Immigration Services Information for International Students

Overview

Immigration Services (IS) at the University of Georgia (UGA) provides immigration and visa-sponsorship information to prospective international students.

Once a student is admitted, IS creates and maintains the immigration records of international students in the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

IS will continue to provide support and regulatory guidance to students throughout their academic program.

Contact Information:

Immigration Services will send emails to student from immigration@uga.edu. It is required that you read communication from our office and respond when necessary. You should be sure to check your spam or junk mail folders to be sure that emails are not going there.

Please review the About Us section of the Immigration Services Website for more information on how to get in touch with our office.

Most requests from our office can be made through our online portal: Compass.uga.edu. Once admitted, students will be sent log in information to this portal via email.

Visa Process

INCOMING STUDENTS

Immigration Document Application:

Once admitted to the IEP, Immigration Services will work with the IEP coordinator and the student to create the necessary immigration documentation: I-20 for F-1 students or the DS-2019 for J-1 students.
An international student can also hold a different visa status, such as an H-4, A-1, J-2 and others. B-1 or B-2 tourists, or those from visa waiver countries admitted under the visa waiver program may not legally study. You may check with Immigration Services to confirm if your visa type is eligible for study.

The Immigration Services Website details the pre-arrival information and visa application steps on the Incoming International Students Page. Please become familiar with this information as you prepare to study in the US.

**Online Immigration Check-in and Mandatory Orientation:**

After you arrive in the US, you must log into Compass.uga.edu and complete the online check-in which will require you to report your local US address and upload your immigration document copies.

You will also be required to view the IEP orientation video and complete the IEP Orientation Quiz on Compass.uga.edu

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**Current International Students**

**MAINTAINING STATUS**

**Full-time study requirement:**

F-1 Students are required to take full-time coursework. Full-time coursework in the IEP is considered 5 classes per week.

F-2 visa holders are eligible for part-time classes only. This allows an F-2 student to take one to four classes per week.

J-2 visa holders are eligible for part-time of full-time classes.

Too many absences from a class may put your immigration status at risk. If you miss more than 20% of your classes you will be out of status, and your SEVIS record will be terminated. Additionally, if you fail your classes in three consecutive sessions, you are not meeting US Immigration’s requirement to make satisfactory progress, which can also result in your SEVIS record being terminated. To avoid termination of your status, you should proactively communicate with your teacher, the IEP coordinator, and Immigration Advisor so they can assist you.

**Vacation:**

Students participating in the Intensive English Program will be eligible for an annual vacation after completing the minimum instructional time equivalent to an academic year: 36 weeks of instructional time.
Each session of the Intensive English Program lasts 8 weeks with approximately 10 days between each session. Therefore, an IEP F-1 Student must complete 4 regular length sessions to earn annual vacation.

Maximum allowable time for the annual vacation is One Term; 8 weeks of break. The student must be registered for the session immediately following the 8 week break. A student who has studied in the IEP for four (or more) consecutive sessions can apply to take a break in the next session. During this break, the student can remain in the US, but does not have to take (or pay for) any classes.

To be eligible for a break you must:

- Study for 4 or more consecutive (back-to-back) sessions in the IEP (36 weeks of instructional time)
- Apply to the IEP Office to request a break
- Purchase medical insurance to cover you during the break
- Be registered for the IEP for the following session. Your break session cannot be your last session in the IEP

For example, a student who begins in January 2022 can do the following

- Spring 1—study full time
- Spring 2—study full time
- Summer—study full time
- Fall 1—study full time (and apply to take a break in fall 2)
- Fall 2—take a break
- Spring 1—MUST return to study full time in the IEP

You do not have to take a break in your 5th session, but you can if you want to!

**Travel:**

F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents must have a signature from an Immigration Services advisor on the form I-20 or DS-2019 before they depart the U.S. To obtain the signature, please go to compass.uga.edu, log in, and submit the Replace I-20 Document (for F-1 visa holders) or Replace DS-2019 Document (for J-1 visa holders) form. Select "travel" as the reason for the replacement document.

International travel can be unpredictable and pose some risk. 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.

**Employment:**

IEP students are allowed to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week) on Campus for a UGA Department (for example, the UGA dining hall). Working off-campus is not permitted and doing so will cause your immigration status to be terminated.
Working in the US will require you to have a Social Security Number. Information on how to obtain this can be found here.

**Extending, Transferring, Changing Levels, Departing the US:**

Changes in a student’s academic program may require updates to your immigration documents. Any changes should be reported within 10 days on [Compass.uga.edu](https://compass.uga.edu).

Additionally, at the end of your academic program, there is a limited grace period in which you can request to change to a new academic level, transfer your immigration record, or choose to depart the US.

The grace period for F-1 Students is 60 days and the grace period for J-1 students is 30 days.

Please review the details of these processes, as well as other helpful information, in the [Current International Student section](https://diverse.ugahero.org/current-international-student/) of the Immigration Services website.