Dear Returning International Students and Scholars,

We know you probably have a lot of questions about planning for the fall. This document includes information for returning international students. We are working with departments across the University to develop plans that will give you the flexibility needed to ensure you can continue your studies at the University, whether that is here in Minnesota or online from your home country.

We will continue to update this document as information becomes available. We also encourage you to regularly read the emails sent to your UMN email from ISSS and other departments. Otherwise, click on the links below to read answers grouped by topic area:

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Attention New Students Starting in the Summer/Fall: This document is for students who have completed, at least, one semester at the University of Minnesota. Please review ISSS's information for new students.
University Fall Planning

**Q. What is the University’s plan for the fall?**

The Board of Regents has approved a framework for resuming in-person instruction and reopening residence halls and campus services this fall in ways that are consistent with public health guidance and provide flexibility for students, staff, and faculty. Courses will be offered in a variety of options, including in-person, fully distanced, hybrid, “HyFlex,” and others. Please review the message sent by President Joan Gabel for more information about these plans.

**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. To ensure you receive these updates, make sure to check your UMN email regularly and read the ISSS Weekly Update sent at the beginning of the week. This is the UMN’s primary way to contact with you.

We will also continue to update this Frequently Asked Questions document.

**Immigration**

**Q. Does the June 22 presidential proclamation suspending entry of immigrants to the U.S. apply to returning international students?**

This ban does not impact international students and scholars. It also does not affect applications for changes or adjustment of status within the U.S. It suspends entry to the U.S. under certain work visas through the end of the year. ISSS will continue to track this presidential proclamation closely, and we will provide more updates through the ISSS Weekly Update and our website when further information is available.

**Q. I am a current student, and I would like to take classes online from my home country in the fall term. Will my visa status be impacted negatively if I do?**

Regarding your visa status, we regret that we cannot answer this question at this time. ISSS is waiting for updated guidance from the federal government regarding the fall semester.

While permission was granted for students to take classes online from their home country for the spring/summer semester, an announcement has not yet been made regarding whether this permission will be continued in the fall.

**NOTE:** We have received questions regarding whether taking classes online in the fall will affect CPT eligibility for Summer 2021. At this time, we are still awaiting guidance from the federal government and are unable to answer this question.

International Student and Scholar Services
isss.umn.edu | isss@umn.edu
Q. **Can you send me an electronic copy of my I-20 or DS-2019?**

I-20: ISSS has begun issuing electronic I-20s for students requesting Travel I-20s, CPT, program extensions, updates to their majors, and other items. ISSS must ship a paper I-20 for students applying to OPT and STEM OPT.

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.

Q. **Will the April 22 Executive Order suspending entry of immigrants to the US apply to Fall 2020 new international students?**

The Executive Order does not apply to international students and scholars. Review our website for more information.

Q. **If the situation makes it unfavorable to be in the United States (either because of safety concerns or flight issues), am I allowed to take online classes from my country instead? Or am I allowed to take the fall semester off and officially start taking classes the next semester?**

The University of Minnesota is seeking various ways to provide flexibility and support to students who are not able to arrive on campus in the fall semester, want to take courses online or chose to change their plans based on the COVID 19 pandemic.

As a continuing student, you need to consult your academic advisor and/or department to plan for the online courses and/or request a Leave of Absence from ISSS by sending an email to isss@umn.edu.

Please be aware that only taking online courses may impact your CPT, OPT, and Academic Training eligibility. We are currently awaiting guidance from the U.S. federal government whether any previous restrictions will change in the future.

**Visa Appointments**

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 announced plans for scheduling future 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.

Please continue to check your UMN email and the ISSS website. We are hopeful that updated information will be announced soon regarding visa appointments, and we will communicate this information once it is available.
Q. If I paid the SEVIS FEE but can’t get a visa appointment, do I lose the $350?

If you plan to defer your admission to a future term, your SEVIS number will remain the same and the fee will be applied to the new term. For more information about the SEVIS Fee, visit www.fmjfee.com.

Arrival

Q. The U.S. has issued travel restrictions for my country. Can I return to the U.S. by traveling through another country?

Yes, however, if you are in a country where the U.S. has restricted travel, you will need to spend 14 days in a 3rd country before entering the U.S. You should check with that country to ensure you meet their travel and visa requirements before making travel arrangements.

Q. If the current travel restrictions from China remain, will students need to arrive through a third country and remain there for 14 days?

Yes, if you are traveling from China, at this time students will need to spend 14 days in a country where the U.S. has not imposed travel restrictions prior to entering the U.S.

Q. What is the latest date that I can arrive at UMN and still attend for Fall 2020?

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.

Graduation

Q. I have applied to graduate this fall. Can I take all my remaining classes and exams online and graduate as scheduled at the end of the fall term?

You should also consult with your academic adviser to determine if you can complete your remaining requirements online. The current SEVP guidance is that once a school returns to normal operations, if students cannot or choose not to return to the U.S. to study, schools should terminate their SEVIS records, however, this guidance could change for fall semester.

Health Care, Campus Safety, and Benefits

Q. What is the University of Minnesota’s plan to ensure students are safe this fall?

The University of Minnesota is developing substantial plans and procedures regarding safety this fall. Please refer to the Return to Campus webpage for more information.

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.

**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.
Q. If I have already signed a lease to live off-campus but will not be taking classes on-campus in the fall, what can I do?

More likely than not, you have a legally binding contract, so you will likely need to find somebody else to take over the lease. You should contact your landlord or apartment manager directly to see if they would be willing to let you out of the lease early. Student Legal Services can also provide assistance with reviewing the language in your lease and provide ideas about ways to negotiate.

Q. If the fall term ends the week of Thanksgiving, can I shorten my housing contract?

If you will be living in on-campus housing, please review the Housing and Residential Life website for more information.

For questions about living off-campus, please review the Off-Campus Living Office webpage. You will need to contact your landlord or apartment manager directly. Student Legal Services can also provide assistance with leases.

Employment

Q. As a student, can I complete my I-9 Form to start employment?

You will need to be on-campus to complete your I-9 Form. The UMN Office of Human Resources is continuing to accept I-9 appointments for new foreign national employees. Email ohr@umn.edu to make an appointment at the Donhowe Building and review OHR’s website for more information.

Q. I am about to start a job. Can I get a Social Security Number (SSN)?

It is not possible to apply for a Social Security Number currently as all Social Security Administration field offices are closed due to COVID-19, and new applications are not being processed.

However, USCIS documentation confirms that F-1 students, J-1 students/scholars, and others do not need an SSN to properly complete an I-9 form (the form you will be required to complete by your organization before starting employment). You will need to work with your employer’s Human Resource (HR) department to complete the I-9 form without a Social Security Number, and you will need to apply for an SSN once the office re-opens. You will need an SSN to qualify for any applicable tax-treaty benefits that exist with your country along with other U.S. tax requirements.

Alternatively, if you plan to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), you have the option to apply for one when completing the I-765 form.