

**A Guide for
Advising
International
Students at
Missouri State
University**

Preface

The Provost's Academic Advising Council (AAC) 2012-2013 has been working on several projects to enhance consistency and quality within Missouri State University's advising system. This *Guide for Advising International Students at Missouri State University* is one of those projects. Our university has approximately 1,400 international students from 80+ countries. Academic advisors across campus will be working with more and more international students, and clear, consistent information about this population will help advisors better serve these students. This guide will not cover all questions that advisors may come across, since each student has individual needs and expectations; however, there are several offices across campus academic advisors can refer to for help. The office of [International Services](#) and the [Academic Advisement Center](#) are two important resources advisors can consult.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to the writing of this guide. Graduate student intern, Kristie Reynolds, worked with the AAC to compile relevant information from those most involved with the international student population. A special thanks to Lisa Gibson and Heejung Cromley (Office of International Services), Christopher Lynn (MBA Program Advisor), Dr. Tina Biava (Professor/Coordinator of TESOL Program), the English Language Institute, and the Office of the Registrar, who all contributed valuable documentation and insight toward developing this guide.

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International Services

The International Services Office (IS) is the admissions office for undergraduate international students and the first and last stop during the graduate student admission process. An international student is a student who is attending the university on a temporary visa, and who is not an immigrant (permanent resident with a Green Card).

The following are some of the many services provided by IS to the Missouri State University community:

- Pre-admission counseling
- Admissions to include transcript and transfer evaluation
- Pre-arrival communication
- Orientation programming
- Immigration advising
- Post-graduation employment advising
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Petition assistance

Academic advisors are encouraged to contact IS for assistance while advising international students.

IS Associate Director:

Lisa Gibson

IS Assistant Director – Immigration Support:

Heejung Cromley

IS Admissions Coordinator (Graduate):

Kristina Guinn

Jim D. Morris Center
301 South Jefferson, Suite 101
Springfield, MO 65806
Phone: 417-836-6618

English Language Institute

The English Language Institute (ELI) offers instruction to provide English language learners with skills for academic and career success. Most ELI students have “conditional” admission to Missouri State University if they meet the minimum GPA requirement. Conditional admission does not mean that they are automatically admitted to Missouri State University when they complete the ELI. It only means students meet the minimum requirements to be admitted to Missouri State. On a student’s last session in the ELI, he or she will begin the official process of applying to Missouri State University through the Office of International Services.

Jim D. Morris Center
301 South Jefferson, Suite 200
Springfield, MO 65806
Phone: 417-836-6540

“Advise International Students just as you would American students except...”

International students encounter academic and personal difficulties while pursuing their studies just like domestic students. However, in addition to the traditional issues faced by domestic students, international students are often adjusting to additional circumstances:

- Adjusting to a new academic system
- Learning in a second language
- Experiencing culture shock
- Learning to live far away from support systems
- Learning new business practices

Major Immigration Concerns

- Full-time enrollment is legally required:
 - 12 hours for undergraduate students
 - 9 hours for graduate students
- Employment is limited to 20 hours per week (except for official school holidays) and limited to on-campus employers.
- Non-traditional classes will only count toward 3 of their required enrollment hours per semester. Non-traditional courses are online courses with an INET code. All other instructional methods such as blended, iCourses, and those with interactive video do not fall under this non-traditional category.

Cultural Differences

International students come from a variety of cultural backgrounds that sometimes allow for cultural mishaps on both the part of the student and the advisor. The following examples illustrate this dynamic:

Different student negotiation tactics:

- “No means I should ask someone else.”
- “No means I should ask again.”
- “No means I should ask your supervisor.”

Different expectations of the advisor:

- “My advisor should help me negotiate my apartment lease.”
- “My advisor should help me maneuver the immigration system.”

