

# CSE International Student Manual

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- “Don’t Panic”
- **Prologue:**
  - **This handbook is intended to serve students in Computational Science and Engineering**
  - **Since policies may vary from department to department, students from other departments should please refer to their respective department's handbook**
  - You can search any possible answer by CTRL+F the keywords in this book.
- If you have questions not listed in this manual, please consider reaching out with the contact listed in each section.

This manual was written by CSE international students, for CSE international students. While efforts have been made to ensure information is as up-to-date as possible, we recommend you review important information for compliance with current US immigration policy where needed.

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# Welcome to GT

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- **Thank you for choosing Georgia Institute of Technology as your next destination! ★ 🎓 .°**
- This chapter will cover the following:
- How to accept the Offer
- Checklist for enrollment
- Initialize VISA

For more question, please reach out with: [GT Office of International Education](#)

## Accept Your Offer

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1. To officially accept your offer:

- **Access Your Applicant Portal:** Log in to the Georgia Tech applicant portal using your credentials.
- **Submit the Acceptance Form:** Locate and complete the acceptance form, indicating your intention to enroll.

2. Be aware, if your admission portal status shows the following messages after “Decision Ready”:<sup>1</sup>

## On-Hold: Missing Documents

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<sup>1</sup> <https://grad.gatech.edu/faq/knowledgebase.php?article=125#under-institute-review>

## **Under Institute Review**

It means you only passed the program review, you will need institute review, usually language proficiency requirement, or official transcript/degree certification. You need to wait till the following appear for next step:

## **Ready to Enroll: Checklist Incomplete**

3. Now you're definitely admitted by GT! Let us go ahead to the checklist. 🚀

# Check-List

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Usually, you can check the original official checklist here:

<https://isss.oie.gatech.edu/content/new-international-student-checklist>

**Step 1:** Submit the I-20/DS-2019 request form, pay the SEVIS Fee.

OR transfer your previous school's I-20 to GT.

At the waiting time, prepare other documents need for F-1/J-1 VISA application

**Step 2:** Make an appointment with the Local US Embassy for your VISA application as soon as you get your I-20 e-document from GT.

**Step 3:** Activate your Georgia Tech account

**Step 4:** Complete Two-Factor Authentication enrollment

**Step 5:** Set up your Georgia Tech student email account

**Step 6:** Look for the housing in ATL

**Step 7:** Register for Orientation

**Step 8:** Upload your BuzzCard Photo

**Step 9:** Submit health and immunization information

**Step 10:** Make your travel plans

**Step 11:** Attend International Student Orientation sessions

**Step 12:** Begin the OIE Check-In process

**Step 13:** Be aware of [scams](#).

# VISA

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This Chapter includes the information about:

- I-20
- DS-2019
- VISA application

## About I-20 and DS-2019

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Usually, I-20 is used for F-1 student VISA, DS-2019 is for J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa. (<https://isss.oie.gatech.edu/student-visa-f-1-versus-j-1>)

### **Step 1: Obtain Admission & Complete Verification**

1. **Receive Admission Offer:** Gain acceptance into a Georgia Tech graduate program.
2. **Document Verification:** The Office of Graduate Education will verify your academic credentials. This process can take up to eight weeks.
3. **Initiation by Department:** Once verification is complete, your academic department will initiate the I-20/DS-2019 request through the iStart system.

### **Step 2: Complete the I-20/DS-2019 Request E-Form**

1. **Email Notification:** Look out for an email from [info@oie.gatech.edu](mailto:info@oie.gatech.edu) containing a link to the e-form.
2. **Provide Required Information:** Through the e-form, submit:
  - a. A scanned copy of your passport.
  - b. Proof of financial support (e.g., bank statements, assistantship letters).
  - c. Completed Financial Certification Form.
  - d. Personal and program details.

*Note:* If you declared your previous degree **in US** colleges in-person with an old I-20 in 60 days, you can **transfer the I-20** from the previous institute where you declared your last degree. Else, apply for your **initial I-20**.

The I-20 is used for F-Student VISA, the DS-2019 is used for J-Student VISA, more information please refer here: [F-1 or J-1 VISA](#).

Please be aware the form submission deadline:

Term	Deadline
Spring	November 1
Summer	April 1
Fall	July 1

### **Step 3: Submit Financial Documentation**

- **Funding Requirements:** Demonstrate sufficient funds to cover tuition, fees, living expenses, and health insurance for at least the first academic year.
- **Assistantships:**
  - *Fully Funded:* If you have a GRA/GTA/GA covering all expenses, upload the official offer letter.
  - *Partially Funded:* Provide additional proof for uncovered expenses.
- **Sponsor Support:** If a sponsor is funding your studies, they must complete the "Sponsor Verification" section in the Financial Certification Form

### **Step 4: Document Processing & Delivery**

- **Processing Time:** Once all documents are submitted and verified, the Office of International Education (OIE) will process your I-20/DS-2019. Processing times can vary; refer to OIE's website for current estimates (<https://iss.oie.gatech.edu/content/istart-e-form-processing-times>)
- **Digital Access:** You'll receive an email notification once your document is ready. Access and download the digitally-signed I-20/DS-2019 via the iStart portal.

