

Useful Information for International Students:

Important things to know about your first few weeks in Bellingham

Arrival:

WCC provides airport pickup service from the SeaTac airport to Bellingham for a \$75 fee for all students arriving on WCC's arrival dates who will be residing in WCC's housing services (Homestay and Cedar Hall).

WCC's arrival dates are set for the best success for our students. However, arrival dates are highly encouraged but not mandatory, students can move into WCC housing on other days. Students arriving earlier than our arrival dates will be asked to make hotel arrangements until WCC housing is available.

WCC Housing: Homestay and Cedar Hall

All students living in WCC's housing services receive airport pick up service from the SeaTac airport (\$75 fee) if arriving on WCC's arrival dates. All housing placements are sent 10 days prior to WCC's posted arrival dates each quarter.

WCC Homestay:

Homestay payments are paid directly to the homestay host either using cash or check. If a student does not live in homestay for the entire month (30 days) a pro-rated daily rate is applied to the homestay fee for that month. The host understands if the first homestay payment after arriving is not paid promptly, but please have finances in place to pay the homestay fee no later than the second week after arriving. All other homestay payments must be paid on the first day of each month. Please talk with your host about this payment plan.

If you live in homestay and arrive on WCC's arrival date, your host will pick you up and help you get to know Bellingham. Your host will show you how to ride the bus to WCC to attend the international student orientation. The first few weeks is an important time to get to know your host.

WCC Cedar Hall:

If you are living in WCC's Cedar Hall and arrive on WCC's arrival date, you will be picked up by a RL staff member and oriented with your apartment. If you have any questions, there is a Resident Advisor (RA) available to help you.

Cedar Hall rent is added to your WCC student account and is payable to WCC's business office. You can pay using cash, credit card or check.

International Student Orientation:

The international student orientation is required for all new international students to attend to be successful in their studies at WCC. The orientation will cover important information including academics, health and safety, activities, and banking. Students who will be living in Cedar Hall will also be required to attend a separate housing orientation scheduled at a different time. You will be sent an orientation schedule 10 days before you arrive to study at WCC. Please make a copy of the schedule and plan to attend all sessions.

Tuition:

Please note that students are required to pay tuition by the first day of the quarter. Tuition can be paid by cash, check from a local bank account, bank transfer, or credit card (Visa and MasterCard are accepted). Many students prefer to pay with a credit card from their home country, though assistance in opening a local bank account will be offered upon arrival. For new students requiring extra time to pay their tuition, a deadline extension will be possible for up to 10 days for the first quarter.

Cell phones, Internet, and Communication:

Most students get cell phone while studying at WCC. There are many options and service plans. WCC recommends you talk with your family and discuss options that apply to your needs. During the international student orientation, Orientation Assistants are available to help answer questions about phone services and internet availability. WCC homestays and WCC campus has free wireless internet. Many public buildings in Bellingham also offer free wireless internet services.

Academics

The first few weeks of the quarter is a time of transition in which you focus on your English skills, start becoming adjusted to new living conditions, navigate a new school system, and start connecting with other students. Please do not expect to learn all the details of your academic program during this transition period. Once you are settled in, you can meet with your advisor, who will gladly answer all your questions about your academics.

Smoking

The legal smoking age in Washington State is 18 years old. Smoking is not allowed in public places by law. On the WCC campus, smoking is only allowed in the covered smoking areas that are found at different locations. Also, smoking indoors is not common in the United States. If you live with a host family or visit American friends, you should ask before smoking.

Opening a Bank Account

There are many expenses when you first arrive in the US: transportation, personal purchases, tuition, books. We recommend that you carry small amounts of cash or have a credit card to cover your expenses during the first few days. It is very helpful if you have a VISA or MasterCard credit card with you. Please do not

You should open a bank account soon after you arrive. Before leaving your home country you should contact your bank to ensure that they can transfer money to a US bank. WCC offers help with bank accounts during our international student orientation.

Automatic Teller Machine (ATM)

There is an ATM machine on campus that recognizes most credit cards. ATMs are also available around the city. When you open an account with a bank that operates an ATM system, you'll be issued a plastic ATM service or "debit" card. You will be assigned a personal code or "PIN number" which identifies you as a bank customer. Never give anyone your personal code. Be careful when accessing an ATM machine. Using the machine at nighttime or early in the morning in an isolated area is not a safe practice. Withdrawing large sums of cash from the machine is also not a safe practice. Be aware of people who are around you and what they are doing.

Health and Safety

Attending school in the US can be stressful. Students who try to carry a heavy study load may be at risk health wise. You need to balance your schedule carefully, stay healthy by eating right, exercising, and getting enough rest. Your advisor can help you plan a schedule that is realistic.

Remember to always be aware of your surroundings and be careful not to trust strangers, don't carry large amounts of cash or valuables with you—instead leave them in a safe place at home.

Medical insurance in the US is something you must pay for and need to be aware that it is expensive to go to the doctor if you do not have insurance. Whatcom Community College requires all international students to have insurance; Whatcom has contracted with Lower Health Insurance to make this process easier. [Click here for more information.](#)

Important Documents

In your apartment or home, please establish a safe and secure place to keep valuable items, such as travel documents, etc. You are required to carry their passport and I-20 at all times, so it is wise to develop a careful way to always have them with you. Do not leave valuable items in cars or backpacks.

Maps

[Whatcom Community College Campus Map and Directions](#)

[Map of Bellingham](#)