

Frequently asked questions about AIO

1) Who can attend AIO?

We welcome all students who have a strong desire to learn and demonstrate an interest and aptitude in science and group collaboration as evidenced by their teacher recommendation.

Due to extensive physical work in the field and on-board boats, students with severe emotional, physical, or learning issues may have difficulty in the program. Though many students with ADD, ADHD and other mild learning disabilities have been successful at AIO, we are not equipped to appropriately handle more severe issues. Since we want to ensure a memorable experience, academically and personally for all students, we ask that you seriously consider what is best for your child before registering.

2) How do I get to Seal Harbor and when should I arrive and depart?

Students can be driven by a parent, take a bus into Bar Harbor or Bangor or fly into the Bar Harbor or Bangor Airports. We will pick students up from the bus stop or airport. **Arrival and departure days are those listed as the first and last days of each session.** Students should plan to arrive between noon and 4 pm the first Sunday and depart on the last Friday between 8 am and noon. We invite you to join our Family Cookout starting at 11:30 am if you're able. **Our staff needs extra time to deep clean between sessions so students will not be allowed to stay longer or for extra nights.**

3) What is a typical weekday daily schedule?

7 am	-students wake up for showers or morning lab
8 am	-breakfast
9-1pm	-morning activity (usually academic: boat trips, tide pool, etc)
2-5pm	-afternoon activity (recreational or academic)
5:15-5:45 pm	-mini-seminar on various topics offered or free time
6pm	-dinner
7-8pm	-recreation (i.e. volleyball, basketball, soccer, etc)
8-9pm	-evening lectures to prepare for the next morning activity

4) Can I attend if I have special food needs?

Yes. Students will receive two home cooked and well-balanced meals at breakfast and dinner each day. For lunch, students are given the choice of many different items to make their own sandwiches. We bring fruit, cookies, crackers, juice, and water for a picnic lunch eaten near the end of the morning activity. At breakfast, we offer cereals, fruit, bagels/toast, milk, juice, hot chocolate, and a hot meal option.

If you check any box on the registration indicating a food allergy or restriction, we will purchase food for the session accordingly. For this reason, it is assumed the child will follow the menu created for their allergy. For example, if you check "gluten-free" then we assume they will eat the gluten-free meal prepared for them. It is very difficult to make last minute changes once the food is ordered for the program, so please let us know no less than two weeks prior to the start of the session. Changes made after that time may require you to bring special meals for the participant.

Though we can accommodate food allergies and many food restrictions, you will need to discuss them with the Director prior to attendance. We keep the cooking nut-free, and we always offer vegetarian alternatives at meals. We cannot, however, control the food that is sent to students in care packages or the food they purchase while away from the building. We have also found that peanut butter is a staple food for many people, especially vegetarians, so it is offered as an option for lunch. Still, we can and have successfully included students every summer in our program with life-threatening allergies to nuts by strictly controlling where the peanut butter is used and by separating the allergic student's lunch from others.

If the participant is *choosing* to limit gluten in their diet, please plan to bring two loaves of their favorite gluten-free bread and two weeks of snacks (such as cookies and crackers) that can be used in their picnic lunches. Since meals are made fresh each day, there will only be one hot gluten free option available at dinner. It is assumed that participants will make the best dietary choices for their health and choose to eat the gluten-free option offered. A gluten free cereal and fruit will be available at breakfast in case the hot meal isn't gluten free. We are not a kosher facility, and we are unable to accommodate a vegan diet.

"Picky eaters" are encouraged to try the food but if they choose not to, you will want to send some additional non-perishable snacks for their snack box to eat after the meal.

5) Will I be in a session with students of all ages?

No. Our sessions are broken into introductory, intermediate, and advanced. The introductory session is for students 10-12 years of age, the intermediate for students 12 to 15, while the advanced sessions are for students who have completed at least their first year of high school,

typically 15 -19 years of age. Students are broken into “crews” by age in the Intro and Intermediate sessions.

6) Is There a Dress Code?

While t-shirts and shorts are the most common choice of clothing for the summer, remember that you will be in all types of outdoor environments during a session and should bring clothes appropriate for field work. Shorts should have a minimum 3” inseam and cover your body when you bend down, climb or lift. Shirts and shorts should cover underclothing and not expose private areas. Consider a bathing suit for swimming rather than sunbathing so no short speedos or thongs. Avoid clothing with offensive or divisive language on it. Some activities require a close-toed shoe with a back be worn. Consult the equipment list for other recommendations and requirements. We reserve the right to ask you to change if we feel your dress is not suitable for the program.

