A PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO COMMON LEGAL ISSUES FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINA



来华·留学生
常见法律问题
宣传实用手册

Hi

To make life in China more convenient for foreigners, the Immigration Affairs Service Center of China's National Immigration Administration has launched SinoGuide, an information service app for foreign nationals. In both Chinese and English, the app offers guidance on entry and exit policies, visa expiration reminders, Chinese-language learning, bill payment, transportation, food delivery, tickets to tourist attractions, hotel booking, and mail and courier services.

We hope that the information above will be helpful to all international students. We wish you success in your studies, a happy and fulfilling life in China, lasting friendships, and meaningful personal growth. May your experience in China enable you to contribute to people-to-people exchange between China and the rest of the world, as well as to global prosperity and development.

PREFACE

Welcome to China for your studies

With a history of more than 5,000 years, Chinese civilization has long been renowned for its openness and inclusiveness, embracing diverse cultures with a broad and generous spirit.

At the same time, China continues to advance the rule of law and is widely recognized as one of the safest countries in the world.

We hope that international students in China will abide by Chinese laws and regulations, respect local customs and traditions, comply with school rules, and successfully complete their studies. To this end, we have compiled, in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, a summary of common legal issues that international students may encounter in areas such as document & visa processing, accommodation registration, part-time work & work-study programs, employment and internships, drug control, religious and student association activities, traffic safety, and daily interactions. This guide also includes practical precautions on preventing telecom and internet fraud, safeguarding risks to residence and property, and a list of commonly used public service numbers for quick reference.

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01 DOCUMENTATION AND IMMIGRATION FORMALITIES

1 Apply for stay or residence documents in a timely manner

International students entering China with an X1 visa must apply for a study-type residence permit with the exit-entry administration of the public security organ in their intended place of residence within 30 days of entry.

International students' family members who wish to accompany them or visit them in China may apply for an S1 or S2 visa at a Chinese embassy or consulate abroad, by submitting the student's proof of enrollment, an invitation letter issued by the student, and proof of family relationship.

2 Carry your identity documents with you

International students aged 16 or above who stay or reside in China must carry their passport or other international travel document, as well as their foreigner's stay or residence document, and cooperate with inspection by public security authorities when requested.

3 Apply promptly for extensions or changes to document information

International students holding an X2 visa who need to extend their period of study in China must apply for an extension, with proof of enrollment or study, at least 7 days before the period of stay indicated on the visa expires.

International students holding a study-type residence permit who need to continue studying in China shall apply for an extension, with proof of enrollment or study, at least 30 days before the expiration of the residence permit.

If any registered information on the study-type residence permit changes, the holder must apply to the exit-entry administration of the public security organ for the relevant amendment within 10 days from the date of such change.

4 Replace or renew your passport in a timely manner

If your passport is lost, you should promptly apply to the exit-entry administration of the public security organ for a certificate of passport loss (free of charge). The procedure is as follows:

(1) Provide a written explanation of the loss and answer relevant questions;

(2) Submit the necessary identity documents. Then, with the loss report certificate, promptly apply for a replacement passport at your home country's embassy or consulate in China.

Before the new passport is issued, the certificate of passport loss may be used for travel and accommodation registration. Where an international student's passport is nearing expiration, it is generally advisable to apply for renewal or extension at the home country's embassy or consulate in China approximately three months before the expiry date. After obtaining a new passport, you should promptly update your residence document with the exit-entry administration of the public security organ to ensure that your documents remain valid and lawful at all times and do not affect your studies or stay in China.

5 Avoid illegal stay or residence

International students in China must not engage in activities inconsistent with the purpose of their stay or residence, such as work, business, or news reporting, and must leave China before the prescribed period of stay or residence expires.

Failure to comply will constitute unlawful residence, which may result in a warning. Where circumstances are serious, the offender may be fined or detained, and may also be subject to an order to leave China within a specified time limit or be repatriated.





02 ACCOMMODATION REGISTRATION

1 Registration requirements in three situations

(1) International students living on campus shall complete accommodation registration under the guidance of their university.

(2) International students staying in a hotel in China shall present their passport and visa documents to hotel staff, who will handle the accommodation registration.

(3) International students staying or residing in a place other than a hotel must, within 24 hours after moving in, complete accommodation registration with the local public security authority either in person or online, either by themselves or by the host.

