

**International Graduate Student Orientation – Fall 2014**  
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**Scenarios for discussion in small groups.**

**Scenario #1:** This is your first time in the US, and you want to make friends with students from America and from other countries. What can you do to make new friends who will be professional connections after you return to your home country?

1. Join a registered student organization (<http://msumankatostudentlife.orgsync.com/>) whose members are NOT from your home country.
2. Keep track of your participation on MavSync, an online, campus-wide system that assists with event coordination, promotion and online community building! Stop by the Community Engagement portal on **MavSync** and sign in today to stay up to speed on student leadership development through service!
3. Create a study group of students in the same course that you are taking.
4. Find a team of students who are in the same academic major, so you can work on research projects together.
5. Use LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/>. This is a great lifelong resource that you can still use when you return to your home country.
6. Ask your academic advisor for ideas of nearby conferences that you might attend, so that you can increase your professional network.

**Scenario #2:** You had TOEFL test scores that were high enough for entrance into graduate school at MSU. However, you are not confident about the quality of your written English. What can you do to improve the quality of your written assignments?

1. Visit the MSU Center for Academic Success <http://www.mnsu.edu/success/> and have a tutor review your written work. The Center is in 116 ML.
2. Send your draft and the assignment instructions to the Center for Academic Success online Writing Center: <https://mnsu.mywconline.com/>. Upload an essay and get real-time feedback on structure of the paper, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.

**Scenario #3:** Your professor tells the class that each student can choose a topic to research for the class projects. For example, you might be required to write a paper about the financial situations of a business, but you get to choose which business to feature. Or you must do a literature review, but you get to choose the topic. What can you do to make smart choices?

1. Select projects or topics that will relate to your capstone project (thesis, creative project, alternative paper, etc.) for your degree.
2. Choose a topic related to your home country. Comparison studies (your country and US or another) are interesting.
3. Use data that already exists somewhere else, so you save time and money. But your thesis should be a new analysis or new way of thinking about the existing data.
4. Get acquainted with the university librarians! Many librarians specialize according to academic majors or content. They can show you resources that you never even dreamed about... and many of the resources are available online and free. They can show you short-cuts for research and writing and reporting!

**Scenario #4:** Your academic advisor tells you that you can select the courses you want to take to fulfill the requirements of your degree. You realize that you will not be in the US long enough to finish all these courses. How do you decide what courses should you take while you are in the US?

1. Review the courses required for your academic major and degree. Usually, these requirements are on-line.
2. You can plan with your academic advisor about the required courses and your graduate-level courses that you could transfer to MSU, Mankato.
3. Complete all your on-campus courses during your time at MSU.
4. You may be able to complete elective courses, on-line courses, or research courses when you return to your home country.
5. Finish related on-line courses after you return to your home country, so you still might complete a certificate or a degree!

**Scenario #5:** You will be in the US only two semesters. How will you balance the course requirements of your academic program with having fun with your friends?

1. Use a planner calendar and write down everything that will be happening. The time will fly past so quickly... sometimes if you don't plan on something, you will miss it.
2. Set monthly and weekly goals for things that must be completed.
3. Professors think that students should spend at least 2 hours studying outside of class for every 1 hour inside of class meetings, so plan enough time for studying and completing assignments.

**Scenario #6:** Your degree and/or your fellowship program require that you participate in an internship experience. In the US, students often must locate their own internship. What can you do to find and make the most of an internship placement?

1. Begin your internship search \*right now\* so that you find something good before May.
2. Visit the university's Career Development Center: <http://www.mnsu.edu/cdc/>. You can get FREE help about possible internships in your professional field.
3. Attend "job fairs," so you can meet potential internship locations or possible employers.
4. Also, the Career Development Center offers: Myers Briggs and other tests; contacts of alumni working in your field of interest; contacts of HR people in the companies of your interest; and professional coaching in case you are still wondering about "what to do next."
5. Internships in Mankato enable you to keep your current apartment/furnishings/transportation and avoid the expense of moving across the country and the trouble of finding other students to lease your apartment.
6. Find an agency that is similar to an agency in your home country -- in which you are most likely to work when you return home.
7. Keep track of your internship on MavSync, an online, campus-wide system that assists with event coordination, promotion and online community building!
8. Your internship can count as credits toward your degree, too.

**Scenario #7:** You had TOEFL test scores that were high enough for entrance into graduate school at MSU. However, you are not confident about the quality of your spoken English and feel uncertain about speaking in class. What can you do to participate in class meetings?

1. Show up to class!
2. Listen carefully, because many professors talk very fast and think the students understand the vocabulary. You may ask the professor for permission to audiotape the lectures.
3. When you do not understand, ask questions such as, “Could you tell us more about .....?”
4. Read the textbook in advance.
5. Say something out loud in every class meeting, even if you only make a joke or ask a question (most professors like participation).
6. Make a presentation about how the class topic relates to things in your home country.

