



Institute of Medical Science
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

International Student Welcome Package



Welcome to IMS



On behalf of the Institute of Medical Science (IMS), I would like to extend a warm welcome to you. International students are an important part of our community, and we are thrilled to have you join us. I hope that during your time at the University of Toronto you will make the most of all that this world-class institution and city has to offer. There are endless opportunities to get involved in student life and find support and community, both within the IMS, the Temerty Faculty of Medicine, and across the St. George campus.

As international students, we at the IMS recognize that you have unique needs. This welcome package is meant to serve as a resource document for you and a starting point for familiarizing yourself with the University and life in Toronto. Please let us know if you have suggestions for additional content.

Thank you for choosing the IMS as your place of graduate study. I look forward to getting to know you throughout your time here. If you are ever in need of support, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or another member of the IMS team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mingyao Liu'.

Dr. Mingyao Liu
Director, Institute of Medical Science
Professor, Department of Surgery
Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto



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Please note that all underlined items in this document are hyperlinks to websites.

IMS International Support

Dr. Zhong-Ping Feng
Director for International Development
zp.feng@utoronto.ca

Dr. Feng's portfolio includes promoting international experiences to IMS graduate students, leading on international recruitment initiatives and developing international programs and partnerships with leading academic institutions.



Sarah Topa
International Program & Partnerships Officer
int.medscience@utoronto.ca

Sarah manages IMS' international programs and initiatives and provides support to international students. Please reach out to Sarah with any questions or concerns you have as an international student.



This group was created in 2020 to facilitate the communication between IMS international students and to promote an authentic, dynamic, and supportive international student community. They strive to create a welcoming and safe space for IMS international students to share their experiences, solve challenges together and reach their full potential as they navigate their academic experience. The IMS International Community Student Group runs a monthly seminar series event and informal biweekly meetings. You can reach them at: ims.international.community@gmail.com

Student Profile:

Neda Rashidi-Ranjbar

PhD Candidate, 5th Year

Co-Founder, IMS International Community Student Group

Research Site: Centre for Addition and Mental Health (CAMH)

Home Country: Iran



What does your research focus on?

My research is focused on the brain networks in the population at-risk of Alzheimer's dementia (AD). I'm using structural and functional MRI scans to assess if a history of depression in older adults would lead to alterations in brain networks similar to that of AD patients. I've witnessed the recovery of a family member from treatment-resistant depression by receiving a non-invasive rTMS (repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation) treatment, and that sparked my interest to continue my career in neuroscience research.

What are some of the highlights of your time at IMS so far?

I received the GSEF Merit Scholarships for International Students when I started my PhD, and later on was nominated by IMS for the Ontario Graduate Scholarship international award. However, the greatest highlight has been forming the IMS International Community Student Group, a group and community that I wish existed when I started my PhD.

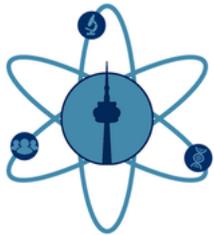
What advice would you give to incoming students?

Settling in a new country takes at least 3 months and it's okay if you aren't very productive during this time. Find your people and community. Getting involved in extracurricular activities helps to balance graduate life and to build friendships beyond the lab. Be mindful of your mental health. Grad life is challenging for everyone, and international students face additional unique challenges. There are great mental health services on campus that you can get access through the university clinic - free of charge.

What is your favourite thing about living in Toronto?

Toronto is the most multicultural city I have experienced. You can find communities from all over the globe, learn their culture, participate in their ceremonies, and enjoy their food.

