

Semester in Qatar Guide



Northwestern | QATAR

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SEMESTER IN QATAR

Each fall, this semester long academic program hosts students at Northwestern's media school in Doha, Qatar. Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) offers distinctive Global South focused coursework in communication, journalism, and the liberal arts, with special attention to Middle East Studies. Semester in Qatar (SiQ) is open to Northwestern students from Medill, the School of Communication, the Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences, and the School of Education and Social Policy. SiQ especially welcomes applications from students interested in the Middle East and North African Studies (MENA). Students study under an excellent faculty and alongside an accomplished, diverse student body.

NU-Q is a globally embedded institution; it is one of three campuses of Northwestern (Chicago, Doha, Evanston) and one of several institutions in the Qatar Foundation's Education City in Doha, Qatar. Our mission is to mentor and educate students to become creative, ethical, and impactful communicators across cultural and national boundaries. We are committed to academic excellence, to a vibrant student life, and to high-level undergraduate student research and media making, particularly on the Global South. Located at the confluence of continents, NU-Q is a diverse global community with approximately 500 students from 60 countries. Doha is a media city – home to the Doha Film Institute, English and Arabic newspapers and magazines, digital media enterprises, and advertising and public relations firms.

SiQ students will have the opportunity to engage with NU-Q's distinctive Institute for Advance Study in the Global South (#IAS_NUQ), a community of evidence-based storytellers devoted to understanding the media, cultures, societies, politics, and history of the countries of the Global South as well as with NU-Q's Artificial Intelligence and Media Lab (AIM-LAB) devoted to research on the intersection of AI technologies and emerging media. These include attending panels, seminars, conferences, and other Global South focused and AI initiative events.

Timeline

Application Process Opens	Mid November
Application Deadline	February 15
Program Acceptance Notifications	Early April
Pre-Departure Orientation	Mid-May
Fly to Doha	1 week before NU-Q's Wildcat Welcome Week
Departure from Doha	Depart Doha after Final Exams

PROGRAM CALENDAR

August 2025

TBC	Arrive in Doha (before Wildcat Welcome Week)
17-21	Wildcat Welcome & Exchange Student Orientation
21	NUQ Convocation
24	Fall classes begin 8:30 a.m. Change of Registration Week (Drop/Add)

28	Last day to add class or change a section for Fall
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September 2025

25	Last day to change grading status from grade to P-N for Fall
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October 2025

9	Last Day of classes before Fall Break
10-18	Fall Break
19	Fall class resume after the mid-term break
30	Last day to withdraw from the university for fall with the Academic Advisor's approval Last day to drop a class for Fall with the Academic Advisor's approval Any drop request after this date results in a W grade on the transcript

November 2025

16	CTEC's open
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December 2025

4	Last day of classes for the fall term
7	Fall examinations begin
11	Fall examinations end
12	Winter break begins and departure from Doha
22	Fall grades available to students

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the SiQ program, the applicant must:

- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 at the time of application
- Be a senior or rising junior and must attain junior status by the time fall classes begins at Northwestern University in Qatar
- Be a Northwestern student from the Northwestern School of Communication, the Medill School of Journalism, Media & Integrated Marketing Communications, the Weinberg College of Arts and Science, and the School of Education and Social Policy.
- Be in good academic, conduct, and academic integrity standing
- Students are eligible to participate one time in the Semester in Qatar

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

Overview

Participating students must adhere to the pre-departure requirements for student travel. Upon program acceptance, students must:

1. Complete GLObal Gateway assignments
2. Meet with their NU Academic Advisor
3. Attend NU-Q Pre-Departure Orientation
4. Ensure thorough review of this SiQ Guide and understanding of all program requirements, including visa processes

Pre-Departure Orientation

Students selected for Semester in Qatar are required to participate in the pre-departure orientation. The session will be scheduled after the confirmation of attendance for the upcoming fall term and will always take place in the evening to accommodate both attendees from Qatar and Evanston. NUQ Staff from the Academic Affairs, Academic Advising, Student Experience and Business & Finance will be available to answer any questions on student life, housing, courses, and money matters.

Meet With Your Academic Advisor

A vital requirement in planning your pre-departure sessions involves meeting your advisor to prepare a schedule of classes for the fall term. Students should conduct their own research about the types of courses offered at NUQ to determine those of specific interest before meeting the advisor. Please see the section of this guide called “Academic Planning” for more information about NUQ courses and the requirements of the SiQ program.

