Spring 2020 Pre-arrival Webinar Series:
Orientation Expectations

Andrea: Hello, hello, and welcome to our final in the series of pre-arrival webinars for new international students arriving to the University of Iowa in spring 2020. Today's topic is understanding orientation expectations, responsibilities and placement tests.

Andrea: If you have not attended the webinar series before, we would like to let you know that this is an optional series provided to new incoming international students before they arrive in Iowa City. The objective of the series is to help new international students to arrange plans for travel to and living in Iowa city, to understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, and finally to transition to student life and academics at the University of Iowa. Just a quick reminder that all webinars are being recorded and we will post them on our website as listed on the slide, which is international.uiowa.edu/prearrival-webinar.

Andrea: If you encounter any technical difficulties during the webinar, please let us know in the chat function. However, if you have questions for our presenters and that are related to today's topic, please use the Q+A function to post your questions. We will definitely reserve some time at the end to answer those questions live at the end of the webinar.

Andrea: If you have not received your I-20 or DS-2019 immigration document, please remember that you still have to pay e-ShipGlobal shipping fee so ISSS can mail you this document. Once you have your immigration document, only then you can apply for your respective visa. This information is also contained in the pre-arrival checklist in iHawk and the address is ihawk.uiowa.edu. If you still have any questions or concerns regarding your immigration document, please contact our orientation team at the email address provided on the slide, which is isss-orientation@uiowa.edu.

Andrea: Let's review some important dates. December 14 is the absolute earliest day to arrive to Iowa City. December 15 is a due date if you have a disability housing request. December 16 is the deadline for reserving the airport transportation with University of Iowa student government. They are arranging for shuttle transportation from the Cedar Rapids airport or Eastern Iowa airport to Iowa City and University. January 12 is the latest day to arrive to Iowa City because on January 13 through January 17, we have a mandatory orientation for international students. This is the international student orientation conducted by ISSS and we will have more details about this during the webinar today. And finally, January 21st is the date when we start the Spring 2020 semester.

Andrea: Let's do some presenter introductions.

Jennifer: Hi. My name is Jennifer Teitle. I'm an assistant dean for graduate student professional development in the Graduate College of the University of Iowa.

Brianne: Hello. My name is Brianne Schwarz, I am an associate director in office of orientation services.

Dongwang: Hello. My name is Dongwang Liu. I’m helping with incoming students (at ISSS).
**Jeff:** Hello. My name is Jeff Knowling. I'm the assistant director of the ESL programs here at the University of Iowa.

**Andrea:** And my name is Andrea Siebenmann, and I'm one of the ISSS advisors and webinar coordinator for today. Let's quickly review today's goals. We will review orientation for graduate students as well as orientation placement tests and Success at Iowa course for undergraduate students. We will help you learn about ISSS orientation schedule and also participation expectations. And finally, we will help you understand the English proficiency requirements for undergraduate and graduate students. Again, at the end of the webinar we will hopefully have time to answer live questions and provide answers.

**Andrea:** Let's begin with the graduate student orientation.

**Jennifer:** Great, thank you. So as I mentioned before, my name is Jen Teitle. I'm an assistant dean of the graduate college. A little bit about the graduate college: we are at the college that sort of grants degrees in the end, we assist graduate students through funding and fellowships and services broadly across the colleges.

