

Staff Resource Guide: New Graduate International Students

University of Minnesota

Fall 2019

ISSS

International
Student & Scholar
Services

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Dear Graduate and Professional School Colleagues,

The goal of this resource guide is to provide you with **information and resources that will help you in assisting international students during the first semester.**

By creating a smooth transition, international students are more likely to succeed academically and be fully engaged in their graduate experience. International students are defined as students here on non-immigrant visas whose primary purpose for being in the U.S. is to study full-time. International students make up approximately 19% of the graduate and professional student body.

Together our vision is to create an inclusive and engaged international learning community!

International Student and Scholar Services
The Graduate School
Minnesota English Language Program

Contents

Summary of Changes and Request for Assistance.....	3
International Student Pre-Arrival Information.....	4
Introduction to MyISSS.....	6
English Language Requirements and Resources	7
English as a Second Language Courses	8
Students Experiencing Personal Difficulties or Mental Health Issues	9
International Student Articles and Resources	10
Contact Information	11

Summary of Changes and Request for Assistance

ISSS has made several changes to our check-in process for new international students this year. These changes were made to ensure efficiency and the seamless transition for incoming students while supporting UMN departments and International Student and Scholar Services.

While most of these changes only impact how students interact with ISSS, we ask that you review your department's new student communications (websites, handbooks, emails) to ensure they are updated to include the correct information.

If you are interested, you can see a list of all of the changes occurring this year at z.umn.edu/issf19changes, but the following items are the most significant items:

- There are **three steps** that must be completed for an international student's AI hold to be temporarily removed to allow them to register for their first semester (see page 8 for more about the entire process):
 1. The student **must complete the International Student Preparation Course**.
 2. The student must **upload their documents using the "Document Check" form on MyISSS** (myiss.umn.edu). This must be done after the student arrives in the USA as one of the documents is given to the student when they enter the USA (see page 6 for more information about MyISSS, our new online system for accepting immigration-related requests).
 3. The student must **attend the ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session** (formerly called Immigration Check-In).

While you can choose how much information to include in your publications, we ask that colleges and departments only link to the New Student section of the ISSS website (iss.umn.edu/new) rather than linking to individual requirements (such as giving a link directly to the International Student Preparation Course) as this will decrease the likelihood of out-of-date information being given to students.

Thank you in advance for supporting our students as they transition to the University.

Please feel free to contact me (moha0015@umn.edu, ext. 6-8494) if you have additional questions.

International Student Pre-Arrival Information

After admission, all new international students can access pre-arrival information from three main sources.

Pre-Arrival Guide for New International Students

After confirming enrollment to the University, students are emailed a [Pre-Arrival Guide](#) along with their immigration documents. The guide contains general information relevant to all new international students regardless of college. A link to the guide is also available in the [New Student section](#) of the ISSS website.

International Student Preparation Course

The International Student Preparation Course is a tool to help new international students prepare for their arrival at the University by learning about certain expectations and requirements. Students are encouraged to complete the International Student Preparation Course as soon as possible, and they must complete it at least 24 hours before their ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session appointment (information below).

Modules include:

1. Introduction Videos from ISSS Assistant Dean Barbara Kappler
2. Preparing for Arrival
3. Requirements Upon Arrival
4. Enrollment
5. Academics
6. Employment
7. Travel
8. Cultural Adjustment

We invite you to view the information by visiting iss.s.umn.edu/new/online.html.

ISSS Emails

ISSS regularly sends email to all incoming international students. As Google applications are banned in some countries, ISSS sends these emails to both the student's UMN email address and the personal email in their record. These email include both reminders about what tasks they must do to ensure the removal of their AI hold along with information about ISSS's services and programs.

To streamline communication from incoming international students, ISSS uses the email issnew@umn.edu for all questions from new students. Please direct students to this email account as they prepare for their first semester at the University.

International Student Arrival Date and ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session

International Student Arrival Date

ISSS recommends new graduate students arrive 10 days before the start date on their immigration documents. Students with assistantships are given a report by date of August 21, but it is recommended that they arrive up to 10 days before to allow enough time to complete paperwork.

