



Preparing for Fall 2020— Tips for F-1/J-1 International Students

First, Remember We're UAlbany & NY Strong!

In the past few months you've had to make a lot of changes— and quickly. Whether you're a continuing student who had to make adjustments during Spring 2020, or a new student navigating the admissions system during unprecedented times, you have risen to the occasion. Remember that you're resilient and have adapted up until this point, and we will continue to support you in the months to come. We're UAlbany and NY Strong!

Communication is Key- Make Informed Decisions

- Check your albany.edu regularly, at least twice a week, and read through your emails to make sure you don't miss any key updates.
- If you haven't already done so, download the [Authenticator App](#) for email access and the [Global Protect VPN](#) (especially if accessing from overseas).
- Pending final review from the Governor and SUNY, UAlbany plans to begin our fall semester on campus on August 24, 2020, as originally scheduled. On-campus housing will be available. To allow for physical distancing, classes will be delivered through a combination of in-person, hybrid (in-person and online components), and fully online instruction.
- We are still awaiting guidance from DHS/ICE regarding Fall 2020 for F-1 students. Students considering taking a fully online schedule or partially online schedule should remember that DHS guidance may not allow for F-1/J-1 students to maintain status if they're not taking in-person or hybrid courses.
- As things change it is important you rely on official sources, including the [UAlbany COVID19](#) webpage, the University [Fall 2020 reopening webpage](#) and the ISSS [COVID19 FAQ webpage](#), for information. Read the latest information and [consult an ISSS advisor](#) before making any key decisions.

Identify Your Key Considerations

Our students have many important and varied considerations while planning, including family obligations, childcare, housing, internship opportunities, and post graduation plans— just to name a few. Identify what your key considerations and priorities are so that you can factor those into your plans. Here are a few ISSS recommends you consider, particularly as they relate to immigration status:

1. **Travel**— ISSS is highly discouraging international travel at this time, particularly for students considering leaving the U.S. If you are currently in the U.S. and are able to remain in the U.S. this summer we recommend that you do so. Students who are outside the U.S. or must travel [should read about and understand how the various travel restrictions and bans](#) in place may delay or prevent a return for Fall 2020. Travel restrictions are subject to change so please check on this regularly.
2. **Course Offerings/Availability**— Pending final review from the Governor and SUNY, UAlbany plans to begin our fall semester on campus on August 24, 2020, as originally scheduled. On-campus housing will be available. To allow for physical distancing, classes will be delivered through a combination of in-person, hybrid (in-person and online components), and fully online instruction. Whether your intent is to take in-person courses, online courses, or some combination of these for Fall, talk to your academic department/advisor about which kind of courses they expect to be available in Fall 2020 for your program to see if these will fit your current plans. Under normal circumstances F-1/J-1 student registration requirements place limitations on fully online study; while a DHS reprieve from these limitations was in place in Spring/Summer 2020, DHS guidance for Fall 2020 is forthcoming and may resume normal registration limitations on fully online study ("hybrid" courses are not classified as online for DHS/immigration reporting).
3. **Status Requirements**— An active F-1/J-1 student status is not required for a student who is studying fully online from outside the U.S., but it is required for any student who plans to study in the U.S (unless you have another status which allows for study) . If you are outside the U.S. without an active F-1/J-1 status, full-time registration is not required for immigration (but may be required by your academic program; check with your academic advisor). Students within the U.S. must be full-time or on an authorized reduced course load in order to maintain F-1/J-1 status. New students may only activate a F-1/ J-1 record by entering the U.S. with the intent to engage in full-time, in-person or hybrid course study.



Identify Your Key Considerations (Continued...)

4. Practical Training Eligibility— F-1 students who wish to engage in practical training (CPT/OPT) in the U.S. must complete one academic year (a fall and spring semester) full-time prior to being eligible. If a student takes a break in their program of study (i.e. does not register full-time for a Fall or Spring term) this academic year requirement count restarts when they resume full time study. Students must be in an active F-1 status to be eligible for practical training. Pending any further DHS guidance contradicting this issue, students may be able to work toward academic year requirement for practical training while studying outside the U.S. Visit the ISSS COVID-19 FAQ for more information.

5. Student Employment on Campus— Students holding an on-campus position, such as a graduate assistantship, are required by Human Resources to be physically present in the U.S. while working in that position. Please contact [Human Resources](#) if you have questions.

Make Plans for Different Scenarios

Even with some factors still being unknown or subject to change, please make plans based on what you know at this moment. Consider multiple plans for different scenarios. Recognize that these plans may need to change, but thinking through these scenarios now will help you prepare to make adjustments in the future.

- **If You Plan to Study in the U.S.:** Talk to your academic program/academic advisor about what kind of in-person or hybrid courses may be offered in Fall. If you're currently outside the U.S., consider what you will do if you cannot re-enter for Fall courses.
- **If You Plan to Study Outside the U.S.:** Talk to your academic program/academic advisor about what kind of online courses may be offered in Fall; Think about what your academic workspace will look like, and the technology you will need to be successful (ex: laptop; WiFi access and reliable; VPN secure connections; webcams and mics; etc...).
- **See page 3 (new students) or page 4 (continuing students) for more information.**

Know Your Support Systems, Ask for Help

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global moment and we're all in this together. Rely on your support systems for guidance during these times. ISSS and the entire UAlbany community are here to support you and guide you. If you have a question, are facing a problem you don't know how to solve, or just need someone to talk to about what you're facing, we're here to support you.