**Scenario #8:** You had TOEFL test scores that were high enough for entrance into graduate school at MSU. However, you are not confident about your ability to read English textbooks at the graduate level. What can you do to understand your textbooks better?

1. Read the textbook before the class meeting when the professor will discuss/present the materials. This will help you have ideas about the concepts.
2. See online suggestions for success at studying:  
<https://www.mnsu.edu/success/studyskills/quickguide.htm>
3. Skim the entire chapter. Skim to create a background and to activate prior knowledge.
4. Skim to get an overview of the organization of the chapter.
5. Skim to overcome inertia and find materials that will help you get started on the assignment.
6. Skim each section before reading that section carefully. Read introductory paragraphs. Look for boldface words. Be sure you know their meanings.
7. Carefully read/underline/highlight each section (paragraph by paragraph). It's okay to write in your textbook.
8. Use self-questioning techniques. Look for:
  - a. definitions
  - b. methods
  - c. sequences
  - d. cause-effect relationships
  - e. comparison-contrast

**Scenario #9:** You want to work on campus, but you are not a Graduate Assistant. How many hours per week can you work?

1. See information links at <http://www.mnsu.edu/international/immigrationfaq.html>.
2. According to US immigration laws, F-1 students are limited to 20 total hours of work per week while Fall and Spring semester classes are in session. This includes time employed as hourly paid or temporary workers for on-campus contract employers (such as food services).
3. Minnesota law limits graduate students who are not graduate assistants to work only 14 hours per week on campus for university departments.

**Scenario #10:** A friend who is struggling with coursework asks you for an answer to a question on an assignment. What could be the consequences of giving the answer to your friend?

1. No corrective action--alleged incident did not meet the criteria of a violation of academic honesty.
2. No corrective action--in the opinion of the faculty member the incident is best dealt with by additional education about the academic honesty policy.
3. Assign a grade of F to the assignment and/or record zero (0) points for the assignment.
4. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F for the course.
5. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F for the course and move to have the student dismissed from the program.

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: plagiarism (such as presenting another's phrasing, concepts or line of reasoning as if it were your own); submitting course assignments that are not your own; submitting the same paper in different classes without prior approval from both instructors; cheating on assignments, laboratory reports or examinations; acquiring or using test materials without faculty knowledge; failure to follow class policy; obtaining academic benefits through inappropriate application of technology; computer fraud or unauthorized access; engaging in academic fraud alone or with others; downloading material off the Internet without proper citation; illicit attempts to influence grading; failing to abide by test-taking procedures; signing the class attendance roster for an absent student.

**Scenario #11:** You are very busy, and the assignment you are working on is not worth many points. You copy part of the assignment from the internet and fail to cite your source. What could be the consequences?

1. No corrective action--alleged incident did not meet the criteria of a violation of academic honesty.
2. No corrective action--in the opinion of the faculty member the incident is best dealt with by additional education about the academic honesty policy.
3. Assign a grade of F to the assignment and/or record zero (0) points for the assignment.
4. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F for the course.
5. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F for the course and move to have the student dismissed from the program.

This is a big deal in the USA, because one's intellectual work is considered to be one's intellectual property. Therefore, the source (the original writer) should be given credit through citation when you refer to a source other than your own words. Ideas from other people should be paraphrased and sources should be cited.

**Do not cut and paste material from another publication or web page and present it as your own work. Do not copy and paste abstracts from journal articles into your research paper. That is called plagiarizing and it is not honest in American academic practices.**

This is from my university's academic honesty policy: "Individuals will fulfill their academic responsibilities in an honest and forthright manner. Every student is responsible for becoming familiar with and abiding by the University policy on plagiarism and academic honesty as well as the guidelines and policies established by their instructors and programs of study."

**Scenario #12:** Your professor wants you to use the APA citation style. What is that? How do you find out more about it?

1. Check the Library Services online resources for citations and formatting:  
<http://libguides.mnsu.edu/citations>.
2. Learn to use RefWorks!! <http://lib.mnsu.edu/services/refworks.html> This is FREE through Library Services / Article Databases A - Z / RefWorks. (1) Create bibliographies for research papers, theses and alternate plan papers; (2) Organize citations for multiple research papers and projects; and (3) Import citations from the online databases and library catalog. It will generate the resource list in whatever writing style is required (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) Log-in with your university username and password, and then create your own RefWorks account. RefWorks is excellent!
3. Visit the MSU Center for Academic Success <http://www.mnsu.edu/success/> and have a tutor review your written work. The Center is in 116 ML.
4. Get acquainted with the university librarians! Many librarians specialize according to academic majors or content. They can show you resources that you never even dreamed about... and many of the resources are available online and free. They can show you short-cuts for research and writing and reporting!

