

# Frequently Asked Questions

ISA - University of Utah

---

## **Q. I did not receive my I20 as yet, what shall I do?**

There is not much we can do. I20s are made once a week at the International Student Scholar Services (ISSS). Please contact them for further information. If you did not receive your I20 by May, then contact ISSS immediately and ask for the status. It is very busy this time of the year at ISSS, so they might not be able to reply to your emails promptly. Make sure you use your umail account to send them emails. If you do not get a reply for three days or more you can call and ask for the status. If you want to expedite the shipping process, the ISSS has an option to post your I20 by FedEx. Expect a mail explaining this process by the ISSS or call them if you think its already late.

## **Q. How do I get a TA/RA, other funding?**

For those who've decided Utah as their destination, congrats! Traditionally funding has not been a problem at Utah. But the increase in the number of foreign students joining Utah has altered the scenario quite a bit. However, if you make a good effort, there are good chances that you'll get funded. Again, **it depends on many factors**, so do not hold us responsible if you don't get funding. Each department/major has their own system of allocating assistantships; read the admit letter you have received in your email. Contact the Department Grad Advisor for clarification. Check if your department has a centralised process, if it does then complete the forms before the deadlines. Irrespective of whether you get a TA or not, if you're interested in research, you should look for a faculty you're interested to work with, and start doing research under them in your first semester itself.

## **Q. How do I contact professors? Or How do I approach a professor? Or The professors are not replying to emails what shall I do?**

Firstly, always email professors from your umail account.

Secondly, not everyone will get the time to reply to each and every email. If it is unsolicited email it might be filtered out. The professors are usually very busy and do not reply to each and every email they get from hundreds of students.

[Click this link to know what a U professor thinks about student emails.](#)

You can come here and talk to different professors in person (by setting up an appointment first. If they don't reply to your appointment requests, you may drop by their office and talk to them if their door is open). All professors here have open door policy, i.e. if their door is open and they are in office, they don't mind being disturbed and you can go talk to them directly.

[Check this link for more information.](#)

## **Q. What to include in your email when you email Professors?**

Keep it short. Visit their Website and read their papers before dropping a mail. See if there is any fit. Email them if you have any relevant work experience. Mention

## Frequently Asked Questions

---

what was interesting in the papers you read about his research. Mention how your expertise or previous projects, relevant work experience can make a difference.

**Q. I am really confused on what topics to research on. There are so many research fields and I know little about them, what shall I do?**

Google is your friend, use it. Try researching the topic of interests. Only direct **specific** questions to seniors. We are also busy with school and research and do not get time to answer each and every email. Some of us filter unsolicited email as well.

**Q. How many days before I join should I come to Salt Lake City?**

If you are interested in research and are unable to make contact with professors from India, come here as soon as your visa, financial constraints allow you to. You can come here meet the professors in person and discuss your options. But then again it is your choice. Immigration does not permit you to come into US earlier than 30 days prior to the program start date. So please plan accordingly.

**Q. What if professors are not there in their office and are not replying to emails?**

Persistence is the key here (but don't bombard him/her with emails). Try visiting the professors for a few days at different times. If they are still not around they might be on vacation during summer, or might be on sabbatical. Ask your graduate advisor about them and s/he will notify you as to when to expect them back.

**Q. How will I know if I want to work with a professor or not?**

Firstly, you should know what you're interest is. A professor's home page gives a gist of what research field they are interested in. But that won't tell you everything. You should read their papers. If you do good research with a professor for one/two semester and prove that you can handle it, usually they give you an RA and (mostly) eventually you end up doing project/thesis under them. You should narrow down your research fields and then look at the professor's website. If you have any direct questions that can't be answered by looking at their website, get in touch with us, and we might be able to help you there.

