



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY  
IN QATAR

# Guide to Life in Qatar

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*The Guide is intended to provide an informal and preliminary orientation to life in Doha, Qatar. The Guide does not supersede the terms and conditions outlined in any faculty or staff appointment letter and it is offered solely for informational purposes.*

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# Introduction

This guide has been prepared for current and prospective faculty and staff of Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q). It is accurate as of June 27, 2016. Updates will be added as they become available. We thank Carnegie Mellon University and Texas A&M University for sharing their manuals as resources and for allowing us to borrow liberally from their publications. Information about Qatar also came from various sources, including the websites of the [U.S. Department of State](#), the [CIA World Factbook](#), the [Qatar Foundation](#), the [Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics](#), and the [Qatar Embassy](#).

Faculty and staff members working in or considering a move to Qatar are urged to read this information carefully. Although it cannot answer every question you may have, it should help guide you through the preparation for and transition to Northwestern University in Qatar.

**NU-Q Human Resources in Doha and the Qatar Support Office (QSO) in Evanston endeavor to be the primary resources for new NU-Q faculty and staff.**

This manual consists of five sections:

**Learning about Qatar:** Provides information about the State of Qatar, Education City, Qatar Foundation, and cultural differences.

**Before You Go:** Discusses preparations employees should make in advance of traveling to Qatar and what to expect on a pre-employment trip.

**Settling in:** Provides information about the immigration process and about living in Qatar, including medical care, dependents' education, and housing.

**Northwestern Employment Policies:** Describes policies specific to Northwestern University in Qatar.

**Life in Qatar:** Provides information about driving in Qatar, the legal system, prohibited activities, safety and security, useful resources, common Arabic words and suggestions for dealing with culture shock.

The information in this guide is subject to revision.

# Learning about Qatar

## Location

Qatar (officially the State of Qatar) is an Arab emirate occupying a small section of the larger Arabian Peninsula. Except for its southern border with Saudi Arabia, it is surrounded by the Arabian Gulf (or Persian Gulf). The capital city, Doha, is located in the mid-eastern region of the peninsula.

## Geographic Features and Climate

Spanning 4,473 square miles (11,586 square kilometers), Qatar is slightly smaller than Connecticut. The land is mostly flat and rocky with some hills and sand dunes.

The climate is mild in winter and hot and humid in summer. Temperatures range from 57 degrees Fahrenheit (14 degrees Celsius) in January to over 112 degrees Fahrenheit (44 degrees Celsius) in summer with high humidity. Rainfall is minimal, averaging just over three inches a year. The weather is generally pleasant from October until May.

## People

According to the Qatar 2012 census, the population is 1,732,717. The current estimate is 2,123,160. Only about 20 percent of the population is Qatari, mostly Sunni Muslims. Other significant populations include non-Qatari Arab (20 percent), Indian (18 percent), and Pakistani (18 percent). Nepali (12 percent), Iranian (10 percent) Filipino (10 percent), Bangladeshi (8 percent), and Sri Lankan (7 percent). Figures are approximate.

Although Arabic is the official language of Qatar, English is widely spoken.

## Capital City

Doha, located in the Ad Dawhah municipality on the Persian Gulf, is the capital and largest city in Qatar. Including its surrounding areas, Doha is home to more than 80 percent Qatar's population.

## Government

Qatar gained independence from the United Kingdom on September 3, 1971, and established a constitutional monarchy. The right to rule is passed on within the Al-Thani family, whose rule began almost two centuries ago. The head of state is a princely leader known as the emir. The current emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, assumed rule on June 25, 2013.

## Economy

The discovery of oil in Qatar in 1939 and its commercial exportation beginning in 1949 were turning points in Qatar's development. The flow of oil revenues made possible better standards of living, health care, and education, and has led to a thirtyfold increase in population since the 1950s (largely as a result of expatriates).

Oil production, which accounts for about 62 percent of total government revenue, was estimated at 1.213 million barrels per day in 2009. At the current production rate, oil reserves are predicted to last more than 40 years.

Qatar shares with Iran the largest gas field (the North Field) in the world. Currently the world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas, Qatar provided approximately one-third of the world's supply by 2010.

Qatar has experienced substantial economic growth in recent decades. The gross domestic product, currently about \$202.45 billion, has grown at an average annual rate of about 10 percent since 2009. Qatar's per-capita GDP is \$93,352.

The official currency is the Qatari riyal (abbreviated "QR"), which is divided into 100 dirhams. A fixed exchange rate was established in July 2001 of USD 1 = QR 3.64.

## **Religion**

Islam is the official religion, and Islamic jurisprudence is the basis for the legal system. Civil courts, however, have jurisdiction over commercial law.

Ninety percent of Qataris are Sunni Muslims, and the remaining 10 percent are Shi'a Muslims. Sunni Islam is the foundation of Qatar's government and laws. Most citizens follow Hanbali Madhhab, one of four schools of Islamic thought.

All visitors and residents are expected to show sensitivity to Islamic culture. For more information, see the sections on "Arab Culture and Customs" and "Life in Qatar."

## **Military**

Qatar maintains a military force of approximately 12,000 (army, navy, and air force) and a public security force of about 8,000 (coast guard, firefighters, marine police, etc.). It maintains defense pacts with the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

## **Communication**

Until recently, Qatar Telecom (Ooredoo) was the sole local telecommunications service provider. Ooredoo offers services for domestic and international calling, mobile devices, internet, and cable television. For information, please visit Ooredoo's [website](#). A second license was granted to Vodafone, which began providing service to Qatar in March 2009. More information on Vodafone can be found on their [website](#).

## **Media**

There are three English-language daily newspapers in Qatar with print and online editions: [Gulf Times](#), [The Peninsula](#), and [Qatar Tribune](#). Cable television is available with a wide array of stations in multiple languages. Several English news television stations are available on cable

TV, including [Al Jazeera English](#), BBC, CNN International, Times Now, CNBC Europe, FOX News and CCTV.

## **Electricity**

Electricity in Qatar has a voltage of 240V, and an electrical frequency of 50Hz. Most U.S. electronic equipment uses 110V/60Hz. US appliances generally require a heavy-duty transformer. Plug configurations are type G with three rectangular blades in a triangular pattern (also used in the United Kingdom). Sophisticated electronics such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets typically operate on local current without the use of a transformer.

## **Qatar Foundation and Education City**

The Qatar Foundation (QF) for Education, Science, and Community Development is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the father emir, and chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Missned, his consort. Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, Research and Community Development, was established to continue fulfilling QF's vision of "unlocking human potential."

The Qatar Foundation is headquartered in Education City, a 2,500-acre campus in Doha. HBKU will offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs in affiliation with its partner universities: Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Weill Cornell Medical College, Texas A&M University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, HEC Paris, and University College London. Other projects include the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies; Qatar Science and Technology Park; Sidra Medical and Research Center, Al Jazeera Children's Channel; Al Shaqab Equestrian Academy, and a state-of-the-art Qatar National Convention Center.

For more information about Education City and Qatar Foundation, please visit [www.qf.edu.qa](http://www.qf.edu.qa).

## **Arab Culture and Customs**

### **Islamic Religious Practices**

Due in part to its Islamic foundations, the culture of Qatar is in many ways significantly different from that of the United States. In the Arabic language, "Islam" derives from a word meaning "peace" and simply means "submission" — thus, in a religious context, complete submission to the will of God. "Muslim" — a follower of Islam — comes from the same root word. Although Islam tends to be associated primarily with the Middle East, Arab Muslims comprise only a minority of the world's Muslim population.

Muslims believe that God (Allah) sent 124,000 Messengers or Prophets to all peoples of the world; events most notably preserved before the establishment of Islam by the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitab*): the Jews and the Christians. Muhammad is believed to be the last, or "seal," of a long line of Prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. From 610

AD until his death 632 AD, Muhammad memorized and collected his revelations in a book called the Quran, literally “the recitation.”

Islamic practices, beliefs, and spirituality are summarized in a popular narration from the Prophet Muhammad:

“Submission (*al-islam*) means that you should bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God’s messenger, that you should perform the ritual prayer (five times daily), pay the alms tax, fast during Ramadan, and make the pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House (Mecca) if you are able to go there.

“Faith (*al-iman*) means that you have faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and that you have faith in the Divine Decree, both its good and its evil.

“Spiritual excellence (*al-ihsan*) means that you worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you.”

