



International Safety and Security Director (ISSD) Preventing Financial Scams and Fraud Brief Issued: January 2022

Scams and wire fraud crimes are happening around the world. Scams can target people of any age, nationality, or visa status. Unfortunately, international students in the U.S. and other countries are often targeted by criminals. During Fall 2022, several UW–Madison international students reported cases of money wire fraud and other scams that led to significant financial loss.

These crimes take many different forms. Often, criminals will make very sophisticated efforts to appear as investigators or other officials calling from an international student’s home country. They can seem very believable by using language, regional dialect, and terms that are familiar to the victim. Even the caller’s telephone number may appear to originate from the location they claim.

Common Types of Scams and Fraud:

Imposter Scams: Scammer poses as a government or law enforcement official from the U.S., a student’s home country, or another country. The scammer claims that you are a suspect in a criminal case, and you must return the money to clear your name from the criminal case. Real police officers or other officials will never ask you for a money transfer over the phone.

Employment Scams: Scammer offers you a job that you did not apply for or is advertising a job offer or similar opportunity that seems “too good to be true.” The scammer wants you to click on a link or provide personal information to take advantage of the offer.

Catfish Scams: Scammer poses as a person with romantic or sexual interest in you. The scammer requests a video call where they can access your webcam even after the call is over, or they request photos of you. The scammer will request money from you to not release the photos or videos to others.

Tax Scams: Scammer claims you have not properly reported your U.S. federal taxes with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The scammer will request money for “back taxes” or to resolve the issue.

If you suspect you are the target or victim of fraud or a scam:

DO: Keep a record of the conversation you had with the person who reached out (what did they say their name was? What organization do they claim to represent? What charge or issue were they calling about?).

DO NOT: Provide any personal information such as your bank account, Cashapp, Venmo, gift card, or any other payment forms.

DO: Reach out to your ISS advisor and UW–Madison Police to report your conversation or any correspondence.

DO NOT: Wait to report possible fraud or a scam; reach out for help right away!

DO: Reach out to campus contacts for advice if you have any doubts about a call or contact.

DO NOT: Allow yourself to feel intimidated or pressured by people making threats or providing deadlines for their requests. These criminals are trying to fool you into believing them and taking the actions they demand – they cannot hurt you or your family.



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DO NOT: Repeat words or phrases at the request of the scammer.

DO: End the call immediately if you suspect it is a scam. If they call back, allow it to go to your voicemail.

DO NOT: Provide any personal or financial details over the phone, virtual platform, or by email.

How to Report:

[UW–Madison Police Department](#)

[Madison Police Department](#)

[Federal Bureau of Investigation](#)

Additional Information to Prevent Scams and Fraud:

<https://www.uscis.gov/scams-fraud-and-misconduct/avoid-scams/common-scams>

<https://internationaltravel.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/255/2022/12/Avoiding-Virtual-Fraud-and-Scams-Dec-2022-rev-1.pdf>

<https://it.wisc.edu/about/division-of-information-technology/enterprise-information-security-services/office-of-cybersecurity/reporting-an-incident-to-it-security/>

<https://iss.wisc.edu/students/current-students/health/avoiding-scams-fraud/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUXNU7ohikY>