Welcome to the University of Minnesota! We are thrilled that you have decided to attend our institution.

We know that international students have a lot of questions about Fall 2021. This document has answers for students who are starting at the UMN for the first time in Fall 2021. If you are a continuing student, review our FAQ for Returning/Continuing International Students.

We will continue to update this document as information becomes available. For more information, do the following:

- Visit the New Student section of the ISSS website.
- Complete the International Student Preparation Course.
- Send an email to isssnew@umn.edu.

Click the links below to read answers grouped by topic area:

- **General Questions**
- **Immigration-Related Items**
  - Immigration Documents
  - Visa Interviews
- **Arrival Information**
  - Travel Restrictions
  - National Interest Exception
  - General Travel Information
- **Enrollment Questions**
- **ISSS Requirements for New International Students**
- **Health Care**
  - Health Insurance
  - COVID-19 Vaccine
- **Student Fees**
- **Employment**
- **Housing**
  - On-Campus Housing
  - Off-Campus Housing

For More Information:

- [Safe Campus](#) (the website where the University is sharing COVID-19 related updates)
- [Office of Undergraduate Education](#)
- [Orientation and Transition Experiences](#) (Undergraduates)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Housing & Residential Life](#)
General Questions

Q. **What is the University doing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 on campus?**

The University has and remains committed to ensuring the safety of all students, staff, faculty, and community members. Before the start of the spring semester, the University posted a [Spring 2021 Guide](#), and updates will continue to be posted about Fall 2021 plans on the SAFE-U website.

Q. **How can I be informed about changes and updates?**

ISSS and other offices across campus will provide further updates as these plans are announced. You should regularly read the emails sent to you by ISSS and other offices. We will also continue to update this Frequently Asked Questions document.

It is important that you claim your UMN email if you have not already. Before the start of classes, some offices on campus (including ISSS) will send emails both to your UMN email address and the address you provided on your application. There are some departments, however, that will only email your UMN email account, so you need to check it regularly.

Q. **How can I talk to an ISSS staff person?**

International students who will be arriving at the University of Minnesota for the first time can email isssnew@umn.edu with any questions. We will be happy to answer your inquiry or direct you to the appropriate office.

Q. **Who should I contact if I want to defer my admission?**

We hope you will be able to join us at the University of Minnesota. If your plans change, please contact the appropriate office as soon as possible:

- **Undergraduate Students:** Admissions (admissions@umn.edu) and your college of enrollment. The [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#) has additional information.
- **Graduate and Professional Students:** Your program/department.
- **Non-degree Students:** Your program coordinator.
- **Sponsored students:** Your sponsoring agency and the sponsored student program at isssspon@umn.edu.
Immigration-Related Items

Immigration Documents

Q. Who should I contact to ask a question about my I-20/DS-2019?

If you have an I-20, please contact the following:

- Undergraduate students: isssnew@umn.edu
- Graduate students: gsquest@umn.edu
- Professional school students: isssnew@umn.edu

If you have a DS-2019, please contact the following:

- Issued by the University of Minnesota: isssjast@umn.edu
- Issued by a different J-1 program (for example, Fulbright): Your placement office

Q. Can you send me an electronic copy of my I-20 or DS-2019?

For documents issued by the UMN:

- I-20: ISSS is issuing electronic I-20s for students through spring 2022.
- DS-2019: We can send an unsigned, digital copy of the document for information and visa scheduling purposes. The digital copy cannot be used during the visa interview or to enter the United States. You will need to receive the signed, original DS-2019 in the mail before your visa interview.

Visa Interviews

Q. I’m having difficulties scheduling an appointment for my visa interview. What can I do?

We recommend checking whether appointments are available at another consulate. Some consulates have begun scheduling visa appointments while others have not, so while the consulate nearest you may not have appointments available, another one in your country or nearby may.

