Dear International Student,

International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS) would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to Drexel University and to wish you good luck in your academic career. We especially look forward to meeting you at the International Student Orientation. Attendance to this event is mandatory. ISSS will be partners in your education in addition to assisting you in achieving your personal and academic goals at Drexel. We advise on immigration regulations, cross-cultural adjustment, and your academic success. We also plan special educational and cultural programs including cultural events, immigration seminars, and informal gatherings to help you acclimate to your life at Drexel.

Please know that all of us at ISSS have the expertise and experience to ensure that your time at Drexel is enjoyable and successful.

Included in this handbook you will find information on the following:

- Pre-arrival visa preparation
- Arriving at Drexel University
- Orientation
- Housing
- Helpful information regarding finances, immunizations, and employment

Again, welcome to Drexel University.

Sincerely,

Jessica Cordisco

Director

International Students and Scholars Services

Student Life

Enrollment Management & Student Success
1. Pre-Arrival

1.1 F-1 Student Status

The F-1 Visa allows you to enter the United States as a full-time student at an accredited university. F-1 visa status requires full-time enrollment that finishes in a degree or diploma. This visa status allows you to remain in the U.S. until the completion of study listed on your I-20. You can bring your spouse and/or children to live with you in the U.S. as long as you provide proof of sufficient financial resources. F-2 spouses cannot work while in the U.S.

To maintain full-time status, undergraduates must register for at least 12-credits each quarter/semester and graduate students must register for at least 9-credits each quarter/semester.

1.2 J-1 Exchange Visitor status

Under the J-1 Visa, full-time enrollment is a requirement. You can bring your spouse and children to live with you in the U.S. as long as you provide proof of sufficient financial resources. J-2 spouses can work while in the U.S., but need to get permission from the ISSS and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

To maintain full-time status, undergraduates must register for at least 12-credits each quarter/semester and graduate students must register for at least 9-credits each quarter/semester.

1.3 School Transfer

If you are already studying at a university in the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 status, and you are planning to transfer to the Drexel University, you must transfer your SEVIS record to Drexel and apply for a Drexel I-20. If you do not clearly understand the transfer procedure, contact an International Student Advisor at the ISSS for more information.

As a transfer student, you must begin classes within 5-months of your last date of attendance at your former school or within 5-months of your OPT end date.
1.4 Visa Application

After gaining admittance and confirming your attendance to Drexel, you are required to apply for your I-20/DS-2019.

After receiving your I-20/DS-2019 in the mail, you will need to arrange for your entry into the U.S. by obtaining the appropriate visa from the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest to where you live. Those who have an I-20 will need to apply for an F1 visa. Those who have a DS-2019 will need to apply for a J1 visa. To find the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate please check here.

You can also learn more the non-immigrant visa by visiting the Office of Visa Services here.

1.5 Citizens of Canada and Bermuda

If you are a citizen of Canada or Bermuda, you do not need to apply for a visa at the embassy. You must present an I-20/DS-2019 form and proof of financial support at the port of entry to the U.S. Be careful to present the documents listed above at the border to avoid being given a B-1/B-2 tourist status, which does not allow full-time study or employment.

Residents of Canada (not Canadian citizens) must apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa.

1.6 Mandatory SEVIS Fee

Before applying for your student visa, you must pay the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee. SEVIS is a U.S. government database that tracks the immigration concerns of students and exchange visitors.

You must pay the SEVIS fee, and include the payment receipt with your visa application. You cannot book your visa appointment until you pay your SEVIS fee. Students who transferred their valid status to Drexel do not need to re-pay the SEVIS fee. Citizens of Canada or Bermuda who do not need visas must still pay the SEVIS fee.

Your fee payment can be made by visiting https://www.fmjfee.com. Please know that this fee will not be refunded if your visa application is denied.
You must carry your SEVIS Fee receipt when you enter the U.S.. We suggest that you staple a copy to your I-20 so you do not lose it. A copy of your SEVIS Fee receipt can be re-downloaded at https://www.fmjfee.com.

1.7 Going to the Embassy

When you apply for a visa, you must prove your intent to return to your country. These are some examples of intent: close family ties in home country, organizational memberships (including religious or social groups), business or real estate owned by you or your family, and proof that you intend to return to your home country and continue your professional career.

The visa only allows you to enter the U.S. The I-20 and DS-2019 allow you to stay. You must always have a copy of your I-20 and you should keep your old I-20s for your records. If you lose or damage your I-20, please contact ISSS.

