Spring 2019 Pre-arrival Webinar – Orientation Expectations

Andrea: Hello everyone. Welcome to the next part of our webinar series for new international students who will be coming to the University of Iowa for spring 2019 semester. Today we're going to discuss orientation expectations, responsibilities and placement tests.

Andrea: First, let's talk a little bit about what the pre-arrival webinar series are. Their goal is to provide incoming international students and help them prepare for arranging arrival plans, for traveling to and living in Iowa City, helping to understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, which is today's topic, and help you transition to student life and academics at the University of Iowa. We would like to let you know that all webinars will be recorded and posted on the web link provided on the slide.

Andrea: During the webinar if you encounter any technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat function. If you have any questions related to today's topic, please use the Q and A function to post your questions. We will do our best to answer them live at the end of the webinar as time permits.

Andrea: If you have not received your I-20 document or DS-2019 document, you must pay E-ShipGlobal fee first so that ISSS can mail you your document. Once you have your document, then you can apply for the visa. This information is also contained in the pre-arrival checklist in iHawk and the address is provided on the slide. Also, if you have whatsoever any questions in this regard, or on your pre-arrival checklist, please don't hesitate to contact our orientation team and send them an email at isss-orientation@uiowa.edu.

Andrea: Also, we would like to go over some important dates for you: December 7 is the earliest day you can arrive to Iowa City, while January 6, 2019 would be the latest date to arrive to Iowa City. This is because the orientation for international graduate and undergraduate students begins on January 7 and goes through January 11. Orientation is mandatory, so please make every effort to be in Iowa City by January 6. On January 14 new spring semester will start.

Andrea: Let's do some introductions for today's webinar. My name is Andrea Siebenmann. I am advisor at ISSS and I will be your webinar moderator today. I will let our other speakers today introduce themselves.

Anne: Hi. My name is Anne Sparks and I am the academic services coordinator for the graduate college here in Iowa.

Tina: Hi, everyone. My name is Tina Arthur. I'm the director of orientation services here at the University of Iowa.

Brandon: Hi, everyone. My name is Brandon Paulson and I'm a senior advisor are with ISSS.

Maureen: Hi everybody. My name is Maureen Burke and I am the director of ESL programs here.

Andrea: Thank you all very much, and let's quickly review today's webinar goals. We will review orientation for graduate students and also you will be able to learn about placement tests and the Success at Iowa course, and orientation for undergraduate students. You will also learn about
international student orientation and then finally we will discuss English requirements including EPE testing and testing for teaching assistants who are the graduate students. Then at the end, our goal is to receive and answer any of your questions. Let’s begin our webinar with the graduate student orientation.

Anne: Hey everyone. Again, this is Anne Sparks. For new graduate students coming to the University, there isn’t a particular event that you’re going to if you are arriving in January, but we do have an orientation event in August that you would be welcome to attend. I'm guessing a lot of the information wouldn’t be as helpful if you've already gone through a semester because you learn a lot in that first semester, but you would be welcome to attend if you choose to in August.

Anne: One thing that I wanted to note that is important to know as you arriving to campus. Unlike a lot of undergrad environments, In the grad college, your department is your primary resource and your home. So if you have questions about how to transition to Iowa City, especially if they are related to your program and maybe your work schedule if you're an assistant or in an assistantship, your department contacts are going to be your first resource that you would reach out to. Sometimes that's different from undergrad where there are a number of offices and you reach out to all of the different offices for different things.

At the grad level your department is your go to (place). So if you have questions about your assistantship, about coursework, or about professional development, chat with your department first, and you can start doing that now. I'm sure you've already been in communication with a lot of those folks. And then once you arrive on campus you can continue that. However, if your department sees it necessary, and often this happens, they might refer you to our office. We do provide some different services in the Grad College. We are happy to help you out with any obstacles you might be having, or just help you apply for a fellowship, or things like that. And so we are still a great resource, we just like to encourage students to reach out to their own department first and then they can reach out to us with any questions at all. I know I personally am happy to help grad students with anything. Students can feel free to stop by 205 Gilmore Hall. That's what's pictured on the slide here is Gilmore Hall which you will get to see when you arrive here. So that was one note that I think is really important to know about your department.

