



# Universidad Veracruzana



*School for Foreign Students*

## **International Guide for Mobility Exchange Students**

Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico

# UNIVERSIDAD VERACRUZANA

## SCHOOL FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS



Remember: The best experience is the one you could have during your stay. We wish you good luck!

### **Enjoy yourself!**

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## INTRODUCTION



Congratulations!! If you are reading this handbook it is because you are getting the opportunity to study in Mexico.

This handbook will help you with important issues including:

- Preparing for departure.
- Packing.
- Traveling to Xalapa.
- Arrival.
- Life in Xalapa.
- Academic and social life.
- The importance of the International Student Office.
- Cultural adjustment.

## WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY



Founded in 1944, the Universidad Veracruzana is considered one of the leading state universities in Mexico. With five branches in the state of Veracruz, it has 75 professional schools that offer 20 graduate programs and 22 research institutes in addition to the full spectrum of undergraduate curricular offerings.

Students can study law, engineering, science, business, economics, politics, medicine and the humanities, including anthropology, archaeology, history, languages, and literature. The University has over 58,000 students in fourteen cities throughout the state.

The central campus is located in Xalapa, with a student population of over 20,000. This campus has extensive sports facilities, including a stadium with a track and an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Workshops in dance, graphic arts, and theater are available through the university as well as through a variety of other cultural institutions. The university supports the Xalapa Symphony Orchestra, the Folkloric Ballet, the Theater,

and the Popular Music Orchestra. The faculty and administration at the Universidad Veracruzana are clearly committed to providing an excellent education for their students. Facilities are well-maintained.

### International Student Office at the Escuela para Estudiantes Extranjeros (EEE)

The International Student Office is in charge of the mutual student exchange programs agreed upon between Universidad Veracruzana and institutions abroad. The office works in collaboration with the academic bodies of the different Universidad Veracruzana regional campuses for the recruitment and selection of students.

### Support Services

Through the Academic Coordination and the Services Coordination at the International Student Office, students are given advice and support regarding courses and programs of study, extracurricular activities, lodging, health services, medical attention, information on immigration procedures, and university services in general. Upon registration, the students receive a university identification card that

entitles them to university's information and computer services.

### Extracurricular Activities

Arts, folklore workshops, and field trips are organized throughout the year to help students appreciate and enjoy Mexican culture and traditions. Local outings, visits to market places, shops, and family factories, as well as salsa dancing and craft lessons add fun to the student's academic stay.

The International Student Office offers students two free courses:

- One language course.
- One course in an academic discipline.

As an option to the courses mentioned above, you can take courses in your academic discipline, doing so with the respective faculty of the Universidad Veracruzana. This will be without extra charge.

## PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

### Student Visa



For academic stays longer than three months, international

students are required to obtain a student visa (FM3). This visa can be requested at the nearest consulate in the student's country by presenting the Acceptance Letter sent to the student by the School for Foreign Students -Universidad Veracruzana.

The Acceptance Letter will be provided upon request once the student has fulfilled admission requirements and paid the tuition for the courses. The Acceptance Letter will include only the period requested and covered by the fees sent to the school.

Since this process will take a long time, we suggest students start at least two months before the departure date. Students that cannot make arrangements early enough to obtain the FM3 can enter Mexico with a tourist card (FMT), then make the exchange of status to a student visa at the Migration Office in Xalapa.

The Student Services Coordination is available to assist with this process.

If you would like to get more information about Mexican embassies and consulates, you can access the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores web page:

<http://www.sre.gob.mx/delegaciones/default.htm> .

For more information about the process of obtaining a visa and for the directory of Mexican consulates in the United States, consult the Mexican Embassy web page:

<http://www.embassyofmexico.org>

The migration process is the responsibility of each student.

### Admission Requirements



- Application form.
- Course selection form.
- Home stay application form (Optional).
- 3 ID size photographs.
- Registration fee.
- Recent transcript (if accreditation is required).
- Letter written by Director of Study Abroad or equivalent ( if the Universidad Veracruzana study is part of a program of studies in country of origin) .
- Certificate of good health (medical form signed by your physician).
- Copy of passport and visa.

## Accreditation



Accreditation can be extended only to those students who present proof of having completed pre-university studies and who fulfill course requirements, including mid-term and final evaluations.

In the case of students whose home university has no formal agreement with the School for Foreign Students, it becomes the student's personal responsibility to secure clearance from the home institution assuring that the credits granted from our program will be accepted.

## Registration



Admission documents and registration fee should be sent at least one month prior the Semester Program. Applications will be considered in the order in which they are received. Fully registered students will receive an ID card which will identify them as students at the Universidad Veracruzana enabling them to use university facilities and services.

## Changing, adding, or dropping a course.



At the School for Foreign Students you will have two weeks to make your final course selection. You can change, add, or drop a course during the first two weeks. After that time, you will not be able to make changes.

