

WELCOME

Welcome to Georgia Southern University. We are very pleased that you have joined our international community. Enclosed is information designed to help make your transition to Georgia Southern easier.

Below are just some of the topics that are included in this guide:

- Next Steps for Accepted Students
- What to Expect from the Visa Process
- How to Prepare for Departure
- Travel Tips and Arrival Information
- Getting Settled and Orientation
- Maintaining your Visa Status
- Resources and Contact Information

Your success is very important to us so please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Welcome to Georgia Southern, and Go Eagles!



ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CHECKLIST

PAY I-901 FEE

You must pay the SEVIS I-901 fee at least three days prior to your visa appointment at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your country. If you are already in the U.S. on F-1 or J-1 visa status or you have paid this fee within the last 12 months and you were denied a visa, you do not have to pay this fee again. You will only need to present the receipt for your previous payment.

APPLY FOR A VISA AT U.S. EMBASSY/CONSULATE

Consult the U.S. Department of State's website for valuable information on what you need for your visa appointment at travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student.html

APPLY FOR HOUSING

Freshmen must live on campus in a residence hall. All other students may choose to live on campus in a residence hall or off campus in rented apartments. On-campus housing information can be found online at www.gsuhousing.com. If you choose to live off-campus, you are responsible for finding your own housing.

SUBMIT COMPLETED CERTIFICATE OF IMMUNIZATION

You must show proof of immunizations and provide basic health information. Please read Health Service's Letter to International Students and submit the Certificate of Immunization (enclosed) as soon as possible. If you do not have these immunizations, we recommend you get them in your country before you arrive as they are costly in the United States.

SIGN UP FOR INTERNATIONAL SOAR ORIENTATION

All new undergraduate and exchange international students must register for this mandatory orientation. Please register online at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/orientation. Graduate students will attend an orientation session for their degree program and an immigration session with the Office of International Programs and Services.

COMPLETE THE ARRIVAL INFORMATION FORM

Sign up for free shuttle service (limited dates and times) from the Savannah/Hilton Head Airport and provide us with details about your arrival. The arrival form can be found online, via the Office of International Programs and Services website at docs.google.com/a/georgiasouthern.edu/forms/d/1hN1QTDcangwimuJZwgLAu1n3YYOSxABhWc62u85uMFE/viewform.

PREPARE TO PAY TUITION & FEES

Your invoice will be available after you register for classes. Semester tuition and fees must be paid by the first day of class. Review tuition and fee information online and read the Paying Tuition and Fees section of this guide to understand how and when to pay.

RESERVE HOTEL

If you or your family need to stay in a hotel prior to or during orientation, please reserve a hotel room as early as possible. A list of hotels located in Statesboro can be found at visitstatesboroga.com/category/stay.

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OBTAINING YOUR VISA FOR STUDY AT GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

PAYING THE I-901 (SEVIS) FEE

Before applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa, you must submit an I-901 form and pay the required fee. The SEVIS I-901 fee is mandated by the United States Congress to support the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is the automated system that keeps track of students and exchange visitors coming to the U.S.

We recommend that you pay online but there are other options such as payment by Western Union. Be sure to print your receipt when paying online or get a receipt from Western Union. You will need this receipt when applying for your visa and when entering the United States. To pay online go toice.gov/sevis/i901.

THE APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

After you receive your I-20 or DS-2019, make an appointment to visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. All of the information you need to schedule an appointment will be listed in the email you receive stating that your I-20 is ready to be shipped. You should schedule your appointment as soon as possible, and don't forget to ask what fees are required and how they can be paid. Application fees are nonrefundable and must be paid before your appointment.

Next, get all your documentation ready. You will need:

- · Passport (valid for at least 6 months from the anticipated start of classes)
- · Application This can be obtained through your local Embassy or Consulate or at usembassy.gov.
- Documents to support your application:
 - Acceptance letter
 - I-20 or DS-2019
 - · Financial documents
- · Proof of payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee (printed upon completion of online)

NOTE: The consular officer may require additional information or forms. You should check the embassy or consulate's website to ensure that you have all of the forms completed before your appointment.

