International First Steps
Welcome to UA
Capstone International Center
International Student & Scholar Services

Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri: 8 am - 4:45 pm
Walk-in/Virtual Advising: Mon-Thur: 11 am - 3 pm

Location: 105 BB Comer Hall
Website: http://international.ua.edu/isss/
Email: international@ua.edu
Phone: 205 348-5402
On behalf of International Student & Scholar Services, I would like to welcome you to The University of Alabama. It is an exciting time of the year for all of us and particularly for all of our newly arrived students.

We can only hope that you will catch the welcoming nature of Tuscaloosa and find comfort as you settle in to pursue your academic career at The University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama has had a rich history of academic excellence since its founding in 1831. This year we are looking forward to seeing you succeed in your goals and participate in the many culturally enriching activities our campus has to offer.

We hope you will join us in many of the campus-wide events designed to welcome new students, scholars, and faculty.

Best wishes for a successful and productive year!

Charter Morris
Director, International Student & Scholar Services
International Student & Scholar Services’ Mission

The mission of International Student & Scholar Services is to provide essential services and innovative programs for The University of Alabama’s international students, scholars and their families to enable them to achieve their educational, professional and social goals. ISSS seeks to foster diversity and strengthen inter-cultural relationships throughout the UA campus and community. It is our commitment to promote understanding and respect for the world’s many cultures.
ISSSS Website

http://international.ua.edu/issss/

or

Short URL

is.ua.edu
Location of ISSS Office

105 BB Comer Hall
400 McCorvey Drive
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401

Campus Map - Building ID: 1043
Google Map
First Steps

As a new international students you have a lot to do to settle in.

Below are your big first steps:
1. Complete International Orientation and Pass the Immigration Quiz
2. Update Address in MyBama with Local Tuscaloosa Address
3. Complete International Check-in by uploading documents
4. Other Orientations – Bama Bound, GROW, GTA Workshop
5. Register for Classes
6. Confirm Schedule
7. Set up ACT Card
8. Set up Apps and Accounts
9. Attend New Student Welcome Event
Step 1: International Orientation

All new international students must complete International Orientation & Check-in online, which can be accessed on our website here:

http://international.ua.edu/isss/future-new-students/orientation/

To complete this orientation, you must do the following:

1. Review the Cultural Adjustment and Health Resources.
2. Review the Academic Success and Campus Life Resources.
3. Complete the Immigration Section Video and take the Immigration Quiz. You must score 100% on the quiz.
International Orientation Guide

Our International Orientation Guide (pdf) contains helpful information about campus resources, adjusting to campus life, and academic success at The University of Alabama.

This information will be covered throughout the Online Orientation, and at various points, we will refer you to sections of the guide.
Step 2: Update Address

You must report your address at check in and keep your address updated. All non-U.S. citizens residing in the U.S. are required update their address within 10 days of any change of address.

When you move, you should update your address in myBama, and ISSS will report the change to the Department of Homeland Security in SEVIS.

ISSS must have the following information to report to immigration:

- **Local Address** – This is where you physically live in Tuscaloosa.
- **Permanent Address** – This is your address in your home country.
Step 2: Updating Address

- **Local Address** – This is where you physically live in Tuscaloosa.
- **Permanent Address** – This is your address in your home country.
Step 3: Complete Check-in: Uploading Documents for Check-In

- Access our Secure Immigration Check-in Portal
- Remember, your documents must be saved as an image, pdf, or word file less than 5 MB in size.
Step 3: Complete Check-in: Required Documents for Upload

- Contact Information Sheet;
- Acknowledgement of Responsibility Form;
- Your passport main information page;
- Your F-1 Visa or J-1 Visa;
- Your F-1 I-20 (pages 1 and 2 only) or J-1 DS-2019 (page 1 only);
- I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (note: only accessible after arrival to the U.S.); and
- If you have a spouse or children with you, please also scan their documents for check-in.
Address Updated? Documents Uploaded? SEVIS Validated!

Once these steps are complete, ISSS will process the validation of your SEVIS Record with Homeland Security’s Student Exchange Visitor Program, which can take 2 – 3 business days at a minimum.

After the check-in has been completed and your SEVIS record has been validated, you will be notified.

After SEVIS Validation, ISSS will be able to process any requested verifications for I-9 processing, Alabama Credit Union accounts, Driver’s Licenses, and Social Security Number applications.
Step 4: Other Orientations - Undergrads

*Bama Bound* is for all first-year and transfer undergraduate students – both American and international students must register and attend a Bama Bound Orientation.

During Bama Bound, you will receive a full introduction to campus and meet with your academic advisor so you can register for courses.
Step 4: Other Orientations – Grad Students

GRADUATE ORIENTATION AND WELCOME (GROW)
GROW is designed to prepare incoming graduate students with the necessary information to make their time at UA a success. In addition, it serves to supplement your departmental orientation experience and give you a well-rounded view of the UA experience through the graduate student lens.

