Hi Everyone, my name is Pugaleni lynkaran. I am one of the International Student Advisors from the International Student Experience team, within the department of Student Experience. Today, I’m going to be sharing some important information for new international graduate students.

I’ll begin by introducing you to our team and services, then will dive into some international grad student specific topics. Before I go further, I want to mention that this video was recorded in early August of 2020. The information presented on this segment is subject to change without notice. Please continue to check appropriate websites for up-to-date information. You will be able to see the weblinks on the PowerPoint slides as well.

The International Student Experience supports the development and learning needs of undergraduate and graduate international students, while fostering cultural competency, leadership, and community development. ISE provides a range of student support such as 1-on-1 advising, ongoing mentorship and engagement programs to help with cultural, academic, and language transition.

We also offer free skill-building workshops such as our career day and other social activities throughout the year. Fear not, this year most of our programs will still continue to run in a virtual format.

This is our Team! There are 5 core staff members. We have our manager Tom. Then there's me and Matthew Keefe. We are your International Student Advisors. We provide most of the 1-1 on advising. Matthew is a regulated International Student Immigration Advisor (RISIA) and he is able to provide Immigration Advising, which I will talk about a bit later. Then we have You Jia Lee and Galen Fick. They are the wonderful coordinators who organize many of our events and programs, such as START International orientation, and the U of G Quarantine program. Feel free to reach out to us and say “hi!” to us.

When it comes to immigration advising, here are some ways the advisors can assist you. We’ll start with immigration. If you have any questions about your study permit application and extensions, temporary resident visa, ability to work on or off campus, amendments to immigration documents, Co-op work permit, post graduate work permit, restoration of status, and open spousal work permit and visas, any of these types of questions, You can reach out to us. In addition to immigration, you can also talk to us about, ways to get connected with others, feeling of homesickness, loneliness, or isolation especially for those who are already in Canada, and how to look for work on or off campus. We can also provide information on how to get your Social Insurance Number, Health Insurance, and Financial aid. If you have
any questions and you don’t know where to go, just ask us! We will be able to connect you with appropriate resources and services.

You can book a 20 min virtual appointment with us, using the link on the slide; uoguel.ph/seadvising. Alternatively, you can email your questions to us as well. Matthew Keefe, mkeefe@uoguelph.ca, Pugaleni Iynkaran, for any non-immigration related question, iynkaran@uoguelph.ca.

Now I’m going to move on to cover some topics that you need to know as new international graduate students. These topics are Immigration, Health Insurance, and student support.

First of all, immigration policy changes can and do happen at any time without much notice. For that reason, I won’t be talking about any specific immigration policies today. Instead I’ll provide some basic information and share links to the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, also known as IRCC. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please seek immigration advising by contacting Matthew Keefe. As I mentioned earlier, he is a Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor.

When it comes to immigration, it’s important that you know your rights and responsibilities. You are responsible for understanding and complying with the conditions listed on your permits. You also should not let your immigration documents expire. Make sure to take note of the expiry dates of your study permit, passport, and visas (if applicable), and renew them as needed.

Also, do not make any decisions about dropping to part-time studies or taking a Letter of Absence without reviewing your status. These decisions may impact your future immigration aspiration. Again, you can consult with Matthew Keefe about these topics for a thorough explanation.

I also want to bring your attention to the IRCC COVID-19 updates for International Students. It’s really important that you keep an eye on this website and familiarize yourself with all of the updates. This webpage has information on Travel Restrictions and Exemptions.