## Medical Care



The University does not offer medical insurance. Therefore, foreign students should make sure that they have their own policies before leaving home. If you have some serious medical condition, please inform the Student Services Coordinator so that she can be prepared to assist you if the need arises. If you use medication on a regular basis, be sure to bring enough to last the entire length of your stay. It may be difficult to find a suitable replacement.

Universidad Veracruzana does have a service that will provide ordinary medical care. There is a fee for this service . Upon arrival contact the Student Services Coordination Office.

The Student Services Coordination Office has a directory of Doctors (general practitioners and specialists), who are available for students.

## Transportation to Xalapa



First class bus lines from Mexico City to Xalapa include UNO and ADO. They charge \$18.00 and \$13.00 USD respectively.

Buses leave from the eastern terminal (TAPO /Terminal de Autobuses de Pasajeros de Oriente) and the trip takes approximately five hours.

If you wish to shorten the bus trip to Xalapa, you may prefer to change planes in Mexico City and fly to the Veracruz International Airport.

If you decide to spend a night in the city of Veracruz, check the internet for hotels. We can recommend the Hotel Emporio and Hotel Colonial. They are located in the center of the city. The Hotel Emporio's telephone number is (52) 2932-7915. The Hotel Colonial's telephone number is (52)2932-2465.

The best transportation from Veracruz to Xalapa is the ADO/GL line. Tickets cost about \$4.00. Buses leave from the ADO bus terminal. The trip takes approximately one hour and a half.

There is now a flight from Mexico city to Xalapa. The trip takes approximately 20 minutes and you will be arriving in El Lencero, a small town just 10 minutes driving from Xalapa. Taxi service is available at El Lencero airport.

## Home Stay Program



The School for Foreign Students has a directory of hospitable families who provide housing for international students. You will be assigned a shared room and bath, with ample space to study and carry out your class assignments.

The host family will provide three meals a day, the cost of which is included in the housing fee. If you have special dietary needs, arrangements can be made to accommodate them at a small extra cost.

Home Stay is the only housing option which is under direct supervision of the School for

Foreign Students. If you are interested in any other type of accommodation such as apartments, boarding houses, and hotels, please contact the Student Services Coordination Office.

### Apartments

In Xalapa you will find both furnished and unfurnished apartments. Rents may vary due to location, size, and quality. It is the responsibility of the student to make all the arrangements for the rental of the apartment. Coordination of Services has information on apartments in the city and you can also receive advice in this office about the contract and the process you have to follow. This housing option is not coordinated or supervised by the EEE. This is why the student must make all the necessary arrangements with the indicated persons. The rental, approximately, of an apartment can vary between \$150.00 USD and \$450.00 USD monthly.

### Hotels

If you will stay for a short time or your family or friends will visit you, Xalapa has many hotels that can easily adjust to your preferences

and budget. To get information about visit the web page.

<http://www.xalapa.gob.mx/n/servicios/hoteles.html>

The cost approximately per night is:

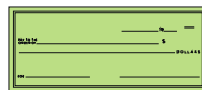
Two star	\$ 6.00 USD
Three star	\$15.00 USD
Four star	\$30.00 USD
Five star	\$65.00 USD

### Money Matters



When traveling abroad you have to be sure of the best process for exchanging currency and keeping your money safe.

### Traveler checks.



A safe way of bringing money is to use traveler checks. However many stores will not accept traveler checks and you may find them hard to exchange for Mexican pesos.

### Cards



Another way to get money while living in Mexico is with credit and debit cards. We recommend both, especially the ATM debit card.

With the ATM debit card you can get cash at any time at almost any bank and it costs usually \$1 USD per withdrawal. The new ATM debit cards can be used in gas stations, grocery stores or restaurants, or even over the phone, just like a credit card. Some also function as a phone card.

The exchange rate with all credit cards and debit cards is very good. Using them makes it unnecessary to carry large sums of cash. Do not carry more cash than necessary. Xalapa is a safe city but like all cities there is some risk.

We recommend a neck money pouch for the cash you do carry.

We also recommend that you keep a copy of your credit card or ATM debit card in the event it is lost or stolen. This is also true for your passport and student visa.

It is best to keep your valuables at home where they will be safe.

## PACKING



Here are some tips on what luggage you should bring and some useful information to consider for your days at the Universidad Veracruzana:

- The airline limitation on baggage is two bags per person and each must weight no more than 32 kilograms (70 pounds each).
- We recommend you label your bags so that you can recognize them upon arrival at the airport.
- Be sure to bring your passport, as well as a Xerox copy of it.
- Keep your travel documents in a safe place and ready to show at the airport and customs. We recommend that you make a Xerox copy of all your travel documents.
- Bring with you the equivalent of \$300.00 USD in cash for taxis, food and hotels.
- Bring addresses and phone numbers of important places and people, and a Spanish - English dictionary.
- Do not forget to pack important medicines and copies of your prescriptions (including a prescription for your eyeglasses).
- Bring one formal outfit for special events. Jacket and tie for men or skirt or dress for women.