WORKSHOP FOR NEW GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS
Held in the Fall Semester only, this workshop is required for all new Graduate Teaching Assistants. New GTAs should contact the Graduate School about participation in the August Workshop.
Step 5: Register for Classes

- You must register for full-time classes before the end of drop/add.
- Work with your Academic Advisor to select appropriate classes and follow the steps on the Registrar’s page to enroll: [https://registrar.ua.edu/student-services/registration/](https://registrar.ua.edu/student-services/registration/).
- General Enrollment Requirements
  - **Graduate Students**
    - 9 credit hours minimum
    - 6 credit hours with a .5 FTE (20-hour per week) Assistantship
  - **Undergraduate Students**
    - 12 credit hours minimum
- Online Class Limits
  - **F-1 Online Limits** - Only one 3-credit hour course can be counted towards enrollment minimums
  - **J-1 Online Limits** - J-1 students may not count any online courses toward the minimum enrollment requirement.
Our **International Student Advising Guide** *(pdf)* contains helpful information about course registration, academic advising, and academic success at The University of Alabama.
Step 6: Confirm Schedule

- Once you have registered for classes, your schedule will not be “confirmed” or “secured” until you have either paid your balance with Student Account Services, set up a Payment Plan, or taken other action to secure your schedule.
- Payment info: https://studentaccounts.ua.edu/payment-methods/
Step 7: Set up ACT Card

- The ACT Card (or Action Card) is a Digital ID Card that gives you access to your residence hall, labs, dining halls, recreation centers, libraries, the Student Health Center, and a lot more! [https://actcard.ua.edu/actcardbasics/](https://actcard.ua.edu/actcardbasics/)
- To set up your ACT Card, follow the steps on the ACT Card Photo Submit Page [https://actcard.ua.edu/photosubmit/](https://actcard.ua.edu/photosubmit/).
  - You will need to take a photo of yourself as well as your passport.
  - Make sure the photo of yourself that you submit meets all of the requirements listed here [https://actcard.ua.edu/tipsandcriteria/](https://actcard.ua.edu/tipsandcriteria/)
  - This process will set up the ACT Card on your phone.
- Make sure you complete this process as soon as possible as your ACT Card is required to access your residence hall, utilize your meal plan, or go to the Student Health Center.
Step 8: Set up Apps and Accounts

- Download the UA App to your phone (Android or Apple): http://app.ua.edu/
- One app contains multiple functions:
  - Directory
  - Events
  - Library
  - Safety App
  - Blackboard
  - Map
  - Crimson Ride Bus Routes and Location
  - ACT Card
  - News
  - Emergency resources
  - Student Tickets
Step 8: Set up Apps and Accounts

Download the UA Safety App to your phone (Android or Apple): https://ready.ua.edu/safety-app/

The UA Safety App provides students with immediate access to information in case of an emergency. Features include a built-in GPS to every campus building and shelter, AEDs and safety guidelines for potential hazards.

Users also receive exclusive UA Alerts and current UAPD advisories for up-to-date information.

Additional features include National Weather Service Information for Tuscaloosa County and an emergency contact list for instant dialing with one push.
Step 9: Attend New Student Welcome Event

- Come to the Welcome Event and meet other new UA International Students – Friday, August 19 at 3 pm
- Food, refreshments, and new friends!
...and next steps...

You are also likely in need of many other documents and services.

We will try to tackle other important steps here:

1. Housing
2. Social Security Number
3. Driver’s License
4. Bank Account
5. Phone Account/SIM Card
6. Transportation Resources
7. Other Resources
1. Housing

- Most apartments require long-term leases of at least one year.
- It is common for most landlords to require you to pay a deposit which is equal to one month’s rent when you sign a lease for an apartment or house as well as the first and last month of rent upon move-in.
- Be sure to read through the terms of your lease carefully before signing. By signing a lease, you are promising to pay the landlord for the entire time listed on the lease.
- Ending a lease early or violating the lease agreement can cost you the rental deposit.
- Please visit Off-Campus Housing’s resources for renters: https://offcampushousing.sa.ua.edu/resources/.
2. Social Security Number

1. You must first have a job or job offer on-campus, and you must have completed check-in and had your SEVIS Record validated.

   NOTE: Scholarships and fellowships will not qualify you for an SSN. It must be a job to qualify.

2. Have your campus employer complete an Employment Verification Form on their letterhead.

3. Submit the Employment Verification Form to ISSS, and we will verify it and provide instructions on setting your SSN appointment.

Full details on the SSN Application Process: http://international.ua.edu/isss/ssn-itin-taxes/
3. Driver’s License

You should study the Alabama Driver’s Manual prior to applying for a license.

Students must have at least 160 days remaining on their I-20/DS-2019 to be eligible to apply or renew license.

1. **Prepare SSN Card or get an SSN Denial Letter** – if you don’t have a Social Security Card, you must do this before requesting a Verification Letter from ISSS.

2. **Obtain Status Verification Letter from ISSS** – Once you have either the SSN Card or SSN Denial Letter, then complete a Verification Letter Request with International Student & Scholar Services so that you may obtain a verification of your visa status. This letter is required for F-1 and J-1 students as well as for their dependents.

