Questions and Answers for Incoming Ph.D. Students

This document was intended to answer the most common questions asked by incoming Ph.D. students. This document was prepared by students and the answers contained therein reflect their own personal opinions, suggestions, and experiences. You need not read the entire document but only those questions that you think are pertinent to your background and situation. This document is available with active hyperlinks on the graduate consultative committee website (http://www.stat.duke.edu/phd-program/gcc/new-student-faqs).

This document is intended to only touch on the basics that incoming students need to know about life at Duke. More detailed information regarding the program can be found on the department website (http://www.stat.duke.edu/phd-program).

Incoming students should feel free to ask their student mentor or first year faculty advisor regarding specific questions that are not covered in this document. Incoming students can also email the graduate consultative committee (GCC) with any further questions at gcc@stat.duke.edu.
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1 PREPARING FOR THE PH.D. PROGRAM

1.1 What should I do the summer before my first semester to prepare for the Ph.D. program?

The first year of the Ph.D. program can be intense. However, with adequate preparation you can make the transition from undergraduate to graduate work smoother than it would otherwise be. It will help your first semester (and every semester thereafter) go smoother if you are already familiar with Linux, \LaTeX, R, and MATLAB before you begin your first semester. If there are any of these you haven’t heard of then see the computing section of this document for further discussion. As Duke is primarily a Bayesian department, there is a good chance you will need some C or C++ programming at some point during your course of study. However, learning Linux, \LaTeX, R, and MATLAB is of much higher importance than learning high level languages as you will use them immediately upon commencement of the program.

As you will most likely be a TA for undergraduate classes during your first year, it would be very helpful to review basic statistical principles such as confidence intervals, hypothesis testing, counting techniques, basic probability, central limit theorem, distributions (e.g. normal, binomial, \(t\), \(\chi^2\) etc.), finding expected values and variances, and other selected topics suitable for an introductory statistics course. You can obtain a list of topics for the undergraduate level introductory statistics classes under the course link on the department website (http://stat.duke.edu/courses).

In order to prepare for first year course work, you can also spend time studying statistical topics such as simple and multiple linear regression, mathematical statistics, Bayesian inference, and real analysis. Also, reviewing calculus and linear algebra topics as needed is definitely encouraged. Suggested reading and study material include Statistical Inference by Casella and Berger, Applied Linear Regression by Weisberg, Bayesian Data Analysis by Gelman, Carlin, Rubin, and Stern, Matrix Algebra from a Statistician’s Perspective by Harville, and other books on the above topics encountered during your undergraduate study or elsewhere.

Last, and certainly not least, take time to relax and enjoy the summer. The Ph.D. program is very intense at times and often summers are needed to catch up on research, attend conferences, etc. After enrolling in the Ph.D. program, your summers will typically be spent either doing an internship or working on your thesis work and/or research projects. Take time the preceding summer to relax because you may not have time to relax once you commence the program.

1.2 Should I purchase a laptop or personal computer for use during the Ph.D. program?

A lot of students find it helpful to have their own personal laptop so they can work away from the office. However, purchasing your own personal computer or laptop is NOT required. Each student is provided with a department owned desktop at their desk. Department desktops can be accessed by any computer via Virtual Computing Network (VNC) or secure shell (ssh) on Unix or Linux based platforms. More information can be found on the Remote Access to Department Resources website at http://www.stat.duke.edu/resources/computing.

1.3 I hear Duke is a heavily Bayesian department. What does this mean? Will I still learn classical statistical methods?

Bayesian statistics is probably a bit different from what you learned in Stat 101 as an undergraduate. Bayesians tend to think about problems in different ways, and work on different aspects of these problems, than classical statisticians. Bayesians do more applied science, more computing, and less asymptotics than do students at most classical departments. If you are interested in more specific differences between Bayesian and classical statistics you can read more at any of the following places:
   \[http://www.math.umass.edu/~lavine/whatisbayes.pdf\].

   \[http://www.stat.duke.edu/~berger/p-values.html\].


While you will still learn classical viewpoints on statistics such as p-values, most powerful tests, interval estimation, etc., these topics will probably not be the focus of your research as the majority of faculty focus on Bayesian solutions to statistical problems.

1.4 Can I jump into doing research right away?

At Duke, jumping into research right away is definitely possible. Of course, conducting research during your first year is contingent upon your background and interests. In terms of funding, faculty mentoring, and peer support, Duke provides an environment very supportive of research from day one. If you are interested in doing research right away, you should talk with faculty as soon as you arrive (or earlier via email) about projects they are working on. However, doing research requires quite a bit of statistical background and, hence, most students start research after their first year exam.

