

Maintaining Your J1 Student Immigration Status

Office of International Students and Scholars
Eastern Illinois University

PLEASE NOTE: This information is primarily for J-1 students for whom the sponsoring agency is Eastern Illinois University. If your DS-2019 was produced by another agency, you should be contacting that agency for immigration advice.

How to Maintain Your J-1 Immigration Status in the U.S.

1. Report to the OISS within 30 days of the DS-2019 Start Date

It is REQUIRED BY LAW that you come to the International Students and Scholars Office within the start date of your DS-2019 whether it is your first time in the U.S. or if you are transferring from another U.S. institution. The start date is listed in Item 3 of your DS-2019.

2. Always Enroll Full Time

J-1 students must maintain full-time student status each semester until they receive their degrees. For undergraduate students, full-time means you must register and complete at least 12 semester hours each semester; as a graduate student, you must simply be registered. There are some rare exceptions to this regulation however, please talk to the OISS staff BEFORE you drop below full time enrollment or take a leave of absence.

3. Update your Local Address

You must do this by updating your local address in "PAWS" AND by notifying the OISS. You are required to use a physical residential address. (A P.O. Box or an Eastern Illinois University departmental address is not acceptable.)

4. Maintain the Required Health Insurance

The U.S. immigration regulations require that all J-1 exchange visitors and their J-2 dependents maintain a specified level of health and accident insurance. The minimum levels are:

- 1) Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- 2) A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness
- 3) Repatriation of remains expenses in the amount of \$7500
- 4) Medical evacuation expenses in the amount of \$10,000

5. Keep your Immigration Documents VALID and CURRENT

You should make photocopies of your immigration documents and keep the copies and originals in a safe place. Photocopy:

- the passport pages with your personal information and picture
- the passport page containing the U.S. visa stamp
- both sides of your I-94 Form
- your DS-2019

a) Keep your passport valid

You should keep your passport valid for at least six months in to the future while you are studying in the U.S. Consult your country's consulate or embassy in the U.S. to renew your passport. You can find the contact information for your consulate at: <http://travel.state.gov>.

b) J-1 Extension

The end date of your immigration status is written on your DS-2019 as the end date in item #3 (not the end date of your visa stamp). If you are unable to complete your course of study by that time, you must apply for an extension BEFORE the DS-2019 end date. You must file your program extension with the OISS or your own sponsor at least two months before it expires.

6. Discuss Transfer Plans with an OISS advisor

If you plan to transfer to or from another school or sponsoring agency, or to go on to another degree program at another school, the OISS and your sponsoring agency will need to complete the immigration transfer procedure. Permission to transfer is granted only if the transfer contributes to the realization of the exchange visitor's original purpose in coming to the U.S.

7. Never Work Off-campus Without Prior Authorization

Employment opportunities for international students in the U.S. are restricted by law. In general there are two types of employment: on campus and off-campus employment.

On-campus Employment: Enrolled J-1 students holding a DS-2019 from Eastern Illinois University are permitted to work on campus for 20 hours per week during academic year and 40 hours per week during summer and winter breaks. If your DS-2019 was produced by another agency, that agency must give you permission to work on the Eastern Illinois University campus.

Off-campus Employment: Off-campus employment is any type of work or services performed in exchange for money, tuition, fees, books, supplies, room, food or any other benefit that is not on the Eastern Illinois University campus. An authorization letter is required **BEFORE** any off campus work is allowed. The authorization letter must be written by the institution or agency who produced your DS-2019 (Eastern Illinois University or another agency).

Off-campus employment options for J-1 Students Academic Training:

J-1 students in degree program are permitted an overall limit of 18 months academic training within their field of study.

J-1 Off-Campus Employment Based on Economic Hardship

If a J-1 student needs employment during the academic year due to financial hardship arising from unforeseen circumstances, the program sponsor may authorize it. Such employment cannot interfere with fulltime pursuit of the exchange visitor's program objectives. Written permission from the program sponsor is required for on-campus as well as off-campus work.

8. Notify OISS when you leave the U.S. or change visa status

When you finish your program and leave the U.S. permanently or change to another visa status (for instance if an employer plans to do an H1B visa application for you after you graduate).

9. Traveling outside of the United States

Re-entering the U.S. after a Temporary Absence

To re-enter the U.S., you need to have the following documents:

- valid passport (except Canadians unless entering from outside the Western Hemisphere)
- valid J-1 or J-2 visa stamp (except Canadians)
- current DS-2019 with a valid signature (see DS-2019 Endorsement)
- proof of financial support (bank statements and/or scholarship, financial aid or TA/RA letter)
- proof of enrollment (certificate of enrollment or transcript).

Traveling to Canada

Before traveling to Canada, come to OISS to check visa requirements. You can re-enter the U.S. from Canada with an expired U.S. visa stamp if **ALL** of the following apply to you:

- You have a valid passport with an expired non-immigrant visa stamp, a valid DS-2019, and you keep your I-94 card when leaving the U.S. and entering Canada
- Your visit to Canada will be less than 30 days
- You do NOT apply for a U.S. visa stamp while in Canada
- You are NOT a national of one of the following countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan, Cuba, or North Korea.

Renewing Your Visa Stamp

If you or your dependents need to renew your visas in order to re-enter the U.S., you must apply in person to a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. Applicants are normally required to submit the following documentation:

- valid passport
- current passport-size photographs
- valid Form DS-2019
- proof of financial support (bank statements and/or scholarship, financial aid or TA/RA letter)
- proof of enrollment (certificate of enrollment or transcript).

DS-2019 Endorsement

You need to have a valid signature from OISS staff (or from your sponsoring agency if your DS-2019 is not produced by Eastern Illinois University) on your DS-2019 in order to re-enter the U.S. The signature is valid for 12 months.

J-2 Dependents

An exchange visitor's spouse or child enters the U.S. in J-2 status and may stay for as long as the J-1 person is authorized to remain. For traveling and re-entering the U.S., J-2 dependents need all the same documents as the J-1 would need as outlined above including a DS-2019 that is produced with the J-2's biographical information.

J-2 Work Permission

A person in J-2 status may apply to the BCIS for permission to accept employment. Permission will be granted only if the employment is designed to support the spouse and child or children, not the J-1 exchange visitor. Pick up the application packet at the OISS. The processing time for work permit at the BCIS Service Center is approximately three months.

Understanding Your “Immigration Status” Visa Stamp

The visa stamp in your passport was obtained at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad and is used for entering the U.S. The visa stamp functions as a key to enter the U.S. Once you are here in the U.S., you do not need to keep your visa stamp current. It is only when you are leaving the U.S. and need to return that you must be sure that you have a valid U.S. visa stamp to re-enter the U.S. [**Note:** Canadian citizens are not required to have a passport (if entering the U.S. from within the Western hemisphere) or visa stamp, but they must show their DS-2019 and proof of Canadian citizenship at the U.S. port of entry.]

J-1 Visa

A J-1 visa stamp is issued to a participant in an Exchange Visitor Program approved by the U.S. Information Agency. Participants can be in one of a variety of categories, including student, research scholar, and professor. The agency issuing the DS-2019 is called the sponsor.

Immigration Status

Immigration status is granted at the U.S. port of entry. You have J-1 student status. In most situations your visa type and immigration status are the same, unless you have changed your immigration status after entering the U.S. People in J-1 status who are subject to the "two-year home country residency requirement" may not change to any other nonimmigrant status within the U.S. Exchange visitors who enter the U.S. in one exchange visitor category, such as "student," are rarely permitted to change to another category, such as "research scholar".