

Viterbi Graduate International Student Information Session

Student and Academic Services
Viterbi Admission and Student Engagement





Learning Objective

This session is designed to help you confidently navigate your first semester by introducing the important processes, requirements, and campus resources available to international students.





Agenda

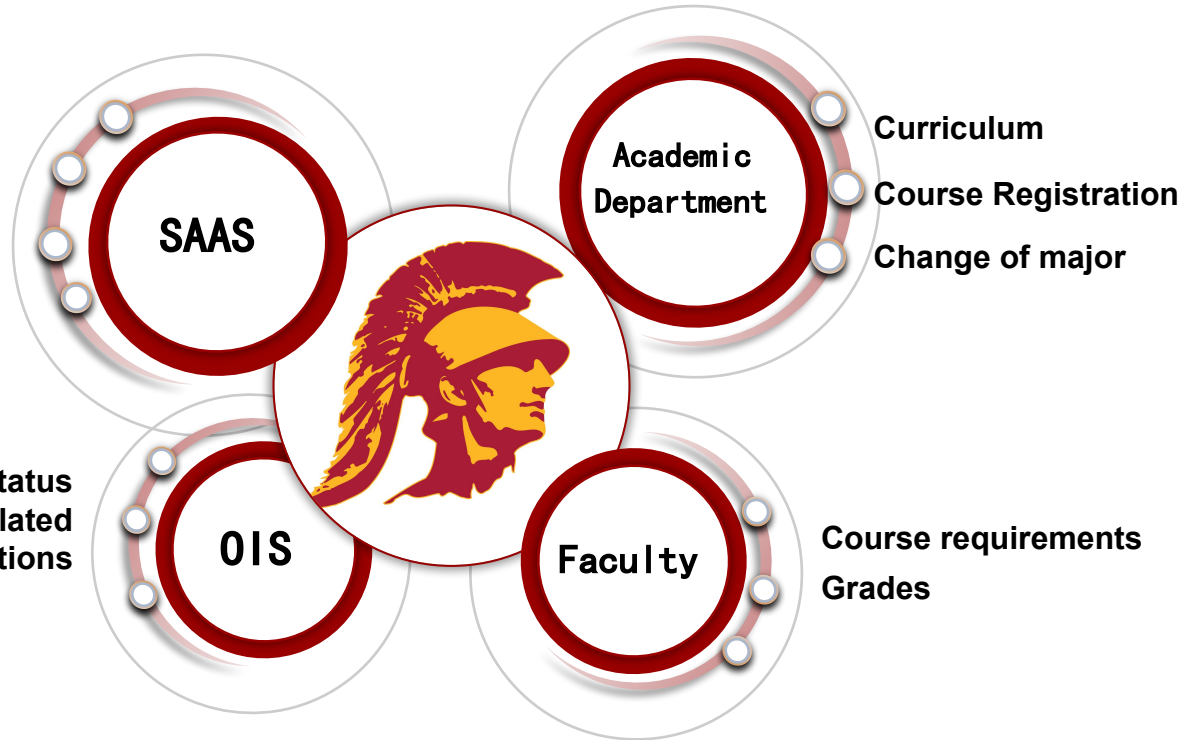
- I. USC Partners
- II. Immigration Status Verification (ISV)
- III. Fall 2026: First Semester Enrollment
- IV. Domestic and International Degree Verification
- V. Maintaining Status and Enrollment Implications
- VI. Late Entry and Admissions Deferral
- VII. Resources
- VIII. Q&A



USC Partners

Provide academic verification for OIS-managed international student processes like reduced course load, curricular practical training, etc.

Immigration status
Any immigration related questions





International Student Support

While the Viterbi Student and Academic Services team is available as an additional resource, the USC Office of International Services (OIS) is responsible for ensuring the university's compliance with immigration regulations governing international students and scholars.

If you have any questions or are uncertain about your immigration status, we encourage you to contact OIS directly for guidance.