Regardless of your statistical background, you are encouraged to begin talking with different professors about research opportunities as soon as you arrive. This will help you identify potential professors you would want to work with during your time at Duke. Students should have identified who they would like to work with by the end of the first year.

1.5 I have been assigned a first year advisor. Does this mean I will be working with this professor on my dissertation?

No. Your first year faculty advisor is your advisor for your first year only. Their responsibility is simply to give you any support you need throughout your first year. During your first year, you are expected to actively seek another advisor with whom you can begin doing research. This may or may not be your first year faculty advisor.

1.6 Is there an orientation for incoming students before Fall semester starts? If so, when is it?

There are three orientations that occur for incoming students. The first is held by the international house, the second is held by the graduate school, and the third is held by the department of statistics. The international house orientation is typically two weeks before the first week of school. Both the graduate school and the department orientation are held the week prior to the first week of school. All students (especially international students) are encouraged to attend all orientation events and should plan their arrival in Durham accordingly. Information regarding the graduate school and international house orientation will be mailed to you or can be found on the graduate school website (\[http://www.gradschool.duke.edu\]).

The graduate consultative committee (GCC) is responsible for holding a department orientation. It is typically held the week before school starts (the same week as the graduate school orientation) in the Fall but after the graduate school orientation. The GCC will contact you via email about when and where this orientation will be held.
2 REGISTRATION AND CLASSES

2.1 The statistics website says there are no course requirements. Does this mean that I don’t take classes?

No. The no course requirement just means that there are no specific classes you are required to take in order to graduate. Most students take a full load of classes (3 classes) each semester in their first and second years and then begin to take fewer or no classes as they transition into research.

The no course requirement is also intended to give students the opportunity to take classes outside of the statistics department that relate to research interests. By having the no course requirement, students are free to choose which classes they want to take (whether in the department or not).

2.2 How and when do I register for classes?

Sometime during the summer, Duke will send you your NetID in the mail. Although you can register as soon as you have your NetID, you do not need to register until after you come to campus and speak with your first year advisor as well as other students. Many students still add or drop classes during the first week of school.

To register, once you have your NetID and password, you can log onto the registrar’s website http://registrar.duke.edu/ and click on “ACES.” Sign in using your NetID and password then click on the “Registration” tab at the top of the screen. The first time you register, you will be required to enter personal information such as official name, address, etc. You will be required to verify this information the first time you register for a new semester. You will also be required to enroll for continuation (CTN) each Fall and Spring semester. If you are a research assistant during the summer, you will also be required to register for CTN in the summer.

The best way to register is to go to your “Bookbag” which is a tab under the “Registration” tab in ACES. From here click “search”, select the appropriate semester, click on the first letter of the department you are searching for (for example, click “S” for Stat classes), and click the green arrow next to the department name. This will list all the classes offered by that department in a given semester. To add a class to your bookbag, click the green arrow next to the class and select “add to bookbag.” At this point, you still have not registered for the class. Before you can officially register for classes, you will need to obtain a registration code from your first year faculty advisor. Once you talk with your first year advisor and obtain your registration code, you can officially register for all the classes in your bookbag simultaneously or one-at-a-time by clicking the appropriate link. Some classes may require permission numbers. If this is the case, you will need to obtain the permission numbers from the instructor of that course (usually this can be accomplished over email). Once the class has been moved to the “class schedule” section, you are officially registered for the class.

2.3 What classes should I register for my first semester?

The courses you elect to take for your first semester will depend on your background. Three of the classes offered in Fall are covered on the First Year Exam (601, 721, and 711) so you should begin by considering these classes and eliminating those whose material you already feel comfortable with. Students generally choose THREE of the following classes to take their first semester.

1. STA 611 Introduction to Statistical Methods - This class taught from the first half of Statistical Inference by Casella and Berger. This class covers topics such as basic probability theory, transformations, expectations, common families of distributions (e.g. normal, $\chi^2$, $t$, $F$, etc.), multivariate random variables, and sampling distributions. If you have little or no mathematical statistics background then be sure to take this class. Most first-years will probably find this class unnecessary, but if you feel like you need some review, you may want to consider auditing.