International students are only allowed to enter the U.S. within 30 days of their program start date. This means that the majority of students will not be entering the U.S. until August. However, students who are currently in the U.S. and studying at another U.S. institution may arrive on campus throughout the summer.

MyISSS Document Check

After students arrive in the USA, they must scan and submit their documents to ISSS using the “Document Check” form on MyISSS (myiss.s.umn.edu). The purpose of the Document Check is to give ISSS staff the opportunity to review all new international students’ immigration-related documents and verify their eligibility to study in the United States. This is a requirement mandated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and ISSS has been given this responsibility on behalf of the University of Minnesota.

Students must complete their Document Check after they arrive in the USA because they will not receive one of the required documents (I-94 entry record) until they enter the country. To avoid complications, students should be encouraged to review the scanned documents to ensure the text is legible and the complete document is shown in the image. The AI hold will be temporarily lifted after the student completes their Document Check and it has been approved by ISSS.

ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session

All new international students are required to attend an ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session with ISSS prior to the permanent removal of the AI Hold. ISSS Check-In and Welcome Sessions will be held bi-weekly from mid-May through July, weekly during the first few weeks of August, and twice a week during the two weeks before classes begin. Although students are required to upload their documents before the session, they should bring their immigration-related documents to this Check-In.

At the ISSS Check-In and Welcome Sessions, students will learn about:

- ISSS’s services and programs
- Negative service indicators (holds) such as the AI, AZ (English Proficiency) and MJ/MG (Graduate School Admissions Office) hold.
- Getting started with their assistantships, including information about confirming their appointments with their departments, visiting Payroll Services to complete the I-9 process, and applying for a Social Security Number (see below for more about Social Security sessions).
- How immigration regulations are relevant throughout their stay in the USA while in F-1 or J-1 status.

When can a new international student register for classes?

Students will be able to register for classes after completing their Document Check in MyISSS, if all other holds are either temporarily or permanently removed. However, if they do not attend their ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session, the AI hold will not be permanently removed, and they will have difficulty registering for their second semester of classes. International students are unable to enroll in courses prior to physically arriving on campus and uploading their documents using the Document Check form on MyISSS.

Situations that may impact a student’s ability to register include:

- **Not completing the International Student Preparation Course:** Students who report to their ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session without completing this requirement will be asked to reschedule their session.
- **Not uploading legible copies of all the necessary documents to MyISSS** (a list is available at iss.s.umn.edu/new/docs.html).
- **Not resolving other registration holds.**

Please direct questions to the ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session Coordinator, Calli Thompson, at issnew@umn.edu or ext. 6-8414.

Additional New Student Activities

Global Gopher Events (August 19–August 27)

[Global Gopher Events](#) are activities for international students designed to support their cultural transition to the University of Minnesota. The activities will allow students to connect with each other and provide a cultural context of the U.S. higher education system. The goals of the program are to increase knowledge of academic and social support resources tailored specifically for international graduate students. During the events, students will be able to choose from various workshops and activities such as an “Academic Resources Tour for Graduate Students,” “What to Expect in the First 30 days of Graduate School”, and “How to Communicate with Americans.” The program includes opportunities for new graduate students to build connections with each other as well as current graduate students.

The Global Gopher Events schedule and registration will be [posted online](#) by May 15. Please direct questions to Nasreen Mohamed: moha0015@umn.edu, ext. 6-8494.

Social Security Sessions

ISSS will be coordinating special sessions with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to facilitate the process new international students need to follow to apply for a Social Security Number. These sessions will take place in late August and/or early September; dates are yet to be determined. Dates will likely be later than in previous years, as students are no longer required to apply for an SSN before completing their I-9 and beginning work.

Students attending their ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session during the weeks prior to the sessions will be provided with details, including the specific dates, times, and how to register. Questions can be directed to Calli Thompson at ISSS: thom2769@umn.edu.