2. Arrival

International students who are moving into dormitories should arrive on campus during their designated move-in time for their hall.

You are expected to know your residence hall location and go there during your assigned move-in time. If you arrive on campus outside your move-in time and are not sure where to go, go to the Towers Hall (101 North 34th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104), where someone at the front desk can assist you. Students can also consult Drexel University Public Safety (215.895.2822).

2.1 Entry to the United States

When you arrive at a port of entry in the U.S., you will be required to present your form I-20/DS-2019, along with your passport, proof of SEVIS fee payment, and financial documents. Keep these documents with you while you travel. Do not put these documents in your checked baggage.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will gather your arrival/departure information automatically. Your border entry creates a record called an I-94. You can get your I-94 by visiting this website. This will be available after 24-hours of your arrival in the U.S. If you have
difficulty retrieving your I-94 or if the information on the form is incorrect, you will need to contact CBP directly to have the information corrected.

Immigration laws allow you to enter the U.S. no earlier than 30-days before the program start date listed on your I-20/DS-2019.

2.2 Transportation Drexel

Drexel’s campus is easy to locate from several of the surrounding cities and airports. ISSS does not provide transportation assistance. More information about ground transportation can be found in our Transportation to Philadelphia [PDF] guide about traveling to Drexel from local area airports.

3 Housing

3.1 Temporary Accommodations

If you arrive to Philadelphia before the move-in date for your on-campus housing or plan on looking for off-campus housing when you arrive, you will need to find temporary accommodations. Unfortunately, there are no early move-in dates for dormitories. Also, if you are not going to live on-campus, you will need to find your own accommodations. There are several reasonably priced hotels and temporary housing facilities close to Drexel. You can find more information about temporary accommodation [here](#).

You can also look into the International House for temporary accommodation. International House is located close to University City Main Campus and often gives new Drexel students a lower rate. Inquire about this when you make your reservation. Temporary housing is not always available, so call before you arrive in Philadelphia (+1.215.387.5125, ihousephilly.org/student-housing.)

3.2 Drexel University Housing (On-Campus Housing)

Drexel University Housing offers on-campus housing in one of our ten residence halls. Undergraduate students are required to live in university-approved housing for their first and second years. First-year undergraduate students are required to live in a University Housing
residence hall; second-year students will have a variety of housing options. Transfer undergraduates may live on-campus or off-campus in the surrounding Philadelphia neighborhoods.

All Drexel residence halls are co-ed with both men and women living in the same building. Generally, females and males cannot live in the same room or suite. Drexel does offer Gender-Neutral Housing. Please visit the Gender-Neutral Housing site for more information. Drexel residence halls offer single and double occupancy rooms, suites and apartments (with kitchens), which house 4 to 6 people. Friends will often live on the same floor or share an apartment or suite. Drexel residence hall rooms come with furniture including 2-beds, 2-desks, 2-chairs, 2-lamps, and 2-closets with drawers. There is a full kitchen on every floor, and small refrigerators and microwaves are allowed in rooms. You will need to provide your own sheets, towels, cookware, and utensils.

For more information about the University Housing please visit their website here.

Drexel does not guarantee on-campus housing for graduate students. Please look at the Off-Campus Housing in this handbook.

### 3.3 Off-Campus Housing

Most housing is rented through contracts or leases, meaning you agree to live in the unit for a stated period, usually 12-months. Some property owners will allow month-to-month renting. When you sign a lease, you are legally responsible for all rent payments, whether you live there or not. When you rent an apartment, a deposit (often called a security deposit) equal to at least one month’s rent is usually required, in addition to the first and last month’s rent. Be prepared to have money available for this. Usually, your deposit is returned to you as long as you have given your property owner sufficient notice and have not damaged the apartment. Read the lease or contract carefully and understand all of its rules and obligations before signing it. Keep a signed copy of the lease for your records.

For more information, please visit the Off-Campus Housing website at offcampushousing.drexel.edu. You can also find a Neighborhood Guide and learn about the important keywords when looking to live off-campus, under the Resources of the Off-Campus
Housing website (you have to sign up using your Drexel Email address to use the Resources for free.)

4. **I-20/DS-2019 Registration**

According to immigration regulations, you are required to register with ISSS when you arrive to the U.S. or shortly after being approved for a change of status (COS) to F-1 or J-1. After you enter the US, this must be completed within 30 days. You cannot complete your I-20/DS-2019 registration before your arrival in the US. You will be emailed instructions to complete this process close the start date printed on your I-20/DS-2019.

