Welcome to Iowa State, International Cyclones! For all international graduate students that are starting classes on campus in Ames, Iowa for Fall 2021, follow this packet of Next Steps to get started on your journey to Iowa State.
**PRE-ARRIVAL PLANNING**

**Reporting Date**

You need to arrive in Ames, Iowa by your mandatory reporting date of **Thursday, August 19th**.

However, ISSO recommends you arrive at least 1 week early in order to complete all orientation activities, placement examinations, or any requirements set by your academic department.

If you have an emergency and are unable to arrive in Ames by August 19th, you must gain approval from your academic department and contact the Office of Admissions at admissions@iastate.edu to receive a late arrival later.

**Traveling during COVID-19**

- **United States Travel Restrictions**
  
  Check all United States travel restrictions on a [reliable U.S. government website](https://www.travel.state.gov) frequently. Email isso@iastate.edu if you have any questions or concerns regarding travel restrictions.

- **International Travel Guidelines**
  
  Iowa State University’s COVID-19 policies remain consistent with the guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)](https://www.cdc.gov). As new information comes out, our policies may change. We recommend you review the [international travel guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov) frequently before traveling. Please be aware that quarantine may be recommended for travelers that are not vaccinated upon arrival into the United States.

  For more information on how Iowa State is mitigating the risk of COVID-19, visit our [Cyclones Care](https://cyclonescare.iastate.edu) and [Thielen Health Center](https://thielenhealthcenter.iastate.edu) webpages.

- **Arrival Date into the United States**
  
  As you are planning your journey and booking flights, please arrange travel so you arrive in the United States by your Mandatory Reporting Date of Thursday, August 19th. Based on COVID-19 international travel guidelines at that time, you may be asked to quarantine or practice increased safety precautions for up to a week after arrival. It is up to your discretion how early you want to arrive; we recommend you select an arrival date based on the [international travel guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov) and your COVID-19 vaccination status.

- **Initial Expenses**
  
  We recommend bringing sufficient funds to cover your initial expenses for the first three months through traveler’s checks, ATM, or debit/credit cards until you establish a bank account in the U.S. Never carry large amounts of cash with you or in luggage checked in with the airline.

**Free Shuttle Service to Ames**

The International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) collaborates with Executive Express, a local car service company, to provide all incoming international students a **FREE** shuttle service from the Des Moines International Airport to Ames, Iowa. Executive Express will be offering **FREE shuttles from July 30th to August 22nd at 11:00 AM, 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM Central Daylight Time each day**. If you are in need of transportation outside of these times, you are responsible for the cost.

Each student is allowed to have two pieces of luggage and one lap item when traveling with Executive Express. Any additional luggage will be $15 per bag over the allowed amount; personal items that can fit on your lap are not to be included in the luggage count. This free ride from Executive Express is only available to new ISU international students, not their family members or returning ISU students.

To schedule a free shuttle, please fill out the registration form as soon as you book your flight into the United States or at least 3 days before your travel begins. After you register, you will receive a confirmation email from Executive Express.

If you need to cancel your scheduled appointment, please email Cyndy Thayer or our IA Dispatch Team 24 hours prior to your travel date at cyndy@executiveexpress.biz or jon@executiveexpress.biz.

**Failure to show up to your shuttle appointment without advance notification will result in you being responsible for the cost.**
On-Campus Housing with the Department of Residence

If you have a Housing Contract with the Iowa State Department of Residence, details about Fall 2021 Move-In can be found here. Housing contracts for apartments begin August 14th, and for residence-halls, it begins August 17th. Early move-in is available (see below under “Temporary housing in Ames”), but there is a $25 fee per night until your contract begins.

Off-Campus Housing

If you do NOT have a housing contract with the Iowa State Department of Residence, you will need to find your own living space. The Iowa housing website will provide you more information on off-campus housing in Ames and tips for living in Ames can be found here.