**Scenario #13:** Congratulations! You are a Graduate Teaching Assistant for a class. A particular student from your country is having an especially difficult time and asks for your assistance to a point that you begin to become uncomfortable. How do you handle that?

1. Encourage students to come in groups to office hours.
2. Leave the office door open.
3. Consider meeting in a public location.
4. Keep all electronic correspondence friendly, but formal, and during work hours.
5. Avoid full self-disclosure.
6. Give the student suggestions and responsibility for looking up the answers and bringing ideas back to class.
7. Participate in the Faculty Teaching Certificate program of MSU's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: <http://www.mnsu.edu/ctl/programs/>. Because you are a Graduate Teaching Assistant, you are eligible for these FREE programs that will help you be an effective TA.

**Scenario #14:** You have never studied with as much technology as is available on MSU's campus. How can you learn about using the various hardware and software that is available?

1. Lynda.com is an online training resource that offers over 2,300 video tutorials on a wide range of topics including: MS Office 2013, Desire2Learn, Career Skills, Customer Service, 3-D Animation, iPads, Photography, Graphic Design, and many more. This is free for all MSU faculty, staff and students to use.
2. <http://ets.mnsu.edu/d2l/tutorials/student/> guides have been designed to give you a thorough introduction to the various areas of D2L.
3. Visit the Academic Computer Center in Wissink Hall.

**Scenario #15:** You feel that you have not been graded fairly on an assignment with your professor. Is there anything you can do?

1. Review the assignment, the grading rubrics, and the class process for the assignment itself. Are you sure that you completed the assignment correctly?
2. Students are always encouraged to talk directly with their professor about grading concerns. Make an appointment and respectfully request that the professor explain the grading process. Ask the professor if there is anything you might do to revise or edit your work and get a better grade.
3. If you are still not satisfied with the professor's response, you may make an appointment with the department chairperson to discuss the grading process. It is likely that the chairperson will invite the professor to be present during the discussion.
4. Avoid appealing every single grade for every single assignment.
5. Wait until the semester is over and final course grades are recorded to see if the professor has actually entered a better final course grade.
6. MSU, Mankato has a formal procedure when students believe that a final course grade is unfair, arbitrary, or capricious: <http://www.mnsu.edu/policies/approved/gradeappeals.pdf>

**Scenario #16:** You are working on a group project but someone in the group is not participating but is taking credit for the group's work. How do you handle the situation?

1. Remember why professors would include group projects in the curriculum. (1) Weak students working individually are likely to give up when they get stuck; working cooperatively, they keep going. (2) Strong students faced with the task of explaining and clarifying material to weaker students often find gaps in their own understanding and fill them in.
2. Students working alone may tend to delay completing assignments or skip them altogether, but when they know others are counting on them, they are motivated to do the work in a timely manner. So, remind the "hitch-hiking" student that your group is counting on them.
3. Ask the professor for procedures that make teams responsible for seeing that non-contributors don't get credit and that only contributors' names should go on assignments.
4. Ask the professor for a procedure that uses peer ratings to make individual adjustments to team assignment grades.

**Scenario #17:** Your professor wants you to use a specific edition of a textbook. How do you find it?

1. The bookstores near MSU usually sell the books that are required by the professors. These could be new (more expensive) or previously used (less expensive).
2. Sometimes, professors put extra copies of the textbooks on the reserve shelves at the library. This means you can borrow (free) the textbook needed. Do not write in this copy of the book and be sure to return it on time so others have access to the book.
3. You might be able to buy less expensive copies of the textbook online (ebay, Amazon, etc.), but be sure it is the correct edition. Also be aware that shipping time may mean the textbook does not arrive until later in the semester. And return policies may be more difficult than purchasing books on campus.
4. Occasionally, professors are willing to actually loan their own books to international students. Be respectful and do not mark in these copies.

**Scenario #18:** You have had difficulty contacting your academic advisor. When you are able to meet with the professor, you are confused and feel misinformed about program requirements or possibilities. What can you do to express your concern and perhaps request a change in your assigned academic advisor?

1. Academic departments have relatively few professors assigned to provide advising to graduate students. In general, the College of Graduate Studies and Research works with the department to determine and to assign a graduate student's academic advisor.
2. There is a process to request a change in academic advisor. This process begins with a form: <http://grad.mnsu.edu/forms/advisorChange.pdf>
3. Students are always encouraged to talk directly with their academic advisor about concerns. Whatever process you follow, the persons with whom you meet will want to know if you have talked with your advisor.
4. If you are still not satisfied with the advisor's response, you may make an appointment with the department chairperson to discuss the advising assignment and explore available alternatives.
5. Academic Advising is an important partnership between the student and their advisor. All successful advising relationships include careful planning, authentic communication, and personal responsibility.
6. Each College has a Student Relations office whose staff members are available to provide information and referrals.