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.

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?

The current U.S government guidance states, "If Initial students have not arrived in the United States, they should remain in their home country." We do not know if this guidance will be revised to give more information before the beginning of fall. As such, students who are travelling to the United States for the first time to start classes need to be aware that it is possible they might not be allowed admission into the U.S.

Also, due to the COVID pandemic, the U.S. government has imposed travel restrictions on individuals coming from certain countries. International students coming from one of the listed countries (while the restrictions are in place) cannot enter the United States, unless they qualify for an exception.

International Student and Scholar Services
iss.s.umn.edu | isss@umn.edu
As you make your fall plans please continue to check both the [CDC website](https://www.cdc.gov) and the [U.S. Department of State website](https://travel.state.gov) for travel updates. The rules around COVID and travel are changing rapidly. Continue to work with your academic advisers/program directors to ensure you have the option to take your classes remotely, from your home country.

**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:** *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.

**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](https://www.cissu.umn.edu), a student must study in the U.S. for a full academic year.

**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 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 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.

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**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.** *If I paid the SEVIS fee and cannot get a visa appointment, will I be refunded the fee 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 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.

**Miscellaneous Immigration Related Questions**

**Q.** *Can you send me an electronic copy of my I-20?*

Electronic I-20 delivery is available for some types of I-20 requests, but not all. The University of Minnesota continues to issue hard copies of Initial Attendance I-20s for students who will be new to the U.S., or have a gap of more than 5 months between their previous U.S. program and their start at UMN.

**Health Care, Health Insurance, and Campus Safety**

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

Yes, please review the [Office of Student Health Benefits website](https://www.umn.edu/student-health) 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](https://returntocampus.umn.edu) 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](https://www.umn.edu/housing) for more information.

For questions about living off-campus, please review the [Off-Campus Living Office webpage](https://www.umn.edu/offcampus) 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](https://www.umn.edu/legalservices) 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](https://www.umn.edu/housing) 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.