

PennGlobal
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

International Student Resource Handbook

Created for students, by students.



Change is the only constant in life. One's ability to adapt to those changes will determine one's success in life.



Benjamin Franklin

Founder of the University of Pennsylvania



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A Message



Dr. Rodolfo "Rudie" Altamirano
Executive Director
Penn Global

Congratulations on your admission to the University of Pennsylvania, and a warm welcome to the Penn community! We are absolutely thrilled that you have chosen Penn as your academic home. As international students, contribute to the vibrant academic and cultural life of our campus, bringing valuable perspectives and talents to our community. Your unique perspectives and cultural backgrounds contribute to the global tapestry we celebrate at Penn.

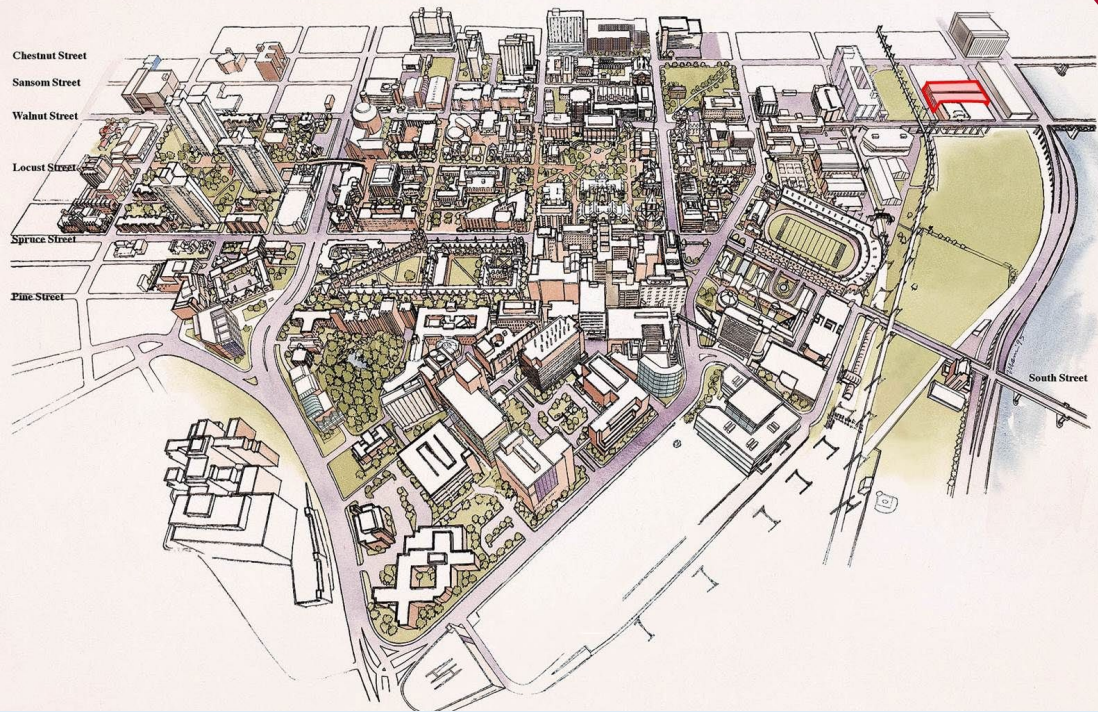
We understand that starting your journey at Penn as an international student may come with its own set of questions and uncertainties. That's precisely why we have prepared this comprehensive handbook for you. It serves as your compass, guiding you through the initial steps of your Penn experience and acquainting you with the myriad resources available specifically for international students.

At Penn, we foster a vibrant and inclusive community that cherishes the contributions of each and every student. We encourage you to embrace opportunities for engagement, seek connections with fellow students and faculty, and explore the wealth of academic and extracurricular offerings. Our campus is a tapestry of ideas, cultures, and perspectives, and we believe that your presence here will not only enrich your own educational journey but also contribute to the diversity of Penn's global community.

As you embark on this exciting chapter, we eagerly await your arrival in the beautiful city of Philadelphia. We look forward to seeing you thrive in our close-knit community. If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you every step of the way.

Best wishes for an extraordinary start to your Penn adventure!