Visa Processing

Entry into Qatar

Qatar requires all students who are studying and living in Qatar to obtain an entry visa and residence permit. To begin the process, please scan and email a color copy of your passport to Virginia Naag, (virginia.naag@northwestern.edu) upon program acceptance.

Once you are in-country, the residence permit process will begin, which includes medical testing (for HIV/Aids and Tuberculosis) and finger printing. You are not allowed to travel out of Qatar while the residency/QID is under process.

Exiting Qatar

Before exiting Qatar, student residence visas must be cancelled. All residence visas in Qatar must be cancelled and cleared while residents are still inside the country. Residence visas should be cancelled **30 days before departure** to ensure that all exit clearances can be completed. Once these visas are cancelled, reentry to Qatar on that visa is not possible.

Check-out process includes:

1. QF Housing clearance and check-out
2. NU-Q finance exit session
3. Closure of any bank account that has been opened
4. Return any items checked out of the NU-Q library or the Cage (production equipment)
5. Visa cancellation

ACADEMIC PLANNING

Course Offerings

SiQ students take courses alongside Northwestern University in Qatar students at NU-Q's state-of-the-art campus in Education City. All classes are taught in English.

Doha Seminar

SiQ students will be enrolled in the program's signature course, Doha Seminar, which engages students in the exchange of ideas discussing topics such as contemporary Arab thought and ideology, Islam in the western world, and storytelling practices among Indigenous groups. In this forum, students focus on Qatar as a case study of issues that include the dynamic cultural interchange of modernity and tradition, economics and politics, and geography and trade. The Doha Seminar is a rare opportunity to engage in a personal exchange of ideas with an extraordinary mix of students, scholars, and leaders from beyond the university.

Other NU-Q courses that SiQ students may register for are offered in the following areas:

Communication

Communication courses offer a wide variety of courses ranging from in-depth analysis and critique of film and cinema from a Middle Eastern perspective, with a unique lens on storytelling to scientific analysis and humanistic approach to the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and emerging media. Study of film theory and practice is blended with the use of the latest cinematographic camera equipment and 3D-modeling software for personal and group projects. Study of AI and digital media is blended with foundational theories of AI and practical use of media analytics tools.

Journalism & Strategic Communication

NU-Q's Journalism and Strategic Communication program includes courses in news and magazine writing, "on-the-street" reporting and multimedia storytelling, public relations, advanced broadcast production, advanced online storytelling, documentary production, and strategic communication. Students have access to the state-of-the-art *Newsroom* built in the beautifully designed NU-Q building.

Liberal Arts

History, economics, political science, religious studies, literature, biology, statistics, Middle East studies – these are just a few examples from the liberal arts and sciences foundation. Our liberal arts program includes courses relevant to the region, helping students prepare for roles in the world's fast-growing media industries.

Learn more about specific [courses offered per term](#)

Course Credit

Courses taken at the Northwestern Qatar campus will transfer to your undergraduate record. Grades received appear on your Northwestern transcript and factor into your GPA. Courses taken through one of the Education City partner universities (if applicable) will also be transferred; however, grades will not transfer (a T grade will appear on the transcript) or factor into your GPA. Please note that cross-registration at partner schools is by application and not guaranteed.

Estimated Credit: 4 units.

One-unit courses taken at NU-Q will be transferred as one-unit courses to NU-E.

Course Registration

To register for courses at NU-Q, reach out to the NU-Q Academic Advising team to schedule a meeting and discuss your courses. Together you will put together a course schedule that reflects requirements for your degree, your interests, independent studies, etc. Confirm your courses with your NUE advisor. Once confirmed, your NUQ advisor will administratively register you through the office of Student Records. Please watch for communications from them.

CROSS-REGISTRATION: Please note that course offerings from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Qatar, Texas A & M University in Qatar, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, and Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar are subject to availability. If you are interested in cross registering, please indicate so when you speak with NU-Q Academic Advising.

Should you have any questions regarding course offerings, feel free to contact the NU-Q Academic Advising team.