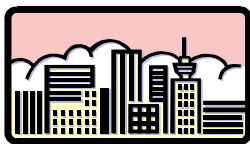
- The weather in Xalapa can be very rainy so bring an umbrella and a windbreaker. Sweaters would be a good idea as well.
- We suggest you bring little gifts typical of your country, some pictures of you and your town, and even music that you like. In this way you can show Mexicans a little bit of your culture.

## ARRIVAL



If the airline company has lost your luggage or if you missed a connection you should ask for help from the airline agents. They will help you to find your luggage or find the next flight for you.

## LIFE IN XALAPA.



Welcome to Veracruz. Xalapa is the capital of the state. It is located in the southeastern part of Veracruz. Xalapa in nahuatl '*Xalli Apan*' means *water running on sand*. This city is 1,200 meters altitude above sea level. You will enjoy a warm climate during most of the year.

Here in Xalapa you will find out that it is very easy to move around the city, it has efficient means of transportation like, taxis, mini-vans and bus service. All of them are very easy to identify and to use.

What about the shopping? You can find everything you need in Xalapa, from personal items to American restaurants. And remember most things are inexpensive in Xalapa.



There are two housing options. Those are: living alone or with friends in an apartment or staying with a family. You choose and notify the International Student Office before your departure. Thus your living quarters will be ready when you arrive.

Phone service and e-mail cafes, will enable you to stay in touch with family and friends at home. E-mail cafes are plentiful and inexpensive.

Social activities are very diversified. You can go to discotheques and clubs with live music. For peace and quiet, you can hike and cycle in the forest hills which surround Xalapa.

## Academic Life



Academic life in Mexico may be very different. If you study only in the E.E.E. you will find that it is not the same as if you studied in regular courses at the university.

To begin with, the school year is longer than in other institutions. It generally runs from late August or early September through late May or early June, while in regular courses it is through late June or early July. In both places, a list of subjects are provided, but remember that you will not chose the teacher nor the time of meeting since they are already arranged.

The Universidad Veracruzana's policy is that attendance is required in 80% of the classes. Sometimes, even deadlines can change. Respect for the teacher and classmates is important.

Classes are mostly lecture. You will be studying with 20 people at the most, so you won't have large classes.

Generally, you will have a text book or an "antología" which is a collection of chapters from

different books. Discussion is very important. Do not expect to receive a syllabus for each class, but rather a program with the description of the course contents. Be prepared to ask the teacher for the assignments in advance.

Quizzes, tests, exams, and homework vary from one department to another. While in some classes there are pop quizzes, others just have two exams: the midterm and the final. Most of the time the exams are comprehensive, but there are also some teachers that divide the course into small units that have an exam.

The grading system is also different. It is based in a 0-10 point-scale where from 0 to 5.99 is failing and from 6 to 10 is passing. You can put this scale into percentages so that you can figure it out.

Qualification	Value
10	Excellent
9	Very Good
8	Good
7	Average
6	Pass
5 (and below)	Fail

## Social Life



In the E.E.E. there is a program called "Cultural Immersion Program". You can find there the

Tutorial Immersion Program that is offered by students from different departments of the university. They can introduce you to the social life of the city. They are usually students that have already worked with other international students and can help you with both your Spanish and cultural adjustment.

If you don't request such programs, you don't need to worry. Xalapa is characterized for its kind population. People always welcome foreigners and help them. You won't find yourself alone. There are also clubs or sport teams that you can belong to.

Also, consider that when people say "Hi" or "How are you?" they often want to talk. Be polite and respond.

Be aware of the differences you'll find in culture. Remember, you will be living in a different culture. If you understand these differences your adjustment will be easier and you will make new friends more quickly.

## CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

### Food

Mexican food is delicious, with a great variety. It is also spicy. Be adventuresome! Try new foods!

Breakfast is between 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. and it can include tortillas and beans. Lunch is between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. It includes soup or pasta, rice, beef, vegetables, and beans. Dinner is between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. and it tends to be a light meal.

Eating with your family is an amazing opportunity to integrate yourself into Mexican culture and to improve your Spanish. Most of the time during meals the family talks about their activities or plans. This involves all the members of the family. Meals can be a little longer than you are accustomed to. This additional time is called "sobremesa" and the translation would be "overtable". Conversation is part of the dinner.

If your Mexican family does not get tired offering you more and more to eat it is because that is Mexican hospitality. Do not think it is impolite. On the contrary, consider yourself lucky to have that family.

If you do not want anymore to eat,  
tell them in a polite way.

## Time

The conception of time in Mexico can be different from the one you are used to. Here people are more flexible about time and in most cases you will have to wait a while. We can only say: be patient, tolerant and flexible. Patience is part of life in Mexico.