

If You're An Incoming Astronomy Graduate Student You'll Want To Know...

Checklist (in a rough order) of things to do or know when you arrive:

1. UMN username/password (X-500 system)
 - a. This should actually be done before you arrive.
 - b. Once you have accepted your offer, the UMN IT department will either email you a username and password to log into the X-500 system or send you a CD that contains the information needed. X-500 is needed to register for classes, pay fees, etc. Log onto the MYU website and change your password.
2. Go to Terry T. in the Astronomy Office and ask her to verify that your appointment has been entered in the "system".
3. Request all of the keys you'll need from Terry T. She may need to send you down to the Physics Office to get some as well.
4. Department e-mail and network access
 - a. Go to Terry T. in the Astronomy Office and ask for your network username and password.
 - b. Go to a computer in Tate 469B and try to log in.
 - c. Open up the e-mail client of your choice (<https://mail.physics.umn.edu> is our webmail interface) and check your e-mail.
 - d. Have Terry verify that you are in all of the needed email lists such as astro-all , physics-all, grads-all, and all-ta.
5. Obtaining a UCard
 - a. The UCard is the University's ID card. They are used for whatever reason someone may need to identify you (e.g. gym, healthcare, parking pass, etc.).
 - b. You need to go to the UCard office in the lower level of Coffman Union (see attached map).
 - c. They'll take your picture and give you your card right away.
6. Graduate Student Health Insurance (if needed)
 - a. You'll need to walk over to Boynton Health Services (see attached map) and ask the front desk where to go to sign up.
 - b. At the Graduate Health Services desk they will give you a form to fill out.
 - c. You need health insurance of some kind (either provided graduate health insurance or one of your choice) in order to register for classes.
7. Selecting Classes
 - a. The typical class load is 3. These are the recommended (*=required) courses to take for your incoming semester:
 - i. *Physics 5011: Classical Physics I
 - ii. Astronomy 5022: Relativity, Cosmology and the Universe
 - iii. Astronomy 8031: Astrophysical Fluid Dynamics
 - iv. Astronomy 4001: Astrophysics I (undergrad course)
 - v. (fill in)

- b. If you have graduate credits from another institution you'll have to check with the DGS (see useful information section below) about what to do. There are Graduate School requirements about how many credits can be transferred, but it is up to the Department to decide which credits you have will transfer. A final decision is not required right away, but it will help guide your course selection if it appears they will transfer.
 - c. Have a GSC member go over your class list before you register.
- 8. Registering for classes
 - a. The University has an online course registration system available through the One Stop interface from the UMN homepage.
 - b. You should register for classes as soon as possible after you arrive (most likely during the week of TA training).
 - c. Log in with your X-500 account information.
 - d. Add the classes you have selected
 - i. You will be asked for health insurance information when you add your first class, so be prepared to give it.
 - e. Typically you will take all classes your first semester for credit (an actual grade). Check with DGS, just for advice, if for some reason you won't be taking a class for credit.
- 9. Money issues
 - a. Your first paycheck will generally take up to a month to receive.
 - i. International students are required to take a summer English language program.
Payment for this will be given AFTER the course is completed.
 - b. Paychecks are processed every two weeks and are given out 10 days after the pay period ends (Minnesota Law). Paydays are on every other Wednesday.
 - c. Your tuition and some fees are paid for by the department, there are some fees that you are required to pay for and total ~\$500-\$600 due soon after the start of the semester.
- 10. Know your TA duties (if you're going to be a TA)
 - a. Attend TA training
 - i. You should get a Department email letting you know when TA training will be given.
 - ii. It is usually held the full week prior to Labor Day weekend.
 - iii. TA training is paid time.
 - b. Nominally students supported on TA positions will teach 3 labs, each 2 hours long, during the week.
 - c. Attend weekly TA meetings (usually held on Fridays)
 - d. Proctor exams
 - i. To ensure that you actually show up when you're suppose to proctor, Terry T. has a procedure she likes people to follow:
 - 1. Check in with Terry T. at least 2 hours before the exam (email, phone, or in person) so she knows you are aware of your proctoring.

2. If the exam is early in the morning then email her the night before.
 3. Note that she can hold your paycheck if you give her trouble.
- e. Public night on Fridays
- i. The Department hosts public nights during the semesters on the roof. The public is invited to come and look through telescopes. It is the job of TAs to talk to the public and run the telescope(s).
 - ii. You'll be signed up for ~2 public nights each semester, weather permitting.
- f. Public outreach events
- i. The Department also has a public outreach program where TAs (though any graduate student is welcomed and encouraged to do it) will visit a school, boy scouts troop, etc. and give a presentation.
 - ii. TAs are required to give a minimum of 2 presentations a semester.
 1. There are stock presentations available.
 2. The presentations are usually done with two people.
 - iii. Peter Mendygral is the coordinator for the program.
- g. You will be scheduled to do 1 office hour per week. The schedule will be worked out with the head TA, Jennifer Delgado.
- h. Report lab grades
- i. Lab scores are turned in to Terry T. by Tuesday of each week.
 - ii. Terry T. has a general format she likes TAs to follow for handing in grades. Here is a sample of what to e-mail her:

Astronomy 1001			
Your Name			
Spring 2007 Semester			
Lab 106, Monday, 2:30-4:25 PM			
Student Information			Lab Name
Astro ID	Student ID	Name	G - Week 13
10601	555555	Doe, Jane	20
10661	666666	Doe, John	20
10635	777777	Bob, Fred	15

Useful Information:

- Who to talk to if you need help with anything
 - Other graduate students will probably be the easiest to start with.
 - Any DGS member
 - Kris Davidson (Official DGS, who is the default person to sign documents for the Grad School)
 - Tom Jones
 - Liliya Williams
 - Terry Thibeault in the Astronomy Office

- Things you “have” to attend
 - Thursday lunch Journal Club
 - Friday afternoon Astrophysics Colloquia
- Things you “should” go to (optional, but recommended)
 - Monday cosmology seminar
 - Wednesday physics colloquia
- Social events (attendance optional) recommended to attend
 - Department picnic
 - Friday graduate student lunches
 - Graduate student parties
 - O’Brien camping trips
 - Whatever party gets sent out via email
 - Post-qualifier exam celebration
 - Spring Awards Luncheon