PROGRAM COSTS AND FUNDING

Program Costs

Evanston students will be billed through CAESAR for

- Northwestern University regular undergraduate tuition and enrollment fees
- Qatar Foundation housing fees
- NU-Q textbook fees

Students should expect to pay out-of-pocket for:

- Food. Meal cards are available for purchase at Qatar Foundation dining halls. These dining halls are located in the student residence, the student center, and several other locations within the Qatar Foundation campus. The Student Center has coffee shops, fast food restaurants, and other amenities. Food delivery from local restaurants is fast and readily available from several delivery companies. There are grocery stores located on the metro line for easy access.
- Transportation within Qatar (taxis, Uber, metro)
- Personal items

All students selected to participate in this program will receive from Northwestern Qatar:

- A \$5,000 scholarship, which will be applied to your direct costs through CAESAR. If you are a financial aid recipient, these funds will be incorporated into your financial aid package for the term per Northwestern's [outside scholarship policy](#).
- Roundtrip airfare to/from Qatar. Economy airfare will be provided to make sure students arrive in Doha on time for the start of fall term, and departure flights will be scheduled to be within 48 hours after the final exam period.
- International health insurance coverage valid for the duration of the program

Financial Aid & Scholarships

Financial Aid is based on the total cost of the program, including all expenses outlined in the program budget sheet.

All students attending this program will receive a \$5,000 scholarship, which will be applied to your direct costs through CAESAR. If you are a financial aid recipient, these funds will be incorporated into your financial aid package for the term per Northwestern's [outside scholarship policy](#).

Northwestern Invoice

Your Northwestern invoice will be issued through CAESAR on the regular quarterly schedule and will include your regular NU tuition and fees, NU-Q housing fees, and the NU-Q textbook fee. Estimated costs are outlined above; you can also find your NU-billed charges and additional expenses on the [NU-Q website](#).

If you receive financial aid and/or loans, these funds will continue to apply directly to your CAESAR account.

If you use the Northwestern 9PAY plan, you may continue to use 9PAY for your NU-billed study abroad expenses, but you should request a **study abroad 9PAY estimate** to have your plan set up appropriately. The 9PAY plan is not available for summer programs.

Confirmation, Withdrawal, & Refund Policies

After being accepted to the Semester in Qatar program, you will need to complete a [Program Confirmation Form](#) to confirm your participation. Northwestern students admitted to the NU-Q semester program are not required to pay a confirmation deposit but will be charged a **cancellation fee** for withdrawing from the program after confirming.

If you withdraw or are dismissed from a Northwestern Program after submitting your program confirmation form, you are subject to the [withdrawal & refund policies for Northwestern Programs](#).

For information about billing, finances and financial aid for study abroad, please visit the [Global Learning Office "Money Matters" page](#). Contact the Study Abroad Financial Aid Office at undergradaid@u.northwestern.edu for more information.

HOUSING

NU Semester in Qatar students will be housed in on-campus residence halls. Students may apply for single-person units, but allocation is subject to availability.

To experience convenience and community, students will stay in Education City housing managed by the Qatar Foundation. The housing units offer an opportunity to live among peers and create lasting friendships in a safe and inspiring setting. All student housing contracts are signed by the student with Qatar Foundation.

Student Accommodation Information

- ADA compliant
- Residence halls are all one-bedroom units without kitchenette. These units have access to a shared kitchenette space with a microwave.
- Apartment residence buildings have studios, one- and two-bedrooms with kitchenettes inside each apartment.
- All rooms include a private en-suite bathroom, mini-fridge, television, phone, wired and wireless internet access, and secured with electronic access to room/bedrooms.
- Communal laundry facilities, common lounge, outdoor space, and study areas are accessible on each floor.
- Housing is gender-specific with designated areas that are gender-neutral (lobby, dining halls, coffee shops).

Housing allocation is by application prior to arrival in Qatar and is billable to the student's CAESAR account. Housing types are not guaranteed. Housing is managed by Qatar Foundation Housing and all applications are made directly to them.

Students are required to inform Qatar Foundation Housing of their intended checkout date. Specific instructions on the checkout procedure will be shared by QF Housing; please direct any questions to studenthousing@qf.org.qa

Housing Application and Payment

Submit the [Housing Interest Form](#) upon program acceptance. Your details will be forwarded to Qatar Foundation (QF) Housing, and QF Housing will send an email directly to you with a link to the application portal and instructions on how to set up the account in the portal.

Housing placements are released beginning in mid-June. All housing fees should be paid prior to moving in.

Qatar Foundation messaging may indicate that you are required to pay a deposit to secure your spot in QF housing. **Please do not pay this deposit yourself.** SiQ students will need a financial guarantee in lieu of paying the housing deposit. NU-Q does not pay the housing deposit but supplies a financial guarantee. Any damage charges incurred upon check out will be added to the student's CAESAR account. Students should be actively involved in their check in and check out to ensure they are only responsible for the condition of their room when they receive it and when they vacate it.

SiQ students should not make any payments to QF housing directly. Any necessary payments will be made by NU-Q and added to their CAESAR account.

HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Health Insurance

The Global Learning Office will enroll SiQ students in GeoBlue health insurance for the duration of the SiQ program in Qatar.