IMS Community - Getting Involved



IMSSA
Institute of Medical
Science Students'
Association



All students registered in the Institute of Medical Science are members of the IMS Students' Association ([IMSSA](#)). IMSSA engages graduate students, staff and faculty of the IMS, with their primary mission being to promote the well-being of students. Students are encouraged to participate in initiatives, activities and events beyond the lab setting within the realms of various subcommittees: social, community and outreach, sports, academics and wellness. Contact: commims@gmail.com



**RAW TALK
PODCAST**



Raw Talk Podcast is a graduate student-run podcast about the journeys, experiences, and perspectives of some of the most accomplished medical researchers and professionals at the University of Toronto. If you are passionate about science communication, want to make research more accessible to a broader audience, and are looking to work collaboratively with a diverse group of graduate students, join the team! Contact: rawtalkpodcast@gmail.com

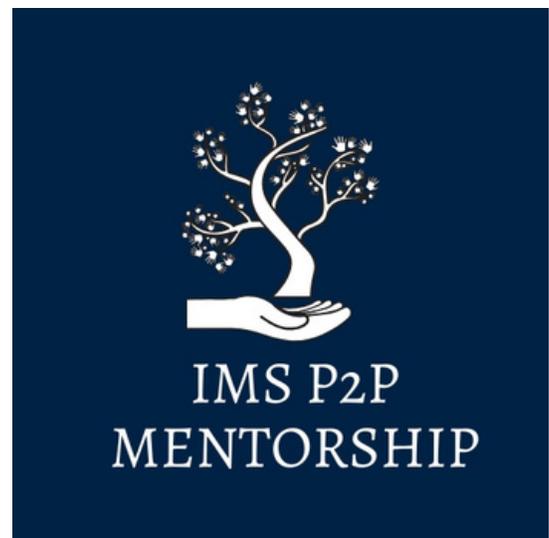
IMSMAGAZINE

THINK. LEARN. DISCOVER.

The IMS Magazine is a student-led science communication initiative showcasing the department's diverse research and the incredible people behind it. Being a member of the IMS Magazine team means getting the opportunity to learn more about science both within and outside of your field. It encourages you to expand your thinking and bridge the gap between basic and clinical, theoretical and applied, science and society. At IMS Magazine, you will learn the importance of storytelling - how to communicate complex ideas and convey key messages to your target audience, whether they are academics, policy makers, or the public. If you're interested in learning more and joining the team, you can email: theimsmagazine@gmail.com



We are you! The IMS P2P Mentorship Program is designed by IMS students for IMS students. We know how difficult transition to graduate school can be from first-hand experience and we are here to make it a little less hectic. Modules, PAC meetings, courses, presentations it can all be overwhelming. The Peer-to-Peer mentorship program is designed to partner each incoming graduate student with an upper year graduate student to help them navigate the complex landscape of IMS and for lasting friendships. From getting more involved with IMS Student Association to finding extracurricular activities that of interest to you, we are here for you. Please e-mail us at: mentorship.ims@gmail.com



Student Life Resources



**STUDENT
LIFE**

**Centre for International
Experience**

The Centre for International Experience (CIE) at U of T provides an array of services unique to international students. This is the U of T hub for all things international.

Why Connect with CIE:

- International study, research, internships and awards
- Help with Canadian study permits, work permits and health insurance in Ontario
- Global skills and intercultural communication development
- Tools to build community and succeed in Canadian campus life

Find out more about learning abroad, study permits & visas, adjusting to life in Canada & working in Canada.

CIE Resources & Programs

[Pre-Arrival Checklist](#)

The CIE has prepared a [pre-arrival checklist](#) to help incoming international students start their journey at U of T. Whether you're starting your studies in your home country or here in Toronto, they have got you covered!



[Global Chatter Hour](#)

[Global Chatter Hour](#) is an opportunity to connect with other international students in a relaxed virtual environment, facilitated by their international student experience ambassadors. Join them for games, conversation and to meet other students studying across the globe.



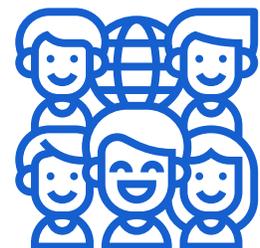
[Grad Step Up](#)

[Grad Step Up](#) is an extended orientation program designed to support your transition to U of T as an incoming international graduate student by connecting you to key information, resources and communities on campus.



