



PennState
Dickinson Law

LL.M & EXCHANGE STUDENT PRE-ARRIVAL ORIENTATION GUIDE

International Programs & Graduate Education
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Welcome to Penn State Dickinson Law!

Dean Danielle M. Conway and all of us at Penn State Dickinson Law are excited to welcome you to Carlisle soon! As you prepare for your arrival, there are several important things to consider. This brief guide provides essential information to help you navigate your pre-arrival preparations.

Please note that all new students are required to attend in-person orientation from August 18–22, 2025, ahead of the first day of classes on Monday, August 25, 2025. During orientation week, there will also be a mandatory immigration document check-in for all international students.

For more details—including pre-arrival steps and orientation information—please visit the Admitted LL.M. & Exchange Students page on our website., [Admitted LL.M. & Exchange Students | Dickinson Law](#).

As you get ready for your move to Carlisle and the start of the semester, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or if there's anything we can do to support you.



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OUR MISSION AND CORE PRINCIPLES

As one of the oldest in the country, Penn State Dickinson Law's mission remains similar to its founding vision: *to prepare students of law thoroughly for the practice of their profession*. While remaining steeped in the tradition and values that have distinguished Dickinson Law for over 185 years, the school has redefined how it is preparing students to lead their profession in a competitive and evolving 21st century legal landscape. Dickinson Law has adopted these [core principles](#):

- I. To vest in our students the entire range of concrete lawyering skills necessary to most effectively perform as legal professionals at the local, state, national, transnational, and international levels in the 21st Century.
- II. To engage in a constant quest for knowledge and wisdom that we can share not only with our students, but with the legal profession, scholars, policy makers, and others, consistent with Penn State's role as a world-class research university.
- III. To willingly contribute our services to the university and to local, state, national, and international efforts to improve global understanding and the lives and well-being of students and the worlds in which they will live.
- IV. We pledge that we will strive to foster a sense of community and mutual support between and among faculty, students and staff, and in our interactions outside the Law School.

IMMIGRATION MATTERS

Upon admission to Penn State Dickinson Law and receipt of your [seat deposit](#), student information is entered into Penn State's student information system. This may take several weeks. Once entered, international students will receive notice from iStart, Penn State's immigration management system for international student and scholar advising. Within 48 hours, you will receive a message from Pre-Arrival Admissions that will explain what you need to do regarding immigration. Once you have submitted the necessary documentation into iStart, an I-20 (assuming an F-visa type) will generally be sent within 2-4 weeks. The I-20 is a "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status" that allows you to apply for a nonimmigrant visa at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

To be issued an I-20, one must provide proof of funds for the duration of your program. Please see [Law Schools: Financial Guarantee Requirements | Global Penn State \(psu.edu\)](#) for more information.

Students on other visa types, including J-1 visas, will require different paperwork but the visa process itself is generally the same. (Visas for Fulbright students are generally handled by IIE.)

I-20 & SEVIS Fee

Once you receive the I-20, please be sure to check it for accuracy. You will then need to pay the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System ("SEVIS") fee. SEVIS is a web-based system used by the U.S. Department of State to maintain information on nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors in the United States. Please watch this [SEVIS fee tutorial](#) for more information. Follow the instructions [here](#) to pay the SEVIS fee online.

Visa

Once you have received your I-20 and paid the SEVIS fee, please complete the online nonimmigrant visa application, [Form DS-160](#), and then schedule a visa appointment with an [American embassy or consulate](#) that is closest to you. Wait times for interview appointments vary, so please apply for your visa as soon as possible. Please pay your SEVIS fee at least 3 days before your visa appointment. Please also ensure that you have a valid, unexpired passport. Be sure you are familiar with the [Cost of Attendance](#). Review on the consulate's website what documents you will need during the visa appointment. Here are some [tips](#) to help you prepare. Penn State has no control over the visa process, so please apply as early as possible and thoroughly review the consulate's website where you have your appointment scheduled. If your visa is denied, please ask for the reason in writing, and reapply when possible.

Penn State Global

International students are supported by the [Office of International Students and Scholars](#) at Penn State Global for all immigration matters. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST Monday through Friday (closed 12:00 p.m. -1:00 p.m. for lunch). Please do not hesitate to reach out to Penn State Global with any questions or concerns you might have. You can call 1-814-865-6348 or email DISSA-Adviser@psu.edu.

During the in-person, welcome orientation (August 19-23, 2024), PennState Global will hold an *iStart Immigration Mandatory Document Check-In*. All international students must be present at this Check-In.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Packing

You can expect Carlisle to be warm and humid with occasional rainfall in August and to be cold and snowy in January. Please pack accordingly. Regardless of when you start, you will likely need a pair of rain boots, a rain jacket, snow boots, a winter coat, and winter accessories, all of which may be purchased in Carlisle. Please visit [here](#) for an overview of Carlisle's weather.

