

Welcome to Murray State University.

Whether you are applying as a student, scholar or visiting faculty member, this handbook is designed to provide you with information on:

- immigration regulations governing your visa status
- community and university resources available to you

This handbook has been prepared by the staff of Murray State University's Institute for International Studies (IIS). We ask that you read this handbook with all other materials included in this package.

The Institute for International Studies (IIS)

One of the primary goals of our office is to insure that new students and scholars are welcomed and well informed during their stay at the university. We want you to feel as if IIS is your home away from home. Two of our staff members are the international student advisers. Their 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. We will conduct the pre-semester orientation.

Our most current address, phone/fax numbers and email addresses are indicated on the arrival information sheet accompanying this handbook. *Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.*

We welcome you to Murray. We want your visit with us to be a pleasant one. We look forward to meeting you at orientation!

Arrival

The university offers a shuttle service from the Nashville, Tennessee airport. Information on this shuttle is provided in the arrival information on the cover of this handbook or on our website. Please read that information carefully. This service is scheduled in conjunction with orientation. **You must make a reservation to be picked up by the shuttle. Contact us with your arrival information as soon as your plans are made.**

Orientation

All newly arrived international students are **required to attend our pre-semester orientation**. You will be charged \$55 for this orientation whether you attend or not. It is in your best interest to attend. Exact information on dates for this orientation is included with the arrival information inserted into this handbook or on our website. **Please consider these dates when making your travel plans.**

At the orientation, all of the items mentioned below will be covered in more detail. Any questions you may have will be answered. In addition, we will help you with class scheduling and with understanding university life and procedures. We will provide you with banking and shopping assistance, with meeting new friends on campus, and helping you adjust to your new home.

SEVIS FEE

A new fee has been added to all persons applying for F-1 or J-1 visas. Prior to receiving your visa you will need to pay a \$200 non-refundable fee to the US Government. The process for payment is explained below:

1. You will receive your I-20 or DS-2019 from Murray State. If you have access to a credit card and the internet visit the following site: www.fmjfee.com
If you do not have a credit card please contact us at iis@murraystate.edu and we will give you other options for paying this fee.
2. Complete the online form I-901 as instructed on the web-page. (You will need your I-20 or DS-2019, your passport, a major credit card, the address you wish the receipt to be mailed to, along with other information such as birthday and country of citizenship.)
3. After completing the online application and submitting the form you will be prompted to pay with a credit card or check (It is hoped that Western Union may be an option in the near future as well. Please contact us if Western Union would be a better option for you.) Enter the payment information requested.
4. Once you have completed the whole process you will be prompted to print out an on-line receipt. **MAKE SURE THAT YOU DO THIS.** The paper receipt may take as much as 4-5 weeks to reach you if it reached you at all. Take this on-line receipt with you to your interview if you have not received the official mailed receipt prior to your interview date.
5. Once you have completed this process it will take approximately 3 working days (Monday through Friday excluding holidays) for the consulates to be updated.
6. You may make your visa interview prior to paying the fee but you must complete the above process at least 3 working days before your interview to make sure the consulate is updated before your interview.
7. **Remember that this fee is non-refundable and is in addition to the visa fee that will be charged when you go for your visa interview.**

Immigration Information

Before you arrive in the U.S., you will receive from us a document certifying that you have been accepted as a student or visiting scholar. This documentation certifies that you are eligible to apply for a visa from the U.S. consulate nearest your home. **If you receive an I-20 form, your visa classification will be F-1. If you receive a DS-2019 form, your visa classification will be J-1.** Because you will be dealing with immigration regulations from the moment you visit the U.S. consular office to obtain your visa and throughout your stay with us, you need to understand a few things about these documents and the importance of keeping them current and correct.