**Jen:** That said, at the University of Iowa, in graduate school, your department serves as your main home. So the graduate college will offer assistance and guidance as a central location, but a lot of your day to day dealings and conversations, courses, assistantships will happen through your home department. So grad studies are decentralized at Iowa. Your department is really the main contact for you as a graduate student. So a lot of graduate students are very interested in assistantships. This would be either a teaching assistantship where you would teach our undergraduates here at the University of Iowa or possibly a research assistantship, where you would be working on research with a faculty member. And these assistantships pay a stipend as well as help you with your benefits here at Iowa. So the assistantships are negotiated and discussed with your home department. This would be either a teaching assistantship where you would teach our undergraduates here at the University of Iowa or possibly a research assistantship, where you would be working on research with a faculty member. And these assistantships pay a stipend as well as help you with your benefits here at Iowa. So the assistantships are negotiated and discussed with your home department. So it will actually be within your discipline that you'll be having this conversation. Coursework is also managed within your home department. And then professional development; this is broad at Iowa and some departments have their own professionalization and professional development, things like helping you prepare for your career, or learning how to write a grant. Some departments do not have that, in which case those students have access to centralized services through the graduate college to help you do that work. It's important to note that there is not a central big graduate student orientation for the spring. That happens only once a year here at the University of Iowa, but you should be in contact with your program to see if they have some orientation procedures that would help you at the program level. And again, as you can see on that second bullet, we are always happy to help students. We work with a lot of graduate students at the graduate college and we can sort of serve as a secondary guide for you during graduate education.

**Jen:** So, my unit specifically helps with that graduate student professional development. Three of our main areas include external fellowship and grant writing support. So during your graduate program, you'll probably want to start to learn the process of applying for funding to national funders and to smaller university funders. So this is the process of applying, writing up the proposal to fund the research that you do. We help students learn to do the kind of writing that you need to successfully apply for and receive money. We help with career strategy exploration and planning for graduate students. So graduate students at Iowa do not go to our undergraduate career center. They come either to the program and/or to the graduate college for support on career exploration and planning. Then we
actually for international students will still work closely with ISSS and with Pomerantz Career Center to help you with additional resources. And then finally we have a program that is the Center for the Integration of Research Teaching and Learning. It’s called CIRTL for short. And this is a program that helps graduate students that are here at Iowa teaching, learn to be stronger teachers, more reflective teachers, and better think about things like diversity and inclusion in their classroom practice, which is really critical if you plan to go on to teach as part of your career after graduate school.

Jen: Iowa City is a beautiful city, and a wonderful community to live in and you will surely enjoy it. The process of settling in can feel a little daunting, I’m sure, before you get here, but there’s a lot of people that are anxious and excited to help you out. So as you settle in you can take a look at the UI Grad Guide, which was created by graduate students and maintained by the University. The Grad Guide will offer you a sense of some of the places where graduate students live, eat, the things that they go do for entertainment on the weekends, the music they might listen to, other places where they could dance or enjoy the weekend. And those are sort of built into the Grad Guide. It is not comprehensive. It doesn’t show all of the great places that we have here, but you can learn a lot about the city from a graduate student’s perspective in that Guide. And then as you can see at the bottom of that list, if you are coming with your family and you need childcare or childcare resources, that’s also a link inside the Grad Guide you can access the University’s resources related to child care and support in the community.

Andrea: Thank you. And we’re going to move to the undergraduate orientation.

Brianne: Yes, thank you. This is Brianne again, and my focus is going to shift from graduate students to undergraduate students. We’re going to talk about required placement tests and the Success at Iowa course. So all new students should complete the required placement test as soon as possible to be ready for registration in the spring. And placement tests can be accessed through the admissions profile on MyUI. And in order to review what test to take, you can check out the website newstudents.uiowa.edu on the placement tests tab on the right side of the page to help you figure out which ones you should take. And there are three types of placement tests that students can take before arriving on campus and those are math, chemistry, and world language. Let’s review those three in more detail.

Brianne: So, the math placement test is broken out into two different types. So, if you have not taken calculus in high school or have not earned college credit for calculus you should take the ALEKS, A-L-E-K-S math placement exam. This test takes about 90 minutes to complete. If you have completed calculus or earned college credit for calculus, you should take the advanced math placement test, and that test takes about 30 minutes to complete. Any student considering a major in engineering, the health sciences like biology, chemistry, pre-medicine, or the natural sciences such as environmental sciences, geoscience, etc. should take the chemistry diagnostic placement test. And that test takes about 90 minutes to complete. So, if you are wondering which placement test you’ll need to complete, or with your major falls under each category, again, check out that newstudents.uiowa.edu website in order to see if your major is listed there.