The religion is most easily understood as the practice of “five pillars of Islam” (testimony, prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage), the belief in several articles of faith (oneness of God, revelation, the afterlife, and destiny), and the cultivated awareness of the omnipresence of God. Other practical aspects of Muslim daily life include frequenting centers of Islamic learning, attending the Friday congregational prayer in the mosque, and dressing modestly. This latter principle applies to both men and women, but most noticeably includes the widespread encouragement for women to cover their hair. Gulf women sometimes veil their faces, although the relationship of this practice to Islam is often disputed.

The Muslim year is comprised of twelve lunar months. The Muslim calendar begins with the Gregorian calendar year 622 CE, when Mohammed and his followers left Mecca and went to live in Medina. This event is called the Hijra (migration). Since the Muslim calendar has 354 days in twelve lunar months, the Muslim year begins eleven days earlier than it began in the prior year of the solar calendar.

Ramadan al-Mubarak (or “the Blessed”), the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is singled out for acts of worship and fasting. The first verses of the Qur’an were revealed to Muhammad during Ramadan, when the Prophet was meditating in solitude in a cave near Mecca.

The name Ramadan is derived from the Arabic word *ramida* or *ar-ramad*, denoting intense, scorching heat and dryness, especially of the ground. Some say it is so called because Ramadan scorches out the sins with good deeds, just as the sun burns the ground. From the same word there are *ramdaa* (“sun-baked sand”) and the famous proverb “Kal Mustajeer minar ramadaa binnar” (to jump out of the frying pan into the fire).

During the four weeks of Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink, and smoking and practicing abstinence in all other respects. Ramadan also calls for extra prayers and meditation, coupled with increased tolerance towards others. Only the sick, the infirm, nursing mothers, pregnant women, children, and travelers are exempt from fasting.

Muslims who do not fast for one reason or another still tend to show self-restraint and modify their habits in private and in public.

Ramadan is also a month of charity and compassion. Alms are given to the poor, and relatives and friends are entertained into the early hours of the morning. Special food and sweetmeats are prepared for breaking the fast each evening (*iftar*).

The US Embassy issues the following information for expatriates concerning local customs during the month of Ramadan:

- Muslims are required to fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan. As such, it is illegal in Qatar to eat, drink (even water), or smoke in public during fasting hours, i.e., approximately 5:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Approximate times for sunrise and sunset will be announced in local newspapers.

If Muslims are present in the workplace, they expect non-Muslims to respect their fasting and not eat, drink, chew gum or smoke in front of them, even in motor vehicles, or to prepare food that they can smell or see. As it is illegal to serve food or drink during fasting hours, restaurants will be closed during daylight hours, with the exception of a few hotel restaurants that serve non-Muslims only.

Restaurants will begin serving food at sundown, but expect them to be crowded, especially during Iftar, the first meal immediately after sunset. If you are in a hotel, and they do not serve a meal at a time you require, you will find that room service is normally available or that the dining room will have an isolated area where non-Muslims are served.

- While modest dress and respectful behavior between the sexes (even between married couples) are normal social customs in Qatar, this is particularly so during Ramadan.
- Shops and markets are open in the morning, often closed in the afternoon, but open again for a few hours after sunset. Shops and stores will have extended hours into the late evening and early morning to accommodate Ramadan hours of operation.
- If possible, please avoid driving in the hour immediately before sunset. One should be extra alert at this time, as many Muslims will be rushing to family members' or friends' homes, or to restaurants to break their fast. Many accidents occur at this time, some very serious.

Ramadan as a spiritual exercise in endurance and self-discipline imposes considerable strain on those who fast, especially in the hotter weather. Those not required to fast can reciprocate the degree of tolerance shown to non-nationals by understanding the importance of this religious occasion and its social and religious implications.

## Dress

National dress for both men and women is a tradition that many Qataris respect and seek to preserve. Nevertheless, visitors to Qatar will observe a variety of practices in covering and dress. The national dress for men is a *thobe*, a long white shirt over loose pants. Men also wear a white or red cloth headdress called a *ghutra*, held in place with a black rope known as the *agal*. Qatari women usually cover their heads with a black scarf called a *shayla* and their bodies with a long black dress called an *abaya*. The *abaya* is not necessarily black, although black has been customary for a number of years.

Expatriates are free to wear what they consider appropriate within the society and its customs. They are expected to remain sensitive to the Islamic culture and not dress in a revealing or provocative manner. Men generally wear long pants in public.

While sleeveless shirts are generally inappropriate, men may wear shorts in certain situations. Women's attire should cover shoulders and knees — shorts, short skirts, tight jeans, and sundresses are considered inappropriate, although casual dress is becoming increasingly flexible. These recommendations do not apply within housing compounds and private gated communities, or at hotel swimming pools or the beach. Discretion is nevertheless always recommended.

## Business Customs

Arabs do not customarily rush into business discussions. Conversations typically begin slowly with exchanges or greetings, transitioning to business only after refreshments have been served. It is common for conversations to be interspersed with periods of silence, which Arabs do not consider to be uncomfortable. It is generally impolite to refuse an offer of food or drink; allow it at least to be served. Arab coffee or sweetened tea is served at almost every meeting, and it is polite to drink at least one of the small cups. Holding the cup out with the right hand when it has been finished will lead to its being refilled. Holding the cup out and gentle shake will lead to it being taken away.

## Social Customs

Arabs are hospitable and courteous. Although some of their social conventions are rather elaborate, Arabs generally are not offended by a social mistake stemming from ignorance.

Most Qataris adhere to the relatively strict Sunni observation of Islam, which affects not only the locals but also other Qatar residents.

Muslim men invited to social events generally do not bring their spouses unless they are familiar with Western life or extremely close to the hosts. Similarly, invitations from Muslim men to non-Muslim men do not include spouses unless specifically mentioned. Nevertheless, female spouses are frequently welcomed separately from their husbands to the homes of Muslim women. Couples are not generally invited to the homes of Muslim women.

Meals are likely to be served at a table in the Western manner. You may, however, have occasion to attend a traditional meal served on a large mat on the floor. Only the right hand is used when

eating with one's fingers or when offering a guest food, drink, or cigarettes. The left hand is reserved for bodily hygiene.

Arab hosts may pile excessive amounts of food on your plate. It is not considered impolite to leave a large part of the meal unconsumed and is in most cases advisable; to consume everything would imply that the host did not offer enough.

As a sign of respect, avoid showing the soles of your feet to Qatari hosts or sitting with your back to other guests. When seated, avoid showing the sole of your shoes, which is considered discourteous.

## Gender Relations

In Qatar, close friends of the same gender often touch faces on greeting, link arms, or hold hands while walking together.

Public display of affection between males and females (including teenagers) is not permitted and is considered offensive. Individuals may be detained and prosecuted for actions considered offensive and detrimental to Qatari culture and values. The penalty for entertaining visitors of the opposite sex in one's hotel room can be severe.

Handshaking between opposite genders is generally viewed unfavorably. Whether in a business or a social context, do not extend your hand to a local of the opposite gender unless he or she extends it first. A useful rule is: same sex, definitely shake hands, even embrace; opposite sex, do not shake hands.

Watch for separate entrances, counters, and even separate buildings, for men and women. Most banks and utilities have counters for women. Men may never enter women's salons or spas.

Men should avoid actions that might suggest a sexual interest in a Muslim woman. Events interpreted in such a way can bring dishonor to the woman and to her family. Men should also avoid speaking to Qatari women, unless they have a business connection or are addressed first.

## Liquor and Pork

The importation of liquor and pork, including duty-free items, is prohibited. While expatriates are permitted to purchase, possess, and consume alcohol and pork in Qatar, they should do so without drawing attention. Drinking in public, public intoxication, and drunk driving can result in severe fines and a harsh prison sentence. Qatar adheres to a "zero tolerance" policy in regards to alcohol consumption while driving.

Liquor is served in many Qatar hotels, except during Ramadan. Residents of Qatar may purchase alcohol and pork at the Qatar Distribution Company upon presentation of an alcohol permit. For information on obtaining the permit, consult the "Settling In" section of this guide.

## Photography

Always ask permission before photographing local people. Never take photographs near industrial plants, the border, the airport, or military or government installations, including the Emir's palace and official buildings.

# Before You Go

## Pre-employment Trip

Final candidates for qualified NU-Q positions are eligible for a pre-employment visit to Qatar. The visit is intended to provide finalists the opportunity to visit the NU-Q campus, meet colleagues, and get a sense of life in Qatar.

