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 isssnew@umn.edu.

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

- General Questions
- Immigration-Related Items
  - Immigration Documents
  - Visa Interviews
- Arrival Information
  - Travel Restrictions
  - General Travel Information
- Enrollment Questions
- ISSS Requirements for New International Students
- Health Care
  - Health Insurance
  - COVID-19 Vaccine
- Student Fees
- 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](https://issss.umn.edu/safe-u), and updates will continue to be posted about Fall 2021 plans on the [SAFE-U website](https://issss.umn.edu/safe-u).

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](https://www.umn.edu/about/student-convocation-center) 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](mailto: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](mailto:admissions@umn.edu)) and your college of enrollment. The [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](https://www.umn.edu/academic-affairs/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](mailto: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. If I paid the SEVIS fee and cannot get a visa appointment, will I be refunded the fee ($350 for F-1, $220 for J-1)?

If you plan to defer your admission, your SEVIS fee will be applied to the new term.

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 know that I am going to be taking classes online while outside the US, should I wait to pay the SEVIS fee and schedule my visa appointment?

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

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.

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.

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

The [Department of State](https://www.state.gov) announced 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. The eligibility and application process varies based on your visa type, so continue reading for more information.

**F-1 Students**

International students on F-1 visas from the listed countries may be eligible for a National Interest Exception (NIE), 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.

### F-2 Dependents

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

### 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](https://www.cdc.gov) 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](https://www.cdc.gov) 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. 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

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.

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 isssnew@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 Frequenty 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](https://www.umn.edu) and/or contact One Stop if you have questions about your student fees.

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](https://www.umn.edu) for more information. To read more specific information for international students, please visit the Housing’s webpage for [International students](https://www.umn.edu).

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)](https://www.umn.edu). 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](https://www.meetminneapolis.com) or [Visit St. Paul](https://www.visitsaintpaul.com).

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](https://www.umn.edu). 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?**

International Student and Scholar Services
iss.s.umn.edu/new | isssnew@umn.edu
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.