2 Online accommodation registration

International students staying in accommodation other than a hotel can register their stay either by themselves or through the person providing the accommodation. To do so, log in to the National Immigration Administration's online service platform (via its official website, mobile app, or WeChat or Alipay mini program) and complete identity verification.

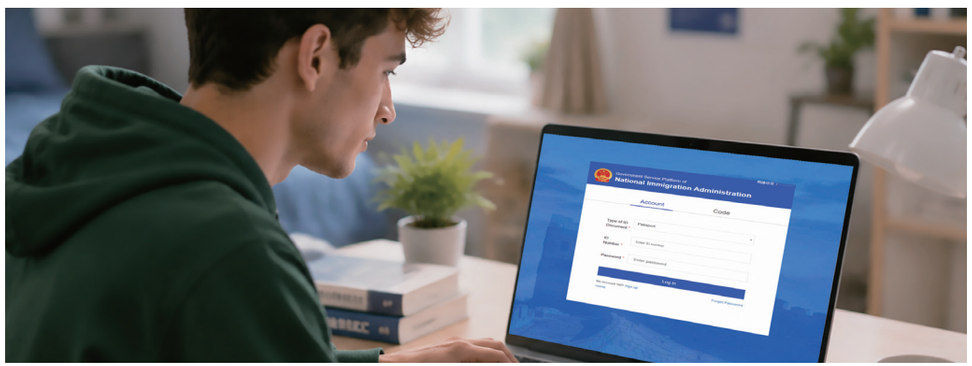
International students staying at someone else's residence for the first time should have the person providing the accommodation complete the accommodation registration for them through the service platform. If an accommodation registration for that address has previously been completed through the platform, whether by the student or by the person providing the accommodation, the student may register on their own when staying there again.

If the student is staying in his or her own residence, he/she may complete the registration on their own.

Some cities also offer their own online registration channels, and students may consult the websites or official WeChat accounts of the local exit-entry administration authorities.

3 Failure to complete accommodation registration is unlawful

International students who stay in a non-hotel residence and fail to complete accommodation registration within 24 hours after moving in may be given a warning and may also be fined up to RMB 2,000.





03 PART-TIME WORK, EMPLOYMENT, AND INTERNSHIPS

1 RULES ON PART-TIME WORK

International students may, under the organization and management of their university, engage in part-time work outside class hours and receive lawful remuneration to help improve their study and living conditions.

For off-campus part-time work, students must obtain the university's consent and apply in advance to the exit-entry administration of the public security organ to add relevant information, such as the employer and period of work, to their student-type residence document.

Without such annotation, off-campus part-time work is not permitted.

2 Rules on off-campus internships

International students may engage in off-campus internships related to their field of study if such internships are arranged or approved by their university. They must apply to the exit-entry administration of the public security organ to add information such as the internship location and duration to their residence document.

Without the required annotation, off-campus internships are not permitted. The university and the internship provider shall sign a cooperation agreement specifying their respective rights, obligations, and management responsibilities. Without such an agreement, international students may not be arranged to undertake internships.

3 Employment after graduation must comply with applicable rules

International students who wish to work in China after graduation generally need to hold a bachelor's degree or above and have at least two years of relevant work experience. With the help of their potential employer, they can apply for a work permit and a work-type residence permit in accordance with the law.

Those who meet the criteria for high-caliber foreign talent or similar categories may be exempt from the two-year work experience requirement. As local employment policies may vary, students are advised to consult the local human resources and social security authorities for specific information.

4 Avoid illegal employment

During their studies in China, international students may participate in part-time work and internships in accordance with the rules, but they may not take up employment, engage in business, or carry out other profit-making activities.

No organization or individual may employ a foreign national who has not obtained a valid work permit and work-type residence permit.

A foreign national who works in China without the required work permit and work-type residence permit, or who works beyond the geographical area or employer specified in the work permit, is considered to be engaging in illegal employment.

A foreign national engaged in illegal employment may be fined between RMB 5,000 and RMB 20,000. If the circumstances are serious, the offender may also be detained for 5 to 15 days and may be subject to an order to leave China within a specified time limit or to be repatriated.



