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# **Incoming Graduate Student Guide (2025)**

**Welcome to Stony Brook University!**We are so glad you will be joining us for the Fall 2025 semester! Beginning as a new student can feel overwhelming, but we hope this guidewill help you navigate your first steps and make this transition easier.

## **1. Before You Arrive**

**Pre-Arrival Tasks**

* Confirm you have accepted your admission offer via your [SOLAR account](https://prod.ps.stonybrook.edu/psp/csprods/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&)
* Activate your NetID and SBU email
* Complete the [New Graduate Online Orientation](https://chatgpt.com/#:~:text=Graduate%20School%20Orientation%20Info), provided by the Graduate School, prior to the start of the semester
* Submit your immunization records and complete the health clearance process
* Set up [DUO two-factor authentication](https://it.stonybrook.edu/services/duo-security-two-step-login)
* Visit the [Life at SBU](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/grad/admissions/campus-life.php) web page for information specific to graduate students
* Review your tuition bill and complete the Financial Responsibility Agreement (FRA) in SOLAR (required for registration)

## **2. Academic Essentials**

**Full-Time Status**To be a full-time graduate student, you need to register for a minimum of 9 credits each semester. The only exception is if you have received formal approval for a reduced course load.

If you have been awarded the [Graduate Tuition Scholarship](https://catalog.stonybrook.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=194&hl=%22graduate+tuition+scholarship%22&returnto=search) (GTS), as noted in your offer letter, it will cover your tuition for:

* Up to 12 credits if you are a first-year student and have completed fewer than 24 graduate credits.
* Up to 9 credits for all other students who have received the scholarship.

**SOLAR Student Portal**SOLAR is your primary online portal for:

* Course registration
* Tuition billing and payments
* Financial aid acceptance
* Grades and transcripts
* Updating your contact information

**How to Register for Courses**

1. Log into SOLAR
   1. Watch this brief tutorial on how to register:
      1. [Enrolling in Classes using SOLAR](https://chatgpt.com/#:~:text=to%20register%3A%0A%F0%9F%8E%A5-,How%20to%20Enroll%20in%20Classes%20using%20SOLAR,-When%20browsing%2C%20use)
2. Navigate to Enrollment > Enroll
3. Use Class Search to find courses
   1. When browsing available courses, use the ‘ESE’ subject code to find your courses
   2. Graduate courses are numbered 500 and above
4. Confirm prerequisites or department approvals if required
   1. Please email the professor for the course and the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) for permission to enroll
5. Finish enrolling

**Helpful Tip**: You can use the Schedule Builder tool in SOLAR to plan your course load.

**Academic Calendar and Graduate Bulletin**

* The [Academic Calendar](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/grad/academics/calendar.php#Fall2025) includes term dates, deadlines, and holidays.
* The [Graduate Bulletin](https://catalog.stonybrook.edu/index.php?catoid=4/regulations/registration_requirements/course_enrollment.php) provides course descriptions and degree requirements.

Visit the [Graduate School website](https://www.stonybrook.edu/grad/) for more information.

**Course Advising and Selection**

Course offerings vary by semester, and enrollment isn't guaranteed, so register early once you're sure you're attending. If you're an international student awaiting your visa, **do not register for courses until you've received it and spoken with Visa and Immigration Services (VIS).**

MS students do not have formal academic advisors or a set course sequence. It is suggested to consult the [**Graduate Program Guide**](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/electrical/graduate/graduate_program_guide.php) for course exploration and identification. PhD students should speak directly with their faculty advisor/recommender for first-semester course guidance.

*If you have questions about a specific course you're interested in, please contact the* ***professor teaching that course****.*

## **3. Graduate Teaching and Research Assistants (TAs and RAs)**

## Teaching Assistantships (TAs) and Research Assistantships (RAs) are common sources of financial and academic support for graduate students at Stony Brook University. These positions come with specific responsibilities, training, and administrative requirements.

All new hire paperwork will be completed via **DocuSign**. Please monitor your inbox for emails from this platform.

[This link](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/shs/insurance/graduateinsurance.php) provides comprehensive details on **Stony Brook University's graduate student health insurance policies**, particularly for Teaching Assistants (TAs), Graduate Assistants (GAs), and Research Assistants (RAs), including **eligibility, enrollment, and waiver procedures**.

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### **TA Appointments**

## If you’ve been offered a TA position, your department will process your appointment paperwork, which will indicate pay and term of appointment.