Brianne: Moving on to world language placement tests. I’ll start by saying if you’re interested in taking or starting a new language, you do not need to take a placement test. If you have taken coursework in Spanish, German, Chinese, or French and want to continue taking coursework in those areas, you will need to take an online placement test prior to enrolling in your course. These tests take around 25 minutes to complete. And if you have taken a coursework in Russian, Latin, Greek, Japanese, or
American Sign Language and want to continue in those languages, placement tests can be arranged in person once you're on campus. And again, to learn about these world language placement tests, you can also visit that newstudents.uiowa.edu website. And reminder, if you are starting a new language, there is no need to take a placement test. Just enroll in the entry level course when you register for classes.

Brianne: So, moving on to Success at Iowa, the required online course for all of our new undergraduate students at Iowa. This is for international and domestic students. This is delivered in five stages and gives you information on what is most applicable to you and your transition to the University of Iowa. We know that there is a lot to learn and you can't learn it all in one day or one afternoon, so this is why this course exists. The class opens on December 2nd, and you should try to complete the first two stages of the course before arriving to Iowa City, if that's possible for you. You can access the course on ICON or Iowa Courses Online at icon.uiowa.edu, and you need to complete each of the five stages by passing the quizzes at 80 percent or better in order to move on to the next stage.

Brianne: So a bit more detail and some dates listed here on each of the remaining stages: the class covers topics that range from academic resources on campus to financial resources and information, transportation around campus and Iowa City, and information on how to transition into your new home here on the University of Iowa’s campus. So, stage two, the second stage that we hope you complete before arrival to campus will open on December 16. And then stages one and two should be finished prior to the start of classes. Stages three and four open on the first day of class, and then stage five opens about three weeks into the semester on February 5th. The deadline for the course, all five stages, is February 21st, so this class will be completed within the first 6 weeks of the semester. Another reminder or something to note about this course is that the modules can continue to be accessed after you finish the course, in order to provide you an opportunity to revisit information in the future should you need it. This is a great way to get started in, again, getting acquainted with your new home, but also can provide some nice reminders if you'd like to revisit any important information as you go through your first semester here on campus. So again, you'll want to log into icon.uiowa.edu on or after December 2nd to begin the course.

Andrea: Great. Thank you so much, and we will transition into the international student orientation conducted by ISSS.

Dongwang: Thank you, Andrea.

Dongwang: Here as you see, we have the orientation week for international students from January 13th to January 17th and the purpose for having such a week is to support your transition to the campus life at the University of Iowa. There are lot of academic issues, you need to learn in order to start school this semester. And we also talk about cultural adjustments and the immigration regulations and how to successfully maintain your status as a J-1 or F-1 student, and also this is a good opportunity for you to get to know new students and someone you will socialize later in the semester.

Dongwang: So, several days that we need to emphasize as we talked, as Andrea has already talked about before. Saturday January 11th is the day when the residence halls will be open at 12 P.M. And so students who have contracts will, undergraduate students who have contracts, will be able to move in on that day. And then they will have meal plans that started on the day and also there will be daily rates,
daily charges for your room until January 18th. There is a Sunday, Sunday January 12th, that's a day you should arrive to Iowa City and to the University of Iowa to start the orientation week the next day. So those two are important days for moving in for undergrads who have already had a residence hall contracts, and for our graduate students to arrive on Sunday January 12th, so is for undergrads.

**Dongwang:** So, the orientation week starts on Monday, January 13th, and we will have a welcome by the staff of the International Student and Scholar Services, and then we'll have small group leaders that will share information with you about the university about the week of orientation, and then the staff will talk about immigration regulations, and so that's for Monday. On Tuesday, there will be an English Proficiency Evaluation, everyone will need to take that to be assessed for English. And then also small group meetings and the small group leaders will guide you for different activities, will share information, will answer your questions about a life at the University.

