



Important Immigration Terms and Information

(For F-1 & J-1 Visa Holders)

Passport: Your passport is your government's permit for you to travel internationally. The U.S. government requires you to keep your passport valid at all times while you are here. Check the expiration date on your passport. If the passport will be expiring within the next six months, you should request an extension or renewal. Your passport may be extended only by your government. You will need to contact your Embassy here in the U.S. and ask about the forms, fees, procedures, and the amount of time necessary to extend or renew your passport. If your F-1 or J-1 visa is still valid and you will be issued a new passport, you should request the return of your expired passport. By keeping the old and the new passports together, the valid visa can be used for reentry to the U.S. Otherwise, you will need to apply for a new visa the next time you depart the U.S.

F-1 and J-1 Visas: Your F-1/J-1 visa is the stamp placed in your passport with your photo, which allows you to enter the U.S. (Canadian students do not need a visa to enter the U.S.) The visa was issued at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate when you presented your I-20/DS-2019, financial certification, and other required documents. The visa notes the purpose of your visit to the U.S. (student, exchange visitor, etc.), the last date you can enter the U.S., and the number of entries you are permitted. Some visas are valid for the entire duration of your studies, and some visas are issued for a much shorter time depending on reciprocity laws between your country and the U.S. **It is NOT necessary to maintain a valid F-1 or J-1 visa while you are in the U.S., but you MUST have a valid visa if you plan to leave the U.S. and reenter for the continuation of your studies.** F-1 & J-1 visas cannot be obtained or renewed within the U. S. They can only be obtained from the U.S. Consulates/Embassies outside the country. Please see the Director of OISS, or our webpage entitled "F-1 & J-1 Visas", for more details if you will need to apply for a new visa soon: <http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/visas.cfm>.

I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (I-94 Card): This small white card was issued to you by the airline personnel and is usually stapled to your passport by the Immigration Officer at the U.S. Port of Entry (POE). This important card contains your name, date of birth, country of citizenship, immigration status, the date you entered the U.S., the amount of time you can remain in the U.S., and your 11 digit "Admission Number", which is used to keep record of the dates you leave and reenter the U.S. F-1 and J-1 students are admitted into the U.S. until "D/S", or "Duration of Status". (See "D/S" below for details.) The I-94 card must be kept in a safe place and surrendered each time you depart the U.S. If a specific date is ever entered on your I-94 card, you must bring your passport, visa, and I-94 card to the Office of International Student Services immediately.

I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant Student Status): The I-20 is the document which is used to obtain the F-1 visa; to enter the U.S.; to transfer from one school to another; and to apply for a change to F-1 student immigration status from within the U.S. On this document, the school certifies your academic level, major field of study, expected completion date, financial support, etc. A new I-20 should be requested from the Office of International Student Services when any errors are discovered, when any changes occur, when beginning a new level of study (moving from a master's to a doctorate degree, etc.), when changing or declaring your major, or when extending beyond your program completion date. A student who plans to transfer to a new school must also obtain a new I-20 from the new school for transfer purposes. The I-20 is an important document which becomes your permanent record of all immigration related matters while you are in the U.S. You should always keep any I-20s that are ever issued to you as a permanent record of your F-1 immigration status. You **MUST** carry all I-20s with you while traveling. A valid I-20 signed within the past 12 months will be needed to reenter the country as a student. The I-20 will also be needed to prove work eligibility to prospective employers.

DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status): The DS-2019 is the document which is used to obtain the J-1 visa, to enter the U.S., and to transfer from one school to another. On this document, the school certifies your exchange visitor category (student, scholar, professor, etc.) your field of study, expected completion date, financial support, etc. A new DS-2019 should be requested from the Office of International Student Services when any errors are discovered, when any changes occur, when beginning a new level of study (moving from a master's to a doctorate degree, etc.), when extending beyond your program completion date, etc. A student who plans to transfer to a new school must also obtain a new DS-2019 from the new school for transfer purposes. The DS-2019 is an important document which becomes your permanent record of all immigration related matters while you are in the U.S. You should always keep all DS-2019s that are ever issued to you. You **MUST** carry all DS-2019s with you while traveling. For J-1 "students", a valid DS-2019 signed within the past 12 months will be needed to reenter the country.

