

Welcome

Pre-Arrival Handbook— Spring 2019

to UAB!

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Introduction



***It's a great day
to be a Blazer!***

**WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM!**

The following information provides you with the basic details you need to prepare for your arrival at UAB and what to do when you arrive in the US. You can arrive in the US up to 30 days prior to the Program Start Date listed on your Form I-20/DS-2019.



Important
Dates &
International
Orientation

IMPORTANT DATES (SUMMER)

Earliest day to arrive	04/08/2019
Latest recommended day to arrive	05/06/2019
International Student Orientation	05/03/2019
Classes begin	05/06/2019

GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS MAY HAVE SEPARATE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS.

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR DEPARTMENT DIRECTLY FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION AND OTHER REQUIRED PROGRAMS

All new and transferring degree-seeking graduate students (both master's and PhD) must attend International Orientation covering immigration rights and responsibilities, university programs, and cultural adjustment.

Attendance is mandatory.

International Orientation will take place on 05/03/2019 at 1:30 PM, at the International Center on the second floor of Sterne Library:

917 13th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35205

You must reserve a seat at orientation by emailing us at isss@uab.edu by 04/30/2019 .

To enter the building for orientation, please use the ramp on the 14th Street side of the library. Your school may also require you to attend a separate orientation session. Contact your school directly to learn details of any program-specific orientation sessions.

Arriving in Magic City



ARRIVAL IN BIRMINGHAM

Transportation from the Birmingham or Atlanta Airport

If you plan to fly into the Atlanta airport (approximately 2.5 hours from Birmingham by car), reserve a shuttle service in advance to drive you to Birmingham (prices vary). [MegaBus](#) also runs between Birmingham and Atlanta.

If you fly into Birmingham, take a taxi/Uber/Lyft from the airport to your apartment, hotel, or other temporary accommodation. The ride should cost \$15-\$20.

Be sure to say you are a UAB student and be prepared to give the driver a printout of your destination.



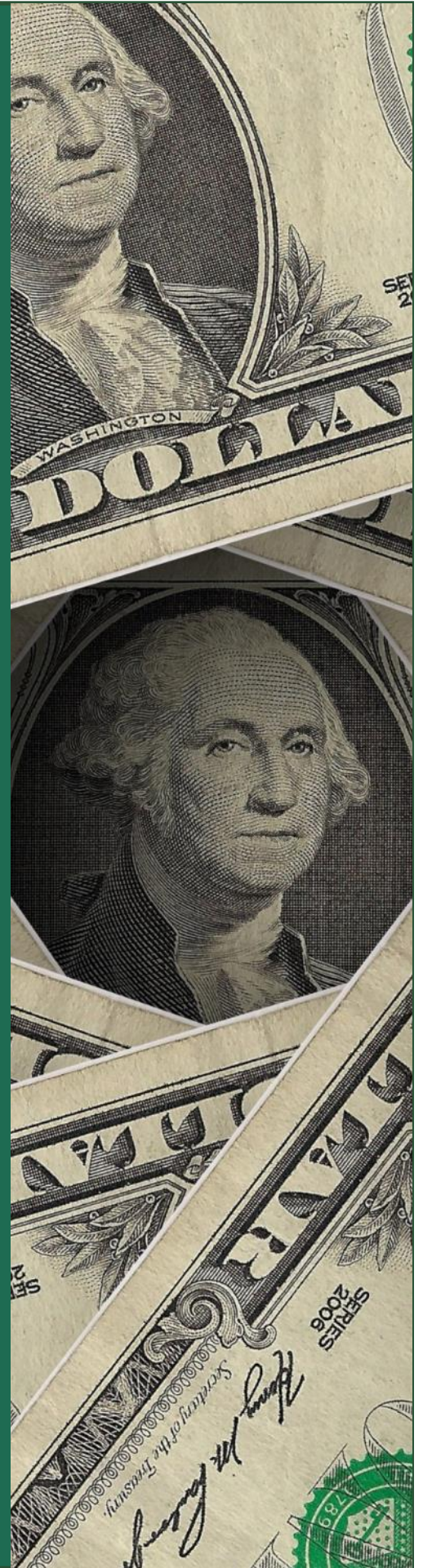
ACCOMMODATIONS:

If you do not have anyone to stay with when you arrive in Birmingham, UAB has negotiated special, lower rates with the following hotels.

Contact the hotel upon your arrival and tell your driver to take you to that location. If your flight arrives very late at night, on a weekend, or on a holiday when ISSS is closed, you may wish to stay at one of the airport hotels (look for a shuttle bus from the airport to the hotel). On the next week-day, take a car to UAB. You can provide the ISSS office address (917 13th Street South) as a destination from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

HOTELS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE	
Doubletree	808 20th Street South Phone: (205) 933-9000
Hotel Indigo	1023 20th Street South Phone: (205) 933-9555
Homewood Suites	1016 20th Street South Phone: (205) 703-9920
Hilton Garden Inn	250 18th Street South Phone: (205) 322-7937
Courtyard by Marriott	19th Street & 5th Avenue Phone: (205) 254-004
Marriot Residence Inn	821 20th Street South Phone: (205) 731-9595

Let's
Talk
About
Money.