Q. If I paid the SEVIS fee ($350 for F-1, $220 for J-1), will I be refunded the fee if I cannot get a visa appointment?

If you plan to defer your admission, your SEVIS fee will be applied to the new term.
Q. If I know that I am going to be taking classes online while outside the U.S., should I wait to pay the SEVIS fee and schedule my visa appointment?

You can decide whether you wish to start the process now or wait. Your SEVIS fee will be valid for one year from the date of payment and should be paid one to two weeks before your visa appointment. Check the embassy or consulate website for visa appointment availability.

Q. Will I need a physical form (versus an electronic copy) of my I-20 or DS-2019 when I go for my visa interview?

- **F-1 Students:** For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, F-1 students are allowed to use the electronic signature and delivery of Form I-20. You must print the I-20 and sign and date the bottom of page 1 for it to be valid. Bring the printed, signed I-20 to your visa interview.
- **J-1 Students:** For those on a J-1 visa, ISSS is not allowed to send you an electronic DS-2019 with an electronic signature. We will need to print and mail your DS-2019 before you go for your visa interview.

### Arrival Information

**Travel Restrictions**

Q. How do I know if the U.S. has issued travel restrictions for my country?

To ensure you have the most up-to-date information, please review the Center for Disease Control and Protection’s website. This website has a list of the included countries and links to the specific Presidential proclamations. Countries not on the list of Presidential Proclamations do not have travel restrictions at this time.

We encourage international students to regularly check the CDC’s website and this FAQ as new travel restrictions may be announced before the start of classes.

Q. The U.S. has issued travel restrictions for my country. What can I do?

If you wish to travel to the U.S. now you can either 1) travel to a third country or 2) determine if you are eligible for a National Interest Exception, and more information is below.
Q. **What do I need to know about traveling to a third country first?**

Individuals coming from one of the listed countries have the option to travel to and stay in a third country for 14 days before coming to the U.S. When deciding whether to do this, you should check the visa requirements of that country along with any quarantine requirements you will be subject to.

**National Interest Exception**

Q. **What is the National Interest Exception? How do I know if I am eligible?**

The [Department of State announced](https://www.state.gov) individuals “who are seeking to provide vital support for critical infrastructure; journalists; students and certain academics covered by exchange visitor programs” (emphasis added) may be eligible for a National Interest Exception (NIE). The eligibility and application process varies based on your visa type, so continue reading for more information.

Q. **What does the NIE mean for F-1 students?**

International students on F-1 visas from the listed countries may be eligible for a National Interest Exception, however, it could depend on when you will arrive in the United States.

**If you are traveling from the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, or Ireland**

Students on F-1 visas after being in any of these areas are automatically eligible for an NIE now. You can travel to the U.S. without waiting 14 days in another country.

If you will be entering the U.S. for the first time on your student visa, please remember that cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start of classes (for those students who have I-20s, this date is printed in the “Earliest Admission Date” field).

**If you are traveling from Brazil, China, India, Iran, or South Africa**

The answer varies based on when you will arrive in the U.S.

**Before August 1**

The NIE is not in effect, so students traveling on F-1 visas after being in these countries will need to 1) stay in a third country for 14 days before entering the U.S., or 2) apply for and be granted an NIE “for purposes related to humanitarian travel, public health response, and national security.”

It is not guaranteed you will be granted an NIE to travel to the U.S. before August 1 even if you have classwork that starts before this date. If you apply, we
recommend you continue planning for the possibility that you will not receive the NIE.

If neither is an option, you will need to delay your travel until August.

On or after August 1

Students on F-1 visas will automatically be granted/considered for the NIE to travel to the U.S. if they are arriving on or after August 1. You do not need to contact an embassy or consulate unless you need to get a new visa or renew an existing visa.

Q. What do I need to know if I have an F-2 dependent?

F-2 Dependents traveling from a country with travel restrictions should be prepared to travel with the F-1 Student.

