

**BOSTON
UNIVERSITY**

International Graduate Student Guide

2023

Written by Students with Real Life Experiences



Sunset Boston Harbor by *Yuandi*

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Preface

Dear Terriers,

Welcome to Boston University!

Like you, we are a group of international graduate students. During our time here, we have found that international students, due to their unfamiliarity with the United States, have difficulties finding resources helpful to us and, as a result, have problems with various aspects of adapting to Boston and the American graduate school system. From our experiences, we had the idea to create a guide for you, the Boston University international graduate students.

This guide is organized in chronological order, with helpful information on the principal matters of navigating your academic and daily life. All the content comes from our experience. Whenever and wherever you encounter a problem, use **Ctrl/⌘+F** to search keywords to find answers to your question. We hope this will help, and we also provide the appendix at the end of the text.


We want to thank Chelsea Cobb, Co-director of the College Mental Health Education Programs in the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Sarah Garibova, Assistant Director for Outreach in the Educational Resource Center, and Lu He, Academic Advisor in Graduate Affairs in the College of Communication for their help and support during this process. We also want to thank Jiating Zhu in the College of Arts and Sciences for creating these co-author connections, Alexandria Yen in the College of Arts and Sciences for proofreading, BU Global Programs and the co-authors of the international undergraduate students' guide, especially Ariane Vigna for the inspiration behind creating our guide.


If you have any questions, feel free to [contact us](#). We will be more than happy to connect with you.


Finally, we want to remind you of one success motto: *everything here can be discussed!* So do not hesitate to email the offices mentioned in the guide.

We wish you a prosperous academic career and all the best in your future endeavors!

Co-authors of the International Graduate Student Guide

Abel Aruan 

Gizem Kaftan 

Yuandi Tang 

About the Co-authors



Yuandi Tang (COM'23) was born and raised in East China. He got his bachelor's degree in English literature in 2014. After seven years of working in the marketing field, Yuandi realized his passion lay in data-driven digital marketing. He is now studying in the Marketing Communication Research program and hopes to move on to be a professional and emerging marketer. In his free time, Yuandi enjoys traveling and he takes full advantage of Boston's rich cultural scene by visiting as many museums and attending as many BSO concerts as possible.

Yuandi's

[Email](#) [Linkedin](#) [Facebook](#)
[Twitter](#) [Instagram](#)



Abel Aruan (STH'23) graduated with a bachelor's degree in theology from Southeast Asia Bible Seminary, Indonesia. Living amid cultural plurality and economic segregation, Abel is committed to advocating for the unprivileged through his scholarly and social engagement in religious and theological studies. Now he is doing a Master of Theological Studies degree at the School of Theology and aspires to be a teacher and researcher in the future. In addition, he enjoys watching anime and drinking coffee in his spare time.

Abel's

[Email](#) [Linkedin](#) [Facebook](#)
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Gizem Kaftan (GRS'24) was born and raised in Turkey. She received her bachelor's degree in International Relations and Sociology in 2017 from Koç University. She received her master's degree in International Affairs from Northeastern University. She is now in the Political Science Ph.D. program. Her research is on the European Union, comparative politics, and political methodology. In her free time, she plays the piano, flute, and clarinet, and listens to classical music. Her favorite composer is Frédéric Chopin.

Gizem's

[Email](#) [Linkedin](#) [Twitter](#)
[Instagram](#) [Website](#)

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Before Coming

Welcome to Boston University. When you receive your acceptance letter, please note that the following tasks must be completed before coming to the United States.

Student Permissions (internal documents requested by the university)

1. Documents:

- [Application Form](#)
- TOEFL/IELTS transcript
- Passport Identity Page
- [Proof of deposit/property/proof of salary](#) (Balance of more than one year of tuition)

2. Email to your College's Admission

U.S. Student Visa (F1/I-20) (Apply through U.S. Government)

Documents

- [Resume](#)
- Identification & Passport
- [Visa photo](#)
- [Financial Proof](#)
- Admission offer letter/email
- I-20
- DS-160

Application Process

- [Pay SEVIS fee](#)
- [Fill out DS160](#)
- [Visa appointment](#) and pay visa fees
- [Visa Interview](#)

Tips: If you have concerns that regular U.S. Postal Service mail may take too long, you may ask them to send the DS-2019 through a particular express service that you trust. Note, however, that you must pay this express cost.

Pay Tuition

BU accepts payment by transfer from a U.S. account, flywire, or Western Union for tuition and fees.

- [Tuition Inquiry](#) (The exact number of your tuition and fees)
- [Fees explanation](#)
- [Fees deductions](#)
- [Installment](#)
- [Estimated Costs](#)
- [Transfer Method](#)
- [U.S. Account Transfer](#) (Domestics)
- [FLYWIRE](#) (INTERNATIONAL) [Western Union](#) (INTERNATIONAL)
- [Payment Deadline](#)

Tips: If you have an issue with paying the tuition in advance, do not hesitate to email the [Financial Aid office](#) to tell them about your situation and ask for advice. They might have additional solutions.

