

WELCOME TO PENN STATE!



PennState Global

IMPORTANT NOTE

International Student and Scholar Advising (ISSA) offers advising, immigration services, and training to support our international students, scholars, and faculty. We assist incoming and enrolled international students including those from other schools on practical training with U.S. visa and immigration matters and provide advising on status throughout Penn State enrollment.

Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Apply for a U.S. Visa

A visa allows you to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry and request entry. You must have the I-20 or DS-2019 in addition to an F-1 or J-1 visa to request entry into the U.S.

Canadian and Bermudian citizens are visa exempt, but they must obtain an I-20 or DS-2019, pay the SEVIS fee and show the receipt of payment at the port-of-entry.

1. F-1 and J-1 students must pay two fees.

- **SEVIS I-901 Fee:** The SEVIS fee <https://fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html> can be paid in one of 3 ways. We recommend paying the SEVIS fee online for an immediate receipt of payment. Print the receipt for your records.
- **Visa Application Fee (also called MRV fee):** Payment for the visa application fee varies among the U.S. consulates. Payment is through a local bank which will issue a receipt with receipt number. See <https://www.usembassy.gov> to find the U.S. consulate where you will apply for the visa for specific instructions on payment requirements.

2. Complete the visa application (DS-160) <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/> and print the DS-160 confirmation page with the application ID number after you submit online.

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study.html>

3. Schedule the visa appointment. See the U.S. consulate post instructions for making an appointment. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/list-of-posts.html>

- You will need the DS-160 application ID number, the MRV receipt, passport number, and the SEVIS ID number to make an appointment.
- Attend the visa appointment with the following: DS-160 confirmation page with the application ID number, the MRV (visa application) fee receipt, printed I-20 or DS-2019, photo, and valid passport.
- Additional documents may be requested. Check the instructions and be prepared with all the documentation.

Plan for Departure

1. Go to EducationUSA for pre-departure orientation if available and for any questions and help.
 - Student Visa: <https://educationusa.state.gov/your-5-steps-us-study>
 - Pre-Departure Orientation: <https://educationusa.state.gov/your-5-steps-us-study/prepare-your-departure>
 - EducationUSA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EducationUSA>
 - EducationUSA YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/EducationUSAtv>
2. Keep your passport (with visa), admission letter, I-20 or DS-2019, and financial documents in your carry-on bag or personal item during your travel to the U.S. You will need to access these documents during your travel. **DO NOT** put these documents in your checked luggage.
3. Prepare your finances to make payments for tuition, housing, and initial expenses.
4. If you have a driver's license in your home country and will be in the U.S. for less than one year, you should get an international permit before leaving home.

Initial Financial Concerns

- When you enter the U.S., you must declare with U.S. Customs amounts equal or over \$10,000. Consider using Flywire for international payments.
<https://www.bursar.psu.edu/payment-options#International%20Wire%20Transfers>
- See <https://liveon.psu.edu> for on-campus housing.
- See <https://livingoffcampus.psu.edu> for off campus housing options at University Park campus. Students attending Commonwealth Campuses should check their campus websites for more information.
- Credit cards are not accepted for most off-campus housing contracts.
<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/offcampus>
- Tuition charges be posted to your LionPATH account only after you register for classes. See <https://bursar.psu.edu/payment-options>
- Tuition and fee estimates vary depending upon campus location, major, level of study and department surcharges.
- International students in F-1 or J-1 immigration status must enroll full time.
- Students who do not waive or enroll in health insurance through LionPATH at the beginning of fall semester will automatically be enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan for Penn State. The health insurance premium for fall semester will be on the fall tuition statement and the premiums for spring and summer will be on the spring tuition statement.
- Health insurance meeting the Penn State waiver standards is mandated for all international students and their accompanying dependents.

STEP 3

Gather your Immunization and Medical History

Medical care on the University Park campus is available at University Health Services (UHS), the student health center. For more information about available services and on how to access them, visit the UHS website at <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health>. After-hours emergency care is available at the local hospital.

Information about immunization requirements is found at <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/medical-services/immunizations>

For information at Penn State Commonwealth Campuses, visit <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/medical-services/health-services-commonwealth-campuses> with any questions about immunization requirements, or contact 1-814-863-5623 or uhs-him@psu.edu

STEP 4

Prepare for International Wire Transfers

Penn State has partnered with Flywire to streamline the tuition payment process for international students. Flywire offers excellent foreign exchange rates, allowing you to pay in your home currency and save a significant amount of money. Flywire accepts payments from any country giving you wholesale foreign exchange rates.

Visit <https://www.bursar.psu.edu/payments-options> and enter the tuition amount.

- Immediately see how much money you will save.
- Receive detailed instructions on how to transfer funds to Penn State.
- Flywire will inform you through every step in the process, including when funds have been delivered.
- Payments are posted to your student account more quickly than if you were using a regular bank to pay.
- You should never have a short payment due to unexpected transfer fees or bank charges.

STEP 5

Arriving in U.S./Port-of-Entry Process

While on the airplane, you should receive the Customs Declaration card. There should be instructions in the airline magazine on how to complete the card. Remember you must declare cash in the amount of \$10,000 or more.

Upon arrival at the port-of-entry, present the following documents to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer: Passport with valid and appropriate visa; printed I-20 or original DS-2019, Customs Declaration Card, and financial documents.

DO NOT LOSE THESE DOCUMENTS

The CBP Officer may stamp the passport with the arrival date, status, and admit until date (should be D/S).

Please check that you have the appropriate documents before leaving the port of entry.