The Qatar Support Office in Evanston and NU-Q HR coordinate air and hotel arrangements for the pre-employment trip. NU-Q pays for reasonable airfare and accommodations, and provides a per diem for meals and incidentals. The candidate is responsible for any souvenir or gift purchases. Spouses are eligible to join finalist candidates on pre-employment visits with airfare and accommodations covered by NU-Q. School age children are also eligible to join the pre-employment visit if the following criteria are met:

1. At least three applications for schools in Qatar have been submitted per child
2. An assessment/test is required by at least one of the schools

Finalists should allow five days for their pre-employment trip (including travel days). During the visit, the finalist will meet with the NU-Q Human Resources staff. NU-Q HR arranges an airport arrival greeting and provides transportation to your hotel. HR will coordinate the pre-employment schedule with the hiring manager and arrange a Doha city tour, tax meeting with an international tax firm (for US citizens and permanent residents), NU-Q housing tour, dependent schooling tour (if applicable) and a lunch meeting to review living in Qatar, immigration, benefits, and allowances.

## Onboarding

### Offer Letter

An offer letter is a contract that states the terms of employment with Northwestern University in Qatar. Before receiving an official offer letter, HR or the hiring manager will provide the preferred candidate with information concerning the benefits and allowances associated with the position. Offer letters are generally preceded by a discussion concerning position title, start date, end date, type of assignment, annual pay rate, and pay schedule.

### Travel Arrangements for Relocation to Qatar

The Qatar Support Office in Evanston arranges airfare for people currently residing in the U.S. taking positions in Qatar. The Qatar Support Office is pleased to receive requests regarding preferred airline, preferred routing, preferred dates for travel, etc. Nonetheless, the Support Office always seeks the best fares and may not be able to accommodate such requests. It is important that persons taking positions in Qatar contact the Support Office in advance of the intended departure for Doha so that airline tickets may be purchased and other necessary processes initiated. Employee airfare to Qatar from countries other than the U.S. will be arranged NU-Q HR.

## Payroll Administration

Effective with the start of your assignment, you will be placed on a monthly payroll. The U.S. and Qatar pay date is currently at the end of the month for all employees. U.S. citizens must submit an updated W-4 Form to NU-Q Human Resources prior to the payroll deadline date of the first month of their assignment. Both new and current employees may be required to complete other important forms. For details regarding direct deposit to US and Qatar banks, change of address information and instructions on discontinuing existing payroll deductions, please visit: [www.northwestern.edu/hr/payroll/qatar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/payroll/qatar.html) or contact NU-Q HR. NU-Q will only deposit money into a U.S. or Qatar bank account. If you do not have a U.S. bank account, NU-Q HR will assist you with opening a Qatar bank account.

## Compensation

Salary administration for Northwestern staff and faculty assigned to Qatar follows the general guidelines and procedures of the home campus. Employees are eligible for annual merit increases to their base salary based on the supervisor's evaluation of job performance and salary increase guidelines.

## Benefits

NU-Q offers two medical insurance plans from which to choose: CIGNA International and QLM International (known as "Qatar Health" in FASIS – see below).

Material regarding CIGNA coverage, premiums, and plan benefits can be found at [www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits). New employees who have activated their Northwestern NetID enroll in coverage online through NU Faculty and Staff Information System (FASIS). Employees hired from NU's Evanston or Chicago campuses must complete a benefits change form in order to enroll. Please contact NU-Q HR for assistance.

Detailed descriptions of CIGNA and QLM coverage can be found in the "Health and Other Benefits" section of this guide.

## Taxes

During your pre-employment visit and/or following your arrival in Doha, NU-Q Human Resources may set up meetings with a representative from the international tax firm engaged by NU-Q and Qatar Foundation to discuss the tax ramifications of working in Qatar. The firm helps prepare tax returns for Northwestern employees in Qatar and assists in tax planning.

While on assignment in Qatar, those Northwestern faculty and staff who are U.S. taxpayers are covered by NU-Q policy. Qatar does not have an income tax, but U.S. (or Green Card Holder) employees based in Qatar are still subject to U.S. taxes. Tax preparation assistance for both you and the University will be provided at no cost to you by an international tax firm selected by Qatar Foundation. The firm will prepare your individual tax return as a service provided to you at the expense of Qatar Foundation. A representative of this firm will meet with you at the beginning of your Qatar Assignment to help you estimate your tax obligations based on your particular salary and allowances. You may be eligible to receive an additional allowance to

offset the excess in cost. The amount of the allowance will be calculated annually and you will receive a separate communication from the tax firm representative through NU-Q HR.

## **Relocation**

### **Documents to Prepare**

A number of important documents are required in connection with relocating to Qatar. Given the great importance of these documents, the Qatar Support Office in Evanston in most cases defers making relocation travel arrangements until the required materials have been submitted and processed. Notarization and legalization of the employee's original highest degree and the documentation associated with an FBI or Police Clearance take at least several weeks to complete.

The following documents listed below are needed to process your Residence Permit (RP), Qatari driver's license, Qatari identity card, and other Qatari-issued documents. As soon as all required documents are received in the Qatar Support Office, certified copies are forwarded to the NU-Q Human Resources Office in Qatar, which uses them to begin the initial phase of immigration processing. You are expected to bring original documents or copies with you to Qatar. Immediately upon accepting a position at NU-Q, you should assemble and provide the Qatar Support Office with the following:

- A copy of the first two pages of your passport — the pages with personal information and the signature — and those of all family members (Qatari immigration law requires that passports be valid for a six-month period following your arrival in Qatar. The passport must also have blank pages available for a visa.)
- Copies of birth certificates for all children under the age of 18
- A copy of your marriage certificate or license, if applicable
- A copy and the original of your diploma from the educational institution from which you obtained your highest degree – this will need to be attested/notarized by the university as well as the State Department/Ministry and the Qatar Embassy. A letter is also required from the school registrar stating that none of the courses taken towards your degree are online courses. The original diploma is for the Qatar Embassy attestation portion of this process
- FBI fingerprints or Police Clearance is required as part of your immigration process – this document must be attested/notarized by the State Department/Ministry and the Qatar Embassy before the immigration process can begin
- Blood-type information for all family members on a physician-issued statement – not mandatory to bring with you – can be completed in Qatar

### **Household Shipment**

Northwestern contracts with a relocation service to transport personal belongings of eligible employees from the United States to Doha by air. Insurance to cover the full replacement value of items damaged or lost during shipment is the responsibility of the employee.

The Qatar Support Office in Evanston coordinates arrangements with air freight contractor. It is essential that you contact the Support Office at least one month before your relocation to Qatar to arrange for packing and shipping.

Since the housing provided by NU-Q is furnished, furniture does not need to be shipped. The established allowances do not provide for the shipment of furniture or other large household items.

Many of the consumer goods one expects to find in the U.S. are also readily available (generally at around the same cost) in Qatar. However, some items are less readily found in Qatar.

*The following list, though by no means definitive, includes items that employees may wish to bring to Qatar and that may be difficult to obtain locally.*

- Gloves, hat, and snow gear (for cold-weather vacationing)
- Thorough medical histories for all family members, charting any ongoing or chronic conditions
- A supply of prescription pain killers, muscle relaxants, antidepressants, and/or sedatives (such medications are given for a maximum of one month at a time). **Restricted medication or medication that can cause addiction are dispensed for a 10 to 30 day period.**

*Transport all prescription drugs in carry-on luggage, in appropriate marked bottles.*

- Decongestants with the active ingredient dextromethorphan, such as Robitussin, Actifed is available in Qatar
- Replacement heads for electric toothbrushes, or replacement components for other devices.
- An international driver's license (see "Driving in Qatar" in this guide)
- Polarized, full-coverage sunglasses
- A router for Vonage (Internet phone service)
- All warranty information on electronics and appliances

## FBI Background Clearance

The State of Qatar requires potential residents to provide a criminal background clearance from their country of origin as part of the residency application process. U.S. passport holders can meet this requirement by completing the Federal Bureau of Investigation Identification Record Request (see <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/identity-history-summary-checks> for more information). Non-U.S passport holders will need to secure a Police Clearance from the country of the passport that they hold.

In order to complete the FBI clearance, new hires and adult family members must undergo fingerprinting, which can typically be done at a local police station for a nominal fee. The fee is reimbursable by NU-Q. For those located near Evanston, IL, the [Northwestern University Police Department](#) provides complimentary fingerprinting services.