Rent a Room

Neighborhoods

- [Boston Neighborhoods Introduction](#)
- [Boston Neighborhoods Average Rent](#)
- [Boston Neighborhoods Crime Rate](#)

Find Housing

- [BU On-campus Housing](#)
- [BU Off-Campus Housing](#)
- [Rent.com](#)
- [Zillow.com](#)
- [Trulia](#)
- [Realtor](#)
- [Craigslist](#)

Boston Rental Online Groups

- [Facebook Marketplace](#)
- [Boom Pay BU Housing](#)
- [Boom Pay Boston Housing](#)
- [Boston Housing, Rooms, Apartments, Sublets Group](#)
- [Boston Moves Real Estate](#)

Tips

- Please be careful of scams (look at some tips to avoid scams [here](#) and [here](#)). The most trustworthy renters are usually the students who want to graduate and need to rent their rooms.

- Most housing rentals in the U.S. do not include furniture such as beds. If you do not have furniture, consider buying it in advance at [IKEA](#), [Bed Bath and Beyond](#), or [Amazon](#). You can then pick it up at the store. Because of the large student population in Boston, furniture is often out of stock in August.
- You can apply for [On-campus Housing](#), which is located on the campus. The price is moderately low, WiFi is provided, and electricity, water, heating, and furniture are included. The disadvantage is that most on-campus housing does not have an in-house kitchen, laundry room, balcony, etc. Some single rooms/studios also require sharing a bathroom. Contact [BU Housing](#) for more information.
- The housing agreement between you and your landlord is called a lease, usually for **one year**, and sets the monthly rent. The rental price will go up every year.
- Pay attention to additional costs and agreements associated with signing the lease, such as leasing fees, security deposits, prohibited items, liability for damage and early termination, and the cost of utilities, such as internet, gas, and heating.
- In the U.S., when you move out of your housing, you need to remove all your furniture and clean the place to restore it to the way it looked when you moved in. If you leave the housing site dirty or with furniture, you may be fined and not receive your entire security deposit back.

Get Vaccinated

[Download](#) Boston University's immunization requirements form, get them stamped at local hospitals and medical facilities before attending school, and [upload materials](#).

BU required vaccines

- Measles-Mumps-Rubella
- Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis (Tdap)
- Meningococcal Conjugate (ACWY) (< 21yr old)
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella

Tips: If you cannot get some of the vaccines above before you arrive, you can often get them soon after you arrive at BU but **no later than the end of your first semester**.

Book Flights

The following are websites for purchasing international airline tickets:

- [Kayak](#)
- [Skyscanner](#)
- [Expedia](#)
- [StudentUniverse](#)

Air Travel Restricted Items

Forbidden

- Arms and Weapons
- Drugs
- Fresh Fruits, vegetables, and seeds(all kinds of nuts)
- Meat and Meat Products
- Ephedrine, Strychnine, and Morphine
- Animal or animal organs(Except Pet)
- Cat/Dog Fur Products
- Chinese medicine
- Cuban Tobacco and Cigars
- Pirated publications and audio/visual products

Require Official Documentation

- Pet
- Biological Products
- Cough medicine, tranquilizers, and sleeping pills
- Antidepressants and Stimulant

Taxed Items

- Liquids over 1,000 ml (must be over 21 years old)

- Over 200 cigarettes or 100 cigars (except those made in Cuba, which must be over 21 years old)
- Cash more than \$10,000.

For details, [please see the U.S. Customs & Border Protection webpage](#)

Tips: When purchasing a ticket, pay attention to the time zone and date specified in the ticket and the checked baggage allowance. In case of delays and temporary cancellations of international tickets, keep an eye on refund policies and any changes in the flight information to avoid missing the flight. Remember that some countries require vaccines to fly to the U.S. **Lastly, do not purchase tickets at the end of the summer. It will be more expensive at that point.**

Apply for your BUID

[Student ID \(Terrier Card\)](#)

Your BUID is your credential for accessing libraries, residence halls, academic facilities, and fitness facilities.

Application steps

- [Upload photos](#)
- Once your completed form and photo upload are reviewed, the TCO staff will contact you to schedule a pickup time for your Terrier Card.

Tips: once you get your BUID, you can access several places around Boston with a discount or even for free. See [here](#).

Other Preparations

Before coming to Boston, you can find various organizations at BU

- [Compass](#): Official Site for Resources and Guidance for International Students
- [Clubs and organizations](#)
- [BU First Class](#): An online non-credit pre-arrival course designed to prepare incoming international students for the transition to BU and the American classroom
- [Health Insurance Choices](#): The school's health insurance is mandatory and contains both basic and premium plans. [Compare Insurance Plans](#) (Page 10-20) or [waive the plan](#)

- Download Google Maps on [Apple](#) / [Android](#) to know your residence and campus environment.

U.S. Voltage and Socket

The U.S. operates on a 120V supply voltage and 60Hz. Type A plugs (left) have two pins, and Type B plugs (right) have two pins in addition to a grounding pin. Make sure to have adaptors for both types.



