WKU®

PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE FOR INCOMING EXCHANGE STUDENTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
GLOBAL LEARNING & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Welcome!

We are excited that you have chosen to study at Western Kentucky University (WKU) in beautiful Bowling Green, Kentucky! We look forward to welcoming you to the Hill!

When you arrive to WKU, you will meet staff in the Global Learning & International Affairs (GLIA) office who are here to help you throughout your time at WKU. We are available to support you during your exchange experience from an immigration, cultural, and academic perspective. This guide is to help you begin preparations.
If you have questions, contact your Incoming Exchange Advisor, WesleyAnne (Wes) Watkins at study.abroad@wku.edu.

Summary

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Course Registration Process

The first step you'll have to take to be a student at WKU will be to register for your classes. Registration takes place :
- In May for fall semester
- In November for spring semester

As an exchange student, you cannot register yourself in courses; only your Incoming Exchange Advisor (advisor), can register you. If you don't have any email address, you can use wesleyanne.watkins@wku.edu. You will be asked to submit your course selections to the advisor. Your advisor will determine whether you meet all the requirements to enroll in the courses you have selected. This includes checking that you have taken prerequisite courses, have sufficient English proficiency (as demonstrated through your TOEFL score) for the course level, and meet any other requirements/restrictions associated with the course. WKU Global cannot guarantee enrollment in courses; only academic departments are able to approve exchange students to register in courses.

To look up courses, search the schedule of courses _**here**_. Make sure to only select courses that take place on **main campus** in Bowling Green. The location for these courses will read "Bowling Green" under the "CAMPUS" heading on TopNet. We recommend that you select 4-5 courses (12-15 credit hours) that you would be interested in taking as well as 2-3 alternate courses, in case your advisor is not able to register you for one of your first choices. All questions regarding academic requirements and courses should be directed to your advisor. Per visa regulations, all exchange students must maintain full-time enrollment status for the duration of their studies in the United States. This means **you must enroll in at least 12 credit hours of coursework (4 courses) per semester**. You may not exceed 18 credit hours. The recommended range for exchange students is 12-15 credits.

We will utilize Schedule Planner within TopNet for the course registration process. You can find step-by-step instructions _**here**_.
Once you have added courses to your shopping cart, please email study.abroad@wku.edu.

Logging into WKU Systems

Every student is assigned a WKU student ID number (80X#) and a NetID (username) upon admission to WKU. You will use your NetID to login to WKU IT systems. After admission, you can look up your NetID and set your password, *__here__* .

TopNet

TopNet is an online portal where you can access many aspects of your student data. Through TopNet you can:
- Apply for on-campus housing
- Purchase a university meal plan
- View your course schedule
- View your bill and pay university fees online (insurance, course fees, housing fees, meal plan)
- Sign up for emergency text alerts
- View your final grades at the end of the semester

You can login to TopNet *__here__* with your Net ID and password. After logging in, you will click 'Continue Login' at the bottom of the Bulletin Page. From there, TopNet will direct you to the Main Menu page where you can navigate to different areas of TopNet.
**Most of the items you need to access on TopNet can be found in the Student Services tab (shown below).
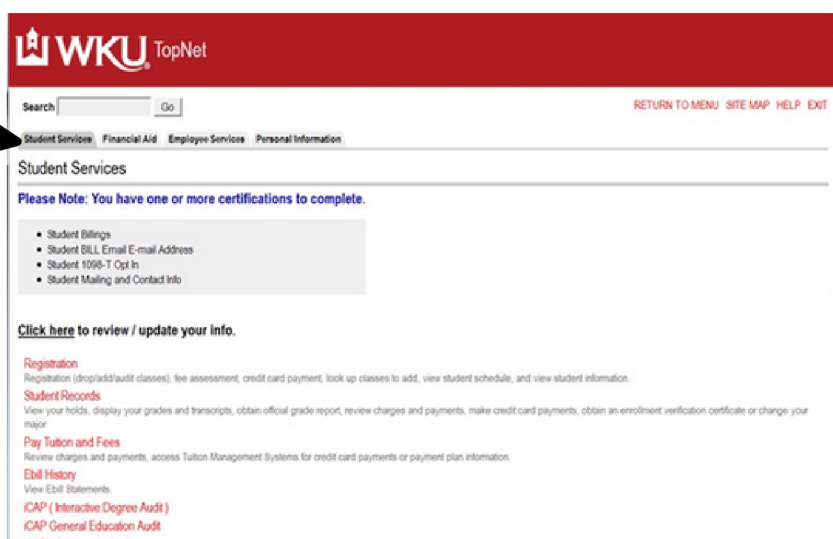
Estimated Expenses for WKU Exchange Experience

You can find budget sheets with estimated expenses here:
- ***Fall semester***
- ***Spring semester***

While tuition is waived for all exchange students, it will be billed to your account and WKU Global will pay it at the beginning of the semester. Keep in mind that you will be responsible for paying all course fees, which are non-tuition fees associated with specific courses based on the equipment/materials used in the course and other costs incurred by the department to offer the course.

