FAQ Regarding Immigration Status and Services at UGA

H-1B Visa Holder

Spring 2020
Immigration Services | Office of Global Engagement

1. If my department implements some lay-offs, will they be required to lay-off people working under non-immigrant visas first?

No, lay-offs are made based on a number of factors.

2. Are unemployment benefits considered a public charge?

Generally no, however keep in mind that in general unemployment benefits are not available to H-1B employees.

3. Can I take voluntary leave from work unrelated to COVID-19 and still maintain H-1B status?

H-1B employees are entitled to the same leave as all other employees, so as long as the leave you are taking is a UGA benefit available to all employees, you can maintain H status while on that leave period.

4. I need assistance from my immigration advisor. How can I ask a question or seek advice?

Although in person advising is not available currently, international visitors on campus have options to reach the advisors in our office:

- Email – all advisors are working remotely during business hours and are available via email. If you do not know your advisors direct email, please email immigration@uga.edu
- Phone – if you need to speak with an advisor, please email and provide a good time to call you and a contact number. You can also call our main number and leave a message for a callback at (706) 542-2900.
- Virtual Advising- Advisors are available to video-conference with you. To schedule an appointment via Zoom, please click HERE https://uga.zoom.us/my/immigration
- For emergency immigration concerns, you may call the Director’s cell phone: 706 202-2546

5/18/2020
5. What do the terms “isolation” and “quarantine” mean?

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Safety: Isolation and quarantine are public health practices used to stop or limit the spread of disease.

- **Isolation** is used to separate ill persons who have a communicable disease from those who are healthy. Isolation restricts the movement of ill persons to help stop the spread of certain diseases. For example, hospitals use isolation for patients with infectious tuberculosis.

- **Quarantine** is used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but do not show symptoms. Quarantine can also help limit the spread of communicable disease.

- **Isolation and quarantine are used to protect the public by preventing exposure to infected persons or to persons who may be infected.**

6. What are UGA’s requirements regarding self-quarantine for people returning from travel outside the U.S.?

a. The U.S. State Department has declared a Global Level 4 Health Advisory. If you have traveled anywhere outside the United States over Spring Break, you **MUST NOT** return to a UGA campus or facility. Anyone who has traveled internationally in the past 14 days **MUST** self-quarantine until you have been asymptomatic for a period of 14 days from the date of entering/reentering the United States.

b. What does it mean to self-quarantine? You must stay home for 14 days from the time you returned to the United States and practice social distancing. You will need to:
   - Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
   - Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
   - Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.
   - Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters), and limit your activities in public.
   - Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet or 2 meters).

c. If you get sick with fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher), cough, or have trouble breathing:
   - Seek medical care. Call ahead before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room.
   - Tell your doctor about your recent travel and your symptoms.
   - Avoid contact with others.

d. At all times, each of us should follow the general CDC guidance offered here: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html)

e. If you or anyone with whom you come into contact experiences symptoms of illness that may be consistent with COVID-19 (cough, fever), it is of paramount importance to seek professional medical assistance immediately through the resources most available to you locally.
7. Where can I find accurate and updated information regarding Coronavirus, or COVID-19?

- Information regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) from the Centers for Disease Control can be found: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html
- Additional information is located on the UGA Health Center’s website: https://www.uhs.uga.edu/healthtopics/coronavirus

8. I plan to return home for a visit. Is this permitted?

Yes. Before you leave, you should review the H-1B travel checklist. Click on link and then click on additional information https://globalengagement.uga.edu/international-employees/h-1b

9. If I leave the U.S. for a visit, will I be able to return?

The situation with the COVID-19 outbreak is changing constantly. Currently there are many travel restrictions between countries, and many Consulates and Embassies are not accepting visa application appointments. We advise you to carefully monitor the situation in your home country, and in the U.S., in order to determine difficulties you may encounter when trying to return to the US.

10. Am I maintaining my H-1B status while I am working remotely?

Yes, during the Covid-19 pandemic Homeland Security has special requirements in place that allow you to work remotely as long as you are within regular commuting distance, or about one hour, from your intended place of employment. If you are further away than this, Immigration Services is required to file a new Labor Condition Application (LCA) with the Department of Labor for your remote location. You will then be required to post the LCA at your remote location for 10 business days.

11. My H-1B status is expiring soon, am I able to currently request an extension of my status during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes, USCIS is continuing to process H-1B petitions. USCIS has temporarily suspended premium processing, but with a timely filed H extension application you may continue working 240 days while the application is pending adjudication.

12. My H-1B status is expiring soon. I will leave the U.S. Do I have a grace period?

Some H-1B employees are granted a 10-day grace period before they must depart the U.S. The Customs and Border Protection officer must add the grace period to your I-94 once you are admitted to the U.S. However, this doesn’t always happen. Check your online I-94 info sheet to determine the date you must leave the US: cbp.gov/i94
13. **H-1B worker requiring leave for quarantine**

In the event that an H-1B employee shows symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, the employer may require the employee to take vacation or sick leave without affecting his or her status. However, because the quarantine is required by the employer, the regulations contemplate that the employer may still be required to pay the required wage during this time. The employer also should keep in mind that the H-1B employee may be eligible for paid sick leave under certain provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

14. **Are U.S. Consulates abroad still accepting visa application appointments, and processing visa applications?**

“As a result of the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19, US Embassies and Consulates may temporarily modify or suspend consular services. Visit the Embassy or Consulate website to confirm operating status and find information about appointment rescheduling and/or emergency services.”

15. **Can an H-1B worker decrease to part-time employment?**

Yes, however any change in work schedule for an H-1B worker requires the filing of an H-1B amendment with USCIS, **BEFORE** the change in work schedule is imposed.

16. **Can my employment be terminated during this pandemic?**

Yes. You must be notified in writing by your employer. The department must provide the employee with the option of payment for transportation to his/her home country.

17. **I have dependents. What family resources are available?**

Helpful Online Resources during COVID-19: [http://ifr.uga.edu/](http://ifr.uga.edu/)

We hope you will find some of these online resources helpful to you and your family as we navigate life from home.

18. **Does my Health Insurance cover COVID-19 testing?**

Yes. If you have Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield (Anthem) insurance, go here [https://www.anthem.com/usg/](https://www.anthem.com/usg/) or 1-800-424-8950. If you have Kaiser Permanente, go here [https://my.kp.org/usg/](https://my.kp.org/usg/) or 404-261-2590.

19. **I’m having problems with my Compass account. What should I do?**

Compass services are functioning normally and are being updated regularly to reflect any changes in our business processes.
a. **For anyone having difficulty logging in:**
b. Please be sure you carefully follow the instructions in the email you were sent regarding login.
c. If you still have trouble accessing Compass, open a different browser or incognito window and try again.
d. Contact mariet@uga.edu for assistance if you are still unable to log in.