Dear New International Students,

We know you probably have a lot of questions about planning for fall. This document includes information for new international students and provides responses to the most frequently asked questions. We are working with departments across the University to develop plans that will give you the flexibility needed to ensure you can begin 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. For individual questions, please email isssnew@umn.edu.

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Attention Returning International Students: This document is for new international students. Please see ISSS's information for returning students.
General Information

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 and [the return to campus plan](#) and student general [frequently asked questions](#) for more information.

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

ISSS is working with offices across campus to develop plans to support international students during their transition to the University. ISSS and other offices across campus will continue to provide updates and guidance on changes. To ensure you receive these updates, you should do the following:

- Regularly check your UMN email. If you have not already, please [claim your UMN email account](#) so you are able to receive these messages.
- Complete the [International Student Preparation Course](#) and any other online orientations. ISSS and other offices will update the information when decisions are announced.

Q. **Who should I contact if my plans change?**

- **Undergraduate Students**: Admissions (admissions@umn.edu) and your college of enrollment.
  - Additional information: [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#)
- **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).

Regarding Arriving and Taking Classes While Inside the U.S.

Q. **I’m a newly admitted student planning to come to campus from abroad to begin my studies this fall. Will I be allowed to enter the USA?**

New F-1 students are eligible to apply for a visa to enter the U.S. as long as they are not registered for 100% online courses. J-1 students will be required to take one in-person course. Contact your academic advisor to review your registration options if you need assistance in selecting appropriate courses.

As you make your fall plans please continue to check both the [Center of Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov) website and the [U.S. Department of State](https://travel.state.gov) website for travel updates. The rules around COVID-19 and travel are changing rapidly.
Q. The U.S. has issued travel restrictions for my country. Am I able to enter the U.S. if traveling through another country?

If you have been in any of the countries listed on the Center of Disease Control website during the past 14 days, you may not enter the United States at this time. Some travelers have made arrangements to travel to another country and quarantine there before arriving in the U.S. Travelers who make such plans are at risk of being subject to changes in travel restrictions while en route.

Q. How can I satisfy the in-person course requirement for fall?

Talk with your academic advisor if you have trouble finding an appropriate course to meet this requirement.

- **New F-1 Students** are required in fall 2020 to enroll in at least one in-person or blended course, for at least 1 credit. The remainder of your courses can all be online.
- **J-1 students** will be required to take one in person course in fall 2020, if they choose to enter the United States and come to the University of Minnesota campus.

Q. Will I have to leave the U.S. if the University switches to all online courses during fall semester?

The July 24th SEVP Guidance clarified that all F-1 international students in the U.S. will be able to maintain their status and remain in the US. if the UMN switches to all online courses at a future date in the fall semester. This does not apply to J 1s and their DS-2019.

**Regarding Taking Online Classes While Outside the U.S.**

Q: In case of visa delays, can students begin classes online from home and arrive on campus later in the fall to continue classes in-person?

If you are not able to obtain your visa by the start of fall semester or shortly after the semester begins, the University recommends take your courses online. Students may not arrive on campus mid-semester. You should contact the ISSS office and your academic department if you are planning to arrive after the start of classes.

Q. If I take my classes outside of the United States, will my SEVIS ID be the same and/or when will I receive my new I-20/DS-2019?

If you decide to take all your courses online from abroad for the fall 2020 semester, you will receive an updated I-20/DS-2019 with the same SEVIS ID.

- **Undergraduate students:** Contact isssnew@umn.edu to inform them of your plans. ISSS will begin updating and reissuing documents in late August or early September.
- **Graduate and Professional School Students:** contact your department to inform them of your plans, and they will contact the office that will process your updated document.
- **Non-degree students:** Contact your program coordinator to inform them of your plans.
Q: If I obtain my visa and decide to study from my home country, will my visa be cancelled?

Your visa (the stamp in your passport) will not be canceled if you decide to study from your home country. You will be able to use it to enter the United States in the spring.

Q. If I study online from my home country for Fall 2020, will I be eligible for CPT (curricular practical training) starting Summer 2021?

No, to be eligible for Curricular Practical Training, a student must study in the U.S. for a full academic year.

Q. Do I need to do ISSS’s New International Student Requirements if I am planning to take all of my classes online from my home country?