Terms to Know

Advising international students can be challenging. Here are some terms common to international students' records and a plain English description as it applies to advisors. **Specific advice about these forms and processes should be directed to the International Services (IS) Office (417-836-6618).**

Immigration Documents

Form I-20: Certificate of Eligibility to obtain an F-1 student visa to enter the U.S. These forms are issued to students once they are admitted to a degree program at Missouri State University and are valid for an average of 48 months for undergraduates, 24 months for graduates, and 24 months for undergraduate transfer students. The expiration date may be extended *BEFORE* the program end date on I-20 with approval from an advisor and the International Services office (*see Verification of Progress form*).

Visa: Included in the student's passport as a separate page. Visas allow students' entry to the U.S. along with their valid Form I-20. A student doesn't need a current visa to study at Missouri State University, but does need it for re-entry (*i.e.*, if the student leaves the country with an expired visa, he or she will need it renewed at the U.S. consulate in the home country or at a U.S. consulate outside the U.S. before he or she can return to the U.S.).

- **F-1:** (*Note: This is the visa you'll usually see.*) These are for full-time students in the U.S. who are seeking degrees in programs intended to last for more than one year's time. Students do have the opportunity to work on campus part time up to 20 hours per week when school is in session (full time during break). The on-campus employment must be for a University service. "Close to campus" does *NOT* count. Students must obtain a work authorization from the IS office or USCIS to work in a degree-relevant employment off-campus (see **CPT** and **OPT** below).
- **H-1b:** Work visa allowing a student to be employed full time in the U.S. for a defined period of time (typically 3 years). Students try to obtain this visa status *en route* to a permanent residency and citizenship.
- **J-1:** Exchange or short program visa, allowing students to come to the U.S. for a program of study for a defined term. Students have opportunity to work on campus part time up to 20 hours per week when school is in session (full time during breaks) but must have prior approval from the IS office.

Note: Some students who appear to be international may not be according to immigration rules. A student who is listed as a permanent resident or U.S. citizen is not governed by the International Services' office and is considered to have the same status as native students. However, they may have typical international student concerns (English proficiency, getting translated transcripts, *etc.*).

Forms

Only the International Services Office (or the Department of Homeland Security) makes the final decision for granting these submitted forms. Forms are located at <http://international.missouristate.edu/services/66521.htm>.

Verification of Progress Form for Extension Request: Signing this form verifies that 1) the student needs more time to complete his or her degree requirements and 2) that you have estimated the time the student needs to complete his or her program. **Satisfactory Progress** means that the student, in your estimation, has made progress toward his or her degree intentionally (hasn't taken several elective classes out of major or out of sequence or is unnecessarily delaying his or her degree completion).

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Verification Form: Signing this form verifies that the student has 1) been approved for academic credit for an internship; 2) this internship satisfies a requirement (or elective) in the student's major; and 3) that the student is in good academic standing. CPT is designed to allow students to work off-campus in a major- (or degree-) related job for a defined period of time (usually a semester). Students are required to be enrolled for academic credit for the internship during semester when they are pursuing the internship. IS then approves CPT, and a note is made on the student's SEVIS¹ record that he or she is eligible for CPT for a defined period. A student needs a new I-20 from the IS office with CPT approval information in order to begin his or her internship on the approved start date until the approved end date.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Verification Form: Signing this form verifies that this student is eligible to graduate at the end of the current semester. You aren't guaranteeing that the student will graduate—just that it is possible the student could graduate. OPT is a provision allowed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for a student to seek degree-related employment for 12 months after his or her graduation date. Once the OPT is approved by the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS), the student may legally begin to work. Students typically apply for OPT two to three months prior to graduation.

Reduced Course Load (RCL) Approval Form: Signing this form verifies that the student has a legitimate reason to be enrolled less than full-time (*Note:* Full time is 12 hours for an undergraduate student, 9 hours for a graduate student). This form is usually used for medical conditions that prevent the student from attending full time, and academic advisors are usually notified by IS first. For some students, the RCL form is necessary when it's the last semester in their degree, and they only need half-time enrollment to complete the degree. A student who presents the form to be half-time due to English language proficiency is likely to be denied his or her request (given that the students typically have to meet an English proficiency standard to even be accepted).

