INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS'

Pre-Arrival Guide

Iowa State University
International Students and Scholars Office

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WHEN TO ARRIVE?

You will need to arrive in Ames, Iowa by the program start date listed on your I-20.

If you have an emergency and are unable to arrive in Ames by the program start date listed on your I-20 or you would like to defer your admission to a future semester, you must contact the Office of Admissions at admissions@iastate.edu to receive a late arrival letter or an updated I-20. Please note that arriving late will impact your course availability and academic success.

DATES TO REMEMBER

To get a snap shot of your first semester at Iowa State and view important dates such as the term start date and university holidays, check out the Iowa State Academic Calendar

LOOKING FORWARD

Graduate Student Orientation

For more information specific to your entry term, please visit our website and learn more.

IMPORTANT PRE-ARRIVAL TASKS

STEP 1

Have you received your University ID Number and signed up for your NetID?

After receiving admission to the university, you will receive your 9-digit university ID number from the Office of Admissions. Be sure to keep this number on hand, as it will be used throughout your arrival process.

Your NetID is attached to your university email and is also used to log in to university accounts. Register for your NetID here.

STEP 2

Have you received your form I-20?

As a new student, you should have received your initial I-20/DS-2019 either digitally along with the pre-Arrival Guide, or by email separately prior to receiving the guide.

If you are viewing this guide as a perspective student, you will receive your I-20/DS-2019 after completing your Admissions process. Please refer to your My Admissions Portal for more information on your application status.

STEP 3

Have you paid the SEVIS Fee?

Before you can apply for visa or enter the U.S., you will need to pay the SEVIS Fee, also known as the I-901 Fee.

To pay this fee please visit www.fmjfee.com.

After paying the fee, be sure to print out your receipt. You will need the receipt when applying for your visa.

If you have any questions regarding your SEVIS Fee, please refer to the SEVIS Fee FAQ or call 703-603-3400 for assistance.

Once your SEVIS Fee is paid, you are ready to proceed to step 4.

STEP 4

Applying for your Student Visa*

After completing the above steps, you are ready to begin the visa application process. Please see page 5 for more specific information on the visa application process.

** Students with a Canadian or Bermudian passport do not need to apply for a visa.*

STEP 5

Register for Orientation

To track important pre-arrival tasks, as well as register for orientation, please log into Cystart using the New and Former Students portal. You will need to request a Limited Services Pin in order to log in. Once in Cystart, click the Iowa State International Student Pre-Arrival Information link on your home page.

If you experience any difficulties logging in, please contact isorient@iastate.edu and we will assist you.

APPLYING FOR YOUR STUDENT VISA

STEP 1

Receive your I-20.

Please see Page 4, Step 3 for more information if you have not received your intial I-20.

STEP 2

Pay the I-901 SEVIS fee.

Please see Page 4, Step 4 for more information regarding paying the SEVIS fee.

STEP 3

Complete the DS-160 Application Form.

Complete a DS-160 visa application form on the U.S. Department of State website https://ceac.state.gov You will need information from your I-20 to complete this form. If you do not have your own contact person in the U.S., you can use the following information to complete the section of U.S. Point of Contact Information.

Name: Becca Duncan

Address: 2229 Lincoln Way, STE 4530, Ames, IA 50014

Phone: 515-294-1120

Email: brduncan@iastate.edu

STEP 4

Schedule your Visa Appointment.

After completing the DS-160, you can schedule your visa appointment at your nearby U.S. Embassy or Consulate. A list of US Embassy locations can be found at https://ustraveldocs.com Please note, each Embassy manages the process of scheduling an interview differently, so please read the information on your specific Embassy location's website carefully.

STEP 5

Prepare for your Visa Appointment

You will want to gather the required documents listed on your specific Embassy's website before your visa appointment. Your interview usually lasts about 3 minutes, and the consular officer will ask you questions about your goals in the US and plans after your graduation. The following documents should be carried to your visa appointment, in addition to any other documents listed on your Embassy's website:

- I-20
- DS-160 visa application fee receipt
- I-901 SEVIS fee receipt
- Valid passport
- Passport photograph
- Transcripts from schools/universities attended and relevant test results such as TOEFL/IELTS, GRE or SAT, etc.
- Financial documents proving available funds for at least one year of expenses
- Admission letter to Iowa State University
- Check your U.S. embassy's webpage for additional requirements.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

GETTING FROM THE DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO AMES

ISSO collaborates with University Transportation Services to provide all new international undergraduate students with a complimentary shuttle from the Des Moines International Airport to Ames, Iowa.

ISSO will work with University Transportation Services to arrange your shuttle, so please follow the instructions below to submit the required information.

