

HAMILTON CAMPUS
GORDON  **CONWELL**
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Post-Arrival Information

For International Students and Families



Prepared by the Office of Student Life Services

Last Update 07/2019

Welcome to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Greetings from Gordon-Conwell in South Hamilton, Massachusetts! We are excited to welcome you to our community. Gordon-Conwell is truly a global institution, with hundreds of students, staff, and faculty representing more than 50 countries and thousands of alumni serving God's Church worldwide.

Gordon-Conwell is located only 45 minutes from Boston, Massachusetts, one of the oldest and most vibrant cities in the United States. With a diverse population of over 5 million people, Boston is also home to hundreds of colleges, universities, law schools, medical schools, and seminaries, including the Boston Theological Institute (BTI). As a student at Gordon-Conwell, you will have the privilege of receiving an outstanding theological education and living and ministering in one of the world's most dynamic cities!

The Office of Student Life Services has prepared this manual to help you adjust to life at Gordon-Conwell. While we have tried to include everything you will need to know (including answers to commonly asked questions and concerns), we encourage you to stay in contact with our office. We are here to serve you and help you in any way possible.

If you have additional questions that have not been answered here, please contact our office:

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South Hamilton, MA
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We wish you well throughout your time at Gordon-Conwell!

Sincerely,

Julie Nichols

This manual was prepared by the Office of Student Life Services at Gordon-Conwell. Resources consulted during the preparation of this manual include The National Association of International Educators (NAFSA) Adviser's Manual (2007), as well as resources for international students at Brandeis University, Boston University, Harvard University, and Fuller Theological Seminary.

When changes in the particulars of this handbook are introduced, the seminary will give such notice and will ensure adjustment without undue inconvenience. However, the right to make whatever changes may be deemed necessary at any time is specifically reserved. Information provided in this Handbook is not legal counsel and should not be deemed as such. For official counsel in regards to your visa status, please consult an immigration attorney.

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Packing and Moving Tips

As a student, you (and your family) will probably spend your time in the U.S. living in temporary accommodations such as on-campus dorms or apartments. Unmarried students often shift residences quite often whereas many married students tend to stay in one place for most of their time in the U.S.

Where you live is perhaps one of the most important decisions you will make as a student in the U.S. Most F-1 students (and their families) live on-campus, as this housing is convenient, generally affordable, and the best way to meet others and experience great community life. Few F-1 students ever buy homes or condominiums while in the U.S., especially since property in New England is usually quite expensive, though some live in off-campus housing. We recommend you carefully consider your living situation before arriving in the U.S. For one, ensure that your living circumstances are safe and suitable to your needs, especially if you have a family.

You will also begin to acquire possessions while you are here such as household items, furniture, and clothing. Therefore, we recommend you bring only what you need to get started living in the U.S. and that you make major purchases like furniture, televisions, kitchen items after you arrive.

Please see section called **New England Weather: What to Expect** (page 9).

Important Documents to Bring

There are many items that you must bring with you and have readily available at all times while living in the U.S., including:

- Official transcripts and syllabi from secondary schools, colleges, or universities
- Medical and dental records, including certificates of immunizations and vaccinations (especially important for young children)
- Information about medical conditions or treatments, prescriptions for medication (including generic and brand names), spare eyeglasses and a prescription.
- Marriage certificate, original and translated if necessary
- Birth certificates for children

Wherever applicable, these documents should be accompanied by official English translations. Keep these documents in a safe place throughout your entire time in the U.S.

Electrical Output

Many students have experienced difficulty bringing electronic equipment from other countries into the U.S. So you know, the standard electrical output in the U.S. is 110V/220V, so most foreign electrical equipment cannot be used here. Bring electrical devices only if you will run them on batteries or a voltage converter.

SIM Cards

There are many network providers that offer affordable monthly plans for your phone. These include [AT&T](#), [H2O Wireless](#), [T-Mobile](#), etc. H2O Wireless is especially preferred by international students for its lowest monthly rates and free international calling to certain countries.

For those considering cheaper options, prepaid carriers are worth checking out like [Mint Mobile](#). Mint Mobile is considered an MVNO, or mobile virtual network operator. This means that it operates on the infrastructure of existing networks. In this case, Mint Mobile operates on T-Mobile's towers. Mint Mobile receives favorable feedback for its inexpensive rates and simple user experience. The downside is Mint Mobile devices will have lower priority on T-Mobile's network than T-Mobile's own customers. This can affect your accessibility to data usage or network signaling when gathered in congested areas. Also, the customer service is less than ideal.

On-campus Housing

Before you apply to Gordon-Conwell, check [Housing Office](#) to get a sense of what on-campus accommodations will be available to you (and your family). On-campus housing is by far the most common option F-1 students pursue. However, on-campus housing is limited and not guaranteed to every student. Especially for students who apply very late and/or plan to arrive on-campus on short notice, we recommend you contact the Housing Office as soon as possible and if needed, consider the option of living off-campus until on-campus housing becomes available.

Off-campus Housing

Some F-1 students live off-campus in surrounding communities such as Beverly, Salem, even as far as Boston. It is solely your responsibility to find off-campus housing if this is the option you will pursue. We recommend the Gordon-Conwell off-campus housing list (available to all incoming students by request from the Housing Office) or by checking websites like Facebook market place, www.apartments.com or <http://realestate.boston.com> have been quite helpful for students seeking good and affordable off-campus housing. The most common off-campus housing options are apartments.

We recommend you carefully consider where you (and your family) live if you choose to live off-campus. You may find apartments right around Gordon-Conwell are quite expensive, whereas apartments in other areas are more reasonably priced. Remember, with apartments you typically get what you pay for. Safety should always be of top concern, as well as location and price.

Signing a Lease

A "lease" is a written contract between you and a landlord (or property keeper) that specifies the terms and conditions of your residence. It will include the amount of monthly rental payment, when it should be paid, and how long you are expected to occupy the property. Since the lease is a legally binding document, make sure to read it thoroughly before signing it. Once you sign a lease agreement, in most cases, you are legally bound to its terms. Most off-campus apartments will require you to sign a lease and make other monetary deposits.

The lease must contain a specified rental price. Do not sign a lease without agreeing on a price.

Making a Deposit

When you sign a lease, you will probably then be asked to pay rent for the first and last month of your occupancy. In addition, you will also probably be asked for a "security deposit" equal to one month's rent. The security deposit will be returned to you after you leave, provided that you have taken good care of the property during your stay. After the property owner (landlord) inspects your apartment, a final decision will be made about returning the security deposit. Be sure to get a written and signed document from your landlord indicating the condition of the property before you move in. This document will protect you from charges for damages you are not responsible for.

Once you sign a lease and make a deposit, you are legally bound to fulfill your requirements as tenant of that property. Be sure that you are certain about renting the apartment before signing the lease.

Utilities

Rental costs do not normally include "utilities" such as water, electricity, heating, and telephone services. Ask your landlord for advice on which service companies to contact that provide these utilities. Some companies may require you to pay an initial deposit that will be returned to you after a given period of time. The average costs of utilities will vary if you live in a large house, with roommates, or if you live alone in a one bedroom apartment.

Classified Ad Abbreviations

Classified ads for local apartments use many abbreviations. Some are listed below:

a/c air conditioned	incl included
apt apartment	kit kitchen
app appliances	lr living room
avail available	lse lease
bdrm or br bedroom	lux luxury
bldg building	mo month
d/a or dr dining area/room	nr near
d/d dishwasher/disposal	nwly renov newly renovated
dep deposit	owner occ owner-occupied (owner lives on property)
elec electricity	priv private
e.i.k eat in kitchen (large)	prkg parking
efficiency or eff one-room apartment (flat)	refs references
fmr first month's rent	sec req security deposit required
frpl fireplace	studio one-room apartment (flat)
furn furnished	trans transportation
h/hw heat and hot water	util utilities
ht heat	w/ with
immed occpy immediate occupancy (available now)	w/d washing machine, clothes dryer

New England Weather: What to Expect

The weather in New England is dramatic and difficult to predict. Summers are usually mild but can become quite hot, with average temperatures ranging from 60-95 degrees Fahrenheit (15-35 degrees Celsius). Fall and spring can be cool, even quite cold at times, with average temperatures ranging from 38-60 degrees Fahrenheit (3-15 degrees Celsius). Winters in New England can be very cold and snowy. Average temperatures range from 0-37 degrees Fahrenheit (-17-3 degrees Celsius). Because weather and temperatures can vary significantly, the best way to prepare for the weather in New England is to be prepared for anything. Especially during the winter, have several layers of clothes that can be put on or taken off according to the temperature; wear a heavy coat, weatherproof boots, hat and gloves; and prepare your car for winter driving.

Changing Seasons

Fall weather begins in September and continues through October. By November days become much colder as winter approaches. It also becomes dark very early around November, usually before 4:00 p.m. Winter weather usually lasts from November to the beginning of April and can also be very dark and cloudy. Snow and freezing rain are common during these times, sometimes lasting for days at a time. January is the month normally with the heaviest snowfall, and February and March are usually the coldest. Spring arrives in April and lasts until mid-June. Believe it or not, snow and cold weather are still very common during the Spring. Summer comes around mid-June and lasts till late August, as temperatures gradually warm up to as high as 95 or 100 degrees Fahrenheit (35-37 degrees Celsius).

During the winter, warm insulating clothing is necessary. It will be necessary to have or purchase items like a heavy coat, weatherproof boots, warm insulated pants, hats, scarves, and gloves by October, depending on how well you handle the cold. Planning ahead is suggested because winter comes quick and can be unpredictable. The costs of each of these items varies from store to store, so shop around before purchasing and if you are willing, look online for the best deals. Everything you might need can be bought locally and will be most affordable in larger cities like Beverly, Danvers, Salem, and Boston.

During the coldest months it is especially important to cover your hands and face when the wind is blowing strongly. A brisk wind can freeze your skin quickly, even though the air temperature is moderate. Simple precautions such as mittens/scarf will prevent these problems from developing.

To check the current weather in South Hamilton, go to www.weather.com. Type "South Hamilton, MA" or "01982" (our zip code) into the appropriate field to learn more about the local weather and to check current temperatures and conditions.

Communication on Campus

There are many ways for you to receive important information on campus at Gordon-Conwell. Much of the communication you will receive as an F-1 student will be from your international student advisor (the government terminology is Designated School Official, often referred to as DSO) in Student Life Services through either your campus mailbox or by e-mail to your Gordon-Conwell student email account. Students must check their student email account daily.

Students may also gain access to important information through many on-campus resources.

Student Handbook

The [Student Handbook](#) is an official document that contains information about academic and community life policies. This is published by Student Life Services and Enrollment Management.

Campus Directory

While there is no consolidated campus directory, there are ways to look up the contact information of students, administration, faculty, and staff at Gordon-Conwell. Student contact information can be accessed via [CAMS student portal](#). Staff contact information [HERE](#). Faculty contact information [HERE](#).

Campus Guide to Auto and Public Safety Regulations

The [Campus Guide to Auto and Public Safety Regulations](#) contains regulations regarding the use of motor vehicles on-campus and other helpful driving tips. Each student is responsible for reviewing the content of this document, even if they do not plan to drive on-campus.

Hilltop

The *Hilltop* is a weekly electronic publication by Student Life Services that informs the GCTS community of the events taking place on the hill.

Friday A.M.