Failure to complete your I-20/DS-2019 registration within 30 days of your arrival will result in termination of your immigration visa status.

5. **New Student Orientation**

In an effort to prepare student for their studies in the US, ISSS offers unique information for international students and what they can expect during their time at Drexel. This information is communicated differently depending on the time of year you begin at Drexel.

**If your program starts in September**

During the mandatory session, ISSS will introduce you to immigration regulations, information about work authorization, and other ISSS services. This is a mandatory in-person session that is held prior to the start of classes. Many other sessions are available for students throughout the week hosted by ISSS, more information can be found in these links:

- [Undergraduate Welcome Week Schedule](#)
- [Graduate Student Orientation Schedule](#)

**If you start at Drexel during any other time of the year**

ISSS will email you the specific international student information, please contact your academic department for any information from them.

6. **Academic Advising**
Drexel University views academic advising as essential to fulfilling the university's commitment to student growth and development. Every Drexel student is provided a professional academic advisor dedicated to fostering autonomy and informed decision-making. If you are an undergraduate student, your academic advising will take place in your college. If you are a graduate student, you will look at the Graduate Admissions Office website and find your designated advisor. It is mandatory to speak with your academic advisor before registering for classes.

You can find the contact information of your Academic Advisor by logging into your DrexelOne account.

7. **Health Insurance**

All undergraduate international students must purchase the university sponsored health insurance plan. This plan meets all of the requirements for students on J-1 Visas and all recommendations for international students on F-1 Visas. The policy covers students domestically and internationally. Undergraduate Students are automatically enrolled into the Drexel Dragon Health Insurance coverage and the premium amount will be placed on the student account. If a student would like to upgrade their policy to the Preferred Plan, please visit the Health and Immunization office when you arrive to the University. The only coverage accepted instead of the Drexel Health Insurance is Embassy Sponsored coverage.

If you have an Embassy-sponsored insurance plan, you must submit proof of this to the Office of Health Insurance and Immunizations by the deadline for your term. If you do not bring this verification to the office by the compliance deadline, the premium amount will remain on your student account and you will be responsible for payment.

Graduate Students are required to have health insurance coverage, however, they can purchase the Drexel plan or show proof of other insurance coverage. If you are purchasing your own plan it must meet the minimum requirements set by the University. The plan must also be in effect for the full academic year. Information on these requirements may be found on our website www.drexel.edu/healthservices. Please know that the health insurance purchased in your country to cover you while you are a student in the U.S. may not be acceptable by Drexel’s insurance office.
For more information please see the Health Insurance Policy for International Students here.

8. Immunization

Drexel University requires ALL incoming full-time undergraduate and graduate students to complete the immunization requirements. You can find the requirements and immunization form here.

International students are strongly encouraged to complete all of these requirements in their home country before they arrive in the US. Most countries are able to meet all these requirements.

Students will need to upload their completed immunization form to their Drexel One Portal. Please do not upload this form until all of the requirements are complete.

Any student who has not complied with the Immunization Policy by the correct deadline will have an Administrative Hold placed on their record, which will prevent registration for the next term's classes.

9. Billing and Finance: Drexel Central

Drexel Central is a one-stop location for students and families to receive answers to all billing, financial aid, and registration inquiries. Drexel Central includes all of the services offered through the Bursar, the Financial Aid/Student Resource Center, and the University Registrar in one large department. For more information please visit the Drexel Central website.

You can find additional financing resources for international students by clicking here.

10. Finances, Banking, and Related

Always be prepared for additional expenses. Do not expect to receive more financial aid, scholarships, or assistantships once you are here. Educational loans are not available for international students unless you know a U.S. citizen who will co-sign for the loan. We suggest that you bring with you a minimum of $1,500-2,000 USD (in addition to tuition and living expenses for the year) to cover items such as the first month’s rent and required housing deposits, temporary accommodations, household expenses, insurance payments and other necessities. You should not bring the amount all in cash as it is not safe to carry that much cash.
on you. Instead you should have some available cash for an emergency and the rest in an account that you will be able to access within the first few days of being in the U.S.

Please do not forget to include these expenses in your budget:

- Overnight temporary lodging when you first arrive.
- Tips for taxis and servers in restaurants.
- Eating meals in restaurants until you get your own apartment or are on a Drexel meal plan.
- Clothing for the different types of weather in Philadelphia, especially the winter (It can get as cold as 10°F (-12°C) in January and February). You may need to purchase warm clothing once you arrive, such as: a winter coat, gloves, scarves, waterproof boots, raincoat, and warm blankets for your bed.
- Personal and household items. Even if you rent a furnished apartment, you will have to buy linens, towels, kitchen utensils, etc. These items can be purchased easily at a reasonable price in Philadelphia and we suggest you buy them once you are here.
- State and local sales taxes of 8% added to the price of many items, except clothing and food (excluding food purchased at restaurants).
- Security deposit and first and last months’ rent when renting an off-campus apartment, which may be equal to up to 3-months-rent total.