2. STA 601 Modern Statistical Data Analysis - This class introduces students to classical and Bayesian statistical thought. This class also introduces students to basic statistical analysis (such as exploratory
and graphical analysis) using R. This class will also touch on \LaTeX. Some first-years will not need this class.

3. **STA 721 Linear Models** - A thorough introduction to linear regression, with a focus Bayesian modeling and computation. Model selection, Bayesian model averaging, and other topics. Most (not all) first-years decide to take this class.

4. **STA 711 Probability and Measure** - STA 205 is an introductory class on probability from a measure theoretic viewpoint. Topics include rigorous treatment of Lebesgue measure and integration, convergence of random variables, Lebesgue’s dominated convergence theorem, etc. Almost all first-years take this class.

5. **MATH 241 Real Analysis** - The topics covered in Math 241 are also covered in STA 711 (a “required” course for the first year exam) so many students take one or the other. If you really like probability (mathematical theory) and want to work mostly in statistical theory taking Math 241 at some point is suggested.

6. **MATH 216 Applied Stochastic Processes** - Discusses Markov chains, martingales, Brownian motion, etc. This class comes highly recommended from all students who have taken it.

7. **STA 841 Generalized Linear Models** - Covers topics such as log-linear models, Poisson regression, probit models, logit models, models for longitudinal, clustered, and multivariate data, latent factor models, stochastic search algorithms, etc. Generally for students who are familiar with Bayesian methods such as Gibbs sampling, Metropolis-Hastings, and have had an advanced course in linear models (e.g. STA 721).

A simple suggestion would be to begin with 601, 721, and 711, then consider replacing 601 with MATH 216 and/or 721 with 841 if you are more advanced. STA 841 is a permission number course so you’ll have to talk with the teacher to see if you are qualified.

A “typical” course of study can be found on the department website [http://www.stat.duke.edu/phd-program/description](http://www.stat.duke.edu/phd-program/description) under the links on the left side.

### 2.4 What courses do I need to take in order to pass the first year exam (FYE)? Is it OK to skip those classes if I already have the necessary background and just do the homework?

The first year exam (FYE), that you must pass in order to continue in the program, covers topics presented in:

1. **STA 601 - Modern Statistical Data Analysis**
2. **STA 711 - Probability and Measure Theory**
3. **STA 721 - Linear Models**
4. **STA 732 - Statistical Inference Part 2**
5. **STA 831 - Probability and Statistical Models**

You can skip any of these classes if you feel you have sufficient background in the material covered in a particular class but it is recommended you do the homework exercises to prepare for the first year exam.
2.5 What textbooks should I bring with me for classes I am going to be taking?

Here is a list of books that students recommend you bring/buy for your own reference and/or classes you will take.

1. *Statistical Inference* by Casella and Berger. You will need this for STA 611 and STA 732. Many first year exam questions are based on this book.

2. *Bayesian Data Analysis* by Gelman, Carlin, Rubin, and Stern. This book is a good reference book for Bayesian methods. While classes don’t teach directly from this book, this book is often referred to in order to supplement class material.

3. *Markov Chain Monte Carlo: Stochastic Simulation for Bayesian Inference* by Gamerman and Lopes. This book provides good discussion about algorithms commonly used Bayesian analysis such as Gibbs sampling, Metropolis-Hastings, etc. You will likely cover the material in this book in STA 831.

4. *Monte Carlo Statistical Methods* by Robert and Casella. This book covers the same topics as Gamerman and Lopes above but in greater depth.

5. *Matrix Algebra from a Statistician’s Perspective* by Harville. This is a great reference book for matrix and linear algebra.

2.6 Can I take classes from UNC or NC State if they turn out to be useful to my research? If so, how can I do that?

While it is possible for students at Duke to take classes at UNC or NC State, most students find the selection of courses within Duke to be sufficient for their research interests. If you are interested in taking a class at UNC or NC State you will need to get approval from your advisor and director of graduate studies. Full details can be found on the Duke registrars website [http://www.registrar.duke.edu/registrar/studentpages/student/interinstitutional.html](http://www.registrar.duke.edu/registrar/studentpages/student/interinstitutional.html).

3 FINANCIAL AID

3.1 What do I have to do to receive the financial aid specified in my acceptance letter?

About 1/2 of the financial aid specified in your acceptance letter will be given to you without you having to do anything except maintaining good academic standing. The other half is contingent upon you being a teaching assistant (TA) or research assistant (RA) within the department.

3.2 How will the financial aid specified in my acceptance letter be paid?

Your tuition, health fee, and continuation fee will be paid for automatically. You are responsible to pay the recreation and activity fee (about $50).

