule
- Your most recent I-20 (original copy only)

However, if you are not able to come to campus to receive a travel signature on your I-20, we will need to send you an updated I-20 with a new travel signature to your location overseas. You can either email us a shipping label or you can purchase a shipping label through eShip Global.

Returning Back to the U.S. & SEVIS I-20 Reactivation Within 5 Months

One month before your intended return back to the US, you must complete the “SEVIS I-20 Reactivation Form” and submit the form along with other supporting documents (including your return flight itinerary) to intlservices@westcliff.edu. The approval of the I-20 reactivation will be at SEVP’s discretion. Please note that SEVIS I-20 reactivation will only be possible if you are returning to the US within 5 months from your termination date.

Returning Back to the U.S. & SEVIS I-20 Reactivation Past 5 Months

If you are returning back to the U.S. past 5 months, the option to reactivate your SEVIS I-20 record will not be possible. In this case, you will need to apply for a new I-20 with a new SEVIS number.

The effective withdrawal date is determined when all F-1 transfer documents are submitted to the University. Before the full termination process completes, please speak with the Billing Department (billing@westcliff.edu) to check if you have any pending balances or refunds that will need to be settled before your departure. Please note that transcripts will not be released until pending balances are completed. Please see the Westcliff University Tuition Refund policy for additional information related to the return of tuition paid.

VISA EXPIRATION/CANCELLATION/RENEWAL

Individuals who were admitted for duration of status (D/S) must depart or extend their visas types according to the regulations governing their visa types. There are serious consequences for nonimmigrants, including students, who violate immigration rules even in minor ways, particularly for those who stay in the U.S. beyond the authorized period of stay.

The U.S. entry visa of any individual who overstay by even one day will be cancelled. This is even if the visa is for multiple entry and is valid many years into the future. These individuals will be unable to obtain a new visa except by applying at a U.S. Consulate in their home country prior to returning to the U.S. F-1 students must extend his or her stay at least 30 days before the expiration of their I-20, or depart no later than 60 days after the completion of his or her education program or after their I-20 expires (see item 5 on the I-20), whichever comes first.

A provision of U.S. immigration law bars admission or re-entry to the U.S. to anyone who was previously unlawfully present in the U.S., either by entering illegally OR by staying beyond the authorized date on his or her visa documents beyond a certain period of time. There is a three-year bar for anyone unlawfully present for more than 180 days but less than one year. There is a ten-year bar for anyone unlawfully present in the U.S. one year or more. There are some limited exceptions, which are expected to be difficult to obtain.

Unauthorized work is a serious violation of the student’s visa status and could negatively impact his/her ability to stay in the United States. Working without a work permit by an F-1 student is illegal.

Students with the F-1 visa may not work off-campus without employment authorization from Immigration or permission from the Director of International Affairs to engage in practical training. Family members with the F-2 visa may not accept any employment under any circumstances. Permission to be employed ceases at the conclusion of a program of study or at the expiration of the period of lawful stay, whichever is earlier, or at the expiration of employment authorization as noted by BCIS.

Employment may continue in certain F-1 instances pending BCIS approval of a timely request for extension of stay or the replacement of a document on which employment authorization was noted.

F-1 students with permission to work are not required to pay Social Security taxes, but are subject to income tax withholding and must file an income tax return before April 15th of each year. It is important that the student retains his/her W-2 Forms (tax withholding statements from the previous year issued by employers each January). Students will need their W-2 Forms when leaving the country.

LIFE AT WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY & SURVIVAL TIPS

Westcliff University understands that traveling to a foreign place to study may be overwhelming for students. In addition, there are certain necessities students need in order to adjust to life in the States. Here at Westcliff University, we strive to ensure students have all the resources available to make their stay convenient and comfortable and produce a pleasant experience for each student. There is information and resources below that may assist with the adjustment process. If additional assistance is needed, students can contact the Department of International Affairs for further assistance at intlservices@westcliff.edu.

