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Visiting Scholar Handbook

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Institute for International Studies Visiting Scholar Handbook

The Institute for International Studies

One of the primary goals of our office is to insure that new scholars are welcomed and well informed during their stay at the university. We want you to feel as if IIS is your support away from home. Our Scholar Coordinator's job is to assist you with immigration procedures, to help you adapt to a new culture and to provide you with encouragement or direction when you have questions. This coordinator and a graduate assistant therefore conduct an on-site orientation with you after arrival. This orientation will include many necessary components to your stay at MSU (see *Orientation*).

For your reference, the contact information for the IIS staff is listed below. **Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.**

Bill McKibben, Director of
International Retention and Scholar
Services bmckibben@murraystate.edu
B0026 Blackburn Science Building
Murray, KY 42071
Ph: 270.809.3089

Immigration Matters

Any questions you have concerning immigration should be addressed to the Responsible Officer, Bill McKibben, located in the Institute for International Studies at MSU. Bill is the J-1 DHS appointed officer for Murray State and will be able to assist you with any questions or problems you may have.

Applying for your visa

When you go to the Embassy to apply for your visa, you will need the following:

- **DS-2019 issued by Murray State University or your sponsoring program.** This is the document that shows you are sponsored by MSU. It will be signed by a Murray State University representative in blue ink.
- **Proof of your financial support.** This includes personal funds, government funds, and any funds offered by a private agency. You should show proof of your personal funds in the form of a bank statement verifying the amount in your bank account. This should be the same amount that you have shown to MSU in authorizing your DS-2019. Remember that all scholars are required to provide proof to MSU of \$1,000 per month + \$200 per month for each dependent (spouse, children). Proof of government or private funds will need to be shown in the form of an award letter.
- **Invitation letter from MSU.** When your DS-2019 is sent to you, a letter is included inviting you to come to MSU for a specific purpose. The Embassy will need to see this letter and read the specific duties that you have been invited to pursue while at MSU. If your spouse and/or children are accompanying you to MSU, their names and birthdates should be included in this letter as well.
- **Passport.** Make sure your passport is valid before going to the Embassy. If you are bringing your family, you must have valid passports for the **entire** family.

There are several laws that govern your stay in the United States. It is very important that you adhere to these laws in order to maintain your status and be eligible to return to the US in the future. Pay close attention to the following information. If anything is unclear, please see Melanie McCallon for further clarification.

Financial documentation

To be eligible to participate in the visiting scholar program at Murray State University, you must provide proof of financial support in the form of an official bank statement from your local bank. This should be provided to the Institute for International Studies when your other paperwork is turned in for receipt of your visa documents.

You should provide proof in the following amounts:

- \$1,000 per month for self
- \$200 additional per month per dependent

These minimum amounts were set for your safety. We want to ensure that you will be prepared for your stay at MSU and be able to afford the cost of living here in Murray, Kentucky for the length of your stay.

If you are receiving a stipend from Murray State during your stay, that stipend can be counted toward these required total amounts.

If you are living in the international house during your stay at Murray State University, you can subtract \$300 per month from the total required.

Valid Documentation

In order to maintain status as a visiting scholar in the United States, you must keep your documents current. If your passport will expire during your stay at MSU, you should apply for a new passport at least 4 months in advance of the expiration date. If your passport expires during your stay without renewal, you risk falling out of status.

Your visa should be valid for your entire period of stay. However, if it is not, you must get it renewed if you return home at any time during your program.

The DS-2019 is one of the most important immigration documents that you have. This document informs the US Government that you are in valid status in the United States. **You must NOT stay in the United States more than 30 days past the end date on your DS-2019.** If you wish to extend your program, you **MUST** seek assistance at the Institute for International Studies to have your paperwork extended **BEFORE** the expiration date on your DS-2019 or you will be considered out-of-status.

If you lose any of your immigration documents: Passport, Visa, or DS-2019, contact the Institute for International Studies immediately.

Regulations governing period of stay

J-1 Scholars are permitted to remain in the U.S. for a period up to 5 years to complete the purpose for which s/he entered the U.S.