The *Friday A.M.* is a weekly publication of the seminary used by many students and offices to make general announcements, including upcoming on-campus events, important deadlines, ministry needs, and items for sale. The *Friday A.M.* is emailed to the entire seminary community every Friday morning while school is in session (September through May).

Bulletin Boards

Bulletin Boards are another way information is passed on to students. The bulletin board located in the Mailroom lobby is used for the following:

- **Campus Events:** Notices of events and opportunities happening on the campus of Gordon-Conwell.
- **For Sale:** Information regarding sale of such items as cars, books, furniture, services such as typing, childcare, and other miscellaneous items.
- **Off-campus:** Events which are occurring in other churches and Christian organizations.
- **Registration Office:** Course schedules, wait lists, professor sabbaticals and other important information.

There are several other bulletin boards located throughout campus (Academic Center, Library, Apartment Buildings, Dorms). Please check them frequently for other important and useful information.

Employment Postings

Though bulletin boards often contain posted information about off-campus employment, F-1 students are not permitted to engage in any unauthorized employment and F-2 dependents are not permitted to work under any circumstances. Please see your DSO for any questions or concerns you may have about your employment restrictions. Contact/visit the human resources department (Kerr 319) for assistance with on campus employment.

Financial Matters

Finances are always a difficult matter to face, especially when moving to a new country, pursuing further education, and adjusting to things like using a new currency, banking, shopping, managing money, and keeping a budget. Of course, these are only some of the challenges you may face as you adjust to life in the U.S. Once you arrive, you may find you have many questions about how to properly manage your finances. Many students, for instance, wonder where to open banking accounts, how and where to purchase important items, and how to convert currency from their home country into U.S. dollars. This manual should be helpful in addressing many of these questions. We also recommend you contact your international student advisor with any questions or concerns you may have.

Helpful Pre and Post-Arrival Tips

Before you arrive in the U.S., we recommend you bring sufficient funds to cover the initial arrival and travel costs once in the U.S. (i.e. traveler's checks, credit card, checks).

You may use these funds for airport emergencies (e.g. taking a cab or shuttle, if needed) and to make initial purchases such as groceries and clothing once you arrive. Student Life Services is more than willing to help you with rides to local stores and banks when you first arrive too, assuming you make arrangements in advance with your international student advisor or the Dean of Students.

Remember that the budget estimates provided to you by Gordon-Conwell (as listed on the Application for I-20/Visa Certificate) are only estimates. Actual costs may be significantly higher or lower than what you expect, depending for instance on the lifestyle you lead, the places you shop, and the amount of meals you eat out in restaurants and local markets. In most cases, your financial situation will not change that much once you arrive. However you typically managed your finances in your home country may not change dramatically once in the U.S.

Be sure that you can afford to pay your tuition and fees when required by Financial Services in your first semester, and that you have sufficient funds for living expenses during your first year in the U.S.

Currency, Exchange Rates, and Credit Cards

Bringing any currency into the U.S. can be difficult, especially if your country has strict regulations about taking funds abroad. Check with the foreign exchange department at your bank or financial institution well in advance, or at least as you prepare your financial support documentation for the *Application for I-20/Visa Certificate*, and make the necessary arrangements to bring sufficient funds with you once you leave your home country.

We recommend you have enough funds transferred or converted to efficiently bank in the U.S. and pay for all your educational and personal expenses. Also, open an account at a local bank as soon as possible after your arrival.

We also recommend that you bring a major credit card (Master Card, Visa, American Express) along with other funds (for example, cash in USD). Most major airports have currency exchange kiosks you may use for a fee.

While there are many websites and resources for receiving current exchange rates, we recommend www.xe.com/ucc. This website will most likely be used by your international student advisor for all currency conversions and other currency related information.

Banking

There are many small to mid-sized local banks not too far from Gordon-Conwell, as well as branches for some large national banks such as [Bank of America](#), [TD Bank](#), [Citizens Bank](#), [People's United](#), [Chase](#), [Fidelity](#). Make sure to do your research to identify which bank is best suited to meet your needs.

Bank of America

Hamilton has mostly small local banks and only one Bank of America branch. Though where you bank is solely your choice, most F-1 students choose Bank of America for its many local and national branches, extensive variety of benefits and wide range of resources, 24 hour multi-lingual customer service, comprehensive online services, and accessibility when traveling internationally. Bank of America in Hamilton is also used to servicing students from the seminary and has always provided great customer service for our international students.

You may visit Bank of America at the following address:

Bank of America
15 Walnut St.
Hamilton, MA 01936

All banks keep a variety of brochures that describe services which you may want to use, and you can always talk to the personnel in the bank.

Bank hours vary from bank to bank. However, banks are usually open for business Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Some banks have branches located in grocery stores. These are more likely to be open during the evenings and on Saturday mornings.

TD Bank

TD Bank is mainly found along the East Coast and all over Canada (it is known as TD Canada Trust). TD Bank has Cross Border Banking options that enable you to transfer funds between the U.S. and Canada free of charge. Many international students found transferring funds from overseas cheaper and easier with this bank. Again, do your own research when choosing a bank.

Another reason why TD Bank stands out is they have longer open hours and are also open on weekends and many holidays.

Opening Accounts

In the U.S., there is a distinction between checking and savings accounts, one being that checking accounts may or may not pay interest while savings accounts usually do.

Banks offer many checking and savings services. You do not need an appointment to open an account, but you will need to speak with someone in “customer service” or “personal banking.” Banks’ requirements for opening accounts can vary, but you will probably need at least the following documents to open an account:

1. Proof of personal identification. Your passport is one source of picture identification.
2. Visa documents, including your I-20 and I-94.
3. Proof of your local address, such as a bill or other official papers you received at your local seminary address. If necessary, the Housing Office can also write a letter verifying your local address.
4. Proof of attendance at Gordon-Conwell.
5. U.S. Phone Number

Note that processing your application and issuing your account number can take 1 to 2 business days. Then the bank will either send an email or a letter letting you know if you are approved for your account. You will then receive your account documents via U.S. Mail within 7-10 business days.

Checking Accounts

Banks offer different types of checking accounts designed to fit individual needs. It is best to speak with a bank representative to determine what type of account would best suit your needed.

The minimum deposit required to open a checking account varies from bank to bank, but be prepared to have approximately \$100 to open an account.

Every month you receive a statement from the bank which lists all the transactions and which returns your canceled checks to you. This statement will be mailed to you or made available online. Be sure to have sufficient funds in your account for the checks you write. If not, your account will be overdrawn and you will incur additional charges.

Savings Accounts

Savings accounts enable you to save money and accumulate interest on your savings. Most savings accounts require a minimum deposit higher than what is required for opening a checking account. Depending on the institution, minimum balance requirements for savings accounts could be less than \$100 or more than \$1,000 to avoid fees. Make sure to check ahead of time before opening a savings account.

Also, savings accounts are more restrictive than checking accounts. If you open a savings account, check to see how often your bank permits you to access your funds. Typically, banks do not permit you to write checks from a savings account and withdrawals from savings accounts are usually limited.

Cash Withdrawals: Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), ATM Cards, and Cash Back

Almost all banks issue ATM cards that allow you to make deposits and withdrawals 24 hours a day through automated teller machines, or ATMs.

ATMs are usually located outside bank branches and in many other central locations like gas stations and supermarkets. Be aware, though, that ATMs often charge fees unless you make a withdrawal from an ATM managed by your bank. Bank of America customers can withdraw from any Bank of America ATM anywhere, anytime without any fees. However, Bank of America charges high fees for withdrawals from ATMs managed by other banks. Some supermarkets even accept ATM bank cards for payment, though be aware of fees associated with these transactions too.

If you do need to withdraw cash immediately and do not have access to your own bank ATM, one method students have used is the Cash Back option at grocery stores. Most grocery stores will allow you to withdraw cash from your card after making a purchase. Students typically buy a small item, such as a \$1 piece of chewing gum, and then at the checkout counter swipe their card and select the desired cash back amount (let's say for example \$40). Thus you will be charged \$41 from your card (\$1 for the chewing gum and \$40 which will be handed to you by the cashier). This is an economical way of getting instant cash when your bank ATM's is hard to access. Note that the Cash Back limit at grocery stores is typically \$100.

Transportation

Gordon-Conwell is located in a rural area, about 1 ½ miles from major stores, banks, and restaurants. There is a train that goes from downtown Hamilton to Boston, but other public transportation in the area is limited. It is difficult to get to food stores and other places without a car or some other means of transportation. Remember too that New England is very cold most of the year, so even walking to places off-campus can be very difficult.

Owning a Car

Most F-1 students find it necessary to purchase a car, especially students with children. Used cars cost anywhere from \$5,000 to as much as \$10,000. Many F-1 students will be required to

pay cash for a car, especially if purchased from an individual seller. If you decide to buy a car, you will also need to get a Massachusetts driver's license, purchase car insurance (which usually costs about \$900-\$1,100 per year), and pay to register your car with the State. In Massachusetts, residents pay an average of \$1,460 per year for car insurance while the average nationwide is \$1,311 (Trusted Choice).

Massachusetts also requires that everyone who owns an automobile pay an "excise tax" each year. The amount of this tax is based on the year the automobile was made.

Obtaining your driver record (minimum of six years is best) from your country in English, or accompanied by an official, notarized English translation should be helpful in getting lower car insurance rates. This record should be on official stationary. When you apply for car insurance, some insurance companies may not mention the need for a driving record, so you should be sure to ask about it.

International Drivers Licenses

The State of Massachusetts honors valid driver licenses issued by countries listed in Appendix C of the Massachusetts Driver's Manual for one year from the time you enter the U.S. This one-year period begins again each time you lawfully enter the U.S.

An "International Driving Permit" by itself does not confer driving privileges in Massachusetts. Nor is it required to drive in the U.S. When driving with your license from your country, you should also have your valid passport/I-94 with you at all times. A valid International Driving Permit merely serves to confirm that a license was issued and translates the relevant information on the license into other languages. However, it is suggested that you obtain the International Driving Permit if your license is not in English. For instance, you may need it in order to use your original license for identification purposes. Beware of internet sites or any organizations that sell fraudulent "International Driver's Licenses" that claim to confer actual driving privileges or allow you to bypass official RMV regulations.

For more information on International Driving Permits and a list of countries in "Appendix C," please see <http://www.mass.gov/rmv/license/international.htm>.

Receiving a Massachusetts Driver License

The State of Massachusetts will not permit you to convert your International Driving Permit or license from your home country (unless granted in Canada and Mexico). That is to say, if you do not have a valid license or if the one-year period described above has expired, Massachusetts requires you to go through the entire application process for receiving an official state license. Your driving record from your home country will not exempt you from any part of this process.

We recommend receiving your Massachusetts license before the one-year period expired for your foreign license.

To receive a Massachusetts license, you must go to the Registry of Motor Vehicles and take a written test, a vision test, and a road test. The written test can be taken on a walk-in basis without scheduling an appointment. Other tests, however, may require you to make an appointment.

Please make sure you have a reasonable knowledge of Massachusetts driving regulations. You can obtain a copy of the [Commonwealth of Massachusetts Driver's Manual](#) online. This manual includes Massachusetts driving regulations, as well as information about taking tests in a foreign language. Please note that traffic laws and driver licensing regulations vary from state to state in the U.S.