The QSO uses an FBI-approved service (“channeler”) to expedite the background check process for U.S. Passport holders. The process can take up to three weeks. New hires are strongly encouraged to begin this process upon accepting an offer of employment with NU-Q. Both the FBI document and the Police Clearance (from countries other than the United States) need to attested/notarized by the relevant State Department/Ministry and the Qatar Embassy. Allow additional weeks for attestation and notarization, especially during Ramadan.

## Degree Legalization

All expatriate faculty and staff who completed their degree in the United States must have their degree legalized by the U.S. Department of State and the Qatar Embassy, or one of the Qatar Consulates (locations in Houston, Los Angeles, and New York). The location of the institution from which the new hire received his or her highest degree determines the Embassy or Consular jurisdiction. NU-Q’s guidance to new hires is based upon the prevailing requirements in the relevant jurisdiction. Each location maintains different criteria for legalizing degrees conferred in the United States.

The QSO contracts with the consular services firm to ensure proper and expedient handling of documents throughout the legalization process. Transactions necessary to legalize an academic credential for use in Qatar typically take at least four weeks. The QSO recommends starting the degree legalization process immediately after a faculty or staff member has accepted NU-Q’s offer of employment. Spouses of NU-Q new hires who wish to seek employment in Qatar may also complete the degree legalization process with QSO assistance.

Faculty and staff who completed their degree in a country other than the United States will undergo a different legalization process.

For guidance on the legalization process specific to your degree, please contact the QSO.

## Photos for Immigration Process

NU-Q HR will take you for your photographs. Photographs are needed for many processes and applications in Qatar, and extra photos are kept in your HR file for your personal use.

# Settling In

## Your First Few Days in Doha

New employees are welcomed at the airport by a Doha-based meet-and-greet service called Al-Maha Services. On arrival, do not follow fellow passengers into the standard immigration lines. Instead, proceed to the Al-Maha office located down a corridor to the right-hand side of the immigration desks. Present your passport and visa at Al-Maha's main desk. An Al-Maha staffer will guide you through baggage claim and customs, and escort you to meet your Q-Buddy. Your Q-Buddy will take you to your new home.

NU-Q Human Resources provides transportation vouchers for travel to campus, sightseeing, and shopping. Once these vouchers have been exhausted, your transportation allowance helps cover transportation costs. Most NU-Q housing accommodations have a shared shuttle service to and from work, at no charge to the employee. During your onboarding orientation with NU-Q HR the shuttle schedule is provided.

## Immigration Process

NU-Q Human Resources works with the Qatar Foundation to help employees acquire residence permits and other required official documents.

### Residence permit

The immigration process begins several weeks or months before your departure for Qatar. Required documents (see "Documents to Prepare" above) must be received in a timely manner.

As soon as the NU-Q Human Resources Office in Doha receives the necessary materials, HR's Government Relations Manager will work with the Qatar Foundation and the government of Qatar to secure your permanent entry visa.

Further steps described below are completed after your relocation to Qatar. When these steps have been completed and government approval has been granted — a process that takes 8 to 12 weeks — your entry visa is upgraded to a residence permit and a government stamp is placed in your passport signifying that you are a recognized resident. The residence permit is typically

valid for a period of one to three years.

Dependents receive residence permits under the sponsorship of the employee. Dependents will receive their residence permits only after the employee has completed and received his/her residence permit.

## Medical Appointment

A chest X-ray checking for tuberculosis and a blood test for HIV antibody, hepatitis B, C and illegal drug use are required for residence permits. You must be tested at a government facility in Qatar. Tests completed outside of Qatar are not accepted. If any test comes back positive or inconclusive, the person is sent to Hamad Medical Hospital (Qatar State Hospital) for further testing. Based on your medical test results, the State of Qatar reserves the right to not issue a residency permit.

NU-Q Human Resources arranges the tests at a medical facility and provides transportation and an escort to the appointment, which can take from two to three hours.

You should wear a white shirt for the X-ray or you will be asked to change into a hospital gown.

Women should dress conservatively when visiting any government facility. Dresses or skirts extending below the knee and tops with half or full sleeves are recommended.

Children under the age of eight are not required to undergo medical testing. As this policy is subject to change, please contact the NU-Q Human Resources Office for the latest information.

## Fingerprinting

You must also be fingerprinted for the residence permit, requiring a second appointment at a different location. This takes place approximately one week after you have successfully passed the medical portion of the immigration process. NU-Q Human Resources Office prepares the paperwork, schedules the appointment, and will accompany you to the fingerprinting appointment. Prints of each finger and a full hand are taken.

## Exit Permits

Employees require an exit permit to leave Qatar. Female spouses of employees and dependents may leave at will, and do not require an exit permit.

An exit permit will not be issued until your residence permit has been granted — a process that takes 8 to 10 weeks. Once the multiple-exit permit is issued, you may leave Qatar at will. In the case of an emergency, the employee may leave without completing the residency process. (Please note, however, that in such cases the residency process will start over from the

beginning.) Each QF sponsored employee is issued a multiple-exit permit that is valid for one year. The exit permit is renewed through the Human Resources Office in Qatar.

When a female employee sponsors her husband, the husband requires a separate multiple-exit permit.

Residence permit holders who leave Qatar for a period of more than six months must apply for re-entry permission through the Qatar Foundation. Applications for re-entry must be submitted at least one month prior to returning to Qatar.

Temporary employees do not routinely receive exit permits. If a temporary employee needs to travel outside of Qatar during the course of his or her employment, he or she must contact Human Resources Office in Qatar at least five working days in advance of travel to request an exit visa.

### Qatar Identification Cards

Once the residence permit process is complete, your Qatar ID will be issued. NU-Q HR will ask if you would like to have “E-Gate access” on your Qatar ID. Such access is recommended, as it helps employees avoid long immigration lines at the airport.

The employee pays for the E-Gate access; a two-year E-Gate costs around \$55. This amount is subject to change.

Dependents under the age of 16 do not receive Qatari identification cards. Thus children under the age of 16 may not use E-Gate access.

### Government Health Card

A residence permit entitles you to apply for a Qatar Health Card or HMC (Hamad Medical Corporation) card, which may be used at one of the many government-run inpatient or outpatient facilities. NU-Q HR will apply for the HMC card once your residence permit is complete.

Documents required prior to applying for your card:

- a completed Health Card form
- two photos meeting local specifications
- copies of your passport and residence permit
- a certificate of blood type

### Alcohol Permit

You may apply for a temporary alcohol permit prior to receiving your residence permit. In order to apply, you must request a letter from the NU-Q Human Resources Office stating your salary, a refundable deposit of QR 1,000 (\$275) and a completed permit application (supplied by HR).

Submit all to the Qatar Distribution Company (open Saturday 10:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; Sunday–Thursday, 8 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; closed Friday; phone: 4469-9412, 4469-9413, or 4468-7547).

The Qatar Distribution Company accepts major credit cards. Alcohol and pork purchases must be transported in a private vehicle and must be taken directly from the Qatar Distribution Company to your residence. Alcohol and pork purchases may not be given as gifts or resold.

In the weeks prior to Ramadan, hours at the Qatar Distribution Company are extended. The Qatar Distribution Company is closed for the entire month of Ramadan.

## Import Permits for Pets

Pets entering Qatar require an import permit from the Ministry of Agriculture. Cats with proper documentation are generally allowed to enter with no difficulty. Some breeds of dogs, especially larger ones, are not admitted or may require additional permits.

To arrange for assistance with the import of a pet, contact:

Qatar Pet Relocators  
[www.qatarpetrelocators.com](http://www.qatarpetrelocators.com)  
[contact@qatarpetrelocators.com](mailto:contact@qatarpetrelocators.com)  
Phone: +001 974 5528-6335  
Fax: +001 974 4466-7127

## Housing

NU-Q provides furnished housing to qualified employees. Housing is allocated on the basis of family size, availability of housing, and seniority of the employee's position. A modest start-up supply of linens, cleaning supplies, iron, ironing board, kitchenware, and food staples is provided in each residence upon the employee's arrival.

## Schooling for Dependents

Northwestern University in Qatar covers the cost of dependent tuition for children age four through 12th grade in Qatar. This benefit applies to full-time NU-Q employees. The NU-Q Human Resources Office acts as a liaison between the family and the school during the application and enrollment process. ***Space for school-age dependents of NU-Q faculty and staff in Doha schools is extremely limited. Please keep in mind that employment at NU-Q does not guarantee the admission of dependent children to any school.***

Although places in Doha schools are generally not assigned until May, it is essential to begin the school application process as early as possible due to the shortage of school vacancies. In order for your child to attend school in Qatar, you must present a number of documents such as a birth certificate, passport, immunization records, the previous year's school transcripts, counselor letter, and a health evaluation. Each school is different and you are encouraged to visit their websites to review requirements. NU-Q Human Resources Office will be more than happy to

assist you and be your focal point in Qatar. It is recommended that you apply to at least three schools per child. All application and assessment fees are reimbursable.