Q. What does the NIE mean for J-1 students?

- Students needing a J-1 visa to begin or resume classes this fall should request an NIE from their consulate when applying for their J-1 visa, if necessary.
- Students already holding a valid J-1 visa should confirm with their consulate whether they will need an individual NIE in addition to their visa to enter the U.S.

General Travel Information

Q. Am I required to show a negative COVID test before flying to the United States?

Yes, the U.S. is requiring all international travelers to get a viral test. Please review the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website for the most accurate information.

Q. Is the UMN requiring individuals to quarantine after arriving at the UMN?

The University of Minnesota does not currently have plans to require individuals to quarantine after arriving at the UMN. This may change, however, if the situation changes. Please review the CDC’s website as the UMN is following its recommendations.
Q. *What is the earliest I can arrive in the U.S.?*

The following information is the earliest date you can arrive under visa regulations. You need to also confirm whether the U.S. has any travel restrictions for your country. If it does, you will not be allowed to arrive until on or after the later date.

- **If you have an I-20:** You can enter the U.S. on or after “the Earliest Admission Date” printed on your document.
- **If you have a DS-2010:** You can enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the “From” date in box 3 of your document.

Q. *How can students prove to an immigration officer that they are enrolled in courses that are not 100% online?*

If you have registered for classes

There has not been an official announcement stating what documents visa officials or immigration officers may ask to see regarding a student’s enrollment in online classes. Based on the systems used at the University of Minnesota, we recommend you do the following:

1. Go to the Academics tab of MyU.
2. Click on registration and then the button to register for classes (it states “Register (Shopping Cart)”)
3. Select Fall 2021 and click “Continue”.
4. You will then be shown a list of your courses.
5. Take a screenshot of your classes (the directions for how to do this varies by computer)
6. Print out your screenshot and [this PDF](#).

You should bring these documents in your carry-on luggage when you enter the U.S. These documents are not required but could be helpful if you are asked questions about your courses.

If you have not registered for classes

Undergraduate students who are not registered for classes can bring a copy of their orientation schedule (new undergraduate freshman students or new undergraduate transfer students) which indicates they are required to register when they attend orientation.

Q. *What is the latest date that I can arrive at UMN and still attend for Fall 2021?*

If you will be delayed, email your academic adviser or department as soon as you are aware of the delay. They can share specific information about your program
and discuss what you need to do. You should also contact isssnew@umn.edu as soon as you are aware of the delay.

Enrollment Questions

General Enrollment Questions

Q. I have a question about my degree program and/or what classes I should take. Who should I contact?

You should also consult with your Academic Advisor/department about University policy and program-specific requirements and online course availability. ISSS can only advise on your immigration-related requirements.

Studying While Inside the U.S.

Q. I heard that SEVP issued guidance for fall 2021. What do I need to know if I will be studying while within the U.S.?

The University of Minnesota is strongly encouraging all students to enroll in in-person classes if they are able to travel to the U.S. This will allow you to have the best experience.

You should also consult with your Academic Advisor/department about University policy and program-specific requirements. ISSS can only advise on your immigration-related requirements.

Beginning Students (Those Enrolling at the UMN for the First Time Who Have Not Previously Been in Another U.S. Educational Program)

You will need to enroll in a full-time course load including at least one hybrid or in-person course. You are expected to enroll in courses taught in person, but immigration regulations allow you to enroll in online courses, if available.

SEVIS Transfer Students (Those Who Have Previously Been Enrolled in Another U.S. Educational Program)

- Transfer students who studied inside the U.S. in spring 2021 and will now take courses inside the U.S. during fall 2021 must register full time. You are expected to enroll in courses taught in person, but immigration regulations allow you to enroll in online courses, if available. Immigration regulations state:
  - F-1 students may take all classes online.
  - J-1 students must register for at least one in-person class.
• Transfer students who studied online outside the U.S. in spring 2021 and now plan to take courses while inside the U.S. must register full time and should plan to take a hybrid or in-person course.