HOUSING

Westcliff University provides assistance in seeking a variety of housing options including homestay, private apartments, and shared apartments. There are two main types of options for housing: homestay and housing:

Homestay

Homestay options are one of the most popular choices for new international students coming into the U.S. for the first time. Homestays are where students get to stay at the home of a local host or family in a safe community near the university campus. It allows students to quickly learn the English language and successfully merge into the local culture.

Homestay features include:

- Meal Options: Breakfast/Dinner provided or No meals
- Shared or private rooms
- Utilities included
- Fully furnished
- Friendly American host family
- Safe Community
- Convenient distance to campus

Note: Please refer to the appendix for available third party options for homestay.

Please refer below for optional (third party) homestay plans:

- ❖ StudentLink International
- ❖ CEH California English Homestay
- ❖ Universal Student Housing

❖ Student International Housing Inc.

Housing

Housing is another option for international students. This allows students to be more independent and learn how to live in a new environment. Most international students either rent private rooms or share apartments with roommates or colleagues to save money.

Housing features (based on our third-party options) include:

- Furnishing packages
- Matching roommates
- Private or shared rooms
- Utilities included (for selected options)

For more information, please contact housing@westcliff.edu.

TRANSPORTATION

The primary forms of transportation in the immediate area are:

- Walking
- Bicycling
- Public Transportation (Bus, Train)
- Carpooling Services (RideMatching, Vanpooling)
- Automobile
- Private Transportation Service (Uber, Lyft)

Public Transportation Services:

- Bus: OCTA – The Orange County Transportation Area is the main bus service provider for Orange County. For information regarding the bus schedules and fares go to: www.octa.net or call (714) 560-6282
- Train: Metrolink- Southern California's premier regional passenger rail system reaching cities including Irvine, Anaheim, Los Angeles, San Clemente and San Bernardino. For information on the train schedules and fares go to <http://www.metrolinktrains.com/>
- Carpooling Services: The Orange County Transportation Area (OCTA) offers third-party services where commuters are able to match their trip with other drivers in the area. In terms of RideMatching, the OCTA does not regulate the exchange of money so riders have the option of either trading off driving or paying partially for gas. ridematch.info
- Vanpooling Services: The vanpooling service is an option for a group of five or more riders with a regular schedule. Riders are able to lease a car at a discounted price and ride as a group to and from school at the same time. <http://www.octa.net/vanpool>
- Private Transportation Service: Transportation network companies like Uber or Lyft allow students to use their smartphones to submit requests to a destination which then coordinates a driver to pick them up at their exact location.

Within the metropolitan area, there are several airports and train stations. The primary airports are:

- Los Angeles International-LAX (Los Angeles)
- John Wayne (Santa Ana)
- Long Beach (Long Beach)
- LA/Ontario International (Ontario)

Airport Shuttle Services:

ShuttletoLAX <http://shuttletolax.com/>

Super Shuttle <http://www.supershuttle.com/>

OBTAINING A DRIVER'S LICENSE

If the student is planning on driving or purchasing a vehicle in California, are recommended to obtain a California driver's license.

Although students are permitted to drive in this state without obtaining a California driver's license with a valid license from their home state or country, they may still be cited by local police for driving without a driver's license. This is as the police may not be able to verify the validity of a foreign license.

Before obtaining a California driver's license, wait at least 10-11 days after the student enters the United States to ensure that his/her SEVIS I-20 record has been registered with Westcliff University and labeled as "active" status. Applying for a license before the 10 day mark may lead to an application being delayed or denied.

F-1 students will be required to bring the following documents:

- 1) I-20 form
- 2) I-94 Arrival/Departure Record
 - a. Note: The I-94 form will either be attached to their passport or available electronically. To access and print a copy of the electronic I-94 record, go to www.cbp.gov/94
- 3) Passport with visa (if applicable)
- 4) Social Security Number (International students that are legally present in the US are exempt from SSN requirements. However, must provide acceptable birth/legal presence documents)

To apply for a California driver's license, follow these steps, students should:

- 1) Make an appointment prior to the visit to the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) office through the website: <https://dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/portal/foa/welcome>
- 2) Complete an original DL 44 application form & pay application fee
- 3) Give thumb print and have picture taken
- 4) Must pass vision exam and written traffic laws & sign test
Note: Please refer to a sample study guide at www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/interactive/tdrive/exam.htm
- 5) After passing the written test, students will be required to take a driving test.
 - Make an appointment for a test online or by calling 1-800-777-0133
 - Must show proof of insurance (financial responsibility)

If students do not plan to drive in California, there is an option to apply for a picture identification card. Students should:

- 1) Make an appointment prior to the visit to the DMV office.
<https://dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/portal/foa/welcome>
- 2) Complete an original DL 44 application & pay application fee
- 3) Give thumb print and have picture taken
- 4) Social Security Number OR acceptable documents including birth date & legal presence in the US (i.e. I-94 form, I-20 form, and passport with visa)

GETTING A MOBILE PHONE

Getting a mobile phone has become a necessity for students to communicate, explore, travel, and get adjusted to their surroundings. Although many students might be familiar with cell phones carriers in their home country, cell phone providers in and plans in the United States may function differently.

▪ **Major mobile phone plans in the US:**

- Two-Year Contracts
- Prepaid plans
- Buying a SIM card

Two- Year Contracts	<p>Most common cell phone plans in the US. Cell phone providers offer low monthly rates for customers that opt for this plan. However, terminating a contract early may result in customers paying a large penalty.</p> <p>*Note: Most providers in the US require either a Social Security Number (SSN) or a high security deposit (roughly ranging from \$400 to \$500)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Low monthly rates ✓ Low prices on new phones
Prepaid plans	<p>An easier option for international students because it does NOT require a social security number and/or credit history check. This cell phone plan allows students to pay by the month, day or minute without the worry of ending a contract with a large fee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does not require social security number and/or credit check ✓ No contract/deposit ✓ No penalties
Buying a SIM Card	<p>For students that plan on using their own cell phone from their home country, buying a SIM Card will allow them to do so. Before purchasing a SIM card, please be sure that the mobile phone (mainly GSM and CDMA) is unlocked so that it can be used by another cell phone provider. In terms of plans, this type of service will require a month by month payment plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No contract ✓ Secure the data and preferences ✓ Portable

▪ **Local Mobile Phone Providers/Carriers:**

<p>T-Mobile www.t-mobile.com</p>	<p>University Town Center 4237 Campus Drive Suite B158 Irvine, CA 92612-2758 949-509-7413</p> <p>Culver & Alton 3995 Alton Pkwy Suite B, Irvine, CA 92606 949-251-1576</p>
<p>Verizon Wireless www.verizonwireless.com</p>	<p>Park Place 2981 Michelson Dr Irvine, CA 92612 (949) 756-3515</p> <p>Jamboree</p>

	3601 Jamboree Rd, Newport Beach, CA 92660 (949) 222-0991
AT&T www.att.com	Harvard 17675 Harvard Ave Ste B, Harvard Place Auto Plaza, Irvine, CA 92614 (949) 622-8240 Campus 4678 Campus Drive, Ste. C,D,E, Newport Beach, CA 92660 (949) 553-9861
Sprint www.sprint.com	Crossroads 3992 Barranca Pkwy, Irvine, CA 92606 (949) 654-8000 Tustin 2871 Park Ave, The District, Tustin, CA 92782 (714) 247-2200

HEALTH INSURANCE

Medical accidents and injuries can unexpectedly happen and medical expenses can get very costly in the United States. Westcliff University strongly recommends that all students are covered by a health insurance plan during the student's educational period at the school.

What is health insurance?

Health insurance protects students by decreasing the cost of medical charges students may encounter during the period away from their home country.

What can health insurance can do for international students?

Medical costs can get expensive especially during a time of medical emergency. A sound health insurance plan can provide coverage of costly medical expenses such as doctor appointments, accident costs, prescription costs, injuries, etc.

Where can I find affordable health insurance?

There are a variety of health insurance agencies and plans that can provide international students with benefits according to their own needs. International students have the option of choosing health insurance plans that is recommended by Westcliff University or through other agencies.