Air Travel Tips

- Prepare comfortable slippers, earplugs, and eye masks.
- If you want to sleep and are easily woken, choose a window seat. Select an aisle seat if you like to move around and go to the restroom.
- The temperature in airplane cabins is low; ask the flight attendant for a blanket for long-distance travel.
- Check with your carrier about international roaming to ensure your phone will work and have internet access during your trip and once you land in the United States.

Settling Down

Go to Your Residence

Custom and Border Control

- When you first get off the plane, you will go through U.S. border control and customs

- Border control may [ask questions](#); please answer these questions truthfully.
- If you are asked to do a further inspection, be calm and cooperative
- After passing customs, you will pick up your luggage and exit the airport.

[Flight Tracker](#)

[Lost Luggage Claim](#)

Airport Commute

Arriving at night or with heavy luggage (Nightly average price: \$50-\$70)

- Uber: [Apple](#) / [Android](#) If you have lots of oversized luggage, choose an Uber XL.
- Lyft: [phone](#) If you have a lot, large or oversized luggage, choose a Lyft XL
- [Pick-up, and drop-off services](#)

Arrive at daytime or light luggage

- [SL1 Bus](#): 5:30 am-1 am; direct to [South Station](#)
- [Blue Subway Line](#): [Airport Station](#), 6 am-12 am, to [State](#), [Government Center](#), or [Revere](#)
- [Shuttle services at the airport](#)

Tips:

- Ask the passengers or staff around you and then tell the driver exactly where you are in the terminal and where you are located.
- If you are arriving late at night, check the license plate number and the driver's information; keep maps and apps open for directions.
- Keep your phone on the 911 dial page at all times if necessary.
- Upon arrival, remember to share your arrival and information with your loved ones.

Move into your residence

Sign Lease

If you are reviewing your lease again, please note the length of your lease, the amount of your rent, and all the terms and conditions are the same as what you signed in the original agreement.

Room Check

- Check if the facilities are as described in your lease, and contact the landlord immediately if there is any damage.
- Check whether the water and electricity network of the house works well. If there is any problem, contact the landlord immediately.
- Confirm the living facilities and safety and security around the house.
- Clean the house and buy furniture.
- Confirm the smoke alarm works. It is required that the landlord provides you with a working smoke alarm.

Housing Utilities

- Turn on the [Water](#)
- Turn on the Electricity [Eversource](#) [National Grid](#)
- Turn on the [Gas](#)
- Turn on the [Internet](#)

Rental Payment

Note or double-check with your landlord the bill payment method and set a reminder to pay the rent on time.

Moving Out

You can look for roommates in the Facebook groups mentioned above and talk to your landlord in advance.

Report Immigration

Report to ISSO at [888 Commonwealth Avenue](#) Avenue, 2nd floor, **within 15 days** of your arrival in the U.S. Materials to bring:

- Passport
- I-20 or DS-2019

or online [here](#)

Pick up your Terrier Card (BUID)

Terrier Card Office

[25 Buick Street, 1st Floor](#)

Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm (except on observed University holidays)

[617-353-9966](#)

Steps to replace your missing card: [Fill out the form](#) - Mail to schedule a pick-up.

Shopping Places

Stores	Grocery	Food	Pharmacy	Living	Bed	Kitchen	Electronics
CVS	√	√	√	√			
Target	√	√	some	√	√	√	√
Star Market	√	√					
Trader Joe's	√	√		√	√	√	
Walmart	√	√		√	√	√	

Whole Foods	√						
Walgreens	√	√	√	√			
HMart Korean	√	√					
88 Chinese	√	√		√			
IKEA				√	√	√	
TJMAXX		√		√	√	√	
Bed Bath & Beyond				√	√		
Costco	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Bestbuy							√
Apple							√

Tips: Check first with Google maps to look for the nearest stores.

Discount Stores with Deals

[Dollar Tree](#): \$1.25 for each item in food, utensils, living stock, and more

[Goodwill](#): Very cheap second-hand clothing, tableware, audio, video, games, and electronics

[Five Below](#): \$1-\$5.55 for each item in cleaning supplies, tech, beauty, pet supplies

Market & Welfare Food

[Haymarket](#)

Fridays 3 am - CLOSE Saturdays 4 am- CLOSE

100 Hanover St, Boston, MA 02108

[Red Cross Pantry](#)

Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9-11 am

1033 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118

[Fairfoods](#)

Online Stores

Anything

[Amazon](#)

Online Electronics, Digital, and Mobile

[Bestbuy](#)

[Apple](#)

[Micro Center](#)

Online Clothing

[Macy's](#)

[TJMaxx](#)

[Marshalls](#)

[JCPenney](#)

Online Groceries:

[Amazon Fresh](#)

[Weee](#)

[Yami](#)

[Getir](#)

[Instacart](#)

Unit Conversions

The U.S. uses imperial rather than metric units. Here are examples and [a conversion calculator](#).