The following list of schools is not intended to be inclusive. For further options please consult NU-Q HR and check the web, *Marhaba* magazine, Ooredoo's yellow pages, ads in newspapers, or ask a friend for a recommendation. Some of the most popular options among Education City faculty and staff are the American School of Doha, Sherborne Qatar, Doha College, Doha English Speaking School, Compass International School, and Qatar Academy. Qatar schools may be toured on a pre-employment trip. There is no implied approval of the schools listed here.

**American School of Doha**

P.O. Box 22090  
Doha, Qatar  
[www.asd.edu.qa](http://www.asd.edu.qa)  
[info@asd.edu.qa](mailto:info@asd.edu.qa)  
Phone: +974 4442-1377  
Fax: +974 4442-0885

**Doha English Speaking School**

P.O. Box 766  
Doha, Qatar  
[www.dess.org](http://www.dess.org)  
[dess@dess.org](mailto:dess@dess.org)  
Phone: +974 4487-0170  
Fax: +974 4487-5921

**Qatar Academy**

P.O. Box 1129  
Doha, Qatar  
[www.qf.edu.qa](http://www.qf.edu.qa)  
[qataracademy@qf.org.qa](mailto:qataracademy@qf.org.qa)  
Phone: +974 4482-6666  
Fax: +974 4480-2769

**Sherborne Qatar**

PO Box 1108  
Doha, Qatar  
[www.sherborneqatar.org](http://www.sherborneqatar.org)  
[registrar@sherborneqatar.org](mailto:registrar@sherborneqatar.org)  
Phone: +974 4459-6400  
Fax: +974 4459-6412

**Doha College**

P.O. Box 7506  
Doha, Qatar  
[www.dohacollege.com](http://www.dohacollege.com)  
[enquiries@dohacollege.com](mailto:enquiries@dohacollege.com)  
Phone: +974 4468-7379  
Fax: +974 4468-5720

**Compass International School**

P.O. Box 23479  
Doha, Qatar  
[www.cisdoha.com](http://www.cisdoha.com)  
[www.cisdoha.com/admissions/](http://www.cisdoha.com/admissions/)  
Phone: +974 4487-7445  
Fax: +974 4487-7446

## Residential Mail, Phone, and Internet Services

### Personal Mail

The QSO forwards U.S. and Evanston campus mail to faculty, staff, and their family members in Qatar. U.S. mail includes personal mail items such as letters, greeting cards, documents, journals and magazines, DVD rental subscriptions, and other flat materials. The staff of the Support Office will use discretion in discarding and not forwarding obvious “junk mail” (e.g. supermarket advertisements, coupons for local businesses, etc.).

The employee must provide the QSO with the names of any family members who will require mail forwarding via the QSO. Faculty, staff, and family members wishing to receive personal mail in Qatar may complete a [change of address form](#) with the U.S. Postal Service.

Address format for mail forwarding:

Name of employee  
NW Univ. MS 1801Q  
2020 Ridge Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60208

Frequency of mailings:

The QSO forwards mail to Qatar by FedEx International Priority on Mondays and Thursdays, with scheduling adjustments made for U.S. holidays. If there are no delays, mail typically arrives at NU-Q within three business days. Mail distribution at NU-Q is coordinated by the Office of Facilities Management.

### Business packages

The QSO forwards scholarly/professional material and NU-Q departmental purchases to Qatar in shipments separate from those containing personal mail. Please inform the QSO of inbound business materials and include the monetary value information for each item and the date the materials are needed in Qatar.

It is the responsibility of the faculty or staff member to ensure that items intended to be forwarded comply with Qatar Customs regulations. Facilities Management maintains a list of [prohibited items](#) that may not be forwarded to Qatar.

Business packages should be addressed to:

Employee name  
NU-Qatar Support Office  
1801 Maple Avenue, Suite 5320  
Evanston, IL 60201

### Personal Packages

The Support Office in Evanston does not forward personal packages (including packages received from vendors such as Amazon, etc.) to Qatar. A monthly shipping allowance is provided to eligible full-time NU-Q employees to defray costs associated with ordering from online retailers. Please note that the monthly shipping allowance may discontinue at any time and is determined by NU-Q budgetary review. Faculty and staff may wish to open an account with any of the shipping companies available in Qatar such as Aramex, FedEx or DHL.

#### Using a Courier Service

Personal packages may be sent directly to Qatar via an international courier service, such as FedEx or UPS, using the following address format:

Name of employee  
Northwestern University in Qatar  
c/o Qatar Foundation  
PO Box 5825

#### Using the US Postal Service and Local Mail

Flat mail and personal and business packages can be sent to employees at Northwestern University in Qatar via the US Postal Service or local mail using the following address. Using Qatar local mail is discouraged and could take an excessive amount of time:

Name of employee  
Northwestern University in Qatar  
P.O. Box 34102  
Education City,  
Doha, Qatar

When shipping items via the US Postal Service, it is important to note that customs forms are required and that certain items may be prohibited. ***Please consult the US Post Office before sending packages to Qatar.***

### Home Telephone and Internet Service

If you are living in NU-Q accommodations, you will have a landline telephone that has access to call mobile telephones. International calls are not permitted from your landline telephone. Many employees place international calls using free online telephone services such as Skype, Viber or Vonage. A Vonage router must be purchased and brought with you prior to arriving in Qatar.

All residences are outfitted with Fiber Optics High Speed Internet connectivity.

### Cell Phone Service

All full-time NU-Q employees receive a mobile telephone and a mobile telephone allowance. NU-Q will assist you in transferring your new Qatar mobile telephone number to your name. Once this process is complete, you may request a micro SIM card for your smart phone. All employees are required to have their cell phones with them, fully charged and turned on at **all** times. This requirement is imposed such that NU-Q administration can contact employees on short notice in the event of an emergency requiring immediate action.

### Emergency Calling Tree

All faculty, staff and spouses are included on NU-Q's Emergency Crisis Plan Calling Tree. The Calling Tree will be activated in the event of an emergency. Throughout the year the emergency

calling tree is activated to test response time. It is very important that all employees comply. Calling Tree Coordinators (CTC) are assigned to notify a group of people.

You are required to keep your Northwestern-issued cell phone on, charged, and on your person at all times so that you can be reached in case of an emergency. You will receive information on NU-Q's Emergency Crisis Plan and a copy of the Emergency Calling Tree during your Onboarding Orientation with NU-Q's Director of Health, Safety, Security, and Environment.

## Telecommunications and Internet Services

Telephone, Facsimile, Internet, and Cell phone (GSM) services are managed by Qatar Telecom (Ooredoo), currently the primary communication provider in Qatar.

Country code for Qatar: 974

Telephone directory inquiries: 180

International call inquiries: 190

International call bookings: 150

Telephone maintenance: 120

English-language clock: 140

Account balance: 146

Weather forecast: 974-4465-6590

Water emergency: 974-4432-5959 or 974-4441-8132

Electricity emergency: 991

Emergency (police, fire, ambulance): 999

Qatar changed its telephone numbering system from seven digits to eight in 2010. If you see old listings with seven-digit telephone numbers, simply double the first digit.

# Northwestern Employment Policies in Qatar

## Health and Other Benefits

### Health Insurance

Faculty and Staff working at Northwestern University in Qatar have two options for medical insurance: CIGNA Global Health Benefits (CGHB) or Qatar Foundation-sponsored AXA Healthcare. Both are international plans that provide coverage in Qatar and around the world.

CIGNA and AXA provide international health, prescription drug, dental, and emergency evacuation benefits. Spouses and dependent children through the age of 25 are eligible for enrollment. (Note that AXA requires the dependent(s) to be residing in Qatar, whereas CIGNA does not.) For more information and for a table of benefits for both plans, contact NU- HR. You may also visit the following websites: [www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits](http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits) and <http://www.cignaexpats.com/>.

Current Northwestern University employees may enroll in CIGNA or AXA between 31 and 60 days in advance of relocating to Qatar. To enroll, a Qatar Benefits Change Form must be completed and sent to the Benefits Division and to NU-Q HR. An employee's retirement, long-term disability, and other benefit elections will remain the same.