More information about Northwestern's Study Abroad health insurance requirements may be found here: <http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/guide/health-and-safety/health/study-abroad-health-insurance.html#nextsteps>.

ANU-Q

AccessibleNU-Q serves students with disabilities by ensuring equal access to fully participate in academic programming and all other facets of University life. For more information, please visit [Accessible NU-Q: MyNUQ - Student Web - Northwestern University in Qatar](#)

If you currently receive academic accommodations at NU-Evanston, please contact NU-Q Academic Advising at accessible@qatar.northwestern.edu upon program acceptance, to arrange for continuation of your accommodations.

Immunizations

The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a full immunization program for everyone. For travelers, please refer to the CDC's website to see what is recommended based on your destination(s). <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list#group-q>

Qatar's Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) recommends a full immunization program for all residents. More information about the recommended immunizations can be found here: <https://www.moph.gov.qa/english/OurServices/eservices/Pages/Baby-Immunization%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B.aspx>

Students may choose to supplement their own immunizations based on personal preference and other health factors.

Health & Safety

Emergency Contact

- Participants are required to provide emergency contact information of a designated emergency contact person who can be reached in case of medical emergencies or crises.
- Participants must ensure that the emergency contact person is aware of their participation in the Program and is available to be contacted during the period of the Program.

Participants should stay informed about any health and safety updates or advisories related to the host country and follow the recommended precautions and should take necessary precautions to maintain their health and safety and seeking medical attention when needed.

The health and safety policies outlined herein are subject to change based on evolving circumstances, global health regulations and local regulations.

Living in Qatar: Important Protocol and Cultural Etiquette

Language: Arabic is the official language, but English is widely spoken, especially among expats.

Religion: Qatar is an Islamic State where the Holy Qur'an influences daily life. Calls to prayer are announced from mosques throughout the day. Non-Muslims should refrain from entering mosques and always speak respectfully about Islam. Other religions are tolerated, but no external religious signs are allowed on church buildings.

Greetings: When greeting, use your right hand only and wait for the opposite sex to extend their hand first. The common greeting is "salaam alaykum" (peace be with you), with a response "wa-alaykum as-salaam" (and peace be upon you). Arab men may also exchange embraces, cheek kisses or touch noses.

Dress Code: Qataris wear traditional clothing: men in white thobes and ghutras; women in black abayas and shaylas. Men should avoid shorts and sleeveless in public, while women should avoid revealing, tight or transparent clothing. Modest swimwear is required on public beaches, but resorts and hotels are more flexible.

Photography: Always ask permission before taking photos of people. Avoid photographing sensitive sites like police, armed forces or government buildings.

Ramadan: During Ramadan Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Eating and drinking in public during daylight hours are prohibited, except for young children, pregnant women, and the chronically ill.

Laws: Drugs are illegal with severe penalties. Importing alcohol and pork products are illegal. Alcohol is available at licensed venues such as hotels, bars and restaurants and will require your QID or passport. Expats can buy alcohol and pork products with a permit from Qatar Distribution Center.

Common Phrases:

English

Hello
Peace be upon you
and peace be upon you
Good morning
Good morning response
Good evening
Good evening response
Yes
No
Thank you
You're welcome

Arabic

Marhaba/Hala
Salaam alaykum
Wa alaykum as-salam
Sabah Al-khair
Sabah Al-nour
Masa' Al-khair
Masa' Al-khair
Naam
La
Shukran
Afuan

CONTACTS

NU Global Learning Office

Program Manager: **Aline Vivirito-Valais** aline.viviritovalais@northwestern.edu

For questions on financial aid

Study Abroad Financial Aid: undergradaid@u.northwestern.edu

NU-Q Academic Advising

For questions about course offerings and course registrations

Director of Academic Advising: **Miriam Khalil** miriam.khalil@northwestern.edu

NU-Q SiQ Coordinator

For questions about travel, visa, housing, etc.

Program Coordinator: **Virginia Naag** virginia.naag@northwestern.edu

NU-Q Student Experience

For questions about student life, etc.

Student Experience email: studentexperience@qatar.northwestern.edu

For questions on housing and housing application

Student Experience Coordinator: **Delora Sequeira** delora.sequeira@northwestern.edu

NU-Q Support Office Evanston

QSO email: gso@qatar.northwestern.edu

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I work at NU-Q or in Qatar?

No, Evanston students may not work on campus at NU-Q or in Qatar.

Can I request to switch dorms?

