



Center for
International Studies
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA UPSTATE

BECOMING A GLOBAL SPARTAN

NEXT STEPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



WELCOME GLOBAL SPARTANS!

Congratulations on becoming a Spartan! Now that you have been accepted, there are some important steps you must complete before you arrive on campus. We recommend you complete them in the order listed on the *International Student Checklist*. It is crucial that you are proactive and stay organized throughout this process to avoid unnecessary stress. USC Upstate is invested in your successful arrival to campus. We want to make the transition to the United States as smooth as possible. If you have any questions, visit the [Enrollment Resource website](#) for additional information about the enrollment process.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

UNDERSTAND TUITION, FEES, & COST OF LIVING IN THE USA

As an international student at USC Upstate, you are required to submit documentation proving that you have enough funding to support both your program costs and living expenses for two semesters (9 months). For this reason, the very first step should be to secure the minimum funds required. The estimate of the required minimum proof of funds can be found on your Financial Certificate. Before you leave for the US, you should also ensure that your funds can be easily accessed and transferred, and that there are no international holds on your accounts.

Once you have secured the minimum funding required, consider the cost of living in the US and other expenses you may incur. Will you need additional money for travel within the US? Perhaps you would like to bring back souvenirs or gifts for family and friends. Maybe you want extra funds to eat out at restaurants or enjoy off-campus activities on the weekends. This money should be budgeted in addition to the minimum requirement funding.

For more information on general tuition and fees, see the [Financial Aid Office's Website](#).

SET UP YOUR UNIVERSITY ACCOUNT

When you are first admitted to USC Upstate, you will be given two student ID numbers: the VIP ID and the USC ID. The VIP ID is 8 digits long, and the USC ID is 9 characters long and begins with a letter. These ID numbers will come from Admissions@uscupstate.edu within the first few days of being admitted. You should save the admissions email address as a contact to avoid having their messages sent to spam.

Once you have this information, you will be able to login and set up your student accounts. Self Service Carolina will give you access to your student portal information. You will use this site regularly to update your personal information, set up your passwords, and register for courses. However, you will not be able to register for courses the first time until you have attended orientation, submitted a copy of your visa to international@uscupstate.edu, and submitted proof of immunizations to Student Health Services. Below are the instructions for setting up your Self-Service Carolina account:

1. Download DUO from the Apple Store or Google Play. This is a multi-factor authentication app that you will need to have in order to access Self Service Carolina.
2. Visit [Self Service Carolina](#) (my.sc.edu).
3. Under "Personal," click "View my IDs and Manage my Passwords."
4. Select "Account Claiming."
5. Follow the instructions to set up your MySC password.
6. Use DUO to scan the QR code and a code will display after entering phone information. Click "Activate."

7. Once your password is established, sign back into Self Service Carolina with your network username and your new password.

You should also have access to your Blackboard account using the network username and password you just created, but your course work will not appear until after orientation and class registration. It is important that you set up your student email account before you arrive at USC Upstate. All the important information from the university and your professors will be sent to that email address. Below are the instructions to set up your student email account:

1. Go to the following link: <https://outlook.office.com>
2. On the next screen, enter your full USC Upstate email address and your temporary password that is provided to you in the new student packet. This will prompt you to set a new password. This is a separate account from your MySC account but has the same 'username'. Once you have set a password, you will then be prompted to add Authentication Methods for your account. It is recommended to use the Microsoft Authenticator app, but you are welcome to use 'other methods' and add a backup email address and/or telephone number. This will be used if you ever need to reset your password in the future.
3. Once you click sign in, you should be taken to your inbox.
4. If you forget your password, go to passwordreset.microsoftonline.com/ to reset it.

Feel free to contact the IT Help Desk if you need any further assistance at 864-503-5257 or helpdesk@uscupstate.edu.

SUBMIT FINANCIAL CERTIFICATION

Once you have secured your funding, you can download the most up-to-date copy of the Financial Certificate from the "International Student Enrollment Checklist" on the university's [International Student](#) page. Note that the Financial Certificate is the "estimated average cost" of attendance based on the Office of Financial Aid's yearly estimated costs of attendance. The amount on your Financial Certificate, which will also appear on your I-20 form, is not a bill nor is it the exact amount you can expect on your bill once you arrive in the US. Undergraduate and graduate students have separate forms to reflect the different program costs, so please complete the correct form. Undergraduate students will complete the Financial Certification- Undergraduate form, while graduate students must submit the Financial Certification – Graduate form. The instructions on how to correctly complete and submit the document can be found on the form. Financial documents must also be submitted with the form to verify the proof of funds.