3. **Gather your immigration documents** – Besides the Verification Letter, you must take all of your immigration documents, including your I-20 or DS-2019, your passport, and your I-94 Record.

4. **Make an appointment online with the Driver’s License Office** – You will need to take both your written test and your driving test at your local driver license office. You must make an appointment online in advance.

4. Bank Account

General documentation required to set-up a checking account:

• Passport
• I-20 or DS-2019
• I-94 Record
• Proof of Physical Address
• Mailing Address
• University of Alabama Action ID Card
• Tuscaloosa Phone Number
• Email Address

PLEASE NOTE: In addition to the documents above, The Alabama Credit Union requires a Verification Letter from ISSS.

Full details on Banking: http://international.ua.edu/isss/life-in-tuscaloosa/finances-banking/
5. Phone/SIM Card

Cellular Phone Store Locations
Most major wireless phone service providers are available in Tuscaloosa. You can find most of these phone providers at the University Mall, Wal-Mart, Target and other locations around the city.

- **Metro** – [https://www.metrobyt-mobile.com/](https://www.metrobyt-mobile.com/) - 426 15th Street, Tuscaloosa, AL

Specialized Plans for International Students and Scholars
There are a few companies which offer specialized no-contract plans that are specifically designed for international students, scholars, and dependents.

- **StudentSIMs** – [https://mysimportal.com/order/studentsims/](https://mysimportal.com/order/studentsims/)

6. Transportation Resources

TUSCALOOSA BUS SYSTEM –
http://tuscaloosatransit.com/

CRIMSONRIDE – UA BUS SYSTEM –
http://www.crimsonride.ua.edu/

GREYHOUND BUS LINES –
http://www.greyhound.com/

AMTRAK TRAIN SERVICES –
http://www.amtrak.com/
7. Campus and Community Resources

The Campus Visitor’s Guide contains extremely helpful information about the campus.
https://visit.ua.edu/

Tuscaloosa’s Visitor’s Guide is an amazing resource for all that is great about Tuscaloosa and why this is Title Town!
https://visittuscaloosa.com/
International Orientation

Cultural Adjustment,
American Culture,
& Relationships
Orientation Guide

Please follow along on page 17 of your International Orientation Guide (pdf).
Culture Shock

• Culture shock describes the anxiety that a person experiences when they move from a familiar culture to an entirely new culture or social environment.

• Everyone experiences culture shock at some point when they are living within a new culture.

• It is important to reach out when you need help, and take advantage of the resources available to you.
What Causes Culture Shock?

Easy to See

“Big C” Culture
- Language
- Food
- Dress
- Holidays
- Folklore
- Arts

“Small C” Culture
- Beliefs and assumptions
- Values
- Body language
- Humor
- Personal space
- Self-concept
- Pride
- Manners
- Beauty ideals
- Work ethic
- Biases
- Thought patterns
- Gender roles

Difficult to See
W-Curve of Cultural Adjustment

Based on Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn & Gallahorn (1963)
How to Cope with Culture Shock

• Remember – this is normal, and you are not alone.
• Make sure you are eating, sleeping, and exercising. These simple things help a lot!
• Talk to someone from your home country.
• Get involved on-campus.
• Spend time with Americans.
How to Get Help

UA Counseling Center
https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/

1101 Jackson Avenue, Tuscaloosa, AL
South Lawn Office Building, Suite 3000

Daytime Number: 205-348-3863
After Hours Number: 205-348-5454

Or Text BAMA to 741-741 to text with a trained volunteer
Understanding American Culture

Please follow along on page 8 of your International Orientation Guide (pdf).
American Cultural Values

1. Individualism
2. Equity
3. Time Consciousness
4. Casual Friendships
American Social Behavior

American social behavior can be quite different from the way it is portrayed in media.

- Greetings and Small Talk
- Personal Space
- Profanity and Taboo Gestures
Interpersonal Relationships

Please follow along on page 11 of your International Orientation Guide (pdf).
Interpersonal Relationships and Sexual Misconduct

• Consent is Required
• Abusive Relationships
• Sexual Misconduct and Harassment
• UAct https://www.ua.edu/campuslife/uact/
Understanding Consent

From Blue Seat Studios “Tea Consent” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU
How To Get Help

• UA Police 205-348-5454 (24 Hour Line)

• Equal Opportunity and Title IX Programs https://titleix.ua.edu/

• Women and Gender Resource Center https://wgrc.sa.ua.edu/ ; 205-348-5040
Safety App

- [https://ready.ua.edu/safety-app/](https://ready.ua.edu/safety-app/)
- Available for [iOS](https://ready.ua.edu/safety-app/) and [Android](https://ready.ua.edu/safety-app/) devices
UAPD

• UA Police 205-348-5454 Available 24hrs (day or night) for Emergency and Non-Emergency Assistance