D/S: This stands for "Duration of Status" and is the period of time for which you have been admitted into the U.S. For F-1 students, this period is defined as the time in which you are pursuing a full course of study, with a valid I-20, and any authorized period of practical training plus a 60 day grace period from which you have to depart the U.S. For J-1 students, "Duration of Status" is defined as the period of time in which you are pursuing a full course of study, with a valid DS-2019, and any authorized period of academic training, plus a 30 day grace period from which you have to depart the U.S.

Full-Time Student Status: F-1 & J-1 students must be enrolled full-time each semester. For immigration purposes full-time status is generally defined as 12 credits for undergraduates; 9 credits for graduate students; 10 credits for law students; and 6 credits for doctoral students. There are a few exceptions to the full-time rule, but **students planning to drop below full-time status, MUST consult with the Office of International Student Services to receive PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL.** Failure to receive prior written approval from the Office of International Student Services is a serious violation of the F-1 status which will result in the loss of the student's lawful immigration status.

Transfers: If you are planning to study at a new school, you must first submit a “Request to Transfer Out” form in order to have your immigration record transferred from Regent University to the new school. You must also contact the International Student Advisor/Designated School Official at the new school to inquire about their transfer procedures, the paperwork you will need to complete for the new I-20/DS-2019, and any time limitations that might apply to you. The transfer procedure will differ from school to school. **Current USCIS regulations require all F-1 students to register with the International Student Advisor/Designated School Official at the new school within 15 days of beginning attendance in order to complete the USCIS transfer process on time. Failure to do so will result in the loss of your lawful F-1 status.** If a student completes a degree at one U.S. institution and plans to enroll at another U.S. institution for another degree, this student must also submit a “Request to Transfer Out” form for immigration purposes even though this is not considered an academic transfer. For F-1 students, the I-20 from the new school **MUST** be issued within 60 days after the student completes his/her studies at the current/previous institution. For J-1 students, the DS-2019 from the new school **MUST** be issued before the current program expiration date.

Program Extension: The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of State (DOS) allow students in F-1 & J-1 status to apply for a program extension under certain circumstances. If you are unable to complete your program before the end-date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019 because of compelling academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses, you may be eligible for a program extension. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are **NOT** acceptable reasons for a program extension. USCIS has a very strict deadline regarding the extension of program. Students who fail to submit the required paperwork by the deadline may fall out-of-status and may need to apply for a reinstatement to lawful status. **If you anticipate that you will not be able to complete your degree by the time you are currently authorized on your I-20/DS-2019, you should speak with the Director of OISS at least 1 month before your current completion date.** Application packets for program extensions are available at the Office of International Student Services and on our website: <http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/onlineform.cfm>.

Employment: Employment is considered to be the part-time or full-time rendering of services for any type of compensation (financial or other). Employment is a “benefit” of the F & J student statuses, which is only available to those students who have maintained their lawful immigration status. F-1 and J-1 students can only work in the U.S. after receiving the proper authorization and with certain restrictions. Working in the U.S. without proper authorization is a serious violation of the F & J student statuses which can lead to deportation. If you are considering any type of employment in the U.S., you should first consult with the Office of International Student Services for specific rules and restrictions. A summary of the regulations regarding the various types of F-1 and J-1 employment is included on the OISS website under “Working in the United States”: <http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/iss/employment.cfm>. All students who plan to work in the U.S. must first obtain a U.S. social security number for employment and taxation purposes. Details about the social security number application are available in the OISS.

Dependents: The lawful immigration status of all F-2 and J-2 dependents is connected to the lawful status of the primary F-1 and J-1 visa holder. If an F-1 or J-1 visa holders violates his/her

immigration status, then all dependents are out of status as well. **F-2 dependents are not permitted to accept employment in the U.S. under any circumstances, and J-2 dependents MUST maintain adequate health insurance coverage at all times.**

(Revised 1/23/09—LJ)