Temporary Housing in Ames

If you have a Fall 2021 housing contract with Iowa State’s Department of Residence, you can move into temporary housing in Willow Hall starting July 31st. If you opt into temporary housing, you will be charged $25 per day until the date your ISU housing contract starts. Students who opt into the temporary housing in Willow Hall will move into their permanent housing assignment on August 11th. More information is found on the ISU’s Department of Residence Early Arrival webpage - please scroll to the bottom of the page under “International Student Temporary Housing” to learn more and fill out the form that is found underneath. Make sure to click on “Temp Housing (July 31 - August 12).”

ISSO also partners with Best Western Hotel to offer reduced room rates from July 12th – August 22nd. New international students may reserve rooms under ISSO’s name to receive the reduced rates of $79 per night for a king room and $89 per night for a double queen room. To reserve your room, please contact Deann Malfero, the Assistant Manager at Best Western Hotel, at 515-296-2500 or dmalfero@bestwesternames.com. You must reserve your room with Deann directly to get the reduced rate. Booking from alternative third-party websites may cost you more.

Alternative and independent arrangements can be made through Airbnb or hotels in Ames.

Dining

Iowa State University offers various meal plans that you can purchase for the Fall 2021 – Spring 2022 academic year. Meal plans are open to those who live on-campus, or off-campus. ISU Dining meal plans begin August 17th, 2021. To learn more about pricing and ISU dining locations on campus, click here.

There will be temporary ISU dining meal plans available for any on-campus or off-campus student that will begin July 12th and end August 16th. With the temporary dining meal plan, you will have 3 meal swipes to use per day, but you will only be charged for what you use. Instructions on how to purchase a temporary ISU dining meal plan will be sent to your email by July. You do not have to purchase a temporary ISU dining meal plan, but please make sure to have arrangements for meals when you arrive into the United States.
YOUR NEXT STEPS

Prior to your arrival, you must complete all the following steps listed in the sections below by Friday July 30, 2021.

University Procedures

- Create a Net-ID

  Your Net-ID will be your main form of university communication and the key to access several resources at Iowa State University. Your Net-ID is the first part of your @iastate.edu email address and you will use it daily. Please take a moment to create your NetID by following these simple steps on the ISU Information Technology website.

- Log into AccessPlus

  Prior to your arrival to campus please take time to log in to AccessPlus to view your class schedule, view housing and dining information, view your university bill (posts the first day of the month you begin classes), and update your personal and emergency information—including your in session address and cell phone number.

- Obtain your ISU Card

  Your ISUCard is your permanent university identification card, which includes your picture and university identification number. You will use your card for most campus services, including the library, testing centers, recreation center, riding CyRide, door access, meals on campus, and many more.

  Please click on Submit Your Photo Here and then follow the guidelines listed there to submit a good photo of you. You will be able to pick up the card once you arrive to campus.

Health Safety

- Health Insurance

  Health insurance provides financial protection from any high, unexpected health care costs in the United States. When you register for classes at Iowa State University, you are automatically enrolled in health insurance coverage under the Iowa State University Student and Scholar Health Insurance Program (SSHIP). Students who arrive at ISU before August 1, 2021 will have an additional insurance premium included on their university bill so that their SSHIP health insurance coverage begins on the date of arrival. More information about health insurance will be covered in detail during an information session at ISSO New International Student Orientation.

  If you have questions about your ISU Student and Scholar Health Insurance, please visit their webpage or e-mail isusship@iastate.edu.

- Submit Proof of Health Immunization Records

  To ensure a safe and healthy campus and community, all incoming international students must submit immunization records to Access Plus as soon as possible, or by July 30th, 2021. This will allow the nurses at the health center to review your documents and know what they need to assist you with upon arrival. A COVID-19 vaccination is NOT required to be a student at ISU, however, if you have received a COVID-19 vaccination please include it along with your other immunization records. You do not need to email any documents directly to the health center in addition to submitting them on Access Plus as all Access Plus submissions go directly the nurses at the health center for review.