Applying for a Driver's License: Some students will ask you to write a letter verifying they are full-time students, so they may apply for a driver's license. The Office of the Registrar will do that for

¹ **SEVIS:** Student Exchange and Visitor Information System. Manages information on F, J, and M visa holders. Immigration data is entered into this federally-managed database, and the International Services office manages student data for the University as a representative of USCIS.

them; the Registrar's Office has a template letter to give to the student that has been approved by the Missouri DMV).

Communication Tips

Boston University's International Students and Scholars Office developed *Tips for Successful Communication with International Students* on September 28, 2010. We found this to be a great source to help you here at Missouri State University:

1. **LISTEN:** Second language students often develop a "script" in their mind of what they want to say to you before they enter your office. Allow them to get through the script, so they feel certain that you have heard what they have to say. This can be difficult if the script is long and you can easily anticipate their question or issue.
2. **LIMIT:** Limit the use of acronyms, abbreviations, jargon, colloquialisms, and idioms when speaking (or writing) to international students, even if English is their first language. Terms like "ASAP" or "on target" or "home run" or "all set" are U.S. culture-based and may have little meaning to an international student.
3. **POSSIBLE CULTURAL DIFFERENCE INDICATORS:** Certain feelings and behaviors (both yours and/or the person with whom you are communicating) can be indicators that cultural differences are at play when interacting with someone from another country: frustration, taking offense, repetition, no response, inappropriate responses for the situation (*i.e.*, nodding continuously when clearly the individual does not understand, awkward laughter, ending the conversation abruptly, seeming distracted, *etc.*). Allow these indicators to remind you to take a deep breath and find a different way to approach the issue or explanation.
4. **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING:** After you have discussed an issue with a student or explained a procedure, ask for an explanation in his or her own words. Don't just ask the student if he or she understood everything you said. This question may not confirm his or her level of understanding, since the culture of some international students dictates that saying they don't understand shows that either you failed in your explanation or they have failed in understanding. "Do you understand what I told you?" will often be answered with a polite "Yes, thank you" as the student walks away without the vital information he or she needs.
5. **NAVIGATING BUREAUCRACY:** This process is not the same in every country or culture, because strategies for getting a favorable response vary. Some approaches include working up to the most senior person in the office or organization, only accepting the answer of someone "in charge," asking repeatedly until a favorable response is received, or only accepting the answer from a male staff member. Be clear in your message and be certain the student has understood what you said. Be patient because you may have to repeat yourself to emphasize that there are no exceptions to the policy/procedure/answer and that the answer will be the same no matter how many times the question is asked. Talk with your colleagues and supervisor about how you will deal with requests to talk to a "higher up."

6. **HELP:** You should assist international students as they work to understand U.S. customs and how “things are done here,” but do not pressure them to change their behavior or viewpoints unless the change is absolutely necessary for academic or social success or to avoid serious conflict. Consider whether the situation could be better resolved if you changed your own behavior or viewpoint.
7. **NAMES:** Learn to say the names of international students correctly. Do not expect the student to select a U.S.-based nickname or shortened version of his or her name. This effort will go a long way toward making the student feel welcomed and respected.
8. **BE CURIOUS:** Take the time to learn at least a little about your students’ countries of origin, customs, languages, and the larger issues of concern in their home countries (*i.e.*, current events).
9. **DON’T GENERALIZE:** Don’t assume that all students from a particular country or culture will behave or respond the same way. Likewise, do not expect a student to know what everyone in his or her country thinks about a particular topic. Like in the U.S., perspectives vary from region to region and group to group in any country

Advising Syllabus

Cultural differences as well as communication barriers can make it challenging for both student and advisor. One of the best ways to help the advisor/advisee relationship is to develop an advising syllabus. Of course using an advising syllabus is recommended for all advisors, whether working with domestic or international students. However, discussing your advising syllabus with international students becomes even more important because of the different expectations that other countries have of academic advisors. You need to make clear the roles of both the advisor and advisee.

