



Office of International Student Services

F-1 and J-1 Visas

What is a Visa: A visa is a permit that allows a foreign national to apply for entry into the United States. It is the stamp in your passport that is issued by the U.S. embassy or consulate after you presented your I-20/DS-2019, financial documentation, and other required documents in support of your application to study in the U.S.

When New F-1/J-1 Visas are Needed: It is not necessary to maintain a valid F-1/J-1 visa once you have entered the United States in F-1/J-1 status and in order to remain here in that status in lawful F-1/J-1 status. However, you must have a valid F-1/J-1 visa for reentry if you plan to leave the U.S. and return for the continuation of your studies (or your post-completion Optional Practical Training). If your visa will expire before you plan to reenter the U.S., or if the number of entries permitted will all be used, you will need to apply for a new visa before reentering the U.S.

Applying for an F-1/J-1 Visa: An F-1/J-1 visa cannot be renewed within the United States and generally should be obtained within the applicant's country of citizenship or nationality. Students who apply for a visa as a "third country national" in a country that is not their own, may experience additional problems or delays which they might not experience if applying from their home country. Due to heightened U.S. security, your visa application may now take several weeks to process, so the appointment should be made as soon as possible, for the earliest date possible. In addition, students are advised to contact the U.S. consulate or embassy where you intend to apply for a visa, in advance, to ask about the specific procedures and requirements at that location. As a result of recent and significant immigration changes, students planning to apply for a visa in Canada or Mexico must first consult with the Office of International Student Services (OISS). Failure to do so can result in serious problems or denials with reentry into the U.S.

Valid Visas in Expired Passports: If you have a valid F-1/J-1 visa in an expired passport and have been issued a new passport without a visa, you may continue to use the F-1/J-1 visa in your old/expired passport until that visa is no longer valid (so long as the nationality in your new passport is the same as the nationality in your old passport and on your I-20/DS-2019). Students whose passports will expire during their studies should contact their embassy in the United States, far in advance (about 7-8 months), for guidance on the passport renewal procedures.

Security Checks and Visa Delays: For detailed information about possible visa application delays, please check the "Student Visa" section on the U.S. State Department web site: www.travel.state.gov

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► **Students Who Changed to F-1/J-1 Status from Within the U.S. Must have a Valid F-1/J-1 Visa for Reentry into the U.S. after a Departure:** All students who had a change to F-1/J-1 status approved in the United States by the USCIS must apply for an F-1/J-1 visa the next time they leave the U.S. for reentry purposes. **A F-1/J-1 visa cannot be issued in the U.S. and a new F-1/J-1 visa is required to match your new F-1/J-1 status for reentry purposes.** Failure to obtain an F-1/J-1 visa after a change to F-1/J-1 status will result in a denial at the U.S. Port of Entry, even if you have a valid passport and a valid I-20/DS-2019.

► **If You Are a Current Student and Need to Apply for a New F-1/J-1 Visa:**

You should make an appointment for the earliest date possible and should consult the website of the U.S. consulate/embassy where you intend to apply for the visa for any special requirements/procedures at that particular location. **For the visa application, you will need at least:**

1. **A passport valid for at least 6 months into the future;**
2. **An original I-20 or DS-2019 signed by the Office of International Student Services (OISS) within the past 12 months, and all previous I-20/DS-2019 forms ever issued to you.** The first and last names on your I-20/DS-2019 should match the names on your passport;
3. **Financial documentation**, which shows proof of financial support for your studies at Regent;
4. **A “Certificate of Enrollment”**, which shows part-time or full-time enrollment status for all semesters you attended Regent University; **AND** **an Official Transcript**, which will show that you are making progress toward the completion of your degree and a record of your current and historical classes. These two documents can be requested from the Registrar’s Office (Room 325, Student Center) and will take approximately 3-5 days to process, so please plan accordingly. Request forms can also be found on this page of the Registrar’s Office website: <http://www.regent.edu/admin/registrar/studentforms.cfm>
5. **Evidence of intent to return home after studies/post-completion OPT/Academic Training since the F-1/J-1 visas are “non-immigrant” visas.** (Examples include: proof of employment, home, family, continued membership in home-country organizations, land/business/ house ownership, home-country financial accounts and investments, etc.);
6. **2 colored photographs;**
7. **DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application, and Form DS-158.** Some, but not all, applicants will also need to complete the DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form; and
8. **Application Fee.** This will vary depending on the location where you apply for the visa.

► **If You Graduated and are on Post-completion OPT/Academic Training and Need to Apply for a New F-1/J-1 Visa:**

F-1 Graduates who are on Post-completion OPT should check to make sure the OISS has their employer’s name and address entered into SEVIS, and will need the following items for their F-1 visa application in addition to the items listed under points 5-8 above: a passport valid at least 6 months into the future; an unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD); a Letter of Employment showing the dates of the employment and salary; and all of your I-20s with page 3 of the OPT I-20 endorsed for travel by the OISS within the past “6” months.

J-1 Graduates who are engaged in Academic Training will need a passport valid at least 6 months into the future; a signature on the DS-2019 that is not more than 12 months old; an employment authorization letter from the OISS; and a Letter of Employment showing the dates of the employment and salary.

For additional details, please consult with the OISS or visit the U.S. Department of State website at: <http://travel.state.gov>