All business courses, for instance, have a $15/credit hour course fee. Journalism and art courses tend to have high fees as well due to the lab/studio equipment and materials. When looking up courses, you will be able to see whether there is a course fee associated with it and how much you will have to pay for the course.

The US government requires J-1 visa holders to have health insurance coverage for the duration of the exchange period. WKU enrolls all international students in a mandatory health insurance plan to ensure that you have adequate coverage in the case that you need to seek medical treatment. Healthcare costs have become very expensive in recent years in the United States. The estimated insurance premium for international students for the 2023-2024 academic year is $920 for the fall, $1268 for the spring per semester, which is at or slightly below the national average for insurance costs.

Paying your WKU Bill

You are required to pay your WKU bill, except for tuition, by Friday of the first week of classes. Fees you are responsible for include insurance, course fees, housing fees, and meal plan (if you purchased one). You can either pay online through TopNet with a checking or savings account or credit card, or pay on campus at the Bursar's Office in Potter Hall, Room 208 with a check (US bank only) or cash (not recommended for large amounts).
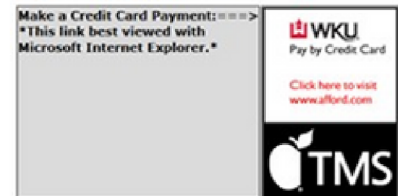
While you will see the tuition charge on your account, do not pay tuition unless you are a fee-paying student. WKU Global will initiate payment of tuition for exchange students during the second week of classes.

To pay student fees online:
- Login to your TopNet Account
- Click "Continue Login" at the bottom of the page
- Click "Student Services"
- Click "Pay Tuition and Fees"
- Select TMS to make a Credit Card Payment or to pay with electronic check
- Select the term you wish to pay and then follow the directions to submit your payment. Payments take a few business days to process.

Looking Up Your Class Schedule

To view your schedule options:
- Login to your TopNet Account
- Click "Continue Login" at the bottom of the page
- Click "Student Services"
- Click "Registration"
- Click "Schedule Planner"
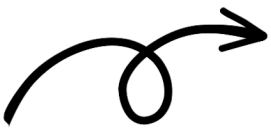
On-Campus Housing Options (1/2)

We advise that you live on-campus in one of WKU's residence halls as it is much easier to reserve a room, and it is convenient to be so close to your classes and campus life.

All WKU residence halls are furnished with the following:
- A twin-size bed (extra-long)
- Desk and chair
- Small Bookcase
- Dresser
- Closet
- Trash can and recycling bin

Not included: bedding, refrigerator, microwave,

For current housing rates, visit **_here_**. Standard rates are for double-occupancy rooms.
**If you wish to have a private room, there is an additional charge.

There are two residence halls that remain open during breaks and holidays: Rhodes Harlin Hall and Hilltopper Hall. The exchange coordinator will notify exchange students regarding the earliest day that you will be permitted to move into your residence hall for orientation. You will be required to move out by the weekend after finals week.

Apply for on-campus housing online by clicking **_here._**

You must pay a refundable housing deposit with a credit card at the time of application. You will need to contact hrl@wku.edu at least two weeks before the end of the semester to be able to receive your refund check before you leave.

All rooms on campus have wireless and Ethernet internet access, a cable TV connection, and feature study lounges, community kitchens on each floor, and air conditioning/heat control. You will need to provide your own bedding (pillow, blanket, extra-long twin sheets, and mattress pad) and cooking utensils if you choose to cook for yourself.

On-campus Housing Options (2/2)

Purchasing Bedding for On-campus Housing
As you may not be able to go shopping until a few days after arrival, you may wish to bring bedding with you or purchase it in advance online and have it delivered to WKU Global. Be sure to order extra-long twin sheets, and have them shipped to our address (below). If you purchase bedding online, please be sure to order it at least one month in advance of your arrival. We will deliver it to your residence hall.

<u>The shipping address to our office is as follows:</u>
c/o WesleyAnne (Wes) Watkins Western Kentucky University
Global Learning and International Affairs
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11064
Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101-1064

<u>A few options to purchase your bedding:</u>
- ***Amazon***
- ***Our Campus Market***
- ***Target***
- ***Wal Mart***

Keep in mind that you will need to apply for housing as soon as possible once admitted to WKU. Once all housing requests have been processed, you will receive a confirmation email with your room assignment. You can also confirm this on TopNet.

