Immigration Services COVID FAQ

Travel & Well-Being

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Can I travel internationally? Are there any entry restrictions to the U.S.?

UGA Immigration Services currently does not recommend non-essential international travel due to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 outbreak and impacts to global travel. International travel can be unpredictable and pose some risk in the current environment. If you make the personal decision to travel internationally, please carefully review the Immigration Services Travel & Re-Entry page for general information regarding travel and required re-entry documents. If your U.S. entry visa is expired, be aware that applying for a visa could be unpredictable and subject to further delays if U.S. Consulates are not open.

Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel

Travelers seeking to enter the U.S. from a foreign country must produce a recent negative COVID-19 test prior to entry (effective January 26th) and comply with CDC guidelines, including recommended periods of self-quarantine or self-isolation after entry into the U.S.

It is important to keep in mind that if your flight connects in any other country, you are subject to their travel requirements/restrictions as well.

Masks are required to be worn in airports, on commercial aircraft and trains, along with all forms of public transportation.

Immigration Services is not currently advising on winter break travel.

Am I required to present a negative COVID-19 Test result before entering the United States?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the U.S. published a notice on January 12, 2021:

Air passengers are required to get a viral test (a test for current infection) within the 3 days (72 hours) before their flight to the U.S. departs, and provide written documentation of their laboratory test result (paper or electronic copy) to the airline or provide documentation of having recovered from COVID-19. Airlines must confirm the negative test result for all passengers or documentation of recovery before they board. If a passenger does not provide documentation of a negative test or recovery, or chooses not to take a test, the airline must deny boarding to the passenger. This order was signed by the CDC Director on January 12, 2021 and will become effective on January 26, 2021.
For up to date information regarding this new testing requirement, please visit CDC Expands Negative COVID-19 Test Requirement to All Air Passengers Entering the United States | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC (link is external)

When returning from international travel, follow CDC guidance and review UGA Campus guidance on the UGA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information & Resources site and the University Health Center COVID-19 Information page.

What should I consider upon arriving at UGA after travel?

We encourage you to visit https://coronavirus.uga.edu for the latest campus messages and information on COVID-19. Additional information regarding vaccines, testing, and other health services provided to students can be found at the University Health Center’s Coronavirus resource page: https://healthcenter.uga.edu/healthtopics/coronavirus/

Where can I find current Travel Restrictions for Student, Scholars, & Non-Immigration Employees?

A travel restriction currently suspends entry into the United States of most non-immigrants who were physically present within the countries outlined on the COVID-19 Traveler Information resource for a 14-day period prior to their travel to the U.S. You can find the website and contact information for the U.S. Consulate closest to you here: US Embassies (link is external)

As of April 30, 2021, these countries include all Schengen countries, Iran, Brazil, China, United Kingdom, Ireland, South Africa, and India.

*Please review updated information specifically for student and scholar travelers from the above-mentioned countries.

Update for students and scholars traveling from China, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, the Schengen countries, the UK, Ireland, and India

Certain business travelers, investors, treaty traders, academics, and students may qualify for National Interest Exceptions under Presidential Proclamations (P.P.s) 9984 (China), 9992 (Iran), 10143 (Brazil and South Africa), 9993 (Schengen Area), 10199 (India), and 9996 (United Kingdom and Ireland).

Students with valid F-1 and M-1 visas intending to begin or continue an academic program commencing August 1, 2021 or later should contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate before traveling to seek a National Interest Exemption (NIE) to travel. They may enter the United States no earlier than 30 days before the start of their academic studies.

Students or scholars traveling as J-1 exchange visitors may contact the nearest embassy or consulate to initiate an exception request. Travelers who believe they meet a national interest exception may request a visa appointment at the closest Embassy or Consulate and a decision will be made at the time of interview. Travelers are encouraged to refer to the Embassy/Consulate website for detailed instructions on what services are currently available and how to request an appointment.
Individuals who already hold a valid travel document or can travel via ESTA may contact the closest Embassy or Consulate to initiate the national interest exception process.

Each approved NIE is valid for 12 months from the date of approval and may be used to travel to the United States multiple times for the purpose indicated in the approved NIE.

Update for students traveling from India
Some U.S. Consulates in India are beginning to open for nonimmigrant visa appointments. Applicants may experience significant appointment backlogs. Students may visit the consulate website, https://ustraveldocs.com/in, to view availability and schedule an appointment. Those applicants who are found to be otherwise qualified for an F-1 or M-1 visa will automatically be considered for an NIE to travel.

Current F-1 Students
If you will not travel abroad at this time, your F-1 status will remain valid while you are continuing your degree program or pursuing OPT at UGA.