Temperature: $(^{\circ}\text{F (Fahrenheit)} - 32) \times 5/9 = ^{\circ}\text{C (Celcius)}$ e.g. $40^{\circ}\text{F} = 4.4^{\circ}\text{C}$ $90^{\circ}\text{F} = 32.2^{\circ}\text{C}$

Weight: 1 lb (pound) = 0.45 kg (kilogram); 1 oz (ounce) = 28.34 g (gram)

Volume: 1 gal (gallon) = 3.78 L (liter); 1 fl oz (fluid ounce) = 29.57 ml (milliliter)

1 tbsp (tablespoon) = 14.79 ml; 1 tsp (teaspoon) = 4.93 ml

Acre: 1 sq ft (square feet) = 0.09 m² (square meters)

Banking Issues

Debit Accounts

Category	Savings Accounts	Checking Accounts
Main Uses	Save and deposit to earn interest	Daily transactions (shopping, bill payment, ATM withdrawals)
Annual Interest Rate	Slightly higher (0. 1%)	Very low (basically 0)
Basic Fee	Monthly account maintenance fee(waivable) When withdrawals exceed the monthly number of times, the account balance is below the minimum balance.	Monthly account maintenance fee (waivable) Withdrawal Overdraft Fee
Functional Features	High-interest rates, branch services, and direct deposits are available.	Debit card services, billing inquiries, direct depositable overdraft protection, branch and ATM services.
Online and Mobile Banking Services	Balance inquiry, transfer, account alert Mobile check deposit	Bill payment, balance inquiry, transfer account alerts, mobile check deposit

Withdrawal Restrictions	Six withdrawals are allowed per month (subject to change), and No limit on the amount per withdrawal.	No limit on the amount and number of times
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Major Banks

Bank	Phone	Appointments	Minimum Deposit	International Transfer Fees
Bank of America	800-432-1000	YES	\$300 \$1500(>24yr old)	\$16
TD Bank	Contact TD	YES	\$100	\$17.5
Chase	@ChaseSupport	YES	\$0 \$1,500(>24yr old)	\$15

Big/National Banks

BOA, TD, CHASE: There are many branches; it is convenient to access money, convenient to do business. The fees may be expensive, and there are low-interest rates.

Nearest Address

[Bank of America](#) [TD Bank](#) [Chase Bank](#)

Local Banks

Local banks in Boston often have low fees, high-interest rates, favorable prices, and easy applications, but they have fewer branches and ATMs, making it inconvenient to access money and do business.

[Compare different bank debit accounts](#)

Documents for opening a bank account

- Passport
- Student ID
- F1 Visa
- I-20
- Lease

Phone Plans

Main Carriers

[T-mobile](#) [AT&T](#) [Verizon](#)

These main carriers are self-operated networks, have a large number of subscribers, and have relatively stable and reliable reception. You can save money by joining a group of friends under the "Family Plan."

Cheaper Carriers

[Mint](#) [Tello](#) [H2O](#) [Republic](#)

These smaller carriers have great deals and also sometimes have equally stable networks and reception as larger carriers.

[Compare Carriers](#)

Note: Not all phones are suitable for the U.S. network. Check [here](#) to ensure your phone will work in the U.S.

Vaccines

Free vaccines with BU health insurance:

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Herpes Zoster

- Human Papillomavirus(HPV)
- Influenza
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Meningococcal
- Pneumococcal
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
- Varicella

Get Vaccinated at [CVS](#) or [Walgreens](#) or [Walmart](#) or [BU Vaccination](#)

Your Journey@BU

Study@BU

Courses

- [Course search](#)
- [Professor Search \(Rate My Professor\)](#)
- [Select/delete course on Studentlink](#)
- [Grades on Student Link](#)
- [BU Directory](#)

Please ensure you meet the requirements of [Compliance](#) before choosing a course.

Tips: If you want to consider a course, you can ask for the syllabus early by emailing the specific professor. If you're going to learn about certain subjects but cannot register or add additional courses to your schedule, ask the professor if you may register for the course as an auditor.

Classroom & Facilities

- [BU Map](#): buildings and facilities locations

Note: There are fewer male toilets in BU academic buildings, usually on every other floor

- [Classroom Search](#)
- [IT Help](#): Contact for the classroom, wifi, software, and DUO authorization issues

Library

- [BU Library Opening Times and Location](#)
- [BU Libraries Database: search for sources in the BU libraries online](#)
- [BU Database List: Search for the databases to which BU libraries subscribe](#)
- [BU Library Ask a librarian](#)
- [Boston Library Consortium: Borrow books outside of BU](#)

Study Spaces

[Study Room Reservations](#)

Other Academic Resources

- [Learning Resources](#)
- [University Service Center](#): Resource center for when you need help but don't know where to go
- [Academic Advising](#): Offices to help you with registering and planning out your courses and other academic issues.
- [Language Link](#): Practice your English and other foreign languages with native speakers
- [Writing Center\(COM\)](#): One-on-one appointments that help with the writing process, including brainstorming ideas, dealing with writer's block, and revising your final draft.
- [Writing Center\(CAS\)](#): One-on-one appointments for students with papers from Writing Program courses (CAS WR courses) and other courses that fulfill the First-Year Writing and Writing, Research, & Inquiry Hub units.
- [Graduate Writing Assistance](#): Develop and polish written communication skills, especially in essays and dissertations.
- [Master's Student Lunch and Learn](#): Workshop series to help equip you with tools for success in your graduate programs and your professional careers

U.S. academic rules/jargon

- [BU University Policies](#)
- [BU Academic Conduct Code](#)
- [U.S. Academic Glossary](#)

Keywords

- Due date: the last day and time you can submit the program
- Always call a professor by professor+last name or doctor+last name

- Syllabus: An outline of the class organization, policies, and assignments for the semester. The syllabus also includes the grading criteria.
- Assignment, Quiz, or Exam: The work you should do by the due date and normally submit on [Blackboard](#)

Dining@BU

You can enter the school cafeteria by purchasing a meal plan using points or using your bank card. You will be charged at the school cafeteria once you pass the entrance, regardless of how many hours you stay and how many plates you eat.