• https://police.ua.edu/

• Safer Living Guide: http://saferliving.ua.edu/
Women & Gender Resource Center

- South Lawn Office Building, Suite 2000
- Near East Edge Apartments & the Law School-on the East Edge Bus Route
- (205) 348-5040
- https://wgrc.sa.ua.edu/
- wgrc@ua.edu
- Twitter: @WGRCatUA
- Facebook: UAWGRC
Women & Gender Resource Center

• A victim advocate is on call 24 hours a day.
• Hospital accompaniment- to provide emotional support and guidance during a sexual assault forensic exam.
• Academic Advocacy - negotiating changes in classes, work load, and making up missed classes or exams.
• Safe Housing - relocation within the on-campus housing system or community based housing as needed.
• Resources - providing information about campus or community resources, legal and judicial options, and support.
Equal Opportunity & Title IX Programs

- 2418 Capital Hall, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
- 205-348-3947
- https://titleix.ua.edu
- Contacts and Staff
- Sexual Misconduct Policy
Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the gender of students and employees of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance.

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

20 U.S.C. §1681

In accordance with Title IX, the University of Alabama does not discriminate on the basis of gender in any of its programs or services. The University is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination based on gender and expects individuals who live, work, teach, and study within this community to contribute positively to the environment and to refrain from behaviors that threaten the freedom or respect that every member of our community deserves.
International Orientation

Health Care, Insurance, Mental Health, and Substance Use
Understanding Health Care in the U.S.

International Student Insurance “Overview of the U.S. Healthcare System for International Students”
https://vimeo.com/72268541
Seeking Medical Treatment

- Minor illness or injury
  - Colds, cough, sore throat or flu
  - Fever
  - Minor cuts
  - Sprain
  - Skin rashes

- Major emergency
  - Major injury (a head injury)
  - Severe shortness of breath
  - Loss of consciousness
  - Bleeding that doesn’t stop after 10 min of direct pressure

- Life threatening

911
Student Health Center

Address:
750 Peter Bryce Boulevard
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

Reception: 205-348-6262
Pharmacy: 205-348-6276
Email: shc@ua.edu
https://shc.sa.ua.edu/
Student Health Center

- No appointment necessary for medical or injury problems
- Appointment is required for Women's Health, Psychiatry, and Dietician Visits
- Fall/Spring hours:
  - Monday – Thursday 8 am - 5 pm
  - Friday 9 am - 5 pm
  - Saturday/Sunday Closed
  - Closed on University Holidays and Home Game Days
- Always bring your Action Card and Insurance Information
Immunizations

• Immunization Form: https://shc.sa.ua.edu/forms/immunization-form/
• The following immunizations are required for all incoming students:
  • Meningitis Vaccine – One dose at age 16 or greater
  • 2 Measles Containing Vaccines – One must be a MMR vaccination after 1980
  • TB Screening – Within one year
• Immunizations (MMR and Meningitis Vaccinations) are available Monday – Thursday from 8 am until 3 pm Friday from 9 am until 3 pm
• TB skin test available Monday-Wednesday 8 am until 3 pm, Friday 9 am until 3 pm
• No appointment necessary, bring your ACT card and Health Insurance Information
• If you have any questions, you can email immunizations@ua.edu or call 205-348-6262 or 205-348-4637. Be sure to include your CWID when you email or call.
UA Student Health Insurance

- **Download instructions** on setting up online account
- Visit uhcsr.com/myaccount and click Create Account
- Enter your First and Last Name, Date of Birth, and either your Email, Student ID or SR ID
- Create your Username and Password
- Verify your identity using either your email or cell phone number
- More information online at [www.uhcsr.com/ua](http://www.uhcsr.com/ua).
UA Student Health Insurance

• Covers services at the SHC, though a co-pay may be charged at time of service
• Covers hospital services if referred by SHC
• Covers most emergency hospital visits
• Covers University of Alabama Required Immunizations and TB skin testing
• Questions? Need forms? – Contact Student Health Insurance Office at 205-348-4086 or shc@ua.edu or visit www.uhcsr.com/ua.
Treating Mental Health is Healthcare

International Student Insurance “Mental Health Awareness for International Students”
https://youtu.be/GfCWUX9gnDc
How to Get Help at UA

UA Counseling Center
https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/

1101 Jackson Avenue, Tuscaloosa, AL
South Lawn Office Building, Suite 3000

Daytime Number: 205-348-3863
After Hours Number: 205-348-5454

Or Text BAMA to 741-741 to text with a trained volunteer
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

Understand the Law and Make Healthy Choices

• Alcohol and smoking are legal if you are 21 years of age or older.
• International students can never possess or consume Marijuana, even in states where it is legal, as it is a violation of federal law.
• Arrests for drinking alcohol and driving (DUI/DWI) lead to automatic visa revocation.
• Alcohol arrests will lead to Student Non-Academic Misconduct Charges at UA.
• Smoking and tobacco use are banned at UA.
• Smoking is not allowed in most bars and restaurants.
How to Get Help at UA

Collegiate Recovery and Intervention Services
https://cris.sa.ua.edu/

1101 Jackson Avenue, Tuscaloosa, AL

South Lawn Office Building, Suite 1000

Daytime Number: 205-348-2727
International Orientation

How to Be Successful at UA:
Tips on the Academic Culture at
The University of Alabama
Orientation Guide –
Academic Success

Please follow along on page 5 of your International Orientation Guide (pdf).
U.S. Academic Culture

• Rewards Initiative

• Expects Active Engagement

• Tends to be more informal
What does UA Expect from You?