BRINGING FUNDS TO THE UNITED STATES

Bring money in a readily convertible form.

DO NOT TRAVEL WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF CASH!

Carry your funds in the form of traveler's checks or cashier's checks payable from a New York-based bank. International checks can take up to 10-15 days for funding to become available. If applicable, plan ahead with your sponsor to insure that your funds are available as needed. Denominations over \$100 can be difficult to use at some establishments that expect smaller bills. In some countries, you can now bring pre-paid credit cards that work like a credit or debit card, but are protected like traveler's checks. Check with your local international banking institution to see what is available.

LIVING EXPENSES AND OPENING A US BANK ACCOUNT

You must provide a Social Security number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in order to open an account at some US banks. However, the Social Security Administration will not issue your SSN until it verifies your immigration status with USCIS, which can take 10-15 business days. Furthermore, not all international students are eligible to receive an SSN: only those who are employed in an on-campus job can get an SSN. Others must apply for an ITIN. Some larger banks such as Regions and Wells Fargo can assist students in opening an account without a SSN.

Until you can apply for either of these numbers, you will need access to at least \$2,000 in living expenses, even if you are funded by UAB. It can take at least 30 days to receive your first stipend payment. If you are funded by a departmental assistantship, you must be prepared for possible delay in payment. Learn more about applying for an SSN/ITIN [here](#).

TRANSFERRING MONEY

Two alternative ways to bring your tuition money to the US are via wire transfer and Flywire. These methods eliminate the need to carry large amounts of funds. Wire money only after you are sure you are coming to UAB and have obtained a student visa: refunding internationally is by check, so it is a slow process. Tuition and fees must be paid on time. For full details on payment deadlines, [click here](#).

UAB has partnered with [Flywire](#), a third-party vendor, to save you money on your international student payments. Flywire converts your currency to US dollars and sends the specified amount to UAB. Once UAB receives the funds, you will get a confirmation email.

If you wish to send a wire transfer, contact Student Accounting (pbatey@uab.edu):

UAB Financial Affairs - Student Accounting
1700 University Boulevard, LHL Ground Floor G10, Birmingham, AL
35294-0013

Phone: (205) 934-3570 Toll Free: (888) 255-8734

Fax (205) 934-9107

Use the following for the wire transfer:

Bank: ACH Information

Regions Bank

PO Box 11007

Birmingham, AL 3522

Routing #: 062000019, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Account #: 00-0065463

SWIFT Code: UPNBUS44 (international transfers only)

**PLEASE REFERENCE THAT THE MONEY IS FOR STUDENT TUITION & FEES
AND INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND STUDENT IDENTIFICATION ("B") NUMBER.**



Immunizations
& Health
Insurance

IMMUNIZATIONS

UAB requires all international students to provide proof of certain immunizations [measles, mumps, rubella ("MMR"); tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis; varicella; two tuberculin skin tests or one TB blood test; and, for those 21 years and younger, meningitis]. After you are admitted, you will receive an email explaining the clearance process for immunizations containing specific information on how to log in to the online patient portal, complete the required forms, and submit your immunization documentation. You must have a BlazerID to access the patient portal. If you have not created your BlazerID, go to www.uab.edu/blazerid.

Students enrolled in certain programs (including Nursing, Optometry, Dentistry, and some Health Professions programs) must also show documentation of three Hepatitis B vaccines, a Hepatitis B surface antibody blood titer, and a physical examination within twelve months prior to matriculation. Please find attached the medical clearance forms to be completed as much as possible before your arrival.

ALL TB testing (skin, blood, or chest X-ray) must be performed in the United States within 3 months of your arrival.

If you do not have the required vaccinations prior to your arrival, Student Health & Wellness can administer the immunizations for a fee. Learn more about the medical clearance process [here](#).

You cannot register for classes until you upload medical records and proof of health insurance

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

All international students must participate in the UAB Student Health Service. United Healthcare student health insurance provides a comprehensive policy including a vision rider allowing for annual eye exams and discounts on eyeglasses. Participation in United Healthcare student health is required regardless of whether or not you have United Healthcare health insurance. Student Health & Wellness runs a clinic providing student access to physicians and nurses and will be your primary health care provider while you are studying at UAB. Student Health Service fees are paid once each term.



HEALTH INSURANCE (FEES SUBJECT TO CHANGE EVERY FALL SEMESTER)

International students must obtain [student health insurance](#) while at UAB. In order to use insurance you already have, you must present your insurance policy to the Student Health Service. The policy must be in English and detail the specific benefits provided. The Director of Student Health & Wellness will decide whether your insurance policy is comparable to UAB's and decide if you can complete a waiver of UAB's United Healthcare insurance. More information about health insurance waivers is available [here](#). To obtain a waiver of United Healthcare insurance, your outside plan must provide, at a minimum:

Physician and hospital coverage with providers in Alabama
Minimum of \$1 million lifetime maximum for major medical
Transplant coverage
Medical evacuation
Repatriation of remains

If your health insurance does not meet the above requirements and your waiver request is denied, you will be automatically billed for UAB United Healthcare insurance (currently \$1,966 per academic year, including summer). You will be charged for health insurance in both the fall and spring semesters; the spring semester payment also covers summer. Insurance fees are listed on the Student Health website and may increase without prior notice. For waiver questions, please contact [Candace Ragsdale](#).