- [Dining Plans](#): Pay in advance and enjoy each meal cheaper at the cafeteria
- [Convenience Points](#): Electronic wallet, rechargeable, for use in campus cafeterias and other dining facilities
- [Dining Points](#) The meal plans for cafeteria dining on campus. These are “zeroed out” at the end of the year, with half of the unused balance returned.
- [BU Dining Places](#) & [which restaurants and dining are currently open](#)
- [Add Convenience Points that will be charged to StudentLink](#)
- [Add Convenience Points using bank cards](#)

Cultural & Sports@BU

- [Fitrec](#): School gym that you have free access to with the purchase of sports fees as a full-time student and [registration](#)
- [Agganis Arena](#): Hockey arena, home of BU men’s team, [free hockey games](#) with the purchase of sports fees)
- [TV Streaming](#): Free TV channel streaming services for on-campus residence students.
- [Booth Theater](#): Multifunctional theater
- [Walter Brown Arena](#): Sports Complex (hockey arena, home of BU women’s team)
- [Wheelock Family Theater](#): Drama/opera performances
- [BU Arts Initiative](#): Art activities every week on campus
- [Other arts facilities and organizations on campus](#)

Health & Medical@BU

By using BU health insurance, you can be reimbursed for certain medical visits and receive free vaccinations. For more information, see:

- [Student Health Services](#): primary care, vaccines, prescription Refill
- [Sports Medicine Center](#)
- [Mental Health](#)
- All of the above can be booked at [Patient Connect](#)
- [Student Insurance \(Aetna\) Affiliated Hospitals](#)
- [Dental](#): Students have discounted dental through Boston University, but if you have significant oral problems, it may be advisable to purchase dental insurance.
- [Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at BU](#): Research, training, and service organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons with psychiatric conditions.
- [Nutrition](#): 5 free [nutrition consulting](#) sessions per year

Activities@BU

When you want to have fun

- [BU Activities Calendar](#)
- [Newbury Center](#): Supporting and celebrating first-generation undergraduate, graduate, and professional students at BU. Breakfasts on Friday with lots of events.
- [Howard Thurman Center](#): Connect through shared creative experiences, exchange ideas, and explore differences. Open spaces for activities.
- [BU Global House](#): A global community with students from all over the world, also provides living places for students from various countries.
- [Marsh Chapel](#): University's religious services with non-denominational services and activities for all
- [Student Clubs and Groups](#)

If you need help and support

- [Sexual Assault Response & Prevention Center](#): Responds to trauma survivors and prevents interpersonal violence through awareness and education.
- [Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at BU](#): Research, training, and service organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons with psychiatric conditions.
- [BU Ombuds](#): An independent, confidential, impartial, informal problem-solving resource if you are treated unfairly in academics or other issues and with no solutions.

Life in Boston

Commuting in Boston

Bus/Subway/Rail/Ferry (MBTA)

[Subway Map](#)

[Bus Map](#)

[Route search](#)

[Charlie MBTA Card](#): A Charlie Card can be used for the bus, subway, ferry, and intercity railroad. You can transfer at a discount. The card has no cost and can be recharged with cash and a credit card savings card at the subway station. You can also [add value online](#).

[Charlie Card monthly pass](#): A monthly pass can help students save money if they are far away from campus and must take at least two daily bus trips.

[BU Shuttle](#): The BU shuttle stops at multiple areas around campus, including Fenway, Allston, Kenmore, Hynes, and BUMC.

Note: If you live at Fenway, Allston, Brookline, Hynes, or BUMC, you may consider walking to BU or taking the [BU Shuttle](#).

Bikes

[Bluebikes \(Boston Shared Bikes\)](#)

[BU discounted annual pass](#) Code: Scarlet (\$70).

Please note that various areas of Boston are hilly, and it can be difficult to bike in certain areas.

Tips: Bikes are expensive in the U.S. Don't just buy a new bike; many good quality used bikes are sold through [Facebook Marketplace](#).

Driving in Boston

To drive in the United States, you should have a United States driver's license. A driver's license is also considered a valid form of identification for several purposes, such as opening a bank account, buying liquor, or getting into bars. Some countries have driver's licenses that can be converted into United States driver's licenses. Most international driver's licenses are valid for 6 to 12 months, but it changes depending on your home country.