Canadian or Mexican Driver's Licenses

The State of Massachusetts will permit you to convert a license from Canada, Mexico or any U.S. Territories if you complete the following:

1. Provide a certified driving record (not more than 30 days old) from the country or territory where you are licensed
2. Take and pass a vision test.
3. Take a written test if your license has been expired for more than one year but less than four years.
4. Take a full test, written and road, if your license has been expired for more than four years.

Transfer Driver's License from Foreign Country

Certain countries allow former licensed residents to convert their driver's license without testing. These countries include:

- Canada, Mexico, or the U.S. Territories
- South Korea
- Germany
- France
- Taiwan

Bring the [completed form](#), required documentation, and appropriate fees to the location listed in applicable section of the [foreign driver's licenses page](#).

Receiving a New Massachusetts Driver's License

To receive a new Massachusetts driver's license, you will need **four** original documents to prove your identity. These documents may include:

1. Social Security Card or valid, current passport.
2. Document proving your date of birth
3. Document proving your signature
4. Document proving Massachusetts residency (e.g., a bill sent to you at your Massachusetts address, copy of your lease, or a letter of verification from the Housing Office)

Out of items 2, 3 and 4, at least one must be a "primary document." Your non-U.S. driver license (along with a legally acceptable translation or International Driving Permit if it is not in English) is a valid "secondary document."

Detailed list of acceptable primary and secondary documents [HERE](#).

Registry of Motor Vehicles Contact Information

The [Registry of Motor Vehicles \(RMV\)](#) has several locations. We recommend the office located at the following address:

9c Everett Street
Revere, MA 02151

You may reach the RMV at (800) 858-3926 or [online](#).

Directions to the Registry of Motor Vehicles

From Gordon-Conwell:

1. Drive from GCTS to ROUTE 128 South.
2. Route 128 South becomes Route 95 South.
3. Take EXIT 44 to merge onto ROUTE 1 South.
4. Take the EXIT for ROUTE MA-60 towards Malden and Revere.
5. At the traffic circle, take the 3rd exit onto MA-60 East/Squire Rd heading to Revere.
6. At the traffic circle, continue straight onto MA-60 East.
7. Sharp left then slight right into EVERETT STREET.

Always bring your passport, I-20, and Massachusetts identification with you. The lines for this office can be long, so we advise you bring everything with you to avoid having to return to

provide more information. We advise you to go early in the morning to avoid long waiting times.

The Massachusetts driver's manual for written exams is available [online](#).

Legal Requirements and Safety Tips for Driving in the U.S.

The following list will help you understand some driving basics once you start to drive in the U.S:

1. **Driver's License:** Keep your driver's license with you at all times when you are driving or may be driving.
2. **Vehicle Registration:** State law requires you to have the registration for the vehicle you are driving in the car, even if the vehicle is not actually yours.
3. **Safety Inspection:** Vehicles registered in Massachusetts must have a valid Massachusetts safety sticker. Vehicles must be inspected after being registered in Massachusetts and afterwards, it must be inspected every 12 months. The sticker is on the lower corner of the front passenger's side of the vehicle windshield.
4. **Seat Belts:** Massachusetts has a mandatory seat belt law. Everyone is required to use seat belts when driving or riding in a vehicle in Massachusetts.
5. **Car Seats:** All children under age 8 and less than 4 feet 9 inches tall must be properly fastened and secured into a "Child Passenger Restraint Device." All children between the ages 8 and 12 years of age must use an appropriate child restraint or wear a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt when riding in a vehicle.
6. **Approaching Emergency Vehicle:** When a fire truck, police vehicle, ambulance or disaster vehicle (using red or blue lights and sirens) is approaching your vehicle, you should immediately drive your vehicle as far as possible toward the right hand curb or side of the street and keep your vehicle stopped until all emergency vehicles have passed.
7. **Approaching Intersections:** Drivers shall not cross or enter an intersection which they are not able to go through without stopping and thereby blocking other vehicles from traveling in a free direction. A green light does not always mean a clear intersection.
8. **Blind Pedestrians:** Whenever a totally or partially blind pedestrian, guided by a guide dog or carrying a cane or a walking stick (white in color or white tipped with red), crosses or tries to cross a way, the driver should bring their vehicle to a full stop, and before going should be careful not to injure such pedestrian.
9. **Crosswalks:** Pedestrians have the right of way at marked crosswalks in Massachusetts. State law requires that drivers stop completely at crosswalks if there are pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross. No driver shall pass any other vehicle which is has already stopped at the marked crosswalk to allow for pedestrians to cross, or enter a marked crosswalk until there is enough space beyond the crosswalk for the vehicle to be driven. Never park on the sidewalk or in any way that would block the sidewalk.

10. Safety Precautions operation or parking of vehicles: No person, when operating a motor vehicle, shall allow anything (to be on or in the vehicle, or on or with the person) that may interfere with or hinder the proper operation of the vehicle or any equipment by which is operated or controlled. This prohibits drivers from using headphones.
11. School Bus: When approaching a vehicle with "SCHOOL BUS" written on it and with flashing red signal lights in the front and rear, drivers shall stop their vehicle, unless they are approaching from the opposite direction on a divided highway, before reaching the school bus and shall not go until the warning lights on the bus are turned off, unless directed to do so by a police officer.
12. Speed Limits: No person operating a motor vehicle shall drive at a speed greater than is posted, reasonable, and proper. Everyone operating vehicle shall decrease the speed of their vehicle whenever there is a special hazard, or by reason of dangerous highway conditions due to bad weather conditions.
13. Railroad Crossing: Every person operating a motor vehicle, upon approaching a railroad crossing, should reduce the speed of the vehicle to a reasonable and proper rate before going over the crossing, and shall go over the crossing at a rate of speed and with such care as is reasonable and proper under the circumstances.
14. Police: If stopped by the police while driving:
 - a. Stay in your vehicle. It is dangerous for you to step out onto the roadway, and the police are trained to view this as an aggressive behavior.
 - b. Keep your hands where they can be easily seen, like on the steering wheel.
 - c. Remain calm.
 - d. Do not make any sudden movements.
 - e. Show your driver's license and the registration of the vehicle. If the license is in your wallet, take it out and give to the officer only the driver's license. They will not accept the entire wallet. If the registration is in a folder, book, etc. also take it out.
 - f. If you are asked to sign your name for the police officer, do so. You can be cited for the failure to comply with this request.
 - g. If a police officer asks you your name and address, answer truthfully. You can be cited for failure to act on this request.
 - h. Your signature on a citation issued to you is an acknowledgment of your receipt of the citation, not an admission of guilt.
15. Funeral Processions: State law forbids you to cut through or disrupt cars in a funeral procession. This procession is usually led by big black "hearse" (the unique vehicle used specifically for a funeral), with its headlights on.
16. When Lost: If you are lost or unsure of where to go, do not stop your vehicle in the middle of the street. Pull over to the right side of the road to ask questions.
17. Left Turn Only/Right Turn Only: If you are in a lane with an arrow that is marked "Left Turn Only" or "Right Turn Only," you must turn in that direction.

18. Safety from Strangers: Do not open your window all the way to talk to people. When you go into the city, you may encounter “panhandlers” (people who beg for money). Make sure your doors are locked and do not open your window all the way.
19. Rotaries: When you approach a rotary, especially in Boston, remember that the cars inside the rotary have the right of way. Therefore, you should let them go first.

Legal Requirements and Safety Tips for Traveling Safely With Children

The following list will help you understand some driving basics if you drive in the U.S with children:

1. A child must ride in a car seat that is secured in the back seat of the car from birth until he or she is large enough to fit correctly in a vehicle’s safety belts. That is usually when the child is five to seven years old, or weighs 50-60 pounds.
2. Child car protection comes in four types: car bed, infant-only, convertible and booster. Your child’s size and weight determine the type of car seat to use and when.
 - a. Car Bed: For premature babies or those fewer than seven pounds.
 - b. Infant Only: Rear-facing, reclined, for infants from seven to about 20 pounds at one year of age. The car seat must face the rear of the car and should never be used in a front seat where there is an air bag.
 - c. Convertible: Rear-facing for infants from seven to about 20 pounds and one year of age. Forward-facing for toddlers from one year of age and about 20 to 40 pounds.
 - d. Booster: Children from 40 to 60 pounds, depending on child’s weight and height.
3. The car seat you select must meet federal motor vehicle safety standards and be manufactured after January 1981. Look for a label that states: “This child restraint system conforms to all applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards.”
4. Many parents are unaware that the seat belts of some common vehicles are not capable of holding a child car seat securely. (Typically the car seat should not move more than an inch when secured in place.) You may need to call the vehicle manufacturer’s customer service department for further instruction, or contact the highway safety office in your state to determine what you need to secure the seat properly.
5. Never try to tend to a crying baby while driving. Find a safe place to stop. Never take a baby out of the car seat for comforting while the car is moving; rather, first pull safely to the side of the road.
6. Air bags/Automatic Seat belts: Never use a rear-facing seat in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with a passenger side air bag, unless you have a cut-off switch for the air bag. The safest place for all children in car seats is in the rear seat. If the vehicle’s front seat belts are automatic, either motorized or door mounted, do not use a child car seat in the front unless your vehicle owner’s manual provides specific instructions on how to do so correctly.

Driving During the Winter

New England is known for its long, harsh winters that can make car travel very challenging and dangerous. When winter weather finally sets in, start with your vehicle owner's manual for helpful tips on maintaining your car. Most manuals have a section on special driving instructions for bad weather and precautions for cold weather. Familiarize yourself with this information.

Before you drive, remove all ice and snow from your vehicle, including the area around your license plate. Snow on windows reduces your visibility, increasing the chance of an accident. Snow left on your vehicle can blow off onto other vehicles, blinding them temporarily, and may even cause them to get into an accident.

Beware of wet roads (or walkways) that suddenly freeze or glaze over, often called "black ice." This extremely thin glaze, or coating of ice, that forms on roadways, is very easily mistaken for water, instead of "Black Ice," until after an accident occurs. The cause is a quick drop in temperature at dawn, (the last few minutes before sun rise), or at dusk, (as, or just after, the sun sets). This is how a road that was wet all day, or all night, can suddenly freeze, forming very dangerous conditions.

New England Winter Vehicle "Survival Kit"

The following list contains items we recommend you keep in your vehicle throughout the winter months (usually October through April). All of these items can be purchased at most major retailers (e.g. Target, Wal-Mart) and some at local grocery stores (e.g. Shaw's).

1. Ice scraper: Necessary to clear windshield and windows before driving. NEVER use hot water to clear your windshield, it often cracks the cold glass, destroying the windshield!!
2. Snow brush: Use it to clear all the snow from your vehicle & lights before driving.
3. Snow Shovel: Use to remove the snow around your vehicle, to free it from all those little snow banks it gets stuck in, or the snow that the plow piles up around your vehicle.
4. Flashlight: Make sure the batteries are good. Check it periodically, do not assume it works.
5. Blanket(s): In case you are stranded somewhere with a vehicle that will not run.
6. Traction enhancer: When your vehicle is stuck (spinning your wheels) on ice or packed snow, often all you need to get going again is a little something to improve your traction. A container of sand, rock salt, ice melt, or even kitty litter, will do the job nicely.
7. Reflective triangles and road flairs: For breakdowns or accidents, to warn on-coming traffic of the hazard ahead.
8. Battery "jumper cables": In case you need a "jump start" for your vehicle.

