Office of International Services (OIS)

Information Session for
New F-1 and J-1 Students

Intended for students who have entered the United States as an F-1/J-1 student

Revised 3/23/2022
Overview

I. Introduction to the Office of International Services (OIS)
II. Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status
III. F-1 Employment Options
IV. Passport Verification (PPV)
V. Life in the U.S.
VI. OIS Contact Information
Introduction to the Office of International Services (OIS)
International Student Enrollment at USC

USC Cosmopolitan Club, 1919
Office of International Services (OIS)

OIS supports international students and scholars as they strive to achieve their educational, professional, and personal objectives. Recognizing the many benefits of international educational exchange, OIS advocates for these benefits on campus, locally and nationally.

OIS is a resource center to help members of the USC international community make the most of their USC experience:

• Answer any questions F-1/J-1 students and scholars may have regarding their immigration status or benefits
• Provide one-on-one and group advising and support
• Offer student programs
• Assist students with navigating life in the U.S.
Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements

To maintain F-1/J-1 immigration status, students must enroll full-time in courses that apply to their degree requirements during each fall and spring semester.

Summer admits are required to enroll full-time during their first summer at USC.
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements

Students are considered full-time when enrolled in a minimum number of units, based on their degree level:

- Undergraduate students – 12 units
- Master’s students – 8 units
- Graduate Certificate students – 8 units
- Ph.D. students – 6 units
- Master’s/Ph.D. students with an assistantship – 6 units
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: 
Online Course Restrictions

- No more than 3 units of online course(s) are applicable to the full-time enrollment requirement
- After meeting the full-time enrollment minimum for each level as described below, any additional units of coursework may be either in-person or online

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Level</th>
<th>Course Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>9 units of in-person course(s) + 3 units of in-person or online course(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 unit minimum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s or Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>5 units of in-person course(s) + 3 units of in-person or online course(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 unit minimum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s/Ph.D. with an assistantship or Ph.D.</td>
<td>3 units of in-person course(s) + 3 units of in-person or online course(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 unit minimum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements:
Exceptions for Reduced Course Load (RCL)

F-1/J-1 students may qualify for exception(s) to the full-time enrollment requirement for the fall and spring semester if they meet certain criteria for a Reduced Course Load (RCL) category:

1) Final Semester
2) Medical Reason
3) Academic Difficulty
1) **RCL due to Final Semester**
   • OIS may authorize a final semester RCL for students who are in their final semester of study and only have a few units remaining to meet academic program requirements

2) **RCL due to Medical Reasons**
   • OIS may authorize a medical RCL due to a temporary health (physical or mental) condition(s) with an appropriate doctor’s letter recommending the RCL for medical reasons
   • To submit a medical RCL, F-1/J-1 students must provide a doctor’s letter with their RCL submission to OIS
   • No more than 12 months total of a medical RCL is permitted per degree level
3) RCL due to Academic Difficulty

- A student may qualify for an academic difficulty RCL if they meet one of the below criteria:
  - initial difficulty with reading requirements;
  - initial difficulty with the English language;
  - unfamiliarity with US teaching methods; or
  - improper course level placement
- Students who file an RCL must be enrolled at least part-time (6 units for undergraduate, 4 units for masters, and 3 units for doctorate)
- An academic difficulty RCL can be used only once per degree level
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: Exceptions for Reduced Course Load (RCL)

Students who meet criteria for an RCL must submit their RCL request to OIS by the end of the second week of the classes.
Students who maintain status by enrolling full time every semester but are still unable to complete their program in time (i.e. change of major), must request a program extension BEFORE their program end date (i.e. at least one month before the I-20 expires). Please check your program end date on your I-20.

*Paid internships (i.e. CPT/Pre-completion OPT) will not be permitted in the extended semesters unless it’s a degree requirement
Additional Requirements for Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status: Address Updates

U. S. Address Updates
Moving to a new address?

Students must update their new address through their myUSC account within 10 days of moving.
Additional Requirements for Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status: International Travel

Traveling Abroad
• Students may travel internationally during scheduled university breaks
• Students returning to the U.S. from a temporary break should ensure they have the required documents to re-enter the country
Additional Requirements for Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status: International Travel

Required Documents for Re-entry to the U.S.
- Valid Passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of the re-entry to the U.S.)
- Valid F-1/J-1 visa in passport (except students from Canada)
- I-20/DS-2019 with a valid travel signature from OIS