10.1 Banking

Several banks are close to each of the Drexel campuses where you can open accounts and exchange money. To open an account, you will need to bring your passport and I-20/DS-2019. If you choose to open an account after school starts, a Drexel University ID is preferred.

10.2 Currency Restrictions and Transfer of Funds to the United States

Before finalizing your plans to study in the U.S, you should become familiar with your government’s regulations regarding currency restrictions and the transfer of funds out of the country. Some governments restrict the amount of money that can be taken out of the country. Others may restrict funds until a letter from the University has been received confirming enrollment (this letter can be obtained through Drexel Central.)
If you plan on using a wire transfer, please be familiar with the process and make sure that your family, or whoever is helping you in your home country is also familiar with the process. You can visit your bank to ask questions about the wire transfer process to ensure you receive your money quickly.

10.3 Social Security Number

A Social Security Number (SSN) is number issued by the Social Security Administration to people working in the US. As an international student, you are only eligible for a social security number if you have valid work authorization. If you are not working, you will not qualify for a Social Security Number.

If you have been awarded a scholarship or an assistantship that includes a stipend, you will not be able to receive your first stipend check until you apply for your Social Security Number (SSN). You cannot apply for a SSN until you have registered your I-20/DS-2019 once you arrive in the U.S.

If you already have a SSN from a previous status or time in the US you do not need to apply for a new one.

It takes approximately 2-3 weeks to receive a social security card after you submit the application. When you apply, you will receive a receipt that you have applied for the SSN and some employers will allow you to submit this receipt while you wait for your card. For more information applying for a social security number, please visit ssa.gov/phila.

11 Employment

As an F-1 or J-1 Student, your primary responsibility is to study, not work. Employment in the U.S. is strictly controlled and limited for F-1 and J-1 students. Work authorization is available only in very certain circumstances. Part-time, on-campus/Drexel employment is permissible, but there are a limited number of jobs available on campus. You should not plan to earn money while working on campus to subsidize for your expenses.

The ISSS offers a variety of workshops throughout the academic year regarding F-1 and J-1 off-campus employment. You are strongly encouraged to attend them if you have questions regarding employment.
12 Privacy and Releasing Information to Parents (FERPA)

All education records related to students is protected under the Drexel's FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) policy. This means that no one but the student can access information from the school (including some health/health insurance information, academic records, F1/J1 visa status information, etc.) unless a student gives the person, like a family member, permission to access the information. To learn more about this policy please click here. You can review the information on this website to study what type of information is or is not permitted to be viewed by your parents.

You may grant FERPA authorization rights to individuals by filling out the FERPA waiver form in DrexelOne. Instructions can be found here.

13 Drexel Shuttle Services

Drexel University provides transportation across its three campuses- University City Campus, Center City Campus, and the Queen Lane Campus. Students have unlimited use of this service at no charge. The bus service includes three fixed routes (Blue & Gold, Dragon, and Queen Lane) and operates Monday through Friday. Weekend shuttle service is available to students only on the University City Campus. You must have your DragonCard to ride the shuttle. You can find more information about the bus routes and schedule by visiting this website.

Drexel University has a mutual agreement with the University of Pennsylvania allowing Drexel students to ride the University of Pennsylvania fixed campus bus, free of charge.

14 Safety On-Campus

Drexel University’s Department of Public Safety takes a holistic approach to providing “best in class” preventive and protective services to the Drexel University community. The department provides and administers many community-oriented services and programs, which exist to maintain a secure environment and to enhance the quality of life on our campuses (University City Main Campus, Center City Hahnemann Campus and the Queen Lane Medical Campus). Click here to find a list of Offices and Locations

Click here to find a list of Emergency Contact Numbers for Campus Public Safety
14.1 DrexelALERT and Drexel Guardian

Drexel has two cellphone based alert systems for on-campus emergency and weather notifications. Please visit the websites for the DrexelALERT and Drexel Guardian for registration or download instructions.

14.2 Security Officers

While on campus, you will often see Drexel Public Safety in the area. Drexel Public Safety patrols campus on foot, by bicycle, and by car. If you have a question or an emergency, you are welcome to approach a security officer.