9. Lock de-icer: Readily available in small spray cans and reasonably priced. A small piece of ice in your lock can disable the lock, locking you out. Keep some in your briefcase, purse, or coat.

Winter Driving Tips

The following list contains tips we recommend you keep in mind throughout the winter months (usually October through April):

1. As a general rule, as road conditions deteriorate, reduce your speed and increase the distance between vehicles accordingly. Speed limits are established for daylight hours, on clear, dry roads. Reduce speed on snow covered, slippery roads, which require much greater braking distances to STOP.
2. Remember, NO amount of salt or sand will stop a car that's going too fast! Drive at a speed that's reasonable and proper for the existing road conditions.
3. Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Law, Chapter 90, Sect. 13, prohibits anything in the vehicle, or on your person, that interferes with the safe operation of your vehicle. This includes the driver's use of headphones, or driving while trying to see through a peek-hole in the snow on your vehicle windows.
4. In the daytime, when driving in reduced visibility situations due to snow, blowing snow, fog, rain, etc., turn on your headlights. It may, or may not, help you to see any better, but it increases your ability to be seen by other drivers. (Do not forget to turn your lights off when you reach your destination!).
5. Bridge surfaces freeze BEFORE roadway surfaces, as temperatures go below freezing.
6. When driving on snow covered roads, if your wheels start to spin, reducing the gas will usually help. Racing the engine spins the tires, friction from the spinning tires heats the snow or ice under the tires, forming water and very slippery road conditions.
7. To reduce the risk of spinning the wheels of a vehicle: Keep "standard" transmissions in the "Highest" gear possible, without stalling the vehicle. Keep "automatic" transmissions in "Drive."
8. When driving down hill on packed snow or icy roads, do NOT use "low gear" as a brake. The high torque put on the drive wheels may spin the wheels, causing a loss of traction and an increase in speed. The vehicle may also start to skid, and control of the vehicle may be lost, causing an accident. To go down-hill safely, you must maintain a safe, slow speed and use proper braking techniques.
9. Sunshine warms most roadways, melting snow & ice, but shaded areas of some roads, remain icy, and dangerous. Remember these places, i.e., on Essex Street, as you enter the Seminary.
10. Do not brake aggressively in icy or slippery road conditions. To stop on icy or slippery roads, gently pump your brakes. Another method is known as "Squeeze", or "Threshold" Braking. Push the brake pedal, with steadily increasing pressure, while maintaining "Rolling Traction." This allows you to keep control of your vehicle. Braking carefully, in

this manner, allows you to stop, in the shortest possible distance, without the loss of control experienced when you "LOCK UP" your wheels (wheels stop turning and start skidding). If you "LOCK UP" YOUR WHEELS, you lose traction and risk losing control of your vehicle. To regain control, ease off the brake, so the wheels can turn again, regaining traction & control. You must have traction to control your vehicle! For Anti-lock Braking Systems ("ABS"), press firmly, and hold the brake pedal down.

11. To avoid putting your car in skid (i.e. if your vehicle starts to slide)
 - DO NOT make abrupt steering changes while driving.
 - DO NOT brake sharply, or forcefully enough to "LOCK UP" your wheels.
 - DO NOT accelerate or decelerate suddenly.
 - DO NOT drive too fast for the existing road conditions.

What to Do if Your Car Breaks Down on the Side of the Road

Despite all your preparations, you may find yourself disabled on the road. If this happens, try to get your vehicle to the right side of the road. Road signs are usually on the right side of the road and drivers tend to repeatedly look to the right. Turn on your hazard lights to increase your visibility. Do not exit from your vehicle into oncoming traffic. Exit from the side farthest from the traffic whenever possible. If you have flares or reflective triangles, use them to alert oncoming traffic to use caution that something is wrong up ahead. Usually, the safest and best course of action is to stay with the vehicle and wait for help to come to you.

Public Transportation

There is a train that goes from downtown Hamilton to Boston, but other public transportation in the area is limited. Please know that it is difficult to get to food stores and other places without a car.

The public transportation system in the Boston area is called the MBTA or the "T". The "T" consists of commuter rail, subway, and bus services. Service runs seven days a week. It will cost \$9.25 one way from North Beverly to North Station in Boston. Download the mTicket app on your phone. A \$3.00 surcharge may be added to tickets purchased on board. For information about maps, schedules, and fares, check out the MBTA website at <http://www.mbta.com>.

Commuter Trains: You can take a commuter train (also called the Purple Line) from Hamilton to cities located North and South, including Boston. The cost of traveling on the train varies depending on how far you travel between cities (e.g., to and from Boston costs several dollars each way).

Subways: The subway system runs throughout the city of Boston and extends into some of the outlying towns. Many students drive to the Wonderland station, which is about a 45-minute drive, and then take the subway into Boston from there. Subway rides cost \$2.25 each with a

CharlieCard and \$2.75 a ride with a CharlieTicket. You can change from one subway to another without paying another fee, as long as you do not exit through the gates to the street. During rush hour, trains run every three minutes, while off-peak-time trains run about every five to 10 minutes. Weekend and holiday service can sometimes be slower (as much as 15 minutes between trains).

Buses (Local): The bus system acts as a supplement to the subway. The cost for one-way travel is \$1.70 with a CharlieCard and \$2.00 with a CharlieTicket. Buses require exact change that is deposited in the coin box at the front of the bus near the driver, usually at the beginning of the trip. Some buses to outlying towns will cost more. To get off the bus, you may have to push a button or pull a rope near your seat in order to tell the driver that you would like to get out at the next stop.

Non-Local Buses: [Greyhound](#) serves Boston with direct trips or connections to all major cities in North America. For fare and schedule information and ordering tickets (advance purchase), call 1(800) 231-2222 (Open 24/7). [Peter Pan Bus Lines](#) connects Boston with cities elsewhere in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New York. For more information call 1-800-343-9999.

Trains: From South Station in Boston, you can go to New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, or any major city on [Amtrak trains](#). Call in advance for information and reservations: 1 (800) USA-RAIL or 1 (800) 872-7245.

Taxis: For information on taxi-cab service, search online for “Boston North Shore taxi services.”

There are other ridesharing apps like Uber and Lyft that are available to offer taxi services. Using your phone, once you download the app and create an account, you can easily reserve a ride.

Airport

The main airport in Boston is [Logan International Airport](#) (i.e. Logan). The international terminal at Logan is Terminal E. Logan is by far the most accessed airport in Boston and greater New England, especially for international departures and arrivals. You can contact Logan 1(800)-23-LOGAN staffed daily from 7:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. EST.

There are many shuttle services to and from Logan. [Massport Peabody Logan Express](#) is a shuttle service many students often use. They are located on Route 1 at 164 Newbury Street in Peabody. Check ahead for parking availability by calling (978) 536-5081.

Sample fares: one-way fare/adult \$12; round-trip fare/adult \$22; children under 17 (with family) free; daily parking \$7.

For more information regarding air, bus, commuter and rail service, check online.

Clothing

International students at Gordon-Conwell are always encouraged to wear traditional dress from their home countries. Most American students typically dress casually during most school days. However, there will be occasions when students need to dress for more formal special events.

Dressing for All Four Seasons

As you may know, the weather in New England is usually quite cold and the summers can be very hot and humid. So bring plenty of warm clothing for winter, such as light and heavy coats, sweaters, and sweatshirts; and plenty of cool clothing such as t-shirts, shorts, and light pants such as jeans. For the winter, many students also own heavy, waterproof shoes, snow boots, gloves, scarves and warm hats. For those who are arriving from warmer climate countries, we recommend you make winter purchases here that are appropriate to New England's winter conditions. We also recommend that you own an umbrella for rainy days, which are quite frequent in New England.

To help you better plan, the following is list of recommended clothing items for each season

Summer in New England is usually mild. Average temperatures range from 60-95 degrees Fahrenheit (15-35 degrees Celsius). Lightweight clothing is recommended, but should include sweaters and pants in cotton or synthetic material. There are several beaches near the campus, so you may want to bring swimwear, especially for children. Note that it can be summer weather at the beginning of the school year (late August/beginning of September). There is no air conditioning provided in the dorm rooms or Graham and Bell apartments.

Fall and Spring can be cool, even quite cold. Average temperatures range from 38-60 degrees Fahrenheit (3-15 degrees Celsius). Medium weight clothing including a raincoat and/or a medium weight jacket should keep you comfortable.

Winter in New England can be very cold. Average temperatures range from 0-37 degrees Fahrenheit (-17-3 degrees Celsius). We recommend heavy woolen clothing, including pants and turtleneck sweaters. For outerwear, we recommend a woolen or down coat, hat or cap, gloves and warm waterproof boots are essential. Because weather and temperatures can vary significantly and are unpredictable, the best way to prepare for winter is to have several layers of clothes that can be put on or taken off according to the temperature.

Give and Take Shop on Campus

Student Life Services, with the help of many volunteers each year, maintains a Give and Take Shop as a ministry to the entire seminary community. Donations of clean clothing, shoes, and winter coats are welcomed. While there are no guarantees that the Give and Take will have everything you need, the shop typically has clothes for the whole family. All items in the Give and Take are free.

The shop is located on-campus next to the Eric Rouse Playground near the Bell and Graham apartment buildings.

Food

Students who have purchased a meal plan have access to the Gordon-Conwell dining facilities during hours of operation. All dormitory rooms come with 300 meal points to be used in the dining hall. Students such as those living in on or off-campus apartments are not required to purchase the meal plan and thus, must provide food from elsewhere.

Local Grocery Stores

There are many grocery stores anywhere from 10-15 minutes from campus. Most students shop at major grocery stores for basic items like milk, cheese, rice, and eggs. Local stores are:

[Crosby's Marketplace](#), 15 Walnut Street, South Hamilton, MA

[Shaw's](#), 71 Dodge Street, Beverly, MA

[Stop and Shop](#), 37 Enon Street, Beverly, MA

[Market Basket](#)*, 139 Endicott Street, Danvers, MA

*Tends to have lower prices, but a couple miles further away than the others.

Finding Ethnic Foods

There are many places to shop for ethnic cooking ingredients (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, European and others). There are several towns within a 10-15 minutes drive from the seminary such as Beverly or Salem that have international food markets. Some grocery stores include an international food aisle. Students are often surprised that they can find ingredients for many of their favorite dishes in these stores.

[H Mart](#) is the largest Asian supermarket chain in America. Here you can find all sorts of Asian food ingredients, side dishes, and other items like cosmetics, household products. There is also a food court where you can try Asian cuisines and Tous Les Jours, the Korean bakery. There are two branches located in Massachusetts. Most students visit the Burlington branch which is approximately 40 minutes away by car.

H Mart, 3 Old Concord Rd. Burlington, MA 01803

Boston's International Cuisine

Boston is known for its many fine restaurants, including the infamous North End (mainly Italian food), Haymarket, and Chinatown. People travel from all over the world to experience Boston's many diverse ethnic restaurants, which can be found in almost every part of the city. For ethnic food from your own country, you may find the various markets in downtown Boston like the Haymarket. Perhaps places like Salem or Lynn may also be good places to shop.

Athletic Facilities

Gordon-Conwell students have access to on-campus athletic fields, located down the hill from the Kerr Building near the Graham and Bell apartments. Many students access these fields for athletic games or simply to relax.