1. Review the **Academic Catalog** and understand the requirements for your degree program.

2. Register for classes, attend those classes, and make reasonable progress.

3. Check your **UA email**.

4. Follow the **Code of Academic Conduct**.
Code of Academic Conduct

I promise or affirm that I will not at any time be involved with cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at The University of Alabama. I have read the Academic Honor Code, which explains disciplinary procedures that will result from the aforementioned. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as indefinite suspension from the University.
Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

- Plagiarism is using information from another source without giving credit.
- Cheating is using unauthorized outside sources to produce information.

The Writing Center
Three Ways to Guarantee Success

1. Keep Focused

2. Have a Plan

3. Take Responsibility for Your Education
Working with Your Advisor

Follow along starting at page 3 in the International Advising Guide
How to Have Successful Advising

1. Use your campus resources.
2. Understand who can help you.
3. Plan ahead.
4. Email your advisers.
5. Know when to make appointments.
Expectations in a Meeting

1. Be On Time
2. Be Prepared
3. Avoid Conflict
4. Be Ready to Accept No as an Answer
5. Leave in a Friendly Way
International Orientation

Campus Life at
The University of Alabama
and in Tuscaloosa
Please follow along on page 12 of your International Orientation Guide (pdf).
Social Media

ISSS SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS
Stay connected through Facebook, Instagram, or Youtube!

Facebook: UA International Student and Scholar Services
Instagram: @uainternationalservices
YouTube: UA International Services
Multicultural Coffee Hour

On Fridays from 11:30-1:00 in the Intercultural Diversity Center at the Student Center

Each week we feature a different country

You can try new foods and drinks, play a game, and learn a little bit of the language!
Student Organizations

All on-campus organizations can be found online at The Source

- The African Students Association (ASA)
- Alabama International Relations Club
- Arabic Culture Club
- The Association of Chinese Students & Scholars at UA (ACSS)
- Bangladesh Student Association
- Caribbean Students’ Association
- Chinese Culture Club
- Education Abroad Alumni Association
- French Club
- The German Club
- Hispanic-Latino Association
- Indian Students Association of Tuscaloosa (ISAT)
- International Student Association (ISA)
- Iranian Students Association at UA
- Italian Club
- Korean Student Association
- Kuwait Students Organization
- Las Doñas
- Nepalese Student Association
- Russian and Eastern European Club
- Saudi Student Association
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
- South Asian Culture Club
- Spanish Club LEAF
- Turkish Student Association
- UA Vedic Society
- Vietnamese Student & Scholar Association
Tuscaloosa’s International Friends (TIF)

- Friendship family program
- Apply in August to be paired with a family
- Student Application Form
International Peer Advisory Council (IPAC)

IPAC is a group of students dedicated to helping new international students feel at home at UA.

Assist with:
- Global Tide groups
- Multicultural Coffee Hour
- ISSS events
Global Tide

Global Tide is a mentorship group comprised of IPAC members and new students.

Consisting of around 2-3 IPAC leaders and 10 students, these small groups are a great way to get connected!

Through the mentorship groups, international students will learn more about the UA campus, make new friends, learn about resources at UA and in the community, and become better adjusted to life in Tuscaloosa.
ISSS Newsletter

• Biweekly updates, announcements, and events

• Check your Crimson email or forward your Crimson email to your personal account
Alabama Traditions

- Football
- The Crimson Tide
- Yea, Alabama
- Big Al
- Denny Chimes
- Roll Tide!
Campus Safety

- Sign up for UA Alerts
- Download the UA Safety App
  - Updates on inclement weather
  - Tornado shelter locations
  - Live radio
  - UA Safer Living Guide
  - Emergency Preparedness Info
Inclement Weather

Locate safe spaces inside of buildings

- Tornado shelters on campus
- First floor away from doors and windows
  - The innermost room

Know the signs

- Sirens going off
  - Tested the first Wednesday of each month
- Watch the news/radio

Be prepared

- Water, flashlight with batteries, nonperishable food, first aid kit, and portable phone charger
Tornado Watch verses Tornado Warning

Tornado Watch
• A storm has been spotted that has the ability to produce a tornado

Tornado Warning
• A tornado has touched down
Interacting with the Police

• Always stay calm and respectful
• Do not argue or try to bribe officers
• Keep your hands visible to officers
• Campus Police Department
  • 205-348-5454
  • 911 for emergencies
• Tuscaloosa Police Department
  • 205-349-2121
The City of Tuscaloosa

- Shopping centers, grocery stores
- Restaurants and coffee shops
- Nature areas and parks
- Traveling options
- Transportation
International Orientation

Understanding your Student Immigration Status
Can you answer these questions?