04 DRUG CONTROL

1 Differences in drug control policies between China and other countries

Under Chinese law, “drugs” include not only traditional narcotics such as opium, heroin, methamphetamine (commonly known as “ice”), morphine, cannabis, and cocaine, but also other narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances regulated by the state that can cause dependence, including synthetic cannabinoids, cathinones, and ketamine.

Although some countries and regions have adopted more lenient control policies on cannabis and other drugs, China enforces strict control over cannabis without exception.

China is one of the countries with the widest range of controlled drugs and the strictest drug control regimes in the world. More than 500 narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, whether for medical or non-medical use, are subject to control, and entire categories of substances such as fentanyl-related substances, synthetic cannabinoids, and nitazenes have been placed under control.

2 Violations carry serious consequences

Under Chinese law, any use of drugs, including taking or injecting drugs, is illegal.

Illegal possession of drugs, arranging or facilitating drug transactions, inducing, abetting, deceiving, coercing, or sheltering others in drug use, illegally cultivating narcotic plants, purchasing drugs overseas and mailing them into China, or carrying drugs into China all constitute violations or criminal offenses.

Smuggling, selling, transporting, or manufacturing drugs, regardless of quantity, will incur criminal liability, with the maximum sentence being the death penalty.





05 RELIGIOUS AND STUDENT ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

1 Respect for freedom of religious belief

In China, citizens enjoy the freedom to believe in a religion as well as the freedom not to believe in one.

China respects international students' religious belief and protects their normal religious activities within its territory in accordance with the law.

China also protects, in accordance with the law, friendly exchanges and lawful cultural and academic exchanges between international students in China and Chinese religious communities.

International students should respect China's principle of independence and self-governance in religious matters, and must not use religion to harm China's national interests, public interests, or the lawful rights and interests of citizens, and must not violate China's public order and good morals.

2 Conduct religious activities in accordance with the law

Universities do not provide venues for religious activities, and preaching, religious gatherings, or any other religious activities may not be conducted on campus.

If international students wish to engage in normal religious activities in China, they should do so at legally registered religious venues.

International students in China may not establish religious organizations, religious offices, or religious venues; propagate extremist religious ideas; conduct religious preaching or group religious activities without authorization; recruit followers among Chinese citizens; produce or sell religious publications and related items; or distribute religious promotional materials.

3 Conduct student association activities in accordance with the law

With the approval of their university, international students may establish friendship or fellowship associations on campus.

Such associations must operate within the scope permitted by Chinese laws and regulations and are subject to the university's guidance and administration. With the consent of the university, international students may also hold celebrations of important traditional festivals from their home countries at designated places and within specified areas on campus, provided that such activities do not contain content attacking or opposing other countries or ethnic groups and do not involve conduct contrary to public morality.

4 Illegal assemblies, processions, and demonstrations are strictly prohibited

Under Chinese law, assemblies, processions, and demonstrations must be applied for and approved by the competent authorities.

International students are prohibited from organizing or participating in any unlawful assembly, procession, or demonstration.



06 TRAFFIC SAFETY

1 Obtain lawful driving qualifications

International students who wish to drive motor vehicles in China, including electric cars and motorcycles, must first obtain a Chinese motor vehicle driver's license in accordance with the law.

They must drive only the type of vehicle permitted by the license and carry the license with them at all times.

Driving a motor vehicle without a valid Chinese driver's license, or driving a vehicle category not covered by your license, is a serious traffic violation. It may result in administrative penalties such as fines and detention; if a traffic accident occurs, the driver may bear full or primary liability, and insurance companies will not compensate for property losses. If the circumstances are serious, criminal liability for causing a traffic accident may also arise.

When riding a two-wheeled motorcycle, including an electric motorcycle, always remember the following: the vehicle must have proper license plates and documents; no more than two persons may ride on it; helmets must be worn; and the vehicle must be driven on the right side of the road. Violations may result in fines, detention, or other penalties.

2 Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is strictly prohibited

Driving after drinking alcohol or using drugs can easily cause accidents and seriously endanger life and road safety.

Such conduct is illegal and may result in severe penalties, including temporary suspension or revocation of the driver's license, fines, and detention. If the blood alcohol concentration reaches or exceeds 80 mg/100 ml, the conduct constitutes drunk driving, and the driver will be held criminally liable in accordance with the law.