Scholars are eligible to remain in the U.S. for up to 30 days past the ending date in block 4 of the DS-2019. This 30 days is a grace period only and the scholar is not permitted to do scholarly work during that period. Instead it is intended for travel and leisure time only.

Changing academic field

The spirit of the J-1 Student and Exchange Visitor Program is to fulfill a specific purpose and return home with that purpose fulfilled to share knowledge with your native community. In the spirit of the J-1 program, scholars are eligible to maintain their program for the purpose and time period they entered the US. A J-1 scholar can be extended for a maximum of 5 years to fulfill this original purpose. However, if a scholar wishes to pursue a separate area of research or wishes to pursue a degree, s/he should see the Responsible Officer to determine the correct course of action to fulfill those goals. Since they are not pursuant to the original purpose for which the scholar entered the U.S., a change of category or a change of status may be necessary. See the Responsible Officer for details and advisement.

Family

If you bring your family with you to MSU, they are dependent on your visa status. This means that their J-2 visas are only valid if your J-1 visa is valid. Your family is issued separate paperwork, but their status will always depend on your status. For this reason, please pay attention to the following points:

- You must purchase insurance for yourself AND every family member.
- If you return home, you cannot remain in your home country and leave your family in the US without you for an extended period of time. They will be considered out-of-status if you leave them in the US on your visa indefinitely.
- If any of your dependents wish to enroll in courses at Murray State University, they may do so only on a part-time basis and may not seek a degree at MSU unless they apply to change their J-2 status to J-1 or F-1 status.
- All J-2 dependents must seek permission from the DHS (formerly the INS) to seek employment. No J-2 can work to provide financial support for living expenses for the J-1. J-2's are only eligible for employment that will subsidize personal spending money during the J-1's stay in the U.S.

Employment

All J-1 scholars are allowed to work on campus **with permission from the Responsible Officer**. On-campus employment must be approved prior to the start date of employment. All on-campus employment must relate to the objectives for the scholar's visit.

Off-campus employment can be pursued only if it relates to your original objective for visiting MSU. Please seek the Responsible Officer for details concerning working off-campus. **You must always obtain permission from the Responsible Officer for employment BEFORE beginning work or accepting payment or you will be considered out of status.**

Moving

If you move at any time during your stay in Murray, you **MUST** notify the Responsible Officer within 10 days and provide your new address and phone number. You must also notify the DHS (formerly the INS) within 10 days. **Failure to notify either the Responsible Officer or the DHS will result in a loss of valid status.**

Consequences of Being Out-of-Status

If you fall out of status, you will need to apply for reinstatement, unless you have been out of status for more than 270 days, in which case you are not eligible to apply for reinstatement. Reinstatement is a long process that can be very expensive depending on the reason you have fallen out of status. The DHS can deny your reinstatement and order you to exit the country immediately. If reinstatement is approved, you will be eligible to complete your current program.

Arrival

After your acceptance to the MSU Visiting Scholar Program and the issuance of your visa, you can purchase your airline ticket. **You should plan Nashville, Tennessee or Paducah, Kentucky, as your final destination.** Once your plane ticket has been purchased, you **must** notify the Institute for International Studies Scholars' Coordinator at bmckibben@murraystate.edu and **provide the Coordinator with the following flight information: airline, flight number, time of arrival, and city arriving from.** This point of arrival is a two-hour drive away, so be sure to **notify the Scholar Coordinator at least one week in advance of your arrival.** The Coordinator or a representative of the Institute for International Studies will meet you at baggage claim after your plane arrives and bring you to Murray, Kentucky to begin your stay at MSU. If you are bringing children, we will need to reserve car seats to adhere to the Kentucky and Tennessee state laws regarding child passengers. Please notify Melanie of the ages of all children accompanying you to MSU.

Orientation

Your orientation will begin the day after your arrival in Murray. It will include the following:

- Social Security Card *If you already have a social security number, bring your card with you to the U.S.! This is very important.*
- Banking
- Campus Tour
- Campus ID Card
- Visit to local grocery/department store
- Departmental Introductions in your academic department
- Insurance
- *If you have children.* enrolling them into school, meeting their teachers, visiting the school, obtaining the bus schedule, finding after school care for them if needed, making appointments for any vaccinations (shots) that are needed, buying items on the school supply list, filling out paperwork for their school, arranging rides to and from school, arranging ESL assistance for your children
- Establishment of an MSU Email Account
- Anything else that needs to be done.

