

STUDENT HANDBOOK

International Student and Scholar Services



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International Student
and Scholar Services



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INTRODUCTION



WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM!

The following information provides you with basic details you need to prepare for your arrival in the US. You can arrive in the US up to 30 days prior to the Program Start Date listed on your Form I-20/DS-2019.



BLAZE ON!

IMPORTANT DATES & INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

UAB
International Student
and Scholar Services

Earliest day to arrive

30 days before start date on
your I-20 or DS-2019

Latest recommended day
to arrive

First day of class

International Student
Welcome Session

fall semester:
08/20/2025 - 08/22/2025

Classes Begin

fall semester:
8/25/2025

Graduate Departments may have separate orientation
programs and Requirements.

Please contact your department directly for further
details.



INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION AND OTHER REQUIRED PROGRAMS



All new and transferring degree-seeking graduate students (both master's and PhD) must attend an International Welcome Session covering immigration rights and responsibilities, university programs, and cultural adjustment.

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

New undergraduate students must also attend a 'Blazer Beginnings' orientation session when you arrive in Birmingham. 'Blazer Beginnings' is required for all new undergraduate students.*

Your academic program may also require you to attend a separate orientation session. Contact your program directly to learn details of any program-specific orientation sessions.

ARRIVING IN THE MAGIC CITY

ARRIVAL IN BIRMINGHAM



If you fly into the Atlanta airport, you can reserve a shuttle service in advance to drive you to Birmingham (prices vary). MegaBus and Groome Transportation are two shuttle options that run between Birmingham and Atlanta. Birmingham is approximately 2.5 hours from Atlanta by car.

If you fly into Birmingham, ISSS can reserve an airport pick up if needed. Please contact us for more information. Additionally you can take a taxi/Uber/Lyft from the airport to your UAB residence hall, apartment, hotel, or other temporary accommodation. The ride should cost \$15-\$20.

Be sure to say you are a UAB student and be prepared to give the driver a printout of your destination address in case there are language barriers.





ACCOMMODATIONS



If you will not be staying in a UAB residence hall, have not leased an apartment, or do not have anyone to stay with when you arrive in Birmingham, UAB has negotiated special, lower rates with the following hotels.

Contact the hotel upon your arrival and tell your driver to take you to that location. You can provide the ISSS office address (917 13th Street South) as a destination from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

LIST OF HOTELS THAT ARE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF MOST OF UAB'S CAMPUS.

{ HOTELS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF CAMPUS }

Doubletree	808 20th Street South Phone: (205) 933-9000
Hotel Indigo	1023 20th Street South Phone: (205) 933-9555
Homewood Suites	1016 20th Street South Phone: (205) 703-9920
Homewood Suites	250 18th Street South Phone: (205) 322-7937
Courtyard by Marriott	19th Street & 5th Avenue Phone: (205) 254-004
Marriot Residence Inn	821 20th Street South Phone: (205) 731-9595
Home 2 Suites	250 18th Street South (205) 322-7933
Spring Hill Suites by Marriot	2024 4th Avenue South (205) 322-8600



LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

Bringing Funds to the United States

Bring money in a readily convertible form.
DO NOT TRAVEL WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH!

Carry your funds in the form of traveler's checks or cashier's checks payable from a New York-based bank. International checks can take up to 10-15 days for funding to become available. If applicable, plan ahead with your government sponsor to in-sure that your funds are available as needed. Denominations over \$100 can be difficult to use at some US stores that expect smaller bills. In some countries, you can now obtain pre-paid credit cards that work like a credit or debit card, but are protected like traveler's checks. Check with your local international banking institution to see what is available.



Living Expenses and Opening a US Bank Account

Generally, you must have a Social Security number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in order to open an account at some US banks. However, some larger local banks, such as Regions and Wells Fargo, will allow students to open an account without a SSN.

The Social Security Administration will not issue your SSN until it verifies your immigration status with USCIS, which can take 10-15 business days. Furthermore, not all international students are eligible to receive an SSN: only those who are employed in an on-campus job can get an SSN. Others must apply for an ITIN.

Learn more about applying for an SSN/ITIN [here](#).

Until you can open a bank account, you will need access to at least \$2,000 in living expenses, even if you are receiving a scholarship or assistantship from UAB. It can take at least 30 days to receive your first stipend payment. If you are funded by a departmental assistantship, you must be prepared for possible de-lay in payment.