Submit your application, passport, and supporting documents to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Your application will be reviewed by the consular officer during your visa interview appointment. For most applicants, the visa is issued within a few weeks, but remember that there is no guarantee of obtaining a visa.

In some cases, additional reviews will be required. Such reviews can include additional interviews, further requests for information, official registration, and fingerprinting. This may add four to six weeks to the visa application processing time. For a list of Web sites of U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide and for information about U.S. visa policies and procedures, visitusembassy.gov.

PREPARING FOR THE VISA INTERVIEW

Practice Your English

Anticipate that the visa interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview. If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

Be Your Own Voice

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

Know Your Program and Your Career Plans

If you are not able to explain the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future professional career when you return home.

Be Brief

Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers would like to conduct a quick and efficient interview. It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will only have two to three minutes of interview time.

Financial Documentation and Employment

Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. Students on F-1 and J-1 visas are allowed to work part-time (20 hours per week) on their university campus, but you must be able to show how you plan to pay for all of your expenses while you are in the United States. You must also be able to clearly explain your plan to return home at the end of your program.

If your husband or wife is also applying for an accompanying F-2 or J-2 visa, be aware that dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the United States. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time during your stay in the United States.



PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

PRE-DEPARTURE (IMMIGRATION)

Note the program start date on your I-20 or DS-2019 and read the remarks carefully. You can arrive in the United States within 30 days before the program start date but not later than the program start date.

You may want to schedule long layovers between connecting flights. You will normally be checked through Customs and Border Protecting (CBP) quickly. However, if the CBP officer cannot clear you quickly, you will be sent to Secondary Inspection. This usually means that there is something that needs further clarification, and you should not worry. However, Secondary Inspection often requires a wait of approximately two hours, which can affect you if you have connecting flights.

Compile all of your immigration documents into one packet. Do not pack them into checked luggage!

- · Valid passport (which must be valid for at least 6 months after the date you enter the United States)
- Form I-20 or DS-2019 issued by Georgia Southern University
- Receipt for the I-901 (SEVIS) fee
- · Financial documentation (that you used for your I-20 and visa interview)
- If you're bringing dependents, each dependent must have an I-20 or DS-2019 of their own

WHAT TO PACK

Moving to Statesboro is exciting, but deciding what to pack can be challenging. Check the luggage restrictions for your airline because overweight luggage can be very costly. Also know that there are several places in Statesboro to purchase needed items. In fact, the Office of International Programs and Services will organize shopping trips after you arrive so that you can purchase items such as bed sheets, towels, and school supplies. You may also want to purchase small electronic items here if your country does not use 120/60Hz voltage, the standard for the United States. Here are some other recommended items to bring with you:

- · Items to remind you of home and to share with new friends, such as photographs, books, postcards, and music
- Traditional clothing to wear during international celebrations
- U.S. currency
- Snacks and food to eat prior to International SOAR Orientation



ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES AND AT GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

ARRIVING IN THE USA

Be prepared to present the following documents to the CBP Officer at the port of entry:

- Valid passport (which must be valid for at least 6 months after the date you enter the United States)
- Form I-20 or DS-2019 issued by Georgia Southern University
- Receipt for the I-901 (SEVIS) fee
- Financial documentation (that you used for your I-20 and visa interview)
- Customs Declaration (given to you during your flight or at border crossing)

If you have an emergency situation during arrival please contact the Office of International Programs and Services: Email: interstd@georgiasouthern.edu • Telephone: (912) 478-0332 • Emergency Cell Phone: (912) 536-5383

WHEN TO ARRIVE AT GEORGIA SOUTHERN

We recommend that you arrive in Statesboro one or two days prior to the date of orientation so that you will have time to settle in and adjust before orientation begins. The orientation schedule for undergraduate and exchange students can be found at academics.georgiasouthern.edu/international/international-students/accepted-current-students/. Graduate students refer to the Orientation section of this guide.

HOW TO GET TO CAMPUS

Flying

The Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport is the closest airport to Georgia Southern University. This airport is about 45 minutes from the campus and should be your final flight destination. Prior to the beginning of orientation, Georgia Southern University provides limited free shuttle service from the Savannah/Hilton Head airport to campus. While this service is free, you must make reservations for the shuttle in advance of your arrival.