In order to help us to get this orientation done in a speedy manner, please read this manual completely and be ready with your questions upon arrival. **If you are bringing children with you, it is very important that you read the section: Bringing Your School-Age Children.** This section will help you in bringing the right materials and documents for your child so that s/he can be enrolled quickly into the local school here in Murray.

Insurance

As a J-1 scholar, your insurance requirements are very strict. **You must purchase insurance immediately after arrival at MSU or before you come to the US.** If you purchase insurance in your native country, you must bring a copy of the policy in ENGLISH from home. You will be considered out of status if you do not purchase insurance with the minimum requirements within one week of arrival at MSU. The minimum insurance requirements for a J-1 scholar are:

- Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per person per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500
- Expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of \$10,000
- The policy should have a deductible less than \$500

If you bring family with you to the US as J-2 dependents, all dependents **MUST** also have these minimum requirements. Proof of insurance will be needed for you **AND** all dependents who come with you to MSU.

You may purchase insurance after arrival at MSU. Policy options are included in your welcome packet and are also available at the IIS after your arrival.

Banking

After your arrival at MSU, our orientation staff will assist you with several things. One of these is securing a bank account. There are several local banks to choose from in Murray. All have ATM machines in town and one has an ATM machine on campus in the student services building. Most banks offer the same basic services:

Checking Account

This is an account in which you place your money in the bank and are able to write checks to spend that money. Checks are accepted at every shopping location in Murray with the exception of some restaurants and gas stations. If you are not familiar with checks and how to write checks, the IIS will assist you with this after arrival.

Savings Account

This type of account allows you to place money in the bank and earn interest on that money. You cannot write checks on this money.

Debit Card

A debit card is a visa or mastercard that pulls money directly out of your account. It can be used anywhere visa or mastercard are accepted, but instead of paying interest on your total, the bill automatically comes out of your bank account. This card can be used with either a checking or a savings account.

ATM Card

An ATM card allows you to get money out of cash machines all over the world. This money comes directly out of your bank account. You can use your ATM card to access your checking and/or savings account.

Transferring Money From Home

You can transfer money to your bank account here after arrival in Murray if necessary. However, you should ask the Responsible Officer about the fees associated with transferring money into your account here in Murray. This can be very expensive. Check on this before leaving your home country.

Safe Deposit Box

Banks in the US offer the use of a safe deposit box to store your valuables such as your passport, expensive jewelry or family heirlooms. This may be useful when you travel while in the US. A safe deposit box costs a monthly fee payable directly to the bank where your box is located.

Account Overdraw

In the US, banks do not allow customers to overdraw their accounts. Though this is common practice in countries outside the US, doing this in the US will be very costly to you. Therefore, be very careful about the amount of money you spend from your account. Fees related to overdrawing your account can be as much as \$30 per check per day.

Living on campus in College Courts

College Courts is an apartment complex owned and operated by Murray State University. IIS has one 1 bedroom apartment and 1 two bedroom apartment. These apartments are on a first come basis. All College Courts apartments are furnished with a bed, desk, couch, table and chairs and have a full private bathroom and kitchen. Cable, internet service, water, trash pick-up and electricity are provided.

If you are placed in one of the college courts apartments owned and operated by Murray State University, there are several things you will need to be responsible for. The apartment is provided free of charge to our visiting scholars **who qualify for it**. The Institute for International Studies expects you to take care of the apartment and all of the furniture and goods in it. In that respect, pay close attention to the following things:

Problems

If anything is broken at the house, please contact Bill at 270.809.3089 or bmckibben@murraystate.edu as soon as possible. Do not let the problem last until the apartment is permanently damaged. As soon as something goes wrong, notify Bill to have the problem fixed.

Cable service

Basic cable service is provided in the apartments.

Telephone usage

No long-distance calls can be made from the phone at the apartments, unless you use a telephone card. You can purchase inexpensive telephone cards at a local world grocery store, Gloria's, as well as many other local marts around Murray.