Anne: Additionally, things not necessarily related to academics that you might be concerned about are where to live. There is a webinar, it sounds like, about that as well. You know, what about options for food; where can I eat? Entertainment; what is there to do? And then, childcare, if any of you have families that you’re bringing along, that would be important. All of those questions can be addressed with the website that is linked on this slide, and it's called Grad Guide, and it was created by grad students. And so I think they did a really good job of targeting the specific questions that grad students have about just life in Iowa City. So I do recommend browsing that website. If you do have further questions about any of those topics, you're welcome to contact the Grad College as well because will be happy to problem solve or navigate those questions with you. But this website is also a great resource.

Tina: Hi again, everyone. My name is Tina Arthur and I'm the Director of orientation services, and I'm going to talk a little bit about placement exams and the Success at Iowa course. All undergraduate students should complete required placement tests as soon as possible in order to be eligible for early enrollment. Advisers may review your scores and add coursework to your schedule based on your major
and during your orientation advising appointment, you can review course work in your schedule with an academic advisor. To determine which tests you should take, review the placement test link on the www.newstudents.uiowa.edu website under the orientation tab. There are three types of placement tests that students can take prior to arrival on campus. Those are math, chemistry, and world language, and I'm going to give you a little bit more specific information about each of those. International students should take the math placement test exam by the end of November or as early as possible for enrollment. If you have not taken calculus in high school or have not earned college credit for calculus, you should take the ALEKS math placement test. This test takes about 90 minutes to complete and you can find it on your admissions profile.

Tina: Any student who has completed calculus or has earned college credit for calculus should take the MPT3 math placement test. This test takes about 30 minutes to complete and can also be located through your admissions profile. Any student considering a major in engineering, health sciences, like biology, chemistry, or pre-medicine, or the natural sciences like environmental sciences or geoscience, should take the chemistry diagnostic placement test. This test should take around 90 minutes to complete. If you have questions about which test to take, you can view the newstudents.uiowa.edu website, click on orientation, and then click on placement test in the menu on the right side of the page. It lists all of the areas in which you can take a placement test and have more information about which majors need to take which tests.

Tina: If you're interested in starting a new language, you do not need to take a placement test. However, if you have previous experience with Spanish, German, or French, and want to continue taking coursework in these areas, you do need to take an online placement test prior to enrolling in classes. These tests take around 20 minutes to complete and can be accessed through your admissions profile. If you've taken coursework in Russian, Latin, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, or American Sign Language and want to continue in these languages, placement test can be arranged in person once you arrive on campus.

Tina: Again, to learn more about math, chemistry, or world language placement tests, you can visit Newstudents.uiowa.edu, click on orientation, and then click on the placement tests link for more information. Next, I'm going to talk a little bit about the required online Success at Iowa course. This is a course that all new students take at the University of Iowa. This class is delivered in five stages and gives you information when it is most applicable to your transition to the University. Stage 1 opens on December 3, and you should try to complete this stage before arriving to Iowa City, if possible. If not possible, please do it as soon as you get to campus. You can login to the course on Iowa Courses Online, or icon.uiowa.edu to begin the course. You need to complete each stage of the course by passing the quiz at 80% or better to move on to the next stage.

Tina: The success in Iowa class will cover topics such as academic resources on campus, financial resources and information, transportation around campus, and information on how to transition to your new home. Stage 2 will open on December 17. Stages 3 and 4 open on the first day of class, and stage 5 opens about three weeks into the semester. The deadline for this course is February 14 so the course will be completed in the first 6 weeks of the semester. Success at Iowa will help all undergraduates learn about resources as you transition to the University of Iowa in Iowa City. the modules can be continued to be accessed after you finish the course to give you an opportunity to revisit any information in the
future, should you need it. It’s a great way to get started in understanding your new home and institution. Log-in to icon.uiowa.edu on or after December 3 to begin the course.

Brandon: Hey everybody, this is Brandon Paulson again from international student scholar services. I’m going to talk to you about international student orientation. And this orientation is mandatory for all new international students, and for the spring semester it is a combined orientation with undergraduate and graduate and professional students attending orientation at the same time and orientation will begin on Monday January 7 and it will go on the entire week until Friday January 11.