Explore the Campus



Scan the QR Codes to get a good grasp of the buildings on campus, transit services, and other Penn facilities.

Virtual Tour



admissions.upenn.edu/virtual-tour

Campus Map



facilities.upenn.edu/maps

Immigration & Arrival

As a new member of the Penn family, you'll join a community of more than 9,000 international students, scholars, and employees from over 120 countries.

We are here to make the smooth transition possible.

Prepare

- ☐ Set up your **iPenn**: an important portal!
- ☐ Apply for your Form I-20 (F-1 Visa students) or DS-2019 (J-1 Visa students).
- ☐ Apply for your US Visa at your local Embassy.



This process takes significant time (at least 2 to 3 months). Get started early so that you can get to the States on time for your program!

- ☐ Keep all the required documents and receipts carefully. These will be needed upon arrival.

Arrival

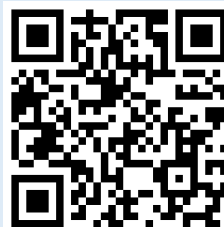
- ☐ You will be assigned an I-94 number upon arrival, which is proof of your legal visitor status. You can access it here: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94>
- ☐ You must register your presence at Penn by checking in with ISSS through iPenn. (A tutorial will be provided on how to do this in iPenn.)

All you need to know to prepare for and arrive to Penn:



global.upenn.edu/iss

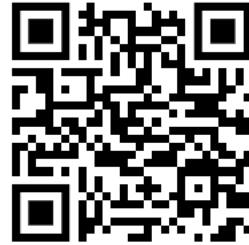
A Useful Pre-Departure Checklist



bit.ly/iss_precheck

PennCard

This is your official UPenn Identity Card. It is used to access buildings and libraries on campus, food halls, recreation facilities, and make purchases. Your PennCard may be pre-loaded with a certain amount of PennCash and you can top it up.



penncard.business-services.upenn.edu

You can apply for the PennCard through the website, but you will need to collect it physically by scheduling an appointment.

PennKey & Password

This is your digital key to access all of Penn's portals and platforms!

Once enrolled, you will receive an email with this information.

However, for now, when you set up your iPenn, you do it through the 'Limited Service Login' where you will receive a 'Limited Access PIN'. This is NOT your PennKey.

Once your PennKey is activated, you can log into iPenn with it automatically.

Insurance & Immunization

Before arriving at Penn, you need to have health insurance and the required immunizations. While you can receive missing immunizations on campus, it is better to get as much out of the way from your home country!

Insurance

Explore the different insurance options recognized by Penn and enroll in the best fit:

- **PSIP** – Penn Student Insurance Plan
- **PSI** – Emerald, Platinum, Presidential
- **ISO** Plans – For UPenn



***Penn Student Health and Counseling** offers 24/7 support for students.*

Medical: 215-746-3535

Counseling: 215-898-7021

Immunization

- ☐ Understand the immunization requirements.
- ☐ Get the **Immunization Form** filled out by a medical professional.
Scan this document – you will need it later!
- ☐ Once you have a PennKey, log into the Wellness Portal, and submit the required information.



If you cannot find certain records, write to the Immunization and Insurance Compliance office for support.

Wellness at Penn

Includes information on insurance and immunization



<https://wellness.upenn.edu/>

The Immunization and Insurance Compliance Office

215-746-4200

wel-immun@pobox.upenn.edu

wel-shsinsur@pobox.upenn.edu

Managing Finances

As international students, you are investing a significant amount of money in your education. The financial aspect of it can be overwhelming. Below are some ways you can be supported.

Explore the SRFS website to:

- ☐ Estimate the costs of attendance so that you are better prepared.
- ☐ Learn about financing and payment plans that can ease some stress!
- ☐ Research opportunities for financial aid from UPenn, and scholarship opportunities in your home country. Write to your program managers and school financial aid officers too.