Wednesday, we will have a cultural adjustment session where we'll talk about cultural adjustments for all international students, and there will be a lot of units sharing information on health insurance, recreational facilities, and also there will be a chance to meet small group leaders who will guide you. Thursday, January 16th, is academics, again small group meetings. And also the last day is Friday with, again, with lot of a campus information. And so, it's a full week of informational sessions and all that will be helpful for your life on campus.

**Dongwang:** So, the small group sessions that we have recruited small group leaders. These are current students, both domestic and international, who are pretty experienced, and will lead in little different small groups you are assigned to and for, to guide you through the week. And so they will cover all different topics, special topics and they can answer any questions you have regarding things that we don’t cover during orientation with such as you know, how the bus system in the city of Coralville and the city of Iowa City, and then on-campus buses and a lot of information can be obtained from these small group leaders. And also they will have some fun activities for you to encourage you to talk, to ask questions, and so to get you familiarized with the University.

**Dongwang:** In order to successfully participate in orientation, you will get your personal orientation schedule, and so you need to attend all the required sessions. Some sessions are optional, but the required sessions are very, very important. So, there are a few sessions that are very important like the English proficiency evaluation and the academic advising on Tuesdays and Thursdays and then these should take priorities. And so, I guess the best thing to do during the week is to introduce yourself and get to know others and make new friends with the new students and/or with your student small group leaders and as future resources for your campus life, again. So, make sure you participate in all the small group meetings. And that will cover a lot of fears of your study.

**Dongwang:** To look at your orientation schedule, you need to log into the portal of the ihawk.uiowa.edu and look at the pre-arrival checklist, and you will see the orientation tab on the right of the screen with an orange rectangle. And then you can click ‘Get your orientation schedule’, which is individualized and to get it printed out even before you arrive. So, try to remember the days, the important days.

**Dongwang:** If you have any questions regarding your pre-arrival arrangements, or issues, you can always email, send an email to the orientation email we monitor; issss-orientation@uiowa.edu. Any questions
can be directed to that email and we will try our best to answer and to provide the best information you can have. And that can be disability and mobility accommodations, and accessibilities in the dorms in the classrooms, and so anything you want to have.

Dongwang: So, here are more resources. Our website is international.uiowa.edu/new-students and these are links of, different topics for international students, both graduate and undergrad. And you can find a lot of information there in regards to your settlement, your arrival, transportation, housing and dining, and off-campus housing... and so if you navigate that there, you’ll find a lot of useful information for your arrival and settlement.

Andrea: OK, and we will move to our final part of the webinar today to testing and ESL requirements.

Jeff: Hi. This is Jeff Knowling. I'm taking the place for Maureen Burke our director. I'll give you the information about the testing process that you’ll undergo once you arrive here on campus.

Jeff: We have this requirement for testing for a couple of reasons. Mostly is to ensure that you're going to be successful as a student here at the University of Iowa. We want to make sure that your English skill is strong enough that it won't be a problem for you in your coursework. Even students with strong English language proficiency sometimes face challenges in the classroom. So we want to make sure that you’re not burdened with an extra challenge. So that all your language skills are up where they need to be.

Jeff: The requirement for the English Proficiency Evaluation is for any student who has scored below 100 on the internet-based TOEFL or 600 on the paper-based TOEFL. Now the result of the test would be that you have to take some ESL credit coursework, but you will receive credit for those classes as elective credits that count towards graduation.

Jeff: So, if you have less than a hundred, you must take the English Proficiency Evaluation that will be on during the orientation week and as a result of that test, you will be placed in courses that you must complete as part of your work here at the University of Iowa. Some of them must be completed prior to enrolling in additional coursework such as rhetoric, which is required by all freshmen here at the University of Iowa. The reasons that you need to take this test is to make sure that your language skills are up so that you can successfully complete your degree program. And we're trying to identify areas of language skill that need a little bit more support. This could be in the areas of reading, writing, oral skills, listening, or grammar, and if you need help in one or all of those areas, we will provide coursework for you, and again those courses do you earn University credit.