All students must complete Westcliff University's health insurance form before the first day of class. Students must certify that all the information on the form is accurate information. Westcliff University is not liable for any incurred medical cost, loss of health insurance premiums for not following the insurance policy guideline, or loss of academic privileges due to inaccurately completed waivers.

Note: Please refer to the appendix for information on Westcliff University recommended health insurance plans.

Please refer below for optional (third party) health insurance plans:

Option 1:

ISO Insurance – International Student Organization (multilingual services)

https://www.isoa.org/westcliff_university

(800)244-1180

Option 2:

International Student Insurance

<http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/schools/westcliff-university.php>

(904)758-4391

MANAGING MONEY

Managing personal finances can be a challenging part of academic study in the United States. Dealing with a new currency and cost of living can be difficult initially. Pay attention to the exchange rate between the home country's currency and the U.S. dollar. Learn to think in dollars! When handling American currency, it is important to look closely at the paper money, as much of it looks alike. Coins can present difficulties too. The five-cent piece (20 per dollar) is known as the nickel, ten-cent (10 per dollar) as the dime, and 25-cent (4 per dollar) as the quarter.

The dime is smaller than the nickel, even though it is worth more. The United States is becoming a "cashless" society, meaning that rather than carry large sums of money on their person, people find it more convenient and safer to make purchases by check, charge account, or credit card. It is advisable for the student to open a checking or savings account at a local bank and deposit any large sums of money h/she have in a bank. A visit with a banker at a local bank can clarify for the student the variety of checking and savings accounts available and determine which type best suits his/her needs.

BANKING

There are numerous banks in the immediate area of Westcliff University in Irvine offering checking and savings accounts. Establishing a local account is advantageous because out-of-town (or foreign) checks are sometimes not accepted. Having a U.S. account separate from a home country account at home is probably the best option. Using a U.S. based credit card, offered through the U.S. bank, is also advisable. Below are the names and addresses of the banks that have branches in the vicinity of Westcliff University in Irvine:

Chase Bank	Campus Plaza Shopping Center, 4543 Campus Dr, Irvine, CA 92612
Schools First Federal Credit Union	A311 Student Center, University of California, Irvine, UCI Student Center & Event Services, Irvine, CA 92697
Wells Fargo Bank	University of California Irvine, 1 W Peltason Dr g202b, Irvine, CA 92697
Bank of America	4101 MacArthur Blvd, Newport Beach, CA 92660
	Newport Hills Shopping Center, 2600 San Miguel Dr. Newport Beach, CA 92660

Westcliff University does not endorse or recommend any of the above listed banks. This list is provided as a service only for those requiring information about the banking facilities located near the campus of Westcliff University.

Additional banking facilities can be found via Google search. It is important to open a banking account as soon as possible. A checking account permits the withdrawal of money whenever necessary at an ATM (Automated

Teller Machine), and to use checks or a debit card to pay for goods and services. Traveler's checks in U.S. dollars can be used temporarily until a bank account is opened.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

A Social Security Number is a number assigned by the U.S. Federal Government to all U.S. citizens and temporary residents who apply for one. International students are not required by Immigration or by the College to have a number; however, a Social Security number is required to work on or off campus, obtain a driver's license, and to open an account at most banks.

If the student wishes to obtain a Social Security Number, please see the International Student Advisor for a letter to take with them to the Social Security Office, located at 208 N. 5th Street. The letter indicates that the student is enrolled at Westcliff University as a full-time student on an F-1 visa. The student will need to bring his/her passport, I-94, and I-20 when h/she applies.