• Do you know where your important documents are, and do you know how to understand them?

• Do you know what is required to stay in status?

• Do you know what options you have for work?

• Do you know what to do when you travel?

• Do you know what you can do at the end of your degree program?
Passport

Your passport is your most important document.

It must remain valid at all times while in the U.S.

If your passport expires or is lost, you will not be able to leave the U.S., renew your license, or extend work authorizations.

If you are within 6 months of your passport expiration, you may not be able to re-enter the U.S. after a trip abroad.
Visa

Your visa is allowed to expire as long as you are maintaining status (e.g. your I-20 or DS-2019 is valid) and you are pursuing the same objective.

Your visa only needs to be valid at the time you enter or re-enter the U.S. after travel abroad.

Some exceptions if returning from travel to Canada, Mexico, and the Adjacent Islands (automatic visa revalidation).
The I-94 is your Arrival and Departure Record, which confirms your “official” visa status while in the U.S.

Access online at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/)

Your class of admission must always be correct - F1 for student visa and J1 for exchange visitor.

Your “Admit Until Date” should be D/S, which stands for Duration-of-Status.

If your I-94 says something different or if you cannot access your I-94 record, you should schedule an appointment with ISSS right away.
Form I-20 (F-1 Students)

The I-20 is a 3 page document, and it is divided into sections.

The links below explain each section in detail:

- **SEVIS ID**
- **PERSONAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**
- **SCHOOL INFORMATION**
- **PROGRAM OF STUDY & START/END-DATE**
- **FINANCIALS**
- **SCHOOL AND STUDENT ATTESTATIONS**
- **EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS**
- **TRAVEL SIGNATURES**

**SEVIS #**

**Program of Study** = Major and Degree Level

**I-20 End Date**

This is your F-1 expiration date. The I-20 must be extended before this date if you need more time to graduate.

**Travel Signatures and Work Authorizations** are on page 2.
Form DS-2019 (J-1 Students)

The DS-2019 is a 2 page document, and it is divided into sections.

- SEVIS ID
- PERSONAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
- PROGRAM SPONSOR INFORMATION
- PROGRAM START/END DATE INFORMATION
- EXCHANGE VISITOR CATEGORY AND STUDY FIELD CODE
- FINANCIALS
- SCHOOL ATTESTATIONS
- TRAVEL VALIDATION SIGNATURES
- EV CERTIFICATION

If you require more time for your degree, the DS-2019 must be extended before this date.
Understanding Your Student Status

As a student visa holder, you have a few key responsibilities:

1. Study **full-time**.
2. Make continuous progress towards your degree.
3. Never **work without authorization** from ISSS.
4. Keep all of your **immigration documents** up-to-date and 100% accurate.
5. Consult ISSS before making changes to your academic program or immigration status.
Who is involved in my status?

- **DOS** – Department of State
  - Bureau of Consular Affairs
  - U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Missions
- **DHS** – Department of Homeland Security
  - SEVP - Student Exchange Visitor Program
    - SEVIS - Student Exchange Visitor Information System
  - USCIS – US Citizenship and Immigration Services
  - CBP – US Customs and Border Protection
  - ICE – US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- The University of Alabama
  - ISSS – Serve as the F-1 Designated School Officials and J-1 Responsible Officers
- You
General Enrollment Requirements

**Graduate Students**
- 9 credit hours minimum
- 6 credit hours with a .5 FTE Assistantship

**Undergraduate Students**
- 12 credit hours minimum
Online Class Limitations

F-1 Online Limits
• Only one 3-credit hour course can be counted towards enrollment minimums.
• You may take more than one online class, but additional courses will not be counted toward the minimum enrollment for immigration purposes.

J-1 Online Limits
• J-1 students may not count any online courses toward the minimum enrollment requirement.
• After a J-1 student has enrolled in a full-time load of in-person courses, they may then enroll in online courses above the minimum full-time requirement.
Enrollment Exceptions

• **Last Semester** – Students may take only what the program requires to graduate in their final semester, but at least one class must be in-person.

• **Reduced Course Load** – Used for medical emergencies and initial academic difficulties.

• **Thesis/Dissertation Hours** – Once a graduate student reaches candidacy, they may take the minimum research hours (599 Thesis/699 Dissertation) mandated by the Graduate School.

• **Summer** – Normally, this is a break for continuing students who are returning for fall. NOTE: New students beginning in summer must enroll full-time.
Summer as First Semester

• While summer is normally a vacation period for students, if summer is your first semester on a new initial I-20 or DS-2019, you must enroll full-time in summer.

• For undergraduate students, the minimum enrollment requirement for summer as your first semester is 12 credits for full summer (6 credit hours if starting in Summer 2 session).

• For graduate students who begin their study in summer as their first semester, the minimum enrollment requirement is 9 credit hours for full summer, or 4.5 hours if starting in Summer 2 session.