Students may not have an understanding of what an academic advisor does for students or vice versa. For instance, in India, students have a preset curriculum and usually do not have an advisor. They might assume that all their courses will already be chosen for them and there will be no decision-making on their part when scheduling courses. In China, an advisor does everything: schedules classes, arranges housing, talks with professors, negotiates grades at the end of the semester, and handles discipline. These differences necessitate the need for the advising syllabus to provide international students with something concrete that they can look back on when questions arise.

Advisors can find a [template](#) and [example](#) of an advising syllabus in the *Master Advisor Handbook*, chapter 5, page 35. The following is another example from Christopher Lynn, MBA Program Advisor, that you can adapt for your student advisees:

Academic Advising Syllabus – MBA Program Office

Advisor: Mr. Christopher D. Lynn, MBA
Location: Glass Hall, Room 223
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Appointments must be scheduled in advance).
Phone: (417) 836-5616 (voice); (417) 836-6636 (fax)
E-Mail: MBAProgram@MissouriState.edu
Web: <http://mba.missouristate.edu>

Policies/Procedures

- Appointments are scheduled for 30 minutes. Please be on time for appointments. If you are **10 or more minutes late to your appointment**, the appointment may be rescheduled at my discretion. If you cannot keep your appointment, please call 417-836-5616 to reschedule. An in-person appointment usually generates beneficial conversation and guidance; **however, most routine questions can be answered by e-mail (preferred) or phone.**
- **Appointments are scheduled at least two days after the day you contact us.** During registration, my calendar may be full two or more weeks in advance – make your appointment early! You can make an appointment by phone or in-person request (not by e-mail).
- **Please check your University-assigned e-mail account (BearMail) daily**, as we send important MBA information to you via this account. We also use your assigned BearMail account to ensure the security of your academic record.
- Please silence your cell phone before coming to the office and conclude any conversations outside. Please also treat all staff in our office with respect and dignity as they help you.

Expectations for My Advisees

- Make regular contact with me. Have an in-person meeting at least once during your academic career. Plan ahead by scheduling appointments early in the semester. Come to appointments prepared with questions, topics to discuss, and a list of courses for the upcoming semester(s).
- **Create a plan for graduation by the beginning of the second semester in the program.** Consider internship /study away/research/fellowship opportunities. Research and be familiar with academic policies/procedures prior to the appointment. Read the Graduate Catalog (<http://www.graduate.missouristate.edu/OnlineCatalog.htm>) to become familiar with course offerings. Always verify any academic advice/information from other sources with the Graduate Catalog and me.
- Seek my help when problems first arise. Accept responsibility for the decisions and actions/inactions that affect educational progress. Provide accurate, honest information about interests and abilities.

What You Can Expect From Me (Advisor)

- Understand and communicate degree requirements. Provide constructive feedback on appropriateness of coursework to the student's educational/career goals. Assist students to make course and academic program decisions. Encourage student responsibility for educational plans and decisions.
- Provide an opportunity for students to share thoughts, goals, concerns, and interests. Listen carefully to students' questions, concerns, and confusions. Provide resources and referrals.
- Maintain confidentiality pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA, <http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/ferpanotification.htm>).
- Respond to e-mail and phone messages within a reasonable timeframe (within 24 hours Mon. – Fri.).
- Assist students in developing academic and research relationships with faculty.

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Enrollment Requirements

- All international students on F-1 or J-1 visas must be enrolled as full-time students during the fall and spring terms. If a student withdraws from a course and falls below the minimum number of credits, he or she will be under-enrolled and out of status. **DO NOT** advise a student to drop a course to save his or her GPA if it puts the student below full-time status.
- There are exceptions to the full-time enrollment requirements, but students must file a Reduced Course Load (RCL) form with International Services. (*See RCL in the Terms to Know listed above.*)
- Summer enrollment is **OPTIONAL**, unless required for a graduate assistantship position or if summer is the first semester of a new level of study. In these required situations, full-time status is also required during the summer (6 credit hours for both undergraduate and graduate students).
- If students audit a course (take a course without earning a grade), the course will not count toward their full-time enrollment.
- International students are eligible to enroll in non-traditional courses. However, only 3 CREDIT HOURS of non-traditional courses count toward their full-time enrollment requirement per semester. Non-traditional courses are online courses with an INET code. All other instructional methods such as blended, iCourses, and those with interactive video do not fall under this non-traditional category.