SCHOOLING

- Basic Classroom Rules: Classroom behavior differs from culture to culture. Some classes are very formal, while others are more relaxed. If the student is to succeed academically, it is important that h/she knows how to fulfill the expectations of his/her instructors. Higher education institutions in the United States have expectations of their students that the student will want to become familiar with.
- Arrive on time and be seated before the scheduled starting time of class. Listen attentively and take careful notes.
- Class attendance is key to maintaining the student's visa as well as the success of his/her studies at Westcliff University. So, make sure the student attends class from the first scheduled day. Never miss a class!
- If the student is ill and misses a class, always check with the instructor to see what work the student has missed and how it can be made up. The instructor may request to see a doctor's note if there is a long absence. Prepare each assignment before the next class.
- Tests/quizzes are given, so study regularly.
- Students should ask questions and express their opinions. Instructors count on this! Do not be afraid to express a different viewpoint than the professor. Students can bring a unique perspective to the classroom and their input will enhance the material being taught.
- If the student does not understand any assignment or material, talk to his/her instructor. Make an appointment to see him/her during office hours or simply talk to them after class. It is important to take initiative in solving difficulties the student is experiencing in class. The student's instructor will be able to suggest ways to improve the situation.
- Understand and be able to use the material from the classroom instead of merely memorizing it.
- Become familiar with the online library (LIRN). Depending on the student's program of study, many of his/her assignments may involve writing and research. There is an online library tutorial the student can use to assist them in learning more about the library.
- Careful records of source material are essential. Always give credit to the source from which the student borrows information to avoid plagiarism.

SALES TAX

Sales tax is added to the price of most goods sold in the U.S. The advertised price on the shelf is without tax. Sales tax is typically 8.00% in Southern California, but varies slightly by community.

INCOME TAX

Income Tax is a tax paid on income received from U.S. sources (i.e. wages, scholarship, internships or fellowship grants, etc.). There are two types of income tax: federal and state. If a student earns income from U.S. sources, he or she will need to complete federal and state income tax returns the following year. An income tax return shows the total amount of the student's income, any allowable deductions, exemptions or exclusions he or she may claim, and his or her ultimate tax liability. If the student worked, his or her employer should have withheld income taxes from each paycheck. If he or she received a scholarship, taxes should have been withheld from those payments as well. If too much tax was withheld, his or her tax return will show a refund is due. If not enough was withheld, he or she will need to pay the difference. Students who are citizens from other countries may not be subject to federal taxes when they work while classes are in session, but these persons must file an income tax return in order to receive credit for any taxes deducted.

RESTAURANTS/MOVIE THEATER/HEALTH CLUB/GROCERY STORE

The campus of Westcliff University is located immediately adjacent to a shopping center, known as the University Center. It contains many different types of restaurants, a movie theater, a health club, a grocery store, a post office and many more options.

Other nearby attractions in Irvine includes:

- Irvine Spectrum: An outdoor shopping center located at the southeast edge of Irvine. Its notable features include Edwards Cinema movie theater, Nordstrom, Macy's, Barnes & Noble, Dave and Buster's, Target, etc. <http://www.shopirvinespectrumcenter.com/>
- The District at Tustin Legacy: A shopping and dining destination between Jamboree Road, Barranca Parkway and Tustin Ranch Road. Designed as a festive place for people to dine, shop and play, this plaza features AMC Tustin 14, Bowlmor Lanes, DSW, RA Sushi, Lucille's BBQ, Target, PetSmart, and much more. <http://thedistricttl.com/>

Popular destinations to visit in Southern California:

- Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)
5905 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Mid-Wilshire
(323) 857-6000
www.lacma.org
- The Broad Museum
221 S Grand Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Downtown
(213) 232-6200
www.thebroad.org

For more options,

- **Yelp:** An easy way to connect people with great local businesses through reviews and recommendations that are published by the public. Yelp is available through the website and/or smartphone mobile applications

<http://www.yelp.com/>

- **Tripadvisor:** The world's largest traveling site that offers a wide variety of travel choices and assists in planning and booking the perfect trip around town. Tripadvisor is available through the website and/or smartphone mobile applications.

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/>

CULTURAL AREAS

California is filled with a diverse cultural population. It offers great opportunities for students to explore and experience different types of cultural communities. More importantly, international students won't feel too far away from their home country with shopping centers, museums, and towns that are distinct to different countries.

