FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The purpose of the International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) is to promote international educational exchange at UAB and in the Birmingham community. The ISSS assists UAB departments in obtaining immigrant and nonimmigrant visas for international scholars and students. The ISSS also assists the university in maintaining compliance with the federal tax withholding requirements for nonresident aliens.

1. May I work?
   On-campus work is allowed for those students who are in valid F-1 or J-1 status. During the academic term, students are limited to 20 hours per week and may work 40 hours per week during vacation breaks. Off-campus work authorization is not allowed for the first nine months of being in F-1 status. Off-campus employment options should be discussed with the Foreign Student Advisor.

2. What do I need to do to obtain an I-20 or DS-2019?
   You must be fully admitted into a degree seeking program (i.e. Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate, etc.) in order to be eligible for an I-20 or DS-2019 form. In addition to this, you must provide proof of funding for one academic year by showing an affidavit of support from your sponsor and an original bank statement. Those students receiving funding from their home country’s government, some international organizations, and any funding from the United States government may be required to obtain an DS-2019.

3. What if I want to go on for another degree?
   If you are completing a lower degree and wish to pursue a higher level degree within UAB, then you are eligible to do so by being admitted into a new degree seeking program. You must obtain proof of support through your department or by providing an affidavit of support and original bank statement in order to receive the new I-20 or DS-2019. If you are transferring to UAB from another school and changing levels, then you will need to do all of the previously mentioned steps along with providing a transfer clearance form from your previous university.
4. What documents do I need if I travel to my home country or a third country for a brief visit?

   Whether you are in F-1 or J-1 status, you must obtain a travel letter and must have a current I-20 or DS-2019 with a signature of less than one year old. Please make this request to the International Scholar & Student Services office at least two weeks prior to your departure. Fill out the Student Request Form. Additionally recommended documentation: Transcripts, proof of funding (if available), proof of current registration, student ID, and any other proof that you are a current student.

5. What do I need to do if I am graduating?

   When you are graduating from your program, then you have to consider your options. If in F-1 status, you have no more than 60 days after your graduation date to do one of the following: 1) Apply for and be admitted into a new degree program (must be before the 60 days expire); 2) Apply for your post-completion practical training; 3) depart the United States or change to another visa status. If in J-1 status, you have only 30 days after your graduation date to do one of the following: 1) Apply for and be admitted into an higher degree level; 2) Apply for your academic training; 3) depart the United States. If you plan on departing UAB and returning home, you need to submit a departure form and update your address with the university.

6. What do I need to do if I want to transfer to UAB?

   You must be admitted into a degree program of study and submit current financial documents (affidavit of support and original bank statement) and additionally submit a transfer clearance form from your current university.

7. How do I invite a family member?

   You may pick up a sample “letter of invitation” in order to invite members of your family (or download it off our website). If providing their support, you should provide proof of that along with supporting bank statements. Have the form notarized.

8. I need a certification letter. What do I do to request it?

   Submit a Student Request Form.

9. I need to obtain a visa. May I do that without traveling?
You must travel outside the United States in order to renew your visa.

10. I want to change my status to F-1. What do I need to do?
You must be fully admitted into a degree program and provide proof of full financial support (original bank statement & affidavit of support). Once this is done there are two options: 1) Travel to Mexico, Canada, or your home country to the United States embassy or consulate; or 2) File a change of status request with the Immigration Service (filed through our office...fee of $120 to the USCIS). Discuss these options with the Foreign Student Advisor.

10. My dependent (F-2, J-2, or H-4) wants to go to school and/or find a job, is that okay?
Dependents in F-2 status are restricted to avocation and recreational courses and cannot be degree-seeking. These types of courses would including things like improving English, recreational or hobby classes, and/or exercise for example. Taking degree-seeking classes not allowed nor can F-2 dependents receive any kind of financial compensation. To work illegally is a violation of the F-2 status. H-4 dependents can be part-time or full-time students, but they cannot work in the United States. J-2 dependents can go to school either full-time or part-time and are allowed to work, but only if they obtain a work permit directly from the U.S. immigration service.

12. Where do I go to have fun?
Check out the Smolian International House at 1600 10th Avenue South, and the campus calendar of events found under Activities on this WebPage. Also, you can check the Student Life event on the Campus Calendar at students.uab.edu.