Transferring Money for Tuition

Two alternative ways to bring your tuition money to the US are via wire transfer and Flywire. These methods eliminate the need to carry large amounts of funds. Wire money only after you are sure you are coming to UAB and have obtained a student visa: refunding internationally is by check, so it is a slow process. Tuition and fees must be paid on time. For full details on payment deadlines, [click here](#).

UAB has partnered with [Flywire](#), a third-party vendor, to save you money on your international student payments. Flywire converts your currency to US dollars and sends the specified amount to UAB. Once UAB receives the funds, you will get a confirmation email.

If you wish to send a wire transfer, contact Student Accounting
(FA-studacct@uab.edu):

UAB Financial Affairs - Student Accounting

1700 University Boulevard, LHL Ground Floor G10, Birmingham, AL 35294-0013

Phone: (205) 934-3570 Toll Free: (888) 255-8734

Fax (205) 934-9107

IMMUNIZATIONS & HEALTH INSURANCE



UAB requires all international students to provide proof of certain immunizations [measles, mumps, rubella (“MMR”); tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis; varicella; two tuberculin skin tests or one TB blood test; and, for students 21 years and younger, meningitis. You will receive an email explaining the clearance process for immunizations containing specific information on how to use the online patient portal, complete the required forms, and submit your immunization documentation. You must have a BlazerID to access the patient portal. If you have not created your BlazerID, go to www.uab.edu/blazerid.

Students enrolled in certain programs (including Nursing, Optometry, Dentistry, and some Health Professions programs) must also show documentation of three Hepatitis B vaccines, a Hepatitis B surface antibody blood titer, and a physical examination within twelve months prior to matriculation. Please find attached the medical clearance forms to be completed as much as possible before your arrival.

ALL TB testing (skin, blood, or chest X-ray) must be performed in the United States within 3 months of your arrival.

If you do not have the required vaccinations prior to your arrival, Student Health & Wellness can administer the immunizations for a fee. Learn more about the medical clearance process [here](#).

You **cannot** register for classes until you upload medical records and proof of health insurance.

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

All international students must enroll in the UAB Student Health Service. Student Health & Wellness runs a clinic providing student access to physicians and nurses and will be your primary health care provider while you are studying at UAB. Student Health Service fees will appear on your bill each term.

HEALTH INSURANCE (FEES SUBJECT TO CHANGE EVERY FALL SEMESTER)

International students must obtain student health insurance while at UAB. In order to use insurance you already have, you must present evidence of your insurance policy to the Student Health Services by uploading to the UAB Student Health and Wellness patient portal. The policy must be in English and detail the specific benefits provided. Student Health & Wellness will decide whether your insurance policy is comparable to UAB's and remove you from the United Healthcare plan. More information about health insurance waivers is available [here](#). To obtain a waiver of United Healthcare insurance, your outside plan must provide, at a minimum:

- Physician and hospital coverage with providers in Alabama
- Provide both inpatient and outpatient mental health
- Provide coverage for pre-existing conditions
- Provide unlimited coverage per illness or injury
- Provide coverage for all semesters of enrollment
- Medical evacuation
- Repatriation of remains

If your health insurance does not meet the above requirements and your waiver request is denied, you will be automatically billed for UAB United Healthcare insurance (currently \$2,772 per academic year, including summer).

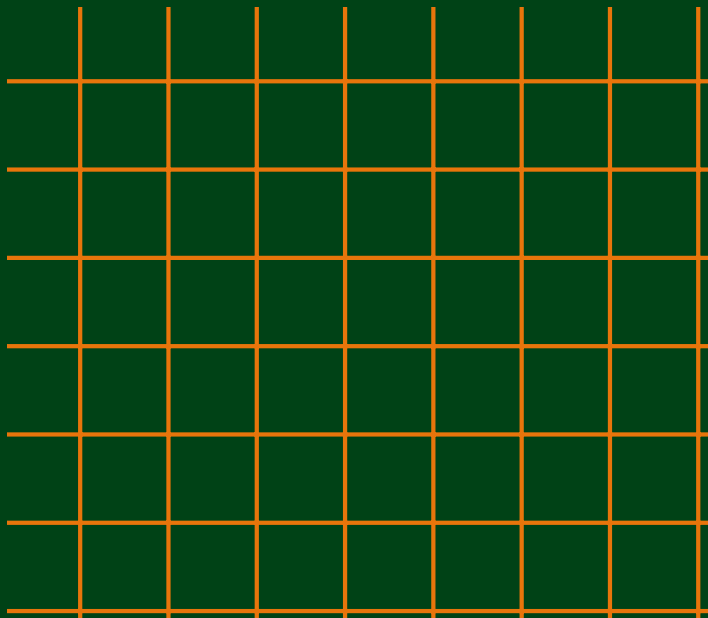
For waiver questions, please contact Student Health & Wellness



MEDICAL RECORDS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

If you take prescription medications, ask your doctor for a copy of the prescription and bring a long supply with you before you leave your home country. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring a second pair and copy of the prescription.

