Welcome to MSU

Greetings from the English Language Institute

Welcome to the English Language Institute (ELI) at Mississippi State University! We are excited that you will be taking classes with us. The intensive English program offers you a chance to study English, learn United States culture, make friends from around the world, and experience the university atmosphere of the U.S.—all while being immersed in an English-speaking environment.

If you would like to try and connect with other international students at MSU before you arrive, please visit the MSU Student Organization Directory for a listing of the international student organizations available on campus: https://www.union.msstate.edu/student-activities/student-organizations/directory/. The International organizations are listed under the Cultural category. Student organizations provide good contacts for such things as airport pick up, finding off-campus housing, finding a roommate, buying a car, etc.

We want your arrival and experiences to be as easy as possible, so we hope this guide will help prepare you. If you have questions or need more information, please contact us.

Phone: 662.325.2648
Fax: 662.325.4242
Email: eli@msstate.edu

We look forward to seeing you in class!

Arrival Dates

Plan to arrive at least five days before the start of the session. The communication about your acceptance has the date of the session’s mandatory orientation and placement test.

- **Fall 1 Session** Begins mid-August
- **Fall 2 Session** Begins mid-October
- **Spring 1 Session** Begins early January
- **Spring 2 Session** Begins mid-March
- **Summer Session** Begins early June
TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to Mississippi State University/Starkville, MS

Students are responsible for arranging their own transportation to campus. The nearest airport to MSU and the city of Starkville is the Golden Triangle Regional Airport http://www.gtra.com. This airport is located a convenient 20 minutes from the MSU campus. The Starkville MSU Area Rapid Transit (SMART) shuttle offers a free shuttle from GTR to Starkville. The GTR Airport Express will depart 30 minutes after each flight arrives and will drop passengers off in Starkville at the Mill, located next to the Courtyard Marriott, and at Walmart. Please visit https://www.smart.msstate.edu for more information on shuttle routes and schedules.

Transportation in Starkville

- SMART – Starkville-Mississippi State University Area Rapid Transit
  662.325.5204
  www.smart.msstate.edu/
- Bulldog Shuttle and Cab Co.
  662.312.5003
  www.bulldogcab.com
  Bulldogcab@gmail.com
- McClain Taxi Service
  662.323.9530
- Uber
  https://www.uber.com/cities/golden-triangle/
- Zipcars
  www.zipcar.com/msstate
**HOUSING**

There are two housing options for ELI students to consider: off-campus and on-campus. ELI students are not required to live on the Mississippi State University campus, but they may choose to live in an on-campus residence hall. If students choose to live on campus, the English Language Institute will assist with the application process.

**Off-campus Housing**

Off-campus housing is not affiliated with MSU, but some of these accommodations are within walking distance of campus. Prices vary according to the proximity to the campus, room quality, and the size of the apartments. Rental rates range from about $425 to more than $800 per month, and off-campus housing may require a deposit of two months’ rent. When looking for an apartment, check if subleasing is available. Subleasing is the renting of property by a tenant to a third party for a portion of the tenant’s existing lease contract. This is a good option for students who do not plan to be here for a full year.

If students choose to live off campus, they are responsible for making their own arrangements. For more information, an off-campus housing guide is online at http://offcampushousing.msstate.edu.

**On-campus Housing**

If you prefer to live on-campus, the English Language Institute will help you apply for housing. Space is limited, so contact the English Language Institute to apply early.

**How to Apply:**

- Contact the English Language Institute at eli@msstate.edu.
Residence Halls
Mississippi State University has 17 campus residence halls. You may visit http://www.housing.msstate.edu/halls to see the different housing options. Each residence hall has certain amenities standard with each building.

Residence Hall Amenities
- common lobby
- front desk with 24-hour assistance
- laundry room
- kitchen
- secure access

Room Amenities
Provided For Each Resident
- bed
- mattress
- desk
- desk chair
- dresser
- closet
- micro-fridge
- wireless Internet
- cable TV hook-up
- sink with mirror

HOTELS IN STARKVILLE
If you arrive before accommodations are available, be prepared to stay in a hotel. Students are responsible for their own hotel arrangements. Hotels in Starkville do not offer airport pick up or shuttle service around town. Starkville has various hotels, but the most popular ones for arriving students are the following:

Comfort Inn
(walking distance to campus)
www.comfordsuites.com
662.324.9595

Hampton Inn
(walking distance to campus)
www.hamptoninn.com
662.324.1333

LaQuinta Inn & Suites
www.laquintastarkville.com
662.270.4100

Courtyard Marriott
www.marriott.com
662.338.3116
The GTR Airport Express shuttle will pick up and drop off at this location.