[Intercultural Learning Program](#)

The [Intercultural Learning Program](#) (ILP) is a way to build your intercultural skills. The ILP involves discovering how your own cultural identities shape the way you understand and operate in the world and recognize culture at work in your everyday experiences.



Student Life also offers:

- **Health & Wellness**: provides a range of health services for your physical and mental health, wellness programs and information to help support you in achieving your personal and academic goals.
- **Career Exploration & Education**: supports students and recent graduates as they build their future in our changing world. They help students explore what they can do with their degree, discover job opportunities and further education
- **Academic Success**: helps you identify and achieve your learning goals. You have a lot more going on in your life than just academic responsibilities, so they tailor their learning supports to fit you.
- **Accessibility Services**: navigates disability-related barriers to your academic success at U of T for your on-going or temporary disability. They provide services and supports for learning, problem solving and inclusion.

School of Graduate Studies - International Portal

This portal helps international graduate students prepare, plan and experience the best that U of T has to offer.

Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office (ARCDO)

The ARCDO provides services to support University members in their efforts to foster environments that are intentionally racially diverse and inclusive through the advancement of equitable practices, education and training and the provision of complaints resolution supports on matters of race, faith and intersecting identities as guided by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Family Care Office

The Family Care Office provides confidential guidance, resources, referrals, educational programming and advocacy for the University of Toronto community and their families.



Awards, Fellowships & Scholarships

Below is a list of awards and scholarships you may be eligible for as an international student. This list is not exhaustive. There may be others depending on your country of citizenship, immigration status in Canada, research area, etc.

- **Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship**
- **Ontario Graduate Scholarship**
- **Adele S. Sedra Distinguished Graduate Award**
- **CAGS/ProQuest-UMI Distinguished Dissertation Awards & John Leyerle-CIFAR Prize for Interdisciplinary Research**
- **China Scholarship Council: Scholarship** *For citizens of the People's Republic of China
- **Connaught International Scholarship**
- **Delta Kappa Gamma World Fellowships** *For students identifying as women
- **Doctoral Completion Award (DCA)**
- **Governor General's Gold Medals**
- **Latin American Scholarship Programs (CALDO)**
- **Mackenzie King Open & Travelling Scholarship** *For students who have obtained a degree at a Canadian University
- **Mexico Scholarship: CONACYT** *For Mexican citizens with an up-to-date firma Certificate



Use the U of T **Award Explorer** site to further browse awards

- **DAAD: German Academic Exchange** - Funding Opportunities
- **Mitacs Globalink Graduate Fellowship** *For Mitacs Globalink alumni
- **Scholars-At-Risk Fellowship** *For students with asylum/refugee seeker status anywhere in the world within the past 5 years OR for students whose current or proposed program of study has been impacted by changing political environments in their country of current or future study, including changes in immigration law
- **University-Wide Award: SGS Fellowships and Bursaries for Black and/or Indigenous Students** *For students who identify as a black and/or indigenous person
- **University-Wide Award: Joseph Bazylewicz Fellowships** *For students with Polish citizenship
- **University-Wide Award: Kwok Sau Po Scholarship** *For citizens of Hong Kong or China
- **University-Wide Award: Scace Graduate Scholarship** *For citizens of South Africa or the United Kingdom
- **University-Wide Award: Professor R. Paul Young Fellowship** *For students conducting research that addresses a problem which crosses traditional Faculty boundaries (e.g. Music and Medicine)

IMS Sara-Al Bader Memorial Award

The Sara Al-Bader Memorial Award was established by the IMS to honour the memory of Dr. Sara Al-Bader, a PhD student at the IMS whose thesis was entitled: Science-Based Health Innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The award is presented annually at Scientific Day to an international doctoral stream student who shows exceptional academic promise. The recipient is chosen by the IMS Graduate Coordinators.