You should be prepared to present the following to the U.S. consular officer:

- **The signed, current and accurate I-20 or DS-2019 issued by our university or your sponsor.** When you enter the U.S., the document presented at the port-of-entry should be for the university stamped in your visa. You cannot enter using one university's document and then go to another university. The one you present at the consular office and the one you present at the port-of-entry must be the one from the university you first attend.
- **Proof of your financial support.** This should include proof of your personal funds, as well as proof of support from any organization or government agency. If you are bringing your family, you **MUST** show proof of financial support for the ENTIRE family. In addition, you may be asked to show that this support will be sustained throughout your studies.
- **Your passport.** Make sure your passport is valid (currently dated) before going to the consular office. If you are bringing your family, you **MUST** have valid passports for the ENTIRE family. (Minimum of 9 months into the future upon arrival in the USA) *At the Port of Entry a small white card called an I-94 will be given to you or attached to your passport. This paper is very important. It is your only proof that you entered the country legally. Before leaving the immigration officer's desk you should check to make sure that it is properly attached and reads as follows: F-1/DS for F-1 students and J1/DS for J-1 students and scholars.*
- **Information on your plans after completion of your program.** This does not need to be in writing, but consular offices often ask about your plans upon return. This is especially true for J-1 students or scholars who will be subject to 212e, or the requirement to return to your country for at least two years after the completion of your program. The officer is required to ask about this.

Maintaining Your Status

This is important. If you fall "out-of-status" after you arrive and begin your study, your entire program of study is endangered. The procedures for re-instatement of status are difficult and may be rejected by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). If you remain out-of-status, you may be forced to return home before completing your program.

In brief, the requirements for F-1 students and J-1 visitors:

- Keep your passport valid.
- Attend the school indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019.
- Carry a full course of study.
- Do **not** work off campus without authorization from DHS.
- Work up to 20 hours per week on campus while school is in session.
- Notify IIS of any change of address or phone number within 10 days.
- Follow certain procedures with the help of IIS:
 - to apply for an extension of stay
 - to apply to change educational level
 - to apply for transfer or report after transfer to MSU
 - to apply for Practical Training if F-1 or Academic Training if J-1
- Do not accept or sign up for any form of U.S. federal, state or local public assistance such as Medicaid (medical assistance) or food stamps. **You will be in violation of status if you sign up for this type of assistance.**

J-1 STUDENTS and VISITORS

Family

Each dependent (wife, children) who will accompany you (in J-2 status) will receive a DS-2019. If you have not notified IIS of your intentions to bring them, you should contact our office immediately for assistance.

Health Insurance

J-1 students and visitors are **required by law to obtain health insurance.** Not only will J-1 students find that they are removed from class rolls for not having appropriate medical coverage, they will also be in violation of their status. IIS can offer J-1 visitors sources of approved medical coverage. J-1 visitors may obtain medical insurance from other sources, but the coverage must meet federal regulations.

The American health care system is very expensive. Health insurance is absolutely necessary to protect against extreme costs due to accident or illness.

Federal regulations regarding insurance coverage for J-1 visitors also apply to their dependents. **You must meet the full federal requirements for insuring all J-2 dependents.** Again, IIS can offer you several examples of approved coverage. Insurance is not retroactive. That is, you cannot apply for insurance to help with the birth of your child AFTER your wife becomes pregnant.

Documents

J-1 visitors can be either visiting students or visiting scholars/faculty. Regardless of your category, you must carefully retain and check your documents. Be sure that IIS has on file copies of all documents listed below. When you need to discuss any modification to these documents, you should talk with a Responsible Officer (RO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO).

You should have these documents upon your arrival at Murray State:

- **Passport.** Check the expiration date! If your passport will expire before the end of your program, you must consult your home country's embassy months in advance.
- **Visa.** You may remain in the U.S. on an expired visa. However, if you plan to travel outside the U.S. and your visa has expired, you will have to reapply at a U.S. embassy abroad for re-entry. This takes time and you need to plan ahead. You should also note the annotation on your visa which states "not subject to 212e" or "is subject to 212e." This annotation is important. It indicates whether or not you will be required to return home for no less than two years following your program of study. This annotation affects your eligibility for other activities in the U.S. Please ask the RO to explain if this is not clear.
- **I-94.** Check your immigration classification (J-1 or J-2) and period of stay. Most of you will have D/S, which means "Duration of Status," marked on your I-94. That means you may remain only until the completion of your program as indicated on your DS-2019. Also, you should check to be sure that the 11-digit admission number matches any notations on your DS-2019.
- **Form DS-2019.** Before you signed the DS-2019, you should have checked the accuracy of all the information defining your program. Do that now, if you have not. **Every time you exit the U.S. for any type of travel, you must have the DS-2019 endorsed by the RO or ARO.** Do not forget this. In addition, pay close attention to the end-date on your DS-2019. If you wish to request an extension, please meet with the RO or ARO to discuss your eligibility and the procedures **at least 60 days prior to the end of your program.**

Employment

J-1 students may be employed for not more than 20 hours per week on campus only. However, **J-1 students must obtain permission in writing from their sponsors before seeking employment.** You should ask the RO or ARO about this permission.

