

Graduate International Student Information for Faculty

About this resource: This resource is a short guide for faculty in the Department of Anthropology to better understand the mentorship needs of incoming and ongoing international graduate students in our department. This resource should not be used by faculty to provide administrative advice regarding immigration status to international students. In such cases, refer the student to the Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS), who will have the most up-to-date information.

General - International Graduate Student Challenges and Steps at Purdue

Getting here

Before arrival to campus and upon arrival international students will have to navigate a variety of steps to arrive on campus and enroll in courses in the fall. While many of these steps are similar for other incoming graduate students, such as finding an apartment, they take on additional importance for international graduate students to fulfill their requirements for entry and enrollment. For example, students will need to have a US address, a US phone number, and navigate having a Social Security Number or lack thereof when they arrive.

To learn more about the processes involved in preparation for travel to Purdue and arrival information, please refer to https://www.purdue.edu/IPPU/ISS/_Documents/Student/WOWed.pdf. In this WOW guide, Purdue provides information for students on how to organize a free airport pick-up, the sequence of steps to complete, resources for students, and other helpful details about the process. If you would like an incoming student to be connected to a current graduate student or faculty member upon arrival, please contact the Anthropology graduate office.

During the program

In general, students who join our program will be either an F-1 or J-1 international graduate student. By law, students are required to enroll in a full course load. For students without an assistantship, this means registering for and completing 8 credit hours every fall and spring semester. Graduate students with assistantships must register for and complete 6 credit hours every fall and spring semester. A maximum of 3 on-line or digitally delivered credit hours may apply to an international student's minimum full-time enrollment. International graduate students with assistantships cannot exceed funding beyond a .50 FTE. Please refer to the ISS website for the most up to date information on these details. Some additional considerations.

- International graduate students might need additional assistance with legal help, tax help, or other aspects of daily life in West Lafayette and Lafayette – please refer to [ISS resources](#), [Purdue's Legal services](#), and [PGSG's off-campus housing guide](#).
- Our department enrolls international graduate students in graduate teaching workshops and Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT) upon arrival. Before being appointed to a teaching assistant position, a student must be certified for oral English proficiency by one of Purdue's accepted [methods](#). If necessary, an international student may be required to enroll in English 62000: Classroom Communication for International Graduate Students.
- Major professors should work with students to meet the English written proficiency requirements for our program. Students whose native language is English satisfy the requirement if they earned a grade of B or better in an undergraduate English Composition

course (or its equivalent) prior to graduate admission. Students whose native language is not English satisfy the written English proficiency requirement if they score 5 or higher on the TWE.

- International graduate students may and do face discrimination, a hostile climate, xenophobia, and other stresses and aggressions while at Purdue. The Graduate Program or a student's major professor can be important resources to support international students during these moments. Additional resources and counseling for students can be found on the [Counseling and Psychological Services at Purdue Office](#) as well as through many of the [Cultural and Resource Centers](#) and [Student Organizations on Campus](#).
- International graduate students should be in regular touch with ISS about requirements, which sometimes might mean that they need to return to their home country to renew their visa or complete a required process. Be flexible and understanding how this may impact their progress in the program.
- International graduate students should be in touch with ISS about any domestic and international travel that may be required for their research.
- Many international graduate students are not eligible for federal grant programs or other forms of external graduate fellowships. Make sure to check the requirements of specific grants, fellowships, and awards before you encourage students to apply. If you are unsure, check with the granting agency.
- Students with families can find helpful resources through the [Graduate School](#) and [Graduate Parent Support Network](#).
- The Anthropology Graduate Student Organization (AGSO) is building resources for international students in our department. Please have students connect with AGSO for further information. Other student organizations have compiled resources, found [here](#) and [here](#).
- [The Department of Anthropology also has compiled the following resource guide.](#)

After the program

The post-PhD process is an exciting and uncertain time of transformation for our students. For international graduate students, this transition is especially important as it impacts their status in the US. Have conversations early on with students about their post-MS or -PhD plans to make sure you can work together to attempt to reach their goals together. Remind students that they should regularly be in contact with ISS about any possible options.

Faculty Mentoring Tips for International Graduate Students¹

Language and culture in the classroom

Despite their many achievements, some international students can feel their competence diminished early in their graduate programs. Linguistic proficiency and lack of awareness of how the U.S. academic system works may be initial hurdles to overcome. Most international students have different collaborative or classroom communication patterns. For instance, in the educational systems of East and Southeast Asia, the student's role is a more understated one in interactions with professors, whose authority goes unquestioned. Thus, some international students are surprised to encounter U.S. students speaking up without being called upon, or challenging their professors' remarks.