Things to Know about Advising Transfer International Students

- International students cannot register for classes until they arrive in the United States and check in with the Office of International Services (IS). This can cause a time crunch for both the student and the academic advisor.
- A maximum of 30 credit hours per academic year can be transferred from international institutions when transfer credit evaluations are prepared, so IS must calculate a conversion factor to reduce credits if necessary.
- One credit hour in another educational system is NOT necessarily equal to one credit hour here.
- International students transferring from a U.S. college only receive credit for the hours taken and passed—not necessarily the course.
- Grades for courses taken at international institutions are not posted on the transfer evaluation. The GPA is calculated, but the grades are not recorded on the evaluation.
- Most credits from international institutions are initially evaluated as departmental elective hours. The student must go through the transfer credit revision process to request specific course credit if he or she has courses that appear to be equivalent to Missouri State University courses. IS is limited on specific course credit it can assign.
- Even if a full bachelor's degree was completed at an international institution, it does not automatically fulfill General Education requirements. The courses only meet General Education requirements on a course-by-course basis.
- Grading systems can be quite different between the U.S. and other countries. For instance, a C in one country may be completely acceptable work. However, if a student plans to attend graduate school in the U.S., this may not be acceptable. World Education Services (WES) provides country profiles that may be helpful for you to look at when you receive an international student from a country with an educational system you are unfamiliar with. You can find this website at http://www.wes.org/wes_tools/index.asp.

English Proficiency

Proof of proficiency in English is required if the student's primary language is not English. Students who have completed one or more years of university-level study in the U.S. may be exempt at the discretion of the International Services Office. The following table shows the three types of English proficiency requirements international students must meet in order to be admitted to Missouri State University:

	Undergraduate Programs	Graduate Programs
Test Type	<i>Minimum Requirement</i>	<i>Minimum Requirement</i>
The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) TOEFL-iBT (Internet-based test)	Score of 61 or more (Scores of less than 15 in any individual band will require enrollment in a corresponding ELI course during student's first semester at MSU)	Score of 79 or more
IELTS	Score of 5.5 or more (Scores of less than 5.0 in any individual band will require enrollment in a corresponding ELI course during the student's first semester at MSU)	Score of 6.0 or more
Missouri State English Language Institute Program (ELI)	Completion of Level 402	Completion of Level 502

Advisors can visit <http://www.ets.org/toefl/institutions/scores/interpret/> for more information about how to interpret TOEFL scores.

General Education Placements

International students will probably not have ACT or SAT scores to indicate their math and English placements. International students should take the [Math Placement Exam](#) either during their SOAR session or by scheduling an appointment with the Mathematics Department.

Student placements in English courses are a little more complicated. Students should be directed to contact the [English Department](#) to obtain correct placement. More specifically, students should contact Christie Englis, Barbara Gressel, or Dr. Tina Biava. In general, for students to be placed in ENG 110: Writing I, they should meet one of the following criteria:

- Students have completed level 4 of the ELI with certain scores in their WG (writing/grammar) course. They need an overall score of at least 82 percent in the WG course AND to have a final essay score of 78 percent.

- Non-ELI students who have a TOEFL score must have a 22 (minimum) for their writing subscore.
- Students who do not fall into either of the above categories must meet with Dr. Biava for an interview and to write a placement essay.

International Holds

There are several holds that you may see that are specific to international students' records. The following table provides the hold codes, what they generally mean, who to contact with questions about the holds, and how the holds prevent registration and/or the release of transcripts:

Hold Code	Hold Definition	Contact Information regarding Hold	Does hold prevent registration?	Does hold prevent release of transcript?
<i>EL</i>	English Language Institute/Fees owed directly to ELI (doesn't go through Banner)	English Language Institute, Jim D. Morris Center, 301 S. Jefferson Ave., room 200, 836-6540	Yes	Yes
<i>EN</i>	International Student Services/English Requirement	English Language Institute, Jim D. Morris Center, 301 S. Jefferson Ave., room 200, 836-6540	Yes	Yes
<i>IA</i>	International Student Services/Address	International Student Services, Jim D. Morris Center, 836-6618	Yes	No
<i>IF</i>	International Student Services/Application Fee Needed	International Student Services, Jim D. Morris Center, 836-6618	Yes	Yes
<i>IN</i>	International Student Services (usually student needs to attend IS orientation, but could have other meanings)	International Student Services, Jim D. Morris Center, 836-6618	Yes	No
<i>IT</i>	International Student Services/Transcripts Needed	International Student Services, Jim D. Morris Center, 836-6618	Yes	No

International Students at Missouri State University

With approximately 1,400 international students from 80+ countries, it would be impossible to provide advisors with specific information from all nations represented on campus. However, the three countries with the highest number of international students attending Missouri State University are China, India, and Saudi Arabia. As such, we've compiled more detailed information about these three countries to help with some of the differences. All information was collected by international students using their own experience and the following websites:

References/Resources

CIA World Fact Book: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

U.S. Department of State: Background Notes: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

Intercultural Communication: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/>

China (Official Name: People's Republic of China)



Geography:	World's 4 th largest country (after Russia, Canada, and the United States)
Population:	1,336,715,015 (July 2011 est.) *country comparison to the world: 1
Language:	Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua), plus many local dialects
Religions:	Daoist (Taoist), Buddhist, Christian 3-4 percent, Muslim 1-2 percent
Capital City:	Beijing
Climate:	Extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north
Currency:	Yuan* 1 Chinese yuan = 0.1522 U.S. dollars (March 2011)

Differences between China and America

- Students cannot call parents or teachers by their names directly.
- The teacher is always right. Even when a student knows the teacher is wrong, to be respectful, the student probably would not point it out or argue the point.
- China has more requirements for classroom behavior than in America. For example, students must sit straight when teachers are lecturing and cannot wear hats in the classroom.
- The Chinese do not cross people's names out of a list in red. In early times, only a dead person's name would be crossed out with red. The Chinese also do not prefer writing names in red.
- Most of the time, students are not allowed to write the test in red, because that is the color the teacher would grade the test.
- Before a person from China gets married, his or her parents will support the student completely, including paying for school. But when the parents get old, children must support and take care of them.
- The Chinese junior high and high school schedule is pretty much from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. or 9 p.m. The 9 p.m. schedule is usually for seniors. There are 10-minute breaks for every 45-minute class, an hour lunch break, and an hour supper break. Thus, most of the time is studying time.
- Being humble is considered a moral behavior in China. People usually say they just know a little about something even when they are quite knowledgeable.

Chinese Society and Culture

The Importance of “Face”

The concept of “face” roughly translates as “honor,” “good reputation,” or “respect.” It is critical for the Chinese to avoid losing face or causing the loss of face at all times.

Non-Verbal Communication

- Since the Chinese strive for harmony and are group dependent, they rely on facial expression, tone of voice, and posture to tell them what someone feels.
- Frowning while someone is speaking is interpreted as a sign of disagreement or confusion. Therefore, most Chinese maintain an impassive expression when speaking.
- It is considered disrespectful to stare into another person’s eyes. In crowded situations, the Chinese avoid eye contact to give themselves privacy.

Chinese Etiquette and Customs

Meeting Etiquette

- The oldest person is always greeted first.
- Handshakes are the most common form of greeting in formal meetings.
- People do not prefer long and direct eye contact.
- People are addressed by an honorific title and their surname. If they want to move to a first-name basis, they will advise you which name to use.
- The Chinese have a terrific sense of humor. They can laugh at themselves most readily if they have a comfortable relationship with the other person. Be ready to laugh at yourself given the proper circumstances.
- People usually do not start talking until they are somehow introduced.