J-2 dependents must apply directly to DHS for permission to work. This procedure requires paperwork, an application fee, involves certain restrictions, and is not automatically approved by DHS. J-2 dependents should inquire of the RO or ARO concerning procedures and restrictions.

Academic Training

J-1 visitors may wish to apply for permission from their sponsor for up to 18 months of Academic Training. This is an option with special restrictions and requirements. J-1 students should inquire of the RO at IIS after their arrival for details.

Period of Stay in the U.S.

J-1 visitors are allowed a 30-day "grace period" following completion of their program. The ending date of your program is indicated on your DS-2019. During the grace period, J-1 visitors may remain in the U.S. for travel and preparation for departure. **J-1 visitors may not work or study during this period.**

F-1 STUDENTS

Family

Each dependent will be issued an I-20 for travel purposes. The I-20 should be signed by the student.

Health Insurance

F-1 students are **required to obtain health insurance** for themselves after they arrive, OR provide proof of health insurance purchased before/after their arrival. If you fail to show proof of health insurance or to purchase insurance after your arrival, your name will be purged from enrollment records at the university. This means you will not be allowed to attend classes. IIS provides information on general health insurance plans for international students, or you may provide proof of insurance from another source. The opportunity to purchase insurance here will be provided during orientation.

The American health care system is very expensive. Health insurance is absolutely necessary to protect against

extreme costs due to accident or illness.

It is strongly recommended that F-1 students purchase health insurance coverage for all F-2 dependents. Medical expenses in the U.S. can be extraordinarily expensive! Carefully consider any form of insurance provider and **purchase insurance coverage for all F-2 dependents**. Insurance is not retroactive. That is, you cannot apply for insurance to help with the birth of your child AFTER your wife becomes pregnant.

Documents

The following documents are important to you not only for entry into the United States, but also throughout your program of study. Check them for accuracy (current degree program, etc.) and validity (the dates of expiration). Bring your form I-20 and passport to IIS whenever you plan to make changes in your program. Be especially careful to take valid documents with you each time you travel outside the USA.

You must have these documents upon your arrival at Murray State:

- **Passport.** Check the expiration date! If you need to renew your passport, consult your home country's embassy in the U.S. several months in advance. IIS can provide you with embassy addresses and phone numbers.
- **Visa.** Check the expiration date and the number of entries allowed. If you have "maintained your status" (see that section), you may remain in the U.S. with an expired visa. However, if you travel abroad on an expired visa, you will need to reapply at a U.S. embassy abroad for a new visa.
- **I-94.** Check the immigration classification (F-1) and period of stay. D/S means "Duration of Status" or the amount of time approved for the completion of your program as indicated on your most recent I-20. Also, check to be sure that the 11-digit admission number matches any notations on your I-20.
- **Form I-20.** Check the accuracy of information defining your program: the school you are authorized to attend, the level of education, the major or field of study, the date of completion of study. **Keep all I-20 forms ever issued to you.** This is especially true when you transfer. You will need them. When you change your major or level of study (graduate/undergraduate), you should acquire a new I-20. You must keep copies of all I-20s on file at IIS. Every time you leave the U.S. to travel or return home, you will need to have the back of the I-20 endorsed by a designated school official. Don't forget to do this.

Employment

F-1 students may seek employment on campus only. During those periods when school is in session, students may work only 20 hours or less per week. During academic breaks, including summer, students may work up to 40 hours per week on campus. F-2 dependents are NOT allowed to work at all. Only F-1 students may be employed.

Practical Training

Consult one of the International Advisers the semester **before** your final semester.

Period of Stay in the U.S.