Brandon: Some goals for international student orientation is we want this to help you successfully transition to student life here and academics at the University of Iowa. So we have many different sessions that has important information that should help you learn more about studying here at the University of Iowa. We also are going to be highlighting the cultural adjustment process, being new in the U.S., and we’ll also talking more about U.S. culture and about the immigration regulations that you need to follow to successfully maintain your F-1 or J-1 status. Then another goal for the orientation is that we really want you to connect with other new students and there will be opportunities throughout orientation to make connections with other students are studying here at the University.

Brandon: So just to provide a general overview of the orientation schedule, once again, if you are an undergraduate student and you have a residence hall contract, you can move in starting on Saturday January 5. The residence halls will open at noon, or 12 p.m. for new international students, and then all other students we do ask that you do arrive by Sunday January 6. That’s the date you should arrive in Iowa City area to start orientation the next day on Monday January 7.

Brandon: So I’m going to highlight few of the orientation sessions that will be part of your orientation schedule. So orientation will really start out with a welcome and a focus on adjustment here to the U.S. on Monday January 7 and then on Tuesday January 8, the focus will mainly be on the English proficiency evaluation for students that are required to take the EPE. On Wednesday January 9, there will be a focus on the immigration regulations and just campus information in general. So again, I’ve highlighted some different sessions that you’ll be participating in. Thursday January 10 will be a focus on academics and then on Friday January 11 we’ll have some additional campus information and this will be the day that you actually do an immigration document check in with ISSS. So you can see there is a number of different sessions that are scheduled throughout orientation week. All of it is designed to help you successfully transition to the University of Iowa, and then you will have an orientation schedule that you will be able to access on the pre-arrival checklist; it will be available starting approximately one month before orientation starts. So it will be available sometime in December and we’ll send out in the email with instructions on how you can access your orientation schedule. It will be created individually for each student and so it is important to follow your own personal orientation schedule and attend each session that is scheduled. If you have a scheduling conflict with the English proficiency evaluation, the EPE, or academic advising for undergraduate students, those take priority, so it’s important to attend both of those. We tried to design the orientation schedule that there shouldn’t be really many, if any conflicts, but if there are, it’s important that you attend both of those.

Brandon: And then some other important things are, again we want the focus to be on connecting with other students, and so making opportunities for you to introduce yourself get to know others, you will have opportunities to and will make new friends and then when you do attend the session since there is
a lot of important information, please pay attention. This is your opportunity to ask questions, so it's expected that you will have some questions. So please make sure you do ask questions during the session sometimes. The presenters will stay afterwards, then you can individually ask questions, but make sure you do take advantage of that opportunity. If anything is unclear or you want to know more information.

**Brandon:** A great way to get any questions answered, any pre-arrival or orientation questions, you're welcome to contact the international student and scholar services orientation email. It’s issss-orientation@uiowa.edu. You can ask questions and also if you need any type of disability or mobility accommodations, this is a place that you can contact us in advanced to let us know that. Again, we're here to help answer any questions and help support you as you prepare to arrive at the University of Iowa.

**Brandon:** And then I also want to highlight another important pre-arrival resource, and that is the new student website that's part of the international student scholar services website. I included the URL to that website. It's international.uiowa.edu/new-students. That's a great place where you can find pre-arrival information, orientation information, and then we also have an academic information and just information about the Iowa City area as well.

**Maureen:** Hello everybody, this is Maureen again for telling you, hope to tell you a little bit about the English testing and what's required of you once you get on campus. And you might be thinking well, I've already sent in my TOEFL score, I'm already admitted on my IELTS score. Why do I have to take another test? So we'll first talk about the ESL requirements here and the English language proficiency requirement, and then I'll tell you a little bit about who is required to take additional testing.

**Maureen:** So the universities requirement is, and the reason for it is, that students need to be assured that they’re going to be able to do well enough to study without being hindered by language problems. And our experience has shown that even students with strong English language proficiency will face challenges in the classroom. There are a lot of things that new students coming from another country and studying in another language will face. And we want to make sure you are ready for that challenge to be successful.

