

# 2020 J-1 STUDENT IMMIGRATION GUIDE

[oia.osu.edu](http://oia.osu.edu)



# OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### **J-1 IMMIGRATION INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

J-1 international students are in the unique situation of being required to learn what it means to be a Buckeye and a proud member of the Ohio State community while also learning and abiding by the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations pertaining to non-immigrant student status.

Maintaining legal immigration status is very important and is dependent on the student understanding and meeting certain requirements as outlined by both the university and the U.S. government. Failure to maintain lawful J-1 student status will result in the suspension of all benefits associated with J-1 status, such as on-campus employment and academic training, and could even lead to deportation from the United States.

Maintaining lawful J-1 status is ultimately the student's responsibility! However, we want to ensure that each student has the tools and resources necessary to succeed at Ohio State, while avoiding any problems with their immigration status. Please note that the following information is not all-inclusive and students should always consult with an immigration coordinator whenever in doubt.

#### **Office of International Affairs (OIA) International Students and Scholars**

The Ohio State University  
140 Enarson Classroom Building  
2009 Millikin Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43210  
614-292-6101 – Phone  
614-292-4725 – Fax  
iss@osu.edu – Email

International students can schedule a virtual appointment with an immigration coordinator Monday – Friday, 1 – 4 p.m. at [go.osu.edu/oiaadvising](http://go.osu.edu/oiaadvising).

**Note: Please read this guide carefully for important information related to your visa status.**

## **J-1 STATUS MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST**

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To maintain lawful status, a J-1 student **MUST**:

- Keep their passport valid for at least six months into the future
- Enroll in a full course of study during the academic year
- Notify OIA of their local address upon arrival and within ten days of any change in address
- Maintain required health insurance coverage, including insurance for any J-2 dependents
- Extend the Form DS-2019 before its expiration, if necessary
- Obtain approval from OIA prior to reducing enrollment, withdrawing or taking a leave of absence
- Consult OIA prior to any switch in major or degree level
- Limit on-campus employment to a maximum of 20 hours per week and obtain work authorization in advance by submitting the J-1 On-Campus Employment Form to an immigration coordinator
- Not engage in off-campus work unless specifically authorized by an immigration coordinator at OIA. Know the employment options.

## **J-1 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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### **Keeping Documents in a Safe Place**

Students must make a copy of all important travel and immigration documents and keep them in a safe and easily accessible location. In addition, students must keep all original Form DS-2019s. A student may receive several Form DS-2019s during his or her stay in the United States, and it is common for a U.S. government agency to request copies of all Form DS-2019s issued when applying for a benefit or even another visa. Therefore, students should not discard any previously issued immigration documents.

### **Passport Validity**

A student must keep his or her passport valid for at least six months into the future. The student should contact his or her country's consulate or embassy ([www.embassy.org/embassies/](http://www.embassy.org/embassies/)) for instructions on extending their passport while in the United States.

### **Full-time Enrollment Requirement**

OIA is required to report each student's enrollment to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by updating the student's individual SEVIS

(Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) record every term. In order to maintain lawful J-1 non-immigrant student status, international students must be enrolled for a full course of study during the academic year. Full-time enrollment is required during autumn and spring semesters. All students will automatically be issued a vacation term for each summer semester, unless it is the student’s final term of study or the first term of enrollment in which the student is required to enroll full time.

### Full-time Enrollment

Undergraduate Students	12 credit hours
Graduate Students with or without a Graduate Associate position (GAA, GTA, GRA)	8 credit hours
Graduate Students with or without a Graduate Associate position - Summer	4 credit hours
Graduate Students with a Fellowship	12 credit hours
Graduate Students with a Fellowship during summer	6 credit hours
Post-Candidacy Graduate Students (with or without a GA)	3 credit hours

In addition, only 3 online credit hours count toward the full-time enrollment requirement. \*\*Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been adjustments to the online credit maximum. For the most up-to-date information, email an immigration coordinator at [iss@osu.edu](mailto:iss@osu.edu).

### Local U.S. Address Reporting Requirement

Students must inform OIA of the local address where he or she resides in order to comply with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement requirements. Students must update their address within 10 days of moving to a new location. To update address information, visit [buckeyelink.osu.edu](http://buckeyelink.osu.edu) and click on “Change Address.” Update the “Current” address with your local Columbus address. Follow this format:

*Line 1:* 123 Buckeye Rd.

*Line 2:* Apt. 6

*Line 3:* Columbus, OH 43221

Please note that students **MAY NOT** use a P.O. Box or campus office address.

