



This guide is to assist with identifying common scams targeting international students in America.

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IMMIGRATION RELATED SCAMS

The Scam:

A student will receive a phone call, text, or email claiming to be from the US government or their home country. The scammer may demand that you have not paid a certain bill and will be deported, or that you are in trouble with the law and will need to pay a fine or be deported, or their home country's government will do something to their family, such as arrest them in their country of study if you do not pay.

Red-Flags:

- The person on the phone is extremely hostile or aggressive. They use threats and emotional manipulations.
- The scammer has created a short window of urgency, such as a payment must be made in a 24-hour period.
- The scammer cannot or will not answer any questions, and asks for payments in gift cards, cryptocurrency, wire transfers, or other unconventional means.

How to Avoid:

- If someone is claiming to be a government official, just hang up. The government will NEVER call you or ask for payment over the phone, especially by gift card or cryptocurrency.
 - They will send an official letter in the mail or visit campus to see you.
- The longer you are on the phone with them, the more information they try to get out of you.
- Do not share confidential information such as passport details or financial information.

Who to Report it to:

- Contact trusted sources, such as the ISS office or a lawyer, who can help verify the legitimacy of such claims.
- You can also report these to the [Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\)](#), which manages various types of scams.
- You should also report scams to the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](#).

Housing Related Scams

The Scam:

Fake or misleading posts for housing. The scammer tries to take advantage of your inability to view the property and mislead the condition of the rental. They might ask for a large deposit on a property that does not exist, or try to steal your personal information, such as your banking account numbers.

Red-Flags:

- The rent is uncharacteristically less expensive than other, similar places in the area.
- They are only able to provide a few or very generic photos (such as just the outside).
- They immediately approve for you to move in with no verification or application.



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- They ask for banking details before viewing or lease signing or try to create a sense of urgency for personal information.
- They make excuses about why you cannot tour the property, like claiming it to be out of state or renovating.
- They refuse to supply a lease or do a background check on you, the renter.

How to Avoid:

- Be wary of places like Craigslist; it can be a useful tool for looking for housing, but it can also be a hotspot for scamming activity.
- Contact ISS to seek assistance on how to verify if the listing is legitimate.
- Research the area you are moving to, to get a sense of the prices you can expect so you know what is out of the "norm."
- When possible, always try to view the property in person. If you cannot make it because you are out of the country, try and have someone you know view it in person.
 - You can also ask the landlord to do a virtual walkthrough via Facetime or Zoom.
- You can ask the landlord for official documentation to cross reference with public records if possible.
- Always use secure payment methods, such as direct bank transfers or reputable online platforms. Legitimate landlords will NEVER ask for payment via gift card.
- Trust your gut if something feels off, and do not hesitate to ask family, friends, or your school for advice.

Who to Report it to:

- You can report suspicious housing listings to platforms like [Craigslist](#) and [Apartments.com](#) for investigation.
- If you believe you are being targeted by a housing scam, report the incident to local law enforcement and provide relevant evidence or documentation.
 - Google the town you are looking at followed by police and you should get non-emergency contact information, like an email or phone number.

Scholarship and Tuition-Related Scams

The Scam:

Fake scholarships are posted online to get students to pay fees or divulge personal identification information or bank details. They may be found on fake websites, phishing emails, or social media outreach.

Red-Flags:

- Scholarships are marketed as "guaranteed," regardless of academic achievements or qualifications.
- A fee is required to process an application- typically, legitimate scholarships do not ask for this.
- You are asked for information that is out of the norm, such as passport info, banking information, etc.

How to Avoid:



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- Verify the legitimacy of scholarship offers and tuition discounts by researching the organization, contacting your university's financial aid office, or checking official websites.
- Beware of paying any "fee" or payments for application processing.
- Consult with trusted advisors such as your school's financial aid office or ISS.

Who to Report it to:

- Report the scam to your school's ISS and financial aid office, so they can make other students aware.
- You can report these to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which handles various types of scams. You can report these on [their website](#).
- You can also report the scam to local law enforcement.

Job-Related Scams

The Scam:

Fake job listings on places such as Indeed.com and LinkedIn. Offers may be extremely exciting, remote, and/or offer to sponsor your work visa enthusiastically. The scammer will try to obtain your banking and passport information for "payment reasons."

Red-Flags:

- The job offer seems too good to be true, the person you are communicating with is too eager, and you do not talk to them over the phone or in an official interview (will attempt to communicate via WhatsApp or other text message apps only)
- Banking or/passport information is asked for exceedingly early in the "interviewing process."
- There is little to no information about the company online.
- The person communicating with you uses unconventional communication methods, such as social media.
- The person communicating with you is not publicly associated with the company or their email is not an official company email but appears to be personal or inconsistent with the company email. For example, "soandso@company.com" may be legitimate, but sosandsocompany@gmail.com is not legitimate.

How to Avoid:

- Make sure the company is real. A quick Google search should lead you to their website, employee reviews, and social media pages. You can also check the [Better Business Bureau](#).
- Check if the job listing is legitimate. Search the job on their company career page, LinkedIn, Indeed.com, and other job listing sites to see if the company has posted the job across multiple platforms.
- Look for things that make the job "too good to be true," like a remarkably high salary but no experience required, 100% of housing afforded, or promised benefits out of the norm.
- The person who you are talking to should not ask for your banking or passport information upfront. The process should include several interviews (with multiple people), an official offer letter, and then your personal information will be asked during your onboarding or just prior.



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- Search for the person's profile or name and verify that they are affiliated with the company they say they are. If a person's profile does not mention the company or is blank, exercise caution.

Who to Report it to:

- If the company is legit, but the job posting is not, reach out to the company to report the violation. You can also reach out to the company's HR department using the contact info on their website to double-check that a LinkedIn post is real.
- If a person is reaching out posing as a nonexistent company or with suspicious activity, you can report it to the social media platform they reached out to you on.
- You can also report any suspicious job posts to the listing platform. Here's [how to report on LinkedIn](#), and [how to report on Indeed.com](#).

What to do if you are a victim of a scam

If you suspect you were a victim of one of a scam or fraud, you should protect yourself immediately. Take the following actions:

1. Stay calm and document everything. Document all communication, transactions, and details about the scam. Take down phone numbers, emails, or names of people you communicated with for evidence.
2. Cease communication. Stop all communication with scammers immediately to prevent any exploitation or damage. Do not send any money or personal information.
3. Contact authorities. Report the scam and your potential involvement to Local Law Enforcement, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and/or the USCIS.
4. Seek support and guidance. Reach out to your university and the ISS office, the police, or counseling center for assistance and local resources.
5. Protect your finances and identity. If you believe your financial information was compromised, reach out to your bank immediately to report the scam, and prevent unauthorized transactions. Monitor your bank accounts, credit cards, and personal information closely for signs of suspicious activity or theft.
6. Explore legal options. If possible, consider consulting with a legal advisor specializing in consumer protection or immigration law to understand your rights and possible legal options. Your school may be able to put you in contact with someone.

Hopefully, this guide assists with identifying common scams and what to do if you encounter them. It is not meant to scare you, but to help you identify and avoid making a mistake. Remember, scammers are incredibly good at their job and convincing people to give them what they want. Knowledge is power, and it is essential that you are diligent in your research and trust your gut when something does not feel right. There are resources and support to help you navigate these complicated scenarios, so do not hesitate to reach out for assistance!