If you will travel to India on or after May 12th, 2021, and have an F-1 visa valid through your return date to the U.S., please travel with caution as travel restrictions are fluid and subject to change with the on-going COVID-19 crisis.

If you will travel to India on or after May 4th, 2021, with plans to renew your F-1 visa, please be advised that U.S. Consulates appointments are currently extremely difficult to schedule. Immigration Services does not recommend international travel at this time.

New Incoming F-1 Students
Incoming students for fall 2021 may find it difficult to find a visa appointment before the start of the UGA fall term. If you are unable to obtain a valid F-1 visa and travel to the U.S. before the fall term, Immigration Services will work with you and your Academic Department to update your SEVIS immigration record. Please read all future emails from immigration@uga.edu, as they will include important instructions to update your immigration record.

Please make sure to contact our office with your visa and travel plans. An immigration advisor will walk you through the appropriate steps for your immigration status.

Update on U.S. Consulates and Embassies in Russia
Effective May 12th, 2021, U.S. Consulates and Embassies in Russia will reduce consular services offered to include only emergency U.S. citizen services and a very limited number of age-out and life or death emergency immigrant visas. This means that non-immigrant visa applications in Russia will not be an option for students enrolling at UGA.

Current F-1 Students
If you will not travel abroad at this time, your F-1 status will remain valid while
you are continuing your degree program or pursuing OPT at UGA.

If you will travel to Russia after May 12th with plans to renew your F-1 visa, please be advised that F-1 non-immigrant visa appointments will not be available. We strongly recommend that you reconsider travel at this time.

If you will travel to Russia after May 12th and have an F-1 visa valid through your return date to the U.S., please travel with caution as travel restrictions are fluid and subject to change with the on-going COVID-19 crisis.

New Incoming F-1 Students
After May 12th, non-immigrant visa appointments will not be available. Applications and visa appointments will need to take place at a U.S. Consulate in a country other than Russia. We understand that COVID-19 travel restrictions may prevent you from traveling to a different country to apply for the visa.

Please make sure to contact our office with your visa and travel plans. An immigration advisor will walk you through the appropriate steps for your immigration status.

Mexico & Canada Travel Restrictions
Effective through July 21, 2021 according to a U.S.-Canada Border Federal Register Notice (link is external) and a U.S.-Mexico Border Federal Register Notice (link is external), entry is only allowed to the United States through land ports of entry along the U.S.-Canada and U.S. Mexico borders for “essential travel” only. “Essential travel” includes “Individuals traveling to attend educational institutions; Individuals traveling to work in the United States.” A separate order from the CDC (link is external) also suspends “the introduction of persons into the United States” who are traveling from Canada or Mexico who are subjected to entry in a “congregate setting” at a Port of Entry or Border Patrol station. The order states that it is not applicable to "Persons from foreign countries who hold valid travel documents." It is unclear how this could apply for travelers sent to Secondary Inspection (link is external), because their documents cannot be verified or if they are missing appropriate travel documentation.

Other Countries
Additionally, many other countries may have travel restrictions of their own (link is external), which could impact your ability to enter those countries or move freely.

Can I apply for a U.S. visa right now? Are consulates and embassies open for applications?

Global travel conditions are highly impacted (link is external) by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department of State has suspended routine U.S. visa services in most countries worldwide (link is external).

Visit your local U.S. embassy or consulate website (link is external) to confirm operating status and find information about appointment rescheduling and/or emergency services.
Expansion of Interview Waiver Eligibility:
As of March 11th, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security, has temporarily expanded the ability of consular officers to waive the in-person interview requirement for individuals applying for a nonimmigrant visa in the same classification. This policy is in effect until December 31, 2021. Travelers are encouraged to review the website of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for detailed information on what services are currently available as well as eligibility information and instructions on applying for a visa without an interview.

If you do make the personal decision to travel internationally, please carefully review the Immigration Services travel page for general information regarding travel and required re-entry documents. If your U.S. entry visa is expired, be aware that applying for a visa for entry could be unpredictable and could cause you to face further delays.

What does UGA Immigration Services mean when they say non-essential international travel is not recommended? What if I want to go home?

From an immigration perspective, international travel currently can be unpredictable. If you are currently maintaining a student, scholar or employee immigration status in the U.S. and you depart, it may prove difficult to return to the U.S. in a timely manner, which could have an impact on your U.S. visa status if you are unable to resume your stay in the U.S. as a student, scholar or employee.