Jeff: The test itself takes up pretty much all morning of your day. They'll be started off with a writing sample that will take 30 minutes to complete. Following that, the next part of the test is the reading comprehension and vocabulary, and that usually takes about 45 minutes, and then the last part of the main test is the listening test and that's for undergraduates only. If you're a graduate student, you will take the first two parts, the writing and the reading and then everyone again will have a 10-minute oral interview with faculty and ESL programs. So those are the components of the English Proficiency Evaluation. You can find more of this information on ESL programs website, which is listed at the bottom of this slide. That's: clas.uiowa.edu/esl
Jeff: Now as a result of taking the English Proficiency Evaluation, possibilities are that you are cleared, and you require no further work in ESL. You may be enrolled in one or more ESL credit classes. And if your score is significantly low, you will be enrolled in what we call ESL transitional courses. These courses do not earn credit, but you must complete these successfully before you can then take the ESL credit class that corresponds to that. So, make sure that when you’re taking the EPE that you’re providing the best work that you can, showing the strength of your language skills. We want to make sure that you are placed in the right coursework or no further ESL coursework, if that’s what you need.

Jeff: As I mentioned earlier, there are five different courses for degree students in the ESL credit program. Those are reading, writing, grammar, listening, and note-taking and oral skills.

Jeff: These classes, we found, from following students who have taken them, help to ensure students’ academic success. They provide a strong foundation in language support for the first year and beyond, and they help students sort of settle into the new learning environment. If you've been studying in your home country, sometimes it's not always in English, so this helps that transition become a little bit more smooth. It also provides a comfortable environment to ask about US classroom culture. Your instructors, our faculty members here at the university of Iowa, or, in some cases, teaching assistants in the linguistics program. We’ll also help with language-related questions for your other classes.

Jeff: For those of you that are graduate students and hoping to receive the teaching assistantship from your department, there are also a couple of tests that you need to take if your department has offered you a teaching assistantship, that’s the first step.

Jeff: And then if your first language is not English, you will have to have your English tested and certified as ready to teach in the University of Iowa classroom. There are two tests in this process, and it assures that your overall language effectiveness is strong enough that you will be effective in the classroom as a teacher.

Jeff: The two tests you start off with the English Spoken Proficiency Assessment, or the ESPA. This is an oral proficiency test. It's given in the language lab and there'll be about 12 or more students taking it at one time. It's sort of in an interview format and you can find more information about that on the website. Students who have a TOEFL score with sub-score in speaking of 26 and 25 in the listening, will be exempted from this first test but must take the following test which is the ELPT.

Jeff: So, if you have successfully completed the ESPA, the first 30-minute test, you will then have a 10-minute presentation where you are giving a mini lesson. The audience, your students, will be faculty members in ESL programs who will be asking questions during and after the presentation. The presentation will be rated by two or more ESL faculty independently, and only your language is being evaluated, not your teaching ability, and not the content of what you're teaching. So students who have scored 60 on the ESPA are exempt from taking the ELPT and will be fully certified. So those are the two tests if you’re going to be a teaching assistant as a graduate student here at the University of Iowa.

Jeff: Levels of certification depend on how you scored in your ELPT. The top score would mean that you have the ability to teach courses here at the University. If you score a little bit lower you may be doing
work in your department, possibly grading papers, conducting office hours, holding discussion sections or things like that.

Jeff: If you’ve taken these tests and you have not been certified to teach here at the University, we do provide some courses for you, so that when you take those tests again, you’ll be better prepared to be successful in those tests. These are in the teaching assistant preparation and English program. Depending on what your scores are, you could be placed in a fluency building and culture course, one that focuses on pronunciation, or just one that focuses on presentation skills. So this would be for students that have passed the ESPA, but were not as successful on the ELPT.