If you are a TA, you will be paid monthly on two separate checks. The first check is for your TA work and will be paid the 25th of every month starting in September and continuing through May. The second check is from you maintaining good academic standing and will be paid on the last working day of each month starting in September and continuing through May. If you are a RA, you will be paid once per month on the 25th from September to May.

**PLEASE NOTE** that as a first year student you will not be paid until the 25th of September so you will need to keep enough money in your bank account to survive until then. Please plan ahead financially so you don’t get into financial trouble until you get your first payment on the 25th of September.
3.3 Do I have to be a teaching assistant (TA) to receive financial aid? If so, what responsibilities will I have as a TA?

No. **HOWEVER**, if you are not a TA or an RA for the department you will not receive that portion of the financial aid specified in your acceptance letter (this is about 1/2 of the aid specified in your acceptance letter).

As a TA your responsibilities include, (1) grading, (2) holding office hours, (3) holding review sessions for exams, and (4) doing whatever professors need you to do. There is a complete list of TA responsibilities on the department website [http://www.stat.duke.edu/resources/teaching-assistants](http://www.stat.duke.edu/resources/teaching-assistants).

3.4 Can I receive financial aid if I am a research assistant (RA)?

Yes. Most students starting in their second or third year will be paid on grants of the professor for whom they are an RA. This money will replace what you would have received had you been a TA.

3.5 Because financial support is paid over the 9 month school year, what do I do about summer funding?

Students typically choose to get summer funding from one of three sources: internships, research or teaching. During the summer, a lot of students choose to do an internship in industry or research groups. Internships are typically arranged between January and March, though it certainly will not hurt to begin looking earlier. A list of internships will be posted on the AMSTAT website, generally in November. Additionally, you will receive emails throughout the year about various internship opportunities available to students. If there are any internships you are particularly interested in, be sure to talk to the faculty to see if they have any contacts with the company. This can increase your odds significantly.

Students nearing graduation typically choose to spend the summer working on their dissertation research. Therefore, their summer funding comes from grants awarded to professors.

A third option is to teach a class during the summer semester for the department. The statistics department offers several introductory undergraduate courses that graduate students teach during the summer semester. If you want teaching experience, you are encouraged to teach a class during the summer and you will be compensated for your work.

4 COMPUTING

4.1 Do I get a Duke email account and if so how do I set it up?

You actually get two email accounts: one from Duke and one from the Stat department. Your Duke account which is NETID@duke.edu can be accessed by using your NetID (which will be mailed to you during the summer) and logging on to Duke mail [http://mail.duke.edu](http://mail.duke.edu). Your stat account is NETID@stat.duke.edu and can be accessed by going to [http://my.duke.edu](http://my.duke.edu) selecting “Statistical Science” mail under the server tab and entering your statistics log-in information. You will receive your statistics log-in information when you arrive on campus or by email Lance Brown.

As most students have multiple emails, the majority of students will forward all mail into a single account. To set up forwarding for the department email NETID@stat.duke.edu, log into a department machine and type

