



## International Student Handbook

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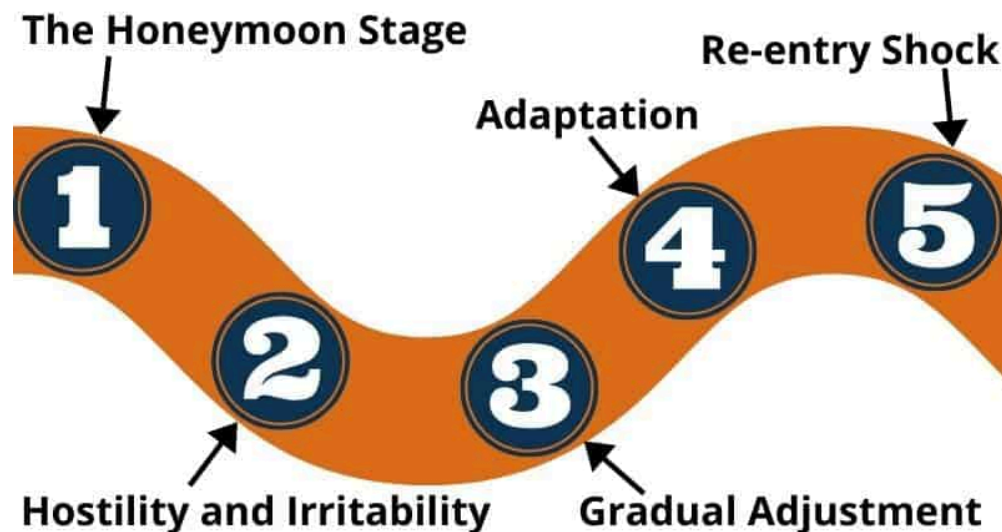
Welcome to the University of South Alabama! We are excited for you to begin this new experience and your education journey with us. International students at the University of South Alabama representing a variety of cultural backgrounds. They come from large cities, villages and rural areas of more than 80 countries. After months of anxious preparation, long and often multiple flights crossing countless time zones, finally arriving in Mobile can be overwhelming. Everything is new, including the constant chatter of English. It will take some adjustments to better understand the “local language” which include idioms, colloquialisms, and Southern accents which were not taught in English class. Even students from English - speaking countries will face language difficulties, due to various accents and vocabulary differences. Try to not be overwhelmed by all of these new and exciting changes, but embrace them as new learning experiences.



## **CULTURE SHOCK AND THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT**

All international students, at some point, will experience "Culture Shock." Culture shock refers to a collective group of thoughts, emotions, and sometimes physical symptoms, that occur in various phases, when someone leaves home and enters an unfamiliar cultural environment and the adjustment period. The severity and length of culture shock and the adjustment period varies by individuals and the cultural contrast. Culture Shock can also be situational and occur during a high stress moment, well after a student's arrival.

# THE 5 STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK



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1. **Honeymoon Phase:** Everything is new and exciting. Feelings of elation and for finally arriving and beginning this new journey.
2. **Frustration Stage:** You become irritable and frustrated because adapting to your new environment is feeling difficult. Everyday tasks and activities, such as grocery shopping, begin to feel stressful. You might question your decision to come to the US. Feeling homesick and longing for your family and friends is common in this stage. Sleeping and eating habits might be affected as a result of these feelings.
3. **Gradual Adjustment Stage:** Everyday tasks and activities that were frustrating before are becoming easier and not so bothersome. You are no longer questioning your decision to come to the US and understanding it's ok to like and dislike various aspects of the culture and environment.
4. **Adaptation:** You have developed a routine and new habits. It has become easy to communicate your thoughts and feelings in English. Developing a group of close friends and begin to experience new things. Your new environment is starting to feel home.
5. **Re-entry Shock:** Living in your new environment has given you a new perspective and ideas. You have grown and your home, family, and friends can seem different than you remember. You might start comparing your home to your time in the US. Give yourself time to adjust and integrate your new way of life to your home culture.



## **IMMIGRATION RULES AND REGULATIONS**

### **F-1 Visa Students Information -**

#### **Words to Know:**

**CBP** - “ US Customs and Border Protection” enforcement agency at all ports of entry into the US.

**D/S** - “Duration of Status” and is the time you have been admitted to the US. This period includes your full course of study, authorized period of practical training, and the 60 day period to depart from the US.

**USCIS** - The “United States Customs and Immigration Services” is a branch of the Department of Homeland Security, which has authority over all foreign nationals in the United States.

**I-20** - A form issued to obtain and renew F-1 status. It lists your program sponsor, dates authorized in your academic program, and student classification.

**I-94** - An electronic arrival and departure record. To verify immigration status, this document can be printed from the CBP website.

**I-539** - An immigration form primarily used for extension/change of status. It can also be used for reinstatement if your F-1 Status is terminated.

**I-765** - An immigration form used to apply for work authorization.

**Visa** - A multicolored entry permit that is permanently inserted in your passport. It is used only to enter the US and does not need to be renewed as long as you remain in the US. If your visa expires, you can only get another visa outside of the US. You will need to bring an updated I-20, copy of your transcripts, and financial support documents.

**Passport** - This document was issued by the government of your foreign residence. Passports must be valid at all times and for a minimum of six months into the future from your entry to the US. Passports can be renewed inside the US by contacting your home embassy. While your passport can be used for identification, it is highly recommended that you get a driver's license or state identification card.



### **Requirements of F-1 Students:**

1. Attend the school authorized on your I-20.
2. Be enrolled in a full course of study each semester. Undergraduate students are required 12 credit hours and graduate students are required 6 credit hours. For both undergraduate and graduate students, only 3 credit hours may be online.
3. Must be enrolled for at least two semesters as a full time student before you are authorized a vacation period. (Exception is made if your first semester occurs during the Spring semester - you will be granted a vacation period)
4. Keep your passport valid for at least six months into the future from your entry into the US.
5. Only allowed to work on campus at 20-hours a week.

### **Work:**

On - Campus employment is the only type of employment allowed for all F-1 students. You must request permission from the Office of Immigration. You may only work 20 hours per week when school is in session. The University of South Alabama limits all students to a maximum of 28 hours per week while on break.



