NEW STUDENT FAQ WEBINAR 2021

Common questions, information, and links to resources.

ISS

TAMU Community

International Student Services
Texas A&M University
Frequently Asked Questions

Category 1 - Holds

Q1. What is ISS Check – In? How can I do it?

- ISS check - in is a request through Terra Dotta that helps an ISS advisor activate your SEVIS record and inform the United States Government that you are officially enrolled full time at Texas A&M University. The request can be completed online using Terra Dotta.

Q2. When is the last date to submit check-in with ISS?

- Every student must submit this request after entering the United States before September 24, 2021.

Q3. What do I need to complete my Check - In?

- Passport
- Visa
- I-94 (steps to access it on Terra Dotta)
- CBP Entry stamp (if available)
- A signed copy of your initial form I-20 (all pages)

Q4. What other category of holds can be placed on my account? Who should I contact to get them removed?

- The most common holds that can show up are:
  - Transcript Hold – contact Admissions – Affects Registration
  - TB Screening – contact Student Health Services – Affects Registration
  - Past Due Payments – contact Student Business Services – processing with ISS stops
  - Direct Deposit Hold – contact Student Business Services – does not affect registration

If any other holds show up, try to contact the department that placed the hold on your account or contact ISS and we can guide you to the correct department.

Category 2 - Orientation and Registration

Q1. What are the various types of Orientations available to me? Is it compulsory for me to attend these orientations?

- Graduate Students
- **Orientation by Office of Graduate & Professional Studies** (Check with academic department if compulsory to attend)
- **Orientation by Academic Department** (Check with academic department)
- **New International Student Orientation (NISO) by ISS** (Optional – but highly recommended)

  - **Undergraduate Students**
    - **New Student Conference** (Check with New Student and Family Programs if compulsory to attend)
    - **New International Student Orientation (NISO) by ISS** (Optional – but highly recommended)

Q2. How many hours do I have to register for to be considered a full-time student?

  - Graduate students – 9 hours
  - Undergraduate students – 12 hours

Q3. The classes that are required for our major are already full. What should we do to get into those classes?

  - There are 2 ways to try and get into those classes:
    - Email your academic advisor and ask them to put you into a class
    - Submit a force request with your respective department to let you into the class

### Category 3 - Transportation

Q1. What are the various ways to travel to and from the airports?

  - The easiest and most popular way to get to college station is by taking the [Ground Shuttle](#) from George Bush Intercontinental/Houston Airport (IAH)
  - The connectivity between Dallas and Austin is very limited. One option to travel to Dallas or Austin from Bryan is the [Greyhound shuttle](#).

Q2. Does Texas A&M provide any services that help students travel around College Station?

  - Yes, the [Aggie Spirit bus](#) system is available free of cost to every Texas A&M student. The buses go to HEB, Target, etc.

Q3. What are the various ways to travel between cities?

  - All these options are not affiliated or related to TAMU in any way.
    - [Ground Shuttle](#)
    - [Greyhound Bus](#)
    - [Brazos Transit District](#)
Category 4 – Health Insurance

Q1. How can I apply for health insurance?

- As international students, you are already enrolled in a student health insurance plan and it is automatically billed to your tuition fees.

Q2. How can I learn about the various benefits available to me as a part of the Student Health Insurance Plan?

- Here is a link to find out more about the various benefits of the Student Health Insurance Plan.
- Information about Health Insurance is also available on the ISS website.

Q3. Is it mandatory for me to have Health Insurance?

- Students entering the United States on J1 status are required by the US government to have an active health insurance plan to maintain J1 status.
- Students entering the United States on F1 status are not required by the government to have an active health insurance plan to maintain their status, however Texas A&M University requires all students to have an active health insurance plan.

Therefore, it is compulsory for all students to have an active health insurance plan to be enrolled at Texas A&M University.

Category 5 – COVID-19 and Quarantine

Disclaimer – As of July 28, 2021 there are no TAMU’s requirements for vaccination or quarantine. However, the steps listed in this section are highly recommended. The guidelines are being revised continuously, please check the US government websites, and the Texas A&M COVID-19 website for most up-to-date information.

Q1. How can I learn about the various University policies related to International Travel, COVID-19, Quarantine?

- Texas A&M University COVID Website
- ISS COVID-19 webpage

Q2. If I have been fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine what are the quarantine requirements for me?

- If you have been fully vaccinated with an FDA-authorized vaccine:
• Get tested 3-5 days after travel.
• Free testing is available to all Texas A&M students. Here is a link to find out more about it.
• If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others and report your positive to Texas A&M university.
• If you test negative, self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms. Here is a link to learn more about the symptoms.
• Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements.

Q3. If I have not been fully vaccinated or received a vaccine that is not FDA-approved what are the quarantine requirements for me?

- If you have not been vaccinated or have received a vaccine that is not FDA-approved:
  • Get tested within 3-5 days after travel AND stay at home and self-quarantine for 7 days after travel.
  • Free testing is available to all Texas A&M students on campus. Here is a link to find out more about it.
  • Even if you test negative, self-quarantine for the full 7 days.
  • If you test positive, self-quarantine and report your positive test to the university. Here is a link to find out how to report a positive test.
  • If you don’t get tested, self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
  • Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.
  • Self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms; isolate and get tested if you develop symptoms. Here is a link to learn more about the symptoms.
  • Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements.