Introduction to MyISSS

ISSS is in the process of moving our visa-related processes online to MyISSS (myiss.umn.edu). This new system (launched in 2018) allows international students and scholars to submit requests online, receive email updates and monitor the status of requests, and provide ISSS staff the information we need to process requests efficiently and accurately. This system will also send emails directly to academic advisers when one of their international advisees submits a request needing their review and/or approval. We will be moving our forms to this new system in stages.

English Language Requirements and Resources

Supporting Multilingual International Students at UMN

Students Who Have NOT Met the Minimum English Requirement = AZ Hold

What is an AZ hold and how does a student clear that hold?

The AZ service indicator is placed on a student's record by the Graduate Admissions Office if the student is admitted with a low English proficiency test score or subscore in reading or writing (score below 79 iBT, with subscores of at least 21 Writing and 19 Reading), 6.5 IELTS (with subscores of at least 6.5 in Writing and Reading), 75 MN Battery (with subscore of at least 83 Writing), or equivalent score on Cambridge Advanced or PTE Academic.

Upon arrival, students have three options:

1. Submit official test scores that meet the requirement,
2. Take the MN Battery Test offered through the Minnesota English Language Program and achieve the minimum score required, or
3. Register for and pass the appropriate ESL credit course during the first semester on campus. They take this class along with their other graduate courses.

Most graduate students who have a low English score take ESL 5302: Academic Writing. This course is designed to support multilingual graduate students as they begin their graduate programs.

What if a graduate program has a TOEFL requirement that is higher than the Graduate School minimum?

AZ holds are only placed on records for students who have an English test scores below the University minimum or in special cases where the department requests that the student be tested on arrival. If a student scores above the University minimum, but below the department minimum, it is up to the department to decide whether the student should participate in additional English language support.

What if students do not comply with the AZ hold requirement?

If a student drops their required ESL classes, both the student and their college advisor will receive an email notification that the student is in non-compliance. In this case, the student will be required to submit official TOEFL scores (or other accepted English test scores) before the AZ hold will be lifted and thus will not be able to register for future terms. See the Graduate Admissions website for a list of accepted English proficiency tests.

What is the AZ hold removal process?

1. The student comes to the Minnesota English Language Program (MELP) office in 20 Nicholson Hall for initial AZ advising.
 - a. The English admissions policy is explained to the student.
 - b. The student is given a permission number to register for the required English as a Second Language (ESL) course (and the AZ hold is temporarily removed).
 - c. If the student wants to take the MN Battery Test to meet the requirement, they register for the test and the AZ hold is temporarily removed.
2. The student meets with their college advisor.
 - a. Students and advisors decide on how to work the required ESL class into their schedule .
 - b. Advisors or students contact MELP for any additional permission number(s), if needed: 612-624-1503.
3. The student registers for classes.
4. The AZ hold is permanently removed after the student passes their required ESL classes.

Students who do NOT have low English proficiency scores

What if I have an international student advisee who does not have an AZ hold, who I think could benefit from more English support?

It is important to keep in mind that any test score is an indication of proficiency, but some students with high test scores might still benefit from language support, especially during their first year on campus. While these students are not required to take ESL classes, some may benefit from support in certain aspects of language. It is a natural process for any graduate student to continue to build their language skills while in a graduate program. There are various courses that can support graduate students in polishing their English skills for their discipline and preparing for future careers in their field. Course listings are found on the Minnesota English Language Program [website](#).

English as a Second Language Courses

Credit Courses Fall 2019

GRAMMAR COURSES:

ESL 3102, Grammar for Academic Purposes (4 credits)

In-person and online sections offered

Course content focuses on improving accuracy and range in English grammar. Topics that are especially relevant to academic writing, such as conciseness and smooth connections between sentences, are emphasized.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING COURSES:

ESL 3551 sec 001: English Pronunciation (4 credits)

The course content and activities center around improving the production and perception of the sounds of the English language: individual sounds, rhythm, intonation, word and sentence stress, and linking phenomena in fast speech.