Acceptable On Campus employment:

- Graduate Assistantships
- Student Worker Positions paid by the university
- Student Worker Positions paid by Aramark Catering

A Special Note Regarding On Campus Employment: Private athletic camps that are hosted on campus are not eligible for on-campus employment. F-1 and J-1 students may not work for these camps as they are privately owned LLC companies that rent space on campus

### **Off campus employment:**

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work that is related to your field of study. You may participate in CPT prior to completion of studies through co-op and/or during your vacation period or and school breaks. To qualify, you must have been in student status for at least 12 months, submit the CPT form, your I-20, and a letter from the employer to the Office of Immigration for approval. You must receive permission before you begin work. If you participate in more than 12 months of full time CPT you are not eligible for any post completion training after you finish your studies. This does not apply if CPT was part time.

Occupational Practical Training (OPT) is an option for students to apply for up to one year after degree completion. You are not required to have a job offer to apply for OPT, but you must have permission and confirmation from the US Government before you begin work. You may apply up to 90 days prior to the completion of your academic program.

### Transferring Schools

If you plan to change schools you must submit your admission letter, issued by the new school, and the transfer out form prior to the first day of classes. If you are out of status, you will be required to apply for reinstatement to F-1 student status USCIS.

### Reinstatement

This is required when you have been out of status for one or more semesters, such as not being in a full time course of study, or unauthorized break from study. To apply for reinstatement, you will need to submit a completed I-539 with the application fee, a new I-20, I-94 record, and a letter or other documentation explaining why you were out of status.

### J-1 Visa Students Information -

#### Words to Know:

**DS-2019** - A form issued to obtain and renew J-1 status. It lists your program sponsor, dates authorized in your academic program, and student classification.

**Program Sponsor** - This is the institution or agency that issued your DS-2019. In some cases, this will be the University of South Alabama. However, it could be an agency outside of the University.

**Program** - This is the reason as to why you have been admitted to the US.

**Visa** - A multicolored entry permit that is permanently inserted in your passport. It is used only to enter the US and does not need to be renewed as long as you remain in the US. If your visa expires, you can only get another visa outside of the US. You will need to bring an updated I-20, copy of your transcripts, and financial support documents.





**Passport** - This document was issued by the government of your foreign residence. Passports must be valid at all times and for a minimum of six months into the future from your entry to the US. Passports can be renewed inside the US by contacting your home embassy. While your passport can be used for identification, it is highly recommended that you get a driver's license or state identification card.

#### Requirements of J-1 Students:

1. Be enrolled in a full course of study each semester. Undergraduate students are required 12 credit hours and graduate students are required 6 credit hours.
2. Your program sponsor can require you to take more credit hours each semester.
3. You may also not be granted a vacation period.

#### Extension of Stay

J-1 can be granted an extension if your program is going to require a longer amount of time than what was originally indicated on your DS-2019. This must be completed before at least 60 days prior to the expiration date on your DS-2019.

#### Employment

Exchange students enrolled in a full course of study may be employed on campus if it is related to the course study. Part-time on or off-campus employment, must be authorized by the program sponsor under the circumstances of urgent financial need which has occurred after entering the US. Exchange students may not reduce their course load to less than full time to take this employment.

#### Two- Year Residency Requirement:

Anyone who comes to the US on the J-1 Visa is required to return to their home country for at least two years before he or she can qualify for any other visa type.

#### Driver's Licenses Process:

In order to apply for a Driver's License/ Alabama ID, you will need to go to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) with the following documents:

- Eligibility letter from the Office of Immigration
- Social Security Number (SSN) or SSN denial letter (issued by the Social Security Administration Office)
- Your valid passport
- Visa
- I-20 or DS-2019
- I-94 record

If this is your first driver's license in the United States or your previous US license has expired you will need to take both a written and a driving test. You can see more information on how to prepare on our [website](#).

### SSN:

In order to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN), you must have a valid on campus job offer. You will need to submit a copy of this job offer letter which must be on university letterhead and include the following information:

- Your legal name
- The position title and brief description of duties
- Your start date
- Number of hours per week you will work (cannot exceed 20 hours)
- Location of employment (must be on-campus)
- Your rate of pay.

Once you receive the SSN eligibility letter from the Immigration Office, you will need to go to the Social Security Administration Office downtown with the following documents:

- SSN eligibility letter from the Office of Immigration
- Job Offer Letter
- Valid passport
- Visa
- I-20/DS-2019
- I-94 record

Please note that SSNs are personal sensitive documents and should not be shared with others apart from human resources and cases in which it is requested by credible banking institutions. Do not carry your SSN card in your wallet. Do not provide your SSN number over the phone or via email.

### ITINs

Certain international students that are receiving non-compensatory income (i.e. you are receiving money that you did not have to work for, such as a scholarship stipend) will need to apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) because they are not eligible for an SSN as they are not working. This typically applies to Student Athletes.

The ITIN application process takes roughly 3-4 months to be approved by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) so it is important to apply as soon after arrival to the University of South Alabama as possible.

In order to apply, you will need to attend an ITIN workshop with the Office of Immigration in order to complete the Form W-7 and Form W-8BEN (if claiming a tax treaty). You will need to bring the following original hard copy documents with you to the workshop

- Passport
- Visa
- I-20/DS-2019

- I-94 record

The Office of Immigration will assist you with the ITIN application, make certified copies of your documents, issue a letter verifying that you are receiving non-compensatory income, that your document copies are certified originals, and that you are maintaining your immigration status, and will then submit your application to the IRS on your behalf.

Please note that ITINS are personal sensitive tax identification numbers and should not be shared with others apart from human resources and cases in which it is requested by credible banking institutions. Do not carry your ITIN in your wallet. Do not provide your ITIN number over the phone or via email.

### I-9s

Within 3 days of starting your on campus employment, you must go to Human Resources and complete the I-9 process. You will need to bring the following original documents with you:

- Passport
- Visa
- I-20/DS-2019
- I-94

### Glacier

Any student receiving payments or scholarships from the University of South Alabama must set up a Glacier Account. Scholarships will not be dispersed by Student Accounting until you set up a Glacier Account. Additionally, if your country has a tax-treaty (agreement between countries to pay reduced taxes) you will not benefit from this treaty until you set up your Glacier Account and add either a SSN or ITIN

### **Taxes & Filing Taxes**

If you were present in the United States at any point in during the previous tax year (January 1-December 31) (even if you started in the Spring semester but arrived the previous December) you need to take appropriate action in regards to filing the Form 8843 and state and federal tax returns for the previous tax year.