Students, faculty, staff, alumni and their families are also invited to sign up for a paid membership to the Bennett Center, located only 7 minutes away on the campus of Gordon College. Family memberships include spouse and dependent children 23 years and younger are able to access the Bennett Center. Current membership fee pricing is available at the welcome desk. Memberships are nontransferable, and membership fees will not be prorated for early cancellation except for documented medical reasons.

Bennett Center Membership Application Procedure

A completed membership form and Seminary ID must be brought in person to the Bennett welcome desk at the time of enrollment. Key tags for each adult member (14 years or older) are issued. Appropriate payment is expected at the time of enrollment. Checks payable to Gordon College, or cash, is accepted. Membership renewals are also processed at the welcome desk.

Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell strongly urges all recreational users to undergo physical examinations to acquire approval from their personal physicians before undertaking any physical activity.

Shopping

There are plenty of shopping malls, grocery stores, and gas stations within a 10-15 minute drive from Gordon-Conwell.

You may find methods of shopping very different from those you are used to at home. For instance, it is very important when shopping in American stores, especially very large stores, to use a cart or a basket provided by the store for your use. Never put a piece of merchandise in your pocket, purse, or a bag! It may appear to the employees of the store that you intend to take it without paying for it. This is called "shoplifting" and is punishable by law.

Most American stores and all department stores will have a service counter located in the front or the back of the store called Customer Service. When you have a question, complaint, or want to return or exchange an already purchased item, this is where you should go.

Grocery Stores

Grocery stores sell all sorts of food, such as fresh, frozen, and canned fish, poultry, meat, fruit, vegetables, and prepared dishes. They also sell basic necessities, such as eggs, milk, sugar, salt, and spices. Bakery goods and dairy products of all kinds can be found there. Also, some sell toiletries such as shampoo and toothpaste and paper products like toilet paper, paper towels, paper plates and paper cups. Large grocery stores, called “supermarkets” can be overwhelming at first because of the vast number of choices and the sheer size of the stores. Also, the placing of the items in supermarkets are planned in such a way as to make you buy more than you need. For example, items that people usually have to buy every time, like milk and eggs, are placed far in the back of the store so that shoppers have to go through the rest of the store and look at other products first. For this reason and also to save time finding items, it is important to make a list of items to buy before you go shopping. Self-service is the rule in supermarkets (e.g. Shaw’s) and in many suburban discount stores (e.g. Target, Sears), which means you take a cart or basket, select the items you wish to buy, and present them for payment at a cashier’s counter where you pay the bill.

Department Stores

Department stores sell a variety of things such as shoes, clothing, appliances, furniture, cloth, dishes, pots and pans, linens, towels, and toys. They are also self-service. Some stores in the North Shore are [J.C. Penny](#), [Walmart](#), [Target](#), and others.

Pharmacies

Pharmacies or drug stores are the only stores that sell pharmaceutical products, although many supermarkets and discount stores have a small pharmacy department. Doctor’s prescriptions can be filled at a pharmacy. Drug stores also have a large selection of cosmetics, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, candy, snacks, greeting cards, periodicals, simple medicines, and photographic film, and some offer photograph developing services.

Nearest Pharmacies to campus are the following

[CVS Pharmacy](#)

15 Walnut St, Hamilton, MA

Open Hours: 8 A.M. – 10 P.M.

978-468-4522

Connolly's Pharmacy Inc.
44 Bay Rd, Hamilton, MA
Open Hours: 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
978-468-3711

Walgreens Pharmacy
48 Dodge St, Beverly, MA
Open Hours: 9 A.M. – 9 P.M.
978-232-0103

[GoodRx](#) assists with finding the best deal on prescriptions. A phone app is also available.

Ways to Save Money

Watch for sales advertised in the newspaper and for discount coupons to use at grocery stores and restaurants. Major department stores often have clearance sections in each department. Many times, clearance sections are marked with red signs. Watch the Classified Ads section in newspapers or Craigslist for household items and furnishings which are used and therefore less expensive than buying the same item new. Prices in stores (under a few hundred dollars) are fixed. The customer generally does not bargain with the sales clerk. Exceptions to this would be in purchasing directly from a private individual or at a yard/garage sale, buying used books, and buying high-priced items such as a vehicle.

Restrooms

Some American stores will have a restroom for their customers to use. Do not bring unpurchased items into the restrooms.

Store Policies

Every store will have its own policy on returning or exchanging purchased items. However, in order to do any of these things, you must show proof that you bought the items. Therefore, it is important that you do not throw away your receipts. Usually the return policy applies until the 30th day from the purchased date.

Damaged Items

If you accidentally break an unpurchased item while you are in the store, you may be asked to pay for the damage. This is usually the case, but not in every case. Fast food restaurants like Burger King and McDonalds will replace a purchased drink if you drop it before drinking it.

Circulars Advertisements

Some stores will send you their circulars (advertisements, information of weekly sales, and coupons) weekly through the mail. These circulars will inform you of special reduced pricing that week on a wide variety of items and will often include coupons that are used to reduce the cost further.

Items on the Shelves

American stores do not allow their customers to open unpurchased items. Sometimes there will be samples nearby to view or taste.

Give and Take Shop on Campus

Student Life Services, with the help of many volunteers each year, maintains a Give and Take Shop as a ministry to the entire seminary community. Donations of clean clothing, shoes, toys and all sorts of household items are given here, including winter coats, dishes, kitchen utensils and small kitchen appliances. While there are no guarantees that the Give and Take will have everything you need, the shop typically has clothes for the whole family and kitchen utensils. All items in the Give and Take are free.

The shop is located on-campus next to the Eric Rouse Playground near the Bell and Graham apartment buildings.

Weights & Measurements

The U.S. predominantly uses the inch, foot, yard system at this time. To convert centimeters to inches, multiply the number of centimeters by .39. To convert inches to centimeters, multiply the number of inches by 2.54.

Measurement Equivalents

1 Cubit = 18 inches	1 meter = 1.09 yards
1 Yard = .91 meters	1 meter = 39 inches
1 Yard = 91.44 cm	1 meter = 3.28 feet
1 Inch = 25.4 mm	1 Short ton = .9 metric ton
1 Rod = 5.029 m	1 Metric ton = 1.1 short ton
1 foot = 30.48 cm	929 sq cm. = 1 square foot
.6 mile = 1 Kilometer	1 sq. Mile = 2.59 kilometers

Americans use the ounce and pound system. To convert grams to ounces, multiply grams by .353. To convert kilos to pounds, multiply kilos by 2.205.

Weight Equivalents

1000 Grams	= 1 kilo	1 Dry pint	= .5 litre
1 ml	= .03 fl. oz	1 Dry quart	= 1.1 litre
1 kilo	= 2.2 lb.	1 Peck	= 8.8 litre
1 litre	= 2.1 liq. pint	1 US yard	= 1 British yard
1 Fl. oz	= 29.6 ml	1 US pound	= 1 British pound
1 litre	= 1.1 liq. quart	1 US gallon	= .8 British gallons
1 Liq. pint	= .47 litre	1 US bushel	= 9 British bushels
1 Quart	= .94 litre	1 British oz.	= .9 US oz.

Cooking Abbreviations & Equivalents

T	= tablespoon	3 tsp.	= 1 T
tsp.	= teaspoon	8 oz.	= 1 C
C	= cup	3 T	= 1/4 C
oz.	= ounce	2 C	= 1 pt.
lb.	= pound	4 C	= 1 qt
pt.	= pint	4 qt.	= 1 gal.
qt.	= quart	16 oz.	= 1 lb.
gal.	= gallon	2 T	= 1 oz.

American to International Equivalents

1 tsp. = 5 grams or 5 cc	1 T = 15 grams or 15 cc
2 T or 1 oz. = 30 grams or 30 cc	1 deciliter = 6 2/3 T
1 C = 1 1/3 deciliters	1/2 deciliter = 1/4 cup

Academic Requirements, Information, and Resources

All F-1 students must take a full course load per semester in order to maintain status. A full course load at Gordon-Conwell is equal to 7 or more credit hours per semester. (At Gordon-Conwell most classes are three credits each, so this generally means a student needs to take at least three classes per semester to be considered “full time”). Only one Semlink course per semester can count toward full-time status.

Academic Handbook

This is an official document that contains information regarding academic and community life policies and procedures. It is a part of the [Student Handbook](#).

Academic Advisor

Each student is assigned an academic advisor by the Registration Office. The advisor is available for counsel in academic, vocational and spiritual matters. However, each student is responsible for his or her own program of study and for correct registration.

Registration Bulletin Board

The Bulletin board is located in Kerr Building lobby (outside the Mailroom). It provides such information as changes in course offerings, limited enrollment courses, examination schedules, and other pertinent information.

Roles of Professor and Student

American professors expect their students to ask questions and use critical reasoning. Class participation is important. Your respectful silence may be misconstrued as lack of interest. Ask for help if you do not understand something. Professors keep office hours for the purpose of assisting students. It is not thought of negatively to admit confusion. The “social distance” between students and their professors is much less in the United States than in other countries.

Be patient with yourself if English is difficult at first. Graduate school education in a second language is quite a challenge!

Your professor or instructor has wide discretion to make and enforce certain classroom policies relating to attendance, make-up examinations, and other issues. Underpinning this discretion is the strong American tradition of academic freedom.

There are some American student behaviors that you may find surprising or that would be considered disrespectful in your country. For example, students may sit in class with their feet on the chair. They may eat, drink, or even sleep in class! Students may interrupt lectures to ask questions or even to raise objections to what is being said. In general, none of these behaviors necessarily denotes disrespect unless done in a belligerent or aggressive manner. In fact, one way in which an American student shows respect for his or her teacher is by being an active participant in class.

Attendance

Each professor sets class attendance policies, announced at the beginning of the course or included in the course syllabus.

Tips for Academic Success

Regular attendance at all classes and good note-taking skills will help you be a successful student.

- Ask your instructor for clarification if you do not understand. Within reason, ask that important points be repeated if they are presented too fast for you to comprehend or to write down.
- Pay close attention to instructions given at the beginning of the course about how the class will be conducted and how grades will be determined. Expect to receive a “syllabus” for each course. You can find the syllabus ahead of time on Canvas, a learning management system.
- The syllabus outlines the course’s objectives and the material to be covered and lists due dates for assignments, examination dates, texts to be purchased or obtained from the library, and the professor’s name, office location, and office hours. Keep the course syllabus for the duration of the course.

To assist you with reviewing information presented in the classroom, it may be possible for you to record classroom lectures. However, please be sure to ask permission from your professor before recording anything.

Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Such behaviors are inconsistent with the seminary’s stated mission of fostering an “experiential knowledge of God in Christ...evidence in character...[and] conduct” (Art. 4) of the Mission Statement of Gordon-Conwell and with the Community Life Statement renouncing “behaviors such as deception and falsehood.”

Paraphrasing

In your writing, you will be expected to know when and how to “paraphrase” or summarize another writer’s ideas in your own words. If you are not a native English speaker this may seem difficult—even foolhardy—and you may be tempted to quote your sources word for word. Because this practice can lead to a charge of “plagiarism” (see below), it is essential that you acquire the skill of paraphrasing. You will find that if you truly understand the ideas you are dealing with, you will be able to express them clearly. Find an instructor or U.S. student, perhaps a volunteer tutor or conversation partner, who will read your papers, point out passages that are unclear, and help you find phrasing that conveys your meaning. You may have to sacrifice the elegance of the original quotation, but your paper will gain coherence from the effort you put into synthesizing all of the material you use.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism consists of restating someone else's ideas and presenting them as your own without giving credit to the person from whom you got them. If you give credit, even though you restate the ideas in some way, it is allowed. If you do not give credit (by footnotes and/or bibliography entry), you are stealing the ideas.