- Schedule Health Screening Appointment

  All new international students are required to complete a health screening appointment that takes place in-person at Thielen Student Health Center. Your health screening appointment is a brief meeting with a member of our nursing staff to review your requirements and any health concerns. Health screening appointments will be held at various times from August 2nd to August 23rd. You can view times and register for a health screening appointment on CyStart by following this step-by-step guide. Please submit your immunization records prior to an appointment.

  If you have any questions about immunization records or health screenings, please email Nurse Kelly Frizzell at kmfrizz@iastate.edu.
Schedule COVID-19 Vaccination Appointment – optional

Thielen Student Health Center will be offering a special Vaccination Clinic for international students who would like to receive the COVID-19 vaccine on Monday, August 9th from 9AM – 3PM Central Daylight Time. Additional vaccine appointment times will be available at a later date for students not able to arrive by August 9th. At the time of this mailing, the current approved vaccines in the United States for COVID-19 are:

- Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, safety data (PDF) (approved for age 16 and above)
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, safety data (PDF) (approved for age 18 and above)
- Johnson & Johnson (Janssen), fact sheet (PDF) (approved for age 18 and above)

The university does NOT require COVID-19 vaccines for students at this time, but it is highly encouraged and is a vital part of having a successful and healthy semester for all students. Iowa State has been administering Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson vaccines primarily. To view appointment times and register for a COVID-19 vaccine appointment (Pfizer or Johnson and Johnson) for August 9th, follow this step-by-step guide. To ensure that you will safely receive the vaccine, you must follow the following guidelines:

- Submit any COVID vaccine immunization records you have received prior to arrival to campus by following this webpage.
- Do not receive any vaccinations in the 4 weeks prior to arriving. Current guidelines state that travelers should not receive a US approved vaccine within 28 days of a previous dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- COVID-19 vaccines should not be given within 2 weeks of any other vaccine. We understand many of you will be updating vaccines prior to arrival, including the required measles vaccine. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic we will be giving priority to providing any COVID-19 vaccinations and will assist those needing to complete measles vaccine series after COVID-19 series has been completed.

Do you have a spouse?

You can also register your spouse for a Covid-19 vaccine appointment! Follow this step-by-step guide, and after you log-in, please find the event listed as “SPOUSE ONLY August 9th Covid-19 Vaccination Clinic.”

Have you already received a COVID-19 vaccine?

Please submit your COVID vaccine immunization records you have received prior to arrival to campus by following this webpage. Students who have already completed a vaccine series that is approved for Emergency Use Authorization in the United States will not need to repeat them after arrival. For those that submit another brand of COVID-19 vaccine, the staff at the health center will determine if additional vaccine should be recommended upon arrival. Below are the current guidelines for those who have received vaccines not listed above:

- People who completed a COVID-19 vaccination series with a vaccine that has been authorized for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO) do not need any additional doses with an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine.
- People who are partially vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine series authorized for emergency use by WHO may be offered an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine series.
- People who completed or partially completed a COVID-19 vaccine series with a vaccine that is not authorized by FDA or not authorized for emergency use by WHO may be offered an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine series.

The list of vaccines approved by the WHO are subject to change between the date of this mailing and the day you arrive. Iowa State will follow the current guidelines on the date you arrive. Because the situation with the COVID–19 pandemic is everchanging, please watch for any additional information prior to your arrival if plans for vaccines or other instructions would change.

If you have any questions, please email kmfrizz@iastate.edu.
Placement Examinations & Teaching Symposium

**English Placement Test (EPT)**

The English Placement Test (EPT) for non-native speakers of English is required for all incoming international students who do not meet the English language exemption criteria. The test is provided once free of charge to give students an opportunity to demonstrate sufficient English proficiency, to be exempt from English coursework, or provide placement into appropriate English language support courses. Exemption from the EPT, a passing score on the EPT, OR completion of the appropriate English support courses is a graduation requirement. The test consists of two parts: writing and oral communication, and based on the results of the test, students may be required to take English courses.

