



March 10, 2021

SPRING BREAK TRAVEL ADVISORY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With spring break on the horizon, we understand some of you may be considering either domestic or international travel. As always, we would like to advise all our students to be careful and alert during any travel – domestic and international, and be prepared to face extra scrutiny at visa issuing posts and at ports of entry. As always, follow all rules and regulations to [maintain your legal status in the U.S.](#) Visit the ISSS [Travel and Visa Information](#) page for information and detailed recommendations for travel.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to be aware of current travel restrictions - not only in the U.S. but also in the country to which you are traveling. Matters can be complicated further if you must apply for a new F-1 visa stamp during your travel; consulates may be offering limited services or could close. If this happens, you may not be able to return to the U.S. for an undetermined amount of time.

Students graduating in May 2021 should also be aware that you must be physically present in the U.S. in order to apply for work authorization after graduation, called [Optional Practical Training](#). If you are not in the U.S., you cannot apply for OPT.

Before finalizing your travel plans, please review the following:

- Chancellor Brian Strom's March 2, 2021 message, [Discouraging Spring Break Travel](#).
- [Universitywide COVID-19 Information](#)
- State of New Jersey's [travel recommendations](#)
- Additional information about travel recommendations is available on the ISSS website: [COVID-19 Related International Student FAQ](#)
- [CDC Frequently Asked Questions](#) for information about testing requirements for international travel.
- [CDC website](#) for COVID-19 travel recommendations by destination.

TRAVEL INSTRUCTIONS FOR F-1 AND J-1 STUDENTS WHO MUST TRAVEL

All F-1 and J-1 students (and their F-2 and J-2 dependents) should obtain a travel signature from ISSS on their I-20 or DS-2019 form. The signature is valid for 12 months and confirms that the I-20 or DS-2019 owner is in valid legal status and eligible to return to the United States to resume their programs. If you decide to travel internationally, please follow the instructions on the ISSS website for details of the [Travel Signature Request Procedure](#).

Remember, you need a valid travel signature when you return to the U.S., not when you are leaving. In case you are outside the U.S. and need a travel signature before you re-enter, please follow the instructions on the ISSS website to request a signature on your document.

Traveling outside the U.S.

When traveling outside the United States, F-1 and J-1 visa holders must have in their possession the following documentation to ensure their ability to re-enter the U.S. and resume their activities:

- Passport valid at least six months beyond re-entry date
- Valid U.S. visa in the appropriate classification, e.g., F-1, J-1
- Valid immigration document for the status being sought: I-20 or DS-2019 with travel signature from Rutgers Global - ISSS. The travel signature is valid for 12 months.

Please check the validity dates of your I-20/DS-2019. If you are on Rutgers' visa sponsorship and you need an extension of your I-20 or DS-2019, please follow instructions on our website for an [Extension of Program](#).

For more information and recommendations for international travel, visit the ISSS website page on [Preparing for International Travel](#).

If you have any questions or concerns about traveling during spring break, please [contact an ISSS advisor](#).

APPLYING FOR OPT

While the USCIS deadline for post-completion OPT applications is 60 days following degree completion, it can take 4-5 months for USCIS to process the applications. All students applying for post-completion OPT must complete the Post-Completion OPT Workshop on [Canvas](#). F-1 students who will be graduating in May and who plan to apply for post-completion OPT should plan to submit an [OPT application](#) as soon as possible.

If you have questions about your OPT application, we encourage you to utilize the following resources:

- [Off-Campus Employment Chat Sessions](#): available twice a month and open for students to drop in and discuss their CPT/OPT questions with an International Student Adviser (ISA)
- [Remote Advising Appointments](#): Note that appointment availability is displayed up to 7 days in advance and no less than 12 hours from the time of booking. If you do not see any available appointments, please check again on the following day for new availability.
- Communicate with our advisors by email (ISSS-students@global.rutgers.edu)

On February 26, 2021, USCIS announced flexibilities for some international students in F-1 status who are affected by delayed receipt notices for their OPT or STEM OPT applications. These accommodations apply only to applications received on or after October 1, 2020, through May 1, 2021, inclusive. The main points of the announcement can be found on the [Rutgers Global Alerts page](#).

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Beyond OPT: Visas After Graduation

Tuesday, March 23, 2021
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET

In this virtual event, students will learn about current regulatory/immigration policy updates (OPT, H-1B, and more); alternatives to the H-1B visa program; common avenues that lead to lawful permanent residence, and resources for assistance with immigration matters. Register via Rutgers Handshake: https://rutgers.joinhandshake.com/events/701657/share_preview

Sincerely,

Rutgers Global – International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)
<https://global.rutgers.edu/>

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