Housing is by application before arrival in Qatar. Any changes are by application. Housing is managed by Qatar Foundation Housing and all applications are made directly to them.

Will NU-Q pay for my visa fees?

Qatar entry visa is paid for by NU-Q.

Will NU-Q pay for my airfare?

Airfare is paid for and arranged by NU-Q.

Will NU-Q pay for my insurance?

Insurance is paid for by NU-Q

Can I stay in Qatar after the SiQ program ends?

The Semester in Qatar Program ends at the end of NU-Q's fall semester. NU-Q cannot support SiQ students who choose to stay in Qatar beyond the end of the fall term. You may decide independently to remain in Qatar beyond the end of SiQ program, or to travel elsewhere before returning to Evanston. If you do so, however, you must sign the NU-Q student travel waiver and are responsible for the following:

1. Making any changes to your flight, including paying any fare difference and/or change fees
2. All travel arrangements including lodging, food, housing, and other transportation related to your extended travel beyond the end of the SiQ program
3. All costs related to your extended travel beyond the end of the SiQ program
4. Understanding and managing any requirements and processes regarding your student visa
5. Purchasing health insurance covering the period of your extended travel beyond the end of the SiQ program

Will my American phone work in Qatar?

You should bring an unlocked phone or plan to purchase one on arrival in Qatar. Affordable phones may be purchased locally at Carrefour, Lulu or many other outlets in the country. You will need to buy a local Qatar SIM card from either Vodafone or Ooredoo which may be used for making local or international calls. Having a local SIM is essential for local communications, registering your national address (a Qatar government requirement, etc.)

Can I travel to other countries while I am in Qatar?

Students may elect to travel on their own outside of Qatar once their residence visas have been secured. While the residence visa is under process, it is not possible to travel outside of Qatar. Once the residence visa process is complete, students who wish to travel may do so, but they will be responsible for all arrangements, costs, and any visa requirements. All travel outside of Qatar would only be possible when the student does not have class meetings or other academic requirements.

The Semester in Qatar Program ends at the end of NU-Q's fall semester. NU-Q cannot support SiQ students who choose to stay in Qatar or travel outside of Qatar beyond the end of the NU-Q fall term. You may decide independently to remain in Qatar beyond the end of SiQ program, or to travel elsewhere before returning to Evanston.

For students considering travel after their Semester in Qatar experience, it is essential to know that it is not possible to re-enter to Qatar once the residence visa cancellation process has begun. Students should carefully review the visa information section of this guide to better understand the entry and exit processes for Qatar. Any SiQ student who decides to travel outside of Qatar should inform the SiQ Coordinator of their travel plans and dates. Any changes to the program supported travel would require completion of the NU-Q student travel waiver and the students are responsible for:

1. Making any changes to your flight, including paying any fare difference and/or change fees
2. All travel arrangements including lodging, food, housing, and other transportation related to your extended travel beyond the end of the SiQ program
3. All costs related to your extended travel beyond the end of the SiQ program
4. Understanding and managing any requirements and processes regarding your student visa
5. Purchasing health insurance covering the period of your extended travel beyond the end of the SiQ program

Can I enroll more than or less than 4 credits?

Students should be registered for a full load of classes while studying at Northwestern Qatar. This would typically be 4 units. Students should work with their academic advisor in Evanston to determine the units needed for their degree completion progress. Students participating in Semester in Qatar and their advisors will also work in coordination with NU-Q's academic advising team to register for classes at Northwestern Qatar that supports their degree progress.

Is Qatar safe for US students?

Qatar is consistently ranked among the safest countries in the world, with a low crime rate and a welcoming environment for both residents and international visitors. The U.S. Department of State has designated Qatar as a Level 1 location, meaning it is considered a low-risk destination where travelers can exercise normal precautions.

Students from around the world can expect to feel safe and secure during their time here.

As with any international experience, it is important to be mindful of local laws and customs to ensure a smooth and enjoyable stay.

Travelers to Qatar are encouraged to sign up for the free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). This is a worldwide traveler safety program that is open to both U.S. and non-US citizens. It allows them to receive timely updates about health, weather, safety, and security for their destination.

Can I play in NU-Q sports teams?

Definitely, NU-Q sports teams compete against other Education City universities. Students can join their preferred team at the start of the fall semester. Details about available teams and how to join will be shared during New Student Orientation.

What cultural resources does NU-Q offer to help students coming from Evanston?

SiQ students can take advantage of all programs and resources offered by the Student Experience office, beginning with New Student Orientation, where they will have a chance to meet with fellow Wildcats, and familiarize themselves with available campus resources.