Immigration Services understands that you may have serious personal or health concerns which require you to depart, or that you may feel more comfortable with your family or in your home country. We want to make sure that as you make these important decisions, you understand the possible risks involved — including the fact that you may not be able to re-enter the U.S. at the time you intend. Additionally, many other countries have travel restrictions of their own, which could impact your ability to enter those countries or move freely.

If you are considering a short trip to a country which is not your home, you may also want to consider the risk that you could remain stuck there if the travel situation changes while you are away, possibly limiting your ability to enter to the U.S. (or any other country). Are you prepared to be delayed for a while in the country you are visiting? You'll have to decide for yourself how comfortable you feel with that risk. It might be important for you to rethink your travel dates and make adjustments later in the year.

Can I travel within the U.S.?

Even within the U.S., different regions are experiencing travel impacts and restrictions. The CDC: COVID-19 Cases in the U.S. website has updated numbers per state, but this is changing quickly. If you choose to travel domestically, please be sure to consider your own health and safety. We encourage you to follow the CDC and local recommendations for domestic travel. Aside from any risk from COVID-19 itself, be prepared for possible localized shelter in place orders, transportation restrictions or infrastructure disruption which may impact your travel plans.
I need to leave the U.S. and Immigration Services has not signed my I-20 or DS-2019 document. Is that OK? How can I get an I-20 or DS-2019 signature?

Yes, it’s OK. Please know that you do not need a travel signature on your I-20 or DS-2019 document to depart the U.S. You DO need a valid travel signature to return to the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status. A valid travel signature must be no more than twelve months old on the date that you return to the U.S. (For F-1 students on post-completion Optional Practical Training or STEM OPT Extension, travel endorsements are only valid for 6 months.) You will need a valid signature to apply for a new visa if the F-1 or J-1 visa stamp in your passport is expired and/or for your reentry into the U.S.

If you would like a travel signature, our office can print a new I-20 or DS-2019 with travel signature to be mailed out to you. Please log into compass.uga.edu. Select F-1 Student Services or J-1 Student Services, then select “Replace I-20 or DS-2019 Document”. You may choose the delivery method within the request form. Electronically signed I-20s are available for F-1 students.

My visa is expiring soon. Do I need to return home to extend the visa stamp in my passport? I fear that I will not be able to return. What should I do?

Please note that it is always important to make sure that your I-20 or DS-2019 has a future date on it to maintain its validity. So long as you remain in the U.S. with a valid I-20 or DS-2019 you are not required to extend the visa stamp in your passport. The visa in the passport only needs to be extended when you have departed and need to reenter the U.S. Accordingly, if you are presently in the U.S., your I-20 or DS-2019 is still valid, and your visa in your passport is expired, there is no need for you to make a trip just to extend the visa. If you must return home, and you do not have a valid visa, you will need to make a visa application appointment, and receive the new visa prior to returning to the U.S. Please remember, many U.S. Consulates and Embassies have limited or no visa services.

What if I was in a U.S. travel restriction-impacted country more than 14 days ago, and wish to re-enter the U.S.?

You should try to have clear documentation about how long you have been outside that travel-restricted country. The current COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving and unpredictable. It’s unclear how long the travel restrictions may remain in effect for re-entry to the U.S. and how entry could be impacted for travelers even after the 14-day window. Currently, Immigration Services does not have access to clear guidance on what documentation travelers may use to prove they were not present in travel restriction impacted areas within the indicated time period. Do you have access to immigration, residence documents, or other documentation which can officially confirm your location? Are you currently employed? Does your passport accurately reflect your entries and exits?

My program is ending and I can’t find a departing flight! How will this impact my immigration status?
Immigration Services is aware that many flights to impacted regions have been canceled, and that travel may not be available at this time. If your program is ending soon and you are unable to depart the United States, please notify Immigration Services to let us know about your situation. We will work with our clients on a case-by-case basis to determine the best path forward.

We urge you to also contact your home country’s local consulate or embassy in the U.S. for support and information regarding travel home. We will work with our clients on a case-by-case basis to determine the best path forward.

HEALTH AND SUPPORT

I’m worried and stressed. Where can I find support?

With the ongoing concerns around COVID-19, Immigration Services understands that there may be concerned and anxiety about family around the world. In addition, with the increasing level of news coverage and concerns about the spread of the virus locally, some of you may be experiencing anxiety or stress. Please know that these reactions are normal and there are ways in which you can take care of yourself during these stressful times.

The university has many resources available to help you cope with these situations. At the following links you can access various resources that you may find useful about how to take care of yourself.