**Maureen:** With that said, what is the requirement? You’re going to have lots of reading and writing. You’re going to have to manage your time. You going to have to follow lectures and there are going to be lots of discussions with a lot of slang and idioms and colloquial language, and those are going to be the challenges that you face. The requirement is that if you have 100 on the internet based-TOEFL or 600 on the paper based-TOEFL, you are free from having to do the English language test. You have met the English language requirement. You come to campus and you meet your advisor, choose your classes and you’re ready to go.

**Maureen:** Because the university offers ESL credit classes, students who submit somewhat lower scores can begin their coursework and those of you who are on this webinar now have met, at the very minimum, that requirement. The condition, however, is that students must take the on-campus proficiency evaluation, what we refer to as the EPE, and you’ll hear that a lot. And that occurs during orientation week prior to your first registration. The test will have results and you are required to enroll in the courses that are indicated by those results.
Maureen: So what about the English language proficiency test? It has four parts to it. One is a 30-minute listening test and that is given only to undergraduate students. Graduate students did not take the listening test. There is a 40-item reading comprehension and vocabulary test that takes approximately 45 minutes. There's a 30 minute writing sample and then a 10 minute oral interview. The written part of the test is given in one sitting and then the oral interview is scheduled for another time during that first day.

Maureen: So what are the possible results? Well, the one that will make you the happiest, no further work in ESL at all. Or enrolled and required in one or more ESL classes, but these are for credit and they do count towards your degree as elective credit. Finally, it is very rare, but you may find that you have to take some classes in the intensive English program in our transitional ESL courses.

Maureen: What does the ESL credit program look like? There are five different courses for degree students. So you may need one, you may need two, or you may need all five. These are in reading, writing, grammar, listening and note taking, and in oral skills. Typically, students need a couple, they don't usually need all five, but sometimes students do.

Maureen: So how do these classes help you? They help to ensure your academic success. They provide a foundation and language support for you during your first year and beyond. The classes are small, so you have lots of opportunities to ask about the culture and about language. They allow you to adjust to studying in English. They provide a small comfortable environment to help you understand U.S. classroom culture. Finally, they help with language questions related to other classes. Your English teacher is not just your English teacher, but somebody who will help you navigate the culture and help you understand academic issues in the United States. So they provide additional language support, you receive elective credit and you take these courses at the same time that you are taking your academic courses. We’re not telling you that can’t do your academic courses. They’re part of your full time study.

Maureen: So we’re going move on to something that applies only to graduate students and that is teaching assistantships. Many of you who are coming to the University as graduate students have been offered a teaching assistantship. So how does that work?

Maureen: All of you who are coming, for whom English is not your first language, must be tested to be certified as ready to teach at the university of Iowa classroom. Testing assures overall language effectiveness in the classroom so that you are ready to walk into a classroom to teach in English, which is an amazing accomplishment for somebody in another language.

Maureen: So the testing that is required is a test called the ESPA which is the English Spoken Proficiency Assessment, and that is given in the language lab. There's information about that on clas.uiowa.edu/esl/tape, and this is on the slide for you to go back, hit that link, and it will give you this video there for you to see exactly what that test is. If you pass that test, you want to take the second test called the ELPT. But you may also, instead of having to take the ESPA, if you have a TOEFL score with a sub-score of 26 in speaking and 25 in listening, you’re exempt from the ESPA. So if you meet that requirement, make sure that you are in contact with your department to request or make sure that they are requesting that exemption for you. It has to be an official score that the University has.
Maureen: The ELPT is the English Language Performance Test. Students give a 10-minute presentation to an audience of the topic from their discipline. The audience ask questions, both during and after the presentation, then the presentation is rated by two ESL faculty. Only language is evaluated, we do not evaluate your teaching ability, your ability to interact, but rather only your language.