Upon arrival, you should meet the shuttle driver near the information desk on the lower level of the Savannah airport, between the baggage claim areas. Look for someone with a "Georgia Southern" sign. The shuttle schedule and reservation form can be found at docs.google.com/a/georgiasouthern.edu/forms/d/1hN1QTDcangwimuJZwgLAu1n3YYOSxABhWc62u85uMFE/viewform. The Savannah/Hilton Head airport is not very large or complicated. However, if you would like to view a terminal guide or get more information about hotels near the airport, taxis and car rentals, or flight schedules, please visit savannahairport.com.

If you arrive in another airport or on a non-shuttle date, you will be responsible for finding your own transportation to campus. A taxi from the Savannah/Hilton Head airport to Georgia Southern will cost approximately \$100 and there are no buses or passenger trains to Statesboro. Depending on when your flight arrives, you may need to spend the night at an airport hotel. A list of Savannah/Hilton Head Airport hotels can be found at savannahairport.com/visiting-savannah/airport-hotels.

Driving

For driving directions to Lewis Hall, home of the Admissions Office/Welcome Center, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/visit. For a map service or GPS, use 100 Southern Drive, Statesboro, GA 30460. Please note Lewis Hall is open from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. This office can provide local maps and direct you to locations on campus and in Statesboro.

ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES AND AT GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

WHERE TO STAY

Statesboro Hotels

If you or your family will need to stay in a local hotel we highly recommend making hotel reservations in advance of your arrival. A list of hotels located in Statesboro can be found at visitstatesboroga.com/category/stay.

Residence Halls

If you have applied for on-campus housing, you can move in two days prior to the start of orientation. For exact move-in dates and to arrange for your residence hall keys, please contact the Office of International Programs and Services prior to your arrival. If you have not yet applied for on-campus housing, do so now! To apply, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/housing. You will need to pay a non-refundable application fee to complete the housing application.

Off-campus Housing

There are many apartments in Statesboro that rent to students. However, Georgia Southern does not actively assist students in finding off-campus accommodations. Information about living off-campus near Georgia Southern can be found at GeorgiaSouthern.edu/offcampushousing. If you do not have housing before arriving in Statesboro, make arrangements to stay at a local hotel prior to leaving your home country. Note that it could take several days or even weeks to locate an apartment. Staying in a hotel that long can be very expensive.

Helpful tips when searching for an apartment:

- · View the apartment before signing a lease. Make sure you are comfortable with the living arrangements and condition of the facilities.
 - Is the apartment furnished or will you need to purchase furniture?
 - · Are adequate laundry facilities available?
 - Will you be assigned a roommate?
- Check the distance from the apartment to campus. For a list of apartments that are on the campus transit route (the shuttle will run close to your apartment complex) visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/parking. Remember that there is no public transportation in Statesboro.
- Read your lease carefully it is a legally binding document. You are liable for the full cost even if you leave before the contract expires.
- Check to see if costs for water, electricity, cable, internet, and garbage disposal are included in the cost of rent. If not, you will need to budget for these additional costs.



GETTING SETTLED IN STATESBORO AND GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

CHECKING-IN

After arrival and prior to orientation, please stop by the Office of International Programs and Services in the Forest Drive Building or the Office of Admissions in Lewis Hall on Sweetheart Circle, especially if you need assistance locating facilities or services. Hours of operation are 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday.

ORIENTATION

Undergraduate and Exchange Students

All new international students are required to attend International Orientation (SOAR). At SOAR we will help you to understand campus rules, register for classes, set up a local bank account and meet professors and fellow students from across the world. During SOAR you may be required to take an English Language Placement Examination. To learn more, visit academics.georgiasouthern.edu/international/files/English-Language-Placement-Exam-FAQs-for-students-FA14.pdf. The Office of International Programs and Services will also arrange shopping trips so you can purchase food, cell phones, bed linens, and other items.

Parents and guests are also invited to attend SOAR and will receive important information regarding payment options, campus safety, tools for academic success and parent resources. Guests must register for SOAR with their student. The university does not offer accommodations to guests, so please make reserve a hotel for the duration of your stay. Registration and fee payment is required for International SOAR Orientation. To learn more, visit here GeorgiaSouthern.edu/orientation.