Here is a list of a couple of cultural sites that students can enjoy:

Little Tokyo

319 E 2nd St

Los Angeles, CA 90012

(213) 293-5822

<http://www.littletokyola.org/>

Chinatown

Cesar Chavez & N Broadway

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Chinatown, Downtown

(213) 680-0243

<http://www.chinatownla.com/>

Koreatown

Wilshire and Western

Los Angeles, CA 90010

Koreatown, Wilshire Center

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/koreatown-los-angeles-2>

Historic Filipinotown

Historic Filipinotown

Los Angeles, CA 90026

<http://www.visitasianla.org/index.php/historic-filipinotown/things-to-do>

Little Saigon

<http://www.littlesaigonnow.com/>

Little India Village

18792 Pioneer Blvd

Artesia, CA 90701

(562) 924-5652

<http://www.artesiaindia.us/>

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A great way to learn more about what Westcliff University has to offer is to keep in the loop with upcoming student activities and events on our social media pages.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/westcliff.edu>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/westcliffuniversity/>

EMERGENCIES

In an event of an emergency, students should call 911. Additionally, students should stay calm and give their name, exact location, and telephone number to the 911 dispatcher. Stay on the line with the 911 dispatcher as long as necessary.

AMERICAN CULTURE

PRACTICING PERSONAL RELIGION

The United States is a multicultural society founded on tolerance and mutual respect. People are encouraged to seek out opportunities to practice their religious beliefs. There are usually a variety of denominations and religious groups in every community. Although America has a higher rate of church attendance than most other western societies, many Americans are uncomfortable discussing religion. If the student is in a religious situation or discussion in which h/she is uncomfortable, it is acceptable to excuse themselves or explain their perspective.

ALCOHOL

U.S. laws concerning the sale and consumption of alcohol may seem very liberal or very constraining depending on the person and their nationality. In the United States it is illegal to purchase and consume alcoholic drinks, including beer and wine, until one reaches the age of 21.

SMOKING

In many parts of the United States, all public buildings are designated “smoke free,” meaning that one cannot smoke in any part of the building. Other buildings have designated spaces for smokers. If one is a guest in someone’s home, room, or apartment, always ask permission before smoking. At Westcliff University, our campuses are all smoke free; however, one can smoke outside the buildings.

AMERICAN HOLIDAYS

There are six major national legal holidays in the United States:

- New Year’s Day (January 1st)
- Memorial Day (4th Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4th)
- Labor Day (1st Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (4th Thursday in November)
- Christmas (December 25th)

Not all Americans observe the same holidays, and there are many holidays that are not legal holidays. Also, some holidays are celebrated only by certain religious or cultural groups. Some of the more common U.S. holidays and religious holidays are:

- New Year's Day (January 1st). The big celebration is the night before, New Year's Eve. The New Year is often "rung in" with bells and noisemakers. On New Year's Day itself, there are many parades and college football games on television.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (mid-January). This holiday celebrates the birth date of one of the leaders of the American civil rights movement.
- Valentine's Day (February 14). A day to celebrate love. Cards are given to close friends and loved ones.
- St. Patrick's Day (March 17). An Irish holiday brought to America by immigrants. The U.S. version of this holiday includes wearing something green, eating corned beef and cabbage, and drinking green beer.
- Easter (March or April). Although primarily a Christian holiday, it is widely celebrated in the U.S. This is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. The secular Easter tradition is to dye eggs different colors and give baskets of candy to children.
- Passover (March or April). A Jewish holiday celebrated in commemoration of the Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt.
- Memorial Day (late May). This day is dedicated to the memory of all soldiers who died during wars.
- Ramadan (June) An Islamic holiday, the beginning of the Ramada fasting month.
- Independence Day (July 4). The celebration of the day the American Declaration of Independence was signed.
- Labor Day (September). This day honors the country's working men and women.
- Day of Ashura (October) An Islamic religious observance on the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year.
- Veteran's Day (November 11). A day set aside to honor all men and women who served in the Armed Forces of the United States.
- Halloween (October 31). A day when children (and adults) dress in costumes and have parties. Children go "trick-or-treating" to homes for candy, and pumpkins are carved into "Jack O'Lanterns".
- Thanksgiving Day (November). This holiday dates from America's earliest days, when the Pilgrims had a feast to celebrate their first good harvest and give thanks. Large family dinners are common, with turkey and pumpkin pie; more Americans will travel home for Thanksgiving holidays than for Christmas.
- Hanukkah (late November or early December). An eight-day Jewish holiday marking the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- Christmas Day (December 25). The celebration of the birth of Christ in the Christian faith. This is also a time when families decorate trees and exchange gifts. One Christmas tradition is that Santa brings gifts to good children.