F-1 students are allowed a 60-day "grace period" following completion of studies. During this time, you may remain in the U.S. for travel and preparation for departure. You may not work during this period. Applications for Practical Training must be made before the end of the final semester.

General Information for Both:

J-1 visitors and students and F-1 students

Students/Scholars with children

If you wish to enroll your child in public school in the United States, you can do so FREE of charge. However, the local public schools require the following for admission:

- **Current medical inoculation information from a physician.** *Medical inoculation information should be translated into English, so that the local Health Department can complete the required medical forms for your children.* If required inoculations are missing from their records, you may have these provided by the Health Department for a fee.
- **Physical and eye exams of each child by a physician.** Each child must provide a special physical and eye exam form to the public school. Your child will need to have this examination done by a local physician after your arrival in Murray. IIS can help you find doctors in the community.
- **Current school reports/information from your child's home school.** These must be translated into English. They should include such information as individual course grades or the equivalent, descriptions of the content of your child's classes, and any evaluations of your child's performance in class by their teachers. This is especially true for English language skills (reading, speaking, writing) and math skills. If it is determined that your child cannot speak English well enough to feel comfortable in a classroom, the school (perhaps with IIS's assistance) will want to make suggestions on how to assist your child with this. Your child cannot be denied a public education because they lack language skills.

Community Activities

If you are bringing your family, they may be worried about how to keep themselves busy while you are studying. This is a very natural concern.

There are many activities in the community for children. If your children are in the public schools, they will soon discover that the schools themselves have “after-school” activities which they can join. These may be sports activities, school clubs that represent the arts, music, theater or language training, or school teams in academic areas that compete against teams from other schools. In the community, children can find athletic groups to join as diverse as swimming, soccer and Tae Kwon Do. Preschool age children have several different preschool facilities to choose from.

Spouses will find many of the local community groups to offer them a place to meet friends, participate in a diverse array of arts programs and improve their English skills. Many of the community service organizations depend upon volunteer help and would welcome a visitor from abroad. Many of the local churches provide activities and English instruction free of charge for non-English speaking visitors. Dependents can also enroll in the ESL program here at Murray State University, though this service is not free.

Living off Campus

Eligibility:

- All undergraduate students who are “freshmen” or “sophomores” (the first two years of undergraduate study), and who are under 21 years of age, **MUST** live in the residential colleges.
- If you are over 21, married, or at least a “junior” (the third year of undergraduate study) in college, you may choose to live in an apartment off campus.

Benefits of living off campus:

- You have more freedom. You can determine your own hours and rules.
- You can cook your own food. College Courts campus apartments provide stoves, but the residential colleges do not.
- You have more privacy and quiet.

Drawbacks to living off campus:

- It costs more. Not only will the monthly rents be higher than campus housing, but you will be responsible for monthly charges for electricity, water, sewage and garbage pickup. You will have to pay for phone installation and all charges.
- It is not always convenient. Off-campus apartments are available within walking distance, but not nearly enough to satisfy all students. If you live in nicer and more expensive housing, it may be far enough away to require a car to get to campus for classes. **Public transportation is not available in Murray.**
- Most **apartments off campus are not furnished** with anything except a kitchen stove and refrigerator. You will have to buy bedroom furniture, sofas, tables and chairs, as well as cooking utensils, dishes, linens and other necessary items.

Living On Campus

Benefits of living on campus:

- You can walk to class; therefore, you do not need a car.
- Campus housing is furnished with basic furniture: beds, storage for clothing, chairs, tables (apartments also feature sofas, lamps, a kitchen stove and refrigerator). Therefore, you do not need to purchase these larger items.
- Phone service for local calls is free. After you establish long-distance service, you will be charged only for those long-distance calls you make.
- Cable service is free if you have a television (you must purchase your own television).
- All utilities (electricity, water, garbage pickup) are included in the rent.
- Rent is generally cheaper on campus than rent for off-campus housing.

Drawbacks of living on campus:

- Unless you **pay extra for a single room**, you must have a roommate (it is likely that you will live with someone you do not know).
- It is difficult to cook for yourself since you do not have a stove (college courts apartments DO have a stove).
- You must follow certain rules that apply to the whole residential college.
- There is less privacy and personal space.