Jeff: Other TAPE components in the program. If you have been certified and ready to teach in a classroom we do have an orientation program. This is required for those who are going to be teaching. It’s a way to form a community with other graduate teaching assistants, and also recognize some of the help that ESL programs can still provide to you. There is also a follow-up program where all the first-time TA’s are observed in classroom teaching. It’s a way for them to get some additional support, suggestions, and to ask any questions of the follow-up person who is faculty in ESL programs.

Jeff: All of this is to help you become successful here at the University of Iowa, to have a good educational experience, and most of all to make sure that you graduate on time.

**Q & A**

Andrea: Thank you so much to all of our presenters for providing a very useful information to our new students. And as the slide indicates, we are in the part of our presentation today when we are going to be answering some questions that we have received, so far. Let me start with the first question that was about international student type of orientation. Specifically the student is a transfer in graduate student, and so they have been an F1 student previously at another institution here in the United States, and they already have had an extensive interaction with their department here. The question is if they really need to attend the international student orientation, because they’re going to have a separate orientation with their department, graduate department. Can you answer to that?

Dongwang: They’re still required to attend all the sessions, and some materials they might be pretty familiar with, but there’s all kinds of information regarding the services, of facilities, and especially the tests and so they need to come.

Andrea: Alright. Thank you. Yes, I would just add on behalf of ISSS that the orientation is absolutely mandatory even for transfer students, because the university policies including those that apply to international students could be different from the previous institution that the student attended and so it’s very important to be familiar with what University of Iowa requires.

The next question was about the Success at Iowa course and weather student needs to sign up for it. And if by the time they wish to maybe start the Success at Iowa, are they going to get any reminder or how does that work?

Brianne: Good question. You do not need to do anything to sign up for Success at Iowa. It will just be available to you through your ICON portal starting on December 2nd. You will get an email reminder. Potentially more than one. But, yes, just know that it will be available to you starting on December 2 through ICON.
Andrea: Excellent. Thank you. Move on to the next question. Actually, it's about Success at Iowa again. Student is asking whether they should take the Success at Iowa course if they are an incoming PhD student.

Brianne: Also good question. Incoming PhD students do not need to take Success at Iowa. That is just required of our undergraduate population. But like I mentioned, the modules are available online for undergraduate students to refer to later. So if you are interested in the content as a PhD student, and you can go to the website success.uiowa.edu. And there you can see some of the modules, not quite all of them, but some that are available to all of us to refer to if you are interested in the contents as an incoming PhD student.

Jen: I'll add that this is where you go potentially to the grad guide, or you can go straight to the graduate college page where you would find some different resources and offerings that might be more relevant to you in your PhD program and lifestyle.

Andrea: Excellent. Thank you very much. And, in terms of speaking of graduate assistantship, or graduate students, so student is asking what's the difference between assistantship and a part time job and can they do both or just one in the first semester.

Jen: You cannot hold a part-time job here as an international student off of campus, here at the University of Iowa. An assistantship is a special sort of job that pays you a stipend, and actually they pay quite well here at the University of Iowa. They also offer you a wide variety of benefits, discounts on your insurance, and other sort of relationship building with your program. There's a lot of reasons to try to get an assistantship with your program, if at all possible. There's two types: One is called a half-time assistantship, and that is 20 hours a week. One is called a quarter-time assistantship, and that would be 10 hours a week. For your assistantship you might do a wide variety of things. So again, you might teach and go through that process. You might also do research. You might also be able to get an administrative assistantship where you're sort of helping around in a program or in an office space here on campus. But, if at all possible, finding a way to work with your program to secure an assistantship is the best kind of funding that a graduate student can get. Then, on top of the assistantship, there's a variety of smaller amounts of funding that you can apply for. So the Graduate College gives over 150 summer stipends each year, where we're providing summer support for graduate students to live, work on their dissertation, do some preliminary data collection, things like that. So there's a variety. Programs also have some awards like that; small stipends, small amounts of money to support your travel or research as a doctoral student or as a Master's student. But the vast majority of graduate students should look towards an assistantship rather than a part time job. And in most cases a part time job, as I said off-campus, is not available to international students at all.