When you leave the CBP Officer at the port-of-entry, be sure you have the following documents:

- I-20 or DS-2019
- Passport
- Financial documents

The I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record) is an electronic document proving legal entry and status which is retrieved from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>. Select "GET MOST RECENT I-94". For several applications in the U.S., an I-94 will be required, so you must print the electronic I-94. See I-94 Fact Sheet at <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2016-Mar/i-94-automation-fact-sheet.pdf>

Travel: The airport code for the airport in State College, Pennsylvania, (for University Park campus) is SCE. There are flights directly to the SCE airport from the following: Dulles (Washington DC); Detroit Metropolitan Airport; Chicago O'Hare Airport; and Philadelphia International Airport. Bus travel is available from most major cities on the East Coast. **For information at other Penn State campuses, reach out to your campus contact:** <https://global.psu.edu/category/campus-contacts>

Complete Health Insurance Requirements

International students (F and J visa holders) and their accompanying dependents must submit proof of health insurance that meets specific criteria or purchase the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). More information about SHIP can be accessed at <https://studentaffairs/psu.edu/requirements-international-students>. Alternate plans must be filed with the Pennsylvania Department of Insurance or be a sponsored plan that meets waiver standards and is approved by the Penn State Student Health Insurance Office accompanied by a letter of financial guarantee directly from the plan sponsor. These changes will eliminate short-term plans as acceptable coverage.

To waive coverage, international students must provide proof of an alternate insurance plan that meets all the following criteria:

- 1.** U.S. carrier or entity is approved to do business in the U.S. and compliant with all guidelines of the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act (PPACA)
- 2.** Carrier has a filed and approved health insurance policy with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Insurance or has a sponsored insurance plan that meets the waiver standards and is approved by the Student Health Insurance Office, together with a letter of financial guarantee directly from the Plan Sponsor
- 3.** Coverage for 100% of preventive and contraceptive care (preventive examinations, immunizations, and screening tests, as required by the PPACA and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for student health insurance plans)
- 4.** Coverage for pre-existing conditions with no waiting period
- 5.** Deductible no greater than \$500
- 6.** Coverage for all essential benefits for accident and sickness, including prescription drug coverage, without limitation
- 7.** Maternity Benefits (or Pregnancy) covered as any other illness or injury
- 8.** Inpatient and outpatient mental health/substance abuse as any other condition
- 9.** No exclusions for injury or illness because of alcohol, drugs, or attempted suicide
- 10.** Worldwide coverage
- 11.** \$3,000 In-Network out-of-pocket maximum
- 12.** \$15,000/\$30,000 Out-of-Network out-of-pocket maximum
- 13.** OR U.S. employer-sponsored health insurance in place of standards 1 – 12
- 14.** AND Medical evacuation (\$100,000)/Repatriation (\$50,000) minimum limits.

Additional plan details including rates, dependent information, and enrollment deadlines can be viewed by visiting Student Affairs at <https://www.studentaffairs.psu.edu/requirements-international-students>. Questions about Student Health Insurance can be directed to University Health Services office of Student Health Insurance at uhs-insurance@psu.edu or by telephone at 814-865-7467.

STEP 7

Complete a Mandatory Immigration Check-in

Return to iStart and complete Immigration Check-In*.

1. Log into istart.gp.psu.edu

2. **Return to the New Student Visa Documentation Process and be sure all forms are submitted.**

3. Complete ALL required eForms in the group.

- More information: <https://global.psu.edu/article/mandatory-immigration-sevis-check-0>
- If your document check-in is not submitted and approved within 30 days of your start date, your I-20 or DS-2019 could be terminated as a result.
- If you make a mistake, you can “Add a new eForm” for the necessary section.

*You cannot obtain a Pennsylvania Driver’s License until after you have been registered as active in SEVIS. More information <https://global.psu.edu/article/how-internationals-can-get-pennsylvania-drivers-license>

STEP 8

Follow Basic F-1 and J-1 Requirements

It is your responsibility to understand and abide by these rules. Read the regulations printed on page 3 of the I-20 or page 2 of the DS-2019.

1. Report to the school which issued your I-20 or DS-2019. If you are attending on the DS-2019 issued by a programming organization (e.g., IIE, LASPAU), you must attend the school authorized by that organization.

2. Complete Immigration Check-in through iStart, to ensure we can register your arrival with the U.S. Government.

3. Update <https://accounts.psu.edu> with the following information which must be reported to the U.S. Government

- Local address in Pennsylvania (must meet USPS postal standards; see <https://usps.com>)
- Permanent address (must be a non-U.S. address)
- Mobile telephone number
- Permanent telephone number (number in your home country)

*ISSA will send emails to your Penn State email address. You are responsible for reading these emails.

4. Be a full-time student every fall and spring semester:

- Undergraduates must enroll for 12 credits
- Graduate students must enroll for 9 credits
- Law students must enroll for 12 credits

No more than 3 credits of online courses can count towards your full-time enrollment. Summer is a vacation period unless you are admitted in summer, or you are completing your program in summer.

5. If you cannot complete your studies by the program end date on the I-20 or DS-2019, it is your responsibility to request an extension of your document before the program end date.

6. If you change your campus, it is your responsibility to request a new I-20 for the Change of Campus through iStart.

7. On-campus employment up to 20 hours per week is permitted. F-1 students may begin work 30 days before the first day of classes. J-1 students cannot work on-campus until the program start date listed on the DS-2019 and must be approved for authorized employment by ISSA.

8. Do not work off-campus under any circumstances without first receiving authorization from ISSA in advance.

9. Request a travel signature from ISSA if you plan to travel outside the U.S. The travel signature is valid for one year. Do not wait until the last minute to submit the request or you will not get the signature.

Contact International Student Advisers for your Immigration needs:

<https://global.psu.edu/student-support-and-success-international-student-advising>