Student Registration and Financial Services



www.srfs.upenn.edu



*The bill is paid through **Penn.Pay**. Figure out the cheapest option to do so: Online, wire transfers, mail, etc. and consider currency exchange rates. You also have the option to pay your fees in instalments. Timely communication is crucial.*

Important

Financial Matters

Key financial considerations for international students:



global.upenn.edu/iss/finances

Emergency Funding

In case of financial emergencies, how can Penn support you:



sis.vpul.upenn.edu/emergency-and-opportunity-funding/

Student Employment

Working part-time on campus is a great way to cover some of your living expenses. Below are some things to keep in mind:

- International students are limited to on-campus employment.
- International students not allowed to work for more than 20 hours per week, except during breaks, when they may work full time (40 hours per week).
- You can search for jobs on **Workday@Penn** (once you have your PennKey)
You can also seek jobs through professors or networks on campus.
- Then, you must apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) to work in the US, get paid, and file taxes.
- Payments are usually made on a weekly basis.



If you become a Resident Advisor (RA) for a College House, your accommodation expenses are slashed significantly! Explore more below!

Workday@Penn



workday.upenn.edu

Getting the SSN



global.upenn.edu/iss/ssn

How to Be An RA



collegehouses.upenn.edu/join/ra/role

ISSS Guidelines



global.upenn.edu/iss/oncampus

US Banks & Phone Plans

Get A US Bank Account

Setting up a bank account is simple. You will need your **passport, proof of residence, PennCard, and for some banks, your SSN**. Visit the different banks around campus, inquire explicitly about their student plans/benefits, and choose the one that works best for your needs. Note that charges and fees for services vary.

- **PNC Bank:** 3535 Market Street (can be linked to your PennCard!)
- **Bank of America:** 3925 Walnut Street
- **Chase Bank:** 4001 Chestnut Street
- **TD Bank:** 3735 Walnut Street
- **Wells Fargo Bank:** 3550 Market Street
- **Santander Bank:** 3802 Chestnut Street, 3131 Market Street
- **Citizens Bank:** 134 South 34th Street
- **UPenn Student Federal Credit Union:** 3401 Walnut Street



Compare the charges for international money transfers, if it is applicable to you. Know the difference between a Checking and Savings account. Also, watch out for the minimum balance required to be maintained.

Get A Phone Plan

Popular network providers have their stores in or near campus. Again, it is a good idea to visit them to understand the best option for you as a student. Data packs in the US can be expensive. Luckily, we have Wi-Fi all over campus!

- **T-Mobile:** 3441 Chestnut Street
- **AT&T:** 3741 Walnut Street
- **Verizon:** 1430 Walnut Street
- **ConnectEd:** connectedmobile.co
- **Google Fi:** fi.google.com



Some phone plans work out significantly cheaper if you register as a group!

Housing & Dining

Housing

- Undergraduates have college houses to choose from (Penn Residential Services) or can stay off-campus.
- Graduate and professional students must find their own accommodation, but Penn Off-Campus Services will guide you through it!



Off-Campus Services can review your contract.

Do not commit to landlords immediately.

They also have a portal to help you match roommates to house-hunt together!

Consider the distance from your place to your school. Rest assured, Philly is well-connected through buses and trolley options.

Dining

Penn Dining offers:

- Meal Swipes in the Residential Food Halls (Buffet)
- Dining Dollars (loaded in your PennCard) that you can swipe in these halls and in certain stores.
- Or a combination of both!

For graduate students who want to cook their own meals, there are grocery stores nearby which have international foods and spices too!



Food trucks all around campus offer cheap and delicious meals. (Approx. \$8 to \$12)

Also, look out for tons of events with free food!

Penn Residential Services

(College Houses)



bit.ly/pennlivingoptions

Penn Off-Campus Services



bit.ly/pennoffcampus

Penn Dining Options



bit.ly/upennndining

Safety in Philly

It is understandable that you are concerned about the crime rates in Philly. We want to ensure you feel secure by highlighting Penn's high-quality safety resources.

Mental Health Help Line: 215-898-4357

Penn Emergency Line: 215-537-3333

- **Penn Guardian App:** This connects you with the Public Safety Division at all times.
- **Walking Escort Service:** If you feel uncomfortable walking alone, you can request a safety representative to walk with you 24/7. This is particularly useful at nights.
- **Penn Violence Prevention:** This provides a wide range of confidential and safe resources to discuss any form of violence, (including emotional, sexual, and relationship) and stalking on campus.
- **Penn Transit:** There are shuttles to take you places and more importantly, you can request an on-demand Penn Ride between 6 pm to 3 am to pick you up and drop you to certain neighborhoods.
- **UPenn Alerts:** The Penn community is notified of emergencies or dangerous situations to avoid in certain areas with follow-ups on action taken.
- **Property Registration:** Register valuable items (www.campusexpress.upenn.edu) to increase chances of recovery should it be lost or stolen.
- **Self-Defense Programs:** These are optional trainings provided to the Penn community.