Also ask your doctor for a copy of any vital medical records you may need to use in the US, like your immunization history.



ACADEMICS

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Contact your school directly to obtain the name of your graduate advisor or mentor. ISSS does not provide academic advice other than ensuring that all international **graduate students enroll in at least 9 credit hours per semester** (at least 6 of which must be face-to-face, not online).

These hour thresholds are set by US immigration regulations. International **undergraduate students must enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester** (at least 9 of which must be face-to-face, not online).

ARTICULATION: TRANSFERRING INTERNATIONAL COURSE CREDITS TO UAB

If you completed college-level courses outside the United States, you completed a transcript evaluation when applying to UAB. Those credits were applied to your UAB transcript as “elective” credit hours, which do not count toward your UAB degree. If you want those courses to count towards your UAB degree requirements (not just as electives), you must have the individual courses matched with UAB course offerings through a process known as articulation. Articulation is mandatory if you wish to transfer credits to fulfill UAB degree requirements.

To begin the articulation process, email the International Admissions team at intladmin@uab.edu.

HOUSING

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

All first-year freshmen must live on campus in a UAB residence hall (dorm). On-campus housing is also reserved for J-1 exchange students visiting UAB from one of our partner institutions in the UK, Japan, Australia, and Spain. **You must apply online [here](#)**. Contact Student Housing & Residence Life at studenthousing@uab.edu with questions. Apply early—on-campus housing is severely limited! Sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students should plan to live off campus in an apartment or rental house.

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

Monthly rates for unfurnished off-campus housing range from \$750 to \$1,500. Renters or “tenants” usually have to pay for their own utilities (i.e., electricity, water, and internet), and you must pay a deposit to each utility company in order to receive service.

If you are having trouble finding accommodation off campus, we highly recommend you contact the [Off-Campus Student and Family Engagement office](#) for assistance in your search. They can help you find available property options and answer any questions. (Search for housing here: <https://offcampushousing.uab.edu/>). Please also see [our webpage with helpful information about the rental market in the US](#).

HELPFUL TIPS

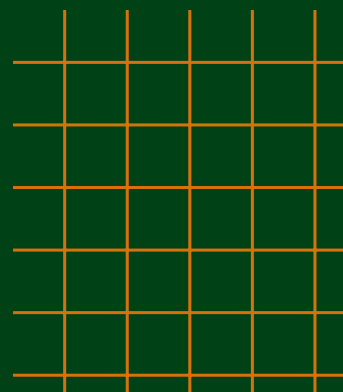
WEATHER & WHAT TO WEAR

The temperature in Birmingham averages 27° C in the summer and 9° C in the winter. Summer is hot and extremely humid, but you may wish to carry a light sweater to wear in our air-conditioned buildings. Fall will transition to cooler temperatures, and a light jacket will suffice for a few weeks. Bring a heavy jacket or coat for our short winter (December through February). It may be less expensive to bring these clothes with you, or ask your family to ship additional bulky clothing to you later.

University students dress quite informally. Women wear skirts, shorts, leggings, or jeans with t-shirts, blouses, or sweaters. Men wear shorts or jeans with sport shirts, t-shirts, or sweaters. Everyone wears jeans. You may want to bring an item of traditional dress from your country to wear on special occasions.

INTERNATIONAL DRIVER LICENSE

If you intend to drive while in the US, we recommended bringing an International Driver License (IDL) from your home country or country of residence. An IDL is accepted in all US states. An IDL is valid for 12 months, after which you must apply for an Alabama driver license if you wish to continue driving in the US. If you are coming for a short-term exchange (fewer than 160 days), you are ineligible for an Alabama driver license and must use an IDL.



**FOREVER
FAITHFUL.
FOREVER
LOYAL.**

UAB

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Again, CONGRATULATIONS on your admission to UAB. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We at International Student & Scholar Services look forward to meeting you!