Hilton Garden Inn
www.hilton.com
662.615.9664

Holiday Inn Express
www.hiexpress.com
662.324.0076
**VISAS**

International students must have a valid passport to enter the United States, and students are encouraged to apply for their visa early to provide time for processing.

**Visa Process and Entry**

1. Pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee: Non-immigrant students and exchange visitors are subject to the SEVIS I-901 fee. Without this fee, students are not eligible to apply for a visa. To pay, visit www.fmjfee.com.

2. Apply: Visit https://usembassy.state.gov to learn about appointments and instructions for applying for a visa at your U.S. embassy or consulate.

3. Visa Appointment: Follow the instructions given by the embassy website. Some of the required items for an F-1 visa include:
   a. A SEVIS generated Form, I-20
   b. Valid passport
   c. MRV fee receipt to show payment of the visa application fee
   d. SEVIS I-901 receipt
   e. Financial evidence/support

4. U.S. Port of Entry: At the U.S. port of entry, students should have all documents ready, including a valid passport, valid U.S. visa, and the form I-20. An electronic arrival/departure record is created on entry, and the passport will be stamped with the date of admission, class of admission (e.g. F-1), and length or time allowed to stay in the U.S. which should be (D/S) duration of stay.

**Important Reminders:**

- A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. Customs and Border Protection officials have authority to permit or deny admission.

- If a traveler wants to obtain a paper version of the I-94 after arrival, it is available at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov.

- Students may enter the country up to 30 days before the program start date listed on their I-20 and should report to the English Language Institute when they arrive.

- Full information about the process is available online at https://www.ice.gov/sevis/students.

---

**FINANCES & BANKING**

Because you will be traveling abroad, it is a good idea to tell your bank and credit card companies. Also, compare your cards’ interest and exchange rates when used in the U.S. to those of your home country.

The first few weeks on campus are busy, so bring money to cover expenses in case you do not open a bank account immediately. You may bring U.S. cash, credit cards, or a prepaid credit card. If you bring a large amount of money, the safest way is in U.S. dollar traveler’s checks, in bank drafts, or by credit card. Traveler’s checks are not accepted at most stores and restaurants in the United States, but you can cash them at a bank in the U.S. once you have opened a bank account.

Mississippi State University accepts Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover, but there is a 2.7% transaction fee for each credit card transition. Remember that transferring money from your home country into a U.S. bank account will also have transfer fees.
Packing for Starkville

Weather and Clothing
Mississippi is known for its mild, yet unpredictable, climate. Starkville’s average yearly temperature is 62° Fahrenheit (17° Celsius), and the temperature averages range from 91º F (33º C) in the summer to 30 ºF (-1º C) in the winter.

From October to March, expect generally sunny days, but mostly cool temperatures. Occasionally, one might experience four seasons within one day during these months, so always be prepared. Hats, gloves, scarves, and jackets are recommended throughout these months to remain warm and comfortable.

The months of April through September produce mostly sunny days with warm to very hot temperatures. Lightweight clothing is desirable, along with a hat, sunglasses, sandals, and sunscreen.

Items to Consider Packing
- Medicines in original containers (take in carry-on), as well as copies of eyeglass/contact lens prescriptions
- U.S. currency for initial expenses
- Credit card
- International telephone calling card
- International driver’s license
- Electrical adapters/plug converters
- Mobile phone or SIM card (you may prefer to buy a pay-as-you-go cell phone or SIM card here)
- Backpack for carrying class books and small bag for weekend trips
- Emergency contact numbers
- USA guidebook and pocket English dictionary
- One traditional outfit from your home country for cultural activities (if desired)
- Musical instrument, dance clothes, etc. for international cultural activities (if desired)
- Small flag from your home country for international cultural activities (if desired)
Health Insurance at Mississippi State University

Mississippi State University requires health insurance for all international students. The MSU Student Plan is compliant with the Affordable Care Act (ACA). All ELI international students will complete the application upon check in at 116 Allen Hall and at the beginning of each new semester. The cost will be added to the ELI tuition invoice. For plan details please visit http://www.health.msstate.edu/healthcenter/insurance_student.php

Repatriation and medical evacuation coverage is included in the health insurance. MSU’s student health insurance policy does not cover the cost of eye examinations or eyeglasses, and it also does not cover routine dental. Dental is provided only as a result of a major medical incident pending a doctor’s examination and referral. Therefore, it is wise to have eye and dental appointment procedures before leaving home.