Off campus Housing Options

You are free to live in an apartment off campus if you choose, and it is often more affordable to do so. However, be aware that you must make these arrangements on your own and it can be challenging to find housing while you are in another country. Remember to research off-campus housing options carefully. Look at reviews and take into account the location and amenities offered before you sign a lease. Look for furnished apartments with short-term leases (six-month leases) and compare costs. Costs to consider include security deposits, monthly rent, average cost of utilities, and any subletting fee the apartment may charge if they do not have six-month leases.

Keep in mind that you may need to book a hotel or other short term stay accommodations if you arrive prior to your move-in date or if you arrive after business hours. You must arrive during office hours in order to pick up your key to move into your room.

A few apartment style housing options close to campus can be found below. However, you are not limited to these options.
- ***1909 Campus Flats***
- ***The Columns***
- ***The Muse***
- ***The Registry***

Note: We do not endorse these apartment complexes nor do we facilitate your living arrangements off-campus. If you choose to live off-campus, you will be responsible for contacting the apartment of your choice to check for availability and pricing, sign your lease, and coordinate your move-in arrangements.

Meals

WKU has a variety of campus restaurants, including an all-you-can-eat cafeteria called the Fresh Food Company and a variety of franchise locations. Each student is required to purchase at least $325 meal plan dollars to use at on-campus dining locations, and you have the option to purchase a larger meal plan if you wish.

Meal plans are loaded to your WKU student ID card and include a certain number of meals you can use per week or throughout the semester. If you plan to eat on campus regularly, it will be a better deal to purchase a meal plan or meal plan/dining dollars rather than paying with cash.

Meal plan rates can be found *here*.

Meal plans and meal plan/dining/Big Red dollars can be added through TopNet by selecting the 'Student Services' tab, then 'Meal Plan Add or Update', 'Purchase Big Red Dollars', or 'Purchase Dining Dollars'. Big Red Dollars can be used at some businesses in Bowling Green.

2023-24 Campus Restaurant Map

Buying Groceries

Students who live on or close to campus typically buy their groceries (food) from Wal Mart (1201 Morgantown Road) or Kroger (711 Campbell Lane). These locations are not within walking distance of campus, so you must find a ride, use the shopping shuttle (see "Transportation in Bowling Green" for more info), or use a bicycle.

There is a small store on campus called the P.O.D. Market in Bates Runner Hall that has a few necessities and food items if you need to purchase something urgently. There is also a small supermarket within walking distance of campus called PriceLess IGA.

The Community Farmer's Market (2319 Nashville Road), where you can buy local produce and goods, is located about 2 miles south of campus. It is open for limited hours on Tuesdays and Saturdays. You can take a Topper Transit shuttle to South Campus/Knicely Center and walk to the Farmer's Market from there (see Transportation in Bowling Green). The farmer's market accepts Big Red Dollars and even doubles them up to $20!

Note: If you are living on campus and want to keep chilled grocery items in your dorm room, you will have to either share a refrigerator with your roommate or purchase your own. Campus regulations state that the refrigerator must be 5 cubic feet or smaller. If you are living off campus, most apartment complexes will have a refrigerator already in the unit.

Transportation in Bowling Green

WKU offers a great transit system that takes students around main campus, to South Campus, and to certain locations around Bowling Green. You can find information about the free WKU shuttle services/routes and other Bowling Green transportation services *here*

Route 4, also known as the Shopping Shuttle, takes students to and from main campus to Walmart and the local shopping mall. This service typically runs every hour Saturday evenings during the semester *and* Wednesday and Saturday evenings during intersession service.

The city transit *GObg bus* offers routes throughout the city of Bowling Green with stops on WKU's campus. Students can purchase a semester-long pass at the WKU Parking and Transportation Office for just $10 USD.

While taxis are not commonly used, Uber and Lyft are available in Bowling Green and are the most affordable options if you need to catch a ride outside of scheduled WKU Shuttle or GObg transit times.

Transports from Nashville airport to WKU :
If you have to take the plane to come to Bowling Green, the closest airport is Nashville International Airport (BNA). There is a shuttle service that can bring you from the airport to campus, or from the campus to the airport, you can find all the information *here*.

Arrival and Orientation

New international student orientation is broken up into two components:
1. Completion of online modules after admission to WKU.
   a. This allows for course registration, **_AND_**
2. In-person orientation

In-person orientation for fall 2023 is Monday, August 14th **_AND_** Tuesday, August 15th. Full details regarding orientation will be emailed to students upon admission. You can find out more information **_here_**.

After you obtain your visa, you should book flights to arrive to the Nashville, Tennessee Airport (BNA) by orientations. Nashville is about a one-hour drive from Bowling Green, KY.

See you soon on The Hill!