Resources available for students, scholars and employees:
- University Health Center

Counseling resources just for students:
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- BeWellUGA - Manage Stress and Depression

Counseling resources just for scholars and employees:
- UGA Well Being- Employee Assistance

Immigration Services advisers are always ready and willing to be of assistance in any way we can. Please Contact Us or the Department of International Student Life for support or resources.

I am experiencing xenophobia, racism, harassment, or bullying. What can I do and where can I find support?

Please notify International Student Life and Immigration Services so that we are aware of your situation and can assist with connecting you to support.

UGA is committed to upholding the mission and goals of diversity, to ensure that all members of our campus community, regardless of race or country of origin, feel welcome, safe, and respected.

Please know that these behaviors have no place in the UGA community. UGA prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of categories including race, color, national
origin, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation/identity and/or sexual violence status. If you have experienced physical assaults, hate crimes, and/or threats of violence, you have the right to report them to UGA PD.

Students can seek counseling support at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Care and Outreach, and the Equal Opportunity Office also be valuable resources. Scholars and employees can access counseling services through BeWellUGA.

F-1 and J-1 Enrolled Degree-Seeking Students

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

I am an F-1 or J-1 enrolled degree-seeking student and I need to submit a request to Immigration Services for my I-20 or DS-2019 form. When will you process my new I-20/DS-2019? How can I receive it?

Immigration Services will continue processing all e-forms submitted through compass.uga.edu. Students may choose from 3 options for document retrieval: Express Shipping, USPS, or by email. For more information, please review: Immigration Services Document Retrieval.

If you are a student who deferred their admission from Spring 2021 to Summer or Fall 2021, specific instructions were sent to you on how to obtain your new I-20 or DS-2019. If you did not receive this email, or still have questions about this, please email immigration@uga.edu.

What can I do to receive a travel signature for my re-entry if I am unable to visit Immigration Services in person?

If you would like a travel signature, our office can print a new I-20 or DS-2019 with travel signature to be mailed out to you.

1. Please log into compass.uga.edu.
2. Select F-1 or J-1 Student Services, then select “Replace I-20 Document” or “Replace DS-2019 Document.”

You will be asked why you are requesting a new I-20 form. For this, you should select “Updated”, then in the subsequent question, select “Travel signature”.

If you are still inside the US, we will be able to mail this document to you.

If you are outside the US, you will follow the instructions we will send to you on ordering shipment delivery.
My I-20 or DS-2019 is expiring, but I need more time to complete my degree. What should I do?

Please submit a request to extend your I-20 or DS-2019 through compass.uga.edu. If you will not be enrolled full-time, also submit a request to reduce your course load through compass.uga.edu.

If you have already applied for F-1 OPT employment or J-1 Academic Training OR if you are eligible to apply now, please contact an Immigration Services advisor regarding your situation, so that we can determine your next steps.

If you are OUTSIDE of the U.S. or you are departing the U.S. before the end of your grace period and 1) you WILL NOT return to the U.S. and 2) you DO NOT intend to apply for post-completion F-1 OPT employment or J-1 Academic Training; You can choose to allow your I-20 or DS-2019 to expire, but you will need to work with your academic department and advisers to be sure you can complete your requirements from abroad.

My I-20 or DS-2019 is expiring and I can’t leave the U.S. due to flight issues. What can I do?

If your program is ending soon and you are unable to depart the United States, please notify Immigration Services to let us know about your situation. We urge you to also contact your home country’s local consulate or embassy in the U.S. for support and information regarding travel home. We will work with you to determine the best path forward. Some options include:

- Consider applying for post-completion employment: F-1 OPT employment or J-1 Academic Training.
- Consider continuing your academic degree program into the summer if further enrollment is appropriate for you in your degree program. If you think it would be better for you to continue your degree program at this time, please contact Immigration Services regarding your situation, so that we can determine your next steps.
- Consider applying for a change of status through USCIS to that of a tourist (B1/B2) visa. The USCIS website (link is external) contains instructions, checklists, and filing tips. If you need further guidance then you may consider hiring an immigration attorney.

I will be outside of the U.S. for more than 5 months. Will I need a new visa? Will I have any problems re-entering the U.S. again as a student?

The Department of Homeland Security provided guidance in Spring 2020 indicating that students may enter the U.S. if they have departed the country for more than 5 months, so long as they have maintained their status while they were in the U.S., continued to enroll full time while outside the U.S., and they are in possession of a valid, unexpired visa in the passport. Be sure to properly maintain your student visa status while abroad and have all required travel documents for re-entry when you return.

If you are currently outside of the U.S. and are unable to return to the United States to resume classes or your UGA employment, please notify Immigration Services to let us
know about your situation. We will work with you on a case-by-case basis to determine the best path forward. Please also notify your academic advisor and instructors.