Immigration Status Verification (ISV)

Upon arrival to the United States (U.S.), all new and continuing (e.g. return from leave of absence, reinstatement, change of status, etc.) international F-1/J-1 students and J-1 scholars are required to complete Immigration Status Verification (ISV) with the Office of International Services (OIS).

ISV is a mandatory online check-in procedure for international students and scholars that verifies their entry to the U.S. as well as their immigration status to ensure the student/scholar is eligible to start an academic program/appointment at USC for their upcoming start date.

- All international students have a [STU55/50 hold](#). This hold restricts enrollment.
- **Our office cannot lift this hold or make exceptions. ISV is an OIS Requirement. OIS will lift the hold within 3 business days (M-F)**
- Once the hold is lifted, students can proceed with course enrollment.

Next Steps: Immigration Status Verification (ISV)

- Review [Immigration Status Verification \(ISV\) information](#) provided by OIS
- After arriving in the US, complete ISV with OIS.
- For any ISV questions: please visit the Office of International Students drop-in advising:
<https://ois.usc.edu/drop-in-advising/>





Course Enrollment

You have now completed ISV and the STU50/55 hold is removed. You can now enroll in course work.

Next Steps for MS

Preparing for Enrollment (MS)

- Reviewed the academic webinar while waiting to complete ISV:
- During the academic webinar, academic advisors reviewed academic requirements, Fall 2026 registration, resources like the schedule of classes and USC catalogue.
 - <https://viterbigrad.usc.edu/new-student-information-new/ms-on-campus-new-student-information/>
- Review academic advisors' email regarding registration

Preparing for Enrollment (PhD)

- Review academic advisors' email regarding registration

Enrolling in coursework (all students)

- Register for courses by August 21st to avoid a late fee
 - Guide on using the registration system: <https://arr.usc.edu/web-registration/>





Domestic and International Degree Verification

All graduate students must verify that they have been awarded a bachelor's-level degree from an accredited institution in the United States or an equivalent degree from an institution outside the United States. This requirement is separate from and additional to the credential review conducted for admission.

- The USC Degree Progress office manages all degree verifications.
- All students with an **ADM40 or RNR40 must complete degree verification by the end of their first term at USC**. The university recommends that you begin this process prior to the start of your first semester.
- Failure to complete the verification will lead to the hold changing to **ADM41/RNR 41 and restrict enrollment**.
- Processing takes time! Failure to complete the verification process in the allotted time will result in delayed or cancelled registration, and late fees.
- In extenuating circumstances, our office can lift holds after the first semester. However, you must initiate the request. We cannot lift holds for students in their last semester.

Next steps: Degree Verification

- Review the USC Degree Progress Domestic and International Degree Verification webpage.
 - <https://arr.usc.edu/degree-progress/>
- Initiate and complete Domestic and International Degree Verification.
 - For institutions in the United States: Contact Degree Progress through the link above to request a check for the transcripts you may have on file. Valid copies are official transcripts sent directly from your previous institution.





Course Enrollment Requirement for International Students

International students must be registered for a full course of study in classes that meet their degree requirements during the fall and spring semesters. Summer admits are required to enroll in a full course load during their first summer session.

MS	
Full time	8 units
ANY required course (example ALI course or required pre-requisites /deficiency course).	

PhD	
Full time	6 units
ANY required course (example ALI course or required pre-requisites /deficiency course).	

Review Maintaining student status website for more information: <https://ois.usc.edu/students/maintainingstudentstatus/>



Exception to Full-time enrollment

- Students that are eligible for a Reduced Course Load
- Summer session enrollment is optional for international students **unless** it is their first term at USC, their academic department requires it, **or** summer is their final term.
- Ph.D. or master's students registered in a thesis/dissertation course (e.g., 594 or 794) during the fall and spring semesters are considered full-time enrolled.