7) Can I bring a friend?

Yes, but most students come alone. If you are attending with a friend, let me know if you want to be in the same dorm by writing it on the application. Once the dorm arrangements and splits have been organized, it’s impossible to change it without affecting several other students.

8) Where Will I live at AIO?

Currently, AIO offers two on-site residential options. We have overnight dorm space for those presenting and identifying as female and dorm space for those presenting and identifying as male. We also have two shared bathrooms and shower facilities that accommodate students who present as either male or female. We are considering options to add non-binary residential dorm and bathroom facilities in the future.

9) How Are Dorms Assignments Decided?

AIO staff uses housing and demographic information from the application, availability of space, staffing, and the needs of all program participants to determine dorm assignments. The Executive Director reserves the right to make initial and final dorm assignments. Participants are also allowed to attend AIO as non-residents and will have access to the same resources and activities as residential participants.

10) Can I live off-site?

Each year, a few students choose to attend our program as non-residential participants and live offsite. For our non-residential participants, we can provide a space and bed to rest, change, and keep a limited number of personal belongings on-site. These students also receive and participate in the same meals, activities, and resources as our residential students. Therefore, AIO tuition is the same for residential and non-residential participants.

11) Are there any additional fees?

No, though some students may require additional services. Additional costs could include:

- Returned check \$40 per incident
- College Credit Fee \$580 in 2024; tbd for 2024. Paid to UMM
- All refunds within the refund policy time incur a 4.7% cancellation fee

12) May my parents or friends visit me during a session?

We ask that you do not have any visitors once the program has started.

13) Can I bring my cell phone?

Cell phones and tablets have become a part of everyday life, but they have also become a big distraction during lessons and in the dorms at night. For this reason, we have instituted a **NO CELL PHONE or ELECTRONICS** policy. If you have a cell phone with you when you arrive, we’ll keep it in a safe place until the end of the program. This includes cell phones, iPod, iPads, Kindles, video games, etc. An iWatch is allowed. Plan to bring an inexpensive camera for pictures though we take hundreds of photos that you can download. You will have access to a free landline (for calls in the US and Canada) and a computer to check email.

14) Tell me about the college credit option.

AIO offers 23 rising juniors and seniors the option of taking the first advanced session as a 4-credit oceanography course (SM 103) through the Early College Program at the University of Maine’s regional campus in Machias. This is a graded course, based on the UMM grading system. The cost of the credits was \$553 in 2023 (subject to change) over and above the AIO tuition and is due on May 1. The AIO tuition includes a \$100 nonrefundable registration fee. A link to create an account at UMM will be sent this spring. Beside participation in the existing AIO program, you will be expected to attend additional labs, lectures and take an end of session lab practical and final exam. You have until the first Tues at noon to drop the course and monies paid to UMM will be refunded.

15) How can someone reach me during my session?

You can receive mail or care packages either sent to the post office or delivered via a delivery service (FedEx, UPS, etc.). You can also receive phone calls or make phone calls from our landline during your freetime. Here is the contact information:

USPS mail

AIO
Your name
P.O. Box 285, 9 Lower Dunbar Rd
Seal Harbor, ME 04675
Tel. 207-276-9364

FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.

AIO
your name
9 Lower Dunbar Rd
Seal Harbor, ME 04675
Tel. 207-276-9364

16) What is your refund policy?

- Withdrawal before March 1, 2025; full refund of money paid
- Withdrawal March 1-April 30: full refund minus deposit.
- Withdrawal May 1-31, 2025: refund of tuition, minus deposit, **only if space can be filled by another student. Otherwise, no refund.**
- Withdrawal June 1, 2025, or later: **no refunds.**
- **Full tuition must be received prior to beginning of the scheduled session or student will not be allowed to attend.**
- All refunds within the refund policy time frame will incur a 4.7% cancellation fee

Participants are expected to report to all scheduled activities on time, to abide by all rules of conduct explained upon arrival at AIO, and to behave in a manner to bring credit upon AIO, the island community and themselves. This conduct includes but is not limited to:

- Following the rules given by the Director at the first night's orientation
- Treating staff and fellow students with proper respect including, but not limited to, not bullying, belittling, ostracizing, threatening, unwanted touching and stealing.
- Using appropriate language
- Refraining from improper relationships with other students or staff
- Not possessing tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, or any illegal substances
- Courteous interactions when encountering members of the public
- Never leaving the property without a staff member
- Respecting the property of AIO and other students. You must replace property willfully destroyed or stolen.

Infraction of the above can result in removal from the program without refund at the discretion of the Executive Director and any cost incurred for travel are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.