



Office of Global Engagement  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

# Immigration Services

International Student Pre-Arrival Information

## WELCOME

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The Immigration Services office within the Office of Global Engagement (OGE) is pleased to welcome you to The University of Georgia (UGA). You will be joining a diverse campus that includes approximately 2,400 international students from over 100 different countries. Our office will assist you with understanding and complying with U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration regulations and required documentation during your stay at UGA. DHS requires us to create and maintain your Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) immigration record. U.S. regulations require you to keep us informed of any changes both to your academic and immigration status so we can update your SEVIS record in a timely manner.

## BEFORE YOUR VISA APPLICATION

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All F-1 and J-1 student visa applicants must pay the SEVIS fee prior to going to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for the visa interview. Students will use the I-20 form or the DS-2019 form issued by UGA in order to pay the fee online. DHS will issue an official receipt acknowledging the payment, but please print a receipt for your records. You will need the receipt when applying for the student visa. Please review the links below before attending your visa appointment.

1. Pay the SEVIS database fee using Form I-901 at [FMJ Fee](#)
2. Find the U.S. Embassy or Consulate closest to your home: [US Embassy](#)
3. Review the following informational websites:
  - a. Temporary Visitors to the United States: [US Visas for Study](#)
  - b. Getting a Visa: [Study in the States](#)
  - c. Visa Denials (learn why they are denied): [Visa Denials](#)
  - d. Visa Fees and Photo Requirements: [Student Visas](#)

## PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING AN ENTRY VISA

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All students issued an initial I-20 or DS-2019 form must apply for a visa outside the U.S. Although UGA has admitted you and issued the I-20 or DS-2019 form, you must first apply for a student visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, and then be admitted to the U.S. as an international student. (NOTE: A visa is not

required for Canadians, but Canadian citizens still need to present the I-20 or DS-2019 form at the U.S. port of entry)

**What to Take to the Visa Appointment:** Take your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 issued by UGA, admission information, and documentation of financial support to a U.S. embassy or consulate at which you have made a visa appointment and have applied for the student visa. If your spouse and/or children are requesting dependent visas (F-2 or J-2), then a dependent I-20 or DS-2019 form, a marriage license, birth certificates (family records), and additional financial documentation will be needed.

**Tourist Visa Information:** You should not enter the U.S. as a tourist using a B-1/B-2 visa or using the WT-Visa Waiver process. You intend to be a student, so you should not apply for a tourist visa. You may encounter immigration problems if you enter the U.S. using an inappropriate visa. Do not worry if you already have a tourist visa in your passport, this will not prevent you from getting a student visa. You cannot legally attend the UGA if you enter the U.S. on a tourist visa.

**The Visa Interview:** You may be required to speak with a consular official who has to review many visa applications every day. The consular officer will review your documents and ask about your plans of study. The officer will verify that you have the academic ability, English language skills, and the financial resources to study at UGA. Because you are applying for a non-immigration visa, the officer will require you to prove that you intend to return to your home country at the end of your program of study. The officer will then give you instructions about when to return to pick up your documents and your visa or when to expect them in the mail. A few applicants may receive a request to submit additional information.

## ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

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It is important to wait to make your flight arrangements until you receive your student visa from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Remember that you cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019 form. **Carry your immigration documents with you onto the plane because you will be required to present your passport and these documents to the Immigration Officer at the port of entry.**

When you arrive at your U.S. port of entry, you will be inspected for admission into the U.S. During this inspection, you will present your passport, I-20 or DS-2019 form, and financial information to the U.S. Immigration Officer. Your passport will be stamped with an entry date. Put these documents in a safe place because you will need to upload copies during your online immigration check-in process with our office once you arrive in the U.S. Losing these documents will cost you significantly in time and money to replace. You may view this video for more information: [CBP You Arrived](#)

Please note: You are required by DHS to attend the institution whose Immigration documents you use to enter the United States.

Review the links below before entering the U.S.

1. [Travel Security Administration](#)
2. [Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, Atlanta](#)

## WHAT TO BRING

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Georgia's climate is moderate. The average temperature in January ranges from 46 degrees F (7.8C) to 60 degrees F (15.6C) and the average temperature in July ranges from 72 degrees F (22C) to 88 degrees F (31.1C). It sometimes gets colder in the winter and hotter in the summer. A medium weight overcoat should keep you warm in the winter, except on colder days you might need a sweater. Bring gloves, a raincoat, and an umbrella as the average rainfall in Athens is 50 inches (1,270 millimeters) per year. Class dress is informal. When more formal dress is appropriate, women usually wear a dress and men a shirt and tie. Also, if your country has a national dress, instruments, crafts, or other traditional materials, please bring them with you if luggage space permits. We offer many opportunities for you to introduce and share your culture and customs with Americans, and for you to learn more about American culture and customs.

If you take prescription medicine or wear glasses, bring a copy of your prescription along. Also bring copies of any medical records which are important - especially IMMUNIZATION records. If you are married and joined by your family, bring their immunization records also as well.