## TA Requirements:

## Complete FERPA Certification (required for anyone handling student records)

## Attend TA Orientation (provided by the Graduate School)

## Submit monthly timesheets on SOLAR **by** the 1st of each month to avoid delaying or even cancellation of your salary payment. Submitting timesheets late can cause significant issues for TAs. Please ensure you submit yours on time to avoid potential problems.

## Communicate regularly with your course instructor and/or TA supervisor

## You can find more detailed information on **TA responsibilities** in the ECE graduate student guidebook and during the ECE department orientation. It's crucial to follow these instructions and fulfill your TA duties diligently to remain **eligible for future TA hiring**. Please be aware that **gross negligence or unresponsiveness may result in the revocation of TA support.**

Please review the [Directions for New Hires](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mNLJq-tdMinjSod3m8-19iNUzU-TY0cO6hZOzYw8yNc/edit?usp=sharing) for more information.

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### **RA Appointments**

## Research Assistant positions are typically funded by faculty research grants. RA roles vary by lab and department, but often include experimental work and other research activities.

## RA Requirements:

## Receive and review your RA appointment paperwork from your department

## Complete payroll and onboarding (including I-9 and W-4 if U.S.-based)

## International students must also complete:

## Visa Check-In with VIS

## GLACIER tax compliance setup

## Some labs may require EH&S training, lab-specific safety modules, or equipment certification

## Discuss expectations, research scope, and publication goals early with your principal investigator (PI)

Please review the [Directions for New Hires](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n5RrefVlKuu7KrwQpAD7eBy4BhXhdbFcW-3NSMJczT0/edit?usp=sharing) for more information.

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### **Union Representation**

## Graduate students serving as TAs or RAs are represented by the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU). The union advocates for salary, health benefits, workload limits, and workplace protections.

## Visit: [gseu.org](https://www.gseu.org)

## **4. International Students – Visa and Immigration**

**Visa and Immigration Services (VIS)**Location: 2401 Computer Science Building  
Email: [vis@stonybrook.edu](mailto:vis@stonybrook.edu)   
Website: [stonybrook.edu/commcms/visa/](http://stonybrook.edu/commcms/visa/)

VIS supports F-1 and J-1 students with:

* I-20/DS-2019 document issuance
* Visa and SEVIS compliance guidance
* CPT and OPT application support
* Mandatory [Visa Check-In](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/visa/new-students/Check-in-and-Orientation.php#Overview) and International Orientation
* Workshops and advising

International graduate students must complete both the Visa Check-In and the International Orientation upon arrival. If you are anticipating you will need to adjust your travel plans, please review [this link](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/visa/new-students/%E2%80%8BAdjusting-Your-Arrival-Plans.php#Graduate-ProfessionalStudents) for more information.

## **5. Campus ID**

**Stony Brook ID Card**Get your ID at the Campus Card Office (SAC Room 225). Your ID is used for:

* [Library](https://library.stonybrook.edu/) access
* [Campus buses](https://www.stonybrook.edu/mobility-and-parking/transportation/sbu_transit_shuttle/index.php)
* [Meal plans](https://www.stonybrook.edu/mealplan/)
* [Printing services](https://it.stonybrook.edu/services/printing)

## **6. Housing and Transportation**

**On-Campus Housing**Graduate housing is limited. Available options include:

* Chapin Apartments (for students with families)
* Schomburg Apartments (for single graduate students)

If you did not apply by the priority deadline of May 31, you can join the waitlist. At that time, your placement will depend on availability.

For more information regarding on-campus housing, [click here](https://energy.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/res/housing/Radius_Policy_FAQs.php?accordion=content-d19e244).

**Off-Campus Housing**Use the Off-Campus Housing Finder at [och.stonybrook.edu](http://och.stonybrook.edu). You can also explore department mailing lists, social media housing groups, and fellow student referrals.

**Campus Transportation**

* Campus bus service is free for students
* Bus routes include Hospital Loop, Outer Loop, and Express routes
* Vehicle registration and parking permits are available through [Parking Services](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/mobility-and-parking/parking/students.php) in SOLAR

## **7. Health and Wellness**

**Student Health Services**Location: Student Health Center  
Phone: (631) 632-6740  
Provides general medical care, immunizations, and wellness visits.

[This link](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/shs/insurance/index.php) provides a comprehensive overview of **Stony Brook University's student health insurance program**, encompassing general information, enrollment procedures, and waiver guidelines.