Penn Police patrols the campus area 24/7 and are easily accessible.

Public Safety Resources



www.publicsafety.upenn.edu

Penn Transit



[cms.business-services.
upenn.edu/transportation](http://cms.business-services.upenn.edu/transportation)



**Get to Know
Your Support
Systems at Penn!**

Essential Resources

Moving to a new country is no easy feat and adjusting academically and socially can be challenging.

International students are well-supported holistically through resource centers that focus on different aspects of their Penn life!

Your program managers, faculty advisors and professors, and school's student services offices are with you.



Advocate for yourself and always ask for help!



For the smooth transition and cultural integration of international students.



global.upenn.edu/issv/integration



Weingarten Center
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Free academic support, tutoring, support for students with disabilities, and more.



weingartencenter.universitylife.upenn.edu



Career Services
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Support with job searches, support with interviews, resumes, connections, etc.



careerservices.upenn.edu

Do explore the Marks Family Center For Excellence in Writing too: writing.upenn.edu/critical/wc/

And More...



As international students ourselves, we assure you that you will find a community at Penn that will help you thrive!

Penn is also home to one of the oldest Women and LGBT+ centers in the country. Cultural centers offer spaces for you to meet like-minded people, study, collaborate, and participate in cultural events. They also support with student advising and connect you to the right resources for your needs.



Some centers also offer free printing and even provide need-based funding.

Penn Cultural Centers



[universitylife.upenn.edu/
cultural-centers/](https://universitylife.upenn.edu/cultural-centers/)



Student Organizations



***Learning is continuous.
Do not limit it to just the four walls of a classroom.***

Make the most out of the Penn experience by joining a student group to explore your passion, build your network, and develop new skills. Student-run groups are mainly of three types (scan the QR code to know more):

- **Penn Clubs:**
Over a hundred to choose from!
- **Fraternities and Sororities:**
Explore the chapters at Penn and their work.
- **Student Governments**
Deliberative and representative bodies for students in each school.

Penn Student Groups



www.upenn.edu/life-at-penn/groups-and-organizations



Each school also has its own student organizations and governments too. However, it is important to be mindful of your time commitments. Though tempting, do not jump into too many clubs at the expense of your academics and health.

Campus Life

Though all of this may seem like information overload, we promise that you will ease into this new start gradually but surely, by leveraging all the support tailor-made for you. Explore the following for a broader idea:

Prepare For Penn



global.upenn.edu/iss/prepare

Penn University Life: Events



ulife.vpul.upenn.edu/calendar/



campusexpress.upenn.edu

Your one-stop-shop for many important student services.



A hub for all graduate and professional students at Penn.



A forum for student parents to connect and develop supportive networks.



Pursue fellowships, scholars programs, and undergraduate research.



Discuss global challenges with experts and world leaders.

Pro-Tips



Begin your house search at least 2 to 3 months prior to your start date. Get your visa process started ASAP.



Try not to miss orientation programs. It will help you settle in and get comfortable with people before classes start. Keep an eye out for emails and reminders from Penn Global.



Be pro-active in asking people for support, even if you are not used to it. Take advantage of all that Penn has to offer and stay informed.



It takes about a week to get a US Bank Debit Card after registration. Have alternatives to pay in place.



There are plenty of courses to choose from. Your faculty and program managers will guide you through the process. It can be helpful to seek opinions from alumni through social media too (Whatsapp, Reddit, LinkedIn).



You can get your day-to-day medication from pharmacies on campus. If you need specific medication, research if it is available in the US.



It gets chilly in Philly! Winter clothing can be expensive, try and pack them beforehand. Thrift stores are affordable and sustainable, and there are many in the area. Penn has one too!



Breathe. One step at a time. You got this!

Protecting your mental and physical health is really important. Be conscious of it.

Engage With Us



@iss.penn



@ISSS.Penn

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2025.05.27

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