

SCAMS & FRAUD

(VIRTUAL OR TELEPHONE)

Don't fall victim to common scams and fraud tactics designed to intimidate and rob you of money and critical information. This can happen to anyone – even to you!

Scammers may pose as government or law enforcement agencies, housing authorities, or other officials. They may ask for credit card, debit card, or gift card information. Scammers may request immediate payment or make direct or implied threats to you or your family and friends over the phone. Real officials or officers will never make such requests.

KNOW WHAT TO DO

- Do NOT provide your name, passport details, contact information, passwords, bank account, credit card details, or other personal information to anyone unknown to you.
- Do NOT comply with the caller's instructions. A real law enforcement officer, government agent, or officer of a court will NOT request personal details or a money transfer via a phone call.
- Call a trusted friend or a close relative before you act. These types of encounters can be stressful, cloud your best judgment, and cause you to make an error.
- Notify law enforcement to report your suspicions and follow their guidance.

SCAMMER TACTICS

Scammers may...

- Pose as or claim to be with a relative or friend in distress who needs immediate help, often using the poor quality of distant cell phone calls to explain the fact that they may sound "different" to you.
- Learn from a person's social media accounts to give their call an authentic feel, even using nicknames or specifics about personal activities on recent trips and visits.
- Make calls that sound "real" and reasonable – even to someone who is very aware of the risk. *They prey on our instincts to want to help others.*
- Mask their actual phone number to display a different number. Calls that appear to be from a local number, one recognizable in your own country, or even the local community may be from elsewhere, even a third country.



ALERT YOUR FAMILY

Virtual frauds and scams sometimes target the families of students who are studying abroad. Ensure that family members are aware of this crime. If a family member has any questions about a student's well-being, they should reach out to the student's study abroad programming office, faculty advisor, or other university point of contact immediately.

UNWANTED INFLUENCE AND REPRESSION

A student abroad may encounter an attempt to influence or silence their right to free expression.

Government organizations, groups, or individuals may attempt to silence political and social perspectives that diverge from their own and force conformity. Some may harass and intimidate their own citizens living, working, or studying in the U.S. or elsewhere abroad due to their perspectives. These governments may also target naturalized or U.S.-born citizens who have family overseas or other foreign connections that may become targets for pressure or leverage.

Repression often targets members of ethnic, religious, or spiritual minority groups or those who evince political ideologies or social positions deemed subversive or disruptive by their government or others at home or even members of the same community also residing in the U.S.

Political and social repression is illegal in the U.S. and violates individual rights. If you believe it is happening to you or someone else, you can get help to stop it.

GET HELP

If you are subjected to or become aware of actions that you believe may be considered repressive, contact the UW–Madison International Safety and Security Director. They will place you in touch with agencies and experts who can help. Circumstances will be considered thoughtfully and privately to ensure your professional work and well-being are not placed at risk.

ISSDInformation@wisc.edu
internationaltravel.wisc.edu