Andrea: And I can actually add to that. Thank you so much. I would like to provide a little bit of clarification in that the international students can work on campus during the semester for up to 20 hours maximum per week. So, for example, if a student has a graduate assistantship already at half or 50 percent, it's already at the limit, so they cannot take on any other job. Then working off campus is a very different category of type of employment that ISSS typically advises to students about. So students would be certainly encouraged to contact us about that if they would be interested. You know, typically during the first semester, it would be advisable that students focus on getting adjusted to their academics and the responsibilities with their assistantship if they have one. I just wanted to add that.
Jen: I will also say, most PhD students you'll be taking course work for the first two years. If you're in STEM fields, you will also be responsible for a wide variety of seminars and other responsibilities to your department. And then you add on the assistantship… and for graduate student sort of health and lifestyle, we really recommend not a lot of work outside of the assistantship.

Andrea: Thank you so much for adding that. We do have another question that is related to TA-ship or teaching assistantship, and then also the EPE testing. So let's dive into that. The student is basically waiting to hear about their teaching assistantship award. And then the department...they think, the student thinks that they might be held to EPE requirement, and then they're worried that if they don't receive the required score from the EPE and have to do the TAPE program, and will they lose the TA-ship funding? So does this worry make even sense? So, is student missing something or can you somehow help them guide through this concern?

Jeff: The support would come from your department. So you would be required to take the English proficiency evaluation, and if you're hoping for a teaching assistantship, you would also take those additional tests; the ESPA and the ELPT. Now, if a student is not successful, the first time they take those exams, it would be up to their department if they're going to continue to support them while they take the extra course work that we offer for graduate students. It could be that your department would support you as you do other work within the department that is not teaching. Or they may find some other way to provide funding to you. But the only way that you can teach at Iowa is to successfully complete those two exams; the ESPA and the ELPT. Do you have anything to add?

Jennifer: No, that's correct. And I think this would be department by department. So if there's, say, research funding for a particular faculty member that needs somebody to help with collecting notes, collecting data, things like that. Sometimes they can switch a student on to that kind of assistantship temporarily, but those conversations take place with the department.

Andrea: Thank you so much. Very good. Student has a question also, that whether they will actually receive the exact amount of assistantship that will show on their I-20. Is that something that you would be able to address, or we could follow up with the student.

Jennifer: Yeah, that would be a follow up. I'm not sure what it says on their I-20.

Andrea: Only whether the amount of assistantship that student was offered... whether that would be, you know, granted or if the department will actually offer or pay to the student.

Jennifer: So my question would be I wonder if filled in on that I-20 is a standard amount. It varies slightly across disciplines.

Andrea: Right. And it usually is taken from the admissions letter and the offer letter.

Jennifer: Oh, okay, then it should be. It should be the same as the offer letter. OK. Alright sorry. That's a good question.

Andrea: Yes, alright. So we have a few questions still. It's sort of about EPE testing here but taken and looked at from different angles. So one question: There is a concern about performing well on the EPE test, because the student, maybe you know, still being affected by the jet lag and traveling long ways to
the United States, and they would like to make sure that they perform well and whether we have any suggestion on how they can be at their best for the test.

**Jeff:** Well, first of all, don't arrive the day before the test. Arrive as early as you can so that you can adjust to your new time zone, new climate, new environment. So that's going to be most important. That's also necessary to get on your sleep schedule here. The best thing that you can do before a test like this, is to get a good night's sleep and to have a light breakfast so that your focus is all on the test when you're taking it. I know that some people do get nervous. Just the word test makes them forget everything that they've ever learned, but we will try to make the test as relaxed environment as possible. So that you can do your best and we'll try to keep the nervousness down to a minimum. We do recognize that some students don't perform as well as they could on an exam, and if you're placed in a course, your instructors will be sort of tracking students who may have been misplaced by the test. So, if your ability shows to be a lot higher than your test score within the first week of class, there can be adjustments made at that time.