**Q. Before I meet a professor what shall I be prepared for?**

The professors over here respect knowledge and intelligence. You being prepared with your arsenal of questions about their research is a good way to make an impression. Make sure you read their latest papers which will be found on their website. Don't just go to them and say "I'm interested in your field, any RA opportunities?" that's what most of us do. They won't be impressed. They (usually) won't take your viva when you go to meet them, but they will see if you've really read and understood their research and are interested in what they are doing. You could also tell them about any new ideas that you get while you read the paper. (Do your homework with those ideas). A professor really likes it if they think that you are already onto something. That makes their job easier as an advisor. If you don't have any ideas, that is fine. They will direct you along the right path.

**Q. When do I register for courses? Do I come there and do it or do it from here in advance?**

Your last date for registering for courses is two weeks after your semester starts. Last day for dropping courses is within a week after the semester starts. You need to register for classes online via CIS ([cis.utah.edu](http://cis.utah.edu)). For exact dates, visit the university website and appropriate class schedule.

New admits should receive an email with information about logging on to CIS - that's the web portal for all your information at the university. You can register for courses from CIS, if the registration has opened. If you need help with CIS, contact your graduate advisor and ask them to send CIS usage instructions to you. Register before you come here, for at least 9 credits so you will get the bus pass immediately. It does not matter what class you registered for, as everything can be changed once you are here and have access to more information.

**Q. Where do I find which classes are offered in Fall / Spring Semester of 20XX?**

[Check this link](#)

**Q. Specifically, what courses should I target? What are the required courses for the curriculum, which ones are good to get a job?**

As graduate students you need to register for 6000+ level classes. The choice of classes depends on the specialization which you want to pursue. For the exact details about classes contact your seniors or graduate advisor with specific questions as these vary by department.

Remember it is important that you choose the right classes from your first semester, as a wrong class will lead to loss of time, money and lower grades/GPA which will affect you during your job search. Many professors help you choose a class and are the right people to talk to about this. Your department must have assigned a temporary advisor for you, contact them and schedule an appointment. You can discuss classes with them then. For courses from a job point of view, more than your coursework, it really depends on the company and job profile you're planning to apply to, your knowledge, the skill set they require, and your work experience(if you have any). A good way to figure out the skill sets required for your target job profile is to look at job postings on websites like [dice.com](http://dice.com) and [indeed.com](http://indeed.com) and look into desired skills posted for the profile. Do not forget to read your department's grad handbook of Masters and PhD grads. That has everything about required and optional course work for both Masters and PhD grads.

**Q. I am confused by the over-usage of terms *Advisor*, *Graduate Advisor*, *Director of Graduate studies* etc by my seniors and friends. What does each of them mean?**

*Advisor* is usually the person under whom you eventually decide to do your thesis/project. Usually your advisor supports you (almost) entirely for the duration of your program.

*Graduate Advisor/Co-ordinator* is usually the person who is not your academic

## Frequently Asked Questions

---

advisor, but takes care of all the technical stuff/your paperwork etc. It is important to keep good relations with them as they are sort of your *non-academic advisors*. A graduate advisor can also be a temporary advisor assigned to (most of) you when you join.

*Director of Graduate studies* is the person appointed by the graduate committee who makes sure all the students are on track and are reporting their due progress, in terms of completing the degree requirements etc. He/she is usually the person who signs off important paperwork, for example, the progress forms etc.

### **Q. Where do I check the tuition fees which I need to pay?**

After you register for classes you can use CIS to view your tuition bill. For a tentative amount check [this link](#).

### **Q. What is CIS and what all can it be used for?**

CIS is Campus Information Services. It is one stop web service portal for all information related to you at the University of Utah.

### **Q. Where do I find roommates? When do I find roommates? How do I find roommates?**

There should be several Facebook and Whatsapp groups formed by the time you read this FAQ. Typically, all prospective students form groups of 3-5 people whom they would share their apartment with after reaching Salt Lake City. It is advised that you do the same. ISA website should direct you on how to get added to these groups.