Gift Giving Etiquette

- In general, gifts are given at Chinese New Year, weddings, births, and more recently (because of marketing) birthdays.
- A nice fruit basket (or flowers) will make a great gift.
- Do not give scissors, knives, or other cutting utensils because they indicate the severing of the relationship.
- Do not give clocks, handkerchiefs, or straw sandals because they are associated with funerals and death.
- Do not give special kinds of white flowers, because many Chinese associate these with funerals.
- Six and eight are the luckiest numbers, so giving six or eight of something brings luck to the recipient.
- Always present gifts with two hands, and gifts are not opened when received.
- Gifts may be refused no more than three times before they are accepted for courtesy.
- Wrapping is as important as the gift itself.

India (Official Name: Republic of India)



Geography: World's 7th largest country: slightly more than one-third the size of the U.S.
Population: 1,189,172,906 (July 2011 est.) *country comparison to the world: 2
Language: Hindi, English, and 16 other official languages
Religion: Hindu: 80 percent, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and other
Capital City: New Delhi
Climate: Alpine to temperate to subtropical monsoon.
Currency: Rupee* 1 Indian rupee = 0.0222 U.S. dollars (March 2011)

Differences in Indian Education

- Students in a class are considered as a batch, and they would have the same classmates for the entire program duration.
- Students must follow a preset curriculum.
- Each class may or may not have an advisor, and usually students don't even know who their advisor is.
- Students cannot address professors by their names, wear hats in class, or chew gum (in some cases).
- In India, teachers are given high respect because they impart knowledge.
- Students can work together and complete their assignments without it being considered plagiarism.

Indian Society and Culture

Hierarchy

- The influences of Hinduism and the tradition of the caste system have created a culture that emphasizes established hierarchical relationships.
- Indians are always conscious of social order and their status relative to other people, whether between themselves, family, friends, or strangers.

The Role of the Family

- People typically define themselves by the groups to which they belong rather than by their status as individuals. Someone is deemed to be affiliated with a specific state, region, city, family, career path, religion, *etc.*
- This group orientation stems from the close personal ties Indians maintain with their families, including the extended family.
- The extended family creates a myriad of interrelationships, rules, and structures. Along with these mutual obligations comes a deep-rooted trust among relatives.

Just Can't Say No

- Indians do not like to express "no," be it verbally or nonverbally.
- Rather than disappoint you, for example, by saying something is not available, Indians will offer you the response that they think you want to hear.

- Since they do not like to give negative answers, Indians may give an affirmative answer but be deliberately vague about any specific details. This will require you to look for nonverbal cues, such as a reluctance to commit to an actual time for a meeting or an enthusiastic response.

Indian Etiquette and Customs

Meeting Etiquette

- Religion, education, and social class all influence greetings in India.
- This is a hierarchical culture, so greet the eldest or most senior person first.
- When leaving a group, each person must be bid a farewell individually.
- Shaking hands is common, especially in the large cities among the more educated who are accustomed to dealing with westerners.
- Men may shake hands with other men, and women may shake hands with other women; however, there are seldom handshakes between men and women because of religious beliefs. If you are uncertain, wait for an extended hand.

Gift Giving Etiquette

- Indians believe that giving gifts eases the transition into the next life.
- Gifts of cash are given to friends and members of the extended family to celebrate life events such as birth, death, and marriage.
- It is not the value of the gift but the sincerity with which it is given that is important to the recipient.
- If invited to an Indian's home for a meal, it is not necessary to bring a gift, although one will not be turned down.
- Do not give frangipani or white flowers because they are used at funerals.
- Yellow, green, and red are lucky colors, so try to use them to wrap gifts.
- A gift from a man should be said to come from both he and his wife/mother/sister or some other female relative.
- Hindus should not be given gifts made of leather.
- Muslims should not be given alcoholic products or gifts made of pigskin.
- Gifts are not opened when received.