In addition to Drexel-specific introductory training, officers receive basic, specialized, and in-service training; including, proficiency in First Aid/CPR/AED, customer relations, patrol practices, terrorism awareness, and customer service.

14.3 Walking Escort

Upon request, Drexel Public Safety security officers provide walking escorts for Drexel students within our patrol boundaries. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information and to request a walking escort:

- Call Public Safety at 215-895-2822.
- Use one of the many building and blue-light emergency phones located across campus.
- Ask any Public Safety Officer on patrol or inside a building. For more information visit the Walking Escort webpage.

14.4 Residence Hall Security

Residence hall main entrances are staffed 24 hours per day. During late night hours, building access is monitored by uniformed Public Safety security officers.

Please note the following important security information:

- Access to residence halls is only permitted through the main entrance.
- Reception desks are the access control point for all residence halls.
Residents gain access by using their Drexel ID cards.

Reception desks are staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Emergency assistance can be obtained quickly through the reception desk.

Residents are responsible for their visitors at all times.

Residents should be alert for tailgaters and propped doors.

Residents’ rooms should always be locked.

### 15 DragonCard

The DragonCard is the official University ID card for students, faculty, and staff, which also provides access to many buildings and services on the three Drexel University campuses.

The DragonCard must be carried at all times while on-campus. It is property of Drexel University and is governed by the rules and regulations established by the University. The DragonCard is not transferable and is not permitted to be used by anyone other than the issued cardholder.

#### 15.1 Obtaining a DragonCard

The DragonCard will be distributed during the New Student Orientation or New Students Day just prior to the start of the Academic Term. Be sure to bring your passport in order to obtain your DragonCard.

Reminder! You need a DragonCard to attend the ISSS Mandatory Orientation Session!

Click [here](#) to start the process of applying for your card!

#### 15.2 Dragon Dollars

Dragon Dollars provide students with a convenient and safe way to manage expenses. It also offers families of students with a worry-free way to provide funds to their student. You can charge your card in different ways (for more information on how you can add DragonDollars
please visit here.) You can use these DragonDollars for various purchases. You can find the list of vendors here.

16  **Social Connections**

There are many ways to connect with students on campus. ISSS hopes that the following information can help inform you about options to meet domestic and international students while you prepare your arrival.

16.1  **Student Organizations**

Many international student organizations are active on campus. Individual groups meet, hold special events, and offer friendship and support to fellow international students from their native countries. Currently, there are student groups that represent almost every ethnic group at Drexel. For more information and to view a complete list of student organizations visit the Office of Campus Activities (OCA) website.

Once you arrive to campus, especially in your first few weeks at Drexel, you will have many opportunities to engage with different student groups and organizations. You can start to browse organizations through DragonLink. This online tool can help you get an idea of all the great things to be involved with at Drexel.

16.2  **Fraternities and Sororities**

Our fraternity and sorority community is composed of students who are dedicated to the spirit of the University and committed to making their college experience unique. Membership in a fraternity or sorority enhances your personal development through a commitment to the ideals of scholarship, leadership, and service. Fraternities and sororities look for students who share similar goals and values while respecting your individuality. Members of the fraternity and sorority community benefit from membership because they have the opportunity to work closely with students who have different interests, beliefs and attributes, while forming lifelong friendships.

Check out the website for more information about Fraternities and Sororities at Drexel.

16.3  **Dragons to Dragons Mentorship**
All incoming undergraduate first year and transfer students have been enrolled in the Dragons to Dragons mentorship program. You should have, or should be receiving an email from your mentor welcoming you to campus. All correspondence is sent to your Drexel email. You mentor can serve as a guide for your arrival to campus. Your mentor is not only available while you prepare your arrival to campus, but your mentor is available to you for information throughout the year.

16.4 ISSS Events and Activities

ISSS holds activities throughout the year for students to participate in. ISSS presents on cultural topics as well as immigration related topics. Please be sure to check the newsletters for information about upcoming events.

16.5 Outside Resources

There are a number of resources to help you discover Philadelphia. Here are two websites that students have found very useful in the past:

Uwishunu: http://www.uwishunu.com/

Campus Philly: http://campusphilly.org/

17. Contact ISSS

For more information and get further assistance, please contact us at the International Students and Scholars Service.

3210 Chestnut Street

Creese Student Center, Suite 215

Monday - Friday: 8 am – 5 pm Phone: +1 (215) 895-2502

E-mail: isss@drexel.edu

Website: www.drexel.edu/isss