Recommended Supporting Documents
- Financial support documents (proof of funding)
- USC acceptance letter
- Paper receipt of Form I-901: SEVIS fee payment
- Copy of USC transcript and/or proof of course registration
Employment Options for F-1 Students
F-1 Employment Options

**Types of Employment**
1) On-campus
2) Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
3) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

**On-Campus Employment**
- Does not require separate work authorization
- Limited to 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters
- May work up to 40 hours per week during summer and vacation breaks, if approved by the hiring USC department
- Review the [OIS website for additional information](#)
F-1 Employment Options

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
• Authorization for paid off-campus internships
• Requires separate work authorization from the student’s academic department and OIS
• Authorized during a student’s degree program
• Review information on the OIS website for eligibility requirements

Optional Practical Training (OPT)
• Authorization for employment after the student graduates
• Requires OIS and USCIS authorization
• Employment can be paid or unpaid and needs to be related to the student’s field of study
• Review information on the OIS website for eligibility requirements
F-1 Employment Options: Social Security Number (SSN)

• If a student finds a paid job in one of the categories mentioned under F-1 employment options, they are eligible to apply for the SSN.
• SSN is 9-digit number issued to citizens, permanent residents and temporary (working) non-residents by the Social Security Administration (SSA).
• Primary purpose on an SSN is to track individuals for taxation purposes; it is not intended to be used for identification purposes.

Students and scholars who are not eligible for an SSN may be eligible for a Tax Identification Number (ITIN) to use for filing taxes during tax season reporting.
Passport Verification (PPV)
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

All international students are required to submit the following documents in the OIS Passport Verification Document Upload System upon their arrival in the United States:

1. Copy of Valid Passport
2. Copy of F-1/J-1 Visa (Canadian citizens exempt)
3. Copy of Page 1 and 2 of USC I-20 or DS-2019
4. Printout of I-94 Arrival Information
5. Printout of I-94 Travel History

Refer to the Passport Verification (PPV) page on the OIS website for document submission instructions.
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

Passport

• F-1/J-1 students are required to always maintain a valid passport
  • Should be valid for at least 6 months into the future, especially for re-entry into the U.S. and when applying for a visa
• Students must contact their local embassy or consulate for instructions on renewing their passport
  • Students may continue to use the expired passport with the valid visa, along with the new passport, when traveling
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

F-1/J-1 Visa
- Students may stay in the U.S. on an expired F-1/J-1 visa if they maintain their immigration status by being in possession of a valid I-20/DS-2019 and an I-94 Arrival/Departure record
- **Visas cannot be renewed inside the U.S.;** they must be renewed at a U.S. embassy/consulate abroad
  - Review the [U.S. embassy/consulate](#) website for details on the visa renewal process including required documents
  - Check [visa wait times](#) prior to renewing to ensure you have enough time to renew and re-enter the U.S.
  - Due to security checks, it is not recommended students use the period of winter or spring breaks to renew since they may be unable to return by the first day of classes
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

SEVIS and the Form I-20/DS-2019

- The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a web-based system of the federal government that maintains information on international students (F-1/J-1 visa holders) while in the U.S.
- School create and issue the Form I-20 for F-1 students and Form DS-2019 for J-1 students via SEVIS
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

Form I-20

![Form I-20 Image]
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

Form DS-2019
Passport Verification (PPV):
Immigration Documents

I-94 Arrival Record

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

I-94 Travel History

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home
Passport Verification (PPV): Registration Holds

STU50 Hold – Removed by OIS
- Placed on graduate student records
- Restricts course registration

STU60 Hold – Removed by OIS
- Placed on undergraduate student records
- Does not restrict course registration

ALI01 Hold – Removed by USC American Language Institute (ALI)
- Placed on all students who have not met the USC English proficiency requirement
- Restricts course registration
- Questions? Email askali@usc.edu
Passport Verification (PPV): Registration Holds

ADM40 Hold – Removed by USC Registrar
• Placed on students who are required to submit their previous degree documents to IERF
• Does not restrict course registration
• Deadline to submit is by end of student’s first semester
• Contact: https://ierf.org/uni-evaluation/usc/, usc@ierf.org
Life in the U.S.
Life in the U.S.: Punctuality