On March 11th, the U.S. Department of State and Department of Homeland Security temporarily expanded the ability of consular officers to waive the in-person interview requirement for individuals applying for a nonimmigrant visa in the same classification. Travelers are encouraged to review the website of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for detailed information on what services are currently available as well as eligibility information and instructions on applying for a visa without an interview.

What details can you provide regarding Fall 2021 Instruction? How will that impact my visa status?

Please review updates regarding fall instruction at coronavirus.uga.edu.

Do students have to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to attend Fall 2021 semester?

It is not required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to attend Fall 2021 semester. The UGA Health Center’s requirements for newly admitted students can be found here: https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/forms. Additional vaccination information can be reviewed: COVID-19 Vaccine Information - University Health Center (uga.edu).

What will happen if I am unable to return and I withdraw or cancel my enrollment at UGA?

If you are on a student visa status and you withdraw or cancel your enrollment, this will have a direct impact on your F-1 or J-1 student visa status. Please contact an Immigration Services advisor before you take any steps to officially withdraw or cancel future semesters. If you withdraw without communicating with Immigration Services, this may result in a negative termination of your student visa record.

Students who have deferred their admission and/or SEVIS record:

Deferrals
We understand the difficulties many students face with attending UGA during the Fall 2021 semester. There are a few options for students who are unable to attend in-person. Based on your situation, our office will work with you to appropriately adjust your I-20 or DS-2019 start date to the future term. Please notify Immigration Services to let us know about your situation. We will work with you on a case-by-case basis to determine the best path forward. Please also notify your academic advisor and instructors.

SEVIS fees and Deferrals
The SEVIS I-901 fee is valid for 12 months.

Students who have not yet paid for their SEVIS fee: the fee will only need to be paid before the student goes to the visa interview at a United States embassy or consulate.
The I-901 SEVIS Fee payment does not have to be completed until the student appears for the visa interview. Students can schedule an interview before they make the I-901 SEVIS Fee payment. Allow at least three business days for the payment to be received and verified. For more information regarding this fee, please follow this link: [I-901 FAQ (link is external)]

**Graduate Student Deferrals**
If you were accepted to begin your academic program Fall 2021 but wish to defer your program start date to a later semester, please follow the steps below.

1. Contact your academic department about your options for deferring to a later semester. If the deferral is approved by your academic department, your department will place a request for your deferral with the Graduate School.
2. Obtain documentation from both your academic department and the Graduate School confirming the approval of your deferral. Please complete the Deferral E-form sent to you by email to confirm your deferral. This form can be found in the General tab of compass.uga.edu.

Upon receipt of all required documentation, Immigration Services will adjust your I-20 or DS-2019 start date to the future term.

**Undergraduate New Student Deferrals**
If you were accepted to begin your academic program Fall 2021 but wish to defer your program start date to a later semester, please follow the steps below:

Contact undergraduate admissions about your options for deferring to a later semester: [global@uga.edu](mailto:global@uga.edu). Typically, students do not need to pay any additional fees to UGA to defer. If the deferral is approved by admissions, please complete the Deferral E-form sent to you by email to confirm your deferral. This form can be found in the General tab of compass.uga.edu.

Upon receipt of this required documentation, Immigration Services will adjust your I-20 or DS-2019 start date to the future term.

**Undergraduate Transfer Student Deferrals**
If you were accepted to begin your academic program Summer or Fall 2021 but wish to defer your program start date to a later semester, please follow the steps below:

Contact undergraduate admissions about your options for deferring to a later semester: [global@uga.edu](mailto:global@uga.edu). Transfer students can just reapply for the next available term if they meet the minimum transfer requirements. Typically, students do not need to pay any additional fees to UGA to defer. If the deferral is approved by admissions, please complete the Deferral E-form sent to you by email to confirm your deferral. This form can be found in the General tab of compass.uga.edu.

Upon receipt of this required documentation, Immigration Services will adjust your I-20 or DS-2019 start date to the future term.
How do I notify Immigration Services of my enrollment plans?

**International students who cannot enroll in person at UGA:**

International students who **cannot** travel to the U.S. for Fall term 2021 may be permitted to enroll remotely or access in-person classes from outside the U.S. if they are offered by the U.S. school. Due to current restrictions imposed by U.S. Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control, remote enrollment delivery cannot be provided to the following countries: **Cuba, Iran, Sudan, North Korea, Syria, Crimea Region of the Ukraine.**

International students who are planning either to enroll remotely from outside the U.S., or to defer their enrollment until Spring term 2022, should first discuss remote learning options with their academic departments.