You may want to bring small pieces of art, crafts, traditional dress, photographs and other items descriptive of your hometown. These can be used to provide a touch of home to your apartment and a way to share a bit about yourself with others.

Be sure to bring copies of your medical records (translated to English) and those records of any accompanying family members. It is usually best to purchase electrical equipment once in the U.S. to ensure compatibility with.

If you are coming from abroad, be sure to consult the [U.S. Customs and Border Patrol](#) about what you can and cannot bring into the country.

Entry into the United States

Please make airline reservations only after your visa has been approved. You can arrive in the U.S. no more than 30 days before the start date listed on your I-20. When traveling, please carry all travel documents with you, and do not pack them in your suitcase, because you will need them to enter the country. At the [port of entry](#), a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer will instruct you to present your documents, including your passport and I-20, and determine entry into the country. Please note that your documents will be checked at the first port of entry into the U.S., even if you have a connecting domestic flight, so please leave enough time for your transfer.

Immunizations

Please visit [here](#) for information on required and recommended immunizations before traveling to the United States. Please give yourself enough time for these immunizations before you travel and bring the immunization records with you.


Health Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory for all international students. Each international student will be automatically enrolled in the [Penn State Student Health Insurance plan](#) ("SHIP"). To waive out of this requirement, one must submit a waiver request at the start of the semester documenting proof of insurance coverage that meets Penn State's insurance requirements. SHIP does not cover visual or dental insurance, but reasonably-priced plans are available for purchase. Health insurance charges are added to your semester bill. Please direct questions to the Student Health Insurance Office at UHS-insurance@psu.edu.

Getting To Carlisle

Harrisburg International Airport (MDT) is the closest airport to Carlisle. This is the airport that most international students use as it is located within a 30-minute drive of Carlisle. You can either take a taxi or an Uber/Lyft from the airport to Carlisle (approximately \$60). Please visit [here](#) for information on ground transportation options from MDT to Carlisle.

From the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), use SEPTA, which is Philadelphia's regional rail system to travel from the airport to the train station at William H. Gray III 30th Street. This is around a 20-minute ride. There is a SEPTA stop at every terminal in the Philadelphia airport, so you can purchase a ticket at the airport. You can take a taxi or an Uber/Lyft from the airport to the Amtrak station in Philadelphia (approximately \$50).



Once you arrive at the train station at William H. Gray III 30th Street, take an Amtrak from there to Harrisburg. This is around a 2-hour ride. You will be able to purchase an Amtrak ticket at the station using either cash or card. This will cost around \$40. Once in Harrisburg, you can either take a taxi or an Uber/Lyft to Carlisle. There is limited [CAT bus service](#) available from Harrisburg to Carlisle. [Relax and Ride, Carlisle](#) also offers transportation services.

If you have a valid driver's license that allows you to drive in the U.S., you can also rent a car and drive to Carlisle. It may take about 2.5 hours to drive from Philadelphia to Carlisle.

There are other major international airports around Carlisle. In New York, there are John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), LaGuardia

Airport (LGA), and Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR). In Washington, D. C., there are Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). In Baltimore, there is Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI). You can take a train from these cities to Harrisburg and then take an Uber/Lyft to Carlisle, or you can drive from there to Carlisle.

Temporary Accommodation

If you are arriving before your lease term begins, you may need to arrange for temporary accommodation in the Carlisle area, such as [Country Inn & Suites by Radisson](#), [Comfort Suites](#), and [Carlisle House](#). There are also AirBnb properties in Carlisle, as well as bed and breakfast inns.

GETTING PREPARED

Email

As a new member of the Penn State Dickinson Law community, you will receive an email message from Penn State with instructions on how to set up your Penn State Access Account, which will allow you to log into some aspects of Penn State's student information, called [LionPath](#), the [Canvas](#) learning management system, and secure pages on the Dickinson Law website. More access, including the creation of a Penn State email address, will happen upon full matriculation. Please note that all important information from your professors, law school staff, and other students will be sent to you by Penn State email account, so it is important for you to check your email daily.

Lockers

Students may request a locker upon arrival at the law school. Lockers are often used to store books and other materials for class. Locker assignments and keys are available through the Office of Student Services.

ID Cards


All students are issued a Penn State ID that can be used to access the law school buildings, make purchases, or borrow books from the library. Cards are normally required to gain entry into the law school buildings and the library on weekends and on weekdays after 5:00 p.m. but be sure to note any changes in that policy. Please upload a photo to be used for ID. Please follow these [instructions for submission](#).