Maureen: Students who scores 60 on the ESPA, which is the highest score you can get, are exempt from taking the ELPT and are fully certified to teach any class. We know this is a lot of information to take in now, but there is information on the website to help you with that. Levels of certification reflect the duties that teaching assistants have at the University of Iowa. If you are fully certified, you may have full responsibility for a class. If you don’t pass the ESPA, you may end up grading or holding office hours, and then taking some courses specifically to help you improve as an instructor in your language until you do pass. Most common duties of teaching assistants at the University of Iowa are to run a discussion section under the supervision of a University of Iowa professor who is providing a lecture, or being the person responsible for a laboratory section in one of the sciences. For example, in chemistry.

Maureen: As I said, for those who do not pass, coursework in ESL is available. And the three classes are fluency building in culture, pronunciation, and then presentation skills, that is given to students who pass the ESPA but still need some work on their language, and we help you learn compensation skills that will help your audience or your class better understand you by using other strategies.

Maureen: This is called the TAPE program and other components of that are an orientation program the first time you are teaching, and a follow up program where somebody from the TAPE program visits your class, not to evaluate you, but to provide support for you and help you with any questions that you may have. So in the end everyone in the University of Iowa wants to help you be successful, have a good educational experience, and finally graduate. And that's why we go all the way back, that's why there's an English language proficiency required. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Andrea: Thank you all for your presentations. We will now move on to the questions and answer portion of our webinar. We have received some questions for just about each of the panelists today so I’ll take the questions in the order that we have received them.

Andrea: Who is the person I need to talk to at my department? Should I email the chair directly or should it be somebody else?

Anne: That's a good question. Of course, it will probably vary department by department, which is the tricky thing about grad education, but in general, I usually recommend reaching out to the person that you have already been talking to. Which may be in admissions person or it maybe a support staff member. Often faculty are a little busier, so I do recommend reaching out to administrative staff for admissions staff, but it's usually best to just continue with anyone you've already been speaking to as well.
Andrea: Perfect, thank you so much. Then the next question is also about graduate students and from graduate students, and the question is whether they need to take any placement tests.

Anne: That is a good question. I would say Maureen’s content about that language placement tests are probably the only tests I can think of if you’ve already been admitted. There are tests for admission that you might need to take depending on your field, but once you have been admitted, I believe the only thing would be anything related to our ESL program.

Andrea: OK. Thank you. Well speaking of tests, there is another question about whether the student needs to, if they are an undergrad student, if they need to take math placement test if they will be an English major.

Tina: Not right away, and if they're just going on taking classes or majoring in a non-engineering natural science or health sciences, if you’re not majoring in one of those three areas, then you don’t need to take it before you get to campus. However, that doesn't mean that you won't have to take one at some point, but you can talk to your advisor about when is the appropriate time to take a math placement test would be.

Andrea: Thank you. All right, let's move on to the next question. That would be about international student orientation because apparently there is a student who may be visiting family in California until January 10. Would that be OK if they arrived Iowa City after that, or is it late for orientation?

Brandon: So that would be late for orientation. We do ask that all new international students arrive by January 6th in the Iowa City area and attend all orientation experiences, because we wouldn’t want you to miss anything important during orientation week So I would change your plans to make sure to be here on time.

Andrea: Perfect, thank you. The next question is actually more logistical and it's about housing specifically, so I don't know if Tina if you would like to answer that. The students said that they heard that there was an extra cost if they arrived early at the dormitory and they’re asking what the cost might be.

Tina: Sometimes there is an additional cost to move in early. That needs to be discussed with housing and it's a per-day cost it really depends on how early you will be arriving, and whether or not they have space available for you to move into. The best way to contact them is to contact housing.

Andrea: We do actually have a recording on the on-campus housing. We had a webinar on September 21 and students actually can find the full, probably more answers to those kind of questions in that recording of the webinar. And so I would encourage anyone to just visit our webinar on pre arrival webinar website where the recording is available.

Tina: Thank you.

Andrea: Let us look at other questions here and that would be something for Maureen. The student has a U.S. bachelor’s degree, and if that's the case, do they still need to take TOEFL?

Maureen: I believe no, but I would check with the office of admissions about that. Grad admissions, to see if they are requiring you to do that. Those decisions are made on an individual basis, and there may
or may not be reasons for you doing it. So check with the international admissions or graduate ambitions.