The following financial documents will be accepted:

- Personal funds – A recent bank letter or bank statement.
- Funds from family or sponsor – Bank statement along with an affidavit of support containing both the student's and sponsor's name, relationship, and amount of funds available for the purpose of the applicant's studies. You may use the bottom of this form for your affidavit of support. Funds must be shown at the current USD conversion rate.
- A bank letter on official letterhead containing the name of the sponsor, relationship to the applicant, name of the applicant, and the USD amount available for the purpose of the applicant's studies.
- Government or other

The following financial documents will not be accepted:

- Annual salary statement
- Real estate
- Investments, stocks, or other accounts from which money cannot be withdrawn.
- Family Business account

REQUEST I-20 FORM

After you have submitted your Financial Certification, you can request an [I-20 Form](#) from the university. Confirm that the main fields on your I-20 (Personal Information, Program of Study, Major, and Student Funding) match your passport, admissions letter, and statement of fees on the e-copy of the I-20. If the information does not match, respond to the email right away and request a new I-20 with the correct information. At this point, begin the process of selecting and booking a consulate interview to avoid appointment delays. Once the I-20 has arrived, sign (or have a parent sign if you are under the age of 18) and date the bottom of the I-20 document.

PREPARE FOR VISA APPOINTMENT

You should begin the application process for your visa as soon as possible. It requires an interview with the U.S. Embassy and can sometimes take several weeks to schedule. In these cases, schedule the appointment first and then start gathering the documents. If you wait to make an appointment until after you have all the required documents, it may not give you enough time to secure a visa before the start of classes. Check the [U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) website for the latest published information on visa appointment and processing wait times for regional consulates.

The next step is to determine what documents you will need for your appointment according to your country and regional consulate. All consulates will require your signed I-20 form issued from your university, proof that you have paid the SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) fee, and DS-160 form, which is the actual visa application form. You can pay the SEVIS fee at <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/students>. Click on “Step 2: How do I pay my I-901 SEVIS fee?”, then click *SEVIS I-901 fee*. Bring a copy of this receipt to your visa appointment. You can complete your DS-160 online at <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>. To complete the DS-160, you will need to upload a visa photo following the specified [visa photo requirements](#). Make sure to pay the SEVIS fee and complete the DS-160 at least three business days before your visa appointment.

Before your appointment, visit the [U.S. Embassy's website](#) to learn if your consulate requires any additional documents. While some visa officers may only look at your I-20 form, you should be prepared in case they ask for other documents. They may ask for your SEVIS I-901 receipt, bank statements, English language scores, or a return flight home. Consulate officials commonly look for the following information:

- Proof of Residence in a Foreign Country: Show ties to your home country
- Proof of Non-Immigrant Intent: Your plans for exiting the United States upon completion of studies
- Educational Qualifications: Verification of your educational credentials
- Financial Documents: Proof of sufficient funds available to cover education expenses in the United States

If you are prepared with documents that fit each of these categories, then you will be more than prepared for the visa appointment.

COMPLETE VISA INTERVIEW

Your visa interview will likely last between one and three minutes, and during this period you will be speaking with a U.S. Department of State visa adjudicator. They are responsible for vetting the legitimacy of your claim to enter the United States on an F-1 visa. Visa adjudicators are looking to answer three main questions: 1) Do you have a clear study plan? 2) Can you afford to fund your education? 3) Will you return to your country when your visa expires? If they do not feel confident in your responses or feel you are being untruthful, they may deny your visa. For this reason, it is important to speak authentically and in your own words.

Below are common questions from visa officers that students have received:

- Why did you choose to study in the United States (instead of studying at home, in Canada, in the United Kingdom, etc.)?

- How many universities did you apply to?
- Do you have relatives in the US?
- Why did you choose your university?
- Do you have GMAT/GRE/SAT/TOEFL/IELTS score reports?
- Why is your I-20 only for four/eight/nine/twelve months?
- Who is sponsoring your studies?
- Can I see your bank statement?
- What is the cost of your first year of studies?
- What are your plans after graduation?