Once they are **approved** by their academic departments for remote classes, or remote access to in-person classes, the student must access the UGA Immigration Service’s “Compass” portal to report their summer or fall term plans. After the student submits the form in Compass, the academic department will receive an email from Immigration Services, asking for approval confirmation through a brief “second approver” e-form. Once approved by the department, Immigration Services will manage the student’s immigration SEVIS record, to allow the planned enrollment or deferral.

International students approved by their departments for remote enrollment or remote access to in-person classes must take the following steps:

1. Consult with the appropriate academic department or Admissions office and get approval for their specific term plans
2. Login in to UGA Immigration Services “Compass” portal
3. Under the “General” category, Click on the link for “Fall 2021 Deferral/Cancellation/Remote Enrollment Confirmation”
4. Complete and submit the e-form, entering the correct department or Admissions office contact email address

Eligible students may have their student fees and health insurance requirement waived if you are unable to return to UGA for summer or fall term. You **must** submit this form again to have these waivers applied to your student account. **Waivers applied for spring 2021 will not automatically roll forward to the fall 2021 term.**

**Important:** All international students who received a fee waiver due to being unable to enter the United States due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic must contact the Office of Global Engagement at immigration@uga.edu to certify that they still meet the criteria to receive the fee waiver for the fall 2021 semester. A timely response is critical to ensure accurate tuition/fee assessment.

**International students who will enroll full-time in person at UGA:**

**Students enrolling full-time on campus SHOULD NOT submit the Fall 2021 Deferral/Cancellation/Remote Enrollment Confirmation.**

Last updated: 9/3/2021
Under current U.S. regulations and policies, international students inside the U.S. are allowed to enroll in a mix of in-person and online classes as needed. Under the guidance from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), at least one class of the full-time course load must be in-person. International students who plan to enroll on campus should consult with the appropriate academic department or advisor for academic advising. On-campus International students should enroll full-time: Graduate Students - 9 hours; Undergraduate Students - 12 hours.

If you are currently outside the United States and have submitted your Fall 2021 Enrollment plan e-form, no action is necessary at this time.

If you can safely travel to the U.S., we look forward to welcoming you to campus. If you are already here on campus, we hope you will have a productive and healthy term. If you cannot travel to the U.S. for in-person studies, we are still here to assist you with your future plans.

I am a new student who decided to take all remote/online classes from home with UGA for the spring, but I plan on coming in-person for the fall 2021. What do I need to do?

Please report your plans in compass.uga.edu. Choose the General tab, then select Fall 2021 Deferral/Cancellation/Remote Enrollment Confirmation. Immigration Services will accordingly update your I-20 or DS-2019. We will contact you with instructions at a later date on how to obtain your updated I-20.

I am a new student who has decided I will not attend UGA. What do I need to do?

If you withdraw or cancel your admission or enrollment with UGA, Immigration Services will need to cancel your current I-20 or DS-2019. Please report your plans in compass.uga.edu. Choose the General tab, then select Fall 2021 Deferral/Cancellation/Remote Enrollment Confirmation.

I am a new or continuing student and have been offered an assistantship for fall 2021. I will not be able to return to U.S. due to travel restrictions or embassy closures.

If you have been offered an assistantship for fall 2021, please contact your Academic Department and The Graduate School for more information.

F-1/J-1 EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

I am a NEW student. If I can’t enter the U.S. to begin my new degree program in fall 2021, will this impact my qualification for F-1 CPT (or internships), post-completion OPT, or J-1 Academic Training?

F-1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is used for internships during the degree program, and F-1 Optional Practical Training can be used for post-completion...
employment. **J-1 Academic Training** is used for internships during the degree and post-completion employment.

Yes, if you are unable to enter the U.S. to begin your degree program in fall 2021, it could have an impact on your F-1 CPT or OPT employment eligibility, or impact the duration of J-1 Academic Training available. Please be advised that this information is based on current Department of Homeland Security guidance and current F-1/J-1 regulations, and is subject to change.

**I am a CONTINUING student with an ACTIVE F-1 or J-1 record. Does attending classes remotely impact my eligibility for F-1 CPT or OPT/STEM or J-1 AT?**

If you have entered the U.S. and you are a continuing F-1 or J-1 student in Active F-1/J-1 status, or if you are outside the U.S. and maintaining your record by enrolling full time online, then any current remote instruction for spring, summer, and fall term 2021 is counted towards your qualifications for F-1 OPT or J-1 AT. Your OPT/CPT or AT qualification period began at the start of your I-20/DS-2019, when you first entered the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status.