Q. If I have a class with an online lecture and in-person lab, would it count as an online class or as in-person?

Please contact your Academic Advisor/Graduate Program Coordinator for questions related to individual classes.

Studying While Outside the U.S.

Q. Will I be able to study online from my home country this fall?

We hope you will be able to join us in person this fall. As the majority of the University of Minnesota’s classes will be held in person, studying on campus will mean you will have access to the widest variety of classes. We also believe this will give you the best experience. The University of Minnesota, however, understands that some international students may not be able to come to the U.S. due to visa or travel difficulties.

You should consult with your Academic Advisor/department about program-specific requirements and online course availability. ISSS can only advise on your immigration-related requirements, and there is nothing in the regulations that would prevent you from studying online this fall. You are not be required to follow the F-1/J-1 student visa requirements until you arrive in the U.S.

Q. Will there be enough online courses for international students who are unable to travel to the U.S.?

Decisions about course offerings are generally made at the college and program level, so you should talk to your Academic Advisor/Graduate Program Coordinator about your need for online courses when you meet to discuss registration. Staff at International Student and Scholar Services have also communicated with departments and colleges to ask that they give international students options and flexibility, but your academic advisor/department will be able to answer questions about your program’s courses and options.
Q. I am studying from my home country. If there are not enough online courses for me to be a full-time student, can I take below the full-time requirement?

New “Initial Attendance” I-20 Students

Students who have not yet entered the U.S. for their current degree program are not required to follow F-1/J-1 rules while studying from outside the U.S. You can start your UMN studies and take the classes that are available. You will need to do the following:

- Email isssnew@umn.edu to inform ISSS you will not be arriving in the fall.
- You should also contact your academic advisor/graduate program coordinator.
- Undergraduate Students: Undergraduate students taking less than 13 credits will also need to submit a 13-credit Exemption Request.

New SEVIS Transfer Students

If you are a SEVIS transfer student and you have an Active SEVIS record with your current/previous institution, ISSS will be required to terminate your SEVIS record for not enrolling full time. Please contact ISSS to tell us if this is your case.

If your SEVIS record is terminated, you will need to contact ISSS before you return to request a new I-20/DS-2019. We request you contact ISSS three months before your planned arrival to allow processing time.

Note: You should be aware that if your SEVIS record is terminated, you will not be eligible to apply for OPT/CPT until you have completed 2 full-time semesters while inside the U.S. (for example, fall and spring). You will also need to pay the SEVIS fee again.

You should also contact your academic advisor/graduate program coordinator.
Undergraduate Students: Undergraduate students taking less than 13 credits will also need to submit a 13-credit Exemption Request.

ISSS Requirements for New International Students

Q. What do I need to do to have the AI Hold removed from my account?

If you will study in-person while inside the U.S.

All new international students arriving at the University of Minnesota for the first time must complete two new student requirements to have this hold removed:

1. The International Preparation Course should be completed before you arrive in the USA, and
2. Complete an ISSS Check-In and upload your immigration documents through MyISSS as soon as possible after arriving in the USA.
We also encourage you to attend Global Gopher Events, but this is not required. If you have any questions about new student requirements, email issnnew@umn.edu.

If you are undecided/unsure about if you will study on-campus during Fall 2021
We recommend that you complete the International Student Preparation Course now.

If you will take all of your courses online while outside of the U.S. in Fall 2021
You do not need to complete your New Student Requirements now, but we strongly encourage you to complete the International Student Preparation Course as soon as possible.

- **Undergraduate Students:** Your AI hold will be temporarily released so that you can register for classes when you attend your New Student Orientation.
- **Graduate Students:** Your AI hold has been temporarily released to allow registration for the Fall 2021 semester.

Q.  I deferred my admission and did not enroll in courses last fall/spring. Do I need to complete the International Student Preparation Course?

Yes, if you deferred your admission and did not enroll in classes for the Fall 2020/Spring 2021 semester, you must complete the new International Student Preparation Course before the start of the Fall 2021 semester.