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**Location: Student Health & Counseling Center  
Phone: (631) 632-6720  
Website: [stonybrook.edu/caps](http://stonybrook.edu/caps)   
Services include:

* Short-term individual counseling
* Group therapy
* Crisis intervention
* 24/7 support (press “2” when calling after hours)

**Center for Prevention and Outreach (CPO)**Location: Union Room 216  
Website: [stonybrook.edu/cpo](http://stonybrook.edu/cpo)   
Programs focus on:

* Mental health education
* Suicide prevention
* Gender-based violence awareness
* Peer education and workshops

**Health Insurance Information**

[This link](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/shs/insurance/index.php) provides a comprehensive overview of **Stony Brook University's student health insurance program**, encompassing general information, enrollment procedures, and waiver guidelines.

**Please Note**: All full-time students are **required to maintain continuous health insurance coverage**. Stony Brook University automatically bills for its student health insurance plan at the beginning of each semester. For specific information regarding health insurance for **Teaching Assistants (TAs)** and **Research Assistants (RAs)**, please refer to the dedicated link on page 2 of this guide.

## **8. Career and Professional Development**

**Graduate Career Services**Location: Melville Library, Room N-1070  
Website: [career.stonybrook.edu](http://career.stonybrook.edu)   
Services include:

* Resume/CV review
* Career counseling
* Internship and job search support
* Career fairs and workshops

[**Handshake**](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/career-center/home/handshake.php) is the university’s platform for job and internship listings.

**Travel & Conference Funding**The Graduate Student Organization (GSO) offers travel grants. Our department does not offer funding for travel and conference expenses.

## **9. Holds on Your Account**

**What Holds Are**Holds are restrictions on your student account that can prevent course registration, access to grades, and graduation processing.

**Where to Check**Log in to SOLAR  
Navigate to Student Records & Registration > View Holds

**Common Hold Types and How to Resolve Them**

* **Financial Hold**: Caused by unpaid tuition or fees. Contact Student Financial Services at [studentbilling@stonybrook.edu](mailto:studentbilling@stonybrook.edu).
* **Immunization Hold**: Due to missing health forms. Contact Student Health Services at [studenthealth@stonybrook.edu](mailto:studenthealth@stonybrook.edu).
* **International Hold**: Caused by an incomplete Visa Check-In. Contact Visa & Immigration Services at [vis@stonybrook.edu](mailto:vis@stonybrook.edu).
* **Library Hold**: From overdue library materials or fines. Contact the circulation desk at [circulation@stonybrook.edu](mailto:circulation@stonybrook.edu).
* **Parking Hold**: Due to unpaid tickets. Contact Parking Services at [transportation@stonybrook.edu](mailto:transportation@stonybrook.edu).
* **Financial Responsibility Agreement (FRA) Hold**: You must complete the agreement in SOLAR under *Campus Financial Services*.
* **Time Limit Hold**:This hold is placed if you have exceeded or are approaching the university's time limit to complete your degree (typically 5 years for MS, 7 years for PhD).
  + The hold description in SOLAR will include the term it becomes active.
  + You should review that term carefully and take proactive steps to address the issue before it blocks registration.
  + Contact your Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) to discuss degree progress and possible extensions.

**Please Note**: Small holds can block registration. Check and resolve holds before registration opens each term.

**10. Finding Your Community**

**Looking to connect with your peers through social events?** Consider joining the [**Graduate Student Organization**](https://www.stonybrookgso.org/) **(GSO)**!

For more information, feel free to reach out to our GSO Alternate Representative: **Anand Ravishankar** – [anand.ravishankar@stonybrook.edu](mailto:anand.ravishankar@stonybrook.edu)

Stay updated and get involved by following the GSO on Instagram: [@stonybrook\_gso](https://www.instagram.com/stonybrook_gso)

## **11. Final Reminders**

* Full-time students must take at least 9 credits per semester, unless otherwise approved by the department and/or Office of VISA and Immigration Services (VIS)
* TAs must submit timesheets before the 1st of each month
* Always check for account holds via SOLAR before registration
* Use your SBU email for ***all*** university communications
* Connect regularly with your Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC)
* Attend all relevant orientations and trainings
* Plan early for graduation, internships, and research opportunities

**12. Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) Department Contact Information**

If you're an ECE graduate student (MS or PhD), your main point of contact for program coordination is:

**Graduate Program Coordinator:  
Ashley Cimato**  
Location: Light Engineering Building, Room 267A  
Email: [ecegradcoordinator@stonybrook.edu](mailto:ecegradcoordinator@stonybrook.edu)   
Phone: (631) 632-8401

Ashley can assist with:

* Course enrollment permissions,
* Degree progress forms and milestones,
* TA/RA appointment paperwork,
* And more!