## Health Insurance Requirement

All J program participants (both J-1 students and J-2 dependents) are required to have health insurance coverage as mandated by the U.S. Department of State. **To meet this requirement, the university policy requires that students have health insurance through the Ohio State Student Health Insurance plan.** For more information about insurance, view the following website: [www.shi.osu.edu](http://www.shi.osu.edu).

Please note that this requirement does not prevent J participants from ALSO maintaining their current coverage in their home country if they choose to do so. Individuals with preexisting health conditions are particularly encouraged to do this as most U.S. health insurance plans place restrictions on coverage of preexisting health problems. **Coverage by the Ohio State Health Insurance plan is still required.**

## Extension of Form DS-2019

Students must obtain an extension of the Form DS-2019 and J-1 status prior to the program end date noted on the current Form DS-2019. Students must submit a program extension form and proof of continued funding to an immigration coordinator. If the student is not approved for an extension, and does not obtain a new Form DS-2019 **prior to the current program end date**, he or she is in violation of his or her J-1 non-immigrant status.

## Reduced Course Load

The federal regulations list very few situations in which an exception to the full course of study or typical full course enrollment requirement may be deemed appropriate. A student must meet with an immigration coordinator and seek approval **PRIOR** to reducing the course load below the required minimum. If the proper procedure is not followed, the student will lose lawful J-1 student status. A student authorized for a reduced course load based on the following options must resume a full course of study at the start of the next available semester, excluding an authorized vacation term.

### Academic Difficulties

A J-1 student may only be authorized to reduce his or her course load to no less than six credit hours once due to academic difficulties. The following reasons are acceptable academic reasons for a student to reduce his or her course load:

- Placement an inappropriate course level
- Initial difficulty with the English language
- Initial difficulty with reading requirements
- Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods

### Final Term of Study

- To complete course of study in student's final term

### Medical Reason

- Illness or medical condition

In the case of a reduced course load request based on a medical necessity, the request serves the purpose of keeping the department and the Graduate School informed of a student's request to OIA to reduce or withdraw from a full course of study for a particular term. In a separate review process, the student must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy or licensed clinical psychologist to OIA to substantiate the illness or medical condition.

## **Travel**

J-1 students may choose to travel outside the United States during their course of study at Ohio State for the annual vacation term, during school breaks or for a long weekend trip to other countries, such as Canada. J-1 students may leave the United States at any time. However, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that he or she has all the required documentation to return to the United States in valid J-1 status:

- Required:
  - Passport valid at least six months into the future
  - Valid J-1 visa
  - Valid Form DS-2019 with a travel endorsement signed by an immigration coordinator
- Recommended:
  - Copy of financial support documentation
  - Enrollment verification (copy of online advising report)

If your visa will not be valid upon re-entry, you will need to renew your J-1 visa with the documents listed above. Students should also obtain an official transcript and/or letter from their academic adviser as enrollment verification.

To obtain a travel signature a student must complete the electronic form at [go.osu.edu/j1travelsig](http://go.osu.edu/j1travelsig). A travel signature is necessary, as it indicates that the student is in good standing at Ohio State and eligible to return. **The signature is valid for one year.**

*Please note that any personal or business-related travel must adhere to university health and safety guidelines during this pandemic.*

## Employment

A student holding lawful J-1 status is in the United States for the primary purpose of engaging in a full course of study. The student must obtain written permission from OIA prior to commencing with any type of employment. Unauthorized employment is a violation of J-1 non-immigrant status. To qualify for employment, students must demonstrate eligibility based on one of the following options:

### On-campus employment

J-1 students may work on the premises of the campus that issued the Form DS-2019 for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session. During official term breaks and annual summer vacation terms, J-1 students may work up to 38 hours per week as long as the student plans to enroll full time the following term.

**Any on-campus employment must be reported to and approved by OIA prior to the employment commencing.** This includes any on-premises employment such as campus dining, library work, etc., Graduate Assistantship (GTA, GRA, GAA) or Fellowship (with work component).

On-campus employment may only be authorized for up to 12 months at a time. Employment may continue beyond one year; however, the employment authorization must be updated every 12 months.

To report on-campus employment, the student and his or her employer must complete the J-1 On-Campus Employment Form, which may be downloaded from the OIA website.

Reminder: A J-1 student may NOT engage in on-campus employment after completing their course of study (commencement date) or after the exchange program end date, unless the student has first been approved for academic training by an immigration coordinator.