**Please note that, per university policy, no employee of the University of South Alabama can give tax return filing advice or complete tax refund documents for you.**

### Filing Deadline

The last day to “file” or submit your tax return is on April 15th of the following year (for example taxes for 2023 are due by April 15, 2024)

Here's more information on what a tax return filing is and who should file:

### The Form 8843

Any foreign national that was present in the United States during the tax year is required to file the Form 8843: Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals With a Medical Condition. This is required even if the foreign national was not working

### What is the IRS?

The Internal Revenue Service is the nation's tax collection agency and administers the Internal Revenue Code enacted by Congress.

### What is a Tax Return?

A form on which a taxpayer makes an annual statement of income and personal circumstances, used by the tax authorities to assess liability for tax.

### Who Must File?

Individuals who have received US income during the tax year must file a tax return. You must file a return if you are a nonresident alien engaged or considered to be engaged in a trade or business in the United States during the year. However, if your only U.S. source income is wages in an amount less than the personal exemption amount (see [Publication 501, Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information](#)), you are not required to file. Even if you are not engaged in a trade or business in the United States, you must file a return if you

have U.S. income on which the tax liability was not satisfied by the withholding of tax at the source. You also must file an income tax return if you want to claim a refund of excess withholding or want to claim the benefit of any deductions or credits (for example, if you have income from rental property that you choose to treat as income connected to a trade or business).

#### Tax Treatment of Nonresident Alien

If you are a nonresident alien engaged in a trade or business in the United States, you must pay U.S. tax on the amount of your effectively connected income, after allowable deductions, at the same rates that apply to U.S. citizens and residents. If you are not engaged in a trade or business, the payment of U.S. source income that is fixed, determinable, annual, or periodical is taxed at a flat 30 percent (or lower treaty rate) and no deductions are allowed against such income. You may earn both effectively connected income and fixed determinable,



annual, or periodical income in the same year and they will be taxed accordingly. See [Alien Taxation – Certain Essential Concepts](#) for a summary of some rules that apply to resident and nonresident aliens.

We understand that all of this can be confusing for some. Most Americans are confused about filing taxes, too! Need help filing your taxes or for a refund? Here's how to get help:

- [IRS Website for Foreign Students and Scholars](#)
- [IRS Website for International Taxpayers](#)
- [Sprintax](#) for nonresidents filing federal tax returns and state tax returns
- [GLACIER Tax Prep \(GTP\)](#) for nonresidents filing their federal tax returns
- [Foreign National Tax Return FNTR](#) – for resident, nonresident and dual-status individuals. Requires an institutional relationship. Recommended by Judy Todd (PD SIG Tax presenter, nonresident alien tax specialist)

You may also be responsible for filing a State of Alabama tax return, in addition to your U.S. federal tax return. More information on this can be found at the [Alabama Department of Revenue](#) or by contacting a Taxpayer Service Center.

#### What do you need to file taxes:

Typically, foreign nationals will need the following documents to file their taxes (this may change depending on your circumstances) along with the previous years tax return if they filed last year:

- W-2 (lists wages, salary, compensation)
- 1042-S (royalty payments, scholarships)
  - This will not be issued by the University of South Alabama until March 15th and is required if you are receiving a scholarship that includes housing/meals
- 1099-SERIES (rent, investment income, settlements, etc)
- Social Security Number (SSN) of Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)
  - If you are a student athlete or other foreign national not eligible for a Social Security Number, tax season is the ideal time to file for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). Please see your USA Immigration office for details on the letter you'll need for filing for an ITIN.

If you want one on one personal assistance with your filing, we strongly encourage you to reach out to a tax professional (local Certified Public Accountant or tax filing service such as [H&R Block](#), [Jackson Hewitt](#)). Be cautious of "side of the road" tax return "specialists" who offer cheap tax return filing assistance. If you need to file taxes for previous years you will need to use a Certified Public Accountant to assist you.

#### **Other Visa Types:**

**F-2** - This visa is issued to the spouse or minor child(ren) of an F-1 Student Visa holder. F-2 visa holders can attend college or university and enroll part time. Under no circumstances can a F-2 visa holder work on or off campus. F-2 visas are considered to be instatus with USCIS as long as the F-1 is in status.

**J-2** - This is the spouse of an exchange visitor. J-2 visa holders can attend college or university and enroll part time. Under specific circumstances J-2 visa holders can obtain work permission from USCIS.

**B-1/B-2** - This visa is considered a visitor's visa and only here for a short period of time. Typically, these visas can not attend school.

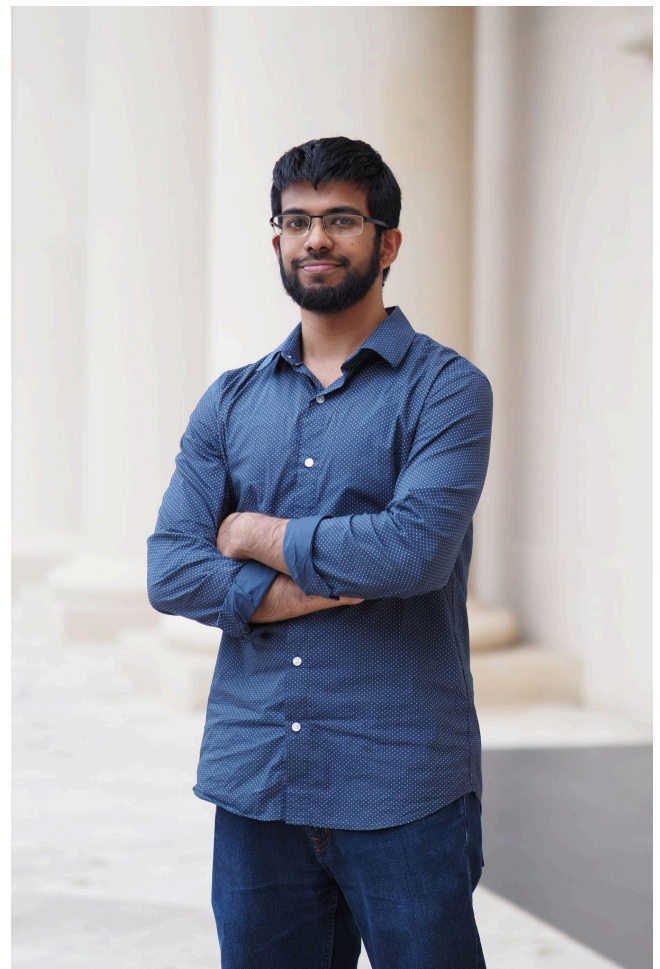
**B-2 Prospective Student** - Under some circumstances a student may be granted a temporary visa in order to enter the US prior to being issued an I-20. The change from B-2 to F-1 must occur before the B-2 visa expires.