**Health Care**

See the Student Fees section for information about the Health Insurance Fee

**Health Insurance**

Q.  *Am I required to have health insurance if I am studying within the United States?*

Yes, all international students who are in the United States are required to have the Student Health Benefit Plan or the Graduate Assistantship Plan.

Q.  *Does the student health insurance cover me if I were to get sick?*

Yes, please review the Office of Student Health Benefits website for more information about the Student Health Benefit Plan or the Graduate Assistant Health Plan. You can also email umshbo@umn.edu if you have additional questions about your insurance plan.
Q. **Am I required to have health insurance if I am studying online while outside the United States?**

If you are studying outside of the U.S. in your home country, you will need to waive the University-sponsored insurance (SHBP). Every semester you will have to submit a [completed waiver form](#) to the Office of Student Health Benefits by mail, email, or fax. You are not required to submit additional documentation if you have not traveled to the U.S. on a UMN visa.

Once approved, your health insurance waiver will be valid for one semester.

(“Residence in your home country” means you’re physically studying remotely in your home country.)

**COVID-19 Vaccine**

Please review [General Travel Information](#) for questions about the quarantine.

Q. **Will I be required to have the vaccine before arrival to attend the University of Minnesota?**

At this time, there is no requirement to have the COVID-19 vaccine before arriving at the University of Minnesota. However, a requirement may be announced before the start of the school year. Please regularly check your UMN email and reference the University’s [Safe Campus](#) page and [Student FAQs](#) for any updates.

Q. **Will I be eligible for a vaccine upon arrival?**

Vaccines are becoming widely available. All UMN students, staff, and faculty ages 16 and older will be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. For the most up-to-date information on vaccine eligibility, review this [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)](#) document, as well as to check your UMN email regularly for vaccine availability updates.

**Student Fees**

Q. **Where can I find information about student fees?**

You should review the [One Stop website](#) and/or [contact One Stop](#) if you have questions about your student fees.
Employment

Q. Is it possible for me to have a job as an international student and work outside the U.S.?

Some students will be able to be hired and continue/start new jobs while being outside the U.S. during the fall semester.

- Graduate and professional degree students should contact their academic department where they can assist in the next steps to determine if you are eligible for employment.
- Undergraduate students starting new positions should tell the hiring department that you are hoping to work remotely from another country when you are applying for the position.

Q. As a student, what paperwork do I need to complete before starting employment?

You should talk to the Human Resources/I-9 Administrator for your department about the process to complete your Form I-9. You will need to present several documents to complete this form. All new UMN employees must complete their I-9 on or before their first day of employment.

Housing

On-Campus Housing

Q. I have questions about living on-campus. Who should I contact?

For questions about on-campus housing, please review the Housing and Residential Life website for more information. To read more specific information for international students, please visit the Housing’s webpage for international students.

Q. I am arriving before I can move into my housing. Does the University have options for where I live until my housing is available?

Yes, international students who have international flights or other extenuating circumstances can stay in the University’s International Early Arrival Housing (IEAH). More information will be posted on the Housing and Residential Life website when it is available.

Alternatively, there are a variety of hotels near campus. For a list of local hotels, go to Meet Minneapolis or Visit St. Paul.
Off-Campus Housing

Q. I have questions about living off-campus. Who should I contact?

For questions about living off-campus, please review the Off-Campus Living website. It provides an overview of the neighborhoods surrounding the university and some things to be aware of when you are renting in the U.S.

You will need to contact a landlord or apartment manager directly to get information about renting a specific property. Check the reviews of a specific rental property for you to know whether it is suitable for your needs.

Q. I've found somewhere I want to live off-campus, and I'm now being told I will need to sign a lease. What should I do?

It is important that you fully understand the lease before signing. We strongly recommend asking Student Legal Services to review your lease and/or to provide advice on negotiating with your landlord. SLS’s support is free for all UMN students who have paid the Student Services Fee.