

University of Delaware
Center for Global Programs & Services
International Student & Scholar Services

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A Guide for UD Academic Advisors and Staff

This document was produced to guide academic advisors and university staff in assisting international students. This guide is not meant to serve as a replacement for immigration guidance given at CGPS. However, we hope that this will serve as a quick reference to help direct international students towards relevant guidance and support. As international students' situations are often case specific, please always refer them to CGPS to discuss their immigration status.



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Immigration

J-1 & F-1 Visa Process

J-1 vs. F-1 Visa

There are two main visa types students use to study at UD, the **J-1 or F-1 Student visa**. Students admitted to UD will contact CGPS to request a Form I-20 for an F-1 visa or DS-2019 for a J-1 visa. In order to receive an I-20 or DS-2019 from CGPS, students must provide proof of financial support along with biographical information. International students then use the Form I-20 or DS-2019 at the U.S. consulate abroad to obtain a visa sticker in their passport to enter the U.S.

F-1 Student Visa:

- Issued a Form I-20 by the Department of Homeland Security.
- Most UD students come as F-1 students.
- To be an F-1 funding can come from any source. However, typically government funding is not used.

J-1 Student Visa:

- Issued a Form DS-2019 by the U.S. Department of State as part of the Exchange Visitor Program.
- Must meet at least one of the following:
 - Funding must come primarily (51% or more) from a source that is not personal/family funded.
 - There is a written agreement between:
 - United States Government and a foreign government;
 - UD and a foreign academic institution;
 - UD and a foreign government; or
 - A state or local government in the United States and a foreign government.

Admissions Process and Requesting an I-20/DS-2019 from CGPS

After international students reply to their offer of admission and their application status page is updated, they will receive a link to the online **I-20/DS-2019 Request Form**. In order to complete the request, students must provide the following after they have been **officially admitted to a UD program**:

- a copy of passport, valid for at least six months from the date of entry to the U.S. (also valid passports for any dependents*)
- Proof of funding, such as a bank statement, university funding, or a financial guarantee letter. If using funds provided by a family member or other personal sponsor, a completed UD [Affidavit of Support Form](#) will be required.

- **F-1 Visa:** Proof of funding that meets or exceeds the University's required amount for the first year of their academic program.
- **J-1 Visa:** Proof of funding that meets or exceeds the University's required amount for the entire duration of the program

*Dependents: to qualify for a dependent visa (F-2 or J-2), the person(s) must be the spouse or unmarried minor (under age 21) child(ren) of the student.

After the student's I-20/DS-2019 request has been found to be complete, CGPS will create the Form I-20 or DS-2019. If the request is not complete, CGPS will contact the student to request any further information. Incomplete requests, such as missing documents, insufficient funds, or conditions on the student's admission, will delay I-20/DS-2019 processing. Once the request is complete, I-20 or DS-2019 Requests are typically processed in 3-5 business days.

Delays/Deferrals/Denials/Cancellations

Delayed Arrival: If a student is planning on entering the U.S. after the official start of the term, please work with CGPS regarding whether the student is eligible for a late arrival or will need to be deferred to another semester. CGPS is required to register their F-1 and J-1 record in the Dept. of Homeland Security's SEVIS system within the first 30 days of the start of the semester. Please ensure international students enter the U.S. to start classes within the first 30 days.

Deferral: Undergraduate Admissions or Graduate College must agree to the deferral and inform CGPS. As long as the materials provided in their original I-20/DS-2019 requests are still valid according to our criteria, students deferring to the next available session/semester are typically issued an updated I-20/DS-2019 with the same SEVIS number.

Visa Denial: If an international student is denied a visa by the U.S. Consulate, please have them contact CGPS so that we can discuss next steps and review the reason for denial as their record may need to be canceled or deferred depending on whether they plan on reapplying for the visa.

Cancel Admission: If an international student is canceling their admission to UD or if UD is rescinding their admission, please let CGPS know so that the I-20 or DS-2019 can be canceled.