**H-1** - This visa is granted for temporary workers. Generally on campuses to teach or participate in advanced research.

**Permanent Resident** - Does not have any immigration requirements that guide their study. In some circumstances, they could be eligible for financial aid and can qualify as an Alabama resident for tuition purposes.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

All University of South Alabama (USA) students are required to have health insurance. As an international student, private health insurance might be unfamiliar since a lot of other countries have a national or universal healthcare system. Medical costs in the US are expensive and often can not be paid without help, which is where your chosen health insurance assists. There are a variety of insurance policies that market to international students, but it is important to review your options to ensure it meets your specific medical needs. USA offers a comprehensive insurance policy that not only meets the minimum requirements, but will keep your medical expenses low. If you decide to take the USA health insurance policy, it will automatically be billed to your student account. If you decide to choose an outside insurance policy, you are required to submit the [F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INSURANCE WAIVER FORM](#) before August 1st for starting in the Fall semester /December 1st for starting in the Spring semester / May1st for starting in the Summer semester. If your insurance policy does not meet the minimum requirements outlined on the insurance waiver and/or



fail to submit the insurance waiver form by the correct date, you will be charged for the USA health insurance policy on your student account.

Words to Know:

**PPO-** Preferred Providers Organization-This is a list of doctors and hospitals which are considered Preferred Providers because of an agreement with the insurance company relating to their charges. The insurance will pay a much larger portion of the expenses to the preferred doctors and hospitals than to those not on the preferred list. A list of PPO providers will be provided through the insurance website.

**Coverage-** The time period and types of services in which your insurance policy will pay out.

**Co-pay-** is the part of the medical expenses that you must pay. Co-pay amounts vary on the type of service provided, facilities, physicians, medication, laboratory evaluations, etc. You can find a list of standard Co-pay amounts on your insurance website.

**Pre-existing condition-** is anything for which you have received treatment prior to having this specific insurance policy.

**Exclusions-** are things the insurance will not cover. Please see your policy description for a detailed list of exclusions such as dental and vision care.

**Routine Preventive Examination-** when there is no indication of illness, but an annual visit to ensure you are maintaining good health.

**Auto Accidents-** If you are injured in an automobile accident, your automobile insurance claim must be filed first before the health insurance will begin coverage. If you are driving illegally or uninsured the insurance will not provide any benefits.



## **HEALTH CARE**

All enrolled students at USA are eligible to use the Student Health Center. Unless it is an emergency, it is highly encouraged for students to use the Student Health Center for your medical needs. The Student Health Center located at 5870 USA South Drive (which is in front of the Student Center). Office hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and 9:00 Am to 5:00 PM Tuesday and Thursday. The telephone number is **(251) 460-7151**. To have an appointment with a doctor, you will need to call to schedule an appointment. Please note, family members of students are not eligible for services at the Student Health Center. They can get inexpensive care though the Family Medicine Center located at 2419 Gordon Smith Drive and the phone number is (251) 434-3475.

If you are experiencing an emergency, extremely sick or injured, and can not wait till clinic hours you are advised to the USA Health Freestanding Emergency Department for treatment. Please be prepared to show your insurance card upon arrival. Costs at other hospitals could be higher.

Dental and Vision/Eye care separate from medical care in the US. The USA Health Insurance policy does not cover these costs. Student Health maintains a list of dentist and eye doctors who will treat students at a special rate. Contact Student Health if you need these services.

### **Clinic and Doctor's Office Visits**

When asked to complete your family and medical history paperwork, be as exact and honest as possible because these records will be used to help determine your treatment plan. Medical records are private information and cannot be released without your permission. A nurse or another member of the physician's staff will ask you a series of questions about your current medical symptoms and/injuries before you are examined by the physician. The purpose of this is to obtain background information in order to better provide care and determine your care plan. Never pretend you are another person when receiving medical care in order to save on insurance costs. This is extremely dangerous for your health and could result in criminal charges. The treating physician may refer you to another doctor or specialist i.e. a Dermatologist, Gynecologist, Cardiologist, etc. for further treatment if he or she believes it is



needed. You will be given a referral and must call the specialist for an appointment if the nurse does not do so while you are still in the office.

### Prescription Medications

If you are prescribed medication by your doctor, it is important that you get this medication filled by a licensed pharmacist. Pharmacies near campus include CVS, Walgreens, and Publix Pharmacy. Before leaving the pharmacy, make sure you understand the medication's possible side effects, food/drink/ other medication interactions, and the amount and frequency you should take it. Never exceed the recommended dosage of any medication, as it could result in severe illness or even death. Depending on your insurance policy, your prescriptions could require a copay payment at pick up. Please review your insurance policy and their coverage of prescription medications.

### Accessibility & Disability Services

The Center for Educational Accessibility & Disability Resources (CEADR) on campus provides educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities through equal access, empowerment, support, resources, advocacy, collaboration and outreach throughout the University and community. If you have a medically documented physical, mental, or emotional disability, you will need to self-disclose and provide [proper documentation](#) in order to receive accommodations.

### Counseling Services

The Counseling and Wellness Center on campus offers students free personal and group counseling. It is a very common practice in the US for people to talk about their problems to others and professional counselors, who can provide guidance. These services are confidential and records are kept separate from your academic and SEVIS records. If you are experiencing an issue that you do not know how to handle, contact the Counseling and Wellness Center at (251) 460-7051.

### Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services

Alcohol and drugs usage, both legal and illegal, is something that occurs on all college and university campuses in the US. In the US, alcohol consumption is illegal for anyone under the age of 21. Alabama has a strict, zero tolerance policy of illegal and abuse of controlled drugs. If you think you could have Alcoholism or a substance abuse problem, please do not be ashamed to ask for help. Please reach out to your International Student Services Coordinator to provide guidance for seeking help or you can reach out directly to the Counseling and Wellness Center for help.

## Sexual Health Services

College and university campuses tend to have more sexual freedom and exploration than most students have experienced in their past. Non-marital sex, between two consenting adults, is not taboo in the US. It is your decision if you want to explore sexual freedom or not, but remember you are responsible for your decisions and the consequences of your actions. It is important that you know if you are being forced into a situation that you are not comfortable with, or have expressed verbally or through physical reactions that you do not want to participate, these actions are illegal.

If you decide to explore sexual freedom, the Student Health Center can provide sexual health items and medications, such as protection or birth control, and instructions on how to use it for maximum effectiveness, and inform you of any possible side effects. If you think you might have contracted a sexually transmitted disease, please schedule an appointment with the Student Health Center to be evaluated and begin treatment. If you or your sexual partner becomes pregnant, immediately seek guidance and counseling along with healthcare information. Student Health can assist with finding advanced medical care and service for care options.



## CAMPUS SAFETY

The University of South Alabama has its own police department located on the main campus. The department operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There are 29 sworn, state law enforcement officers, 6 full time support staff, and 20-25 student workers. All law enforcement matters are handled within the department including initial complaint taking, criminal investigations and arrests. The university also employs security guards at its hospitals, health clinics and the Fairhope Campus. These security guards are managed by the local campus administrator and not the University Police. They have citizen arrest powers as provided by state law. The non-emergency phone number is (251) 460-6312. **In the event of an emergency please call 911.**

## **CAMPUS RULES AND STUDENT CONDUCT**

Campus rules and regulations are provided for the protection of students and community to ensure that all University offices offer fair and consistent service. If you violate these policies, you will be brought before the disciplinary board and/or criminal prosecution.

### **Student Conduct**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a reasonable and adult manner at all times. They are expected to avoid the following categories of misconduct:



1. Dishonesty such as cheating, plagiarism (to present as one's own ideas and/or words of another or from an existing source), or knowingly furnishing false information to the University.
2. Forgery, alterations, or misuse of University documents, records, or identification.
3. Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration disciplinary procedures, or other University activities including its public service function or other authorized activities on University premises.
4. Physical abuse of any person on University-owned or controlled property or at University-sponsored and supervised functions or conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any such person.
5. Theft or damage to property of the University or of a member of the University community or campus visitor.
6. Unauthorized entry to or use of University facilities.
7. Violation of University policies or of campus regulations concerning the registration of student organizations, the use of University facilities, or the time, place and manner of public expressions.
8. The use, possession, or distribution of narcotic or dangerous drugs.
9. Violation of rules governing residence in University-owned or controlled property.
10. Disorderly conduct of lewd, indecent, or obscene conduct or expression on University-owned or controlled property, or at the University-sponsored or supervised functions.
11. Failure to comply with directions of University officials acting in the performance of their duties.
12. Conduct which adversely affects the student's suitability as a member of the academic community.
13. Consumption or service of alcoholic beverages on campus.
14. Possession of firearms, lethal weapons, explosives or fireworks on University premises.



## **GLOBAL USA POLICIES**

International Admissions Standards for USA are based upon recommendations established by the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers, the World Education Series, the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association. These standards may be reevaluated as additional information on institutions and national educational systems is received and as the requirements at the University are revised.

### **Copying Documents**

All documents submitted as part of the application process become the property of the University, and will not be copied for, or released to a student or forwarded to another institution.

### **Transfer Credit from Foreign Institutions**

Students transferring to the University of South Alabama from institutions of higher education abroad must submit a detailed course syllabus of the classes listed on the academic record/transcript. These records/transcripts and documents will be evaluated by the Office of the Registrar and recommendations of credit to be awarded will be made to the academic department. Should the Office of the Registrar be unable to evaluate the academic work or the student disagrees with the University's evaluation, the student will be responsible for the submission and payment to a credential agency for a professional evaluation. In these cases, the results of the professional evaluation will be the final, binding decision whether it results in more or less transfer credit.

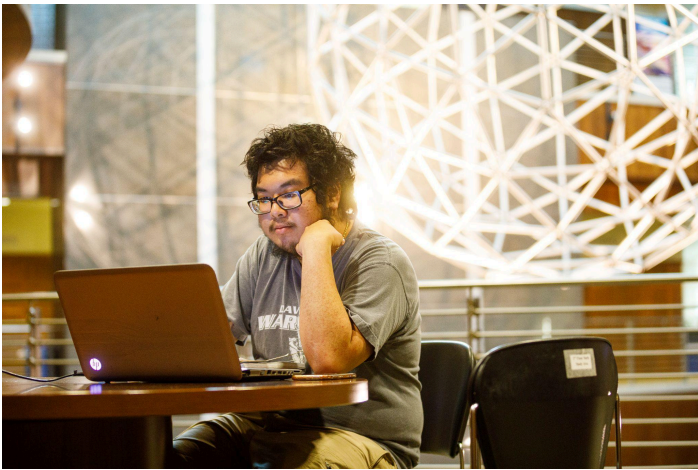
All transfer students accepted into the Colleges of Education, Nursing, or Allied Health must obtain a professional evaluation, through the credential agency recommended by the department, under State of Alabama law.

### Deposit

A tuition deposit is required prior to being issued the Form I-20 . As a F-1 student you must demonstrate ability to fund the tuition, cost of living, and fees for a minimum of one year prior to being issued the Form I-20. Submission of the deposit, along with your bank statements, is a part of this financial demonstration. Upon registering your first semester, this deposit will be credited to your Student Account. The monetary value of this deposit may be revised as necessary by the Office of Immigration.