Do not bombard your seniors unless you know them personally with questions about roommates. It is very difficult for them to find a roommate and apartment of your choice. You will have to do most of the things by yourself. Your seniors are there only to guide you in the right direction. You are coming to the US to live, study and work alone. So do your homework, read online forums, regulations, laws and other requirements. Learn to become independent from the get go. Only ask questions if you have exhausted all your options and cannot find answers. That is unlikely to happen as you are not unique in coming to US.

### **Q. How many people can stay in one apartment?**

It depends on the rental contract which you will sign. Generally as a graduate student you will stay with two to four other people.

### **Q. What is the best way to find apartments?**

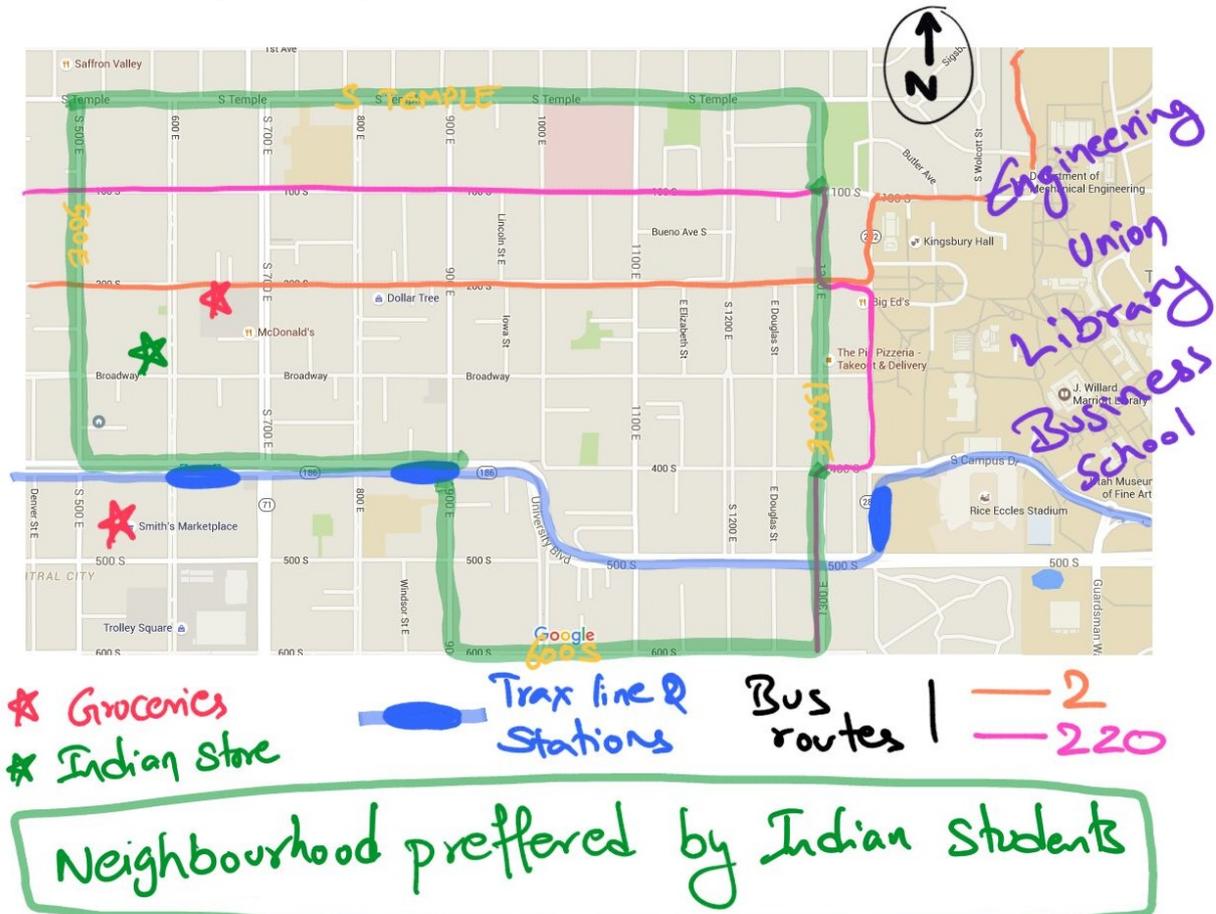
You need to roam in Salt Lake to find an apartment. You can find one easily in a couple of days. But you need to be wise while searching. Searching for places online can help a lot. Do not go to look for places in large groups, small groups are preferable as the managers can help you more efficiently. Visit [ksl.com](#) or [Craiglist](#) and look under the classifieds for *Apartments for Rent*. Put the Zip code as 84102/84112 and you should get most apartments near the University. This will give you a good feeler about the apartments and the costs associated with housing.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. Where shall I take/ look for an apartment in Salt Lake City?