SGS Bursaries & Loans

- **SGS Emergency Grant**: assists registered, full-time graduate students who have encountered an unforeseen, urgent, and/or serious financial emergency.
- **SGS Emergency Loan**: alleviates temporary cash flow problems for students who are expecting the release of funds in the near future (i.e., 30 to 120 days) from employment (U of T internal), a major award instalment, teaching assistantship, or research assistantship payment, etc.
- **SGS Accessibility Grant**: supports significant educational expenses not normally covered by the student, the graduate unit, provincial, or federal agencies.
- **SGS Conference Grant**: provides financial support to encourage eligible students to actively present their research at an academic conference during the early stages of their graduate studies.
- **SGS Summer Gym Bursary**: offers students a reimbursement for up to 100% of their campus summer athletic membership or program fees.

Graduate Centre for Academic Communication (GCAC)

GCAC provides graduate students with advanced training in academic writing and speaking. Graduate students need to be able to communicate sophisticated information to sophisticated audiences. As you prepare to attend your first conference, to write your first proposal, or to publish your first paper, you will need stronger communication skills than those needed in undergraduate work. By emphasizing professional development rather than remediation, GCAC can help you cultivate the ability to diagnose and address the weaknesses in your oral and written work.

GCAC offers five types of support designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers of English: non-credit courses, single-session workshops, individual writing consultations, writing intensives, and a list of additional resources for academic writing and speaking.

LGBTQ+ Support

- **Out in Medicine:** the Temerty Faculty of Medicine's LGBTQ+ student group
- **LGBTOUT:** the oldest LGBTQ+ student organization in Canada and has served the U of T community for over half a century.
- **Queer Caucus (QC) of the Graduate Students' Union:** a political and social caucus for U of T graduate students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ).
- **Sexual and Gender Diversity Office:** develops partnerships to build supportive learning and working communities at U of T by working towards equity and challenging discrimination.
- **Centre for Women and Trans People:** provides a safe, harassment-free drop in space for all women and trans people on campus

Fraud Prevention

The Community Safety Office (CSO) is available to consult with you on any situation that is causing you to be concerned for your safety or the safety of someone else. If you suspect that you have been targeted by a fraudster we encourage you to make a report to the Campus Safety Office.

CSO resources on frauds and scams that specifically target international students:

- Fraud prevention tips
- Examples of common types/methods of fraud
- What you should know and do if you receive these types of calls
- Toronto Police Service Alert on Money Mule Fraud Awareness Targeting International Students

University of Toronto Supports:

- U of T St. George Campus Safety (Available 24/7):
 - 416-978-2222 (Emergency)
 - 416-978-2323 (Non-Emergency)
- Community Safety Office (Available M-F, 9-5):
 - 416-978-1485 or community.safety@utoronto.ca

COVID-19 Information

- **COVID-19 Information for UofT Students**: contains information regarding the University's responses and actions related to the coronavirus (COVID-19).
- **UofT's Vaccine Requirement**: this fall, the University of Toronto is requiring all those intending to be present on our three campuses, or on premises owned or operated by the university, to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide proof of vaccination via UCheck, in full accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- **Temerty Faculty of Medicine**: COVID-19 Updates
- **Covid-19 Vaccination**: information from the City of Toronto on how to be vaccinated and how to be tested.

Health & Wellness

- **U of T Health & Wellness**: Students may book appointments for primary care services (e.g. family physicians, nurses, dieticians) and mental health care. Download their [Feeling distressed \(PDF\)](#) for contacts/resources to support you through different kinds of distress.
- **UofT Student Mental Health Resource**: this online portal makes it easier for students to find mental health services & resources on campus, and those of partner organizations in the community.
- **SGS Graduate Wellness Services**: SGS and the Division of Student Life have partnered to provide embedded wellness counselling and wellness workshops specifically for graduate students.
- **Graduate and Life Sciences Education (GLSE) Wellness Package**: to encourage us to think about and promote our wellness, GLSE paired up with IMSSA & MBPGSA's Wellness & Wellbeing committees as part of a GLSE-funded initiative, to create a graduate wellness package.
- **Graduate Peer Support Network (GPSN)**: a GLSE-funded initiative founded by graduate students across the Temerty Faculty of Medicine to provide graduate students with timely mental health and wellness support, and resources via educational seminars and peer mentorship.