Phonetic Name Recording & Pronouns

All students are invited to submit voice recordings of their names to share with our faculty. Please complete the [Pre-Arrival Survey](#) before August 1, 2025 to notify the law school of your preferred name, pronouns, and the correct pronunciation of your first and last name.

Business Cards & Name Tags

All students will receive professional business cards and name tags. Please complete the [Pre-](#)



[Arrival Survey](#) before August 1, 2025 to indicate your preferences.

Banking

Banks are plentiful in Carlisle, such as [PNC](#), [Wells Fargo](#), [Santander](#), [M&T](#), and [Orrstown](#), etc. All of them should have a monthly service fee waiver option for a bank account. To open a bank account, normally you need to book an appointment and bring your passport, I-20, I-94, student ID, and address proof (lease, bill, etc.). Information will be provided during the welcome orientation on opening a U.S. bank account.

Cell Phone Service

You may purchase a cell phone with a plan or bring your own phone and get a new SIM card. You may also purchase a prepaid SIM card to avoid an annual contract. If you are bringing a phone from abroad, many stores, such as [Walmart](#), [Target](#), and cell phone providers, such as [AT&T](#), [T-Mobile](#), offer compatible SIM cards. You can also find some mobile virtual network operators, such as [Mint](#), [Tello](#), [Visible](#), providing affordable mobile service.

Driver's License

Each U.S. state issues photo identification cards and driver's licenses for its residents under its own laws. Regulations and application processes vary from state to state. In Pennsylvania, [PennDOT](#) is the government agency who has the authority to issue ID cards and driver's licenses.

Pennsylvania honors a valid foreign driver's license with an international driving permit for as long as the foreign license and/or international driving permit are not expired. Generally, holders of foreign licenses must apply for a Pennsylvania learner's permit if they wish to obtain a Pennsylvania driver's license. Some nationals may be exempt from applying for a PA learner's permit (e.g., South Korea, Spain, etc.).

To apply for an ID card, you need to bring your

passport, I-20, I-94, 2 address proofs (lease, bill, delivery package, etc.), SSN (or Ineligibility Letter from [Social Security Administration](#)) to [PennDot](#). To apply for a driver's license, additionally, you need to bring the physical exam form (DL-180) and prepare for the Driver's Manual knowledge test to get a Learner's Permit before scheduling a Road Test to get the official driver's license.

Tuition


Generally, tuition is due in August for the fall semester and in January for the spring semester. For more information, see [Tuition Due Dates](#) here. Penn State offers an [Installment Payment Plan](#) every semester, which allows students to pay tuition in installments over four months in fall and four months in spring. Students must enroll in this plan every semester in which an installment plan is preferred.

Housing

As Dickinson Law does not offer on-campus student housing, students generally seek local apartments in the Carlisle community. Housing located within walking distance of campus can be competitive to secure and one should start looking as early as possible. Dickinson Law maintains a database of available housing options in the area. Please contact the respective landlords directly for more information on listings. If you would like to take a virtual tour of the place before you sign a lease, please reach out to the Office of Int'l. Programs and Graduate Education to request assistance. These housing options are not vetted, nor endorsed by Penn State Dickinson Law. Also see, [Housing-Guide-Fall-2025.pdf](#)

Social Security Number

A Social Security number (SSN) is issued mainly to record workers earnings over their lifetimes. Students holding F-1 and J-1 status who are employed in the United States must apply for a Social Security number. Dependents on F-2 visas are not



eligible for a Social Security number. (Students who do not work on campus but who receive a taxable scholarship can apply for an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) for tax purposes).

To receive a SSN, the Social Security Administration requires you to show that you are eligible to work in the United States, that you are a full-time student, and that you have received a formal offer of on-campus employment or have been authorized for off-campus employment through Curricular Practical Training, or Optional Practical Training. A Social Security number is not required to obtain a driver's license, cell phone, insurance, admission to an academic institution or for other

“non-work” reasons. The Social Security Administration must also verify your immigration documents and status with the government before issuing the Social Security number.

Note that new students may not apply for an SSN earlier than 10 business days after arriving in the United States. The Social Security number itself is not a work permit.

To apply for an SSN, you can bring your passport, I-20, I-94, job verification letter, and Social Security letter to the [Social Security Administration](#).

STUDYING AT DICKINSON LAW

Meeting Your Professors

During the welcome orientation, [our faculty](#) will be present to welcome you. As the semester gets underway, the faculty will welcome individual meetings by appointment or during the office hours listed on the course syllabi for their courses. Some Dickinson Law professors have an “open door” policy, meaning that you can visit them when their office doors are open. The proper way to address your professors is by calling them “Professor,” followed by their family name. Before coming to campus, take some time to learn about our faculty and [their professional impact](#).

Academic Calendar

Review the [academic calendar](#) to check when classes and exams begin, the deadlines to add or drop classes, and a list of school holidays.

