

October 4, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Summer Deans, Outreach Deans, Department Chairs and Budget Officers

FROM: Visiting International Student Program (VISP): Thematic Track Program Model

A. Overview

In 2012, the Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) launched the Visiting International Student Program (VISP) to assist international students who are interested in short-term study at UW–Madison. The program has grown from 66 VISP students in Fall 2012 to around 150 each semester now. Students have had great success and enthusiasm for being a part of the campus community. For more information about the regular VISP program, please see: VISP.wisc.edu.

We have also heard from departments who are interested in hosting international students for formal study at UW–Madison during one or more academic terms. Helping departments host international students for a thematic track in an appropriate extension of the services already provided. At the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year, we welcomed our first VISP cohort of students from Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) for the VISP math thematic track. Now entering its twelfth full academic year, the program has hosted students from around the world, in every term, across more than ten different departments, housed in eight Schools and Colleges.

Many other departments have begun to plan and explore potential options for spring, summer, and fall of 2025-26. The thematic track students have excelled in their academics and enjoyed their time here as VISP students. The thematic track model also provides significant value-added revenue to these departments. The following model provides a framework for departments to explore with school/college leadership and DCS, the possibility of enrolling visiting international students. Faculty and staff interested in the thematic track program are encouraged to review our [Information for Faculty and Staff page](#).

This model will apply when UW–Madison department faculty:

- 1) Have an existing or are working towards developing a relationship with the international institution (or institutions) or international students;
- 2) Are actively working with the international institution or VISP to identify an appropriate cohort of qualified students to sponsor for enrollment at UW–Madison on a short-term basis;
- 3) Provide an identified curriculum of instruction within a department (guaranteed course enrollment) or departments at a credit load which satisfies U.S. Department of State guidelines for the student visa.[i]

# Credits to be Full-Time		
Type of Student	Summer (8 wk session / 4 wk session)	Fall or Spring
Undergraduate	6 credits / 3 credits	12 credits
Graduate	4 credits / 2 credits	8 credits
Dissertator	3 credits / 2 credits	3 credits

If these three criteria are not met, regular VISP student admission may be appropriate. Please consult VISP coordinators at VISP@dcs.wisc.edu for details and assistance.

B. Fiscal Model for VISP Thematic Track

Regarding the financial aspects, the following apply:

- Students enrolled in a VISP thematic track program will pay standard [International University Special Student tuition](#). Departments developing thematic track can discuss the ability to set alternate program fee structures. Please discuss this option with Jayne Arnold, jayne.arnold@wisc.edu.
- Consistent with the existing VISP model, tuition generated by the VISP Thematic Track Model will be attributed to the VISP fund 131 account. i
- DCS will transfer 80% of gross tuition (minus segregated fees) to your school and/or college's 131 fund account. Please work with your dean and/or budget office to determine how they will transfer this revenue share to your specific department. ii
- Out of that 80%, the school/college and department(s) will cover all direct instructional and other related expenses.
- Continuing Studies will then retain the remaining 20% of the tuition generated to cover the administrative expenses associated with the admissions and academic dean's office responsibilities defined below.
- It is highly recommended that the school/college and the sponsoring department(s) execute a memorandum of agreement regarding the respective fiscal and other responsibilities of the department(s) and the school/college.

C. Responsibilities

The following outlines responsibilities of the various participants:

Sponsoring Department(s)

- 1) Primary liaison with colleagues/sponsors at international institution
- 2) With colleagues and DCS identify appropriate students, accounting for academic readiness
- 3) With colleagues, identify appropriate array of courses to ensure full-time enrollment
- 4) Work with DCS staff in the Adult Career and Special Student Services (ACSSS) office responsible for the application and admission process and facilitate student enrollment in specified courses
- 5) Serve as the students' host department and provide course support and academic advising for the students.

Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) – Adult Career and Special Student Services (ACSSS)

ACSSS is the advising and academic dean's office for all University Special students, including VISP students on the UW–Madison campus. As such, they are responsible for:

- 1) Student communications
 - Work with department to respond to prospective student communications
 - Explain academic calendar, academic programs, tuition, and other costs
 - Assist admitted students while still in home country
 - Support enrollment of initial schedule; work with departments on class schedules
 - Ongoing support regarding learning challenges, personal issues, financial problems, future plans, and student life desires
- 2) Admissions application processing
 - Work with department to review qualifications and requirements, including student's academic record, English Language Proficiency scores, and funding requirements. For more specifics, see:

- Admit students to UW-Madison as University Special students and authorize them for enrollment.
 - Work with each admitted student to submit documents to obtain appropriate visa documents (I-20 or DS-2019) through the Terra Dotta portal with International Student Services (ISS)
 - Send welcome email admissions letter and other materials to student
- 3) Responsibilities as Academic Dean for University Special Students
- Explain policies and procedures for actions related to enrollment and process academic dean's action requests
 - Support institutional actions to meet the requirements of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), such as monitoring student status, addresses, work authorization, or emergency travel
 - Monitor student credit load and courses taken
- 4) Maintain website outlining local housing options and assist sponsoring department with arranging group housing as needed, and as timing allows.
- 5) In liaison with Summer term, provide optional wrap-around services and support for academic departments hosting a cohort of international students in a [summer VISP thematic track program](#).
- 6) Provide student orientation program for an introduction to UW-Madison and the city of Madison
- Assure student compliance with current visa rules, including visa check-in with ISS upon arrival, review student policy and enrollment rules, and direct prompt pick-up of student ID (Wiscard)
- 7) Provide Regular VISP event programming and communications
- Maintain Facebook and Social Media pages open to all students
 - Schedule and lead events such as sporting outings and social events which are open to all VISP students
 - During academic semesters, provide end of the semester events and awards open to all VISP students
 - Provide VISP Certificate of Participation
- 8) Facilitate tuition capture and transfer of funds to college/school
- Code VISP students in selected cohort to track enrollment for tuition capture and identify students for DCS budget staff to determine tuition amount for the cohort
 - Where tuition will be paid by a third party on behalf of a student group, serve as intermediary between Bursar's Office and third party to make arrangements for appropriate billing and payment of students' accounts
 - Confirm payment of tuition by individual students or third party and then prompt subsequent transfer of captured tuition funds from DCS to the school and/or colleges central budget office(r). We ask that your department work with your central school and/or college budget office to ensure how the transfer will work to your department. DCS only transfers to the central school and/or college, not the specific department.
- 9) Student and Thematic Track Program Recruitment
- By request, VISP can also assist with certain aspects of externally marketing and recruiting students into your program ⁱⁱⁱ; These are as follows:
 1. Webpage on our [thematic track page](#)

2. Employment of third-party recruiting networks
 - I. Given the difficulty of making a visiting non-degree student program known, DCS has been granted the authority to utilize and manage a third party recruitment and agency program to recruit international students into non-degree academic programming (Effective Fall 2016). We can leverage our developed agency network to recruit students interested in studying in your discipline specific thematic track.
 - II. Department(s) must opt-in to utilize DCS approved agents, and by so agree to pay for full agent commission if students are then selected into the thematic track by the department (costs are approximately 10-20% of student total bill)
 - a. Departments have the right to review all students who are recruited by third party organizations and have the right of refusal and will not be charged the commission fee if student does not enroll and officially enter the thematic track program.
 - III. If agents are utilized to recruit students who enroll in thematic track programs, the amount of the commission paid to the agent by DCS for each student will be subtracted from the tuition revenue transferred to the school or college at the end of the term.
 - IV. This is a supplemental service to a department's ongoing thematic track development, and not a mechanism to guarantee creation of new cohorts or students.
3. VISP Thematic Track Programs Scholarships are available to departments that elect to provide them.

We hope by outlining the above framework, we can assist departments and schools/colleges in creating high quality experiences for visiting international students. We look forward to working with you on this exciting opportunity to internationalize our campus community.

We recognize every department has different goals and ideas. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the VISP team at VISP@dcs.wisc.edu, or Jayne Arnold (VISP Thematic Track Program Liaison) at jayne.arnold@wisc.edu and we would be happy to talk through scenarios and plans with you.

i As of July 1, 2015 131 account revenues will be subject to a 10% assessment fee from the university. These assessments will occur after DCS transfers the revenue at the School / College (S/C). S/C will pay the 10% 131 tax from their 131 accounts after the transfer. DCS will not be responsible for the 10%.

ii DCS will only transfer revenue to the School and/or College the department is housed under. Every school and college budget office has local policies that differ on transferring the subsequent revenue to the department. – please consult your dean's or budget office to determine any additional revenues sharing your school and college may assess before transferring the funds to your department.

iii Please contact the VISP Thematic Track Program Liaison if you would like to pursue these external marketing options and to review the current services and timeline that can be provided. Ultimate formation of the thematic track and student recruitment should be initiated by the department as VISP cannot guarantee students from the traditional track VISP program for you or from third party recruiting organizations.

1. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, New F-1 Students have not been able to secure visas to study in-person at UW-Madison. Thematic tracks with a 3+1+1 program can and are offering online-only options for VISP students that want to take online courses. Online-only students are not bound by minimum credit load. Online-only students can take as many or as little credit as they want. Online-only students in the thematic-tracks are still expected to receive course support and academic advising from the hosting department. Please contact the VISP coordinators if you would like to learn more about how the pandemic affects VISP thematic tracks and or how to provide online course options for VISP students.