To receive a driver's license, you must take written and road tests to receive a driver's license. First, you should take a written test at a Registrar of Motor Vehicles (RMV) in Massachusetts. The tests are scheduled online and taken in person at the RMV, where you have scheduled your appointment. Getting an RMV appointment is very hard, and generally, the RMV appointments around Boston, such as Watertown, Braintree, and Quincy, are full for up to 2 months. You should try to get an appointment from one of the RMVs as soon as possible if you want to receive your driver's license.

To apply for a learner's permit, the step before the driver's permit, you should bring the documents [on this list](#). You can apply for either a Real ID or a State ID. A Real ID is more useful if you are planning to travel around the U.S. After you pass your written exam, you will receive your learner's permit, allowing you to drive with a person with a valid driver's license in Massachusetts. You can learn more about the learner's permit and its uses from [this link](#).

After receiving your learner's permit, you should schedule your road test. It is up to you whether you want to practice with your learner's permit for several months and then take the road test or take it immediately. To take the road test, you should have a sponsor who has a Massachusetts license and owns a car. Most rental companies and agencies do not allow their vehicles to be used in road tests. Call a driving school to find a sponsor or take driving classes. You can find a list of driving schools in and around Boston [here](#).

After taking the road test, the examiners will give you a paper indicating that you have passed the driving test. With that paper, you can go to RMV after your exam and apply for your driver's license. You will receive your driver's license via mail, so make sure you give a valid address while applying for your license. You should renew your driver's license regularly after receiving it. If your visa status changes (from F1 to J1 or from F1 to H1B), or if you move to another address, you should renew your driver's license.

After receiving your driver's license in the mail, you can search for cars. You can also buy a car before you receive your license. Most car dealers are still very confused about international licenses, so it is best to wait until you have a Massachusetts license and start car shopping. You can look for cars at [cars.com](#), [CarMax](#), and other websites. If you plan to buy a used car, purchase it from a reputable company or asking an expert for a second opinion because some cars may have hidden damage. You can also directly go to car dealers in and around Boston to shop for cars.

If you can drive but don't have a car, you can rent one at [Turo](#)(cheap, book in advance), [Zipcar](#)(various places, gas included), [Rentalcars](#)(long distance, compare prices), see [discount](#) here special for BU students (thank Wei Zhang for this information).

Eat in Boston

[Boston Food Map](#)

[Boston Restaurant Search](#)

Fastfood Restaurants & Drinks

[McDonald's](#)

[KFC](#)

[Starbucks](#)

[Taco Bell](#)

[Dunkin Donuts](#)

[Shake Shack](#)

[Subway](#)

[Chipotle](#)

[Five Guys](#)

[Wendy's](#)

[Pizzahut](#)

[Domino's](#)

Takeout/Delivery Apps

- [Grubhub](#) (You can use Grubhub to order online for restaurants in the Charles River Campus)
- [Uber Eats](#)
- [Chowbus](#)
- [Hungry Panda](#)
- [Doordash](#)
- [Ricepo](#)

Activities in Boston

Event Calendar

- [Boston Event Calendar](#)

Free Student Resources

- [Boston Symphony Orchestra](#) Code: Reg22BUCard

Free college cards and free concerts

- [Museum of Fine Arts](#)

BU Students, Faculty, and Staff can gain free entry by showing their BU ID at the museum ticket counter.

- [Boston Institute of Contemporary Arts](#) Promo code BU2022ICA
- [Isabella Steward Gardner Museum](#) Promo code BOSTUNIV
- [Harvard Art Museums](#)
- [Other Boston Museums](#)
- [\\$9 Red Sox baseball tickets at Fenway Park](#)
- [Boston Public Libraries](#)(Free Books/NewsMag/Movie/Wifi Hotspot/Room Reserve,Cheap Museums)

Student Online Benefits

- [Online Benefits with .edu email](#)

Leisure Time Activities

Movies

- [Nearest Cinema](#)
- [Movies and Comments](#)
- [Karaoke](#)
- [Board Games](#)
- [Sports Venues](#)

Volunteering in Boston

Volunteer Activities

- [BU Community Service Center](#)
- [BU Days of Service](#)
- [Boston Cares](#)

Food Donations

- [Greater Boston Food Bank](#)

- [Red Cross](#)

Clothing Donations

- [Cradles to Crayons](#)

Blood Donations

- [Blood Donations](#)

Travel from Boston

Plan a trip

- [Trip planner](#)
- [Roadtrip Planner](#)

Book a trip

- [Trip.com](#)
- [Viatour](#)

Book hotels

- [Trivago](#): Hotel bookings and price comparison
- [Airbnb](#): Rooms run by individuals
- [Student Universe](#): Cheap flight and hotel deals for students

Travel around Boston

- [Beaches](#)
- [Hiking](#)
- [Skiing](#)
- [Camping](#)

Travel Highlights in the U.S.

- [Beaches](#)
- [Hiking](#)
- [Skiing](#)
- [Camping](#)

Safety in Boston

- [Scam phone calls](#)

Beware of and suspicious “Visa Delivery” calls. Never transfer money or redeem checks for strangers via phone calls or emails

- [Theft](#)

Always double-check that you locked your door before leaving. If a theft occurs on campus, call [617-353-2121](#)

Security

- [Crime Map](#)
- [Active Shooter Safety Guidelines](#)
- Security Alert App: [Citizen](#)

Police Contacts

- On-Campus: [617-353-2121](#)(CRC) / [617-358-4444](#)(BUMC)
- For any off-campus and Life-Threatening call [911](#)

Work in the U.S.