Review OIS Student website for more information: <https://ois.usc.edu/students/maintainingstudentstatus/reducedcourseload/>





Reduced Course Load

OIS states that International (F-1/J-1) students are required to enroll *in and* complete a [full course load](#) each semester to maintain valid non-immigrant student status. There are only a few exceptions to the full-time enrollment requirement for the fall and spring semesters. Each exception (category) has its own criteria, which are outlined below.

We will focus on two RCL categories today:

Academic Difficulty

- It can only be approved for your 1st semester.
- Must be registered in a minimum of 4 units.
- Students cannot take academic difficulty RCL with off-campus internships simultaneously.
- Only once per degree level.

Medical

Students with temporary or mental health condition may be eligible for a Medical Reduced Course Load (RCL) that allows them to drop below full-time enrollment or, in some cases, not enroll in any classes during the approved semester. Review eligibility requirements in OIS website

Review OIS Student website for more information: <https://ois.usc.edu/students/maintainingstudentstatus/reducedcourseload/>





Reduced Course Load Cont

- For any questions regarding how a RCL can impact your academic program please contact vasems@usc.edu for MS Students or vasephd@usc.edu for PhD Students.
- For any questions regarding the eligibility or requirements, please visit OIS drop in advising: <https://ois.usc.edu/drop-in-advising/>

Submitting an RCL

- Submit a request through the **Trojan International** site
- Advisor: Email: vasems@usc.edu for MS Students or vasephd@usc.edu for PhD Students
- Deadline: Second week of classes

Review OIS Student website for more information: <https://ois.usc.edu/students/maintainingstudentstatus/reducedcourseload/>





Late Entry Letter

If you are unable to enter the U.S. by the program start date listed on the I-20/DS-2019, you can request a Late Entry Letter. This is a supporting document in case you are questioned about your late arrival to school at the U.S. Port of Entry.

As a reminder, a Late Entry Letter does **not** guarantee entry into the U.S., as students should enter the U.S. by the program start date listed on the I-20.

To request the letter, please ensure you read the [Late Entry Instructions](#). In order to be issued a Late Entry Support Letter, you will need to complete the [Late Entry Letter Request Form](#). Upon submission, you will be issued the requested letter.

For questions regarding late entry letters, please contact us at vwelcome@usc.edu.





Program Deferral

If you wish to defer your admission term and start your USC studies in a future term, please:

- MS students: Submit your inquiry via the [Deferral Request Form](#). The Viterbi Graduate Admission office will review the request and provide guidance on next steps. For questions regarding program deferral, please contact us at vwelcome@usc.edu.
- PhD students: Submit your request by emailing or sending your questions regarding program deferral to vasephd@usc.edu.





PhD Students Only: Payroll and Funding Setup

All international students on university payroll will need to complete I-9 as well as Glacier documents (this is required whether you are a grader, working as a student worker, or for Ph.D. students on a RA/TA/fellowship positions)

For PhD students, please make sure you attend part two of your PhD funding orientation on July 31st for additional information.





Questions & Takeaways

✓ International Student Verification

- ✓ STU50 holds cannot be lifted by SAAS or make exceptions. ISV is an OIS Requirement. OIS will lift the hold within 3 business days (M-F).

✓ Course Enrollment

- ✓ MS Review webinar and advisor email for registration information
- ✓ PhD Students review advisor communication.

✓ Full time enrollment

- ✓ MS- 8 units
- ✓ PhD- 6 units
- ✓ If enrolling in less than number of units require, meet with OIS to discuss eligibility and submit RCL if eligible.

✓ Degree Verification

- ✓ All students with an ADM40 or RNR40 must complete degree verification by the end of their first term at USC
- ✓ ADM40/RNR40 does not restrict enrollment.





USC
Viterbi

*Admission and
Student Engagement*

Q&A

VSAAS Drop-in Advisement

MS

PhD Drop-In

Mondays

Fridays

3:00PM-4:00PM

10:00AM-11:00AM

<https://viterbigrad.usc.edu/academic-advisement/>