If a student’s spouse and children come along, health insurance for them is highly recommended.
Medical Requirements
Mississippi State University requires proof of immunizations against certain diseases for all students. All international students studying at the English Language Institute are required to have the following:

- Proof of adequate health insurance
- A Chest X-ray
- Interferon Gamma Release Assays (IGRA)
- Two (2) MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccinations

Chest X-ray and IGRA
The chest X-ray and IGRA must be performed by a U.S.-licensed physician to confirm negative indications for tuberculosis, and it must be performed in the United States not more than six weeks prior to the first day of class. The MSU Longest Student Health Center will verify documentation. The ELI will make appointments for all new students needing the chest X-ray and IGRA.

MMR Vaccinations
Mississippi State University requires completed immunization forms as proof of MMR vaccinations. Measles and rubella in adults are serious and highly contagious illnesses. If unable to provide proof before arriving on campus, students will receive their first MMR vaccination along with their chest X-rays. Students who have had the vaccinations should bring the completed immunization form as proof. The Health Center must validate all vaccinations records. Information about the MMR vaccination is found on the following website: http://www.immunize.org/vis/vis.mmr.asp.

Make a copy of your vaccinations for your personal record and bring it with you.

If you have any more questions about health requirements, please email eli@msstate.edu.
**FINAL PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST**

- Paid the SEVIS fee
- Obtained Visa
- Checked that the names on passport and I-20 are the same
- Sent the medical requirement form to Amy Harrison at the English Language Institute
- Have passport, immigration documents, and any paperwork that you have received from MSU and a sponsor
- Completed travel arrangements
- Completed housing arrangements
- Included new address inside of luggage
- Written down emergency contact information
- Ensure necessary funds are available for at least one semester’s expenses
- Have immunization records and completed measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) form (if already vaccinated)
- Given contact information for the English Language Institute to family and friends in case of emergency:
  
  The English Language Institute  
  175 President’s Circle  
  116 Allen Hall  
  P.O. Box 9742  
  Mississippi State, MS 39762  
  662.325.2648

**TRAVEL HINTS**

Before you leave for the United States, check for all documents you might need. Carry your original documents, and also keep money and emergency contact information with you. Do not place them in checked baggage.

Along with your original passport and immigration documents, please bring photocopies in case the originals are lost or stolen. You may also leave a set of photocopies with a trusted relative or friend.

Remember to bring shampoo, soap, toothbrush, and toothpaste for the first few nights. You may not be able to go shopping immediately upon arrival, so bring immediate needs.

Put your contact information inside your luggage in case the outer tag is lost or destroyed. You may list the English Language Institute as an alternate address for the tag inside the luggage:

Your name  
English Language Institute  
175 President’s Circle  
P.O. Box 9742  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
662.325.2648

If a piece of your luggage is lost, file a claim immediately at the airline’s desk at the airport.

Do not lock your suitcase.

It is common for international luggage to be delayed by 1-2 days. Please pack a small carry-on bag with your essential medications, toiletries, and a change of clothes.
WHEN YOU ARRIVE

The faculty and staff of the English Language Institute are committed to taking care of students. We provide a variety of services and cultural opportunities to all ELI students, including service orientations.

Reporting to Campus

The English Language Institute expects you to arrive and report no later than five business days before classes begin. Students may arrive in the U.S. and MSU up to 30 days before their I-20 report date. ELI transfer students should report to Amy Harrison in 116 Allen Hall to report their address and receive their new I-20.

Orientation and Testing

All new ELI students are required to attend testing and orientation. You must arrive and check in with Ms. Amy Harrison, 116 Allen Hall, five business days before classes begin in order to take part in required testing and orientation. The orientation for new students includes academic and culture/student services orientations, placement testing, and lunch. Additional activities throughout the day will include obtaining student ID cards, setting up new passwords, and meeting with language advisors to receive placement scores and class schedules. Additional service sessions will be held during the first two weeks of classes:

• Post Office: The ELI office assists students with opening an on-campus mailbox.
• Banking: Students receive information and assistance in opening a local bank account.
• Health Center: The ELI office arranges for students to visit the Longest Student Health Center for any needed medical documents and for insurance.
• Sanderson Center: Students register to obtain access to the recreational facility.
• Information Technology Services: Students set up free on-campus wireless internet access. Until their campus accounts are active, students receive the password of the day.

Books

Textbooks are required the first day of class.

Fee Payment

Tuition and fees are due before the first day of classes. Additionally, students who cannot attend the required orientation and testing are charged a $100 late fee. All these expenses will appear on one bill, payable to Mississippi State University. Checks, credit cards, money orders, and cash are accepted. All credit card transactions are charged a 2.7% transaction fee. These payments are made in 116 Allen Hall in the International Institute office.