Students who plan to observe their own cultural or religious event should advise the Director of International Affairs at Westcliff University in advance.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LOANS

The International Education Financial Aid (IEFA) website, IEFA.org, is the premier internet resource listing financial aid information for students who wish to study in a foreign country. IEFA has partnered with a provider of international student loan programs to provide students around the world with financial aid options to fund their education abroad. Through this site, one will gain access to a loan comparison tool designed specifically for international students. There are up to eight (8) lenders associated with this website which are currently providing financial aid to international students.

DEPARTURE BACK TO HOME COUNTRY

The student has 60 days upon completion of his/her program to leave the United States under his/her F1 visa. To remain in the U.S., the student will need to re-enroll in a higher program, transfer to another school to receive a new I-20 form, or apply to change his/her visa status.

REFERENCES, INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES, AND FORMS

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)	https://www.ice.gov/
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)	https://www.uscis.gov/
Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) & Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)	http://www.ice.gov/sevis/
Student Process Steps: How to Navigate the U.S. Immigration System	http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students
Student Visas: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs	https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student.html
Visa Appointment & Processing Wait Times	https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/wait-times.html/
U.S. Embassy & Consulates	http://www.usembassy.gov/
Nonimmigrant Visa Applications:	https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/forms.html
I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment Tutorial	http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm

WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY FORMS AND IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Admissions Department:	admissions@westcliff.edu
Application of Admissions:	http://www.westcliff.us/forms-for-admissions/application-form/
Catalog/Student Handbook:	http://www.westcliff.edu/students/student-handbook/
Curricular Practical Training (CPT)	cpt_bachelors@westcliff.edu cpt_masters@westcliff.edu cpt_doctorate@westcliff.edu
Credit Card Payment Link:	http://www.westcliff.us/wu_payment/
Registrar:	registrar@westcliff.edu
International Student Services:	intlservices@westcliff.edu

GLOSSARY

BCIS:	Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services
CBP:	Customs and Border Protection (Responsible for immigration and customs inspections at U.S ports of entry)
CPT:	Curricular Practical Training
DSO:	Designated School Official
D/S:	Duration of Student Status
DHS:	Department of Homeland Security (Oversees CBP, ICE, and USCIS)
DS 157:	With most visa applications, male and female applicants fill out the same forms in the same manner. However, due to security concerns, some male applicants may need to provide additional information on their applications. For example, Form DS-157 (Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application) must be completed by any male applicant between the ages of 16 and 54 who is filing for a nonimmigrant visa.
DS 160:	The DS-160, Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application form, is for temporary travel to the United States, and for K (fiancé(e)) visas. Form DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State website via the Internet. Consular Officers use the information entered on the DS-160 to process the visa application and, combined with a personal interview, determine an applicant's eligibility for a nonimmigrant visa
EAD:	Employment Authorization Document
F-1:	Category of Visa required of all non-immigrant students
I-20:	Establishes the individual meets the basic criteria for nonimmigrant student status
I-539:	Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status.
I-901:	Form to pay SEVIS fee of \$200
I-94:	Arrival/departure card, received from the airline during the flight
	ICE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Responsible for maintaining the student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) conducting immigration investigations, detentions, and removals –deportations)
OPT:	Optional Practical Training
POE:	Port of Entry
SEVIS:	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
USCIS:	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

THANK YOU!

The administration, staff and faculty thank you for considering Westcliff University. We look forward to helping you in achieving your dreams as a global citizen and becoming an integral part of Westcliff University!



Westcliff University

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Irvine, California 92606**

**Cerritos Campus
18000 Studebaker Rd #300
Cerritos, CA 90703**

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