Being on time is very important

What is “on time”?• About 5 minutes early

Consequences of tardiness• Lose appointments, negative impact on reputation

Proper notification• Call/email if you are going to be late
After arrival in the U.S., it is common for students to experience a period of cultural adjustment.
Life in the U.S.: Cultural Adjustment

STAGE 1: Honeymoon Stage
• Taking care of practical matters
• Observing new culture/environment
• Meeting new friend/staff/professors
• Seeing/trying new things
• Able to understand/be understood (if English is not first language)

STAGE 2: Conflict (Culture Shock) Stage
• Negative feelings (isolation, frustration and depression)
• Homesickness
• Problems with subtleties of language
• No time to make new friends/time spent with friends from home culture
• Complain about host culture/blame for problems
Life in the U.S.: Cultural Adjustment

**STAGE 3: Critical (Adjustment) Stage**
- Choose to explore a new culture
- Accept the challenge of self-reflection
- Assume responsibility for own cultural adjustment

**STAGE 4: Adaptation Stage**
- Language skills improved
- Better understand actions of the members of the host culture
- Made friends in the host culture
- Developed greater tolerance for strange and new environment
- Become a mediator between two cultures
Life in the U.S.: Health and Wellness

• Medical centers and other health administrators may ask personal questions to gather information in order to provide you with better, individually-tailored health services – *this is a normal part of the intake process*

• In the U.S., medical information is legally required to remain confidential and private

• In the U.S., it is common and encouraged to seek professional help if you need help with a medical or mental health issue
  • Counselors and therapists are trained to listen to you and offer help; they can provide treatment for issues such as homesickness, stress, depression, social anxiety, and more

• Are you worried about a fellow Trojan are unsure how to help? [Submit a Trojans Care for Trojans (TC4T)](https://www.usc.edu/student-affairs) report to connect them with important resources

• Review comprehensive list of [USC Health and Wellness Resources](https://www.usc.edu/student-affairs)
Life in the U.S.: California Driver’s License

- Students are encouraged to obtain a California Driver’s License from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) if they plan to drive a car in the US.
- California does not recognize an International Driving Permit (IDP), International Driver’s License or an International License as a valid form of driver’s license.
- A California driver’s license is required to purchase a car and obtain auto insurance.
- Apply for the driver’s license after the add/drop deadline of 1st semester at USC.
- Social Security Number (SSN) is not required to apply for a driver’s license.
- Must pass written and driving exams.
Life in the U.S.: Beware of Scams

Watch the OIS video for information on how to protect yourself from scams

Know the Facts
IRS or other government agencies will never:
• Ask for money over the phone or online
• Request or accept payments in the form of gift cards or Bitcoin
Law enforcement agencies will never:
• Request payment of citations, warrants, etc., via the phone

Safety Tips
• Never provide your credit card information or your Social Security number over the phone or online to someone you don’t know
• If you visit a website that asks for your Social Security number, don’t provide it
• If you receive an email from a stranger or company asking you to click on a hyperlink and/or open an attachment and enter your financial information, delete the email
• Do not respond to friend requests from strangers
• Hang up on telemarketers

If you’ve been the victim of a scam or suspect you’ve been scammed, contact:
USC Department of Public Safety (DPS) (213) 740-6000
Life in the U.S.: Resources for International Students

Campus Involvement and Student Organizations
• Get involved with various nationality-based or interest-based student organizations for community support
• For more information, see Campus Activities

Los Angeles (LA) Activities
• Explore LA museums, visit amusement parks and enjoy the numerous beach/hiking trails

International Update (IU)
• Stay up-to-date with the weekly OIS e-newsletter
• Subscribe today
OIS Contact Information
Contact OIS

The Office of International Services provides assistance to our international community via email, one-on-one advising via Zoom, or through online group advising/webinar sessions.

OIS Live (Virtual Front Desk/Drop-in Advising via Zoom)
OIS Advisors are available for one-on-one consultation Monday through Friday via Zoom. Advising hours and Zoom meeting link are posted on the [OIS website](mailto:ois@usc.edu). Appointment not required.

Zoom Group Advising
OIS will offer group advising sessions via Zoom. Refer to the [OIS eCalendar](mailto:oistraining@usc.edu) to view upcoming session topics.

Email
For all F-1 student related inquiries: [ois@usc.edu](mailto:ois@usc.edu)
For all J-1 student related inquiries: [J1exchg@usc.edu](mailto:J1exchg@usc.edu)