ESL 3602 sec 001: Speaking for Academic Purposes (4 credits)

The course activities focus on academic interactions such as lectures, presentations, seminar-style discussions, and informal exchanges. Students will learn to present themselves professionally/socially in collegiate settings.

ESL 5008, English for Professional Settings (2 credits)

This course is designed for graduate students seeking to improve their English speaking skills for professional settings. The course helps students polish their English skills for interacting with colleagues, interviewing for academic positions, and conference presentations.

WRITING COURSES

ESL 5302: Academic Writing (4 credits)

The course content emphasizes the writing process - developing ideas, drafting, revising, and editing. Students practice different genres of academic writing, work on refining their ability to incorporate source material into writing, critiquing writing, and matching writing to audience and purpose.

ESL 5006: English for Business Interactions (2 credits)

The course content is designed for high-intermediate to advanced non-native speakers of English who are currently business majors or in closely related major. Writing for business communication, self-editing skills, communication styles, presentations, telephone communication.

Resources for faculty and staff in supporting multilingual students at the UMN

The website esl.umn.edu is a resource for faculty and staff working with multilingual students. It has tips and suggestions for creating a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for multilingual students and tips for helping students find resources to continue their language development throughout their academic program.

See www.esl.umn.edu or contact Alyssa Bonnac, ESL Faculty and Staff Liaison, at rues0022@umn.edu.

Students Experiencing Personal Difficulties or Mental Health Issues

If you work with an international student who is demonstrating unusual behavior or is experiencing personal difficulties or mental health issues, the following campus resources can offer assistance. Because of the stigma that some students attach to “counseling,” it may help the student be more comfortable if you tell him/her/ them that these offices have staff who help students deal with a variety of difficulties. You can also contact a counselor from one of these offices directly to consult with you about the student. The counselor can help you determine if a referral or other resources are needed.

The following campus offices offer counseling to international students:

- [Office of Student Affairs \(OSA\) Care Program](#) (612-625-2517)
- [Student Counseling Services](#) (612-624-3323)
- [Boynton Mental Health Clinic](#) (612-624-1444)
- [International Student and Scholar Services](#) (612-626-7100)

For more information about mental health resources, go to www.mentalhealth.umn.edu.

International Students in Crisis

If you are concerned about an international student’s well being or disruptive behavior, please contact International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). ISSS has an experienced crisis team whose members work with international students who are in crisis or exhibit behavior that is disruptive and/or possibly indicative of more serious problems. Possible behavioral indicators of more serious problems include international students who (a) do not consistently attend class, (b) are missing from normal activities, (c) exhibit disruptive behavior, or (d) appear to not be functioning well. ISSS staff can usually find a way to contact an international student and check on his/her welfare.

The earlier ISSS receives reports about an international student’s well being or disruptive behavior, the more effective interventions can be. If further assistance is needed to stabilize the student, ISSS staff can accompany the student to a medical provider or the hospital. ISSS staff work closely with the OSA Care Program, SCS, Boynton Mental Health Clinic, and Fairview University Medical Center. In addition, ISSS is represented on the University Behavioral Consultation Team (BCT) and the University Community Response Team. Referrals from the academic advising community and collaboration with advisers are instrumental in assisting international students.

If you are concerned about an international student, please contact one of these ISSS advisers from the ISSS Crisis and Counseling Team:

Barbara Pilling	pilli003@umn.edu	612-624-9519
Charles Dania	cdania@umn.edu	612-626-4797
Chirayu Dongre (Especially LGBTQIA+ International students)	dongr044@umn.edu	612-626-4797
Gabriele Schmiegel (Especially government sponsored international students)	schm0535@umn.edu	612-626-7428
Drew Smith	smit2039@umn.edu	612-625-7965
Alisa Eland	eland@umn.edu	612-626-7100 or 612-626-7445

International Student Articles and Resources

University of Minnesota

[ISSS Tips for Native English Speakers: Speaking with Non-Native English Speakers](#)