MEDICAL RECORDS AND PRESCRIPTIONS



If you take prescription medications, ask your doctor for a copy of the prescription to bring with you. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring a second pair or a copy of the prescription. Also ask your doctor for a copy of any vital medical records you may need to use in the US.

Academics



ENGLISH

UAB requires all students to demonstrate the ability to read, write, understand, and speak effectively in English. Graduate students in certain programs (e.g., Public Health, Chemistry, and some engineering departments) may receive an email about additional English skill assessment. Please notify [Amy Snow](#) if you receive such an email and require clearance for class registration.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Contact your school directly to obtain the name of your graduate advisor or mentor. ISSS does not provide academic advice other than ensuring that all international graduate students enroll in at least 9 credit hours per semester (at least 6 of which must be face-to-face, not online). These hour thresholds are set by US immigration regulations. International undergraduate students must enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester (at least 9 of which must be face-to-face, not online).

ARTICULATION: TRANSFERRING INTERNATIONAL COURSE CREDITS TO

If you completed college-level courses outside the United States, you completed a transcript evaluation when applying to UAB. Those credits were applied to your UAB transcript as "elective" credit hours, which do not count toward your UAB degree. If you want those courses to count towards your UAB degree requirements (not just as electives), you must have the individual courses matched with UAB course offerings through a process known as articulation. Articulation is mandatory if you wish to transfer credits to fulfill UAB degree requirements. To begin the articulation process, email the International Admissions team at intladmin@uab.edu.



Housing

ON-CAMPUS

All first-year freshmen must live on campus in a UAB residence hall (dorm). On-campus housing is also reserved for J-1 exchange students visiting UAB from one of our partner institutions in the UK, Japan, Australia, and Spain. **You must apply online [here](#).** Contact Student Housing & Residence Life at studenthousing@uab.edu with questions. Apply early—on-campus housing is severely limited! Sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students should plan to live off campus in an apartment or rental house.

OFF-CAMPUS

Our [Compass](#) guide contains extensive information about off-campus housing in the Birmingham area. You can also visit UAB's [Office of Off-Campus Housing](#) website. Current students often help new arrivals find a place to live off-campus—**check our Facebook page**. The Southside, Highland, Forest Park, Lakeview, Five Points South, Glen Iris, and downtown Loft District neighborhoods are within reasonable walking distance and biking distance of campus. The suburban neighborhoods of Homewood, Mountain Brook, and Vestavia are a car ride away.

Monthly rates for unfurnished off-campus housing ranges from \$450 to \$750. Renters or “tenants” usually have to pay for their own utilities (i.e., electricity, water, and internet), and you must pay a deposit to each utility company in order to receive service. Most landlords (property owners) require a deposit (usually the amount of one month’s rent) that may be refunded after the tenant moves out if no damage has occurred. Take these fees into consideration when planning your budget.

Whether you live off-campus or on-campus, we recommend purchasing **renters insurance**. Read more about it in the [Compass](#).



Helpful Tips

WEATHER & WHAT TO WEAR

The temperature in Birmingham averages 27° C in the summer and 9° C in the winter. Summer is hot and extremely humid, but you may wish to carry a light sweater to wear in our air-conditioned buildings. Fall will transition to cooler temperatures, and a light jacket will suffice for a few weeks. Bring a heavy jacket or coat for our short winter (December through February). It may be less expensive to bring these clothes with you, or ask your family to ship additional bulky clothing to you later.

University students dress quite informally. Women wear skirts, shorts, or jeans with t-shirts, blouses, or sweaters. Men wear shorts or jeans with sport shirts, t-shirts, or sweaters. Both men and women wear jeans. You may want to bring an item of traditional dress from your country to wear on special occasions.

INTERNATIONAL DRIVER

If you intend to drive while in the US, we recommended bringing an International Driver License (IDL) from your home country or country of residence. An IDL is accepted in all US states. An IDL is valid for 12 months, after which you must apply for an Alabama driver license if you wish to continue driving in the US. If you are coming for a short-term exchange (fewer than 180 days), you are ineligible for an Alabama driver license and must use an IDL.

International Mentors



INTERNATIONAL MENTORS

UAB created the International Mentors (IM) Program to assist international students with their transition to life in the United States. Every international student who wants one is assigned to a mentor. IMs are here to assist you with immersion into southern American culture, the Birmingham community, and life at UAB. IMs are chosen after a highly selective and careful process to assure they are interested in promoting diversity and the needs of international students. UAB's Office of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs arranges IMs for international undergraduates, and UAB's Graduate Student Association pairs IMs with international graduate students. If you wish to be paired with an IM, please email us at isss@uab.edu.

*Forever Faithful.
Forever Loyal.*

Again, congratulations on your admission to UAB. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We at International Student & Scholar Services look forward to meeting you!

Don't forget to like and follow us!



[UAB International & Scholar Services](#)

[@global.uab](#)