### Academic Training

Academic training is work, training and experience that is directly related to a student's field of study. A J-1 student may engage in academic training during and/or after the completion of study, part time or full time, unpaid or paid, for a maximum duration of 18 months (post-doctoral students may receive authorization for a maximum of 36 months), as long as he or she meets all eligibility requirements. **The student must apply, be approved, and have obtained an updated Form DS-2019 prior to beginning**

**academic training and no later than the end date of the program (graduation date).**

Off-campus employment based on economic hardship

A J-1 student may be eligible to engage in temporary off-campus work based on severe and unforeseen economic circumstances that have arisen. For more information regarding employment based on economic hardship, please contact an immigration coordinator at [iss@osu.edu](mailto:iss@osu.edu). Strict eligibility requirements apply, and students must receive approval from OIA prior to commencing with any type of off-campus employment. Total on-campus and off-campus employment may not exceed 20 hours per week while school is in session.

**Change of Program and/ or Educational Level**

A J-1 student is admitted to participate in the J-1 exchange visitor program for a specific program objective. The student must complete one degree level prior to changing to another degree level. Significant changes to the original program objective may not be permissible under current U.S. Department of State regulations.

Change of Program

J-1 students must consult with an immigration coordinator prior to changing the major area of study. If appropriate, and the change of major request is granted, the student will obtain an updated Form DS-2019. However, this is not an automatic process, and it is the student's responsibility to inform OIA and ensure that the immigration documents are up-to-date.

Matriculation: Change of Educational Level

A student must contact an immigration coordinator for instructions as soon as he or she has decided on a change of academic level and no later than the graduating semester. The student must receive an updated Form DS-2019 prior to the start date of the new level of study. This is not an automatic process, and it is the student's responsibility to inform OIA and ensure that all documents are up to date. Matriculation options: Bachelor's to Master's, Bachelor's to Doctorate or Master's to Doctorate.

## **Grace Period**

J-1 status holders have a 30-day grace period to depart the United States following the completion of study (commencement date) or completion of academic training. A student may travel within the United States during the grace period, but **MAY NOT** leave the United States and return on the basis of the current J-1 SEVIS record.

## **Transfer to Another U.S. Institution**

For immigration purposes, a student is considered to be a transfer student when he or she leaves one U.S. institution (before or after earning a degree) to begin attendance at another U.S. institution while following the proper transfer procedures as outlined by the U.S. Federal Regulations.

**Please note that this does not refer to the transfer of academic credits.**

A student must initiate the process of transferring his or her J-1 SEVIS record prior to completing the course of study at Ohio State. The student should contact an immigration coordinator at least 30 days before the end of the program of study at Ohio State for instructions and options for transferring to another U.S. institution.

## **Early Withdrawal or Leave of Absence**

A student must inform OIA if he or she decides to leave Ohio State and not return to his or her studies for the coming term. OIA is required to report on each student's enrollment to DHS by updating the student's individual SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) record every term. As such, OIA is required by law to update student's J-1 non-immigrant record if he or she is not going to be enrolled due to withdrawal from the university or leaving for a prolonged period of time (for example, military service). Informing the academic adviser is not sufficient. The student must inform OIA.

## **Change of Non-Immigrant Status**

As soon as a J-1 student decides to change status, her or she should contact an immigration coordinator for eligibility requirements and instructions. The student must not stop attending classes without consulting with an immigration coordinator first.

## **Dependents**

J-2 dependents are currently permitted to engage in study (part time and/ or full time) without any additional authorization. A spouse or child in J-2 status may also apply for temporary employment authorization from USCIS. Please see the OIA website for additional information and instructions.

## **Sponsored Students (for example, Fulbright, LASPAU, USAID, etc.)**

J-1 students who are not sponsored by Ohio State, as stated in section number 2 on the Form DS-2019, must follow their program sponsors' instructions on maintaining lawful J-1 non-immigrant status. The immigration coordinators at OIA will assist and advise all J-1 students whenever possible; however, they CANNOT sign Form DS-2019s nor approve applications for those students NOT sponsored by Ohio State. Please plan ahead and know your sponsor's guidelines and procedures.

## **Incident Report**

The Department of State now requires that Exchange Visitor Program Sponsors report serious incidents involving J-1 students and scholars to the Office of Private Sector Exchange Administration's Academic and Government (OPA-AG) unit within 24 hours of their occurrence. In order to fulfill this obligation, OIA requests that all J-1 students and scholars sign a J-1 Incident Report Form at immigration check-in.

## **Exchange Visitor Program Emergency Hotline**

The U.S. Department of State offers a hotline available 24 hours a day for international students in emergency and urgent situations. Call toll-free at 1-866-283-9090.

## **Important Reminder**

The information contained in this handout is not all-inclusive and is only intended to educate students regarding their basic rights and responsibilities while in the U.S. on J-1 non-immigrant student status. When a student has questions, he or she should always consult the OIA website or seek advice from an immigration coordinator by email, phone through a virtual appointment. OIA is here to answer questions.