BOOK YOUR FLIGHT

It may be tempting to book your flight as soon as you receive your acceptance letter but wait to book until you have all the information. If you are planning to live on campus, check to see when on-campus services such as dining services and housing resume and when orientations are being held. The Center for International Studies, or CIS, (international@uscupstate.edu) will send out an email with information regarding the recommended arrival and International Student Orientation dates. Once you have received this email and have scheduled a visa appointment, you can start looking for flights. Sometimes students choose to arrive earlier than our recommended date because they wish to travel beforehand or visit family. Remember, the earliest you can arrive in the US is 30 days prior to the program start date listed on your I-20 form. If you arrive before on-campus housing or your apartment lease begins, you are responsible for your own accommodation.

The closest airport to USC Upstate is the [Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport](#) (GSP). It is a small, easy to navigate airport located just 20 minutes from campus. Because it is small, your port of entry into the US will likely be a larger international airport and you will have to book a connecting flight to GSP. If you decide to fly into GSP on the recommended date given in the email, free airport pickup can be arranged through the CIS. If you arrive on a different day than the one recommended, you must arrange your own transportation to campus. We recommend you use the airport taxi service or download a rideshare app such as Uber or Lyft prior to your arrival.

ARRANGE HOUSING

We advise all international students, especially those without a car, to find housing on or near campus. The city of Spartanburg is spread out and not easily walkable, but USC Upstate's campus is! From campus, you can easily access the university bus route that drops students off at the George Business School in downtown Spartanburg and makes weekly trips to local stores for groceries and shopping. You will be able to walk to classes, university events and activities, and the dining hall and restaurants on campus.

If you live on campus, you are required to have a meal plan through dining services. You can apply for on-campus housing and a meal plan through Self Service Carolina. For more information regarding housing options on campus, visit the university's [Housing and Residential Life](#) page.

If you are considering off-campus housing options, the application and payment process can take much longer, sometimes up to a month. Depending on the apartment complex it may also involve extra steps such as proof of good credit or proof of guarantor if you do not have a credit score. You should start early and work closely with the apartment complex to ensure you have all the documents you need before you arrive.

Here are student friendly, furnished housing options recommended by former international students:

- [Magnolia & Palmetto House](#) (Freshmen only)- Single and double occupancy rooms with shared bathrooms and living areas. Required living arrangement for all first-year undergraduate students.
- [The Villas](#) (Upperclassmen only)- Single and double occupancy rooms in an apartment style suite with shared bathrooms, living room, and kitchen space.

- [Auden Apartments](#) (Off campus)- Located within walking distance of campus with floorplans for 2-, 4-, and 5-bedroom apartments with shared living room and kitchen.
- [Valley Falls Apartments](#) (Off campus)- Located within walking distance of campus with floorplans for 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom apartments with shared living room and kitchen.

REGISTER FOR ORIENTATION

All new international students in both undergraduate and graduate programs at USC Upstate **must attend** international student orientation on campus. It is required that you register and attend this orientation before you can register for classes. During orientation, you will learn about USC Upstate resources and services and get to know other students. Undergraduate international students must attend Student Orientation, Advisement and Registration (SOAR) programs for first-year students in addition to the orientation for international students. International students who are undergraduates transferring from another university in the US will have to attend both the international student orientation and the transfer student orientation. International students in graduate programs may also be required to attend additional program specific orientations. Links to register for the International Student Orientation, SOAR, and Graduate Program Orientations will be sent to your student email or can be found on the school's [Orientation website](#) closer to the semester start date.

SUBMIT YOUR IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

All students are required to have a history of current immunizations on file prior to enrollment. Students are required to submit their immunization records no later than 10 days prior to orientation or course registration. Failure to comply will result in the inability to change, drop, or register for future classes. You may submit these records at www.uscupstate.edu/myhealth. Log into MyHealth portal using your USC Upstate email address and password. Click on "Immunization Records Submission" and upload a picture or PDF of your record. Once you have uploaded your documents, the status will be listed as "Not Compliant", but the details will change to "Awaiting Review". Once reviewed, your status will change to "Compliant" and the details to "Satisfied". Please allow five business days for review. If your status does not get updated to "Compliant", please follow up with Health Services.