Andrea: All right and actually, the next one is also about testing. This one is about ESPA and the question is whether they need to take the ESPA test if they have a fellowship.

Maureen: I think that that decision would be made by your department, because even if you are not a teaching assistant, even if the department is not giving you an assistantship now that you have a fellowship, it’s possible that later you will be given a teaching assistantship. If that is the case, the department may want you to do the ESPA now, so that if you needed coursework it could be done in time for you to assume most teaching responsibilities. So again, that’s really a question for your department and something that they will probably have made a decision on by the time you arrive, but you could check with them.

Andrea: OK. Great, thank you. Let us look at another question here. A student is asking whether they need to sign up for or register for classes before orientation and who can help them with that.

Brandon: So students, undergraduate students, you would not register before orientation. Many students are required to take the English proficiency evaluations, the EPE. You would need to actually wait until you have taken that before you register for courses. You would actually be assigned academic advising time during orientation. For graduate students, that is something that you will need to talk to your department about when you can register. Again if you’re held to the EPE, you might have to wait until orientation, if you to register.

Anne: I'll just add that if you are a grad student, connecting with your department is important in that situation as well. Each department has a different process and timing for how they enroll students before they arrive. So touch base with your department if you’re at the grad level.

Andrea: Thank you. Let us take a look at some other questions that we have received. One of them is again about EPE testing and specifically, if the student has high ACT scores in English, do they need to take the EPE?

Maureen: Yes. Only the TOEFL of 600 or 100 on the IBT exempts somebody from taking the English proficiency evaluations.

Andrea: All right, thank you. Another question would be about the orientation and, basically, academic preparation and the student is asking whether they can know who their academic advisor is before they meet them.

Brandon: You will find out during orientation who your academic advisor is. You may also be able to check MyUI and check to see who your academic advisor is. Maybe Tina can help answer that.

Tina: You likely won't be assigned an advisor until about five days before orientation. It may show up online in your MyUI system, but it might not be there until closer to the first day of class. When you attend orientation and get your individualized schedule, you should be able to see at around that time who your advisor is and where and when you will meet with them.
Andrea: OK. All right perfect. Thank you. Looks like we have one more question. That would be about the website for new students. I am not sure, may be they referring to new-students.uiowa website, and they say that the website says that they have to reserve orientation. How do they do that?

Tina: So that particular website and what it is talking about is orientation for domestic students. The ISSS website is where international students should look for their orientation. The new students.uiowa.edu website though has information about placement tests for all new students, only undergraduate students. And so you should disregard any of the orientation information on that new students website since that is just for domestic students. And all international orientation information would be on the ISSS website, in your pre-arrival checklist.

Brandon: And I'll add to that - you don't need to actually register for orientation because it is mandatory. You will actually just need to complete the pre-arrival checklist. We do have... One of the items is an orientation confirmation, where you'll share your arrival to the US, to the University of Iowa. So it's just important to complete your pre-arrival checklist about to have access to your orientation schedule. Once that is available.

Andrea: Thank you so very much. And if anyone listening to the webinar would like to share anymore questions with us we still have a little bit more time. But in the mean time I would like to mention that we will also in the chat function. We will send a quick survey and we would like to ask you to please respond to the survey. So that we know a little bit more about your experience with the webinar and that will help us to improve or do anything that may need to be done to address your needs during the webinars.

Andrea: And we don't have any other questions right now. But let me go ahead and give you a reminder that we are going to have two more webinars this month. And in two weeks, we will have on Friday November 16th we will be talking about University billing and health insurance. We will discuss UBill matters and so we will have experts in those two areas. And then also we will have another webinar on November 30th and that will be on academic expectations. We hope that you will be able to join us.

Andrea: And also I would like to again, remind everyone that we are recording our webinars and two previous webinars are already posted on our website. So please do take advantage and listen to them. There are also transcription texts for both webinars and we will try our best to post today's webinar as well on the website as soon as possible. Typically it takes about 10 to 14 days. But if we're done sooner we will send you an email and let you know that the recording is available for you.

Andrea: If there are no other questions for today then we will close our webinar. Thank you so much for attending and we look forward to having you join us for the next webinar on November 16th.