### Payment of Fees

All international students with non-immigrant visas are considered non-residents and will be assessed the out-of-state tuition fees and the international fee each semester, this includes those pending adjustment to permanent resident status. Tuition and fees are payable during your designated registration period and at the beginning of each semester, which can be found on the University Academic Calendar. Payment of tuition and fees are required in order to finalize and complete your registration. Tuition deferrals are not permitted. The Office of Student Accounts offers payment plans for students that need to make multiple payments.



## **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

After registering for your courses each semester you will be required to pay your tuition bill. As you add/or drop courses your tuition bill will reflect these changes. Your tuition bill will include all fees and health insurance. If you are living on campus, you will see your housing fees and meal plan on your tuition bill. For tuition bill deadlines please refer to the [Financial Calendar](#) listed on the Student Accounting webpage. If you are unable to make one payment in full, you can enroll in the USA Payment Plan, which splits your tuition bill into three or four payments throughout the semester.

### *USA Payment Plan*

The payment plan allows students and their families to have the flexibility to spread out payments across multiple months. Students must enroll in the payment plan each term, and follow the deadline dates as set in the Financial Calendar and the [Payment Plan webpage](#).

### Wire Transfers

The University of South Alabama works with two vendors to provide students with additional options to make wire payments to your student account. Both services are fast, simple, secure, and you can track your payments from start to finish. It is important for you to compare rates and choose the option that works best for you. The two wire transfer companies are [PayMyTuition](#) and [FlyWire](#). For more information please refer to the [International Student Payment webpage](#).

### Scholarships

The University of South Alabama provides scholarship opportunities all for new, incoming students and current students. All scholarships and the application process is conducted in JagSPOT, the campus scholarship portal. JagSPOT utilizes the Scholarship Universe tool, based on your submitted profile, to provide matching scholarships and ways to apply for all students.

There are seven scholarships available exclusively for international students. A list of these scholarships and requirements can be found on the [Office of Scholarship Services website](#). All of these scholarships are awarded for the Fall semester. Deadlines for each scholarship can be found in JagSPOT.

### Graduate Assistantships

These competitive assistant awards are only given to a select number of students each year. Graduate admissions and assistantship funding decisions take place within each department. Admission requirements and assistantship funding opportunities differ between programs. Types of Graduate Assistantships include Graduate Research Assistant, Graduate Assistant I, Graduate Assistant II, and Graduate Teaching Assistant. All Assistantship positions require students to be enrolled full time. Graduate Students interested in Graduate Assistantship positions should apply directly to their program. Please contact your department chair or graduate program director/coordinator for information on available assistantship positions. Graduate Assistantships only cover course credit hour charges, which does not include fees.





## **Living Accommodations**

### **On- Campus Housing**

The University of South Alabama offers a variety of on-campus housing options. Living on campus should be your option, especially if you are a first-time freshman international student. Some of the advantages to living on campus include: guaranteed living accommodations and meal plan before arriving to Mobile, close to University facilities, and an excellent opportunity to interact with American students. There are 33 residence halls and are divided into 7 residential communities. Rooms vary from traditional two-to-a room arrangements with a shared bathroom up to two-bedroom apartments such as one would find off campus. The rates vary depending upon the facilities. Currently enrolled students living off campus who would like to move into University housing should contact the Housing Office at (251)460-6185 to inquire about availability. If you sign a housing contract and later decide you want to move off campus, you are financially obligated to pay your on-campus room charges.

### **Off- Campus Housing**

A lot of international students decide to live off campus. If you decide this would be the better option for you, it is your responsibility to find housing and transportation accommodations to and from campus. Should you sign a lease agreement with an apartment complex and decide you want to move or violate their policies, you will be financially obligated and legally bound to pay the remaining balance of the lease or the apartment complex will pursue legal proceedings. Please make sure you read your entire lease agreement and specifically check for automatic renewal clauses, the requirement of notification period for move out, and early termination penalty.

### Words to Know:

**Lease** -. This is a contract obligating you to a specific term of occupancy. Generally, leases are either 6 or 12 months in length. You cannot move out during the term of the lease without penalty—this may mean loss of a security deposit and/or all rent due for the remaining length of the lease. You must read this carefully and look for the following:

**Length of Lease** - the time period in which the lease is valid.

**Subleasing** - Having another person legally take possession of the lease and the property. You will need to ask the apartment complex the requirements for subletting.

**Security Deposits**- This is a financial promise that you promise that the apartment will to maintain cleanliness and be damage free upon move out. Failure to do so will result in not getting your deposit back.

**Other Policies** - These could be apartment complex specific, such as children/minors living and visiting the apartment, owning pets, rules and regulations about parties and gatherings, guest use of apartment facilities, such as the pool or gym.

**Condition of the Apartment** - You will be held responsible for the apartment being returned in the same condition as when you rented it. It is your responsibility to make sure that anything that is wrong when you move in is noted by both you and the landlord.

**Roommates**- It is extremely important that you are careful when selecting your roommates. Depending upon the apartment complex, you might have individual leases or you could be listed on one lease. If all roommates are listed on the lease, it needs to be established who will be responsible for setting up the utilities and payment arrangements.

## **UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS AND OFFICES**

*The Office of Immigration and International Admissions*  
390 Student Center Circle - Meisler Hall Suite 2200  
(251) 460-6050

The Office of Immigration and International Admissions is the main office on campus that is dedicated to working with all international students and scholars at the University of South Alabama. If you are having troubles, questions, or need guidance, please come to and talk with the International Student Services Coordinator.





[University Counseling and Wellness Center](#)

300 Student Center Circle  
(251) 460-7051

The University Counseling and Wellness Center provides confidential, free counseling and crisis intervention services to eligible USA students and consultation and outreach services to members of the USA community.

[USA Housing](#)

251 Delta Loop - Delta Commons Room 100  
(251) 341 - 4663

USA Housing is responsible for all on campus housing and leasing these facilities to students. Living on campus, students have the access to amazing programs and staff to support them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including some holidays. Each resident hall has either a community director or area coordinator that is responsible for facilitating programs and ensuring our students are safe in the residence halls.