REQUEST YOUR SHUTTLE

- Log into Cystart using your NetID and Password
- Select Orientation and Pre-Arrival Checklist from the bottom of your home screen.
- In the Arrival Tasks part of the checklist, locate the Book Your Shuttle to Campus
- Completely fill and submit this form, at least 3 business days prior to your arrival.

If for any reason you are unable to submit this form, please email isorient@iastate.edu and we will assist you.

ADDITIONAL TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

For students not wishing to use the Iowa State shuttle service, other options may be available. Please contact shuttleservices@iastate.edu for assistance with additional options.

GUESTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

If you are bringing guests or family members with you to attend orientation, they will need to book travel arrangements separately. Passengers above the age of 18 can request a shuttle through University Transportation Services.

For those traveling with small children, we recommend booking through Executive Express, as University Transportation Services is unable to assist passengers under the age of 18 due to liability concerns.

EARLY ARRIVAL HOUSING

Different options are available for early arrival housing depending on which semester you are starting at Iowa State.

INTERIM HOUSING (FALL ONLY)

Iowa State has a variety of on campus housing options for students.

International students who will arrive early to participate in International Student Orientation can request Interim Housing through the Department of Residence. Students utilizing Interim Housing will be charged per night from the date they check in to Interim Housing until their official move in date.

- Cost: $25 per night
- Location: Maple Hall, 204 Beach Road, Ames, IA 50013-0025
    - All rooms are single gender, double occupancy, with two single beds in each room, both of which will be lofted with furniture under each bed. Only the provided furniture is allowed in the rooms.
    - The Maple-Willow-Larch (MWL) Hall Desk is located in the commons building between the three towers and will be open for check-in and check-out.
- For dates please check:
    - The Department of Residence's Early Arrivals Page

    or
    - The Fall International Orientation Page

TEMPORARY HOUSING (ALL SEMESTERS)

ISSO recommends that students in need of temporary housing upon their arrival to Ames make reservations at the Gateway Hotel.

To Make a Reservation:

- Call the Gateway Hotel at 515-292-8600
- Use the code "International Students and Scholars Office" to get the reduced rate

Currently, the ISSO reduced rate is $109 per night.

Reservations are dependent on hotel availability. The "International Students and Scholars Office" reduced rate does not apply during ISU

home football games and graduation.

Other Arrangements

Students can make alternative and independent arrangements through Airbnb or hotels in Ames.

HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

It is important to have your living accommodations arranged before arriving in Ames.

ON CAMPUS HOUSING

Iowa State has a variety of on campus housing options for students.

Signing up to live on campus is easy! Your housing assignment is based off the date you submit your housing contract, not the date you accept your offer of admission. There's no reason to wait!

You can make adjustments to your contract later, for example, adding a roommate or learning community. Follow the steps below and submit your housing contract!

1. Accept your offer of admission to Iowa State.
2. Log in to the Housing Portal to submit your contract. As part of this process, you will choose preferences (aka: places you'd want to live). Check out housing options here. Not sure where you want to live? It's okay! You can adjust your preferences, add roommates or choose learning communities later.
3. Submit your contract and you're set!

Remember, on campus housing fills up quickly, especially as enrollment continues to rise. Make sure to submit your contract as soon as possible to secure on campus housing.

OFF CAMPUS HOUSING

Ames has a variety of rental properties that exist off campus. If you are renting off campus only use reputable rental sites and avoid establishing rentals through sites like Facebook Marketplace.

The City of Ames website offers a Rent Smart Guide for individuals renting in Ames. It offers an overview of what renting in the city looks like and city policies regarding rentals.

What to Bring?

Amenities vary based on which on or off campus housing you choose. Make sure to look over what is included in your space on the Department of Residence's website or the website of your rental of choice, if living off campus.

The Department of Residence has a handy guide on their website with recommendations on what to bring with you or purchase once you are in Ames. You can find it here.

TUITION & BANKING

U-BILL

Payments can be initiated in Workday and are processed through Nelnet. We accept online payments from checking and savings accounts as well as credit/debit cards and international bank accounts. Additional fees may apply based on the specific method of payment.

Payment can be made on the Workday website, even on a mobile browser, but cannot be made while using the Workday app.

For **Students** they are found in the Financials Hub.

For **Friends & Family** they are found in Financials for Third Party.

INTERNATIONAL BANK PAYMENTS

Paying your U-Bill

Payments made from an international account are processed through Convera. Once this payment type is selected in Nelnet you will be taken to Convera's website to set up your payment. The amount chosen in Nelnet will pre-populate in Convera and cannot be changed in Convera. You will be supplied with a sheet that you must present to your bank for them to send funds to Iowa State University. A copy of the sheet and your payment information will be emailed to you.

- Pay in the currency of your choice and have it converted to U.S. Dollars.
- If the currency of your choice is not listed select USD and the banks will process the conversion.
- Fees and exchange rates vary by date and currency.
- Exchange rate valid for 72 hours after transaction is initiated.
- Payments are transmitted electronically and typically post in 3 to 5 business days.

