



IMPORTANT INFORMATION
for INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

DECEMBER 18, 2023

- **ISSS HOLIDAY WISHES**
- **REMINDER: LIMITATION ON ONLINE CLASSES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**
- **OBTAINING A TRAVEL SIGNATURE ON AN I-20 OR DS-2019 BEFORE INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL**
- **UPDATES AND REMINDERS**

ISSS HOLIDAY WISHES

Your friends at Rutgers Global wish you a happy and healthy holiday season. We are proud of your hard work, learning, and success as we come to the end of this semester. We hope you find joy in whatever makes you happy during the winter recess, and we wish you a safe and prosperous New Year.

REMINDER: LIMITATION ON ONLINE CLASSES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The Department of Homeland Security's COVID-19 emergency related flexibility allowing international students to take additional online courses has expired as of May 2023. This means that there is a limit to how many credits of online courses F-1 visa holding international students can take as part of their full-time credit load each semester. All F-1 students must enroll for a full course of study every fall and spring semester until they complete their program. Summer enrollment for continuing students is optional and is not subject to this requirement.

Per F-1 regulations, no more than one online/distance education class or 3-credits per semester may count toward the full course of study requirement in the fall and spring terms. An online/distance education class is defined as one which does not require physical attendance at Rutgers University to complete the course and does not have some in-person component associated with it (e.g., meetings, exams, presentations, etc.)

Per J-1 regulations for exchange visitors, no more than one online/distance education class per semester may count toward the full course of study requirement in the fall and spring terms. Students on approved Academic Training may participate remotely no more than 40% of their program (e.g., two out of five days per week) when their host organizations have instituted partial remote policies, and their sponsor has approved their hybrid program participation.

For Undergraduate Students:

3 online credits + 9 in-person/hybrid credits is considered acceptable. Students may take additional online courses after they meet this requirement.

For Graduate Students:

3 online credits + 6 in-person/hybrid credits is considered acceptable. Students may take additional online courses after they meet this requirement.

Some graduate programs may have different definitions of full-time study. In these cases, no more than one online/distance education class or 3 credits per semester may count toward the full course of study requirement in the fall and spring terms.

If an F-1 or J-1 student needs only one course to complete their program of study in their final semester, that course must be an in-person/hybrid course. F-1 and J-1 students may not enroll in only one online course during their final semester.

For more information, please refer to our [Full Course of Study Requirement](#) page.

OBTAINING A TRAVEL SIGNATURE ON AN I-20 OR DS-2019 BEFORE INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

If you are planning to travel internationally during the upcoming holidays, please exercise caution and review the [Travel and Visa Information webpage](#) for further detailed travel guidance, resources, and tips. The travel signature on the I-20 or DS-2019 is valid for 12 months (6 months for students on OPT) and confirms that the student is in valid legal status and eligible to return to the United States to resume their programs.

APPLYING FOR A TRAVEL SIGNATURE

1. Visit the [Travel Signature Request Procedure](#) page on our website. **Check your I-20 or DS-2019 to see when it was last signed for travel. If you have received a travel signature within 12 months of your anticipated return to the United States, you do not need a new signature at this time.** Visit the travel signature page on our website for guidance on whether you need a new travel signature on your I-20 or DS-2019.
2. **Navigate to the Travel section in the RGlobal Portal and complete the [Travel Signature Request E-Form](#).**
3. **Your document will be ready within 5 business days.** We will email you an I-20 or DS-2019 that has been digitally signed for travel. The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has confirmed permanent acceptability of electronically-issued I-20 and DS-2019 documents. Be sure to print and sign your new I-20 or DS-2019, as you will need to show a paper copy upon re-entry.
4. **Report International Travel.** It is important for ISSS to understand the current location and international travel of our students to best assist you in maintaining your F-1/J-1 status. Any time you have international travel planned (departing and/or entering the US), we ask that you report this to us via the **International Travel Plans e-form** in the [RGlobal portal](#) (found under Travel & Location Information). This e-form is for informative purposes only, so you may submit it with recent international travel plans as needed in advance, at the time of travel, or after. It is separate from the existing [Travel](#)

[Signature Request E-form](#) referenced above in Step 2.

UPDATES AND REMINDERS

REDUCED CREDIT/COURSE LOAD – SPRING 2024 DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024

To maintain legal status, all F-1 and J-1 students must pursue a full course of study at all times. This means being registered for a full credit load (12 credits for undergraduates and 9 credits for graduate students). There are cases, however, in which regulations consider a student to be pursuing a full course of study even though he or she is NOT actually registered for a full credit load. For example, undergraduates who only need 1 or 2 classes to complete their program, or graduate students who have completed all coursework but are still conducting thesis or dissertation research, might be pursuing a full course of study even though not registered for 9 credits.

If you will be registered for less than a full-time credit load in Spring 2024, you MUST submit a "Reduced Credit/Course Load" e-form to ISSS using the [RGlobal portal](#). You need approval from our office for less than full-time enrollment in any semester. The form can be completed online and will require your graduate program director/academic dean's approval. Please review our website for instructions and information about the process to submit this form. The deadline for submitting the form is **Friday, February 9**.

Please check the [University's academic calendar](#) for the appropriate add/drop dates for the last date to drop classes without a "W" grade.

Bear in mind that it takes 3-4 days to process the form after receipt and we cannot guarantee timely processing of forms received after the deadline. This could mean loss of legal status and you will need to leave the country or apply for a reinstatement process with the government. Remember, the "Reduced Credit/Course Load" e-form can be submitted at any time before the deadline, even before the semester starts.

FINAL SEMESTER?

Are you finishing your degree requirements this semester? If so, congratulations! Be sure to review our [graduating students page](#) for important guidance on your next steps. Please note that we do not recommend traveling outside the U.S. if you have already completed your degree requirements and plan to re-enter the U.S. in your current status. If you have questions about traveling during your grace period, please visit our [advising services page](#) and consult with an international student adviser.

EXTENSION OF PROGRAM

If you will not complete your program before the end date on your I-20/DS-2019, you must request an extension of your program. Please remember that any delay in completing program requirements must have been caused by compelling academic reasons (such as a change of major, change in research topic, or unexpected research problems) or medical reasons (documented by a licensed medical practitioner). Please review the [Extension of Program webpage](#) for more information about eligibility requirements and instructions.

UPCOMING OFFICE AND UNIVERSITY CLOSURES

The office will be closed for the holiday break from Monday, December 25, 2023, through Monday, January 1, 2024. We will reopen at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Take care, stay safe, and happy holidays!

Rutgers Global – ISSS

This periodic update from the Rutgers Global – International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office provides you with important information regarding your legal status, upcoming programs, and useful resources. Previous updates can be found on our [Email Notices page](#).

These notices are automatically sent to all nonimmigrant students enrolled at Rutgers–New Brunswick and Rutgers–Biomedical and Health Sciences. Most messages, however, apply only to F-1 and J-1 students. We label most messages to facilitate your identification of which messages may apply to you personally. All F-1 and J-1 students on Rutgers' visa sponsorships are required to know the information that is provided in these notices and to follow reminders and instructions that apply to their own situations.

This is NOT a subscription email list. These notices are sent periodically to an automatically generated list. If you are a permanent resident or citizen of the U.S and should not be receiving these notices, please contact ISSS:

New Brunswick

848-932-7015

iss-students@global.rutgers.edu

RBHS

973-972-6138

iss-rbhs@global.rutgers.edu