**I am outside of the U.S. and unable to enter to start or continue my F-1 student OPT or apply for OPT. What should I do?**

The current COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving and unpredictable. It's unclear how long the travel restrictions or other global travel restrictions may remain in effect for re-entry to the U.S. and how your entry could be impacted. If you are currently outside of the United States and are unable to return, please notify Immigration Services to let us know about your situation. We will work with our F-1 OPT students on a case-by-case basis to determine the best path forward. Be sure to review OPT information on the Immigration Services website, including the OPT workshop, application instructions, employment/address reporting, and required travel documents.

Be aware that you may not exceed 90 days of unemployment during OPT. If you are currently approved for OPT, you may need to determine if you can work remotely for your employer. If you do not have an employer, it’s possible that you might exceed the 90 days of unemployment if you are unable to begin employment. Current guidance DOES allow less-than-full-time employment (meaning less than 20 hours per week) if the change is due to the COVID-19 emergency.

If you are currently outside of the U.S. and have not yet applied for OPT, you must re-enter prior to your program completion date in order to qualify to apply for OPT. Please contact Immigration Services as soon as possible for advising, which might include planning to extend your program of study.

**Has anything changed with regard to OPT processes in light of COVID-19? What if I cannot find an employer within 90 days of the start date of my OPT?**

*Please be advised that this information is based on current Department of Homeland Security guidance and current F-1/J-1 regulations, and is subject to change.* There have been no changes to the application process for OPT or to OPT itself. We have not received any guidance regarding the possibility of extending the period of time when someone is not engaged in employment while under OPT or OPT STEM Extensions.
Current guidance DOES allow less-than-full-time employment (meaning less than 20 hours per week) if the change is due to the COVID-19 emergency.

Please continue to check the USCIS website (link is external) for updates or visit the USCIS COVID-19 response page (link is external) regarding any changes to USCIS processing of requests.

If you are still finishing your degree and have concerns about your post-completion employment, you could also consider continuing your academic degree program, if further enrollment is appropriate for you in your degree program at this time. If you think it would be better for you to continue your degree program at this time, rather than continue with your OPT application, please contact an Immigration Services advisor regarding your situation, so that we can determine your next steps.

Immigration Services will continue to process all requests for OPT.

I am on F-1 OPT or OPT STEM Extension and I am working remotely. Is that OK? Do I need to report my remote work?

Remote work is OK. DHS has indicated that you DO NOT need to update the employer address information in SEVIS nor on the Form I-983 for students working remotely. Students on OPT should be sure that the work continues to meet OPT requirements or STEM requirements for eligible employment. Make sure to continue to report any OPT/STEM changes in living address, employment, or unemployment via compass.uga.edu.

I am on F-1 OPT or STEM OPT Extension and I have been furloughed or laid off. What’s the difference? How does this impact my OPT or STEM Extension unemployment days?

Furlough, leave of absence, laid-off and termination have different meanings. You should confirm in writing with your employer exactly what your employment status is.

A furlough or paid or unpaid approved leave of absence may still be considered employment for OPT/STEM OPT purposes. F-1 regulations allow for “time off taken consistent with leave-related policies applicable to the employer’s similarly situated U.S. workers in the area of employment.” If this is your situation, request documentation from your employer (usually your supervisor or HR) confirming that your period of furlough or official leave of absence.

A termination or lay-off would be an ending of the employment, and would result in the beginning of days of OPT or STEM OPT unemployment. You’ll need to report your employer end date via the compass.uga.edu.

I am on F-1 OPT or STEM OPT Extension and I have been furloughed or laid off. Am I eligible for unemployment benefits?

Immigration Services is unable to answer questions about eligibility for unemployment benefits. There is information here (link is external) about state unemployment programs. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has confirmed (link is external) that unemployment benefits are not considered “public benefits” that would violate the public charge (link is external) rule. However, it is unclear whether use of
unemployment benefits could make a student likely to seen as someone who could become a public charge in the future. Being seen as a potential public charge could negatively impact applications for future visas or immigration benefits.

I am a J-1 student and my Academic Training employment has been terminated due to COVID-19. What can I do?

Please contact Immigration Services as soon as possible so that we can advise you on your available options.

**CORONAVIRUS STIMULUS AND RELIEF MEASURES INFORMATION**

Will I receive a stimulus payment?

