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# Answers to Questions from New International Students Regarding Fall 2020 at the UMN

From ISSS | Last Updated September 21, 2020



## Dear New International Students,

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 [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu).

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

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### For More Information:

- [Safe Campus: Return to Campus](#)
- [Office of Undergraduate Education](#)
- [Orientation and Transition Experiences](#) (Undergraduates)
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- [Housing & Residential Life](#)

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

ISSS staff are working remotely and are available to answer questions from international students and scholars. To contact an advisor:

- **Before arriving on campus:** International students can email [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu) to ask questions about their arrival to their University of Minnesota.
- **After arriving on campus (for those coming to the U.S.) or after classes begin:** Please email [iss@umn.edu](mailto:iss@umn.edu) or complete the [ISSS Phone Request Form](#) to schedule an appointment to talk to an ISSS advisor.

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

- **Undergraduate Students:** Admissions ([admissions@umn.edu](mailto: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).

## SEVP Guideline Updates

**Q. *I'm a newly admitted F-1 student who has been studying at another institution in the United States. I have not left the United States. How do the new SEVP guidelines apply to me?***

Students who are transferring from another U.S. institution and who have been continually inside the U.S. are allowed to register for 100% online courses.

**Q. *I'm a newly admitted F-1 student who has been studying in the United States and travelled to go home, but plan to return to study at the University in the fall. How do the new SEVP guidelines apply to me?***

New students who are transferring from other U.S. institutions who plan to enter the U.S. are eligible to apply for a visa and enter the U.S. as long as they are not registered for 100% online courses.

**Q. *Do I need a new I-20 with the new SEVP guidelines?***

If you are outside the U.S. and have not already received an I-20 indicating the University will be using a hybrid model for fall and you will not be enrolling in 100% online courses please request an updated I-20 by contacting the office that issued your initial UMN I-20:

- **Undergraduate students:** [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu)
- **Graduate students:** [gsquest@umn.edu](mailto:gsquest@umn.edu)
- **Professional school students:** [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu)

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

**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.

## Travel Items

**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.

**Q. *I am a new student who is currently outside the United States. I want to attend classes in the U.S. for Fall 2020, but I will be late. What should I do?***

September 20 will be the latest day the University will allow new students to arrive in the United States. However, **prior to making plans that would result in you entering the United States after the Program Start Date indicated on your current I-20**, you will need to 1) get permission from your instructor(s) and 2) obtain an updated I-20.

- **Undergraduate students** who will miss an in-person or blended course meeting due to their late arrival will need to contact their course instructor(s) in advance to secure their seat in the course. Once your request is approved, you should email [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu) to request an updated I-20.
- **Graduate students** must contact their department to receive permission to arrive after the start date listed on their I-20. Departments may vary in the date they establish as the last day to arrive on campus. You should then inform the Graduate Admissions office, which will issue your updated I-20 and email it to you.
- **Professional School students** must contact their program to receive permission to arrive late. Professional programs may vary in the date they establish as the last day to arrive on campus. You should then email [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu) to request an updated I-20.

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

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:

### **If you have registered for classes:**

1. Log in to MyU and select the My Finances tab.
2. Click on the link for the Registration & Fee Summary.
3. Select the appropriate items from the drop downs and then click "View Report".
4. Print the summary along with [this PDF](#).

Bring both documents with you to the embassy and when you go through the immigration inspection process when you enter the U.S. These documents are not required, but they could be helpful if you are asked about whether you are taking an in-person/hybrid course..

## **If you have not registered for classes:**

Undergraduate students who are not registered can bring a copy of their orientation schedule which states they are required to register when they attend orientation.

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

On Friday, August 7, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) lifted the 14-day quarantine for international travelers. International students who are coming to the UMN from countries outside of the United States DO NOT need to quarantine for two weeks when they arrive. For more information, see the CDC website for [Tips for After You Travel](#).

## **Health Care**

[See the Student Fees section for information about the Health Insurance Fee](#)

### **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](mailto:umshbo@umn.edu) if you have additional questions about your insurance plan.

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

### **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 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 [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@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 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.

## ISSS New Student Requirements

**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 while outside of the U.S.** (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. While you are not required, we encourage you to complete the International Student Preparation Course.

- **Undergraduate Students:** Your AI hold will be temporarily released so that you can register for classes when you sign up for orientation.
- **Graduate Students:** Your AI hold has already been temporarily released.

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. *Do I need to update my address in MyU if I will be studying from my home country this fall?***

**If you are a new "Initial Attendance" student for Fall 2020** and will study online from outside the U.S. for your first term, you are not required to enter a U.S. address in MyU at this time. You will need to enter your U.S. address in MyU within 10 days of arriving in the U.S. when you do so.

## Regarding Deferral of 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](mailto:isssspon@umn.edu).

**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. You will need to take the updated I-20/DS-2019 to your visa interview.

## 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: [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@umn.edu)
- Graduate students: [gsquest@umn.edu](mailto:gsquest@umn.edu)
- Professional school students: [issnew@umn.edu](mailto:issnew@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 U.S. 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 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.