## GETTING TO ATHENS

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Upon arrival at the Atlanta International Airport, you may reach Athens the following ways:

1. Groome Transportation: <https://groometransportation.com/> Please visit the website for updated rates. The Groome shuttle leaves Atlanta at various times during the day. It takes approximately 1 ½ hours to arrive in Athens after leaving the airport. Locate the International Shuttle Connector which transports from the International Terminal to the Domestic. The ride is approximately ten minutes. Once at the Domestic terminal, you would find the Groome van at Ground Transportation.
2. Take a taxicab to the Atlanta Greyhound Bus (\$14.00-\$20.00), and then the Greyhound Bus to Athens (\$12.00 plus tax). Confirm the fare with the taxi driver on the fare before departing.
3. Rideshare options are available at the Atlanta Airport. Please visit your chosen provider for current fare rates.

## UPON ARRIVING IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

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If you arrive without housing accommodations, you may wish to stay at one of the local hotels near campus. Although not the least expensive hotels, the UGA Georgia Center (706-542-2134) and Hotel Indigo (706-546-7311) are closest to campus. The single room rates are approximately \$70.00 - \$150.00 per night. If you arrive by Groome shuttle, the shuttle stops at each location.

You should plan to arrive several days before beginning your program to look for available housing. You may need to spend a few nights in a local hotel while looking. It is not possible to make rental arrangements by mail.

On-campus housing at UGA is an option for most students. Please review the UGA Housing website before arriving: [UGA Housing](#)

Off-campus housing in Athens includes furnished rooms and unfurnished rooms or apartments. Please review the [Off-Campus Student Housing guide](#) before arriving.

## IMMIGRATION CHECK-IN UPON ARRIVAL TO THE U.S.

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All new and transfer nonimmigrant international students must check-in with the Office of Global Engagement, Immigration Services. The check-in process is completely online. 30 days before the start of their program, new students will receive an email with instructions about how to check-in.

**Check-in cannot be completed until you are in the U.S. Students must check in with our office before registering for classes.** You will receive an email from our office with a link to the online check-in form and login information. You will be required to upload the following documents into the online form: Passport, U.S. Visa and entry stamp, I-94 document. You can obtain the I-94 document **after** you arrive in the U.S. by visiting [CBP I-94](#).

## VERIFICATION OF LAWFUL PRESENCE & IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

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UGA is required to verify the lawful presence in the United States of every student attending. A person who is not lawfully present in the U.S. is not eligible for admission. Students may not register for classes until lawful presence has been verified. To read more, please review the [VLP Frequently Asked Questions Handout](#).

VLP flags will be adjusted to begin on the first date of classes. Students who have failed to complete immigration check-in by this date may not register for classes or edit their schedule. VLP flags will be cleared officially when students enter the U.S. and complete immigration check-in.

You will need to provide documentation of your required immunizations with the UGA Health Center upon your arrival. Visit [UGA Health Center](#) for more information.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION

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International Student Life (ISL- [isl.uga.edu](http://isl.uga.edu)) organizes an orientation each semester for new and transfer international students before classes begin. The information included in this orientation is not covered by any other program on campus. Highlights from ISL's orientation schedules include information concerning immigration issues, taxes for non-residents, cross-cultural adjustment, housing assistance, course registration procedures, Social Security Cards, UGA payroll, and campus tours. Current UGA students serve as orientation leaders (called World Leaders) to assist with international orientation sessions. To learn more, watch the video below and visit the ISL website: [Attend International Student Orientation!](#)

[Register for ISL Orientation!](#)

## QUESTIONS?

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**Undergraduate Students** will receive immigration documents directly from OGE. If you have *admissions* related questions, please contact [global@uga.edu](mailto:global@uga.edu).

**Graduate Students** will receive immigration documents directly from OGE. If you have *admissions* related questions, please contact [gradadm@uga.edu](mailto:gradadm@uga.edu).

**Master of Laws (LL.M.)** students will receive immigration documents directly from OGE. If you have *admissions* related questions, please contact [LLM@uga.edu](mailto:LLM@uga.edu)

**Clinical & Administrative Pharmacy, Clinical Experimental Therapeutics, & Pharmaceutical Health Services, Outcomes & Policy** students will receive immigration documents and admission letters directly from OGE. If you have *admissions* related questions, please contact Dr. Duc Do, [duc.do@uga.edu](mailto:duc.do@uga.edu).

**Veterinary Medicine** students will receive immigration documents and admission letters directly from OGE. If you have *admissions* related questions, please contact [dvmadmit@uga.edu](mailto:dvmadmit@uga.edu)

**Intensive English Program** students will receive immigration documents directly from OGE. If you have *admissions* related questions, please contact [iep@uga.edu](mailto:iep@uga.edu).

**Mandatory Health Insurance-** All UGA F-1 and J-1 international students are required to have medical insurance while attending UGA. Please contact Human Resource Benefits for more information: [hr.uga.edu/student-health-insurance](http://hr.uga.edu/student-health-insurance).

For all **IMMIGRATION**-related questions, please contact an [Immigration Services advisor](#).