



NOVEMBER 17, 2020

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UPDATED COVID-19 FAQs FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON F-1 AND J-1 VISAS

The [COVID-related FAQs for International Students on F-1 and J-1 visas](#) have been updated. The highlights of the updates include:

SPRING 2021 - INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Between September and October 2020, [President Holloway](#) and [Chancellor Molloy](#) sent out messages about Rutgers plans for the Spring 2021 semester indicating that Rutgers would like to move toward offering increased in-person instruction and on-campus housing options for spring 2021. However, the university is sensitive to the rise of COVID-19 cases in New Jersey over the past month and will continue to make cautious decisions about the university's winter and spring operating status, while keeping our community's safety and well-being in mind.

For the latest COVID-19 information visit <http://coronavirus.rutgers.edu/>. The [R-Connection website](#) provides answers to many questions regarding campus services, academics, etc.

At this stage, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has not yet provided updated guidance regarding online instruction beyond Fall 2020. We are hopeful that the Fall guidance will continue. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide updates as they become available.

Refer to the current DHS guidance:

- [Guidance from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program](#) (SEVP) issued in March 2020

- [Clarification on the March guidance issued in July 2020](#)
- [ICE FAQs \(updated on July 15, 2020\)](#)

We understand students need to finalize their schedules for the spring and make decisions regarding visa, travel and much more. In the absence of additional government guidance, we would recommend the following:

- New undergraduate and graduate students who have a fully online academic schedule should plan to enroll from abroad.
- New undergraduate and graduate students who want to/ need to come to the US for the spring semester should have some in-person component to their schedule (e.g., at least 1 in-person course, graduate students may have lab and clinical work and other in-person components, as well as TA/GA responsibilities that can account for the in-person requirement). Note that there is no guidance on what the "in-person requirement" should be. A Consulate or Embassy official processing the visa application, or a US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) official will make the determination on whether a student should be issued a visa or allowed to enter the US.
- Students who are already in the US should continue to follow the policies and rules pertaining to their F-1 and J-1 status and make normal progress towards their degrees.
- Continuing students who are overseas should be able to come to the US even if they have a 100% online schedule, should they choose, and if the current DHS policy stays.

WHO NEEDS A NEW I-20/DS-2019 FOR SPRING 2021?

- Continuing students with active SEVIS records - if you need a new travel signature, complete the [Travel Signature Request E-Form](#) on the RGlobal Portal.
- Students who started remotely in the fall and were issued I-20s/DS-2019s with a fall start date - we will adjust your I-20/DS-2019 start date to the next semester. All Fall 2020 I-20s and DS-2019s will be updated by the end of November. You will receive an email when your new document is available.
- You will need a current I-20/DS-2019 to apply for a visa at a US Embassy or Consulate. I-20s can be signed and mailed electronically. If you are attending Rutgers in J-1 status, we will make special arrangements to mail your DS-2019 to you.

STATUS OF VISA OPERATIONS

Students should check with the embassies or consulates near them as they prepare for their visa applications. Check the [Department of State website](#) for the status of operations at the embassy where you intend to apply for a visa. Please also be aware that [global travel conditions remain highly impacted](#) and could change rapidly, and visa applicants could face serious delays. Students should continue to monitor the news, airline travel information, and the [Rutgers Global](#) website for additional changes or updates.

We understand that some students may have visa appointments scheduled. If you have a valid I-20/DS-2019 (either an updated document issued for students who started in Fall 2020 from overseas, or an I-20/DS-2019 with a valid travel signature for continuing students) and need to apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa, please be aware that there is no guarantee that the visa will be approved or that you will be able to use the I-20/DS-2019 to enter the US even if your visa is approved.

TRAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

Please note that the situation regarding domestic and international travel is changing daily. We would like to advise all our students to be careful and alert during any travel 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 US](#). Visit the [Travel and Visa Information](#) page on the Rutgers Global website for information and detailed recommendations for travel.

The US government has implemented certain [travel and visa restrictions](#) that students should be aware of prior to making any travel plans. Also, many countries are imposing immigration restrictions to contain the virus. For further information, please review travel advisories available from the [U.S. State Department](#), the [CDC](#), and the country/countries outside of the US which you want to travel from or to, or even transit through.

ISSUANCE OF “TRAVEL/VISA SUPPORT LETTERS” FROM RUTGERS GLOBAL - ISSS

Should you make the decision to enter the US for the spring semester, we will provide you with a [Travel/Visa Support letter](#) to help facilitate the application for a visa should you need one, and for your entry into the US.

If you are applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa or if you are traveling to the US for the spring semester, please download this letter and present it with your I-20 or DS-2019 when you are applying for a visa and/or at a US Port of Entry. Please note that this support letter does not guarantee that you will be issued a visa or be permitted entry into the United States. This letter is only meant to provide additional documentation and institutional support indicating that you intend to enroll in a course of study which is a combination of online and in-person requirements.

If you need to confirm your specific enrollment or degree program details, you can print your [Rutgers unofficial transcript](#) or request an official [Enrollment Verification Letter](#).

OBTAIN 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 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.

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.

2. **Complete the [Travel Signature Request E-Form](#) on the RGlobal Portal.**
3. **Your document will be ready within 5 business days.** We will email you an I-20 that has been digitally signed for travel. The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has made allowances for the issuance of electronic I-20s. J-1 students will require an original DS-2019 and will need to complete the [Document Mailing Request E-Form](#) on the RGlobal Portal. Be sure to safely keep all your previous I-20s/DS-2019s.
4. **Report International Travel.** Now more than ever, 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.

REMINDERS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS, OPT, AND FINAL SEMESTER

EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

As F-1/J-1 students, it is your responsibility to know the rules and laws governing your legal status, including the regulations regarding off-campus internships or any off-campus employment. You don't need to wait until you have a job interview to find out what those rules are.

All our employment workshops are now offered online through [Canvas](#). If you are unable to access the Rutgers Global - ISSS Canvas page, you will need to first submit the [Online Workshop Access e-form via the RGlobal portal](#). Review the [CPT](#) and [OPT](#) webpages for important information about how to complete the workshops, and consider joining an upcoming Off-Campus Employment Chat session with an adviser and your peers (dates and times posted on the [Advising Services webpage](#)). More information about employment for international students can be found on the ISSS [website](#).

Remember that all on-campus employment must also be reported to ISSS. Please refer to our webpage on [On-Campus Employment](#) for information about steps for F-1 and J-1 students to report on-campus employment. The [On-Campus Employment workshop](#) may also be accessed through [Canvas](#).

REMINDER ABOUT OPT APPLICATIONS

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 getting an October 2020 or January 2021 degree and who plan to apply for post-completion OPT should plan to submit an OPT application as soon as possible.

FINAL SEMESTER

Are you finishing your degree requirements this semester? If so, congratulations! Be sure to review the [Graduating Students](#) webpage or important guidance on your next steps.

UPCOMING OFFICE CLOSURES

Due to COVID-19, services provided by Rutgers Global - ISSS are still temporarily modified in response to a change in university operating status. Please be advised that our virtual office will be closed on the following dates:

Thursday, Nov. 26 - Friday, Nov. 27: Thanksgiving Recess

Friday, Dec. 25 - Friday, Jan. 1: Winter Break

The staff at Rutgers Global - ISSS wish you good health during these unusual times.

Take care, stay safe, and be well.

Sincerely,

Rutgers Global – International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)

848-932-7015

iss-students@global.rutgers.edu

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.

These notices are automatically sent to all nonimmigrant students enrolled at Rutgers–New Brunswick. 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 Susan Maldonado at susanmal@global.rutgers.edu.