Where driving under the influence of drugs leads to serious consequences, it may constitute the crime of causing a traffic accident or the crime of endangering public security by dangerous means.

3 Travel safely when using transportation services

When taking a taxi, international students should take good care of their personal belongings. If you take a taxi at night, you should note the license plate number and stay in contact with your teachers or classmates.

Do not use unlicensed or illegally operated transport services.





07 IMPORTANT NOTES FOR DAILY CONDUCT

1 Drink responsibly

When drinking alcohol, you should drink responsibly and in moderation. Heavy drinking is strictly prohibited.

Avoid disputes, conflicts, or fights caused by intoxication. If you encounter a dispute or conflict, you may call the police hotline "110" for assistance and resolve the issue through lawful means and with a rational approach. Do not act impulsively, escalate the conflict, or disturb public order.

In addition, under Chinese law, acts such as fighting, insulting others, disturbing public order, unlawfully entering another person's residence or dormitory, committing indecent acts, picking quarrels and provoking trouble are all illegal. Intoxication does not constitute a ground for exemption from liability. Anyone who commits an illegal act after drinking shall bear the corresponding legal responsibility.

Depending on the seriousness of the circumstances, the offender may be subject to administrative penalties such as a warning, a fine, administrative detention, or an order to leave China within a specified period. Where a crime is constituted, criminal liability will be pursued.

2 Maintaining public order

When gathering in dormitories, residential buildings or public places, international students shall observe public order and respect the lawful rights and interests of others. They shall not disturb the normal rest and life of surrounding teachers, students, or residents through loud noise, high-volume music, or rowdy gatherings, and shall avoid damaging public or private property.

Causing noise disturbance or damaging public or private property are illegal acts that incur legal liability, and offenders will be subject to penalties imposed by public security authorities as well as disciplinary action by the school.

3 Zero tolerance for prostitution and related illegal activities

International students shall maintain personal integrity and shall not participate in any form of paid companionship, prostitution, or patronizing prostitutes.

Such conduct not only violates university rules and discipline but also constitutes a clear violation of Chinese law. Once verified, public security authorities will impose administrative penalties such as fines or detention in accordance with the law. In serious cases, this may result in the revocation of the study-type residence permit and interruption of studies.

Under Chinese law, a person who knows that they have a serious sexually transmitted disease, such as syphilis or gonorrhea, and still engages in or solicits prostitution commits the crime of spreading a sexually transmitted disease. The offender will be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of up to five years, criminal detention, or public surveillance, and will also be fined.

A person who knows they are infected with HIV or have AIDS and still engages in or solicits prostitution commits the crime of spreading a sexually transmitted disease, even if no one else is infected as a result. The offender will be punished more severely within the statutory range.

A person who knows they are infected with HIV or have AIDS, and who engages in or solicits prostitution, or intentionally has sex with another person without taking preventive measures, and thereby infects that person with HIV, will be convicted of the crime of intentional injury. The offender will be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of up to three years, criminal detention, or public surveillance. If the circumstances are serious, the sentence will be fixed-term imprisonment of ten years or more, life imprisonment, or death.

4 Strict prohibition against infringing on others' personal rights and interests

International students shall strictly abide by the law, respect and protect the personal rights and interests of others, and refrain from any conduct that endangers the personal safety of others.

Whoever rapes a woman by violence, coercion, or other means will be sentenced to more than three years but less than ten years of imprisonment; where circumstances are serious, the offender will be sentenced to more than ten years of imprisonment, life imprisonment, or death. Whoever has sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 14 will be deemed to have committed rape and will be given a heavier punishment within the statutory range.

Whoever, by violence, coercion, or other means, forcibly commits indecent assault against another person or insults a woman will be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than five years or to criminal detention. Whoever commits such an offense by assembling a crowd or openly in a public place, or under other egregious circumstances, will be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of five years or more.

Whoever commits indecent assault against a child will be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than five years. Whoever commits indecent assault against multiple children or against a child on multiple occasions, does so by assembling a crowd, or does so openly in a public place under egregious circumstances, will be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of five years or more.