Career Resources@BU

Career Services

- [University Career Center: Services](#)
- [Career Center for QST](#)
- [Career Center for COM](#)
- [Career Center for ENG](#)
- [Career Center at CAS](#)
- [Medical Campus Career Center](#)

Career Guidance

- [_CCD Resume, Cover Letter, Networking, Interview, Clothing, Internship, Recommend Tips](#)
- [BU Professional Clothing Closet](#): Free professional clothing for interviews organized by the CCD
- [Career Resources Directory](#)

Tips: If you would like to work in the United States after graduation, make sure you have spent enough time building connections with U.S. employers or interning at U.S.-based companies. You can also consider volunteering to explore various career options.

Finding a Job in the U.S.

- [Cover letter](#): This is one of the application documents almost always required by companies during the application process.
- [Elevator pitch](#): This is a quick synopsis (often just 2-3 minutes) of your background and experience.

- [Networking](#): This is interacting with those in your chosen career field and talking to them about experiences in this chosen career path. Networking is a quick way to find a job in the U.S.
- [LinkedIn](#) is a professional social networking platform for connecting with the company and people in the U.S.

Work with CPT

CPT can be applied after completing one full academic year of a graduate program. The cumulative length of CPT is one year, which must be used up before graduation, and must be linked to fixed courses in your program. Full-time jobs have a cumulative maximum duration of 364 days.

Application Process

1. Receive a job offer from your employer. Make sure to have an official offer letter from your employer listing start and end dates.
2. Consult your advisor and/or department and register for a class linked to your CPT job.
3. Fill out the [CPT form](#), and get a signature from your advisor.
3. Email the signed form, offer letter, and I-94 to the [ISSO Advisor](#) for processing

If the process is delayed, please contact [ISSO](#).

[BU ISSO Official CPT Guide](#)

Work with OPT

OPT is a program for F-1 students to stay in the U.S. for an internship after graduation that is consistent with their graduate school specialization. The OPT program is a one-year program, and the STEM program can be extended to three years.

For **STEM Programs**: Please check if your **program code** in I-20 is in the [STEM table](#). If yes, it is a STEM program

PROGRAM OF STUDY		
EDUCATION LEVEL LANGUAGE TRAINING	MAJOR 1 Second Language Learning	MAJOR 2 None 00.0000
PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY Not Required	ENGLISH PROFICIENCY NOTES We are an ESL school	EARLIEST ADMISSION DATE 23 JUNE 2018

Application Timing

OPT can only be applied within 90 days before graduation or within 60 days after graduation

OPT Material requirements

- [Form G-1145](#)
- [Form I-765](#)
- Photocopies of I I-20s, latest [I-94](#), passport pages, visa pages
- Copy of previously valid [EAD card](#)(s) if available
- Two passport-size photos within 30 days (it is recommended to write your name and I-94 number in pencil on the back of the photo)
- Application fee \$495 (check or money order) (fees are subject to change and are subject to current USCIS regulations)

[Application Process](#)

- Submit an OPT application to ISSO to obtain a new I-20 form. Since regulations vary from school to school, it is recommended to check with the school for specific information.
- Prepare the application (complete the required forms correctly and sign the new I-20).
- Mail all application materials to the USCIS [designated address](#). Each state has a USCIS application center, so pay attention to your state's corresponding application center to avoid sending them to the wrong address.
- The applicant can [check the](#) application's progress by using the application number on the [receipt](#).
- The official processing time given by the USCIS is usually 90 days.

Note: Only when you get OPT can you start working.

BU ISSO: [Video Application Guide](#)

Work Visa

[U.S. Work Visa Policy](#)

[U.S. Industry Distribution Map](#)

For Ph.D. Students

Academics & Funding

Several academic resources are available for Ph.D. students, especially for Ph.D. candidates who are currently writing dissertations. One main organization at Boston University that supports Ph.D. students is the [Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs \(PDPA\)](#). This office offers professional and teaching-related resources for all Ph.D. students.

There are also different centers and institutes at Boston University that provide certain small-scale grants to Ph.D. students. This is [a list](#) of grants for Ph.D. students at Boston University compiled by PDPA. In addition to the internal grants that PDPA lists, there are certain databases that you can use to find external funding opportunities. These databases include [UCLA Grant Finder](#), [Northwestern University Grant Finder](#), and [University of Chicago Grant Finder](#). You can find a longer list of grant finder websites on [the PDPA website](#).

In addition to grants, Ph.D. students can often work as a grader or as research assistants to receive extra money. Each department generally determines these paid positions, which are considered additional work on top of the regular funding packages received from the department. These paid positions generally require students to work up to 5 hours per week for a specific professor or research center. They are generally competitive positions advertised by the departments.

There are also other external websites that explain the cost of a Ph.D. and different funding opportunities. For instance, [this website](#) lists several external scholarship opportunities you can apply for. You can also check [this website](#) for fellowships.