## **MORE Information**

Please refer here: <https://iss.oie.gatech.edu/content/obtaining-initial-student-georgia-tech-i-20-or-ds-2019>

## VISA Application

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### **Step 1: Schedule Your Visa Interview**

1. **Locate the U.S. Embassy or Consulate:** Identify the U.S. embassy or consulate in your home country where you'll apply. It's generally recommended to apply in your country of residence. [OISS](#)
2. **Complete the DS-160 Form:**



- a. Fill out the [DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application](#).
  - b. Upload a passport-style photo that meets the [U.S. visa photo requirements](#).
  - c. After submission, print the DS-160 confirmation page with the barcode.
3. **Pay the Visa Application Fee:**
  - a. Pay the non-refundable visa application fee, which is typically \$185 (as for 2025 April) for F-1 visas.
  - b. Payment methods and instructions vary by country; check the specific embassy or consulate website for details.
4. **Schedule the Interview:**
  - a. Visit the [U.S. Visa Information and Appointment Services](#) website for your country.
  - b. Create a profile, pay the VISA and SEVIS fee (if not already paid), and schedule your appointment.
  - c. Wait times for interviews can vary; consult the [Visa Appointment Wait Times](#) page for estimates.

## **Step 2: Prepare Required Documents**

Bring the following documents to your visa interview:

- **Valid Passport:** Must be valid for at least six months beyond your intended stay in the U.S.
- **Form I-20:** Issued by Georgia Tech and signed by both you and a school official.
- **DS-160 Confirmation Page:** With the barcode.
- **Visa Appointment Confirmation:** Proof of your scheduled interview.
- **SEVIS Fee Receipt:** Proof of payment for the I-901 SEVIS fee.
- **Financial Documentation:** Evidence of sufficient funds to cover tuition and living expenses.
- **Passport-Style Photograph:** If not uploaded with the DS-160.
- **Academic Documents:** Transcripts, diplomas, standardized test scores, and admission letters.
- **Ties to Home Country:** Documents demonstrating your intent to return home after your studies.

## **Step 3: Attend the Visa Interview**

1. **Arrival:** Arrive at the embassy or consulate early, as security procedures can take time.
2. **Biometric Data Collection:** Your fingerprints will be taken.
3. **Interview:**

- a. A consular officer will ask questions about your academic plans, financial situation, and ties to your home country.
  - b. Answer honestly and concisely.
4. **Visa Decision:**
  - a. If approved, the officer will inform you of the visa issuance process.
  - b. If denied, you will receive a reason for the denial.

## **Step 4: After the Interview**

- **Visa Issuance:** If approved, your passport with the visa will be returned to you via the method specified by the embassy or consulate.
- **Review Your Visa:** Ensure all information is correct, especially the SEVIS ID, please make sure it's complete same as your issued I-20.
- **Travel to the U.S.:** You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the start date on your I-20.

# Before the Flight

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## Essential Documents to Carry

Ensure you have the following documents readily accessible in your carry-on luggage:

- **Valid Passport:** Must be valid for at least six months beyond your intended stay in the U.S.
- **F-1 or J-1 Visa:** Ensure it's valid and corresponds to your intended program.
- **Form I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1):** Signed by both you and your Designated School Official (DSO).
- **SEVIS Fee Payment Receipt:** Proof of I-901 SEVIS fee payment.
- **Admission Letter:** From Georgia Tech, confirming your enrollment.
- **Financial Documentation:** Proof of sufficient funds to cover tuition and living expenses.
- **Academic Records:** Transcripts, diplomas, and standardized test scores.
- **Health and Immunization Records:** As required by Georgia Tech.
- **Emergency Contact Information:** Including contacts at Georgia Tech and family members.

*Note:* It's advisable to make copies of all these documents and keep them separate from the originals.

## Packing Essentials

- **Clothing:** Pack according to Atlanta's climate; include formal attire for academic events. (You can also purchase inexpensive casual clothes in USA)
- **Electronics:** Laptop, phone, chargers, and appropriate plug adapters.
- **Medications:** Bring necessary prescriptions with accompanying doctor's notes.
- **Personal Items:** Toiletries, bedding (if not provided), and any cultural items to ease homesickness.

## Housing and Arrival

- **Housing Arrangements:** Confirm your accommodation details, whether on-campus or off-campus.
- **Arrival Plan:** Plan your arrival to coincide with Georgia Tech's orientation schedule.
- **Transportation:** Arrange transportation from the airport to your accommodation.



## At the U.S. Port of Entry

- **Be Prepared for Inspection:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers will inspect your documents and may ask questions about your studies.
- **Form I-94:** Upon entry, ensure you receive the Form I-94, which records your arrival and authorized stay.
- **Secondary Inspection:** If directed to secondary inspection, remain calm and answer questions truthfully.



## Upon Arrival at Georgia Tech

- **Check-In with OIE:** Complete the mandatory check-in process with the Office of International Education.
- **Attend Orientation:** Participate in orientation sessions to familiarize yourself with campus resources.
- **Set Up Essentials:** Open a bank account, obtain a SIM card, and familiarize yourself with local transportation.



## Safety and Compliance

- **Stay Informed:** Keep abreast of any changes in immigration policies that may affect your status.
- **Maintain Status:** Ensure full-time enrollment and adhere to visa regulations.
- **Emergency Contacts:** Keep a list of emergency contacts, including Georgia Tech's international student advisors.

For more information and advising, you can check with OIE (international scholar's office):

<https://isss.oie.gatech.edu/>

# Housing In ATL

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1. You can lookup housing via various platforms such as: <https://www.apartments.com/>
2. Please be attentive to potential scammers.