New employees may complete the enrollment benefits process online after activating their NetID in Faculty and Staff Information System (FASIS). Once your NetID has been activated, a Northwestern e-mail address is generated for you. At this address you will receive an e-mail from Benefits inviting you to enroll online in FASIS.

### *Cigna Coverage Timing*

If your start date is on the first of the month, your medical insurance will commence on that day. If you start later in the month, coverage begins on the first of the following month. In such an instance, before your CIGNA coverage begins you will be insured through a secondary medical insurance company, bridging any coverage gap. However, most appointment letters have a start date on the first of the month.

CIGNA partners with the Saudi Arabian Insurance Company (SAICO), which provides coverage in Qatar and throughout the Persian Gulf. This partnership allows you to use SAICO's direct provider list by presenting your SAICO medical card. No payment is required at the time of service from such direct providers.

### *AXA Coverage Timing*

With AXA, your coverage will start once you receive your Residence Permit for Qatar. In the meantime, you will be insured through a secondary medical insurance company to bridge any coverage gap. AXA International Medical Insurance is a Qatar Foundation-sponsored insurance.

There is no premium for AXA and the co-pay is just under 14 USD per visit. The direct providers for AXA are extensive in Qatar and the Persian Gulf. AXA insurance is only available after your Residence Permit has been issued, which could take around 7 weeks.

The processes for reimbursement and more information for both AXA and CIGNA are explained during your onboarding orientation with NU-Q HR. Such information is also available on the NU-Q intranet site, SharePoint. Any questions about medical insurance should be directed to NU-Q HR.

If you decide on CIGNA Insurance you must also enroll in NU Life Insurance. If you select AXA Insurance you must enroll in QF Life Insurance. QF Life Insurance is basic salary times 36 month with a minimum of QR150,000 (\$41,209) and a maximum of QR 1,500,000 (\$412,088). For information on NU Life Insurance, please visit this website to review your options: <http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/life-other-insurance-plans/index.html>.

## Hospitals

There are many hospitals and clinics in Qatar, most of which are on the direct provider list for SAICO and AXA. You will also have access to the government-run hospital and clinics called Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC). In case of an emergency, all affected must go to HMC. HMC is the only hospital in Qatar medically equipped to handle serious emergencies. Once you have your RP, NU-Q HR will apply for an HMC card on your behalf. For emergencies, no card is required. This applies for visitors as well.

## Prescription Drug Coverage

Most prescription drugs are available in Qatar. If you are on medication, please contact NU-Q HR to ask about specific drugs and their availability. If the medication is not available in Qatar, you may bring your medication into Qatar with you. Medication sent via mail or shipping companies is not allowed and will not pass through customs. Please note that prescriptions issued by a doctor not licensed in Qatar will not be honored by any pharmacy. You must have your prescription from a Qatar licensed physician.

## Life, ADD, Disability, FSA, and Retirement Plans

Benefits-eligible faculty and staff working in Qatar may participate in other University-sponsored benefit plans just as Evanston and Chicago faculty and staff do. Premiums and retirement plan contributions are processed through the University's payroll system.

Employees may view enrollment and paycheck transactions online using [FASIS Self Service](#). They may view Flexible Spending Account transactions and file claims online at <https://www.payflexdirect.com/EmployeeLogin.aspx>.

Retirement investments through TIAA-CREF (<http://www1.tiaa-cref.org/tcm/northwestern/>) and Fidelity Investments (<http://plan.fidelity.com/nu>) are available to US citizens only.

Current Northwestern employees relocating to Qatar should submit a completed Qatar benefits enrollment form to NU-Q HR as well as to the Benefits Division at least 31 days prior to relocation. New employees in Qatar must submit a Service Waiver form, if applicable: <http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/benefits/retirement-plans/index.html>. If you are at least 24 years old and have a least one year of benefits eligible service at NU -- or if you were employed at a tax-exempt educational or research organization for at least a 12-consecutive month period immediately prior (within 31 days) to NU employment -- you will be eligible to participate in the Basic (Matched and Unmatched) Retirement plans.

## Educational Assistance and Reduced Tuition Plans

Full-time NU-Q employees are eligible for educational assistance and reduced tuition benefits for Satellite Office Employees at institutions other than Northwestern and for portable tuition benefits for dependent children taking courses at other colleges for an undergraduate degree.

Educational assistance and reduced tuition applications should be submitted to NU-Q HR each term with a copy of the institution's billing statement and proof of successful completion of the course(s) with a grade "C" or better.

Dependent tuition for any school in Qatar is also available from age 4 through completion of High School for full-time benefits eligible NU-Q employees.

## Other Employment Matters

### Office Phones

Offices at NU-Q are equipped with desk telephones for business use. To call an off-campus number from an office phone, dial 9 first.

To call the United States from Qatar, dial 00 + 1 + area code + the seven-digit telephone number. Some office phones may not be set up for international dialing, from the office phone dial 9 + 00 + 1 + area code + the seven-digit telephone number to call the US. To call Qatar from the US, dial 011 + 974 (Qatar Country Code) + the eight-digit telephone number.

### Expense Reimbursements

NU-Q employees may seek reimbursement for allowable expenses per Northwestern University and Northwestern University in Qatar policy. For expenses reimbursed in USD, employees will utilize NUFInancials. For expenses incurred in the local currency (Qatari Riyal), employees may request reimbursement in Qatari Riyal, deposited to a Qatar bank account. Qatari Riyal

reimbursements are managed through NU-Q's Business & Finance department. Please contact the department directly with any questions or to request training or forms.

## Qatar Holidays

Qatar law provides Qataris with the following paid holidays:

- Three days for Eid El-Fitr, the festival at the end of Ramadan
- Three days for Eid Al-Adha, the festival of the sacrifice commemorating God's gift of the ram in place of the biblical patriarch Ibrahim's/Abraham's son Isma'il/Ishmael
- One day for Qatar Sports Day, second Tuesday of February
- One day for National Day, December 18

These holidays must be taken by University employees working in Qatar. Qatar law states that employers specify three additional paid days off. Northwestern University in Qatar will schedule holidays as much in advance as possible. The dates will vary from year to year.

## Business Hours

Official business hours in Qatar are Sunday–Thursday; 7:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and 2:30–6 p.m. Government offices are open from 6 a.m.–1 p.m. The weekend is Friday and Saturday.

The Qatar time zone is +8 to Chicago's Daylight Savings time. The rest of the year Doha is CST +9.

# Life in Qatar

## Getting Around

### Driver's Licenses

It is recommended that you bring your U.S. driver's license and an International driver's license with you to Qatar. Please make sure your U.S. driver's license does not have a renewal extension sticker. If it does, please go to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and have a new license issued. An international driver's license is available for purchase from the Automobile Association of America (AAA). If you wish to drive immediately upon arrival, you must have a valid U.S. driver's license and an international driver's license. With these two licenses, you may drive in Qatar until you receive your RP. Once you complete the Qatar residency process and receive your RP, you are no longer eligible to use your U.S. and International license. At that time you must apply for a Qatar Driver's License, and NU-Q HR will assist you through this process. If you are not a U.S. citizen, make sure bring a valid driver's license from your home country and an international license, if available.

Qatar driver's license required items:

- A driver's license from your home state/country
- Eye examination QR50 (\$13.74)
- A processing fee of QR 250 (\$68.68)
- Copies of your passport and residence permit
- Two photos (with eyeglasses, if required)

Required tests for a Qatar driver's license:

- Engine test
- Sign test
- Road or driving test
- Obstacle test

### Driving in Qatar

First-time drivers in Qatar may find the driving style to be unusually aggressive and frustrating. While road conditions are generally excellent, on- and off-road motor vehicle accidents are among the leading causes of death in Qatar. Learn to drive defensively, and do not respond to other drivers with obscene gestures or language.

Arguments and altercations over traffic incidents should be avoided. Once the traffic police have been called, wait patiently for the police to arrive. Try to remain calm and refrain from any physical contact with others involved, no matter how minor. If you are having difficulty due to language barriers or need any assistance, please call the NU-Q HR number on the purple emergency card you received during your onboarding orientation. Before you start driving in Qatar, NU-Q HR will provide you with a driving handbook.