## **Additional resources**

Office of International Affairs:	<a href="http://oia.osu.edu">oia.osu.edu</a>
Department of Homeland Security:	<a href="http://dhs.gov">dhs.gov</a>
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:	<a href="http://uscis.gov">uscis.gov</a>
U.S. Customs and Border Protection:	<a href="http://cbp.gov">cbp.gov</a>
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement:	<a href="http://ice.gov">ice.gov</a>
Department of State:	<a href="http://state.gov">state.gov</a>
Safe and Healthy Buckeyes:	<a href="http://safeandhealthy.osu.edu">safeandhealthy.osu.edu</a>

## **J-1 IMMIGRATION STATUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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### **What or who is ISS?**

International Students and Scholars (ISS) is a unit within the Office of International Affairs (OIA). ISS provides advising to international students, scholars and temporary employees including assistance with immigration regulations and associated paperwork, social and cultural adjustment, and personal and financial concerns. The office also offers social and informational programs and activities.

### **What is a Form DS-2019?**

A Form DS-2019 is a certificate of eligibility form issued by a university to enable a student to apply for a visa and come to the United States to engage in a full course of study in a specific program of study. A student must report to the school that is listed on the Form DS-2019 that he or she used to enter the United States. The student must also keep the Form DS-2019 valid by keeping the information updated at all times.

### **What is an I-94?**

The Form I-94 is the official record of a student's lawful arrival into and departure from the United States. It is also the immigration document showing the status in which an individual has entered the country. Once you arrive in the United States, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

will create an electronic I-94 record for J-1 students. Please visit [www.cbp.gov/I94](http://www.cbp.gov/I94) after you arrive in the United States to print your I-94. You will need to do this each time you enter the United States.

### **What does the D/S written on the I-94 stand for?**

D/S stands for 'Duration of Status'. This notation indicates that a J-1 student is allowed to remain in the United States for the duration of his/her J-1 status (regardless of the end date on the student's J-1 visa), through the completion of his or her course of study and any subsequent educational levels or series of programs. A J-1 international student's admission stamp and I-94 should read "J-1" and "D/S" to show that the student was lawfully admitted to the U.S. in J-1 student status for the duration of his or her program of study. The student should consult with an immigration coordinator immediately if he or she notices a problem with their admission stamp or I-94.

### **What is SEVIS?**

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System is an electronic system that allows universities to issue immigration documents for F-1 students and J-1 students and scholars. It also aids the U.S. government in facilitating and upholding the integrity of international exchanges. According to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) collects, maintains and provides information so that only legitimate foreign students or exchange visitors gain entry to the United States. The result is an easily accessible information system that provides timely information to the Department of State, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Each student is issued a SEVIS ID number starting with "N," which is located on the Form DS-2019.

### **Who can sign my Form DS-2019?**

Only a designated school official (DSO) at the Office of International Affairs can sign a Form DS-2019. Immigration coordinator in our office are DSOs. Students should plan ahead and complete the electronic form at [go.osu.edu/j1travelsig](http://go.osu.edu/j1travelsig) well before their anticipated travel dates. **(For sponsored students – if the Form DS-2019 was not issued by Ohio State, the student must obtain the travel signature from the official program sponsor).**

## **Can I seek immigration advice from my department and academic advisor?**

No. The only personnel at Ohio State authorized to provide J-1 students with immigration advice are the immigration coordinators at OIA. No one else at the university has access to the immigration record nor has the authority to give immigration advice. It is the student's responsibility to know what the international student requirements and regulations are, and, as such, students should always consult with an immigration coordinator at OIA if in doubt.

## **A student asks, "My friend says he was able to do this last year, so can I do the same, without consulting OIA?"**

No. Friends may give advice on adjusting to the United States, Columbus, and even to classes; however, due to the complexity of ever changing immigration regulations students should not rely on friend's advice concerning anything that may impact his or her own lawful J-1 status. In addition, OIA recommends being wary of immigration information on the internet. Contact an immigration coordinator at OIA to confirm the validity of this type of information.

## **When does a student need to contact an immigration coordinator?**

Below are some topics for which a student may contact OIA:

- Address change
- Program extension
- Course load reduction
- Travel signature
- Off-campus employment (CPT/OPT)
- Adding or removing a dependent
- Change of education level
- Change of immigration status
- Transferring out of Ohio State
- Early withdrawal or leave of absence
- Loss of an immigration document, such as the Form DS-2019
- Academic probation, suspension or expulsion from the university



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