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emacs .forward
```

into the command shell. This will open a new window of emacs (a text editor). Simply type the email address you want to forward all mail sent to your stat.duke.edu account to, save and exit. Now all mail sent to NETID@stat.duke.edu will be forwarded to whichever address you specified in your .forward text file. Second, to forward messages sent to your NETID@duke.edu account, you can log on to Duke mail [http://mail.duke.edu](http://mail.duke.edu) and use the preferences options to set up forwarding.
4.2 Do I get web space to post a personal web page? If so how do I post my web page?

Every student is given web space to post a personal web page if they want to. To post a personal web page you need to do two things:

1. Move all HTML files corresponding to your web page into the directory .public.html in your home directory on department machines. Your homepage will be the file entitled index.html and your web page address will be www.stat.duke.edu/ NetID where NetID is, of course, your personal NetID.

2. Go to http://fds.duke.edu and log in using your NetID and password. On this page you need to enter your general information and provide a link to your homepage. It is also a good habit to provide information on http://fds.duke.edu so outside people can learn more about you.

4.3 What type of operating system does Duke statistics use?

Most desktop computers in the department are now running Scientific Linux 6, a freely-available Linux distribution. To interact with this system, we often use a Graphical User Interface (GUI) provided by various desktop environments such as KDE, Gnome and XFCE. These desktop environments are quite similar to these for Microsoft Windows or Mac OS X, typically providing icons, windows, toolbars, folders, wallpapers, and desktop widgets. Thus we are having a consistent user experience with our department operating systems.

4.4 I have never used Linux before, what do I do?

The GCC web page provides an introduction to basic commands used in Linux/Unix at http://old.stat.duke.edu/programs/gcc/ResourcesDocuments/UnixTutorial.pdf. You can use this to introduce you to the basic functions of Linux. If you want a deeper understanding of how to use Linux, you can always buy a book.

4.5 What is \LaTeX{} and how do I use it?

\LaTeX{} is a typesetting document preparation program. It has features designed for the production of scientific and technical documents. It is different from other document preparation programs (such as Word) where what you see is what you get. Rather, you give \LaTeX{} a set of commands that it puts together to produce a well formatted document.

The GCC web page provides an introduction to using \LaTeX{} (see http://old.stat.duke.edu/programs/gcc/ResourcesDocuments/LatexTutorial.pdf). If you have never used \LaTeX{} before you should probably learn before you begin your first semester as \LaTeX{} is required for peer-reviewed publications and class projects. You can read more about \LaTeX{} on the \LaTeX{} website (http://www.latex-project.org).

4.6 What is R and how do I use it?

R is a statistical computing software package. It has built in functions for performing simple statistical analysis such as graphical analyses, regressions, bootstrap, etc. (just to name a few). R is also flexible enough that you can write your own functions for Metropolis-Hastings algorithms, etc. R is freely downloaded from http://www.r-project.org.

If you don’t know how to use R, you should definitely learn it before you begin your first semester as a lot of your work within the program will be done using R. To get you started, a short primer on R can be found on the GCC website (http://old.stat.duke.edu/programs/gcc/ResourcesDocuments/RTutorial.pdf). Beyond that, several good text books are available but certainly not necessary for further learning.
4.7 Do I need to know MATLAB?

Yes. MATLAB will be required for STA 214, a course which nearly all first-years will take their second semester. As MATLAB is much faster than R at looping, it is the preferred programming language for students and faculty in the department. MATLAB is available by purchasing a license. However, MATLAB is installed on all department machines so you don’t have to purchase a MATLAB license in order to have access to it on the departmental systems – the primary computing environment for StatSci graduate students. Students also work heavily on their own laptops, and most will install Matlab there too; the Duke licensing agreements allow graduate students to install a "student version" of Matlab at almost no cost, while most students will be able to install the full version of Matlab for no cost under the site license agreement via a departmental faculty member research group that they work with.

Once again, links to short MATLAB primers are available from the GCC website (http://old.stat.duke.edu/programs/gcc/Resources.html) if you have never learned MATLAB before. After that, you can either purchase a book or just use the Internet to learn advanced functions and programming tools.

4.8 Do I need to know C, C++, or another programming language?

Maybe, but definitely not right away. As the department is primarily Bayesian, your Ph.D. thesis will probably, but not certainly, contain a complex algorithm for parameter and model estimation. C or C++ are among the best (fastest) languages for programming loops and complex algorithms. Quite a few students find MATLAB to be sufficiently fast for the standard algorithms. However, knowing C or C++ could certainly speed up your statistical analysis. Therefore, knowing C or C++, while encouraged, is not required.

5 HOUSING/LIVING IN DURHAM

5.1 When, during the summer, should I plan on moving to Durham?

The short answer is: whenever is most convenient for you. Many students choose to move to Durham in July or early August in order to get situated before a new semester begins. However, you can move to Durham right up until the day before the first day of school. It is up to you. You are, however, encouraged to attend the various orientations and should probably plan on arriving in Durham prior to the orientation events.

5.2 Should I live on- or off-campus?

Many international students prefer to live on campus during their first year so they can become accustomed to life in the U.S. before living off campus. However, it is certainly not a requirement for international students to live on campus their first year.

Most U.S. students choose to live off-campus. Off-campus housing is easy to come by in Durham as there are many apartment complexes and condominiums near campus. If you have a bicycle or car there are many apartment complexes within a short commute to Duke.