For more general information about traffic safety and policies, visit [travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_1179.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1179.html)

## Taxis and Chauffeur-Driven Cars for Hire

NU-Q currently uses two transportation companies:

Qatar International Adventures (QIA) – e-mail: QIA [infor@qia-qatar.com](mailto:infor@qia-qatar.com), phone: 4455-3954 and Al Afdhal Transport– e-mail: [alafdhaltransport@yahoo.com](mailto:alafdhaltransport@yahoo.com) , phone: 4488-0177

Karwa is the main taxi service in Doha. Karwa cabs can be hailed from the roadside or arranged in advance by phoning the central dispatch number: 974 4458-8888

Refuse offers from unlicensed drivers who may offer transportation while you await a taxi.

## Car Rentals and Leasing

Transportation vouchers are issued by NU-Q Human Resources Office upon your arrival in Doha, allowing you to use a preselected car service, including drivers. Transportation vouchers may be redeemed at any hour of day or night. This service is intended to be used for commuting to work, shopping for groceries and supplies. Employee shuttle service is also available from most NU-Q housing complexes to Education City and back home. You can arrange a short-term car rental until you receive permanent residency. You will need to bring your country's driving license as well as an international driving license to rent a car in Qatar. You can choose between purchasing a car or leasing once you have received your permanent residence permit and your permanent Qatar driving license.

## Buying a Car

You may bring vehicles less than five years old into Qatar. A number of local banks offer special rates for car loans. It is best to shop around to determine the best current rate available. You must have your residency permit before you are granted a loan. Some car dealerships have on-site lending services available.

Recent experience suggests that employees approaching the age of 62 may have difficulty securing a loan for the purchase of an automobile. Some banks in Qatar have established policies restricting the availability of loan terms which extend beyond the age of 62. Thus, unless the individual can secure an exception to the bank policy, a 61-year-old employee would be able to obtain at most a one year car loan. A 60 year old employee could obtain a two-year loan. Etc. There are apparently no such age-related restrictions attached to car rentals in Qatar.

If you prefer to purchase a secondhand car, it is best to check notice boards in supermarkets, newspapers, or Maktabi (a listservs which distributes news and announcements concerning the Education City community). Used-car dealers are listed in the newspapers and *Marhaba* magazine.

## Car Insurance

Car insurance is mandatory and is your responsibility. Both the vehicle and insurance should be placed in your name. Insurance can be purchased in Qatar when you buy or lease a vehicle. The NU-Q Human Resources Office in Qatar can help direct employees to sources for the purchase of insurance.

## Ensuring Your Safety

### Legal System

The citizens of Qatar enjoy equal civil rights and responsibilities without discrimination on grounds of race, origin, or religion. Laws may not be applied retroactively, and no sentence may be passed except under the force of an existing law. A suspect is innocent until proven guilty and is entitled to a fair trial. The civil liberties guaranteed by the state include the right of residence, freedom of the press and publication, and private ownership.

While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens are subject to its laws and regulations, which may differ substantially from and not offer the protection of U.S. laws. Islamic law forms the basis of Qatari law, and its penalties can be severe. Persons violating Qatari laws, even unknowingly, may be arrested, imprisoned, deported, or banned from leaving Qatar. Travel bans remain in effect until both parties or a court resolve the dispute. Qatari law-enforcement authorities have also detained witnesses and relatives throughout a criminal investigation.

According to the U.S. Department of State, Qatari law enforcement does not routinely notify the U.S. Embassy in Doha of a U.S. citizen's arrest. U.S. Embassy officials are often prevented from visiting arrested U.S. citizens until after the initial interrogation. If arrested, a U.S. citizen should ask to speak to the U.S. Embassy immediately. If this is not allowed, ask a friend or family member to notify the U.S. Embassy and NU-Q HR as soon as possible.

Obscene language, obscene gestures, or other insults often result in arrest, overnight detention, and/or fines. Public intoxication, drunk driving, and other alcohol-related offenses are treated with severity and result in arrest, heavy fines, imprisonment, or expulsion from Qatar.

Islam and tribal traditions provide the foundation of Qatar's customs, laws and practices. Foreign visitors are expected to remain sensitive to Islamic beliefs and practices and not dress in a revealing or provocative manner, halter tops and shorts. Western bathing attire is worn only at hotel pools and private beaches.

The U.S. Embassy notes that religion and religious practice are quite sensitive issues in Qatar. Therefore, discussing religious issues, or answering questions about a religion, should be treated with care and sensitivity. *Proselytizing is illegal in Qatar.* Attempting to convert a member of one religion to another, "sharing one's faith" with someone of a different faith, and similar practices can be deemed violations of Qatari law, with deportation or even prison the

consequence. Accordingly, charitable activities, both religious and non-religious, must be approved in advance by the Qatar Authority for Charitable Activities (QACA).

The country has a zero-tolerance attitude toward the use and possession of illegal drugs. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking are severe. The penalty for possession is a two to six month prison sentence and deportation. The prison term for trafficking is 10 to 20 years. Convicted offenders also can expect large fines.

Gambling is prohibited by both civil and religious law in Qatar.

Homosexual activity is a criminal offense in Qatar. According to the U.S. Department of State, conviction may result in lashing, a prison sentence, and/or deportation.

Importing the following items is prohibited:

- Alcohol
- Counterfeit currency
- Fireworks
- Narcotics and illicit drugs
- Obscene material
- Pork products
- Religious materials intended for recruitment
- Weapons and ammunition

## Safety and Security

The crime rate in Qatar is generally low, and incidents of violence are rare. Police presence throughout the country is high. Nevertheless, reports of petty theft have grown, including ATM and credit card theft, pickpocketing, and purse snatching. Travelers are urged not to leave unsecured valuables in hotel rooms or unattended public places. American citizens are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance at all times and to be aware of local events. Should you require immediate emergency assistance, call 999 from any telephone to reach the Qatari police.

Circumstances permitting, you should also phone the NU-Q Human Resources Office in Doha. For the latest information, U.S. citizens should monitor the U.S. Department of State web site for travel alerts. Updates also can be obtained by calling 888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or 202-501-4444 elsewhere between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. (CST) on weekdays.

For further information, please review *A Safe Trip Abroad* at [travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety\\_1747.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html).

## Other Helpful Resources

### U.S. Embassy Registration and Services

The U.S. Department of State has a secure online travel registration web site that allows American citizens to record foreign trip and residence information. Using the online registration service allows you to update your contact information at any time and include an emergency

contact. The State Department can use this information to communicate with you and assist you in the event of an emergency.

American citizens arriving in Qatar use their U.S. passport information when registering. You must also provide the following information:

- Place of employment and/or spouse's place of employment
- Area of business, i.e., education
- Compound or area of Doha in which you will reside
- Proof of American citizenship

U.S. citizens who travel or reside abroad can access this site either through a link on [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) or directly at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>.

Use the embassy web site (<http://qatar.usembassy.gov>) to familiarize yourself with its services and resources, including

- U.S. citizen services
  - Information for travelers
  - Federal benefits
  - Legal information
  - Medical information
  - Passports
  - Report birth abroad
- U.S. policy and issues
- Educational resources
- Trade and commerce

General inquiries can be sent to:

Embassy of the United States of America  
22<sup>nd</sup> February Street  
Al Luqta District  
P.O. Box 2399  
Doha, Qatar  
Phone: 974-4488-4101  
Fax: 974-4488-4298  
E-mail: [PASDoha@state.gov](mailto:PASDoha@state.gov)

Emergency assistance for U.S. citizens is available 24 hours a day. In the event of an emergency, please call 974-4488-4101 to reach an embassy duty officer.

## Helpful Resources

Before departing for Doha consider reading Jeremy Williams's book, *Don't They Know It's Friday*, a cultural guide to living and working in the Middle East. Copies are available for a one-week loan from the NU-Q Support Office in Evanston. The following websites also may be valuable resources about climate, economy, geography, government, history, population statistics, shopping and tourism, and things to do in Doha.