Lastly, if you are eligible to enter Canada and your travel is deemed essential, then you are required to have a plan to quarantine yourself upon entry. Please refer to the link on the slide for more information on the Government of Canada’s Quarantine Act and the Quarantine Plan requirement. You can create your own quarantine plan or take advantage of the program that has been developed by U of Guelph with public health guidelines. If you register for this program, your transportation, accommodation, and food will all be arranged for a minimum of 14 days. The cost breakdown of the program is available on the slide. If you have any questions about this, please contact intl.student@uoguelph.ca. Please note that this information is only for those students that meet the conditions to enter Canada. This information does not guarantee entry nor is meant to encourage travel to Canada, but instead assists those that are eligible to prepare for this mandatory requirement. Please visit the link provided on the previous slide for current and up to date travel restrictions information.
The second topic we are going to cover is Health Insurance. International Students, you are covered by two different health insurance plans. They are University Health Insurance Plan, also known as UHIP and Health and Dental Plan, also known as the Student Benefits Plan. UHIP covers your basic health needs such as a doctor’s visit. Student Benefits Plan offers extended health coverage. You can see a brief snapshot of the coverage on the slide. For the complete list, please visit uhip.ca and mystudentplan.ca. It’s really important that you familiarize yourself on this. The fee for these insurance policies are already charged to your student account. You can see it on your WebAdvisor.

UHIP for Fall 2020. This year, if you are in Canada there is no change to the process. UHIP is mandatory. You will be automatically charged for this along with your tuition fee and it will be activated for Fall 2020 and for the rest of the academic year. You will receive an email from SunLife in September with more info on how to get your UHIP card.

If you are registered for Fall 2020, but not going to be in Canada, then you can opt out of UHIP. You will still be charged for this along with your tuition fee, but you will have an opportunity request a refund. You should have received an email from Student Financial Services already. Respond to that email and confirm that you will be studying from your home country for the Fall 2020. If your situation changes and you will be coming to Guelph after you opt out, then you need to email Student Financial Services prior to leaving your home country to ensure we have UHIP set up for you when you arrive. UHIP is administered through Student Financial Services. Email accquest@uoguelph.ca if you have any questions.

As for your Student Benefits Plan, there is no change. If you are registered for Fall 2020, but are still in your home country and incur health expenses that are covered by the Student Benefits Plan, then you will be reimbursed as long as the service you receive falls within your coverage. Please make sure to get a receipt with clear detail on the service you received. You can hold on to the receipt and submit a claim when you return to Canada or after you enter Canada, or submit online and receive your refund if you have a Canadian bank account. For more information, please visit the website seen on the slide. That is www.mystudentplan.ca/uofguelph/en/making-a-claim

Lastly, being a new graduate student brings about its own challenges, and current situation surrounding COVID-19 probably doesn’t make thing better. We are here to support students, and help them find balance - academic, personal, as well as physical, emotional, and spiritual health. It is easy to overlook the fact that our body, mind, and identity are going through a huge change when starting a graduate program and moving to a new country, if that is the case for you. Sometimes when those physical symptoms arise, students tend to seek help from the doctor rather than building coping mechanisms and seeking support for the big change.
If you're not feeling like yourself, make sure to reach out. The university is a big place and there are lots of resources here to help you navigate this. Get involved to build community and to break your isolation. Yes, you can do this virtually as well! There are over 1700 international students at the University of Guelph, so you're not alone – take care of each other and use your community!

One way of building community is by attending START International Orientation. It’s a free 14-day orientation for new international graduate students. The program will introduce you to the campus environment, the resources available to aid in your social and academic transition, and what you can expect from your University of Guelph experience. This year, the orientation program will be online, and runs from August 21 to September 4. You can register for START International on Gryph Life. Please go to gryphlife.uoguelph.ca/organization/isc

Throughout the academic year, you can also look forward to our events like International students’ weekly discussions, conversation partners and café, career session, immigration session, and other activities. Again, these will be offered virtually this year as well. Up-to-date schedule will be made available on our GryphLife page.

You can also stay in touch with us by connecting to University of Guelph Student Experience social media pages listed on the slide. We will also be sending weekly newsletters to your University of Guelph email address. Keep an eye open for that. Registered international graduate students will also be added to the INTLGRAD listserv. You can use this to communicate with new and returning international graduate students.

That is it from me. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to reach out! My email address is iynkaran@uoguelph.ca. I’m looking forward to connecting with you during START International Orientation, between Aug 21st to Sept 4th and you can also join me during the live chat on September 8. I’ll be on from 9:30am-10:30am EST.

Thank you! Be Well! And wish you all the best!

[End of Transcript]