What is provided at the apartment?

Sofa, bed, dresser, kitchen table, coffee table, desk, and chairs. You will be responsible for all other furnishings.

You must leave all items, except for the items you purchased, in the house and are not permitted to take any items provided in the apartment home with you or to any other living quarters you may move into while at MSU. **Additional supplies, including cleaning supplies and personal hygiene supplies, must be purchased by the scholar.**

The end of your program

Please leave the house as you would want to find it. Clean the house, including the bathroom, kitchen, dishes you have used, linens you have used and vacuuming all of the floors. Take **all** of your personal possessions with you when you leave, as we are unable to mail any leftover items to you. All food and personal effects left in the house will be thrown into the trash within 2 days after you vacate it.

Living off-campus

You may choose to live off-campus while visiting Murray State University. For those of you who are not visiting MSU as part of a reciprocal exchange, this is one option that may satisfy your needs.

Murray State University employees are unable to assist you with securing off-campus housing prior to your arrival at MSU. If you are not participating in an exchange agreement, you are responsible for finding housing suitable to your needs after arrival in Murray and for securing furniture, having utilities (water, cable, telephone, electricity, internet) activated and other details associated with off-campus housing. The Institute for International Studies will assist you if possible.

Off-campus living costs are usually much higher than on-campus costs, though you may be able to find more updated accommodations off-campus more easily. You can expect rent for a one-bedroom apartment off-campus in Murray to range from \$475 up to \$700 per month. This monthly charge does not include utility payments for water, electricity, telephone, internet, cable, or trash services. Keep this in mind when budgeting for your visit to MSU.

Transportation

Murray is a very small town. As a result, there are few options for transportation within Murray and between nearby cities. These options include the following:

Rental Cars

Murray has two rental car companies, Enterprise and Haley's. Both are near the campus. Cars can be rented for months at a time. You can use your international license or foreign license for this purpose. Costs vary. You should inquire as to the costs after your arrival in Murray.

Taxis

There are several taxi services in Murray. They offer services to Paducah, Clarksville and Nashville, the closest larger cities to Murray. Costs vary. You should inquire at the IIS after arrival for these costs.

Buying a Car

To purchase a car in the US, you must have a US driver's license. Before you can obtain a driver's license, you must have a social security number. After your arrival in Murray, you will immediately apply for a social security number. The wait for the social security number is between 3 and 8 weeks. Therefore, you should be ready to rely on other forms of transportation while you are waiting for your social security number to arrive.

Bringing your School-Age Children

If you bring your school-age children (age 5 to 18) to Murray with you, there are several things that you should consider and be prepared for before leaving your native country. This section is intended to reduce your stress after arrival in getting your child enrolled in school.

Vaccinations

All school-age children are required to have a specific amount and type of vaccinations (shots). A booklet called “Shots for Tots” is available at the Institute for International Studies and is enclosed here for you if you have informed the IIS that you are bringing children with you to MSU. This booklet explains what each shot is for and how the illness it prevents can be recognized. The shots required for children to attend school are broken down according to age. These are:

| Child's Age | Vaccination |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Birth-2 months | Hepatitis B |
| 1-4 months | Hepatitis B |
| 2 months | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis; Polio; Haemophilus influenzae type b; Pneumococcal disease |
| 4 months | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis; Polio; Haemophilus influenzae type b; Pneumococcal disease |
| 6 months | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis; Haemophilus influenzae type b; Pneumococcal disease |
| 6-18 months | Hepatitis B; Polio |
| 12-15 months | Haemophilus influenzae type b; Measles, Mumps and Rubella; Pneumococcal disease |
| 12-18 months | Chickenpox |
| 15-18 months | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis |
| Before starting school, 4-6 years | Measles, Mumps and Rubella; Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis; Polio |
| 11-12 years | Measles, Mumps and Rubella (if your child has not had the MMR shots yet); Chickenpox (if your child has not had the Chickenpox shot and has never had chickenpox); Hepatitis B (if your child has not had the Hep B shots) |
| 11-16 years | Tetanus, Diphtheria |

If your child has had these vaccinations in your native country, you **MUST** bring a record of these shots in ENGLISH with you to the US or your child will be required to get these shots again, which could be costly. Some vaccinations can only be performed by a local physician. Office visits at local physician's offices are costly in America. It is to your advantage to bring your child's vaccination record with you to the US in order to more easily be enrolled into the local schools.