To check whether or not you are exempt from taking the EPT, please review the exemption criteria listed here. If you are NOT exempt, please take note of the testing schedule below.

- The EPT writing test will be offered virtually on **Saturday, July 24th at 8:30AM Central Daylight Time**. Please keep this date and time open. To register for the test and for more information, visit this [webpage](#). If you are unable to take it on that date, we will offer an in-person writing test in August. **Students are strongly encouraged to attend the online administration on Saturday, July 24, 2021, if possible, so you can register early for any necessary writing classes**

- The EPT oral communication test will be offered in-person in August. Registration will open up on August 5th. At that time, please visit this [webpage](#) to register.

It is required that you complete both components of the English Placement Test. For questions regarding the test, please email ept@iastate.edu.

**Oral English Certification Test (OECT)**

For graduate students with teaching assistantships, you will have to complete the in-person OECT prior to the start of the semester. To view available dates and learn more about registering for the OECT, please visit the [International Teaching Assistants Program website](#). The registration for August 2021 will be available starting July 15, 2021. The test dates will start as early as August 2.

After you have completed the registration, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions to select a preferred test slot. However, it is strongly recommended that you login periodically to check for available test slots since it is a busy test period. If there are no more slots, continue to login since new slots may be added if there is enough demand and if there are sufficient raters.

**Teaching Assistant (TA) Cohort Program - optional**

The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) will conduct the virtual Teaching Assistant (TA) Cohort Program on Tuesday, August 17 (10AM-12PM). Zoom registration form will be available by July 1. All TAs who are new to the ISU classroom, or who have received a teaching assignment different from what they have done before, are strongly encouraged to attend this seminar. In this online workshop, teams of TAs will work together in breakout rooms to solve potential classroom scenarios on various topics such as academic dishonesty, classroom management, and inclusivity. A panel of experts will help TAs discuss appropriate steps to take when these situations occur in their classrooms. **This is not required, but we encourage you to attend.**

More information on registration can be found on the CELT [website](#).
Orientation Activities

The International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) expects you to participate in new graduate student orientation activities upon arrival into the United States. Follow the sign-up instructions in this step-by-step guide to register for the following activities on CyStart:

■ Immigration Processing – Virtual, appointment based

Immigration processing is a mandatory session that is required for all international students at Iowa State University to complete once they arrive into the United States. We will offer various virtual appointments to complete this during August. During this session, you will complete an Electronic Check-In with an ISSO staff member where you will upload important documentation, and then you will listen to an Immigration Presentation with an ISSO International Advisor to go over regulations you should follow to maintain your immigration status. Failure to complete could result in academic and immigration issues.

Please have the following documentation ready before attending Immigration Processing. Documentation needs to be clearly scanned in a digital JPEG or PDF format.

- I-20 or DS-2019 (from ISU and any previous schools)
- Passport Photo Page
- I-94 Arrival Record (get yours here)
- Passport Photo Pages & I-20/DS-2019 forms for any F-2 or J-2 family members who will come with you
- Letter of intent (for graduate students on assistantship)
- Financial guarantee (for sponsored students)

You will also need to know the following:

- Address in Ames (this can be a temporary address, such as a hotel or the home of a friend or acquaintance with whom you are staying)
- Name, phone number, and mailing address for a person we can contact if you have a personal emergency

■ New International Graduate Student Welcome Program – Virtual, Friday Aug 20th from 10AM-12PM

ISSO will host a half-day International Graduate Student Welcome Program on Friday, August 20th, 2021 where you will get the opportunity to mingle virtually with other new and current international graduate students and learn more about Iowa State by hearing from important campus resources. If you unable to make it to this due to a schedule conflict with your academic department, please ask for a recording of this program so you can watch it on your own time later.

■ Sponsored Students Meeting (If Applicable) – Virtual, Thursday Aug 19th from 2-3PM

Students whose tuition and fees are paid by a government, business, or organization should attend this meeting.