Graduate Students

All new international students are required to attend an immigration session hosted by the Office of International Programs and Services. For more information please visit academics.georgiasouthern.edu/international/international-stLimeteudents/accepted-current-students/. Students are also required to attend an orientation session hosted by their academic program. Information regarding the date and time of this session will be communicated to students via email.

COMMUNICATION

Email

All Georgia Southern students are provided a Georgia Southern email account within 24 hours of registering for classes. You will learn how to access your email account during SOAR.

Cellular Phone

We generally recommend that students purchase cell phones upon arrival in Statesboro. Other options include using Skype or online software that enables you to make free video and voice calls. You will learn about all of these options including specific details about cell phone plans, service providers, and where to purchase phones at SOAR.

TRANSPORTATION

Georgia Southern is a very beautiful campus that is pedestrian friendly, so there are no problems walking across campus. There is also an oncampus bus service that shuttles students to different parts of campus. However, the bus service operates only when classes are in session. Many students purchase bicycles to get around campus and around town. Inexpensive bicycles are available through the Campus Cycle program, sponsored by Campus Recreation & Intramurals, located in the Recreation Activities Center (RAC) building. There is no public transportation in Statesboro but there are shopping and food areas within walking distance from the campus.

GETTING SETTLED IN STATESBORO AND GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

MONEY MATTERS

Bring enough U.S. currency to pay for items when you first arrive. Also bring money you plan to deposit in a local bank account. You will have the opportunity to set up a bank account during SOAR. Money can be wired to your new bank account, but it may take several days or even weeks before the money becomes available to you. You cannot wire transfer money directly to Georgia Southern. Refer to the Paying Tuition and Fees section of this guide to understand payment options. Foreign currency cannot be exchanged in Statesboro. Please change your currency to U.S. dollars before you arrive. You should not carry large amounts of cash in the U.S. nor risk keeping it in your room. It is best to store money in a bank account and use a debit card for purchases.

IMMUNIZATIONS

All students are required to show proof of immunizations. If you have not already done so, ask your health care provider to complete the enclosed Certificate of Immunization form. If you do not have all the required immunizations, we recommend you get them in your home country as they are expensive in the United States, ranging from approximately \$40 to \$75 per immunization. Please fax the immunization forms to the Health Services office at (912) 478-1893 or email to immunizations@georgiasouthern.edu and bring the original form with you. Students who fail to turn in their immunization forms will not be allowed to register for classes for the following semester.

PAYING TUITION & FEES

Semester charges for tuition, university fees, on-campus housing, meal plan, and mandatory health insurance are due on the first day of classes for each semester. Online invoices are available through the student portal WINGS. Paper invoices are not created for students. You will be able to view your invoice via WINGS with the exact amounts payable to Georgia Southern University after registering for classes. You will learn how to use WINGS and access your invoice during SOAR.

Payment may be made in the form of cash, check or debit card from a U.S. bank or with a major credit card (Mastercard, Visa, Discover, American Express). Payment may also be made using Peer Transfer when paying from a non U.S bank account. Money cannot be wire transferred directly to Georgia Southern University. For additional information, please visit businesssrvs.georgiasouthern.edu/bursar/cashiers-office/payment-options/. For an estimate of tuition and fees due, please visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/tuition.

HEALTH INSURANCE

The University System of Georgia requires all international students to purchase a health insurance plan. Here at Georgia Southern University, you will be automatically enrolled in a health plan and a charge for health insurance will appear on your bill after registration every semester. The policy is an accident and sickness insurance program that includes diagnosis and treatment of illness, injury, or medical conditions. The health insurance fee, which differs from the Health Fee on your bill, will be approximately \$2,000 per year. You can read more about the student health insurance plan here auxiliary.georgiasouthern.edu/healthservices/insurance.

MAINTAINING STUDENT VISA STATUS

It is vital that you understand and abide by the following summary of F-1 and J-1 visa law since any violation of visa status makes you subject to arrest, detention, and deportation. If you are ever in doubt as to how a planned action may impact your visa status, please contact a Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) in Georgia Southern's Office of International Programs and Services.