Course Descriptions

Please visit the Penn State Dickinson Law [website](#) for course descriptions. Note that not all of these courses are offered on a regular basis and that many will not be available in any particular semester.

Textbooks

Students have a variety of options to buy, sell, rent or borrow textbooks. You may purchase your books from [the Penn State bookstore](#) (or a vendor of your choice) and have them delivered to Dickinson Law. Review instructions for ordering textbooks [here](#). As advanced reading is often required, students must acquire all required textbooks before the start of classes. There is an inventory of used textbooks (located on the “sharing shelf” in the lower level) that are available on a first come, first served basis.

Academic Accommodations

At Penn State Dickinson Law, we are always willing to assist students with the adjustment to U.S. academic culture and legal study. If you anticipate needing academic accommodations, contact the Office for Student Services to request assistance. For more information, please see [Disability Accommodations Process](#).

Course Registration

New J.D. and S.J.D. students will be automatically registered ahead of the welcome orientation.

LL.M. and Exchange students, however, must register for classes on their own prior to arrival. Once matriculated, students will receive a “To Do” list within LionPath. Among those items is a [Pre-Registration Student Activity Guide](#). Only upon completion will a student be able to register for classes.

Before arriving on campus, students are invited to participate in a series of pre-arrival orientation sessions, which will cover important topics such as housing, academic expectations, and more. All students are required to attend the in-person Welcome Orientation scheduled for the week prior to the start of classes. Please note that late arrivals will not be permitted.

Library Information

The Penn State University Libraries consists of 36 libraries at 22 locations throughout Pennsylvania. The [H. Laddie Montague Jr. Law Library](#), located on the Dickinson Law campus, provides students with a wide range of resources to support class work, address legal research questions, and conduct legal scholarship. The library also provides course supplements, such as West Study Aids.

THRIVING AT DICKINSON LAW

Counseling and Psychological Services

It is not unusual for law students to face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional well-being. Dickinson Law offers a variety of confidential services to help students through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. Penn State students initially receive free counseling sessions. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients’ cultural and religious backgrounds, and differences in race, ability, gender identity, and sexual

The law librarians can assist students with using the various legal research databases available at Dickinson Law including LexisNexis, Westlaw, BloombergLaw, HeinOnline, and the Penn State e-Journal and e-Books catalogue. Law students can also access many other legal databases, such as CALI, Fastcase, Case Text, and Ravel Law using their school account.


PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- I. Acquire I-20 and finalize visa process (if applicable).
- II. Finalize travel arrangements.
- III. Secure off-campus housing.
- IV. Set up Penn State email account.
- V. Submit [Pre-Arrival Survey](#) before August 1, 2025.
- VI. Complete Penn State ID card.
- VII. Register for all courses and order textbooks.

orientation. Questions about counseling and psychological services can be directed to Dean Giselle Santibanez-Bania, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Services via email at, gps5491@psu.edu.

Getting Involved

One of the best ways to adjust to life at Dickinson Law is to become involved with the many opportunities available to students. Students play a variety of intramural sports including flag football, soccer, basketball, and softball. Dickinson Law hosts an intraschool moot court competition. Be sure to look at the [events calendar](#) for other activities.



At Penn State Dickinson Law, there are also many student organizations that will allow you to become involved. Student organizations make it easier to meet your classmates and learn about areas of the law or other interests that you have. Please visit [here](#) to learn about the many student organizations at Penn State Dickinson Law. You are welcome to reach out ahead of arrival to the members to learn more about the organization.

Social Media

For the latest news and events happening on campus, be sure to connect with us on social media.

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

Career Services

Students seeking to work in the United States after graduation should establish early contact with the [Career Services Office](#). Representatives from the Career Services Offices will offer an introductory information session during the welcome orientation.

Employment

Off campus employment for F-1 and J-1 students is restricted and working without permission may be a violation of status and a deportable offense. On-campus employment is permitted with certain restrictions. Generally, first-semester JD students are highly discouraged from working on campus. Some opportunities are available for graduate students. More information will be made available at the welcome orientation.

Cost of Living

For a breakdown of costs, including tuition, fees, books, and living allowances, visit [Cost of Attendance](#). To reduce living expenses, most students establish a personal budget, opt to live with a roommate, shop at discount food stores, walk or bike to campus, bring their meals to campus, and more. Penn State offers student discounts on software, computers, clothes, and much more.

Cultural Differences

There are numerous cultural aspects of the United States that you will find different, and potentially frustrating. International students, for example, often have a difficult time with initially navigating tipping expectations, the lack of bargaining, American humor, and the relative openness to discussing religion, diversity and politics. This is all normal. As you prepare to live and study in the U.S., please remember to bring items from your home country to share with your fellow students here as an opportunity to teach them about your culture.