**Andrea:** Excellent. Thank you. And in that line, there is another question. Is there any, and I know you mentioned that already, is there any specific recommendation how and what to do to prepare for EPE?

**Jeff:** Just make sure that you're keeping your English skills up and as sharp as possible. My advice to students is watch as much American TV and cinema as possible. And read popular fiction. Don't worry about reading classic literature, read popular literature. And don't be afraid to pick up what's considered young adult or middle school books here in the United States. Some of those are very well written and are very engaging. So a lot of reading and a lot of exposure to video would be my recommendation.

**Andrea:** Excellent. Thank you so much. That's a great recommendation; very comprehensive. So I hope that it will help the student. Still going back to EPE, we have a student participating who says that they have a Canadian English Master's degree and their TOFL requirement was waived. In such case, do they still need to take the EPE test?

**Jeff:** You may not need to take the EPE, but most likely as a graduate student, if you're planning to teach, you would still be held for those other two tests if English is not your first language.

**Andrea:** Great. Thank you so much. Then last question is a little bit about the preparation of students for arriving to Iowa in January. It sounds like student is aware of the fact that it might be rather cold, and if they're coming from a warmer climate, they are sort of asking for advice because in their country, they don't really can buy substantial clothing, warm clothing. So how they should prepare for their flight, you know what kind of clothing they should be wearing not to put themselves in harm. They don't know what kind of weather is going to be. Is that something we can address quickly?

**Dongwang:** This is a Dongwang Liu. Yes, school starts in January and it's a cold time of the year, and you do need to have a warm coat. And those can be available here. They are easily available here in Iowa City in stores like Walmart, or other stores like Target. Don't be afraid. We don't spend too much time outdoors. You're not obligated to spend too much time outdoors, and inside the buildings and the buses and the places... it's very comfortable. And so you can also go to our website, and there will be resources telling you how to prepare. And you can also write an email to ISSS-orientation email and we will try to answer the questions.
**Andrea:** Thank you, Dongwang. Anyone else has any good tips for the students?

**Jennifer:** I would add that, you know you're going to land in a nice big warm airport. If you don’t have boots yet, or snow boots or something, you'll be fine. You could bring your regular sneakers or tennis shoes get onto a bus and come to Iowa City. Sidewalks would be clear. The areas to for you to get to where you need to go should be mostly cleared of snow. You would probably want to purchase some boots and gloves and things, but if you don’t have all of the gear when you first get here, as long as you maybe have a coat and a hat, you would be fine to be here for a while. As Dongwang said that you will be warm inside, and there’s plenty of ways to be inside.

**Andrea:** Sure. Any other tips? OK. Thank you so much, and we have actually answered the very last question for today’s webinar. And so we will close our presentation for today. Before we close today, I would like to ask the participants to help us evaluate the webinar. I have just shared a brief link to a webinar survey that we would like you to complete for us.

I do have couple of reminders about contacts and resources. So if you still have questions about your pre-arrival preparations and or pre-arrival checklist and any other issues, please do contact our orientation team at the email provided on the slide. As Dongwang mentioned earlier, it’s [ISSS-orientation@uiowa.edu](mailto:ISSS-orientation@uiowa.edu). Then I would like to also repeat again, our wonderful resource for new international students. That’s a website: international.uiowa.edu/new-students where you can find a lot of information to help you prepare before your arrival.

Then finally we have a reminder that previous webinars in this series have been recorded and already posted on our website. And so, you’re welcome to access those recordings through the web link that we provided previously on the webinars. And today’s webinar will be posted within the next 10 to 14 days on our website. We will let you know when that happens. And finally, we still encourage you to look at and review the pre-recorded webinars on different topics that can help complement some information that you might be interested in including how to get involved and engaged at the university, and to help you in your cultural adjustment, or to read about academic expectations, advising, and finally about the options of your employment as an international student. With that we would like to close today’s webinar, again thank you for participating. We look forward to seeing you at the orientation in January.

Bye!