**Category 6 – Employment**

Q1. How can I find an on-campus job? What do I have to do after I get an on-campus job? How many hours can I work on-campus without putting my status in jeopardy?

- To find an on-campus job, use the jobs for aggies portal.
- After you get a job and have an offer letter with you, apply for the Social Security Endorsement Letter with ISS. Here is a link to find out more about it.
- Fall and Spring semester hours <= 20 hours/week
- Summer and Winter Break hours <= 40 hours/week

Q2. What do I need to apply for a Social Security Endorsement Letter with ISS? How can I apply for one?
- You can request ISS to issue a Social Security Endorsement Letter using Terra Dotta. For a successful application, make sure the offer letter from your employer has the following information on it:
  - Student name (as it is listed on the student’s passport)
  - Department
  - Position/Title
  - Start Date (No more than 30 days in the future at the time of application)
  - Number of hours per week
  - Rate of pay
  - Contact information for employer and supervisor
  - Employment Identification Number (EIN) (if possible) (This number can be requested form the payroll office of the hiring department.)

Here is a link to the sample letter for employers and departments on our website.

Q3. Do I need to apply for CPT/OPT to work on campus?

- For F1 students, the only requirement to work on-campus is to finish the Check-In with ISS. You don’t need a CPT or an OPT to work on-campus.
- For J1 students, along with finishing the Check-In with ISS, they also have to apply for ISS Work Authorization. Here is a link to find out more about it.

Q4. How can I look for jobs/internships off-campus?

- The Career Center is a great resource to help with finding jobs and internships. Jobs for aggies is another great resource for the same.

Q5. What is the difference between CPT, post-completion OPT, and pre-completion OPT?

- **CPT (Curriculum Practical Training)** – Here is a link to learn more about eligibility, steps to apply for CPT, etc.
- **Pre-Completion OPT and Post-Completion OPT (Optional Practical Training)** – Here is a link to learn more about OPT, eligibility, steps to apply for OPT, etc.

In a nutshell, students apply for CPT when the internship/co-op is a part of their degree plan and OPT when the internship/co-op is not a part of their degree plan.

**Category 7 – Safety**

Q1. What are the various safety resources available to students?

- Safety of students is a priority for the university, and they have multiple resources to ensure the safety of all Texas A&M students. Here is a link to them.
- **Code Maroon** is the official emergency notification system of the university. They have a website and a mobile application that is compatible with both Android and iOS. You also receive emails on your Texas A&M account with regular updates.

**Q2.** I received a call/email from IRS/Department of Homeland Security/any other government office demanding for money. They threatened that I would lose my immigration status if I did not transfer that money immediately. What should I do?

- **A government official will NEVER call you or email you demanding for money.** In the US, if you have any payments due or if anything is putting your status in jeopardy, the office will reach out to you using a physical mail in your mailbox instead of an email. If you receive such a call or email block that number or email address immediately and report it to ISS.
- Here is a link to [INFORMATION ABOUT SPAM CALLS](#). Please go over this information and stay informed.

**NOTE** – The University provides multiple resources for every problem you could possibly face. Here is a list of those resources:

- During the fall and spring semester, the university provides [late-night bus rides](#) to and from multiple locations on and off campus.
- Another useful resource is the [Corps Escorts](#). Under this program, a member of the corps of cadets accompanies you from wherever you are to your home at night and makes sure you reach home safely. The contact information for this service is available on the back of your student ID. The contact number is – (979) 845-6789
- **Car-Pool** is another service that provide you free rides late at night. The contact information for them is also available at the back of your student ID. The contact number is – (979) 693-9905
- If you experience theft, sexual harassment, physical harassment, or any other problem, you can contact the [University Police Department](#). Contact number – (979) 845 2345
- For any problems or emergencies that happen off campus call 911.

### Category 8 – General Questions

**Q1.** How can I pay my fees? Who should I contact for questions related to fee payment?

- There are multiple ways to pay your fees. All the questions regarding fee payment can be answered by the [Student Business Services](#).

**Q2.** Where can I pick up my Student ID from?

- The Student ID can be picked up from the General Services Building. Make sure to bring a form of photo ID to pick up your Aggie ID.
Q3. What forms of photo ID are acceptable when going to pick up my Aggie ID/student ID?

- The following forms of photo ID are acceptable:
  - State Driver’s License (including state-issued temporary or provisional licenses with photos)
  - State-Issued Identification Card
  - U.S. or Foreign-Issued Passport
  - Permanent Resident Card (i.e., Green Card, Resident Alien Card)
  - Mexican Consular ID
  - Student Visa
  - Certificate of Naturalization
  - High School ID

PLEASE NOTE – if you are an international student you must present your I-20 or DS-2019 along with your foreign-issued passport.

Q4. How can I get my Driver’s License?

- Here is a link to learn more about the process to obtain your Driver’s License.

Q5. What can I do for fun around College Station?

- The local resources section of the New International Student Orientation covers a lot of information about all the fun stuff you can do around College Station. It also gives you tips about how to shop on a budget as a student.

Q6. Where can I find information about how to open a bank account and how to manage my finances here in the US?

- The Money education center aims to educate students on healthy long-term financial practices. They have in-person appointments, virtual appointments, handouts, webinars, workshops, etc. to educate every student on how to be financially independent.