

J1 Visa Immigration Basics

# Maintaining Your Immigration Status

1. **Pursue a full course of study**

International students must enroll full-time (at least 12 credit hours for undergraduates) in fall and spring semesters.

***Always consult the ISSS Office before dropping a class.*** *Professors and other staff may not be familiar with immigration regulations.*

1. **Never work without proper work permission**

International Students MUST have authorization from the ISSS Office (and in some cases, USCIS) before working on or off campus. This includes on-campus jobs, internships, practicums, and student teaching. There are NO exceptions!

1. **Keep your passport valid at least 6 months into the future**
2. **Keep your DS-2019 valid at all times**

Your DS-2019 should not expire before you have completed your exchange program. Be sure to know your Program End Date and make an appointment to speak with ISSS if your plans change. The DS-2019 should always reflect the correct information (name, major, school, etc.) Report any changes of name, address, and program dates to ISSS within 10 days.

1. **Do not overstay your visa**

Upon completion of your degree, exchange students have a 30-day grace period to either depart the U.S., begin Academic Training, or transfer to another program in the same Exchange Visitor category.

1. **Have your DS-2019 signed prior to traveling outside the U.S.**

The ISSS Office must sign your DS-2019 before you travel outside the U.S.

1. **All documents should match**

Your name should be the same on your Passport, DS-2019, I-94, Visa, Geneseo ID, SSN, credit card, etc.

1. **Carry Health Insurance**

As a student on J1 Exchange, you are required to carry health insurance at all times. You have been automatically enrolled in the SUNY United Health Care (UHC) plan. You will receive an email from UHC with directions to download your card.

# Immigration Terms

**SEVIS:** Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. The internet-based system that holds up to date information on SEVP certified schools, F1 and M1 visa holders, Department of State Certified Schools, and J1 visa holders. SEVIS is how Universities communicate up to date information to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and US Department of State (DoS).

**SEVP:** The Student and Exchange Visitor Program. SEVP manages SEVIS on behalf of DHS and DoS.

**I-20:** The document issued to F1 Visa students after admission to a university and payment of the deposit. This document proves eligibility for issuance of an F1 visa.

**DS-2019:** Similar to an I-20, the document issued to short-term exchange students and visiting scholars that proves eligibility for a J1 visa.

**I-94:** An electronic record of your entry in to the U.S. as well as your departure. Your I-94 can be viewed or printed by entering your passport information at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov

**RO/ARO:** Responsible Officer and Alternate Responsible Officer; The school officials that are authorized to enter information in SEVIS. At SUNY Geneseo, the RO and ARO are Jennifer Kenyon and Sam Cardamone.

**Visa:** A document that you obtain at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy that is usually glued or printed in to your passport and tells the Port of Entry your purpose in the United States. The visa must be valid at the time you enter the U.S., but can expire during your studies as long as your passport and DS-2019 have not expired.

**I-901 Fee/SEVIS Fee:** Currently, $200 paid to SEVP before applying for your visa. It is strongly recommended that you print and keep a copy of your I-901 fee receipt with your DS-2019.

**D/S:** Duration of Stay; D/S means that you may remain in the U.S. as long as you maintain J1 status by pursuing a full course of study and pursuing your program objectives. You are allowed to remain in the U.S. up to 30 days after your program end date.

**USCIS:** U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. The government office that reviews certain applications including work authorization.

# Work Authorization

## On-Campus Employment

All J1 students are permitted to work on-campus up to 20 hours per week. If hired, you must apply for a social security card. Students may apply for an SSN starting ten days after entering the U.S. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain an SSN as soon as possible after being hired for an on-campus job, although the ISSS Office will provide at least one trip per semester to the SSN office.

## Off-Campus Employment

Off-campus employment, or Academic Training, is allowed after the completion of your program. The Academic Training must begin within 30 days of your program end, and must be recommended by your program or academic advisor. Please see ISSS for more information.

# Travel

Students may travel outside the U.S. during vacation times if they carry the following documents:

1. Valid Passport
2. Valid Visa
3. Valid DS-2019 with signature from the ISSS office

Valid Passport: Your passport must be valid at least 6 months in the future. If your passport will expire within 6 months, please contact your embassy or consulate in the U.S. for instructions to renew it. Passports can be renewed within the U.S. or you can travel home to renew your passport.

Valid Visa: Your visa stamp must be valid at the time that you enter the U.S. Your visa may expire during your studies and this is not a problem. However, if you plan to travel outside the U.S. and your visa has expired it must be renewed before you return to the U.S. Visas cannot be renewed from within the U.S. They must be renewed at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the U.S.

Valid DS-2019 with signature: Your DS-2019 should **not** expire during your studies. Be sure to find and remember your “program end date” and be aware of it. If you change your plans, the date must be updated BEFORE the program end date. To travel outside the U.S., you must also have a signature on the your DS-2019 that is less than six months old. Please see an adviser in ISSS if you plan to travel.

***Additional recommended documents:*** Geneseo Student ID card, a good standing letter, a current financial statement, and enrollment verification or an unofficial transcript for good measure. **If you will be renewing your visa during your travels, you must carry a current financial statement and an official transcript.**

# Tips and Reminders

1. **Always maintain your J1 status**
   1. Register in at least 12 credits each semester. Attend class and complete your courses. Do not drop courses without consulting ISSS first!
   2. Get your DS-2019 signed (if needed) before leaving the U.S.
   3. **NEVER** work without authorization
   4. Update ISSS with any changes to your address, name, major, minor, or program dates
   5. Carry health insurance
2. **Never assume that other students, faculty or staff outside ISSS, or the internet understand your immigration status.** While others may be well-intentioned, it is not their job to know the ins and outs of your legal status. Don’t get yourself in to trouble because “my friend said….”! Always ask an advisor in ISSS if there is something you do not understand or are not sure about. We are here to help you!!
3. **Always keep extra copies of your immigration documents**

We keep copies of your documents in ISSS, but we recommend that you also keep copies of your DS-2019, passport, visa, I-901 fee payment, SSN, and financial statement in a safe place.

1. **Keep the contact information of your advisor in ISSS**
2. **Get involved on campus!** It’s the best way to meet new people!
3. **Don’t be afraid to speak up or ask questions in class!** Professors in the U.S. expect students to ask questions and participate. It is not considered rude. It is encouraged! If you find yourself confused about an assignment or subject, make an appointment to speak with your professor after class or during office hours. Don’t wait until it is too late!

**It is your responsibility to maintain your legal J1 status in the United States.**

**ISSS provides information and guidance, but it is your responsibility to know and follow the rules.**

**It is always better to ask FIRST if you are not sure!**

**We are here to help!**

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