- Email ISSS@albany.edu or [schedule a Zoom appointment](#) with an advisor
- Read CAPS' "[Psychological Tips for Managing Concerns Related to COVID19](#)"

Be Prepared to Be Flexible

Due to the fluid nature of COVID19 and public health concerns guidance may change. Some things are uncertain right now, like what the modality of your Fall 2020 courses will be; future DHS guidance; or what the international travel situation will look like in August. As we learn more your plans may need to change. Recognizing this possibility now will make it easier to be flexible in the future. And remember, you will have the support of ISSS throughout.

Unleash Greatness!

We are so proud to have you as a member of the UAlbany community, and we are committed to helping you succeed and achieve your goals, now and into the future. Together, let's Unleash Greatness!



Special Planning Considerations– New Students

New Students Intending to Study Inside the U.S. in Fall

- A student needs a F-1 status (students with an “I-20” document) or J-1 status (students with a “DS-2019” document) in order to enter the United States to study.
- Students entering the U.S. should intend to engage in full-time, in-person study. This includes both hybrid courses and in-person classes.
- All students currently in the U.S. with an active F-1 or J-1 status are encouraged to remain in the U.S. and avoid international travel, if possible.
- We recognize that obtaining a F-1/J-1 visa in time for Fall is very difficult, as embassies/consulates are still closed or just beginning to open up and backlogs for appointments are quite long. If you have a prior F-1/J-1 visa from a prior program of study, check with ISSS about whether you can still use that visa. If you need to apply for a new F-1/J-1 visa, U.S. Department of State typically requires students to receive approval for the student visa prior to the start of classes date listed on the student’s I-20/DS-2019.
- Immigration regulations allow a new student to enter 30 days prior to the start date listed on the I-20/DS-2019. The student must enter the U.S. within 30 days of the start of classes listed on the I-20/DS-2019.
- ISSS recommends students enter no later than the first week of classes to ensure a successful academic/cultural transition and to avoid potential complications at the port of entry (the further a student is from the start date, the more questions he/she may face at the port of entry). If you must arrive after the first week of classes (but no later than 30 days after the I-20/DS-2019 start date), please contact [Undergraduate Education](#) or your graduate program department for further guidance.
- Travel Restrictions/Travel Bans remain in place and more could be announced and are subject to change at any time. Currently, there are bans which would prevent entry for F-1/J-1 students who have been present in the following regions/countries in the 14 days preceding their attempted entry: China; Iran; European/Schengen countries; the United Kingdom and Ireland; and Brazil. Additionally, there are restrictions on land entry from Canada and Mexico. Even outside of these federal bans, flights and airline travel worldwide are severely limited at this time.

New Students Intending to Study Outside the U.S. in Fall

- An active immigration status is not required for international students who will study from outside the U.S.. If outside the U.S., full-time study is not required for immigration, though it may be required by your academic program (check with your academic advisor). Choosing to study part-time may also [impact future practical training eligibility](#).
- Check with your academic advisor about which courses you may take and whether or not the courses you need will be offered online for Fall 2020.
- Contact Undergraduate Admissions or Graduate Admissions to defer your I-20/DS-2019 start date to Spring 2021 if you plan to seek entry for in-person study then.
- Pending any further DHS guidance contradicting this issue, students may be able to work toward academic year requirement for practical training while studying outside the U.S. Visit the [ISSS COVID-19 FAQ](#) for more information.



Special Planning Considerations— Continuing Students

Continuing Students Intending to Study Inside the U.S. in Fall

- All students currently in the U.S. with an active F-1 or J-1 status are encouraged to remain in the U.S. and avoid international travel, if possible.
- Students studying in the U.S. must be full-time (12 credits for undergraduate students, 9 credits for graduate students) or on an authorized reduced course load. Under normal circumstances F-1/J-1 student registration requirements place limitations on fully online study; while a DHS reprieve from these limitations was in place in Spring/Summer 2020, DHS guidance for Fall 2020 is forthcoming and may resume normal registration limitations on fully online study (“hybrid” courses are not classified as online for DHS/immigration reporting).
- ISSS recommends that students currently outside the U.S. enter no later than the first week of classes to ensure a successful academic/cultural transition and to avoid potential complications at the port of entry (the further a student is from the start date, the more questions they may face at the port of entry). If you must arrive after the first week of classes (but no later than 30 days after the I-20/DS-2019 start date), please contact Undergraduate Education or your graduate program department for further guidance.
- Travel Restrictions/Travel Bans remain in place and more could be announced and are subject to change at any time. Currently, there are bans which would prevent entry for F-1/J-1 students who have been present in the following regions/countries in the 14 days preceding their attempted entry: China; Iran; European/Schengen countries; the United Kingdom and Ireland; and Brazil. Additionally, there are restrictions on land entry from Canada and Mexico. Outside of these federal bans, flights and airline travel worldwide are severely limited at this time.

Continuing Students Intending to Study Outside the U.S. in Fall

- DHS offered a reprieve for *continuing* F-1 students who were studying remotely due to COVID-19 during Spring 2020/ Summer 2020. DHS states it is currently working to issue guidance for Fall 2020. The rules for Fall 2020 may or may not include the reprieve rules which were in place during Spring/Summer. The implementation of the DHS guidance for University at Albany students, both new and continuing, will also likely depend on the instructional mode for Fall 2020 courses.
- An active immigration status is not required for international students who will study from outside the U.S.. If outside the U.S., full-time study is not required for immigration, though it may be required by your academic program (check with your academic advisor). Choosing to study part-time may also [impact future practical training eligibility](#).
- Check with your academic advisor about whether or not the courses you need will be offered online for Fall 2020 or alternate classes you may take.
- If you plan to graduate in Fall 2020 from overseas, contact ISSS, especially if you were considering pursuing post-completion OPT after graduation.
- Students holding an on-campus position, such as a graduate assistantship, are required by Human Resources to be physically present in the U.S. while working in that position. Please contact [Human Resources](#) if you have questions.