[The Office of the Registrar](#)

390 Student Center Circle - Meisler Hall Suite 1100  
(251) 460 - 6251

The Office of the Registrar supports the University community by providing information and services related to academic programs and degree requirements, registration and enrollment verification, and maintenance of permanent academic records for students, faculty, staff, and external constituencies. The Office of the Registrar also can provide copies of official transcripts for a fee. In order to participate in graduation you must submit your graduation application and associated fee to the Office of the Registrar by the deadline listed on the website.

### [Department of Campus Recreation and Wellness](#)

51 Jaguar Blvd.

(251) 460 - 6065

The Department of Campus Recreation and Wellness encourages students to play hard, get, and lead happy, healthy lives. There are 7 programs within the department which include: the Student Recreation Center, South Sports, and Outdoor Adventures.

The Student Recreation Center (Rec/Rec Center) is accessible free of charge for students when they present their JagCard at the front desk. The Rec is a 116,000 square foot facility that includes:

- A cardio theater with treadmills, ellipticals, upright and recumbent exercise bikes, rowing machines, stair climbers, and arm ergometers
- A weight room with selectorized machines, plate-loaded machines, functional trainers, and free weights
- Indoor track, approximately 1/8 mile
- Indoor and outdoor heated [pools](#) and spa
- Three multipurpose courts for basketball, volleyball, and badminton
- Four racquetball courts
- Indoor soccer court
- Table tennis and billiards
- Three [group fitness](#) studios
- [Climbing wall](#)
- Men's, women's, and a gender-neutral family locker room
- Kids' Play Zone for members' children



### [South Sports](#)

South Sports provides students with the opportunity to participate in various sports and activities through intramural leagues, special events, and club sports. Intramural leagues provide competitive league sports that last 3-5 weeks with games scheduled once a week. There team groupings for men, women, and co-rec. Team fees are required to participate. Special events are one time events that occur throughout each semester, such as various tournaments. Club sports are registered student organizations that offer team play with other universities.

### [Student Center](#)

350 Student Center Circle  
(251) 460 - 6077

The Student Center is considered the center of campus and where the majority of campus activities and meetings take place. In the Student Center you will find a variety of meeting rooms, vending machines, the food court, lounge areas, Mail Hub, JagCard office, Lost and Found, and a computer lab.

### [Jaguar Productions](#)

350 Alumni Drive - Student Center 130  
(251) 460 - 7144

Jaguar Productions (JP) is the official Student Activities Board for the University of South Alabama. Striving to provide the ultimate campus experience, Jaguar Productions encourages student involvement and community building through entertaining, educational, and diverse events.

Our events include:

- Block Party
- Comedy shows
- Poetry nights
- Live music
- Movies
- Karaoke Nights
- Open Mic Nights
- Game Nights

JP also provides students with discounted tickets to the movies at AMC Theatres and local attractions.

### [Marx Library](#)

5901 USA Drive North  
(251) 460 - 7028

The Marx Library is the main library for the University of South Alabama. It operates under the “open stack” system for the majority of its collections. “Open stack” refers to when students can get the book they need from the shelves. The library is cataloged under the Library of Congress Systems and has a unique set of letters and numbers that denote individual volumes.

In addition to books, the library contains microforms, audio and visual materials, periodicals, newspapers, and US government documents. The catalog systems are located on computers around the building. Professional librarians are available to assist if you have questions or need

help. Other USA libraries include: Biomedical Library, MCOB Business Library, McCall Rare Book & Manuscript Library, and the USA Baldwin County Library.

### [Division of Student Affairs](#)

350 Student Center Circle - Student Center  
(251) 460 - 6172

The Division of Student Affairs is committed to providing services and creating a supportive campus environment which fosters engagement, academic success, and personal development within a diverse community of learners.



### **Academic and University of South Alabama Terms:**

**Academic Advisor** - A professional staff member and/or department professor who will help you select courses each semester and ensure you are making progress toward your academic goals.

**The Lowdown**- The official student handbook of the University. It is your responsibility to know and understand this document –including your obligations, your rights and your degree requirements.

**Change of Courses** (also known as **Add/Drop period**) - as specified in the schedule of Courses. All additions to your schedule will be made during the first week of classes during the drop/add period of registration. A student may withdraw from a class beginning on drop/add through the last day to drop, as listed in the University Calendar. If you withdraw on drop/add day, this withdrawal will not appear on your final transcript. If the withdrawal is made after drop/add day, a WD will be recorded on his/her permanent grade record. If you abandon a course without officially withdrawing, you will receive an “F” grade.

**Student Classification/ Academic Class** - This is determined by the number of credits earned.

Freshman: 0-31 semester hours

Sophomore: 32-63 semester hours

Junior: 64-95 semester hours

Senior: 96 semester hours or more

**College** - The University is divided into academic colleges. All students are enrolled in one of the academic colleges, depending on their major. The colleges are:

Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions

College of Arts and Sciences

Mitchell College of Business

College of Education and Professional Studies

College of Engineering

College of Medicine

College of Nursing

School of Computing

Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences

Global USA

Graduate School

Honors College

**Conditional Admissions** - Some applicants to the graduate school may be admitted conditionally if their grades and/or test scores are below minimum admissions standards, but the academic department agrees the applicant would be a good fit for the program. Conditional graduate students must meet certain minimum requirements in their graduate work to continue toward the degree.

**Course/Class** -The course (or class) is the basic division of study. A course represents a semester’s work in a given area. Each course is assigned a course number; this number designates the level of the course.

**Semester Credit Hours** - One semester credit hour is given for each 50-minute lecture each per week or 2-3 hour laboratory or studio hours. The majority of USA courses are 3 or 4 credit hours. A full-time undergraduate student will need to take at least 4 courses to meet the 12 hour minimum. Graduate students will need at least 2 courses for the 6 hour minimum.

**Curriculum-** The total program of courses required for a degree in a particular subject.

**Dean-** An administrative office in charge of a college, faculty, or division of the University.

**Dismissal-** Academic dismissal is for one calendar year and occurs when a student who has been reinstated following a previous academic suspension or dismissal fails to make satisfactory progress. Satisfactory progress is specified in the USA Undergraduate/Graduate Bulletin.

**Elective-** A course that is accepted toward fulfillment of credit for a degree but is not a major related required course. The name reflects the definition that a student “elects” or chooses to take the course.