- 1. Enter the U.S. with an I-20 or DS-2019 issued by the school you will attend. You can enter the U.S. no more than 30 days before the reporting date shown in item #5 of your I-20.
- 2. Make "normal progress" in your program of study. This includes actively participating in a full course of study every fall and spring semester.
 - Full course load.
 - English Language Program = all class offerings for your level
 - Undergraduate = 12 credit hours (no more than 3 hours of online classes can be applied toward full-time requirement)
 - Graduate = 9 credit hours (no more than 3 hours online classes can be applied toward full-time requirement)
 - · If you think there is a legitimate reason (i.e. last semester) for you to take less than a full course load, talk with a DSO in advance.
 - You are permitted to drop and add courses during the official schedule adjustment (drop/add) period during the first week of each semester. At the end of schedule adjustment, you must be registered for a full course load. You may not drop below a full course load at any point in the semester.
 - You may remain in the U.S. in legal status during summers without taking classes as long as you are returning to school fall semester. You may take classes part-time during the summer as long as it is not your first term. Only work on campus.
- 3. You cannot work more than 20 hours per week. You may work full-time during summers (as long as you are not registered for classes) or during official breaks. Campus regulations may restrict some employment.
 - All other employment (including internships and co-op employment) requires specific authorization from either a DSO or from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS).
- 4. Report the following to a DSO within 10 days:
 - · Your new address -- Using MyGeorgiaSouthern WINGS, report your Local Address.
 - · This must be the physical address where you are actually living.
 - If you cannot receive mail at your apartment, enter your P.O. Box address in the second line. This cannot be the address of a relative or friend.
 - · Your dependent's new address
 - Your new name and/or your dependent's new name
- 5. Maintain a valid passport. You should apply for a new passport at least six months before the expiration date.
- 6. Be sure your I-20 or DS-2019 always state your current program of study and does not expire.
 - Your I-20 or DS-2019 must include:
 - · The name of the school you are currently attending
 - The correct program level (language training, bachelor's, master's, doctorate)
 - · The current major you have chosen
 - The expiration date is listed in item #5.

MAINTAINING STUDENT VISA STATUS (CONTINUED)

- If you will not graduate before your I-20 expires, you must talk with a DSO to get information for a program extension before the expiration date.
 - · Program extensions cannot be granted for academic difficulties, so work hard to keep your grades up!

Change of program level or transfer

- If you will change program levels (e.g. from an undergraduate to a graduate degree), you must submit a new SEVIS Data Form and current financial documentation.
- · If you plan to transfer to a different U.S. school, you will need to contact a DSO for further instructions.

RESOURCES & CONTACT INFORMATION

Office of Undergraduate Admissions

Lewis Hall

P.O. Box 8024

Statesboro GA 30460-8024

Telephone: (912) 478-5391 | Fax: (912) 478-1156 Email: intladmissions@georgiasouthern.edu Web: GeorgiaSouthern.edu/admissions

College of Graduate Studies

Veazey Hall, 2nd Floor, Room 2000

P.O. Box 8008

Statesboro, GA 30460-8008

Telephone: (912) 478-2647 | Fax: (912) 478-0605 Email: gradadmissions@georgiasouthern.edu

Web: GeorgiaSouthern.edu/cogs

Office of International Programs and Services

Forest Drive Building, Room 1313

P.O. Box 8106

Statesboro, GA 30460-8106

Telephone: (912) 478-0332 | Fax: (912) 478-0824 EMERGENCY TELEPHONE: (912) 536-5383

Email: interstd@georgiasouthern.edu Web: GeorgiaSouthern.edu/international

Department of University Housing

Watson Hall, 1st Floor

P.O. Box 8102

Statesboro, GA 30460-8102

Telephone: (912) 478-5406 | Fax: (912) 478-1148

E-mail: housing@georgiasouthern.edu Web: GeorgiaSouthern.edu/housing

Health Services

The Health Center

PO Box 8043

Statesboro, Georgia 30460-8043

Telephone: (912) 478-564

Main Fax: 912-478-1893 | Immunizations Record Fax: 912-478-0792

E-mail: health@georgiasouthern.edu Web: GeorgiaSouthern.edu/health