



THE UNIVERSITY *of* TEXAS

HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**Orientation for New
International Students on
Non-Immigrant Visas
Fall, 2009**

International Students on Non-Immigrant Visas

- SEVIS
- Enrollment
- Emergency Preparations
- Change of Address
- Employment
- NSEERS
- Travel
- Graduation
- Contact US

STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR INFORMATION SYSTEM (SEVIS)

Electronic reporting of all non-immigrant F, M, and J visa holders

- Arrival in U.S.
- Full-time/part-time/no-enrollment
- Employment authorization
- Dependent(s)
- Completion of program/departure
- Violation of status

F-1 ENROLLMENT

- F-1/J-1 students must be enrolled full-time during the Fall and Spring semesters
- Schools may require summer enrollment
- Full-time enrollment for graduate students is 9 credit hours
- Full-time enrollment for undergraduate students is 12 credit hours
- F-2 visa holders may only engage in recreational or vocational studies

F-1 ENROLLMENT

- Students may take no more than one class or three credit hours per semester of on-line and distance education courses
- Failing a course is considered completion for immigration purposes
- Incomplete grades must be completed by the end of the next semester
- Audit courses are 0 credit hours, and consequently do not meet the immigration requirements of full-time course of study

F-1 FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT EXCEPTIONS

- Illness or medical condition
- Initial difficulty with English language
- Initial difficulty with reading requirements
- Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
- Improper course level placement
- To complete course of study in current term
 - *The above exceptions must be pre-approved by the Office of International Affairs*
- If school curriculum permits, no approval is required for official school breaks and summer vacation

J-1 ENROLLMENT

- J-1 students must enroll full-time and make progress toward their academic objective
- J-2 visa holders do not have restrictions for enrollment as long as the J-1 is maintaining status

J-1 FULLTIME ENROLLMENT EXCEPTIONS

- Last semester prior to graduation
- Illness or Medical condition
- Bona fide academic reason; however, the above exceptions must be pre-approved by the J-1 Program Sponsor
- J-1 Non-degree student
- Official school breaks and summer vacation if school curriculum permits
- Office of International Affairs approval not required for non-degree program or summer vacation

F-1/J-1 FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT

- Mandatory reporting in SEVIS which in turn will result in:
 - **Inability to continue studies**
 - **Inability to continue employment**
 - **Inability to change status**
 - **Inability to transfer schools**
 - **Potential removal from the U.S.**

ENROLLMENT ON OTHER VISA STATUS

- Immigration status that is not tied to enrollment (e.g. J-1 Research, H-1B, L-1, O-1, R-1 and TN) may enroll incidental to status
- H-4, L-2, TD, Permanent Resident, and Pending Immigrants have no restrictions on enrollment

EMERGENCY PREPARATIONS IN THE EVENT OF A NATURAL DISASTER

- Secure your valuable documents (e.g. SEVIS I-20, passport, I-94 card, EAD card, Social Security Card, financial records, plane tickets, checks and credit cards in a plastic bag and keep in a safe location
- Always have contact numbers or e-mail addresses of Office of International Affairs Advisors
- F and J visa holders – In the event that you cannot get in touch with your International Visitor Advisor (IVA), contact the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and let them know where you are and how your IVA can reach you. Email to SEVP at SEVIS.source@dhs.gov or call free from any phone at 1-800-961-5294

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- All F and J students MUST report change of address to the Office of International Affairs (OIA) within 10 days of move
- All non-U.S. citizens must report change of address within 10 days of move to the U.S. Government by completing and submitting the appropriate Change of Address Form AR-11 (or AR-11 SR as appropriate), which is available on-line at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>
- Also report address change to any and all appropriate programs (e.g., Registrar's Office; Visa Program Sponsor; Payroll, etc.)