If you choose to apply for campus housing:

- **You must include the housing deposit with your application.** Your application WILL NOT be processed without this deposit. This is a security deposit, which will be returned to you when you leave campus housing if you have not damaged the room or apartment.
- **It is a good idea to sign up for a 10-month contract.** This means the residential college in which you live will not close during academic breaks between August 1 and May 30. This is a useful and important option for those of you who will not have a home to visit during these breaks. If you want to be considered for this option, you should write

in your request on the residential college application form. This option does cost a little more (\$100 extra per semester in 2001 and is non-refundable).

- After you arrive, you will be asked to sign a formal “housing contract.” This is just like a legal lease for an apartment. It means you promise to live in campus housing for a specific period (usually one full academic year). **Once you sign the contract, you cannot change your mind.**

Enrollment

F-1 and J-1 students are required to be fully enrolled during the regular academic year. This means not less than 12 credit hours per semester for undergraduates, and the equivalent of 9 credit hours per semester for graduates. (Graduate students with assistantships may take 6 credit hours per semester and be fully enrolled.) Any student who is under-enrolled during the regular academic year is considered to be “in violation of status.”

Employment Procedures

The conditions under which students may obtain employment are detailed above under each of the two visa classifications. In addition, employment procedures will be discussed during orientation. In brief, each student will complete the following steps after arrival:

- Apply directly for a job at any campus department or service office. The Student Employment Office in the ground floor of Sparks Hall can help you locate available positions.
- Apply for a social security card. This process will be discussed during orientation.
- If hired, the student must complete:
 - an I-9 form at IIS
 - a student Personnel Action Form (PA) in the department or office where hired
 - a W-4 form for withholding taxes at the Student Employment Office

Note: Some students may be from a country with whom the United States has a “tax treaty.” If so, this means that federal taxes will not be taken out of your paycheck. Those students who qualify must also complete a tax treaty form each year at IIS.

Emergency Assistance

What do you do in an emergency? Or when you become ill?

- In the residential colleges, you should notify your resident adviser (RA) with any emergency or medical problem. His/her job is to assist you with any problem, at any time of the day or night. It is his/her job! You will not be disturbing the RA to ask for assistance. He/she will know what to do, or whom to contact for you.
- In College Courts, you should notify the Campus Security (campus police) at any time of day about an emergency situation or problem. You simply dial 2222 on your phone and they answer. After 4:30 p.m. they will also notify the campus nurse if there is a medical emergency.
- All MSU students, even off-campus students, have access to the Health Center during the day for medical needs. After 4:30 p.m. any student may contact Campus Security at 809-2222 and ask that a campus nurse call them. The nurse may be able to make recommendations on a medical problem and save you the necessity and cost of a visit to the emergency room at the hospital.
- Like all U.S. cities, Murray uses the 911 emergency system. **If there is an immediate and dangerous emergency (a fire for example), dial 911 on your telephone and ask for help.**

Banking, Purchasing Cars, Telephone Service, Etc.

From our experience with international students, we know that many of you will have questions about purchasing an automobile, obtaining a driver’s license, establishing a bank account, obtaining the cheapest international phone service, setting up email accounts and more. All of these will be covered in our orientation.

Any visitor to another country finds the most frustrating things are the little things. We often hear our students saying, “Why do I have to do it that way?” or “We don’t do it that way back home.” Both of these statements are very understandable! We will help you with your frustrations in orientation by providing information on all the steps necessary to obtain the things you need and, in many cases, walking you through them ourselves.

CHECKLIST of Things You Need and Don’t Need to Bring with You

DON’T BRING:

- ✓ **Bed and bath linens.** These items are not expensive and students often discover that bed linens from home do not fit the bedding (mattresses) here!

