



# Cornell University International Students and Scholars Office

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## Maintaining Your J1 Student Immigration Status

**PLEASE NOTE:** This information is primarily for J-1 students for whom the sponsoring agency is Cornell University (holding a Cornell DS-2019). 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.

To maintain your legal status in the United States as a J-1 student, you must remember these important requirements:

- 1) **Report to the ISSO** within 30 days of the DS-2019 start date
- 2) **Always enroll FULL-TIME** during the academic year
- 3) **Update your local address** within 10 days of moving
- 4) **Maintain the health insurance required for J-1 exchange visitors**
- 5) **Keep your immigration documents VALID and CURRENT:**
  - a) KEEP YOUR PASSPORT VALID
  - b) Apply for an EXTENSION at the ISSO BEFORE the end date in Item 3 of your DS-2019
- 6) **If you plan to transfer to another school**, or to go on to another degree at another school, come in to the ISSO to discuss the immigration status transfer.
- 7) **NEVER work off-campus without PRIOR authorization**
- 8) **Notify the ISSO when you leave the U.S. permanently** or when you change your visa status.
- 9) If you TRAVEL outside the United States, be **SURE to have the proper re-entry documents**

### 1. Report to the ISSO 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 credits each semester; as a graduate student, you must simply be registered. There are some rare exceptions to this regulation however, please talk to the ISSO 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 "Just the Facts" AND notifying the ISSO. You are required to use a physical residential address and not a PO Box or a Cornell department address. You can update your address on our website at:  
<http://www.isso.cornell.edu/about/addresschange.php>

### 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

**All of the above are covered by the Cornell student health insurance plan** (you do have to add any J-2 dependents to the plan or cover them by an equivalent health insurance plan).

### 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 ISSO or your own sponsor at least two months before it expires. Pick up an J-1 Program Extension packet from the ISSO to begin the process.

### 6. Discuss Transfer Plans with an ISSO 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 ISSO 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. Come in to the ISSO to discuss the transfer process.

### 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 Cornell 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 Cornell 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 Cornell 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 (Cornell or another agency). See the staff in the ISSO for advice and assistance.

### 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. For postdoctoral training the overall limit is 36 months.

### **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 full-time 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 the ISSO 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), come to the ISSO to notify us of your plans.

### **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). You can download a certificate of enrollment from the registrar's web site at: <http://certification.cornell.edu>

#### **Traveling to Canada**

Before traveling to Canada, come to the ISSO to check visa requirements and to pick up a Canadian visitor visa application if one is required (or on the web at <http://cicnet.ci.gc.ca>). 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). You can download a certificate of enrollment from the registrar's web site at: <http://certification.cornell.edu>

### **DS-2019 Endorsement**

You need to have a valid signature from ISSO staff (or from your sponsoring agency if your DS-2019 is not produced by Cornell) 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 ISSO. 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 non-immigrant 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 "researcher."

## **Immigration Questions? Come visit us at the ISSO.**

**If at any point you have questions about your immigration status or plans you have that may be impacted by immigration regulations, please contact the ISSO. We have the most current and accurate immigration information and we are dedicated to helping you achieve your educational goals.**

**ISSO, B-50 Caldwell Hall, 255-5243, FAX: 255-2778  
Advising Hours:, Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.: 9-12:00 & 1:00-4:30; Wednesday 1:00-4:30**