Taking someone else's actual words and presenting them as your own without giving credits to the person from whom you got them. If you do not give credit (by quotation marks, or indentation and isolation, as well as footnotes and bibliography entry) to show you are borrowing someone's actual words, you are stealing the actual words.

Examples of Plagiarism

Here is an example of restating someone else's ideas and presenting them as your own without giving credit to the person from whom you got them:

Suppose the following appears in the book *The Structure of Thanksgiving Psalm* by C. Arthur Rheinfrank:

The several parts of a thanksgiving hymn in the Psalter are easily remembered by the following initials: IMART, which we use to suggest the elements Introduction, Misery, Appeal, Rescue, and Testimonial, which are the five most important structural elements, given here in their most common order.

Now, suppose you read this and then, wrote the following in a paper:

I believe that the component parts of a thanksgiving hymn in the Psalms may be best remembered by the following initials: IMART, which stand for Introduction, Misery, Appeal, Rescue and Testimonial, the five major elements in their usual order.

At this point, you have committed plagiarism, because you repeated an author's specific idea in your own words, and yet gave no credit to the person you got the idea from.

To avoid plagiarism, your paper would need to read like this:

There is much to comment on the suggestion that the component parts of a thanksgiving hymn in the Psalms may be best remembered by the following initials: IMART, which stand for Introduction, Misery, Appeal, Rescue and Testimonial, the five major elements in their usual order¹

At the bottom of the page or end of the paper, the above sort of footnote, and, in your bibliography the following entry appears:

¹ Rheinfrank, C. Arthur. *The Structure of Thanksgiving Psalms*. Philadelphia: Irving Press, 1974, pp. 178-190

Your Bibliography would then need to include the following entry:

Rheinfrank, C. Arthur. *The Structure of Thanksgiving Psalms*. Philadelphia: Irving Press, 1974.

If you follow this process, you have not committed plagiarism, because you gave credit by a footnote and bibliography entry to the person you got the idea from.

If you take general ideas from a book, but not any specific ideas, you should still list that book in your bibliography, even if you do not cite it in a footnote.

Plagiarism on Exams, Quizzes, Speeches and Other Assignments

If any of these assignments require bibliographies, you can commit plagiarism. If they do not, plagiarism is not a concern except for copying, which is forbidden anyway. If you use someone else's general ideas, you must give credit to the source you got them from by a bibliography entry. If you use someone else's specific ideas, you must give credit to the source you got them from by both a footnote and a bibliography entry. If you use someone else's actual words, you must give credit to the source you got them from in all three of the following ways: by quote marks [or indentation and isolation in the case of a long quote], by a footnote telling the exact page(s) or place you took the words from, and by a bibliography entry.

Recommended Writing Resources

We recommend the following book as a great introduction to academic writing:

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of ...* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 6th ed.

This book can be checked out at the library or bought at a local book store and online.

Cheating

According to the seminary's Student Handbook:

Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially the same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors.

Those who violate the seminary's policy on cheating . . . are subject to one or more of the following penalties: a failing grade for the course; suspension from the seminary; dismissal from the seminary; or revocation of a degree.

Unauthorized Sources of Information

An unauthorized source of information is anything that the course professor does not permit students to use during an exam. This includes, but is not limited to, dictionaries, language grammar books and notes, class notes, study guides, text books, computer programs, Bibles, etc. Unauthorized sources of information also include discussing the exam with students who have the exam before you, and talking to students while taking the exam.

Some professors allow students to use English dictionaries during an exam if English is their second language. If this is permitted, the dictionary must be free of all additional notes and papers.

The best rule to remember: **If in doubt ask!** This means if you have any questions about using any extra materials while taking an exam, ask your professor. It is better to ask before the exam than deal with the possible consequences.

What does the seminary's academic policy mean when it says not to submit the same or substantially the same paper for two or more courses?

If you wrote a paper in Systematic Theology I entitled "John Calvin and the Doctrine of Divine Election," and for a church history course submitted a paper entitled "The Reformation and John Calvin" which included four pages (out of 10) on Calvin's doctrine of election, this could be considered cheating. However, if you had the permission of both professors to combine this work, this may not be considered cheating.

The same rule applies here as above: **If in doubt ask!** Do not be afraid to talk to your professors. Every professor at Gordon-Conwell would much rather answer questions about cheating than suspect students of it.

Public Schools for Children

The Town of Hamilton offers public (state-funded) school for children 4 ½ or 5 years through 18 years of age. Students living on-campus at Gordon-Conwell are permitted to enroll their children in Hamilton schools. School is typically in session the first week in September through the last week in June. There is no cost for enrolling children in public schools.

The best way to receive the most up-to-date procedures for enrolling children in Hamilton-Wenham public schools is to contact each school directly (see below) or visit their website at <https://www.hwschools.net/index.cfm> .

Elementary or middle school aged children

[Hamilton-Wenham School Administration](#) (Center School Building)

5 School Street, Wenham MA 01984
(978) 468-5310

High school aged children

Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School
775 Bay Road, Hamilton, MA 01982
(978) 468-0400

Registering Children for School

To register your children in Hamilton public schools, you will need the following information for each child:

- Proof of Date of Birth (Copy of Birth Certificate, Passport, etc.)
- Proof of local residency (If you live on-campus, the Housing Office can provide you with a letter that verifies this. Otherwise a copy of a local utility bill would be fine.)
- Completed Physical Examination Form (Done within the year of entering school.)
- Proof of immunization (ask the school or see the schools website for details)

Remember, all documents submitted to schools must be translated into English.

Postage Services

As a student at Gordon-Conwell, you will be assigned a seminary **mail box** at which you will receive all types of information from the administration, faculty, staff, other students, and your

regular mail from outside the seminary. You will also be able to access most services of the United States Postal Service.

Mailroom Services On-Campus

The Mailroom on-campus offers students full services access to most mail services, including the ability to receive and send packages and purchase stamps. Your on-campus mail box is located in the Mailroom. Please use your assigned campus mail box as your mailing address. Below is an example:

Write you First (Given) Name and Last Name (Surname)
130 Essex Street, Box (include your assigned box number)
South Hamilton, MA 01982

Your specific housing assignment is your residential address. For further assistance, please contact the housing department. houserep@gordonconwell.edu

If you wish to send packages to the school prior to your arrival, please contact the Mailroom in advance for approval. The Mailroom can be reached at 978-646-4043; Hours: 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. M-F. Packages sent without prior approval may be rejected.

Mail Services Off-campus

The [United States Postal Service \(USPS\)](#) has at least one post office in every U.S. city or town. The mail phone number of the United States Postal Service Phone is 1-800-275-8777.

In the Hamilton area, there are two offices located at the following addresses:

49 Railroad Avenue
South Hamilton, MA 01982
Parking Lot Available

589 Bay Road
Hamilton, MA 01936
Street Parking Available

Most post offices are open weekdays (Monday through Friday) from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Post offices are closed on Sundays and on all national holidays.

Stamps may be purchased at the post office or from vending machines located in some stores and banks. Mail within the United States costs 55 cents for the first ounce. International mail postage varies by country. To send anything other than a letter, a customs slip (available at the post office) must also be filled out and attached to the package.

In addition to the campus mailboxes located by the Mailroom, those students who live in apartments can also receive off-campus mail at a separate mailbox located in the entry way to the apartment in which they live. This mail is delivered once a day, Monday through Saturday. All addresses in the U.S. are assigned a 5-digit zip code number according to the state, city, and sometimes even to individual areas within a city. Incorrect or missing zip codes will delay mail delivery. Call your local post office for information on zip codes, or check with the mailroom on-campus.

International Travel

Many F-1 students and F-2 dependents travel internationally during their time at Gordon-Conwell, usually back to their home country, for vacation (e.g. Canada), or for missions work. While international travel is permitted for F-1 students and F-2 dependents, there are expectations and restrictions that must be followed to avoid travel delays and violations of the F-1 visa restrictions. Domestic travel within the U.S. is permitted. However, we always recommend you bring your passport, current I-20 form(s), and proof of enrollment at Gordon-Conwell with you to avoid travel delays and any unnecessary confusion about your identity and/or reason for being in the U.S. No DSO (Designated School Official, international student advisor) endorsement is required for domestic travel.

Before You Travel Outside the U.S.

There are several steps you must take before travelling outside the U.S.

1. Review the requirements and restrictions for the country which you plan to visit.
2. Verify all your important documents are current and not expired, including passport, visa, and I-20.
3. Make three sets of copies of all your important documents for both you and your dependents (even if some dependents are U.S. citizens).
 - a. Include copies of all identity pages of your passport, such as your picture, birth date, F-1 visa, and I-94 card.
 - b. Leave one set of copies at home, one in your carry-on luggage, one in your checked baggage.
 - c. Verify that your DSO has current copies of your passport, F-1 visa, and I-94 card.
4. Meet with your DSO to have your most current I-20 form(s) signed, including I-20s for any dependents traveling with you.
 - a. DSO will endorse your I-20 for travel by signing the bottom of page 3.
 - b. Please meet with your DSO during office hours, allowing as much as three days for processing.
5. Meet with the Registration Office to receive a "Proof of Enrollment" letter. This letter will help you prove your enrollment at Gordon-Conwell should a border officer,

embassy/consulate official, or any other official request proof you are an F-1 student in the U.S.

6. Bring all official documents used to receive an I-20 with you as you attempt to re-enter the U.S., including your passport and any/all church or family support letters, bank statements, and/or financial aid forms. Financial documents must not be greater than six months old.

Leaving the United States

Every country has its own rules with regard to who can enter their country, under what restrictions, and for how long. Typically, as an F-1 student, you can enter your own country of citizenship if you hold a valid passport issued by that country with little or no problem. Before entering a country other than your own country of citizenship, however, we advise that you check the embassy of that country to learn about their specific entry rules.

Travel Restrictions

Though travel is permissible for F-1 students and F-2 dependents, there are restrictions that must be followed. For instance, F1 student with an application pending with the USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) for change of status or post-completion OPT (Optional Practical Training) should not travel outside the U.S. while the application is still pending. Travel during this time is considered an abandonment of the application. This restriction includes F-1 students currently in the 60-day grace period after the completion of a program (indicated on line 5 of your I-20) or students in the process of adding a second degree. In these instances, under no circumstances will you be permitted to travel outside the U.S. Attempting to re-enter the U.S during the 60-day grace period automatically terminates the F-1 visa and the student would not be permitted to re-enter. The implications of this rule can be very severe, causing delays in students' course of study if violated. This restriction includes travel to Mexico and Canada.

Transfer students must exercise careful consideration with regard to travel during the period between enrollment at both Gordon-Conwell and their respective transfer institution. Thus, you must pay attention to the start and end dates listed on your I-20 to avoid complication when attempting to re-enter the U.S., and consult your DSO at both schools to ensure you have a valid, properly endorsed I-20.

Re-entering the U.S.