NACADA Clearinghouse: International Student Resources

[International Student Related Resource Links](#) (additional articles besides those listed below)

[Advising First Year International Students](#)

[Visa Status and Its Effect on International Student Academic Success](#)

Journal of International Students (additional articles besides those listed below are at jistudents.org)

[Developing Skills and Disposition for Lifelong Learning: Acculturative Issues Supervising International Doctoral Students in New Zealand Universities](#)

NAFSA: Association for International Educators

[Bridging the Gap: Recruitment and Retention to Improve International Student Experiences](#)

[Retaining International Students](#)

Other Journal Based

[Using Formal and Informal Curricula to Improve Interactions Between Home and International Students](#)

[Bridging the Gap in Expectations Between International Students and Academic Staff](#)

Other Resources

[The Transition In: Setting International Students Up for Academic Success](#)

[The American Educational Administrator: Examining Some Assumptions](#)

[Recognizing and Addressing Cultural Variations in the Classroom](#)

University of Minnesota International Student Specific Resources

[Support for International Teaching Assistants who are Non-Native Speakers of English](#)

Consultations, workshops, online resources, and Partners of English Program available through the Center for Teaching and Learning.

[Resources for Multilingual Learners](#)

Online resources for enhancing English skills and information about other resources on campus.

[Writing Resources for Non-native Speakers of English through the Center for Writing](#)

[Understanding the University of Minnesota Library System: A Guide for International Students](#)

Created by UMN library staff and available to students in English, [Chinese](#) and [Korean](#) languages

[ISSS International Student Support Programs](#)

Cross-Cultural Discussion Groups, Small World Coffee Hour and Leadership Programs

Contact Information

International Student & Scholar Services

190 Humphrey School | issv.umn.edu | issv@umn.edu | 612-626-7100

Theresa GanglGhassemLouei

For general advising and immigration-related questions.

t-gang@umn.edu

612-624-5225

Calli Thompson

For questions about ISSS Check-In and Welcome Session

issvnew@umn.edu

612-626-8414

Deanne Silvera

For questions about short-term exchange students

silve025@umn.edu

612-624-9512

Nasreen Mohamed

For questions about Global Gopher Events and International Preparation Course

moha0015@umn.edu

612-626-8496

Gabi Schmiegel

For questions about students who are sponsored financially by a government, company or agency

schm0535@umn.edu

612-626-7428

Chirayu Dongre

For questions about LGBTQIA+ international student support

dongr044@umn.edu

612-626-4797

Graduate School Admissions

309 Johnston Hall | grad.umn.edu

Jim Rowan

Assistant Department Director

j-rowa@umn.edu

612-626-7454

Suzan Koroglu

Program Coordinator

korog001@umn.edu

612-625-2306

Minnesota English Language Program

20 Nicholson Hall | ccaps.umn.edu/esl | 612-624-1503

Emeline Rogers

Program Associate, AZ holds

For questions about AZ holds and permission numbers

etrogers@umn.edu

612-624-1503 or 612-625-2162 (direct)

Mike Anderson

Director, English Language Programs

ande1819@umn.edu

612-624-1183

Sara Schroth

MELP International Student Adviser

Works with students in Intensive English Program

schro861@umn.edu

612-625-7888

For More Information

The ISSS Website (issv.umn.edu) has a wide variety of information for students, scholars, and departments about visa regulations and ISSS's service and programs. A page with information for academic advisers is at issv.umn.edu/Departments/aadviser.

ISSS emails a Weekly Update that contains announcements about important deadlines, visa requirements, events for international students, ISSS services, and more. All international students are automatically signed up for this email. If you would like to subscribe or read past issues, go to issv.umn.edu/weeklyupdate.

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) offers a variety of training options to help UMN colleges, departments and staff work effectively with international students, scholars, and colleagues. We offer these sessions for all UMN staff periodically throughout the semester, and we will also work with departments to create personalized training tailored to their unique needs. Our trainings range from sessions focusing on specific visa regulations to intercultural skills development and suggestions for advising international students. For more, see issv.umn.edu/training