• Graduate students on a full assistantship (.5 FTE) may be considered full-time with 6 credit hours of registration for full summer.
Remember!
You must have advance permission from ISSS to:

- Enroll less than full-time
- Apply for off-campus employment
- Take a leave of absence
- Withdraw from the university
- Transfer your immigration record to a new university
Violations of Status

- Violating immigration regulations forces ISSS to terminate your status.
- If your status is **terminated due to a violation of status**:  
  - you will have no **Grace Period** and must depart the U.S. immediately;
  - you will lose all employment eligibility immediately;
  - you will not be able to enroll at UA for future terms until issue is resolved.

- Regaining status is never guaranteed!
  - You may have to travel to regain valid visa status; or
  - file for **reinstatement with Homeland Security**.
  - There will always be fees to pay!

- Get your immigration advice from ISSS. Friends are not a good source of immigration information.
- If you think you have an issue, meet with an ISSS advisor right away.
What Causes Violation of Status?

The most common violations of status result from the following:

- Failing to attend class
- Not enrolling full-time or dropping below a full-time course load without permission
- Failing to pay tuition or fees and having schedule dropped for nonpayment
- Academic suspension
- Working without authorization
- Failing to update address within 10 days of a change
- Failing to extend your program before it ends
Updating Address

You must keep your address updated. All non-U.S. citizens residing in the U.S. are required to update their address within 10 days of any change of address.

When you move, you should update your address in myBama, and ISSS will report the change to the Department of Homeland Security in SEVIS.

ISSS must have the following information to report to immigration:

- Local Address – This is where you physically live in Tuscaloosa.
- Permanent Address – This is your address in your home country.
Updating Your I-20 or DS-2019

Contact ISSS for a new I-20 or DS-2019 if:
• Your major changes or you add a second major.
• Your level of study changes (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate).
• Your funding changes (scholarships or assistantships).
• Your graduation date changes – either you graduate earlier than your I-20/DS-2019 end-date or you need additional time to complete your degree.

You can submit an I-20/DS-2019 Update Form to ISSS for these changes.
F-2 and J-2 Dependents

**Dependent Status:**
- Their legal status is linked to the F-1 or J-1 primary.
- Their status is valid as long as the F-1 or J-1 maintains status.
F-2 and J-2 Dependents

**Dependent Studies:**
- F-2 – can study part-time at University (children can enroll in K-12 full-time).
- J-2 – can study part-time or full-time at University (children can enroll in K-12 full-time).

**Dependent Employment:**
- F-2 – cannot work.
- J-2 – can work, but must apply for work authorization with USCIS.

**Dependent Insurance:**
- F-2 & J-2 Dependents require medical insurance.
- Dependents can be added to the UA Insurance Policy.
On-Campus Employment

F-1 and J-1 Students may work on-campus under the following conditions:

1. Must maintain valid status.
2. May not exceed 20 hours of work per week total during fall and spring semesters.
3. May work more than 20 hours per week during the summer and official university breaks.

How to Find On-Campus Employment

• Student employment opportunities at https://uastudentjobs.ua.edu/
• Bama Dining employment at https://ua.campusdish.com/en/Careers
Off-Campus Employment

Off-campus employment is only allowed with specific permission from ISSS using the following types of training and work authorizations:

- F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- J-1 Academic Training
- Economic Hardship Authorization from USCIS
F-1 CPT Eligibility

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is typically used for internships and practicum experience during degree program.

CPT work authorization comes from ISSS and is for specific period, employer, and location.

Student must:
• Be in valid F-1-status
• Have completed one full academic year (2 semesters) of full-time study
• Have not completed program of study
• Have a job offer directly related to major field of study (not minor)
• Enroll in an approved Co-op or academic course tied to CPT
F-1 OPT Eligibility

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is typically used for internships and work after completion of the degree program.

Recommendation for OPT comes from ISSS and work authorization approval is handled by USCIS and is for specific period.

Student must:
• Be in valid F-1-status
• Have completed one full academic year (2 semesters) of full time study
• Work directly related to major field of study (not minor)
• Have not utilized 1 year or more of full-time CPT
• Have not utilized 12 months of OPT at the current or higher degree level
• Not be in an ELI or non-degree program
J-1 Academic Training Eligibility

**J-1 Academic Training (AT)** is typically used for internships and work either during or after completion of the degree program.

Academic Training work authorization comes from ISSS and is for specific period, employer, and location.

Academic Training Eligibility:

- Student must be in valid J-1 Student status
- Work must be directly related to major field of study
- Training must be an integral part of study program
- Training approved by the academic advisor
Economic Hardship

Generally, recommendation for F-1 Economic Hardship comes from ISSS and work authorization approval is handled by USCIS and is for a specific period of time.