## Student Fees

### Health Insurance

**Q. *Am I required to have health insurance if I am studying within the United States and enrolled at the University of Minnesota?***

Yes, all students who are in the United States and enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have the Student Health Benefit Plan unless they are eligible for a waiver. This requirement applies regardless of how your courses are being delivered (in-person, online, or hyflex). For more information, go to [www.shb.umn.edu](http://www.shb.umn.edu).

**Q. *I am studying online from my home country in fall 2020. How do I ensure that I am not being charged for the University Health Insurance?***

By October 1, you must submit the International Waiver Request Form to waive the Student Health Benefit Plan by October 1st. To do this, you must submit the form along with documentation showing that you are residing in your home country to the Student Health Benefits office. If you are residing outside the U.S. in a third country that is not your country of citizenship, please contact [umshbo@umn.edu](mailto:umshbo@umn.edu).

Below are options for the documentation you can provide. Please contact ISSS if you need additional help in understanding this requirement.

- Copy of your flight ticket/itinerary showing your departure from the United States,
- The electronic I-94 travel history if it shows your most recent departure (this can be accessed here),
- A copy of your passport showing a stamped entry date into your home country, or
- A letter or email from your academic advisor (undergraduate) or Graduate Program Coordinator (graduate students) that states you are studying from your home country.

Once you have submitted your waiver and document copy, your fees on your MyU account will be updated. Please be aware, however, that it may take up to 2 weeks for your account to be updated due to the high volume of requests.



**Q. *I have reported my plans, but my account still shows the health insurance balance, what are my next steps?***

If you have reported your plans and your account is not updated by September 20, 2020, please contact the Office of Student Health Benefits at [umshbo@umn.edu](mailto:umshbo@umn.edu). There may be a delay in processing waivers.

## ISSS and Other Fees

**Q. *Do I still need to pay the ISSS fees if I'm not on the Twin Cities campus this fall or if I'm taking all my classes online?***

Yes, international students will continue to pay ISSS fees. In a thorough review of student fees, the Board of Regents decided all international students will be required to pay the International Student Support Services Fee and International Student Engagement Fee this fall regardless of whether they are taking their courses in-person or online this fall. These fees directly support all International students through programs and services provided by International Student and Scholar Services.

The International Student Support Services Fee of \$175.00 supports our services for F-1 and J-1 students, including immigration advising, counseling, programming, and advocacy. ISSS advisers remain available to communicate with international students about their visa-related questions and other issues related to transitioning to instruction at the University of Minnesota. The International Student Engagement fee of \$14.00 supports key student programs that continue to be offered virtually this fall.

**Q. *Do I need to pay other student service fees?***

Your bill for the term will include the fees that apply to your specific course registration. Tuition and fees support the variety of services our students rely on for their educational and student life success, and these wide-ranging resources and services continue to be available in a variety of existing and new formats.

In response to COVID-19, many Student Services Fee-funded services have been enhanced to ensure that units are still able to serve students regardless of physical location (online workout programs, remote access to legal services, etc.). The physical location of the student or the service unit is no longer a significant factor in the delivery of many services. You should review the [One Stop website](#) and/or [contact One Stop](#) if you have questions about your student fees.

## 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 information about Housing's updated plans for the start of the fall semester, see Housing's [Maroon and Gold Sunrise Plan](#).

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. *Is housing available for new international students arriving before they can move into their permanent housing?***

Yes, students who have international flights or other extenuating circumstances (for example, those not having a safe housing alternative and/or students who have in-person instruction prior to the new move-in period) can stay in the University's [International Early Arrival Housing \(IEAH\)](#). See Housing's website for more information about how to request to stay in IEAH and move in/move out procedures.

**Please be aware that new students are the only individuals who can stay in IEAH.** Students who are traveling with other individuals (such as family members) must find another housing alternative such as a hotel. A list of hotels can be found on the Meet Minneapolis website, and we encourage you to ask if they have any special move-in rates.

**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. Housing and Residential Life will provide further information about housing over break.

## Employment

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

Many 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**, for on-going employment, should contact their previous supervisor to learn about their options. For those starting for new positions, you should ask the department if you can work remotely from another country when you are applying for the position.

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

The UMN Office of Human Resources is processing I-9 verifications remotely for foreign national employees. To submit the necessary paperwork, new employees should compile and complete their documents (review [OHR's website](#) to identify the appropriate documents) and then email them to [I9OHR@umn.edu](mailto:I9OHR@umn.edu). It is important all of the forms are completed as incomplete forms and missing visa documents will delay processing.

All new UMN employees must submit their I-9 forms **on or before their first day of employment**, so the forms should be submitted as soon as possible. The OHR Contact Center is only able to process documents Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m to 3:00 p.m. If documents are sent in on a weekend and the start date is the following Monday, the process will most likely not be completed in time.

The OHR Contact Center can help with any questions about the forms and documents. Call 4-UOHR (+1-612-624-8647) and select Option 2.