Conference & Publications

Conferences and publications are essential to academic life, and each department has its conventions and requirements. With Covid-19, some conferences shifted to an online format, but now with the vaccines and decreases in Covid-19 cases, most conferences have returned to the in-person or hybrid format. To attend in-person conferences in the U.S., you do not have to do anything extra except carry your passport and I-20 with you if the conference is held outside of Massachusetts. All hotels must ask for IDs in the U.S. for check-in so carrying your passport with you is important.

For conferences outside of the U.S., you may need a visa based on your country of origin. You can check whether you need a visa or not by going to the websites of the countries' embassies that you are planning to visit. If you need a visa to visit another country for a conference, you can apply for a visitor visa from the U.S. as long as you have a valid I-20 and proof of legal presence in the U.S., like your F-1 visa. Each country has different visa requirements. Some countries may accept online visa applications. Others may require you to attend an appointment for your biometrics at an embassy or a consulate.

Applying for visas for conferences is generally costly. Sometimes, you can get reimbursed for visa application costs by your department, but each department has its regulations regarding reimbursements. If you incur any costs during the visa application process, like biometric processing costs, when attending a conference, please keep the receipts from your application. You can submit your receipts to your department if they have a conference support budget. You may be reimbursed partially or entirely by your department according to departmental policy.

When you attend the conferences, you also have to book a room at the destination city if the conference is held in a place away from your residence. Suppose you are going to another country for a conference; you may have to book a hotel room in advance because some countries want to see a hotel reservation during the visa application process. There are generally recommended hotels on the conference's website for international and U.S.-based conferences that offer discounted prices for hotel rooms. Another way to save some money during conferences is to learn whether other Ph.D. students from your department are attending the conference and share a room with them.

When attending a conference in another country, you must get your I-20 signed for travel purposes. It takes around ten business days to receive this signature, and you can apply to ISSO to receive a travel signature. When using a travel signature, make sure you apply for it in advance, as travel signatures are valid for a year.

Teaching & Professional Development

Several Boston University centers focus on improving Ph.D. students' teaching, writing, and professional skills of Ph.D. students. These are:

- [Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs](#)
- [The Educational Resource Center](#)
- [Center for Career Development](#)
- [Boston University Libraries Teaching Support](#)

There are external resources that can help you to write a CV/resume for a job and TA/RA applications. The [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) is one of those resources that you can check when you are getting ready to apply for a job outside of academia. BU also has a membership to [Handshake](#), which lists job opportunities for everyone from undergraduates to Ph.D. students. The link above explains how to download and register for the Handshake application.

Other external resources can help you apply for academic jobs, such as professorships and postdocs when you finish your degree.

For instance, [The Professor Is In](#) offers guidance on writing teaching statements, cover letters, and academic articles.

Ph.D. Support

There are several centers at Boston University that support Ph.D. students' research and help find funding for projects. These are:

- [Boston University Research Support Office](#)
- [Boston University Libraries Scanning & Digital Delivery Services for Doctoral Students](#)
- [Boston University Libraries Thesis & Dissertation Support](#)

For parents, Boston University also offers several support services. This is a list of the services provided by Boston University:

- [Children's Center](#)
- [Childcare and Preschool Education](#)
- [Breastfeeding and Lactation Support](#)
- [Childbirth and Adoption Accommodation for Full-Time Ph.D. Students](#)

For more information on Ph.D. support, program information, and specific school and program policies, you can check [this website](#) and select your school. Most graduate students are part of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences or Graduate Medical Sciences. You can see which school you belong to on your I-20.

Appendix I: Before U.S. Preparation Checklist

- Admission deposit paid
- Passport ready
- Financial documents ready
- I-20 ready
- Visa applied and received
- Vaccine compliance
- Apply for BUID
- Flight booked
- Room rent / Lease signed
- Courses selected
- Cellphone card ready (**If applicable**)
- Download necessary apps
- BU First Class finished
- Learned more about your academic program
- Tuition paid
- BU Orientation completed

Appendix II: International Flight Checklist

Luggage with you

- Passport, visa, and I-20
- Medications
- Insurance and ID cards
- Cash, debit cards, and credit cards
- Pen to fill out customs forms
- Portable charger
- Earplugs, eye mask, and sleeping pills
- Electrical converters and adapters specific to your destination
- Headphones
- Antibacterial wipes
- Sweater/scarf in case the plane is chilly
- Cell phone, laptop and charger

Luggage Consign

- Personal care(if applicable)
- Clothing
- Personal Items(Keys, wallet, other documents, and IDs)
- Cell Phone, digital products and electronics
- Glasses and optical
- Masks
- U.S. plug adapters

Appendix III: Settle Down Checklist

- Report landing to ISSO within 15 days
- Get BUID Terrier Card
- Receive all required vaccines (if not vaccinated before arriving in Boston)
- Gas/electricity/water/heat Ready(if applicable)
- Furniture bought
- Electronics/appliance bought
- Everyday living items / Food Bought
- Dining plans chosen(If applicable)
- Room check
- Debit and/or credit account opened
- Cellphone plans registered