Health Services

- **University Health Insurance Program (UHIP)**: for details on coverage see "Service Fees" section of website.
- **General Practitioner (GP)/Family Physician**: to find a GP you can register and browse via [Health Care Connect](#) or use The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario's "[Find a Doctor](#)" search tool.
- **Walk-in Clinics**: offer same-day non-urgent care without an appointment.
- **Urgent Care Centres**: Medical clinics that provide same-day urgent treatment for non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries, such as infections, sprains, earaches, broken bones, and fevers.
- **Specialized Physicians**: To see a specialist you generally first need a referral from a GP.
- **Blood testing and other laboratory services**: You usually need a requisition form from a GP. Various companies and locations. Examples: [LifeLabs](#) and [Dynacare](#)
- **Emergency Departments**: Hospital emergency rooms provide treatment for severe illnesses and life-threatening injuries 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- **In an Emergency: Call 911**



Toronto Travel Information

- **Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)**: main public transport agency in Toronto operating the subway, bus, and streetcar services.
 - One-ride ticket: \$3.25 (can be used for unlimited transfers for up to two hours)
 - Day pass ticket: \$13.50
 - Post-secondary Monthly Pass: \$128.15
- **GO Transit**: regional public transport service for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area.
- **VIA Rail Canada**: train services across Ontario and Canada.
- **Cost of Driving**: Owning a car can be expensive in Toronto.
 - Average gas cost: \$150/month
 - Maintenance: \$100/month
 - Car Insurance: Up to \$300+/month
 - Parking: Street Permit (if available) - \$16/month; fees in private garages, city street parking lots and streets prices vary
- **Taxi Companies**:
 - Beck Taxi
 - Co-op Cabs
 - City Taxi
 - Taxi Toronto (Airport Transit)
- **Ride Hailing Companies**:
 - Uber
 - Lyft
 - Both companies have ride-sharing option to cut costs.
- **Cycling**: a popular mode of transportation in Toronto. There is an extensive bike-lane system, but be careful of the traffic especially if you're not used to cycling in large cities. Remember to always lock your bike when leaving it.
 - Bike Share



Districts & Neighbourhoods

- [Moving2Canada](#): article on the variety and differences between the various districts and neighbourhoods in Toronto (there are many!).
- [City of Toronto](#): website with extensive list of neighbourhood profiles.
- [Destination Toronto](#): website with information on popular Toronto neighbourhoods.



Accommodations

- **University Accommodation:**
 - [Graduate House](#): offers shared suites for graduate students.
 - [Massey College](#): requires application for Junior Fellowship, successful applicants are eligible for shared suites with meals and housekeeping service included.
- **Housing Search Platforms:**
 - [U of T Off-Campus Housing](#)
 - [Canada Homestay Network](#)
 - [Kijiji](#)
 - [Viewit](#)
 - [Craigslist](#)
 - [Facebook Marketplace](#)
- **Short-Term Housing:**
 - [AirBNB](#)



Discover Toronto

Popular Toronto Attractions:

- [CN Tower](#)
- [The Distillery Historic District](#)
- [Casa Loma](#)
- [Centre Island Toronto](#)
- [Toronto Island Park](#)
- [St. Lawrence Market](#)
- [Kensington Market](#)
- [High Park Toronto](#)
- [Black Creek Pioneer Village](#)
- [Fort York National Historic Site](#)
- [Toronto International Film Festival](#)
- [Allan Gardens Conservatory](#)
- [Toronto Botanical Gardens](#)
- [Scarborough Bluffs](#)
- [Swimming Beaches](#)
- [Canadian National Exhibition \(CNE\)](#)
- [Ripley's Aquarium of Canada](#)
- [Rogers Centre](#) (originally Sky Dome)
- [Toronto Zoo](#)
- [Canada's Wonderland](#)
- [Ontario Science Centre](#)
- [Riverdale Farm](#)
- [Harbourfront Centre](#)
- [Toronto Symphony Orchestra](#)
- [The Second City](#)

Movie Theatres:

- [Cineplex Theatres](#) (various locations)
- [Imagine Cinemas Market Square](#)
- [TIFF Bell Lightbox](#) (world cinema)
- [The Royal](#) (independent, documentaries, second-run)
- [Revue Cinema](#) (specialty screenings, second-run)
- [Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema](#) (independent films, documentaries)

Museums and Art Galleries:

- [Royal Ontario Museum \(ROM\)](#)
- [Art Gallery of Ontario \(AGO\)](#)
- [Spadina Museum](#)
- [Bata Shoe Museum](#)
- [Gardiner Museum](#)
- [Mackenzie House](#)
- [Aga Khan Museum](#)
- [Hockey Hall of Fame](#)
- [Gibson House Museum](#)
- [Colborne Lodge](#)
- [Montgomery's Inn](#)
- [Museum of Contemporary Art](#)
- [Toronto Railway Museum](#)
- [Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library](#)

Theatres:

- [Royal Alexandra Theatre](#)
- [Ed Mirvish Theatre](#)
- [Princess of Wales Theatre](#)
- [CAA Theatre](#)
- [Meridian Hall](#)
- [Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre](#)
- [Tarragon Theatre](#)
- [Buddies in Bad Times Theatre](#)
- [Factory Theatre](#)
- [Bad Dog Theatre Company](#)

Fun Fact:

The popular TV show Schitt's Creek was filmed in Goodwood, Ontario, a tiny hamlet just an hour's drive from Toronto.

Important Phone Numbers

- Emergency (Fire/Medical/Police): **911**
- Non-Emergency Medical Issues - Telehealth Ontario: **1-866-797-0000**
- Assaulted Women's Helpline: **1-416-863-0511 / 1-866-863-7868**
- Crime Stoppers: **1-416-808-8477 / 1-800-222-8477**
- Toronto Police Service Central Dispatch: **1-416-808-2222 / 1-416-467-0493**
- Victim Services: **1-416-808-7066**
- Report power outage: **1-416-542-8000**
- Report gas leak: **1-866-763-5427**
- Toronto at Your Service (non-emergency info & help) - **311**

Major Internet & Phone Providers:

- [Bell](#)
- [Rogers](#)
- [Fido](#)
- [TekSavvy](#)
- [VMedia](#)

Shopping

Major Grocery Stores:

- [Loblaws](#)
- [Walmart](#)
- [Metro](#)
- [No Frills](#)
- [Sobeys](#)
- [FreschCo](#)
- [Food Basics](#)

Major Shopping Centres:

- [CF Toronto Eaton Centre](#)
- [Yorkdale](#)
- [PATH](#)
- [Dufferin Mall](#)
- [Yorkville Village](#)

Major Pharmacies:

- [Shoppers Drug Mart](#)
- [Rexall](#)
- [Pharmasave](#)

Student Bank Accounts

- [Scotiabank Student Banking Advantage Plan](#)
- [CIBC Smart for Students Chequing Account](#)
- [RBC Student Chequing Account](#)
- [TD Student Chequing Account](#)
- [National Bank Student Chequing Account](#)

*This is just a sample. There may be other student bank accounts available.



Immigration Information

The Centre for International Experience (CIE) at UofT offers immigration advising services to international students. As an international student at U of T, you will need to navigate Canadian immigration requirements.

A CIE immigration advisor can help you:

- Understand your document requirements including study permit, entry visas, work permits, etc.
- Understand the immigration requirements for your dependents.
- Choose the right immigration workshop and/or information session to learn about study permits, entry visas, work permits, permanent residency, USA visas and Canadian income tax.
- Locate additional appropriate services and resources.

A reminder that you are responsible for your immigration status.

Government of Canada Resources

- Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada
- Study Permit Information
- Extending Study Permit
- Permanent Residency
- Post-Graduation Work Permit Program
- Help your spouse or common-law partner work in Canada
- Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA)





Wish List:

If there's anything else you think should be included in this resource booklet for incoming IMS international students please let us know. We are always looking for feedback in order to improve our support. You can send your suggestions via email to: int.medscience@utoronto.ca



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