¹ Source for this section – <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/core-programs/mentoring/mentoring-guides-for-students/mentoring-international-students/>

Behavior in graduate seminars can seem unnecessarily competitive to international students, who fear that if they do not exhibit these same behaviors, professors will judge them less capable or intelligent. Many international graduate students come from countries in which only a small percentage of high school graduates is admitted to university, so the different levels of preparation of first-year undergraduates in the U.S. can be a challenge for international teaching assistants.

The rules of the academic game

When international graduate students arrive on campus, they need to demystify three cultures: the U.S. culture, the culture of the research university, and the academic culture in their departments. They discover that policies in graduate departments can be quite different from those in their home institutions, or are opaque or difficult to interpret. For instance, some may find it initially hard to understand why they can accept teaching or research assistantships but are not permitted to work off-campus. On a subtler note, international students rely on different assumptions about how faculty members and graduate students should relate to each other. Many East Asian graduate students, for example, have reported sensing a kind of interpersonal “coldness” from some U.S. faculty who, while informal and jovial with students during seminars, might remain distant regarding students’ personal or family lives. In other countries, the faculty-graduate student relationship extends beyond academic discussions.

Social stresses

In moving far away from families and friends, international students can feel displaced. Those who are new to the U.S., and who bring their partners and children with them or leave their families behind, worry about how well their families will adjust to American life or how they will cope being away from their families. After a while, some students may wonder how they will be accepted at home with different dress, talk, and behavior. In essence, they worry about being foreigners in their own countries upon return.

Additional Suggestions for Faculty²

- Encourage international students to be in touch with ISS and be available to help them understand what is expected if they come to you for advice.
- Help international students acclimate to your seminars by working with them on ways to best participate in discussion.
- Reserve extra time outside of seminars or labs to interact with international students. Ask them about their research and outside interests, their families, how they are adjusting, and what education is like in their home countries.
- Realize that not all international students have difficulties with English; many of them were trained in English-speaking institutions, and for others, English is their first language.
- By the same token, avoid assuming that if an international student speaks English well, they do not experience cultural dissonance or confusion about how U.S. education works.
- Refrain from stereotyping international students as having difficulties with English.

² Source for this section – adapted from: <https://www.unl.edu/mentoring/international-status>

- Offer a variety of ways for international students to meet with you so students with different levels of linguistic competence can choose how to communicate with you comfortably: in person, by e-mail, phone, scheduled office hours, or group meetings.
- Make it a point to introduce new international graduate students to more advanced international students, and to U.S. graduate students with international experience.
- Be aware that the rules governing graduate studies and funding in the U.S. may be different from those in other countries. They also cannot work for pay during the semester, except for TA and RA positions, and are excluded from many U.S.-based fellowships. If you have questions about our program's requirements, speak with our graduate program coordinator or department head. If you have questions about your students' travel or work, contact the [Office of International Students and Scholars](#).
- If you have ever traveled to another country, recall how you had to rely on others' assistance to acclimate to the language and customs. Offer international students the same courtesies you found helpful.

Resources for International Graduate Students at Purdue³

- The [Office of International Students and Scholars \(ISS\)](#) seeks to enhance the academic, cultural, and social pursuits of students and scholars from abroad. ISS provides knowledge and expertise in admissions, immigration, advising, and cross-cultural programming. For more information, e-mail iss@purdue.edu.
- [The Oral English Proficiency Program \(OEPP\)](#) serves as a resource for international graduate students and graduate students studying English as a Second Language.
- Nearly 40 [international student groups](#) offer social and cultural activities at Purdue. The student organizations represent countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Oceania, and the Middle East. These groups bring together students from all countries.
- The [International Center](#) fosters the spirit of international cooperation and understanding, and enriches the cultural diversity within Greater Lafayette. It promotes interaction among American and international community residents and visitors, including students, visiting scholars, faculty, and staff from Purdue University. The International Center also offers [English classes](#) and the [Conversation Partner Program](#) to strengthen language skills. [The School of Languages and Cultures \(SLC\) host different coffee hours](#) which enable conversation in all the languages offered by SLC.
- [EducationUSA](#) is a network of over 450 advising and information centers in 170 countries supported by the U.S. Department of State. Centers offer information about educational opportunities in the U.S. and guidance to qualified individuals.
- There are at least thirty religions and denominations represented in the Greater Lafayette area. Lafayette Online provides a list of [religious organizations and places of worship](#) categorized by religion.

³ Source for this section – <https://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/student/resources.html>

- The Greater Lafayette area dining scene is varied. Both [Lafayette Online](#) and the [West Lafayette Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) list area restaurants.
- The [Lafayette and West Lafayette Chamber of Commerce](#) and the [Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) provide information for people relocating to the area, community events and activities, a business directory, and a dining and shopping guide.
- See our Resources for Current Grads Page for an additional guide:
<https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/anthropology/graduate/current-grads/resources.html>