Iowa State University does not accept direct wire payments. You can wire funds to your own US account and pay using the eCheck option.

SETTING UP A U.S. BANK ACCOUNT

Iowa State University collaborates with US Bank. However, you do not have to select US Bank as your bank account; it's optional.

PLACEMENT TESTS

ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST:

Incoming international students who are not native speakers of English, not enrolled in distance-only programs, or who do not meet at least one of the exemption criteria for the English Requirement may take the English Placement Test (EPT).

The English Requirement is different from the English proficiency requirement needed for admission to ISU. Students who are admitted to ISU may be required to take English classes to meet this requirement.

Please note that failure to take the EPT in your first semester may cause difficulties in planning your course of study and delays in your graduation.

EPT EXEMPTIONS:

Check the English Placement Test webpage and review the criteria listed under the Exemptions tab to determine whether you meet the English language requirement.

If at least one of the exemption criteria apply, you have met the English requirement and should not take the EPT. Your student records should be automatically updated to indicate that you have met the English requirement. You do not need to do anything for this process to occur. If you do not meet the English requirement, you need to take the EPT on campus prior to your first semester.

Students who are confident that they have sufficient English proficiency may (re)take TOEFL iBT, IELTS, or Pearson PTE, at their own cost, to demonstrate their English proficiency. Required scores for meeting the English requirement are on the Exemptions tab of the EPT website.

EPT REGISTRATION:

Registration opens two weeks prior to the next available testing date. To register select the Registration tab for information about how to register. Students who need to take the EPT will need to take both parts:

- EPT Writing.
- EPT Oral Communication.
- You will select a time when you register for the test.

Test descriptions, sample questions, scoring guides, and other information are available on the EPT website. If you still have questions after reading this information, email them to ept@iastate.edu.

ORAL ENGLISH CERTIFICATION TEST (OECT)

Only for teaching assistants

For graduate students with teaching assistantships, you will have to complete the in-person OECT prior to the start of the semester. To view available dates and learn more about registering for the OECT, please visit the International Teaching Assistants Program website.

After you have completed the registration, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions to select a preferred test slot. However, it is strongly recommended that you login periodically to check for available test slots since it is a busy test period. If there are no more slots, continue to login since new slots may be added if there is enough demand and if there are sufficient raters.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

IOWA STATE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Thielen Student Health Center (TSHC) looks forward to being your on-campus medical provider during your time at Iowa State. As a requirement of your orientation, you will be asked to attend a confidential, in-person health orientation visit at TSHC. During this visit, you will be provided with resources to support your well-being as you work to achieve your academic goals.

Iowa State Student Health and Wellness includes:

- Thielen Student Health Center
- Student Wellness
- Student Counseling
- Recreation Services

During your health orientation visit, you will meet with a member of the TSHC clinical staff to complete the following:

- Review resources available to Iowa State Students within the Student Health and Wellness unit.
- Review of immunization records and assistance with completion of ISU immunization requirements.
- Review any health concerns and receive assistance with the transfer of care needed by incoming students based on their individual needs.
- Receive information regarding the Student and Scholar Health Insurance Program (SSHIP).
- Assistance with connecting to other resources, as requested.

IMPORTANT STEPS PRIOR TO ARRIVAL:

On acceptance to Iowa State – begin as soon as possible.

- Complete the **Immunization Requirement Form** to bring with you to campus (link coming soon)
  - This form must be signed by a medical provider. We also ask you to bring supporting copies of original immunization documents labeled with your full name and date of birth.
  - If you've had previous testing for tuberculosis, please bring copies of these medical records including any lab reports or chest radiology reports.

WITHIN ONE MONTH OF ARRIVAL AT IOWA STATE.

- **Schedule your required in-person health orientation at TSHC.** (link coming soon)
  - Before your visit, review the information on this website. (we/TSHC will need to update this website)
- Download, sign, and print the TSHC Consent for Services and Communication **form** and bring a copy to your health orientation visit.
  - If you will be under the age of 18 when arriving on campus, it is mandatory that this form contain the signature of a parent or guardian.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about immunization records, ISU health requirements, or your health orientation session, please email the Thielen Student Health Center (TSHC) at immrequirements@iastate.edu. A member of their nursing staff will reply to your questions. The expected response time will be 5–7 days.

Questions specific to health insurance should be directed to the Student and Scholars Insurance Program (SSHIP) at isusship@iastate.edu.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance provides financial protection from any high, unexpected health care costs in the United States. When you register for classes at Iowa State University, you are automatically enrolled in health insurance coverage under the Iowa State University Student and Scholar Health Insurance Program (SSHIP). More information about health insurance will be covered in detail during an information session at ISSO New International Student Orientation.