If you are planning on taking all online courses from outside of the United States (not arriving on-campus) for Fall 2020 your New International Student Requirements (the International Student Preparation Course and the ISSS Check-In through MyISSS) will be shifted to be completed before the start of the spring term. You will complete the ISSS Check-In the spring after arriving in the United States.

If you are undecided/unsure if you will be arriving on-campus for Fall 2020, we recommend that you complete the International Student Preparation Course now.

Regarding Deferring Fall Enrollment

Q. If the situation makes it unfavorable to be in the United States (either because of safety concerns or flight issues), can I defer my enrollment?

The UMN is seeking various ways to provide flexibility and support to students who are not able to arrive on campus in the fall semester or who choose to change their plans based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Undergraduates**: To defer enrollment, contact the Office of Admissions to request. ISSS will issue a new I-20 or DS-2019 for a future semester.
- **Graduate and professional students**: Contact your academic program to discuss your plans to defer. You will need to be issued a new I-20 or DS-2019 for a future semester.
- **Non-degree seeking students**: Contact your program coordinator.
- **Sponsored students**: Contact your sponsoring agency and the UMN’s sponsored student program at isssspon@umn.edu.

Q. If I defer my enrollment, will my SEVIS ID be the same and/or when will I receive my new I-20/DS-2019?

If you defer your admission, you will receive an updated I-20/DS-2019 with the same SEVIS ID.

- **Undergraduate students**: Contact isssnew@umn.edu to inform them of your plans. ISSS will begin updating and reissuing documents in late August or early September.
- **Graduate and Professional School Students**: contact your department to inform them of your plans, and they will contact the office that will process your updated document.
- **Non-degree students**: Contact your program coordinator to inform them of your plans.
Visa Appointments

Q. For my visa appointment, do I need any supporting documentation or a new I-20 to demonstrate that the University of Minnesota is hybrid?

On July 24, 2020, the Student Exchange Visitor Program updated the guidelines regarding fall enrollment. These updated guidelines clarified that a new student is eligible for a visa and entry only if they will not be 100% online. As soon as you are able, you will need to be registered for at least one course that is not fully online. You can work directly with your academic advisor to register for at least one course that is offered in a hybrid or in person format.

Prior to your visa interview, ISSS recommends that you obtain an updated I-20 which certifies that you will not take an entirely online course load for fall 2020. While it may not be required, you can provide this documentation at your visa interview to verify that the University of Minnesota is following a hybrid model this fall. The updated I-20 can be sent electronically, to your UMN email account. To request an updated I-20 please contact the office that issued your initial UMN I-20:

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

Q. Will I need a physical form (versus 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 in order 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.

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. Can I apply for a visa to enter the US for a hybrid program?

Yes, students enrolling in a program that includes in-person and online components are eligible to apply for an F-1 visa.

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 defer, should I wait until I receive my updated I-20/DS-2019 to schedule my visa interview?

Students can schedule their visa appointment with their current I-20/DS-2019 as the updated document will contain the same SEVIS ID.

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?

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 prior to your visa appointment. Check the embassy or consulate website for visa appointment availability.

Health Care, Health Insurance, and Campus Safety

Q. Will I be required to self-quarantine upon arrival?

Students traveling to the University of Minnesota from outside of the U.S. must self-quarantine after arrival for 14 days and watch for symptoms of COVID-19. Self-quarantine means individuals should stay home, separate themselves from others and monitor their health. Contact a nurse at Boynton Health at 612-625-7900 to discuss your quarantine arrangement or if you are experiencing any symptoms.

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. 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.

Housing

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

For questions about 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 which provides an overview of the neighborhoods surrounding the university and some things to be aware when you are renting in the US. 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. Student Legal Services can also provide assistance with reviewing your lease or providing advice on negotiating with your landlord.
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.

If you will be living off-campus, contact the landlord or apartment manager about making changes to your contract. You can also review the Off-Campus Living Office webpage.

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 ideas about ways to negotiate.

Q. Will I be able to live on campus over Winter Break?

For students with an on-campus housing contract, there are options for break housing. Historically the on-campus apartments and a few residence halls remain open. More information about break housing will be available in mid-July.