While at Western we hope that you will not be contacted by someone attempting to “scam” or defraud you of your money. As is true anywhere in the world, there are people who attempt to take advantage of international students and scholars, but with a little knowledge you can learn how to identify a scam and avoid falling victim to the scheme.

- Common Scam Themes:
  - The caller ID or phone number looks like a government agency or police.
  - A claim is made that you owe money or have committed some kind of fraud.
  - A caller or letter will use fear, threats, and intimidation to get what they want.
  - A scam requires immediate action.
  - A scam includes punishment (often threats of deportation or arrest) for not acting immediately.
  - A scammer will keep you on the phone for a long time and will not let you hang up to call back later.
  - A scammer will use lots of legal-sounding language such as “federal regulations” and “visa fee” to sound as legitimate as possible.
  - The use of gift cards to repay some form of debt.

- Important for Students and Scholars to Know:
  - Department of Homeland Security may call you regarding your SEVIS record, but they will never ask for money over the phone.
  - Ask for a caller’s name, ID badge, and phone number and request that you call them back.
  - Do not cash checks that arrive in the mail unexpectedly.
  - Do not sign contracts without reading them and fully understanding the content.
  - It’s a good idea to check how much of your information is public, such as your phone number and address.

- Common Scams:
  - Third Party tax forms attempt to collect the refund that is rightfully yours.
Rental scams where your deposit money is taken and no one meets you with the keys to move in.

Online scams when purchasing items on Craigslist or EBay or through PayPal.

Calls demanding an “international student tax” or “visa fee” which directs the victim to wire money or buy gift cards.

A website charging fees to enter the Green Card Lottery.

- **Report to International Program and Services:**
  - If you receive concerning or suspicious call.
  - If a letter arrives in the mail which includes threats for not acting.
  - If an employer is acting unethically by requiring you to pay money to receive a job offer, or an employment agency is offering to create fake credentials.

- **Remember:** when one person reports a scam, International Programs and Services can alert all of our international students and scholars.

- **Resources for more information:**
  - [Federal Trade Commission](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog) pamphlets in several languages.
  - USCIS webpages on [how to avoid scams](https://www.usa.gov/housing-scams#item-211837) and also where to report a scam.
  - [https://www.usa.gov/identity-theft](https://www.usa.gov/identity-theft)
  - [https://oig.ssa.gov/newsroom/scam-awareness](https://oig.ssa.gov/newsroom/scam-awareness)
  - [https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog)
  - [https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/pass-it-on/imposter-scams#](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/pass-it-on/imposter-scams#)
  - [https://youtu.be/i4nCy6Xs6R8](https://youtu.be/i4nCy6Xs6R8)