BRING:

- √ **A driver's license from your home country or an international driver's license.** It is easier and quicker to obtain a Kentucky driver's license if you have one from abroad already.
- √ **Some cash in U.S. dollars.** Plan to arrive in Murray with at least \$800 in USD. This is a small community and having your currency changed into dollars is not speedy! You can do this at the Nashville airport if you do not have the opportunity before your arrival.
- √ **VISA, Mastercard or American Express credit cards.** The university will accept these three major credit cards for university tuition and fee payment. The university will not accept Diner's Club cards!
- √ **Cirrus system or PLUS system ATM cards** are useful in this area.
- √ **Bank drafts, traveler's checks in USD** are useful when setting up bank accounts. Money can be wired from home, but most banks here will not accept wired funds until you have established an account! Since you will need funds for fee payment right after your arrival, waiting for wired funds may be frustrating. Bring some of your funds (if possible) in the form of bank drafts or traveler's checks. During orientation, you will be introduced to banking in the U.S. and will be provided the opportunity to pick from several local banking agencies.
- √ **Clothing.** The temperatures can be as high as 95 degrees F (35C) in the summer, and as low as 15 degrees F (-10C) in the winter. In the summer it is very humid. In the winter it is very cold, but there is usually little snowfall. Rainfall in the spring can be heavy. Former students have indicated that clothing is fairly inexpensive here. You will need heavy jackets, gloves and a hat for winter, which can all be purchased after your arrival.
- √ **Personal items from home.** Don't forget to include those things that will remind you of home. Bring photographs of friends and family. Bring items that are important to you or that represent your culture. Bring your home country's flag. Bring an example of your native dress. Each year international students participate in cultural events on campus. One of these events is a buffet where students cook for and entertain 300 guests. You might want to bring recipes from home for this event, or even to help you cook favorite dishes for yourself. Each year, international students volunteer to talk with local school children about their homelands. What would you like to show other people about where you live? What do you want to bring to help you deal with homesickness? Everyone misses home. Having something personal of your own in your room may be more important than packing all of your clothing!
- √ **Prescriptions from your doctor** for any medications you must take, or for your eyeglasses or contacts. This may be very useful after you arrive. If you have not packed sufficient medications for your time here, or if you need new glasses or contacts, you will have to visit a local doctor. A prescription, written in English and using generic labels for medications, will help the local doctor better meet your needs.
- √ Don't forget to bring your passport, I-20 or DS-2019, this handbook and the instructions for arrival!
- √ If you need to bring your personal computer, remember the voltage difference here! Talk with those who can help you with converters and adapters for our electrical system. Students do bring their own computers from abroad, but most often they have been adapted for universal use. Check on this before you pack it!

We sincerely hope this handbook will provide useful information to you before you arrive. We also hope orientation and the information provided here will be useful to you after you arrive. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. Your suggestions for improving this handbook or for topics to be discussed at orientation are welcomed.

To contact our office online

Access the Murray State University website at
<http://www.murraystate.edu/iis>

Email us at: **iis@murraystate.edu**

ACRONYMS & DEFINITIONS:

IIS: Institute for International Studies

ISA: International Student Advisor

I-20: Immigration document for F-1 students

DS-2019: Immigration document for J-1 students

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

USCIS: United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (formerly INS)

USICE: United States Immigration & Customs Enforcement (formerly INS)

USCBP: United States Customs & Border Patrol (formerly INS)

J-1: visitors attending MSU on a DS-2019 immigration form

J-2: the spouse or children of a J-1

F-1: students attending MSU on an I-20 immigration form

F-2: the spouse or children of an F-1

I-94: U.S. entry & exit document, a passport-page sized white card, EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

RO: Responsible Officer is a campus official on all J-1 immigration matters for both students and scholars and the primary campus contact for the DHS.

ARO: Alternate Responsible Officer is a campus official on all J-1 immigration matters for both students and scholars.

PDSO: Principal Designated School Official is a campus official on all F-1 immigration matters and the primary campus contact for the DHS.

DSO: Designated School Official is a campus official on all F-1 immigration matters.

I-9: document you will complete at IIS if you gain employment on campus

W-4: document you will complete at IIS if you gain employment on campus

PA: Personnel Action Form, your contract with MSU if you are hired to work on campus

RA: Resident Advisor in your dorm. This is a student who lives in the dorm on your floor and helps you with your questions as well as informs you of activities, rules, etc.

RD: Resident Director in your dorm. This is a student who lives in the dorm on the 1st floor. The RD manages all activity of the RA's and can help you if your RA is not available.