08 RISK PREVENTION AND DAILY SERVICES

1 Guard against telecom and internet fraud

Telecom and internet fraud has become one of the more common types of crime affecting people internationally in recent years. Common scams include:

(1) Impersonating personnel from immigration authorities, customs, public security authorities, courts, embassies and consulates, or other government agencies in China or abroad, and asking students to provide bank account information, passwords, or transfer funds to so-called “safe accounts”;

(2) Impersonating customer service staff or courier companies and, under pretexts such as problematic parcels, product compensation, visa issues, or residence permit issues, inducing students to click phishing links or disclose bank account details, passwords, or verification codes in order to steal funds;

(3) Fake online relationship or investment scams, which lure students into fake investment platforms or gambling websites by offering small initial gains before taking large sums of money;

(4) Fake currency exchange scams, in which fraudsters post advertisements in social media groups or online platforms offering “ultra-low exchange rates,” induce students to exchange money at below-market rates, ask them to transfer renminbi first, and then send fake transfer screenshots before disappearing after receiving the funds; and

(5) Fake job or internship scams, in which fraudsters pose as recruiters or agencies and collect registration fees, deposits, training fees, or medical examination fees under false pretenses.

To prevent telecom and internet fraud, keep the following five points firmly in mind:

(1) Law enforcement authorities do not handle cases by telephone or online, and so-called “safe accounts” do not exist;

(2) **Follow the “three don’ts”:** do not readily trust unsolicited calls or messages, do not disclose personal identity information, bank account details, passwords, or SMS verification codes, and do not transfer money to any unverified account;

(3) **Verify proactively:** if you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately and verify the information yourself through official or otherwise reliable channels;

(4) Protect personal information by being cautious about sharing personal or family details on social media; and

(5) **Seek urgent help immediately if you suspect fraud:** contact your bank at once to request a payment stop, call 110, or report the matter in person to the nearest public security authority.

2 Guard against risks to your residence and property

You are advised to take the following precautions:

(1) **Strengthen prevention against fire, electricity, and gas hazards in your residence:** use electrical appliances properly, do not install unauthorized wiring, and turn off power when leaving. Regularly check gas valves and pipelines and keep rooms well ventilated. Do not pile up items in corridors, and familiarize yourself with evacuation routes. Install smoke alarms, and in the event of a fire, call 119 immediately;

(2) **Take good care of your personal property when going out:** keep cash, your passport, mobile phone, laptop, and other valuables secure. Do not use bags to reserve seats in public places, and keep personal belongings within sight. It is advisable to keep electronic scanned copies of important documents such as passports; and

(3) Protect your privacy when using the internet by avoiding disclosure of your exact address, travel plans, or financial situation in public places or on social media, so as to prevent information leakage.

3 Commonly used public service numbers

If international students encounter difficulties or emergencies, they may call the appropriate helplines for assistance:

(1) For immigration-related matters, call the immigration service hotline at 12367, which provides services in English, French, Russian, Japanese, and Korean;

(2) In cases of theft, fraud, personal injuries, or disputes requiring urgent intervention, call the police at 110;

(3) In the event of sudden illness, serious injury, or another medical emergency, call 120 for emergency medical assistance;

(4) In the event of a traffic collision, personal injury, or traffic dispute, call 122 to request traffic police assistance; and

(5) In case of fire, explosion, or leakage of flammable materials, call 119 immediately, move away from the danger area, briefly describe the location and situation to the operator, and wait for professional rescue services.

4 Getting a local SIM card

Obtaining a local phone number is often an important prerequisite for handling matters such as opening a bank account.

International students may bring their original passport and other required documents to a telecom operator's service outlet to register for a SIM card under their real name. The specific required materials may be confirmed in advance with the local telecom operator.

5 Mobile payment and bank card services

Using an overseas bank card for mobile payments:

After completing passport-based real-name verification in the "Wallet" service of Alipay or WeChat, you may add an overseas credit or debit card that supports cross-border payments under the "Bank Cards" section. Follow the prompts to verify the card information and authorize the linking by SMS or through your bank's app.

Opening a domestic bank account:

If you are unable to link an overseas bank card to Alipay or WeChat, the reason may be that cross-border payment services have not been enabled for that card. In that case, you may open a bank account in China to access full payment functions.

International students may go to a bank in China with their original passport, residence documents, mobile phone, and other required materials to apply for a bank card. The specific required documents may be confirmed with the local bank in advance.

Once the bank card is activated, online banking and mobile banking may also be activated and the account can be linked to payment functions in apps such as Alipay or WeChat.