F-1 EMPLOYMENT

- All employment (paid or unpaid) (on or off campus) MUST be cleared with OIA before beginning appointment. (This includes participation in research or clinical studies where payment may be made.)
- Types of potential F-1 employment:
 - On-campus
 - On-campus off-site
 - Curricular Practical training (CPT) – student must reapply each semester
 - Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- **NO EMPLOYMENT (PAID OR UNPAID) MAY TAKE PLACE WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM OIA**

F-1 SOCIAL SECURITY

- Social Security Administration (SSA) requirements for F-1 students:
 - Letter from Office of International Affairs (OIA) establishing authorization for employment,
 - Letter from employer establishing terms of employment offer
 - Passport, I-94 card, F-1 visa stamp, and SEVIS I-20.
- SSA cannot process application for social security number if employment begin date is more than 30 days from date of application
- Applications for a SSN should be submitted to SSA no earlier than 10 days upon initial arrival into the U.S.

F-1 SOCIAL SECURITY

- For more information visit www.ssa.gov
- SSA can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

J-1 EMPLOYMENT

- Restricted and must be cleared by OIA
- Types of potential J-1 employment:
 - On-campus
 - J-1 Academic Training
- **NO EMPLOYMENT MAY TAKE PLACE WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM OIA**

EMPLOYMENT ON OTHER VISA STATUS

- Must be cleared with OIA
- Permanent Residents must present evidence of employment eligibility (e.g. Alien Registration Card)
- Pending Immigrants, L-2, J-2 must present a valid EAD card
- TN, H-1B, J-1, or other category should consult with your sponsor
- **NO EMPLOYMENT MAY TAKE PLACE WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM OIA**

TRAVEL PROCESS

- If F and/or J is sponsored by UTHSC-H :
 - Completed and signed Travel Request Form; and,
 - I-20 or DS-2019 must be submitted to OIA with travel request
- Processing time:
 - Mandatory 5 business days; however, it is best to submit request at least 10 days prior to travel
 - Contact your International Visitor Advisor (IVA) immediately in the case of an emergency
- Return from travel abroad requires F and J students to present OIA with original immigration documents

TRAVEL INSTRUCTIONS

- Documents needed:
 - Passport (must be valid six months into the future)
 - Current visa stamp (If not valid, student must renew visa before returning to U.S.)
 - Current signature from IVA on I-20 or DS-2019 for travel purposes
 - All previous immigration documents
 - Evidence of maintenance of full-time enrollment (transcript, letter from academic advisor)
 - Evidence of financial verification dated within last six months
 - Evidence of strong ties to home country

TRAVEL INSTRUCTIONS

- In addition to the above, F-1 OPT students must have a valid EAD card and a letter verifying employment before departing the U.S., or the student will be denied a return to the U.S.
- F-1 students on OPT are strongly advised not to travel abroad unless current visa stamp is valid

National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS)/Special Registration

- If subject you will be given:
 - FIN (Fingerprint Identification Number)
 - Written instructions
- Departure requirements mandatory
- Failure to comply with all requirements will result in loss of immigration benefits, removal proceedings and bars from U.S.
- Mandatory requirements can be found at website www.ice.gov

Do not confuse NSEERS with U.S. Visit

U.S. VISIT

- A U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) program that collects biometrics, such as fingerprints and biographic data from all Non-U.S. Citizen Visitors entering the U.S.
- Every non-U.S. Citizen (except U.S. Permanent Residents) is subject to the U.S. Visit each entry into the U.S.
- www.uscis.gov

GRADUATION

- F-1/J-1 students need to make an appointment with their IVA at least one semester prior to graduation to discuss options and benefits:
 - Optional Practical Training and/or Academic Training
 - Transfer to another institution
 - Change of status
 - Depart the U.S.
- **Failure** to meet with OIA prior to graduation could result in a loss of benefits

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Contact Us

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713/500-3189 (fax)

- **General e-mail:** utoiahouston@uth.tmc.edu
- OIA website address: <http://www.uth.tmc.edu/intlaffairs/>
- Office hours Monday - Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. except Thursdays when office is closed from 9 a.m. – 11.am.
Appointments are required unless:
 - Check-in
 - Employment
 - True Emergency

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISORS

- Priscilla Mendez – International Visitor Advisor (A-F)
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