Registering for school

Registering for school can take a few days to complete. There are many forms to complete and policies to understand before enrolling into a local school. The Institute for International Studies will assist with this process and take you to the local school appointments to help get your child enrolled into school.

Bus requirements

The local schools offer a bus pick up and drop off service to all school children in the county limits. The IIS can assist you with informing the bus service that you wish to utilize it. Your child can ride the bus both to and from school or just one way depending on your needs. The IIS will help you find out what time the bus picks up and drops off and the closest stop to your housing. In return, the bus drivers often appreciate having a sheet of commands in your native language. For that purpose, please translate the following phrases into your native language:

- Sit down.
- Be quiet.
- Hello.
- Good Morning.
- Good afternoon.
- Goodbye.
- See you tomorrow.
- No food is allowed on the bus.
- Wake up.
- This is your bus stop.

Local school buses are on a very strict schedule. If the bus driver has informed you that your child will be picked up at 6:50 every morning, then your child should be at the bus stop before 6:50. If your child is late, the bus will not wait for him/her. In the afternoons, if you are not waiting for your child at the bus stop, the bus will not drop your child off.

After school programs

If you are attending evening or late afternoon classes and are unable to meet your child at the end of the school day, you may wish to register your child for an after-school program. There are many of these programs available at the local schools. They cost additional money. Their sole purpose is to allow students to stay in a safe place until parents are able to pick up the children. Please ask for more details about these after school programs at IIS.

Auditing courses/taking courses for credit

All courses, whether taken for credit or as an audited course, **MUST** be related to your academic field and purpose for visiting Murray State University. **This is a requirement for your visa.**

As a visiting scholar, you are permitted to audit up to 3 courses with the permission of the instructors of those courses. You should seek assistance in contacting these professors from the Institute for International Studies or feel free to contact the instructors on your own.

As an auditing student, you will not receive official course credit or a Murray State University transcript of these courses. Auditing classes does not require that you take the tests or do course homework. As an auditor, you are also not paying for the classes, so you are requested to sit in and observe the classes and not to take part in the class discussion or group work activities as a participant unless the instructor gives you permission to do so.

You may also take courses for credit if you wish. You are allowed to take 1-2 courses per semester for credit, but those must be paid for by you unless a previous arrangement has been made with the Institute for International Studies regarding payment by an outside party, such as Fulbright or LASPAU.

The courses you take at MSU for credit CANNOT lead to a degree. You must take the courses as a non-degree student and are not eligible to receive a degree as a J-1 scholar. If you wish to seek a degree at MSU, you should apply for a change of category to a J-1 student or a change of status to an F-1. You can see the Responsible Officer for details and assistance with this if it is needed.

Relationships Within Your Academic Department

Prior to your arrival at MSU, you will be in contact with the academic department you will be affiliated with while at MSU. Upon arrival, you will meet the faculty and staff of that department. Your work within the department and research collaboration with other faculty are solely dependent on that department and the interests of the faculty members of the department.

The department you are affiliated with may or may not provide office space, computer support, and internet services. This is the decision of the department and is based on space and equipment availability. This is determined each semester. You should ask your department about it but be willing to share space with other adjuncts or student workers. If no space is available in your department, there are computer labs on campus in several buildings where you can utilize the internet and word-processing capabilities.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency on Murray's campus, you should call **Public Safety at 2222** for assistance. Public Safety patrols the campus and will assist you with whatever you need. If you are living off-campus or experience an emergency during travel away from MSU, you should dial **911 for assistance from the local authorities (police, fire, ambulance)**.

You should also feel free to call the Institute for International Studies' Scholar Coordinator to seek help. Upon your arrival, you will receive the business card and personal telephone and contact numbers for the Scholar Coordinator. In emergencies, you may call her to seek advice on what procedures you should follow to get the emergency under control.