To reenter the U.S. after a temporary absence (e.g. travel abroad), you need the following:

1. Valid passport
2. Valid I-20 endorsed by your DSO (i.e. signed on the back page)

3. Valid visa
4. Current financial statements, as required to create your I-20 (suggested, not required)
5. Letter from the Registration Office indicating enrollment as a current student signed by your DSO during the current academic session

When you attempt to re-enter the U.S, you will be required to speak with border officials and/or immigration officers. Remember, remain calm, speak clearly, and most importantly, have all required documents with you. Remind the official (if necessary) that you are a student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts and that you currently hold a valid F-1 visa for study at that school. If needed, the official can contact Gordon-Conwell for verification of any needed information, or review your current I-20 available to them in SEVIS.

5 Month Absence Rule

While travel is permitted, you are not permitted to leave the U.S. for longer than five months and maintain a valid F-1 visa status. U.S. Immigration law refers to this as “The 5 Month Rule.” Under this law, absence for a period of more than five months outside the U.S is considered beyond the permitted temporary absence allowance, thus terminating an F-1 (and F-2 visa) status. This means if you are **absent from the United States for more than 5 months, you will no longer possess a valid I-20** and will need to request a new I-20 to return to Gordon-Conwell (or reenter on a new school’s I-20 if the intent is to attend a school other than Gordon-Conwell upon return to the United States). The implications of this rule can be very severe, causing delays in students’ course of study if violated. Gordon-Conwell is required by law to maintain strict adherence to this rule.

Entry into the U.S. Without a Valid I-20 or DSO Signature

Occasionally, a returning F-1 student arrives back in the U.S. with a deficient I-20, the most common occurrences being that the I-20 lacks a travel signature from the DSO or the student forgets the I-20 altogether. There are many things that could happen in this instance. The Immigration Officer could deny entry and you would be required to return home. If the Immigration Officer does not deny entry, he or she could instead call the school to request a faxed copy of the I-20 or verbal confirmation over the phone of your status. This process usually causes serious travel delays, sometimes as long as two days depending on where you travel and whether Gordon-Conwell administrative offices are open. The Officer may also issue you a one-page notice and write on the I-94 Departure Record card that you are admitted not for the usual “duration of status” (D/S) but for only one month.

If you receive such a notice, you must apply to correct the deficiency as soon as possible once you return to school. If you do not take care of this before the end date on your new I-94, there are severe consequences. For instance, if you overstay beyond the D/S by even a day you will

automatically become “[unlawfully present](#)” in the U.S. and thus, permanently ineligible to apply for a U.S. entry visa anywhere except in your home country. Anyone who overstays and remains “unlawfully present” for six months and then leaves the U.S. is barred from returning to the U.S. for three years. Unlawful presence for a full year means a bar of ten years.

Immigration Resources

Your DSO at Gordon-Conwell is available to help you understand the guidelines and restrictions of U.S. Immigration Law and F-1 student visas. However, in certain circumstances, we recommend students pursue other resources for U.S. immigrants, as needed. Students may wish to consult other resources in any (but not all) of the following cases:

- Detailed questions and/or concerns about immigration law and/or F-1 student restrictions
- Questions about or applications for alternate visas (e.g. J-1, R-1)
- Questions about applications for Green Cards
- Legal troubles

While Gordon-Conwell does keep a list of immigration lawyers for student’s reference, it is your responsibility to seek legal counsel and to pay any necessary fees or charges that may accrue for accessing such services. See your DSO for a list of immigration lawyers and/or further resources than those listed below.

USCIS Boston Office

Students may contact USCIS’ Boston office. You may reach USCIS-Boston at the following address:

[Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#)

Location: Boston District Office
USCIS Boston District Office (Room E-160)
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
15 New Sudbury St.
Boston, MA 02203

Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

This office is not accepting walk-in requests or scheduling InfoPass appointments.

Directions to USCIS-Boston

By Car: Take Route 93 South to the Government Center exit in downtown Boston. Parking is available at the Government Center parking garage for a fee.

By Subway: Take the Orange, Blue, or Green Lines to Haymarket Station

Remember to always bring your passport, I-20, and Massachusetts identification with you. You must schedule an appointment on the USCIS website via [INFOPASS](#) to visit the office and to speak with an Immigration Information Officer.

Helpful Websites for International Students

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration: www.uscis.gov
- Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov
- Study in the States: <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students>
- Social Security Administration: www.ssa.gov
- Internal Revenue Service: www.irs.gov
- Visa Law: www.visalaw.com
- Currency Converter: <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>
- Student Guide for Studying in the U.S.: www.edupass.com

Practical Training (CPT and OPT)

Practical training is a right for every F-1 student who lawfully maintains status. Practical training allows students to gain valuable, hands-on experience in an internship or another employment opportunity before or after they have completed their studies at Gordon-Conwell.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

F-1 students may be eligible for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), which is an authorized way to gain valuable work experience required as an integral component of your program of study. This may include mentored ministry, internships, student teaching, and other practical experiences relevant to your academic program. However, please remember that students completing mentored ministry are not required to do so through CPT; CPT is only an option if desired. Only pursue CPT if you plan to be paid for your work during mentored ministry. Also, please know that this option is subject to your DSO's approval.

Eligibility for CPT

Students must be currently enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one academic year (as required for maintaining the F-1 visa) before pursuing CPT. CPT is only available before the completion of the student's degree, and not after. Any work pursued after completion will be considered post-completion optional practical training.

Criteria for Pursuing CPT

CPT can only be authorized if the training is necessary for the student's intended course of study. This means students who wish to work off-campus in another capacity other than employment relevant to the student's degree program may not pursue CPT.

If you are pursuing CPT in your last semester of study, you must be enrolled in at least one other course in addition to CPT, unless the CPT course is the degree-required course. This determination will be made by your DSO and is subject to DSO approval.

Part-Time/Full-Time CPT

Part-Time Training: CPT authorized on a part-time basis is limited to no more than 20 hours per week. If eligible, there is no limitation on the length of time you may participate in part-time curricular practical training, provided you continue to maintain lawful F-1 status.

Full-Time Training: CPT may only be authorized on a full-time basis during official seminary breaks and vacations. Student during their last semester of study may also be authorized for full-time CPT if also authorized for Reduced Course Load by the DSO. Full-time CPT allows the student to work more than 20 hours per week and there is no limitation to the length of time you may participate in full-time CPT. However, if you participate in 12 months or more of full-time CPT, you will not be eligible for post-completion optional practical training (OPT).

Application and Documentation Requirements

To apply for CPT, bring the following documents with you to your DSO (Designated School Official, international student advisor):

1. Official offer letter on church/company letterhead signed by your supervisor. This offer letter should include the employer's name, address, dates of employment, and any other information relevant to your application.
2. Proof of registration for CPT course, if you are earning academic credit for the training. This letter must be received from the Registration Office.
3. Copies of your passport, I-94 card, and I-20.

Authorization Procedures

You may engage in CPT only after you have received the I-20 with your CPT authorization from your DSO. This work authorization is valid only for the specific employer, location, time period and on a part-time or full-time basis as approved and recorded by your DSO as evidenced on your I-20 issued for CPT. You may not continue employment beyond the date authorized unless you apply and are granted an extension of your permission to work from your DSO.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary permission to work in the U.S in order to gain additional knowledge about your field of study. OPT employment outside your field of study, or employment not commensurate with your degree level, is prohibited. Like CPT, OPT requires the approval of your DSO. However, OPT also requires an authorization card from USCIS (called an EAD card). Students must apply for the EAD card through USCIS by submitting a form I-765 and other supporting documentation, including an updated I-20 indicating the period(s) of authorized OPT.

When to Pursue OPT

Students may pursue OPT during:

- Full-time or part-time during vacation periods
- Part-time (20 hours/week max) during spring or fall semester along with full-time enrollment in classes
- Full-time or part-time after completing all formal class requirements
- Full-time (not part-time) after completion of your study program.

F-1 students are eligible for a total of twelve months of OPT per educational level.

Criteria for Pursing OPT

OPT provides an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge obtained in an academic program to a practical work experience in the U.S. This employment opportunity must be directly related to your major field of study. Eligible students may apply for "pre-completion OPT" (before completion of program) and/or "post-completion OPT" (after completion of program).

Students do not need a job offer in order to apply for OPT. However, OPT requires the student to have authorization from USCIS before beginning employment. This authorization can take up to 3 months to obtain. Students recommended for OPT will receive a new I-20 with an OPT recommendation notation on page 3. This new I-20 must be included in the formal application packet sent to USCIS.

When to apply for OPT

USCIS typically requires students file the I-765 no later than the student's program end date, and it is not specified how soon before the program end date the application can be filed. Under the new rule, however, a student will be able to file his or her I-765 up to 90 days prior to his or her program end date, and up to 60 days after his or her program end date. The student must submit the I-765 package to USCIS within 30 days of the DSO requesting the OPT.

Length of Time for Pursuing OPT

Employment authorization is usually given for up to one year. The start and end date of authorization is listed on the EAD (Employment Authorization Document) card issued by USCIS.

How to Apply for Pre/Post Completion Optional Practical Training

When you meet, your DSO will explain all the procedures and rules for applying for OPT. Your DSO will help you select your OPT dates, make copies of the documents for your OPT application packet, and submit request for a new I-20 with an "OPT Authorization Request" in SEVIS.

After you Apply for OPT

Once your packet is mailed, USCIS will send you a Form I-797 *Notice of Action* indicating that they have received your application and that your case will be decided on within 5 months. **DO NOT LOSE THIS FORM!** This form will probably come to you in approximately two or three weeks after you submit your application, though you may hear back before that time. It will also have a tracking number for your application, which will look something like "EAC-11-222-3333." You may check the status of your application online at www.USCIS.gov with this tracking number. Look for the case status online link and enter the EAC# in the appropriate field.

Receiving the Employment Authorization Document Card (or EAD)

If your application is approved, USCIS will send your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card to the address provided on your I-765. Bring this card to your DSO so that copies can be made and included in your file. If USCIS has a question regarding your application before approval, they will send you a "Request for Evidence." We recommend contacting your DSO before taking any further action so that we may advise you on how best to respond.

Application Processing Times

Processing times can take quite a long time, sometimes as long as five months. OPT applications **cannot** be expedited either. Current average processing times for applications are always listed on the <http://www.uscis.gov/> web site under the Vermont Service Center (VSC). This link may be helpful to you in knowing how long the VSC is taking to process I-765/OPT applications. The earlier you file your OPT application, the shorter the processing time. USCIS tend to experience a high volume of application toward the summer and end of year. Due to the number of applications they receive during these times, please plan accordingly and if possible, apply early.

Taxes

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for no more than five different calendar years are exempt from Social Security Taxes. You should, however, be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws.

Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply, including federal, state, and local taxes. For more information on taxes, please consult with a tax professional and/or Publication 519 of the Internal Revenue Service (<http://www.irs.gov/>).

Failure to Comply with F-1 Visa Regulations

It is your responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations that apply to F-1 students before, during, and after any periods of OPT. Employment regulations pertaining to F-1 visas and OPT are very strict.

Often students who apply for OPT late may not receive their EAD until after their proposed employment start date indicated on their offer letter or I-20. Please know that working without the proper authorization, including your EAD card, is a serious violation of your F-1 visa status. Do not start working before you have received your EAD card. In some cases, you may need to make alternate arrangements with your employer to adhere to this rule.

If you fail to comply with your F-1 visa regulations, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students; and in most cases, you may jeopardize your stay in the U.S.