Advantages to on-campus housing include (1) the apartments come fully furnished, (2) have fast Ethernet connections, (3) are close to bus stops, (4) can be paid for via direct deposit from your bursars account, and (5) have quiet hours. Disadvantages include expenses as many on-campus housing options are twice as expensive as off-campus counterparts. Also the number of on-campus apartments available for graduate students is small, making them difficult to come by.

One thing to consider when thinking about on- or off-campus housing is your mode of transportation. If you do not have a car then you will want to live either on or very close to campus. If you have a car (make sure to read the section on parking passes) then your commute will be reasonable anywhere in the Durham area.

Regardless of whether you live on or off campus, use common sense by locking your door, not walking home late at night, and use cabs if necessary. While Durham is generally quite a safe city, there are incidents which occur close to campus and students are encouraged to take the proper precautions.
5.3 Where can I find housing information for both on- and off-campus housing?

The community housing website (http://www.communityhousing.duke.edu/communityhousing) is established to help graduate students find either on- or off-campus housing in the Durham area. Many students start their housing search at the above website. You can also use traditional search engines such as google, yahoo, etc. to help you find housing. Many students also suggest using Craig’s List to find housing.

If you have sufficient finances to make a trip to Durham to search for housing, it would be a good idea to visit the apartments you are considering before actually moving here. However, if this is not an option you can feel free to ask your student mentor to help you out by answering questions about locations you are considering.

If you are considering off-campus housing, students generally suggest to avoid apartments that have the word “Duke” or “University” in the title of the apartment complex. These particular apartment complexes have been known to have a bad reputation. Another apartment complex to avoid is called “Chapel Tower.” For more about reputation of off-campus apartment complexes, take a look at the annual Duke survey: http://www.communityhousing.duke.edu/node/2463.

5.4 Do I need to get a Duke Parking Pass?

Only if you have a car and plan on driving to campus everyday. However, Duke parking passes are very expensive and the parking lots are a long walk from the department building. Students find that living closer to campus and riding a bicycle, taking the bus, or walking is more convenient (and cheaper) than driving to campus everyday.

A good alternative to a car is to drive a motorcycle. Motorcycle parking passes are cheap and you can park almost anywhere you want on campus (including right next to the statistics building).

5.5 What is the weather like in Durham?

The weather in Durham is great for 9 to 10 months out of the year. The latter part of July and August can get hot and humid and January is typically a bit cold. The leaves in the Fall are fantastic and Spring is beautiful. You should plan on having clothes for all 4 seasons but the weather is typically mild and comfortable for 9 to 10 months out of the year.

6 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The majority of your questions will be answered at the international student orientation in August. It is highly recommended that international students attend all orientation meetings to get themselves situated before school begins. You can also receive answers to most of your questions at the international house website (http://ihouse.studentaffairs.duke.edu).

6.1 Should I plan on attending the orientation for international students?

Yes. They cover everything that international students need to know to survive in graduate school and will provide a much better orientation than this question and answer document. In the orientation, the international house will also cover any legal issues that may arise from being an international student (e.g. visas).

6.2 What do international students typically do for housing?

International students are offered accommodation on campus, in Central Campus apartments. Most international students stay on campus for a year or two in order to become accustomed to life in the United States. A few first year students prefer off-campus accommodation and there is a lot available very close to campus. The Graduate School arranges priority on-campus accommodation for all incoming, new overseas
students. The web site at the Grad School has full details at [http://rlhs.studentaffairs.duke.edu/graduatestudents/](http://rlhs.studentaffairs.duke.edu/graduatestudents/).

You can also feel free to contact some of our current international students for insider information - just check the departmental web site under People/Students or talk with your student advisor.

### 6.3 What should I do when I arrive at the RDU airport?

It is best to arrange with someone before hand to pick you up from the airport. You can either talk with your student mentor or the GCC to arrange for someone to pick you up. If you find yourself at the airport without a ride to your house, you can take a taxi for about $25-$35.

### 6.4 What should international students do about banking?

You can set up banking when you arrive. Most international students bring their passport and form I-20 to the Wachovia bank located in the Duke hospital and set up a checking account along with direct deposit. You will NOT need a social security number (SSN) to apply for a bank account with Wachovia.

International students can also receive an ITIN# which most banks accept instead of a SSN to open an account. Some banks will also require letters showing proof of residence both in the US and in NC so apartment leases and your Visa will need to be handy. More information is available on the I-house website under banking at [http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/ihouse/banking-and-credit-cards](http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/ihouse/banking-and-credit-cards).

### 6.5 What should international students do about social security numbers?

Issues regarding social security numbers will be handled during orientation. Students can also visit the international house to go to the social security office to obtain social security cards if they need them.

More information about SSN’s and other topics, can be accessed in the informational handouts provided by the International House: [http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/ihouse/resources](http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/ihouse/resources).