FAQ Regarding Immigration Status and Services at UGA

J1 Exchange Visitors

Spring 2020
Immigration Services | Office of Global Engagement

1. 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
- PLEASE NOTE: Exchange visitors must keep their U.S. sponsors notified of all travel plans and must keep valid health insurance for the duration of their program for themselves and all accompany dependents.

2. 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.
3. 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. 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

   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.

4. 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

5. How often do I need a new travel signature on my DS-2019 form?

   We recommend all scholars have a travel signature every 6 to 9 months.

6. I am departing the U.S. and traveling to my home country, but will return to continue my J program at UGA. How can I receive a new travel signature on my DS-2019 form (J-1)?
If you would like a travel signature, our office can print a new DS-2019 with travel signature to be mailed out to you. Please log into compass.uga.edu. Select J-1 Scholar Services, then select “Replace DS-2019 Document”. You will be asked why you are requesting a new DS-2019 form. For this, you should select “Updated”, then in the subsequent question, select “Travel signature”. If you are still inside the U.S., we will be able to mail this document to you. If you are outside the U.S., you will follow the instructions we send to you on ordering shipment delivery.

7. Will my DS-2019 request be processed and mailed?

Immigration Services will continue processing all e-form requests submitted through compass.uga.edu (formerly iStart). All initial DS-2019s will be processed and mailed to the scholar via express mail, unless the department chooses differently.

8. I am J-1 scholar and I plan to return home for several months. Is this permitted?

Yes. Before you leave, you should speak to your J1 immigration advisor. Depending on how long you will be outside the U.S., you may need to complete the Out of Country form in Compass.

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.

10. My program end date has ended or been shortened. Do I still have a grace period?

Yes. Exchange visitors still have a 30-day grace period following the program end date.

11. Can I choose to cancel my J-1 program?

Yes. UGA can cancel a J-1 program if you and your UGA supervisor have agreed on cancellation. We need written proof of this in order to cancel the SEVIS record.

12. Does my Health Insurance cover COVID-19 testing?

Not sure. Please contact your health insurance provider directly with questions about this. If you have health insurance offered by UGA, testing will be covered. If you have Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield (Anthem) insurance, go here https://www.anthem.com/usg/ or 1-800-424-8950. If you have Kaiser Permanente, go here https://my.kp.org/usg/ or 404-261-2590.

13. Are exchange visitors in Active status able to work, if we are required to work remotely?

Yes. However, you must report to us the address where you will be working. To do so, visit

5/22/2020
In the General section, fill out the form: “Covid-19 Online Instruction Plans (Scholar)”. In addition, all exchange visitors in Georgia must adhere to the shelter in place order issued by the Governor.

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.” As of mid-April, 2020, most US consulates are not processing regular visa applications.

15. I am financially supported by another funding source other than UGA. I was issued a DS-2019 by UGA with a start date in May or June. Can I start my program on time?

Generally no, you may not. UGA has delayed all visiting scholar start dates until at least July 1, 2020. We will amend your DS-2019 and will be sending you an updated form.

16. I already received my J-1 visa. Will I have to apply for a new one since my program has been delayed?

For the most part, no, you should not have to apply for a new J-1 visa. Please check your current visa stamp to see how long it is still valid. If your current visa will remain valid by your expected arrival date, then you will not need to re-apply for a new J-1 visa.

17. I have decided not to come to UGA. Is there anything I need to do?

Yes. Please inform us by email, and also contact your sponsoring department and let them know your plans have changed.

18. Will US Embassies and Consulates open soon for J1 interview?

Routine visa services will resume as soon as possible, but the US Department of State has not set a specific date at this time. Please access the website of your local US Consulate if you have a student, scholar, or employment start date within the coming 60 days, and see if you will be allowed to make an emergency appointment.

19. Will the Department of State replace in-person interviews with video interviews in order to expedite the process when consular sections reopen?

The Department of has no plans to substitute video interviews for in-person visa interview.

20. What should I do if I am having trouble getting a flight home because flights have been canceled or unavailable?
You should contact your home country embassy in the U.S. Many are registering citizens and compiling lists of those who are trying to return home, and may be able to assist you. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/consularnotification/ConsularNotificationandAccess.html

21. I have dependents. What family resources are available?

Helpful Online Resources during COVID-19:
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.

22. How do I access Compass?

Please visit https://compass.uga.edu/istart/controllers/start/StartEngine.cfm

23. How can I get help with my Compass.uga.edu account?

Compass services are functioning normally and are being updated regularly to reflect any changes in our business processes.

For anyone having difficulty logging in:
   a. Please be sure you carefully follow the instructions in the email you were sent regarding login.
   b. If you still have trouble accessing Compass, open a different browser or incognito window and try again.
   c. Contact mariet@uga.edu for assistance if you are still unable to log in.

24. I plan to remain in the United States to continue my J-1 program. What resources are available to me?

UGA Intensive English Program
Iep.uga.edu

Health Center
https://www.uhs.uga.edu/

Housing
https://housing.uga.edu/

Health Insurance
25. My program was extended 60 days by the U.S. Department of State due to Covid-19. Am I required to maintain health insurance during this 60 day extension period?

Yes, you are required to maintain health insurance for the entire duration of your J-1 program. If you have dependents accompanying you in J-2 status, they also must maintain health insurance for the entire duration of their J-2 status.

26. Can I continue my research in my home country temporarily, without ending my exchange visitor program at UGA?

Yes, this is possible as long as you continue to pursue your program objective originally described in the offer/invitation letter and you will be returning to UGA within one year. In addition, the UGA sponsoring department has to agree to it as well. You should discuss this with your J-1 advisor prior to submitting the ‘Out-of-Country Request’ in your Compass record. You will be required to maintain insurance coverage as long as your SEVIS record is active, whether or not you are physically present in the U.S.