Places to Visit on the North Shore of Boston

Gordon-Conwell is located near Boston, Massachusetts in an area commonly referred to as the North Shore. The North Shore is infamous for its rocky coastlines, quaint villages and small towns, great seafood, and historic sites. Marblehead, Salem, Essex, Ipswich, Newburyport,

Swampscott, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Beverly, Cape Ann - these places glow with the aura of old New England. The base of commercial seafaring in the 18th and 19th centuries, the North Shore still boasts living testimony to this historic period. Restored wharves, sea captain's mansions, maritime museums, artist colonies, and some of the East Coast's prettiest stretches of beach dot the landscape. As you spend time at Gordon-Conwell, you will want to take advantage of these unique opportunities.

- **BEVERLY:** The birthplace of the American navy, Beverly was first settled in 1626 as an extension of Salem. Named by Roger Conant in 1668 after a town in Yorkshire, England, it includes the "Gold Coast" communities of Beverly Farms and Prides Crossing.
 - **ANCIENT BURIAL GROUND** (ca 1671) 15 Abbot Street--Rev. and Mrs. John Hale and residents accused of witchcraft are buried here.
 - **BALCH HOUSE**, 448 Cabot Street--Built in 1636, considered the oldest wood frame house in the U.S. Here David Balch was "tormented by witches" and died.
 - **JOHN CABOT HOUSE**, 117 Cabot Street--Federal mansion (ca. 1781) of wealthy merchant and privateer. Headquarters of Beverly Historical Society and Museum, including period rooms, costumes, maritime, military and children's collections.
 - **JOHN HALE HOUSE**, 39 Hale Street--Built by Beverly's first minister (1694), whose testimony led to the hanging of Bridget Bishop as a witch. After his wife was accused of witchcraft, Rev. Hale helped end the hysteria.
- **DANVERS:** Originally Salem Village, it was here that the witchcraft furor began in 1692. Incorporated in 1757, Danvers has many fine buildings of historical and architectural significance.
 - **GLEN MAGNA**--Ingersoll Street off Center Street--Summer mansion of Peabody and Endicott families. 18th century teahouse by Samuel McIntire and formal gardens grace the 140 acre estate.
- **ESSEX:** Settled in 1634, famous for its 300-year tradition of shipbuilding and clam harvesting. More ships were built in Essex than any other town in the world. Essex was originally part of Ipswich, having been purchased from the Agawam Indians for \$100. One of Paul Revere's last bells is in the First Congregational Church. Essex is also famous for its antiquities, with over 60 shops located on or around the Main Street.
 - **CRANE WILDLIFE REFUGE**, Essex Bay-753 acre reservation, five islands and surrounding salt marsh. Woodlands, fields, historic buildings, visitor center.
 - **ESSEX SHIPBUILDING MUSEUM**, 28 Main Street--Shipbuilding exhibits/video, models, photographs, plans, tools. Hands-on auguring, caulking, lifting lines. Shop featuring works of local artisans.
- **GLOUCESTER:** Samuel de Champlain anchored in Gloucester Harbor in 1604 and christened it "Le Beauport". Settled in 1623, Gloucester and the lives of her citizens have depended upon the sea for over three centuries. Many of her early fishing vessels served as war vessels during the American Revolution. Fishing is still Gloucester's top industry,

and the fleet a colorful site in a harbor bustling with sightseeing cruises, whale-watching and deep sea fishing excursions.

- **CAPE ANN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**, 27 Pleasant Street--Historic house (ca. 1804), largest collection of painting and drawings by Fitz Hugh Lane, antique furniture and silver, fisheries room, art exhibitions.
- **FISHERMAN STATUE**, Stacey Blvd.--Symbol of Gloucester, facing the harbor. The "Man at the Wheel" was commissioned by Gloucester's citizens in 1923, in celebration of the seaport's 300th anniversary.
- **HAMMOND CASTLE MUSEUM**, 80 Hesperus Avenue--Medieval castle home of Dr. John Hays Hammonds, Jr., America's second greatest inventor next to Thomas Edison, housing his unique collection of Roman, Medieval and Renaissance artifacts. Guided tours, educational programs, concerts, etc.
- **HAMILTON**: Settled in 1638 and named after Alexander Hamilton. In 1787, the first covered wagon going west left from here. The late General George Patton, Jr. is a native son. Now the center of North Shore horse country, Hamilton is home to Myopia Hunt Club with its famed polo fields.
 - **MYOPIA HUNT CLUB, BAY ROAD**--Enjoy polo matches and stylish tailgate parties every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m.
- **IPSWICH**: Settled in 1630, it was here that the question of taxation without representation was first raised. The "Birthplace of American Independence" also boasts more 17th-century structures than any other community in America. Over 40 homes still resided in today were built before 1725. No visit is complete without a plate of its famed Ipswich clams.
 - **CASTLE HILL**, Argilla Road--59-room English Stuart-style mansion built for Richard T. Crane, Jr. in 1927. Formal gardens and magnificent views.
 - **CRANE BEACH**, Argilla Road--1,400 acres with over 5 miles of white sandy beach and dunes.
 - **JOHN HEARD HOUSE**, 40 S. Main Street--Built in 1795, this China Trade mansion has Chinese and early American furnishings, restored carriage collection.
 - **JOHN WHIPPLE HOUSE**, 53 S. Main Street--Built c. 1640, home of the Ipswich Historical Society. Excellent example of 17th-century architecture, in Whipple family for almost 200 years.
- **MANCHESTER**: Picturesque Manchester-by-the-Sea was incorporated in 1645. This fashionable village has a yacht-filled harbor and is famous for its Singing Beach, where the sand make musical sounds under one's footsteps.
 - **HESPERUS POINT**--Beautiful scenic drive past Manchester's most beautiful mansions. Take Masconomo Road and loop around the point and the yacht-filled harbor.
 - **SINGING BEACH**--At the end of Beach Street you will find beautiful Singing Beach. Be prepared to walk, as parking can be a problem.

- **TRASK HOUSE**, 10 Union Street--Home of 19th century sea-captain Richard Trask, with period furniture, china and costume collections. Location of Manchester Historical Society.
- **MARBLEHEAD**: America's "Yachting Capital" was originally a fishing community, settled by Cornwall fishermen in 1629. Protected by an ocean-cooled peninsula, Marblehead's scenic harbor is a photographer's delight. Hidden among the winding streets of quaint Old Town are interesting historic sites, excellent restaurants, fascinating shops and antique collections.
 - **ABBOT HALL**, Washington Square--Victorian town hall (1876), location of famous "Spirit of '76" painting and original 1684 deed.
 - **JEREMIAH LEE MANSION**, 161 Washington Street-- Impressive Georgian home built in 1768, headquarters of Marblehead Historical Society. Period furniture, Marblehead history, painting, fishing tools and other items.
 - **MARBLEHEAD NECK**--View of beautiful seacoast mansions and summer homes, and climb Castle Rock with its lovely views of Boston.
- **NEWBURYPORT**: Birthplace of the U.S. Coast Guard, the "Clipper City" was founded in 1630 at the mouth of the Merrimack River by wealthy ship owners and sea captains who carried its name to remote corners of the world. Many of their homes on High Street, a parade of some of the greatest Federalist architecture in the country, may be visited on individual tours. Rich in the lore of the sea and restored to its original grandeur, historic Newburyport has a wide variety of specialty shops and fine eating establishments.
 - **CUSHING HOUSE**, 98 High Street--Home of the Historical Society of Old Newbury, this Federal brick manse (1808) has 21 beautifully furnished rooms and outstanding collections. Carriage house and French garden.
 - **CUSTOM HOUSE MARITIME MUSEUM**, 25 Water Street--Permanent displays in 1835 Greek Revival Custom House include maritime history exhibits, models, tools, paintings, local decorative arts, exotic items from China Trade.
 - **OLD SOUTH CHURCH**, Federal Street--Built in 1756, it has a famous gallery plus a bell cast by Paul Revere. Evangelist George Whitfield is buried here. During Newburyport's maritime glory, the church boasted a sea captain in every pew.
 - **PUBLIC LIBRARY**, 94 Sate Street--Nathaniel Tracy's brick mansion played host to George Washington and Marquis de Lafayette. It became a library in 1865.
- **ROCKPORT**: Located on the northern tip of beautiful Cape Ann, Rockport was a sleepy fishing village until it was "discovered" by artists shortly after the Civil War. Some of the nation's most prominent artists have lived or visited here. The town got its name from its granite quarries, which one chipped building stones all over the world.
 - **BEARSKIN NECK AND MOTIF #1**, off Dock Square---Bearskin Neck is a popular art center and shopper's paradise, with many small and fascinating shops carrying a great variety of wares. Also here is motif #1, the fisherman's shanty overlooking Rockport Harbor that is a favorite subject for artists and photographers.

- **HALIBUT POINT STATE PARK AND RESERVATION**, Rt. 127 to Gott Ave.--Cape Ann's northernmost point. A rocky headland with outstanding views of Ipswich Bay, granite quarries and information center.
- **SANDY BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM**, 40 King Street--A museum of local history with Early American granite and fishing exhibits, costumes, toys, paintings, decorative arts, library.
- **SALEM**--Settled in 1626, historic Salem is noted for the 1692 witchcraft hysteria, its maritime tradition and the architectural splendor of its McIntire Era Federal homes. Salem frigates opened the Far East trade routes and provided the wealth which produced America's first millionaires. Among its native sons are author Nathaniel Hawthorne, navigator Nathaniel Bowditch and architect Samuel McIntire.
 - **ESSEX INSTITUTE MUSEUM NEIGHBORHOOD**, 132 Essex Street--Visitors can explore 350 years of history in one city block. Includes a museum with remarkable collections of historical objects, toys, clocks, costumes and period rooms; three period houses dating from 1684 to 1804; restored gardens; and a research library.
 - **HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES** (1668), 54 Turner Street--Inspiration for Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous novel. Also on the grounds are Hathaway House (1682), Beckett House (1655), and period gardens.
 - **PEABODY MUSEUM OF SALEM**, East India Square--North Shore's largest museum, with nationally renowned collections in maritime history. Asian Export Art, ethnology, natural history.
 - **SALEM MARITIME HISTORIC SITE**, Derby Street--Nine acres along Salem's scenic waterfront, with historic 18th and 19th century structures from Salem's peak years as an international seaport. Includes Custom House (1819), Derby Wharf (1760), Derby House (1762), Bonded Warehouse (1819), Scale House (1826), West India Goods Store (1800).
 - **WITCH HOUSE** (1642), 310 Essex Street--restored home of Jonathan Corwin, judge of the witchcraft court. Preliminary examinations of persons accused of witchcraft were held here.
- **TOPSFIELD**: One part of town was settled in 1615. It has outstanding examples of 17th century architecture and its Village Green is one of New England's loveliest.
- **WENHAM**: Settled in 1635 as part of the vast Salem Plantation, Wenham is now an elegant residential area with beautiful rolling fields, giant elms, rows of maples and stone walls. During the 19th century, ice from Wenham Lake was shipped around the world and was a favorite of royalty, including Queen Victoria of England.
- **BOSTON**: Some highlights include Hancock Tower, The Freedom Trail, Beacon Hill, Haymarket Square, The Aquarium, Harvard Square, Fenway Park, The Museum of Science, The Museum of Fine Arts, The Children's Museum, Lexington and Concord, etc.

For more information: please use the [Out and About](#)