Economic Hardship Criteria

- Based on severe and unforeseen economic circumstances
- Student must have completed at least one academic year of study
- Student must be in good academic standing
- The employment must not interfere with studies
- Economic hardship is recommended and approved on a case-by-case basis
Note on work authorization

- Working, **paid or unpaid**, without proper authorization is a serious violation.
- Even unpaid internships require authorization - unpaid work is not “volunteering”.
- Most off-campus work authorizations must be approved by USCIS, which may take months.
- Always contact ISSS office before engaging in any work or if you have questions international@ua.edu
Travel
Travel Inside the U.S.

When traveling outside Tuscaloosa, carry the following:

• Passport
• Original Form I-20 or Form DS-2019
• Form I-94

Remember, keep photocopies/scans of your main passport page, visa page, I-94 record, I-20/DS-2019 and any other visa documentation with you at all times even when not traveling.
Travel Outside of the U.S.

To depart the U.S., you only need a valid passport.

To re-enter the U.S. after a short trip abroad (less than 5 months), you need the following:

• **Travel Signature** on I-20 or DS-2019 (within the last 12 months)
• Valid Passport (valid at least 6 months beyond date of return)
• **Valid Visa** (unexpired on the date of return)

We recommend you carry a copy of your **unofficial transcripts** or **enrollment verification letter** from the Registrar (available on myBama in the student tab).
Travel Signatures

• You can get travel signatures at ISSS.
• Generally, travel signatures are valid for multiple uses for one-year from the date of the signature.

I-20 Page 2: Travel Signature

DS-2019 Page 1: Travel Signature
Grace Period and Life after UA
Grace Period

Upon completion of studies, your F-1 I-20 or J-1 DS-2019 will end.

Students have an automatic Grace Period that begins after they complete their program:

- F-1 Students – 60 Days
- J-1 Students – 30 Days
Options During Grace Period

Students have the following options during their Grace Period:

1. Prepare to depart the U.S.
2. Apply for F-1 Optional Practical Training or J-1 Academic Training.
3. Request a new I-20 or DS-2019 to continue at UA in a new degree program.
4. Transfer your SEVIS record and I-20/DS-2019 to a new school to begin a new program.
5. Apply with USCIS to change status to another visa category.
International Orientation
Completing Immigration Check-In
Completing Check-In

Congratulations, you are at the last stage of Orientation and Check-in.

To complete Check-In:
1. Follow the instructions to **update your Tuscaloosa address** in [MyBama](#), and
2. Upload Clear Scans/Images of the Following Documents to our [Secure Portal](#):
   - Contact Information Sheet;
   - Acknowledgement of Responsibility Form;
   - Your passport main information page;
   - Your F-1 Visa or J-1 Visa;
   - Your F-1 I-20 (pages 1 and 2 only) or J-1 DS-2019 (page 1 only);
   - I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (note: only accessible after arrival to the U.S.); and
   - If you have a spouse or children with you, please also scan their documents for check-in.

Once these steps are complete, ISSS will be able to activate your immigration record.
Updating Address

You must report your address at check in and keep your address updated. All non-U.S. citizens residing in the U.S. are required update their address within 10 days of any change of address.

When you move, you should update your address in myBama, and ISSS will report the change to the Department of Homeland Security in SEVIS.

ISSS must have the following information to report to immigration:

- Local Address – This is where you physically live in Tuscaloosa.
- Permanent Address – This is your address in your home country.
Updating MyBama Address

- Local Address – This is where you physically live in Tuscaloosa.
- Permanent Address – This is your address in your home country.
Uploading Documents for Check-In

- Access our **Secure Immigration Check-in Portal**
- Remember, your documents must be saved as an image, pdf, or word file less than 5 MB in size.
Getting Your I-94

The I-94 is your Arrival and Departure Record, which confirms your “official” visa status while in the U.S.

Access online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/

Your class of admission must always be correct - F1 for student visa and J1 for exchange visitor.

Your “Admit Until Date” should be D/S, which stands for Duration-of-Status.

If your I-94 says something different or if you cannot access your I-94 record, you should schedule an appointment with ISSS right away.
Getting Your I-94

Enter Your Traveler Info

Note: The info returned may not reflect applications submitted to or benefits received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

First (Given) Name: 
Last (Family) Name/Surname: 
Birth Date: December 31, 1981
Document Number: 123456789
Country Of Citizenship: Bangladesh (BD)

Next >>
Required Documents for Upload

- Contact Information Sheet;
- Acknowledgement of Responsibility Form;
- Your passport main information page;
- Your F-1 Visa or J-1 Visa;
- Your F-1 I-20 (pages 1 and 2 only) or J-1 DS-2019 (page 1 only);
- I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (note: only accessible after arrival to the U.S.); and
- If you have a spouse or children with you, please also scan their documents for check-in.
Address Updated? Documents Uploaded? SEVIS Validated!

Congratulations! You’re done with your check-in process.

ISSS will process the validation of your SEVIS Record, which can take 2 – 3 business days at a minimum.

After the check-in has been completed and your SEVIS record has been validated, you will be notified.

After SEVIS Validation, ISSS will be able to process any requested verifications for I-9 processing, Alabama Credit Union accounts, Driver’s Licenses, and Social Security Number applications.