- ◆ U.S. Department of State sites  
<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/ci/qa/>  
[www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1003.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1003.html)
- ◆ *Al Hannah Practical Guide to Living in Doha*, a wiki developed by the Human Resources Office of Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar  
[http://qatar.cmu.edu/alhannah/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://qatar.cmu.edu/alhannah/index.php/Main_Page)
- ◆ CIA World Fact book page on Qatar  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>
- ◆ State of Qatar directory  
[www.hejleh.com/countries/qatar.html](http://www.hejleh.com/countries/qatar.html)
- ◆ Explore Qatar, facts about working in Qatar  
<http://www.explore-qatar.com/living-in-qatar/working-in-qatar-0>
- ◆ *Gulf Times*, a daily online newspaper in English  
[www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/index.asp?cu\\_no=2&temp\\_type=44](http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/index.asp?cu_no=2&temp_type=44)
- ◆ Her Highness Sheikha Mozah's home page  
[www.mozahbintnasser.qa](http://www.mozahbintnasser.qa)
- ◆ *The Peninsula*, a daily online newspaper in English  
[www.thepeninsulaqatar.com](http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com)
- ◆ Qatar Embassy in the United States  
[www.qatarembassy.net](http://www.qatarembassy.net)
- ◆ Qatar Living, an on-line community with discussions, maps, and reviews  
[www.qatarliving.com](http://www.qatarliving.com)
- ◆ Qatar Visitor, a site with information for tourists and expats  
[www.qatarvisitor.com/](http://www.qatarvisitor.com/)
- ◆ *Qatar Reformed by a Modern Marriage*, an article from the *Christian Science Monitor*  
[www.csmonitor.com/2007/0306/p20s01-wome.html?s=u](http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0306/p20s01-wome.html?s=u)

## Dealing with Culture Shock

### Definition and Stages

Culture shock is a term used to describe the anxiety produced when people move to a completely new environment. It encompasses the feelings of not knowing what to do, how to do things, and what is appropriate or inappropriate. When the way of life to which you are accustomed is no longer the norm, you may experience both physical and emotional discomfort.

Research defines various stages of culture shock that are not static or exclusive of one another. People are known to experience a combination of these stages, to skip a stage, or to get stuck in one.

***Pre-departure:*** A time to begin to explore and learn about what is involved with an international move before leaving home. The more accurate the information, the better equipped people tend to feel moving on to subsequent stages. This is when expectations begin to form.

***Honeymoon:*** Immediately after arrival, people may feel euphoric and pleased by the newness. Things feel exciting, not unlike the excitement of being on holiday.

***Adjustment:*** People may experience strong feelings of dissatisfaction, discontent, impatience, anger, sadness, frustration, and incompetence when trying to adapt to a culture very different from their culture of origin. Transition between the old methods and those of the new country is a difficult process and takes time to complete.

***Understanding and integration:*** This stage is characterized by a feeling of some understanding and belonging. It is linked to developing a sense of familiarity with the community (“comfort zones”). There is a realization that the new culture has good and bad to offer. A good indicator of this stage is the return of a sense of humor. One may start to feel a sense of balance, less lost, and more in control, and to establish goals for living and making the new location “home.”

***Re-entry shock:*** This stage has two phases. The first involves the time prior to returning home (wrapping up, saying goodbye, etc.), and the second follows the return. Many families note that reentry is much more difficult than they anticipated. They may expect to slide right back into the old life, and that rarely happens.

People and circumstances change; the home front will not be the same. It’s not uncommon to find that others may not want to hear about one’s international adventures.

### Symptoms of Culture Shock

Aches, pains, and allergies

Anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others

Changes in temperament, depression, feeling vulnerable, feeling powerless  
Desire to sleep too much or too little  
Developing obsessions, such as over cleanliness  
Developing stereotypes about the new culture  
Feelings of being lost, overlooked, exploited, or abused  
Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity  
Identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country  
Inability to solve simple problems  
Insomnia  
Lack of confidence  
Longing for family  
Preoccupation with health  
Sadness, loneliness, melancholy

### Some Ways to Combat Culture Shock

- If you feel stressed, look for help. There is always someone or some service available to help.
- Don't forget the positive things in your life.
- Be gentle with yourself. Adaptation to new situations takes time. Pace yourself. Expect ups and downs. Don't try too hard.
- If you encounter an unfavorable situation, avoid putting yourself in that position again.
- Include regular physical activity in your routine.
- Try relaxation techniques and meditation; they have been proven to help people through periods of stress.
- Connect with others who share similar interests. This provides a feeling of belonging and reduces feelings of loneliness and alienation.
- Develop a hobby.
- Maintain contact with the new culture. Learn the language. Volunteer in community activities that allow you to practice the language. You will feel useful as well as less stressed about speaking the language.
- Allow yourself to feel sad about things that you have left behind — your family, your friends, your own country, etc.
- Pay attention to relationships with your family and at work. They will serve as support during difficult times.
- Establish simple goals and evaluate your progress, one step at a time.
- Find ways to live with the things that don't satisfy you 100 percent.
- Accept the new country.
- Maintain self-confidence. Follow your ambitions and continue your plans for the future.
- Focus your power on getting through the transition.

## Factors That Further Intercultural Adjustment

The following information on culture shock was provided by Victoria Barnhill-Hensen, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Qatar.

***Open-mindedness:*** The ability to keep one's own opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli is important to a successful intercultural adjustment.

***Sense of humor:*** Relocation can lead to frustration, anger, confusion, despair, and embarrassment. The ability to laugh things off can help guard against these.

***Information:*** Gathering as much accurate information as possible about the new location will help create a realistic picture and expectations. Ask questions and communicate with people who are already there. Remember: Knowledge is power.

***Communication:*** The ability to communicate thoughts and feelings to others is an important skill for a successful intercultural relocation.

***Normalization:*** Know that an international relocation is not easy for anyone. It is an exhausting, frustrating, confusing, and often lonely time. Be gentle and forgiving toward yourself for these normal reactions.

***Flexibility and adaptability:*** The ability to respond to or tolerate the ambiguity of new situations is very important to intercultural success. Keeping options open and judgmental behavior to a minimum will reduce frustration.

***Curiosity:*** Curiosity is the desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc. This skill or personality trait is important for intercultural travelers because they need to learn many things in order to adapt to their new environment.

***Positive and realistic expectations:*** There are strong correlations between positive and realistic expectations and a successful intercultural adjustment.

***Tolerance for differences and ambiguities:*** An understanding of beliefs, traditions, practices, and values that differ from one's own is important to successful intercultural adjustment.

***Positive regard for others:*** The ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for others is an important component of effective intercultural relations.

***A strong sense of self:*** Individuals with clear, secure feelings about themselves are neither weak nor overbearing in their relations with others. Persons with a strong sense of self stand up for what they believe in but do not cling to those beliefs regardless of new information, perspectives, or understandings they encounter.

**Connection:** A sense of belonging is cultivated by seeking out others who share common bonds or interests.

## Glossary

### Helpful Arabic Words

Below are some common phrases or words that you may hear around the office or around Doha. Some of these are British terminology with which Americans may be unfamiliar. Others are specific to the Gulf region or to the Qatar Foundation.

<b>Car park</b>	Parking garage; usually refers to the underground parking where the majority of staff and faculty park their cars
<b>City Center</b>	Refers to the city's center or one of the large malls; "City Center" signs mean the center of town
<b>Corniche</b>	A scenic drive and walk next to the Gulf (i.e., Doha's Lake Shore Drive)
<b>Diwan</b>	Palace
<b>Emir</b>	Ruler, monarch
<b>Flat</b>	Apartment unit
<b>First floor</b>	The floor above the ground level or entry level
<b>GSM</b>	Cell phone
<b>Hala Card</b>	A card used to extend service or add minutes to your cell phone on a pre-paid plan. You can pick up one at local grocery stores or any Q-Tel station in the malls
<b>Hamour</b>	A local white fish served in many restaurants
<b>HMC</b>	Hamad Medical Corporation – Government Hospital

<b>Hypermarket</b>	Grocery store or supermarket, such as Lulu or Carrefour
<b>Khalas</b>	Arabic for “finished” used when a decision has been made; also can mean a store or restaurant has run out of an item
<b>Limousine</b>	A private car that performs like a taxi service
<b>Majlis</b>	Equivalent to a senate. Students have a student <i>majlis</i> rather than a student council. <i>Majlis</i> can also refer to the front room of a house where guests are received or to a traditional tent-style dining room
<b>QA</b>	Qatar Academy- lower, middle and high school
<b>QDC</b>	Qatar Distribution Company; Qatar’s only liquor store
<b>QF</b>	Qatar Foundation
<b>QR</b>	Qatari riyal; the Qatari currency
<b>Sheikh</b>	Term of address for a male political or religious leader, most commonly used in Qatar for a member of the royal family
<b>Sheikha</b>	Term of address for female member of royal family, for example “Sheikha Mozah”
<b>SMS</b>	Text message
<b>Souq</b>	Traditional market
<b>Take-away</b>	Taking a meal “to go”; a carryout meal
<b>Villa</b>	House

**Wasta**

Clout or influence