All Students:

- **MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella):** MMR is a 2-shot series. Students **MUST** submit proof of 2 doses. If unable to provide documentation of 2 doses, an MMR Antibody Titer laboratory report must be submitted. If Titer proves negative, then two administrations of the vaccine are required.
- **Tdap Vaccine**

On-Campus Residents Only:

- **MCV4 Meningococcal Vaccine:** At least one dose must have been administered **AFTER** the 16th birthday.

Please note that the US government may require additional vaccines and proof of health as a part of your visa process depending on your country of origin, see [Visa Health Requirement](#). For more information and to access the required immunization form for the university, please see [Immunization Requirements](#).

AFTER YOU ARRIVE

CHECK IN & ORIENTATION

Once you have arrived on campus, check in with your pre-arranged housing. If you are living on campus, notify Housing and Residential Life with the day and time of your arrival so your Resident Advisor (RA) can get you checked in as soon as you arrive. If you are living off campus, communicate with the housing office at your apartment complex beforehand so you know exactly how much you will need to pay, usually a deposit plus the first month's rent, and what payment method is best. Some housing offices may not accept foreign credit cards and might request a money order, direct deposit, or check, which you should have ready before you arrive.

At the International Student Orientation, there are a few key documents you will need to bring. These items include proof of health insurance, your passport and visa, and an updated US address and phone number, if you have one. During the orientation, we will be covering topics like the services and resources on campus, what to expect from classes, and adjusting to life in the US.

PAY TUITION

As soon as you register for classes, usually during orientation, your official bill for the semester will be generated. You can log into my.sc.edu, click “View student account information and pay bill,” then follow the Payment Gateway instructions. If you are using a checking account to set up the pay, the account must be validated before a payment can be made. Follow instructions under Prenoting/Validating Your Checking Account and set this up 5 – 7 days before paying. You can also work with the [Financial Assistance Office](#) to learn more about making a [payment plan](#).

PICK UP CAROLINA CARD

The Carolina Card is your official university ID as well as a pre-paid balance card. You can use it to access university buildings after hours, buy food at any dining services location on campus, and scan into campus events. To use it as a purchasing card on campus, you can deposit money into your Carolina Cash account on Self Service Carolina. Each time you make a purchase, the amount of the purchase is deducted from the account balance.

To obtain your Carolina Card, you must upload your photo at least 72 hours prior to picking up your ID at the Department of Public Safety. Go to my.sc.edu/carolinacard to learn more about the photo requirements and to upload your picture. You can pick up your ID at the Department of Public Safety Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

HELPFUL CONTACTS

ADMISSIONS OFFICE

The Admissions Office can help answer questions about your Financial Certificate, your I-20, and your enrollment status. You can email or call the office or schedule an appointment in person or online [here](#).

admissions@uscupstate.edu

+1 (864) 503-5246

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The Center for International Studies (CIS) can help answer questions about health insurance, international student orientation and arrival dates, general questions and concerns about life as an international student at USC Upstate.

international@uscupstate.edu

+1 (864) 503-5675

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

The Office of Financial Aid can help answer questions about tuition fees, financial aid, and scholarships.

finaid@uscupstate.edu

+1 (864) 503-5340

CASHIER'S OFFICE

The Cashier's Office can help answer questions about direct deposit, meal plans, and payment plans.

cashiersoffice@uscupstate.edu

+1 (864) 503-5326

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Information Technology Services can help answer questions about setting up your student email, Self-Service Carolina, and Wi-Fi on campus.

helpdesk@uscupstate.edu

+1 (864) 503-5257

HOUSING & RESIDENTIAL LIFE

The Housing & Residential Life can help answer questions about on campus housing.

hrf@uscupstate.edu

+1 (864) 503-5422

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CHECKLIST

Date Completed	Task
BEFORE YOU ARRIVE AT UPSTATE	
	Secure Easily Accessible Funds (tuition & fees + living costs)
	Set up Your University Account
	Submit Financial Certification
	Request I-20 Form
	Schedule a Visa Appointments
	Complete DS-160 Online
	Pay SEVIS I-901 Fee
	Gather Additional Visa Documents (university acceptance letter, valid passport, proof of finances, etc.)
	Complete Visa Interview
	Book Your Flight
	Arrange Housing
	Secure Health Insurance
	Register for Orientation
	Submit Your Immunization Records
AFTER YOU ARRIVE AT UPSTATE	
	Check in & Orientation
	Pay Tuition
	Pick up Carolina Card