Saudi Arabia (Official Name: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)



- Geography:** World's 14th largest country: slightly more than one-fifth the size of the U.S.
- Population:** 26,131,703 (July 2011 est.) *country comparison to the world: 46
- Language:** Arabic (official)
- Religion:** Islam
- Capital City:** Riyadh
- Climate:** Harsh, dry desert with great temperature extremes
- Currency:** Saudi riyal (SAR) * 1 Saudi Riyal = 0.26659 U.S. dollars (March 2011)

Differences in Saudi University

- When students start at the university, they get their schedules automatically, so all they have to do is go to the registrar's office and get their schedules. This will happen every semester.
- If the student fails a class, the same class will be added to his or her schedule the next semester. The students will meet with the department head or the dean in cases where there is some discrimination against the student.
- All students, depending on their majors, will have degree plans from the first day, and they will know which classes will be in their schedules. If students want to add or drop a class, they must go to the registrar's office.

Saudi Society and Culture

Family Values

- The family and tribe are the basis of the social structure.
- As seen in their naming conventions, Saudis are cognizant of their heritage, their clans, and their extended families.
- Saudis take their responsibilities to their family quite seriously.
- Families tend to be large, and the extended family is quite close.
- The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the family.
- Nepotism is considered a good thing. Employing people one knows and trusts is of primary importance.

Islam

- Islam is practiced by all Saudis and governs their personal, political, economic, and legal lives. Islam originated in Saudi Arabia and, thus, is visited by millions of Muslims every year. The Prophet Muhammad is seen as the last of God's emissaries (following in the footsteps of Jesus, Moses, and Abraham) to bring revelation to mankind. He was distinguished with bringing a message for the whole of mankind, rather than just to certain peoples. As Moses brought the Torah and Jesus the Gospels, Muhammad brought the last book, the Quran. The Quran and the actions of the Prophet (the Sunnah) are used as the basis for all guidance in the religion.

- Among certain obligations for Muslims are to pray five times a day: at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The exact time is listed in the local newspaper each day.
- Friday is the Muslim holy day. Everything is closed. Many companies also close on Thursday, making the weekend Thursday and Friday.
- During the holy month of Ramadan, all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk and are only permitted to work six hours per day. Fasting includes no eating, drinking, cigarette smoking, or gum chewing. Expatriates are not required to fast; however, they must not eat, drink, smoke, or chew gum in public. Each night at sunset, families and friends gather together to celebrate the breaking of the fast (*iftar*). The festivities often continue well into the night. In general, things happen more slowly during Ramadan. Many businesses operate on a reduced schedule. Shops may be open and closed at unusual times.

Saudi Etiquette and Customs

Meeting Etiquette

- Men shake hands. Good friends may greet each other with a handshake and a kiss on each cheek.
- Women generally hug and kiss close friends.
- Men and women do not greet each other in public if they are from outside the family.
- When Saudis greet each other, they take their time and converse about general things.

Gift Giving Etiquette

- Gifts are not the norm like in many other countries.
- If you are invited to a Saudi's house, bring something small as a thank you gift.
- Flowers do not make good gifts from a man, although a woman could give flowers to her hostess.
- Never give alcohol unless you are positive they partake.
- Gifts are not opened when received.

For Further Information

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about advising international students at Missouri State University. You're always welcome and encouraged to contact the Office of International Services and the Academic Advisement Center for additional advising questions. Visit the Academic Advisement Center's [website](#) for additional informational videos and a schedule of future advising workshops, including those about international advising.

Here are a few offices and websites that might help you in the future:

Academic Advisement Center: <http://www.missouristate.edu/advising/>, 417-836-5258

CIA World Fact Book: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Boston University International Students & Scholars Office. (2010). Tips for successful communication with international students. Retrieved from <http://www.bu.edu/isso/Tips/Tips-Succesfull-Communication-Intl-Students.pdf>.

English Department: <http://english.missouristate.edu/>

Intercultural Communication: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/>

International Services: <http://international.missouristate.edu/services/>, 417-836-6618
FORMS: <http://international.missouristate.edu/services/66521.htm>

Math Placement Exam: <http://www.missouristate.edu/soar/mathexam.htm>

Office of the Registrar: <http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/>

TOEFL Score Interpretations, <http://www.ets.org/toefl/institutions/scores/interpret/>

U.S. Department of State, Background Notes: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

World Education Services (WES), Country Profiles: http://www.wes.org/wes_tools/index.asp.