International Student Life (ISL), the UGA office that assists with international student tax preparation, has received numerous questions from international students and scholars regarding the stimulus payments being made in the US. Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will issue these payments to US citizens and permanent residents, as well as to people who are deemed "residents" for tax purposes. In general, it is unlikely that most international students and scholars will receive a stimulus payment. Please review the information provided by ISL [here](mailto:isltax@uga.edu). For further questions relating to taxes please email isltax@uga.edu
J-1 VISITING SCHOLARS AND INTERNATIONAL FACULTY & STAFF

What are Immigration Services’ current procedures for J Scholar and Employment-based operations?

Immigration Services staff on the J scholar and employment-based teams are continuing to issue DS-2019s and filing employment based petitions. During this period we continue to process cases and departments can continue to submit cases as usual through the Compass portal.

What can I do to receive a travel endorsement for my re-entry if I am unable to visit Immigration Services in person?

If you would like a travel signature, our office can print a new DS-2019 with travel signature to be mailed out to you.

1. Please log into compass.uga.edu.
2. 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.

I am a new visiting scholar or employee currently outside of the U.S. and I can’t enter to start my program. Or, I am a continuing scholar employee, and I cannot enter to resume my appointment. What can I do?

The current COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving and unpredictable. It's unclear how long the travel restrictions or other global travel restrictions may remain in effect for re-entry to the U.S. and how your entry could be impacted. If you are currently outside of the United States and are planning to enter the country, please notify Immigration Services to let us know about your situation. We will work with our clients on a case-by-case basis to determine the best path forward, and (for new scholars or employees) if your start date and documents should be adjusted. Consult with your UGA faculty sponsor, human resources representative, or department administrator, and contact Immigration Services if there will be any changes to your program dates or affiliation.

If you made plans to travel to the U.S. to begin an upcoming UGA program or appointment, there are several factors to consider. More information is available on the UGA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources & Information (link is external) and
How can a new Visiting Scholar apply for a Social Security Number?

If your visa status permits you to work in the United States and you decide to pursue employment you will be required to obtain a U.S. social security number. For additional information you may visit the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) website at or call 800-772-1213.

What will happen if I end my UGA appointment early and/or I depart the United States and do not intend to return to the U.S. for my J program?

If you are a scholar and you depart the U.S. early (more than 15 days before your DS-2019 end date) and you do not intend to return to the U.S. for the remainder of your J program, please discuss this with your faculty sponsor and human resources representative. Please also email immigration@uga.edu so that we can advise you on the steps and the visa implications of ending your program early.

Our Department is inviting a Visiting Scholar who is currently overseas to join our department. When will they be able to start?

Many U.S. embassies overseas remain closed for routine visa services, and we anticipate a backlog once operations resume. Therefore, even after J-1 scholars receive their Forms DS-2019, it may take several months before they are able to secure visas and arrive on campus. Please contact immigration@uga.edu so that we can advise you on next steps. Also, please refer to our J-1 Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Process guide.

My visa (inside passport) has expired. I want to renew it. Must I appear in person for the interview?

No. If you are applying for a visa in the same nonimmigrant visa classification and category. Department of State (DOS) announced expansion of statutory and regulatory Provisions that allow consular officers to waive the in-person interview requirement for individuals applying to renew a visa in the same nonimmigrant visa classification and category if it hasn’t been more than 48 months since the prior visa expired. The expansion of this authority is valid until December 31, 2021. To qualify, for the visa renewal interview waiver (link is external), please contact the consulate or embassy where you will apply to confirm steps for renewing the visa.

If I transit through any airport, will I be prohibited from entering the US for 14 days?

Any foreign national who transits an airport (even without leaving the airport) will be subject to the entry restrictions set forth in this Proclamation.

My dependents will accompany me to the United States. Do they need to apply for an NIE?
If traveling with a J1, likely not. If traveling separately, probably yes. However, please contact the consulate or embassy where you will apply for visa to confirm if dependents need to apply for an NIE

Are there any current travel restrictions for Permanent Residents?

On Wednesday, April 22, 2020 the President issued a proclamation suspending the entry of certain new immigrants. Nonimmigrant visa holders including F-1 students, J-1 Exchange Visitors, H-1B, TN and O-1 workers are NOT impacted. The proclamation DOES NOT impact F-1 or J-1 Student employment options.

The proclamation DOES NOT affect U.S. green card holders, spouses and children of U.S. citizens, and EB-5 investor immigrants all of whom are exempt from the order, which is set to take effect at 11:59pm on April 23, 2020. Applications for permanent residence filed in the U.S. (adjustment of status applications) are also not affected. The proclamation ONLY impacts pending immigrant visa applications (applications for permanent residency) for persons who: were outside the U.S. on the effective date of the proclamation (04/23/2020); and who do not have an approved immigrant visa or some other already issued official travel document (such as an advance parole document).