



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

2020-2021





College of the Mainland has served the community for more than 50 years. Preparing students to transfer to a university or enter the workforce, College of the Mainland has helped more than 90,000 students reach their goals.

# 2020-2021 COM International Student Handbook

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[www.com.edu](http://www.com.edu)

## Maintaining Your Status

As an F-1 international student, you are required by the Department of Homeland Security to abide by the conditions of your non-immigrant status. Failure to abide by the regulations will result in serious penalties, including deportation. The following guidelines will help you maintain a legal F-1 status while you are temporarily residing in the U.S.A.

### I-20

- Always be aware of the I-20 expiration date found on page 1, item #5. Do not let your I-20 expire. You may apply for an I-20 extension 15 days prior to the expiration.
- Any changes to your I-20 such as your name, major, education level or funding must be reported to your international student adviser.



## Passport

You must maintain valid passports for you and your dependents. Your passport must be valid at least six months into the future. To renew your passport, contact your home country embassy in the U.S.A.

## Enrollment

- This school is authorized under Federal law to enroll nonimmigrant students.
- You must be enrolled full time (12 credit hours) each semester. Exceptions to full time enrollment require the permission of an international student adviser. Exceptions can be made for initial difficulty with the English language, improper course placement, medical condition or final semester of your program.
- CLEP Exams or Credit by Exam courses cannot be used to fulfill the 12-credit hour requirement.
- Registration for all classes including fast track classes must be completed by the first day of the semester.
- Only three credit hours from any online class can count towards the minimum 12 credit hours. Therefore, whether you take one three-credit hour online class or one four-credit hour online class, you must take an additional nine credit hours of lecture classes.
- You must maintain satisfactory

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progress in classes, failure to do so may result in academic probation.

- You must seek permission from the international student advisor before withdrawing or dropping a course while semester is in session that will result in less than 12 hours.

## Scholarships

- View a list of available scholarships on the College of the Mainland Foundation website.
- [www.com.edu/com-foundation](http://www.com.edu/com-foundation)
- Tuition and fee reduction for scholarships of \$1000 or more from the COM Foundation

## Insurance

Medical insurance coverage is required throughout enrollment at COM for all F-1 Students. Insurance information is not required until after a student has been accepted and enrolled. COM provides a list of insurance companies that provide insurance coverage specifically for international students. If a student is already insured proof of coverage should be submitted at time of registration.

## Concurrent Enrollment

Always obtain permission from an international adviser prior to taking classes at another College (concurrent enrollment).



## Changes to Address, Phone Number and Email

Report to your international student advisor any change of address, telephone number or email within 10 days of the change.

## Employment

Working on campus for 19 hours a week while school is in session is permitted after completing a full academic year successfully with permission from the international adviser. Working off campus is not permitted unless you have been authorized for curriculum practical training, optional practical training or employment based on economic hardship.

## Travel

Never travel without informing your international student adviser. You must obtain a travel signature on your I-20 prior to your departure. Your passport, visa and I-20 must also be valid when you travel.

## Grace Periods

A 60-day grace period exists after academic program completion. During the 60-day grace period, you may:

- Remain in the U.S. to prepare for departure.
- Transfer to another school.
- Apply for a change of status.
- Caution: no travel abroad and U.S. re-entry on the same I-20 and no employment is permitted during the 60-day grace period.

A 15-day grace period exists after authorized withdrawal. During the 15-day grace period, you may:

- Remain in the U.S. to prepare for departure.
- No employment permitted during the 15-day grace period.
- No transfer may be initiated during the 15-day grace period.

## Reinstatement

A student who has failed to maintain status may apply to be reinstated to lawful F-1 status within five months of falling out of status. If the reinstatement is denied, the student will be asked to leave the U.S.

## Change of Status

Please notify an international student adviser and provide supporting documents when:

- You have applied/been approved for a change of status from an F-1 to permanent residency (based on marriage, political asylum, etc.).
- You have applied/been approved for a change of status from an F-1 to an H-1B (full-time work authorization).

## Dependents (F-2)

- May stay in the U.S. as long as the F-1 student is in status.
- May travel abroad and re-enter without the F-1 student but must obtain a travel signature from an international student adviser prior to departure.
- May not be employed in the U.S.
- May not enroll in a degree program but may enroll in part time vocational/recreational.



### Emergency Contact Information

To contact International Students Office in case of an emergency after hours, weekends or holidays, contact COM Police.

- 409-933-8403 office campus
- 599 - on campus

Please refer to the COM Student Handbook (A Student's Guide to COM) for more information and guidelines that apply to ALL students.



## **MISSION**

College of the Mainland is a learning-centered, comprehensive community college dedicated to student success and the intellectual and economic enrichment of the diverse communities we serve.

## **VISION**

College of the Mainland will be a valued and vital community partner by enriching our community and preparing our students to thrive in a diverse, dynamic and global environment.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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College of the Mainland is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate degrees and certificates. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of College of the Mainland. The Commission is to be contacted only if there is evidence that appears to support the institution's significant non-compliance with a requirement or standard.

For more information please contact:  
International Students Office  
409-933-8653 or  
1-888-258-8859, ext. 8653  
or 409-933-8521  
email: OIA@com.edu

[www.com.edu](http://www.com.edu)