

Mobile phone providers include:

- AT&T (<https://www.att.com/wireless>)
- Sprint (<https://www.sprint.com>)
- T-Mobile (<https://www.t-mobile.com>)
- Verizon (<https://www.verizonwireless.com>)

### Transportation

Public buses run Monday through Saturday in Macon. The “Macon Mall” route stops at MGA’s Macon campus and connects to other routes via Terminal Station downtown. The fare for one ride is \$1.25 with transfers costing \$0.50. Passes for 10, 20, or unlimited rides are available. See <http://www.mta-mac.com/index.html> for route maps, schedules, and more information.

### Driver’s license

Georgia recognizes unexpired foreign driver’s licenses but because you will be in Georgia for more than 30 days, you should get a Georgia license if you plan to drive here. See the Department of Driver Services website (<https://dds.georgia.gov/drivers-other-nations>) for a list of required documents and an overview of the process.

### Employment

Students on F-1 visas may work a maximum of 19 hours per week in an on-campus job only when school is in session. MGA has only an extremely limited number of campus jobs open to international students. The Department of Homeland Security restricts international students from working off campus.



**Middle Georgia**  
State University



# International Student Guide

## Now that I have been accepted to MGA, what’s next?

### Receive your I-20 and get your F-1 student visa

Your I-20 has been sent or will be sent very soon. When you receive it, make an appointment with the U.S. Embassy to receive your F-1 student visa. You will be interviewed at the embassy to qualify for your visa. At the interview:

- be calm
- answer questions honestly
- keep answers short and simple
- demonstrate that you can support yourself financially while in the U.S.
- show that you intend to return to your home country at the end of your studies

### Activate your student email

Follow the instructions at this link: <http://www.mga.edu/technology/email.aspx>

Your email address appears at the bottom of your acceptance letter and in the welcome letter that accompanies this guide.

### Schedule classes for the semester

We will help you get the classes that you need. Dr. Laura Thomason is your international advisor and her email address is [laura.thomason@mga.edu](mailto:laura.thomason@mga.edu).

**You must take a minimum of 12 credit hours (including no more than 1 online class) per semester to meet the requirements of your visa. Plan to take 15 hours or more per semester to make good progress toward your degree.**

### Arrange for student health insurance

MGA and most universities require students to carry health insurance. Meet this requirement by:

- having coverage from your home country or
- buying international student travelers insurance such as PGH Global ([www.intlinsure/georgiacare](http://www.intlinsure/georgiacare)) or
- buying the university-offered insurance (SHIP), which is automatically billed to your student account

If you do not use SHIP, you must fill out a waiver and provide documentation to show that you have adequate insurance. After you enroll for classes, you will receive an email with instructions to complete the SHIP waiver process.

### Log into SWORDS

SWORDS is the database you will use to view your course schedule, grades, and student account, and to reserve your housing and meal plan. Log in at this link: [https://astro.mga.edu/pls/COMB/twbkwbis.P\\_WWWLogin](https://astro.mga.edu/pls/COMB/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin)

Your username is your MGA ID number (983xxxxxx), which appears on your acceptance letter and on the welcome letter that accompanies this document. The password is your 6-digit birthday (mmddyy).

### **If you plan to live on campus, select your residence hall and meal plan in SWORDS.**

Log into SWORDS and select Student (Tab) > StarRez Housing Portal > Login.  
Read the instructions in StarRez carefully and make sure you have completed all the steps.  
Find out what to bring to your student residence here: <https://www.mga.edu/residence-life/what-to-bring.php>

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## **How much will I need to pay each semester and how do I pay?**

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Your I-20 form from MGA will include estimated costs. You can check your exact cost of attendance in SWORDS after you get your class schedule and housing reservation (if applicable).