**Full-time Students-** A student who registers for 12 or more semester hours as an undergraduate or 6 or more as a graduate student. This is required for all F-1 international students.

**Good Standing-** A student who is registered full-time, has no financial or other outstanding obligations to the University, and has no disciplinary sanctions against him/her.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)-** A weighting average of your grades and credit hours. A 4.0 is a perfect average, a 2.0 is the minimum required for undergraduates and a 3.0 for graduate students to graduate.. See the Lowdown for calculation methods.

**Hold-** Outstanding debts or obligations to the University, such as traffic tickets or outstanding documents, will mean a hold will be placed on your academic record. The hold will also be on your course registration, barring you from registering until it is cleared. Transcripts, enrollment certifications, etc. will not be issued to students with holds.

**Student Identification (ID) Card/JagCard -** The JagCard is a picture ID made during orientation. It is used to check out books at the library, get access to recreational facilities, attend athletic events, etc. If you lose your Jag Card, report it to Campus Security and obtain a new ID at the JagCard office in the Student Center.

**Jaguar (panthera onca)-** A large feline mammal of tropical America which has a spotted coat with black markings. It is the mascot for the University of South Alabama. Sometimes called “Jag” on campus.

**Major-**The academic subject area in which you intend to specialize.

**Minor-** The academic area in which you place special emphasis; a secondary specialization.

**Part-time Student -** A student who registers for less than 12 hours for an undergraduate and 6 hours for graduate students.

**PAWS** - Personal Access Web System, available at <http://paws.southalabama.edu>. Registration is conducted online using PAWS in designated phases. Students must register during the time frames specified on their individual time tickets.

**Prerequisite-** A course which must be taken prior to another course. It is your responsibility to check for these from your academic advisor or program coordinator before you register.

**Probation-** Students with a cumulative grade-point average below 2.0 are having academic difficulties and are alerted to this fact by being placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation are restricted to taking no more than 13 credit hours per term, unless exempted from this regulation by the dean of their college. Students with grade-point averages substantially below 2.0 are subject to academic suspension or dismissal.

**Provisional Admission-** A student who was admitted with an incomplete file, such as a missing final transcript. Academic Files must be completed during the first semester at the University. Failure to do so will result in a hold being put on your registration until the file is complete.

**Semester System-** The academic year at the University of South Alabama is divided into two terms of approximately 15 weeks of class followed by a final examination week. These are known as “semesters”. Fall and Spring make up the “regular” academic year. Summer Semester is a short, intensive semester .

**Registration-** The designated time period each semester, that students are able to register for courses and pay the tuition bill. You are not enrolled in classes nor a student unless you have gone through registration and paid your tuition bill.

**Section-** Some courses are taken by a lot of students that have several classes on one subject and will be offered with different times, locations, and instructors. Each individual class is called a section.

**Suspension-** Academic suspension for one regular semester results if a student at the end of any semester does not have the minimum grade-point average indicated in the suspension and dismissal table located in the USA Undergraduate/Graduate Lowdown. The minimum required grade-point average varies with the total number of credit hours attempted at the University. No student will be suspended before they have passed at least thirty credit hours at the University.

**Transcript-** The official University document that lists all academic courses, grades received, and if a degree is awarded.



## Cross Cultural Tips

### Greeting People

- Two men almost always shake hands upon first meeting. A man does not shake hands with a woman unless she offers her hand first.
- Customary greetings include "It's nice to meet you"& "How are you doing"

### Calling Other People

- Americans use Mr./Sir or Mrs./Madam.
- You can also use Mr. for a young man and Miss for a young woman.
- Calling an older person by his/her name is impolite and in some scenarios rude.

### Smiling

- American people are generally known as friendly people.
- Smiling is a common occurrence, even to people they don't really know.
- Smiling is positive and considered a sign of friendliness.
- It is recommended to smile back at people who smile at you.

### Shaking Hands

- It is most common for people to use their right hand.
- A handshake is the most common greeting when meeting someone for the first time or in a professional setting.

### Event Invitations

- Small informal affairs, such as dinner with a friend are often extended over the phone, text, or in person.
- For larger gatherings or formal occasions, written, printed, or emailed invitations usually sent in advance.
- If an invitation indicates RSVP, you must call, email, or write either your acceptance or regrets to the host or hostess.
- When you accept an invitation, the host or hostess expects your attendance. If you are unable to attend after accepting your invitation, be sure to give as much notice as possible.

### Time

- While different cultures treat time loosely, Americans are precise when it comes to time.
- When an American says they will meet you at 7pm, they mean 7pm, not 6:55 or 7:08.



- If a professor indicates lectures begin at 1pm, you should arrive 5-10 minutes early, each lecture, to get settled and prepared to take notes. Arriving after 1pm or getting yourself settled and prepared when the professor is beginning the lecture is considered extremely rude and very disrespectful.

### Roles of Women

- In society, men and women have equal status and rights.
- Women do hold positions of power and authority within the public and private sectors, government, education, religious organizations, etc.
- The same level of respect should be given to these women in the same way it is given to a man in the position.

### Talking to Other People

- Americans tend to stand a little further away from each other when engaging in conversation. This is because personal space is seen as a boundary reflecting that person's individuality.
- It is normal for Americans to engage in conversation with people they do not know without beginning with a formal introduction. Examples include standing in a queue or sitting next to someone at an event.
- If you are new to a conversation or a group of people, take the initiative to introduce yourself.
- Don't point your finger at someone else when you talk, as it indicates anger or being upset with that person.

### Cleanliness

- Overall, Americans have high concern for personal cleanliness.
- It is normal to bathe daily, brush teeth at least twice a day, and wear deodorant, perfume, and colognes.
- It is important to wear clean clothes daily and to launder clothes regularly.

### Not to Do In Public

- It is not common for Americans to greet with a kiss. However, if you have a close, personal relationship with someone you sometimes might greet with a hug.
- It is considered rude to talk on your phone loudly, on speaker phone mode, or video chat.
- It is in poor taste to belch or break wind in a large gathering or public place.
- Do not stand too close to people. A safe rule is an arm's length away.
- The use of slurs and offensive language is highly frowned upon.
- Do not consume alcoholic beverages and operate motor vehicles.
- Skip to the front of the line or queue.