YOUR UNIVERSITY ID CARD



ISU CARD

Your ISUCard is your permanent university identification card, which includes your picture and university identification number. You will use your ISUCard for most campus services including:

- door access to the residence hall
- meals on campus
- testing centers
- recreation center
- riding CyRide
- the library

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTO

Visit the photo submission webpage and follow the guidelines listed to submit a photo for your ISUCard. It is very important that you only submit a photo that meets our requirements. Your photo will be rejected if it doesn't meet the requirements.

Photos must be submitted online at least two full business days prior to picking up your card, or you will need to have your photo taken when you stop in the ISUCard Office instead.

Be sure to stop at the ISUCard Office in 0530 Beardshear Hall when you arrive on campus to pick up your ISUCard. Check the ISUCard website for hours of operation. The ISUCard Office, like most business offices on campus, is not open on weekends.

HAVE YOUR PHOTO TAKEN ON CAMPUS

You also have the option to stop into the ISUCard Office after you arrive on campus to have your photo taken and walk out with your ISUCard. Check the ISU Card website for office hours and further information.

The process generally takes about 30 minutes but could be longer if there is a line. Be sure to bring:

- your University ID number
- your passport

POST ARRIVAL IMMIGRATION CHECK IN

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IMMIGRATION CHECK IN

After arriving in the United States, you must complete the Orientation Checklist found in CyStart under the International Student Orientation section. In the checklist, you will complete various modules:

- Immigration Regulations
- Electronic Check-In

This can be completed only **AFTER** you arrive in the U.S. and is required for all new international students at Iowa State University. You can complete these forms at your own pace.

Through this process, you will hear from the ISSO International Student Advising team about regulations you must follow to maintain your immigration status and the benefits your status provides along with uploading important immigration documentation to register your immigration record in SEVIS.

Please have the following documentation for the Electronic Check-In form. Documentation needs to be clearly scanned in a digital JPEG or PDF format I-20 or DS-2019 (from ISU and any previous schools)

- Passport photo page
- I-94 arrival record (get yours here)
- Dependents' immigration documents (passport, I-20/DS-2019, and visas)
- Letter of intent (for graduate students on assistantship)
- Financial guarantee (for sponsored students)

You will also need to know the following:

- Address in Ames (this can be a temporary address, such as a hotel or the home of a friend or acquaintance with whom you are staying)
- Name, phone number, and mailing address for a person we can contact if you have a personal emergency

Failure to complete could result in academic and immigration issues.

Once you have arrived in the United States, you can begin this process by following this step-by-step guide.

GRADUATE ORIENTATION (HEADER)

New Graduate Student Orientation will take place just prior to the start of your first term at Iowa State. Orientation for graduate students is not required, but is strongly recommended, as it will provide you with resources and information to help you start your journey at Iowa State.

More information about Graduate Student Orientation, such as the schedule of events, times, and locations can be found on the New Student Orientation page of the ISSO website.

POST ARRIVAL EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES

I-9 EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

Students must complete Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification) with ISSO on or before the first day of on-campus employment. To complete Form I-9 with ISSO, please follow the steps below after receiving a job offer for an on-campus position.

STEP 1 (Before start of employment)

Complete New Student Immigration Check-In with ISSO (**page 11**) on CyStart located under the International Student Orientation section. This will consist of completing the following items:

- Immigration Regulations presentation
- Electronic Check-In form
- On-Campus Employment form.

STEP 2 (Before first day of employment)

Start this step only after step 1 is completed and approved by ISSO. Complete on-boarding tasks and Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification) in Workday.

Note: you will only be assigned Form I-9 task in Workday **after** your hiring department has completed the hiring process and the hire has been approved through the Workday process.

STEP 3 (Before third day of employment)

Once you receive your On-Campus Employment form approval email, bring your original, unexpired documents to ISSO during walk-in I-9 hours.

Bring the following original printed documents:

- Letter of Intent or job offer letter (only required if you need to apply for the U.S. Social Security Number)
- Unexpired passport with a current U.S. visa stamp
- Expired passport(s) with other U.S. visa stamps, if any (e.g., F-1/F-2, J-1/J-2, B-1/B-2, etc.).
- Signed I-20 from Iowa State University or unexpired DS-2019
- Previous I-20s/DS-2019s from other schools or J-1 sponsors.
- Most recent I-94 Record.
- Additional U.S. immigration documents, if any (e.g., I-797 USCIS Approval Notice/Receipt Notice, Change of Status documents, proof of other status).

STEP 4

Apply for a Social Security Number, if needed.
You will receive information and required documents to apply for U.S. Social Security Number, if needed, during the Form I-9 visit.

EARLIEST DATE TO START WORK

The earliest students can start working on-campus at ISU is 30 days before the start of classes of their first semester.