Supporting International Graduate Students

Quick Guide for A&S*

We hope this serves as a useful reference for Directors of Graduate Studies in the College of Arts & Sciences. If students are asking immigration-related questions, please refer them to John Honeycutt in ISSS.

Graduate School Policies and Procedures for DGSs and Bulletin

Student Immigration Timeline

• After receiving admission offer, student activates LinkBlue account/email.
• Student submits e-forms & proof of funding in iCAT (ISSS data system).
• A Designated School Official (DSO) in ISSS issues an I-20 or DS-2019 to student, who then pays SEVIS fee of $350.
• Student applies for visa at U.S. embassy or consulate at cost of $160.
• Student enters United States up to 30 days before program start date and receives I-94 at point of entry.
• Student attends international orientation and submits arrival documents in iCAT.
• After student registers for classes, DSO reviews and approves arrival information and registration of student in SEVIS, the Student Exchange & Visitor Information System administered by the U.S. government.

ABCs of Student Immigration

• Read the latest immigration updates related to COVID-19 [here](#). General regulatory updates and trends can be found [here](#).
• I-20 & DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility: ISSS issues one of these documents to international students who then use it to obtain a visa appointment.
• Students obtain either F or J status. Read about the differences in status.
• Proof of Funding: International students (F-1) must show proof of funding for the first year. J-1 students must show funding for the duration of their program. It can be a combination of assistantships, sponsors, scholarships and/or personal funds.
• Visa Stamp: Students receive a visa stamp at the U.S. embassy or consulate.
• I-94: Upon entry to the U.S., students receive an I-94 tracking arrival/departure.
• Full-Time Status: F-1 and J-1 students must be enrolled in the graduate degree program course work that is listed on their I-20/DS-2019. 9 hours is considered full-time (767 dissertation credit is considered full-time). Fall & Spring registrations are required.
  • Any online coursework is subject to approval by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). See more information.
  • Enrollment below full-time requires ISSS authorization of a “Reduced Course Load Exception.”
  • Students must complete their degree by the end date on their I-20/DS-2019. Extensions may be granted if students meets established criteria.

*Adapted from an International Student & Scholar Services Presentation in March 2021, delivered as part of the International Center’s Global Engagement Academy.
Employment, Taxes & Health Insurance

- Students can work **on campus up to 20 hours** per week.
  - During official breaks, students may work on campus full-time.
  - Off-campus employment requires prior authorization (**CPT/OPT (F-1); Academic Training (J-1)**).
- If a student is **experiencing financial difficulties** (basic needs or tuition), please report their situation to the **UK Center for Support and Intervention (CSI)** [here](#).
  - Students with difficulties in paying tuition should email [isss@uky.edu](mailto:isss@uky.edu). An ISSS staff member will reach out about available resources.
- **Any student present** in the United States during the tax year is required to file. UKY offers [free tax prep services](#); ISSS provides a short [tax resource guide](#); and the College of Law operates a [free clinic](#).
- International students (F-1, J-1 and J-2) are required to have health insurance meeting UKY’s criteria. It’s **billed automatically** unless a waiver is requested.

Supporting Cultural Adjustment

- **GradCATS** is a new program launched in 2020 to support international graduate students in the period between admission and arrival.
  - Contact [Karen Slaymaker](mailto:karen.slaymaker@uky.edu) or [Angela Garner](mailto:angela.garner@uky.edu) to learn more!
  - Read student testimonials [here](#).
- **New Graduate Student Orientation** occurs before the start of each semester and is coordinated by the [Graduate School](#) and [ISSS](#). ([Orientation in Canvas](#)).
- **English as a Second Language Support** is available for graduate students.

Best Practices

- Create a **mentoring program** for all graduate students.
  - Upon their admission, connect incoming students with current students.
- Encourage new students to participate in **GradCATS** and **New Graduate Student Orientation**.
  - Provide a **departmental orientation** as well.
- **Develop documents** that help international graduate students understand the **role of an advisor**, including a **departmental handbook**.
- Schedule **one-on-ones** with all new students early in the first semester.
- **Include international alumni** in departmental symposiums/forums.
- **Connect** students with the **Graduate Student Congress** and the **Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity Initiatives**.

ISSS Contacts for A&S

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