Most of the Indian students stay in apartments located between blocks with corners at 1000 E 400 S and 700 E South Temple. Generally they stay at places like Elevate on 5th, Mercer, East-Side Apartments, Sunset Apartments, La Parisienne Apartments, Broadmoor Apartments, Cedar Cliff, etc. The SLC public transit system has a bus route 2, which runs on 200 South and goes to the university. The trax (train) line runs on 400 S. The grocery shops are located off 400 S, hence staying at places which are easier to commute is advisable.

The below image should give you a better picture.



### Q. How far is the University from these areas?

Use google maps to find out.

### Q. What is the approximate rent for an apartment?

It depends on the apartment which you rent. One bedroom apartments can be found from \$600+ while two bedrooms can be found at \$800+. The more the amenities, better the apartment complex you stay at, higher is the rent.

### Q. How much expenditure will be incurred monthly?

SLC is one of the cheapest places in US. That said, your expenses depend on you.

## Frequently Asked Questions

---

Your apartment rent, phone, internet, utilities (heating, electricity), groceries etc.

### **Q. When I land in US what shall I do?**

Indian Student Association is one of the student groups which help you during your initial days. Fill out the pick-up and host form and be in contact with the people responsible to arrange for your pick-up and host. ISA does this on a voluntary basis and it is not necessary nor is it imperative for ISA to be able to arrange a pick-up and host for all incoming students. ISA has limited resources, however, they try to maximize the available resources and help everyone. If required arrangements are possible, ISA will arrange for a pick-up from the airport and also a host for a maximum of one week (might be less than that depending on restrictions at the hosts' apartment). Hosting is only for new/first time students to the US. Please don't look for hosting options if you have been living in the US for longer than a year. This is not a concierge service, but a show of good faith to help fellow compatriots. Do not take undue advantage of this. If you stay longer than a week, this is between you and your host. You may also be required to pay some nominal cost of food/utilities to the hosts.

### **Q. Is the pick-up and hosting facility free or are there charges for it?**

The pick-up and hosting is free. Please bear in mind that you are guests at someone's place. They are kind enough to help you through your initial days, do not take advantage of that fact. ISA organizes a Volunteer Appreciation Party where the pick-ups and hosts are invited for a dinner reception. A part of the expenses are paid by ISA and the other part is collected from the new students. As a sign of gratitude it is expected that you pay the required amount and help extend the service every year. When you stay at someone's house, stay CLEAN and don't make a mess. Again remember that you are a guest at their place.

*If you did not find anything on this page then take your best friend Google's help. If you do not find your answer on Google's first page feel free to contact your seniors at the University of Utah. The best way is to not directly send personal emails but to post on public facebook forums. Visit the [ISA Facebook group](#) and see if your queries are resolved there.*

Compiled by : Anshul Joshi and Nikhil Nanivadekar

Edited and Proof-read by : Pranay Asai and Rajiv Mantena

Modified on : July 5th, 2016

*PS: Most of these questions are compiled based on the queries we have received, or the questions we asked and read about before coming here. [edulix.com](#) is an awesome website where these FAQs are listed, if you are interested to dig deeper.*