Virtual Link for Orientation Activities

- To join your Immigration Processing session, enter this virtual session link during your scheduled appointment time: IMMIGRATION PROCESSING MEETING LINK
- To join the New International Graduate Student Welcome Program on Friday, August 20th from 10AM – 12PM, enter using this virtual session link: WELCOME PROGRAM LINK
- To join the Sponsored Student Meeting on Thursday Aug 19th from 2-3PM, enter using this virtual session link: SPONSORED STUDENT LINK
Employment Procedures

I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification

If you have been hired for an on-campus employment position, you must complete the following steps in step by step order to finalize your on-campus work authorization. After you complete your Immigration Processing appointment, you will receive more details on how to drop off your documents and set up an in-person I-9 appointment.

1. Complete the Electronic Check-In during your Immigration Processing appointment. You can only complete the Electronic Check-In once you are physically here in the United States. To sign up, follow this step-by-step guide.

2. Complete on-boarding tasks and Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification) on Workday on or before first day of employment

3. Drop off your original documents at ISSO for review

4. Schedule and complete an in-person I-9 appointment at ISSO

5. Apply for Social Security Number, if needed.

Stay Connected

Join our WhatsApp Group

We have created a WhatsApp group for new international graduate students to get to know each other. Join the group chat using this link! We encourage you to introduce yourself, and chat with other incoming international students. Creating connections with each other is important, fun, and exciting, as you will start your journey at Iowa State together.
Here is a check-list that will help you remember all the steps you need to complete by July 30th, 2021. Print off this check-list so you can keep track of your progress!

**Pre-Arrival Travel Planning**

- Plan your travel accordingly and arrive to the United States by your reporting day of Thursday, August 19th.
- Check all United States travel restrictions on a reliable U.S. government website.
- Review the international travel guidelines frequently.
- Book your FREE shuttle service to Ames with Executive Express by using this link.
- Finalize your temporary housing accommodations at the Department of Residence, the Best Western Hotel, or any other alternative arrangement.

**University Procedures**

- Create your Net-ID
- Submit your photo for your ISU Card
- Log into AccessPlus to review your housing and dining information, university bill, and more

**Placement Examinations**

- If not exempt, register for the EPT writing test that will take place virtually on Sat, July 24th at 8:30AM Central Daylight Time.
- If not exempt, register for the EPT oral communication test that takes place in-person in August. Registration will open up August 5th.
- Graduate teaching assistants must register for the in-person OECT. Registration opens up July 15th.
- Graduate teaching assistants are encouraged to register for the virtual TA Symposium. Registrations opens up July 1st.

**Health Safety**

- Submit your Immunization Records, including any COVID-19 vaccine records, on Access Plus to Thielens Health Center as soon as possible.
- Register for your Health Screening appointment that takes place in-person at Thielens Health Center by following this step-by-step guide. Appointments are available from August 2nd to August 23rd.
- If desired, schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment on August 9th by following this step-by-step guide. Make sure to review the section on page 6 clearly before scheduling a vaccine appointment. If you have a spouse, you can register for them as well.

**Employment Procedures**

- If you have on-campus employment, like a graduate assistantship, you must first complete your Immigration Processing session. Afterwards, you will receive on-boarding steps to complete.

**Orientation Activities**

- Using the activity sign-up instructions here, register for the following on CyStart:
  - Immigration Processing – virtual, appointment based
  - New International Graduate Student Welcome Program – virtual, Friday Aug 20th from 10AM-12PM
  - Sponsored Student Meeting (if applicable) – virtual, Thursday Aug 19th 2PM-3PM
- Check our New International Student Orientation page regularly to received updated information
- Join the New International Student WhatsApp group chat and chat with other incoming international graduate students.
We Are Here To Help You!

Have questions?
Email isso@iastate.edu and your question will be forwarded to the right person.

For timely updates and more information:
Check our New International Student Orientation website.