### **Payment deadlines, options, and payment plan**

- Payment deadlines: <http://www.mga.edu/bursar/payment-deadlines.aspx>
- How to pay: <https://www.mga.edu/bursar/payments/options.php>
- Payment plan to spread payments over several months: <https://www.mga.edu/bursar/payments/payment-plan.php>

### **Financial aid**

International students may apply for MGA Foundation scholarships for which they are qualified. See <http://www.mga.edu/foundation/scholarships.aspx>

### **Taxes**

If you are receiving a scholarship from MGA, you may owe taxes. After you are registered for classes, look for an email from [support@online-tax.net](mailto:support@online-tax.net) and follow the instructions that it provides.

### **Academic calendar**

See start and end dates for the semester, final exam dates, etc. here: <https://www.mga.edu/academics/calendars/index.php>

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## **What happens when I arrive in Georgia?**

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As soon as you make your flight arrangements, notify Dr. Thomason so that we know when to expect you.

Take the Groome Transportation shuttle from Atlanta to Macon unless you have made other arrangements (e.g., with a family member or one of the International Team). Reserve your seat on the shuttle via the Groome website: <http://macon.groometransportation.com/book-now/>

When you get off the plane in Atlanta:

- A. Go through passport control if you have not already done so. Pick up your luggage from the baggage claim. Go through customs if you have not already done so.
- B. Follow signs for "Ground Transportation." If you landed at the international terminal, take the international shuttle connector (it's free) to the domestic terminal.
- C. In the domestic terminal, go out through exit W1 or W2. Follow signs for "Ground Transportation" to "Shared Ride Shuttles." Groome Transportation's parking spaces are numbers 12-15 on the green row. Be sure you get the van for Macon: The van's destination is marked on the windshield, or you can ask the driver. Give the driver your confirmation number and any luggage you want to place in the back of the van.

The trip to Macon takes 75-90 minutes depending on traffic. A member of the International Team will meet you at the Groome office in Macon, take you to your student residence, and help you check in.

As soon as possible after you arrive, meet with a Designated School Official (DSO) on your campus. Please bring your passport, visa, I-20, I-94, and F-1 Student Agreement form. We will copy these documents for your file. Our DSOs are:

Macon and Warner Robins campuses  
*100 University Parkway, Macon, Georgia 31206*

- **Dr. Laura Thomason** ([laura.thomason@mga.edu](mailto:laura.thomason@mga.edu))  
Office of International Programs, Student Life Center, Room 255  
+1 478-471-5765
- **Ms. Margo Woodham** ([margo.woodham@mga.edu](mailto:margo.woodham@mga.edu))  
*Primary Designated School Official (PDSO)*  
Office of Admissions, Student Life Center, Room 172  
+1 478-471-2725
- **Mr. Ryan Tucker** ([ryan.tucker@mga.edu](mailto:ryan.tucker@mga.edu))  
Office of Admissions, Student Life Center, Room 172  
+1 478-471-5307

Cochran, Eastman, and Dublin campuses  
*1100 Second Street SE, Cochran, Georgia 31014*

- **Ms. Liz Travis** ([liz.travis@mga.edu](mailto:liz.travis@mga.edu))  
Office of Admissions, 199 3rd Street, Cochran, Georgia 31014  
+1 478-934-3136

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## **What else do I need to do to get settled at MGA?**

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### **Banking**

Plan to open a bank account soon after arriving at MGA. Several banks have nearby branches, including:

- Bank of America (<https://www.bankofamerica.com>)
- BB&T (<https://www.bbt.com>)
- State Bank & Trust (<https://www.statebt.com>)
- SunTrust Bank (<https://www.suntrust.com>)

To open an account, you will need your passport, I-20, and your social security number if you have one. Once you have opened a bank account, your parents can deposit money into this account from overseas by wire transfer. When you open your account, ask the bank official to give you the information your parents would need in order to make such a transfer.

### **Mobile/cell phones**

You can buy and top up prepaid/pay-as-you-go phones at stores like Walmart, Target, and Kroger as well as at mobile phone stores. Another option is to sign a contract for a monthly plan from a mobile phone provider. Contracts usually last two years and include a fixed amount of data, calls, and texts for each month. Be sure to ask about international calling and texting options and costs if you plan to use them.