For more information, please see [International Admissions & Student Visas](#)

Enrollment Requirements

Full-time Enrollment/Online Courses

- **Fall and spring full-time enrollment:**
 - **Undergraduates:** 12 credits
 - **Graduates:**
 - 9 credits, or
 - 6 credits for students enrolled in Graduate Contract (TA, RA, etc.), or
 - Sustaining (if completed all coursework and working on dissertation/thesis)
- **Online courses:** Students may include only the **equivalent of one online course (3 credits)** towards their full-time enrollment. Once this full-time enrollment has been met, additional online courses can be added to a student's schedule.
- **Summer and winter session enrollment:**

Students may take any number of online courses during the summer/winter sessions **unless** it is their first or last session at UD. If it is their first session, they must enroll full-time. If it is their last session, they must enroll in the required courses to graduate.

Students in the U.S. cannot enroll in only online coursework during summer/winter session if they are starting or ending their degree program that term. Also, students returning from a leave of absence (e.g., re-starting a program) in the summer/winter must enroll in full-time coursework, and only one online course may count towards that full-time enrollment.

Reduced Course Load

Students must request a reduced course load from CGPS **before** they drop below full-time status to remain in status.

When on a reduced course load, students are still required to take no more than the equivalent of one online course (3 credits) towards that reduced course load enrollment. Students cannot enroll in only online coursework while on a reduced course load.

Per SEVIS regulations, students may only be authorized for reduced course load for the following:

1. The student is having difficulty with English language (only authorized in the first year)*.
2. The student is having difficulty with reading requirements (only authorized in the first year)*.
3. The student is unfamiliar with American teaching methods (only authorized in the first year)*.
4. Improper course level placement (for students placed in advanced courses without first completing a required prerequisite, or for other academic department errors in student course enrollment)
5. The student needs less than a full course load to finish the degree program this term (Minimum enrollment is 1 credit)
6. The student needs to be registered less than full-time for medical reasons. This can include a leave of absence for the semester. Documentation from a licensed medical doctor, psychiatrist, doctor of osteopathy, licensed psychologist, or clinical psychologist is needed for a medical reduced course load approval.

*Students requesting a reduced course load for reasons 1-4 are permitted to use this type of academic reduced course load only once per degree level. In addition, they must remain enrolled in at least the following number of credits while on the reduced course load:

- Undergraduate Students – 6 Credits
- Graduate Students: No Assistantship – 6 Credits
- Graduate Students: Assistantship – 3 Credits

Applying for a reduced course load: The student must complete an application to ISSS with a recommendation from the Graduate College (for graduate students) or from the academic advisor (for undergraduate students).

Advisor/Grad College Recommendation: The recommendation can be completed either electronically (sent via email to the advisor) or by paper. The recommendation request will ask for the reason for the reduced course load, the number of credits the student intends to take that semester, the expected graduation date, and the number of credits remaining for the student's degree completion. The advisor must submit this information to CGPS before the reduced course load can be authorized.

The student must not drop below a full-course load before receiving approval from our office for the reduced course load.

Leave of Absence

If a student will be placed on a leave of absence during a major semester, their F-1/J-1 SEVIS record must be terminated and they will need to leave the U.S. The only exception to this policy is if the student has been approved for a medical leave of absence (see medical reduced course load above). A medical leave of absence must be approved by our office before the student can drop their semester courses.

Students should contact CGPS **before** taking a leave of absence, so we can discuss their immigration options. If our office sees the leave of absence in their UDSIS record, we will reach out to the student regarding the termination of their SEVIS record and their requirement to leave the U.S.

Undergraduate Students: Per the [Registrar's Office page on Leave of Absences](#), any undergraduate student taking a leave of absence for personal or academic reasons should reach out to the Assistant Dean of the student's college. For medical leave of absences, undergraduate students should reach out to the Office of the Dean of Students. If a student is planning to take a medical leave of absence and hopes to remain in the U.S., the student will need a CGPS Medical RCL for immigration purposes at the same time they are working on their medical leave of absence with the Office of Dean of students. This timing is very important. For military leaves, undergraduate students should reach out to the Coordinator of Student Veterans Services in the Office of the Dean of Students. (For undergraduates, a webform for a leave of absence is almost always submitted and our office should receive a copy of the approved form.)

Students on a non-medical leave of absence must exit the U.S. within 15 days of the I-20/DS-2019 termination. Prior to reentering the U.S, they will need to contact our office to request a new I-20/DS-2019, pay the SEVIS I-901 fee again, and may need to renew their F-1/J-1 visa. They will be able to enter the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to the start of their new I-20/DS-2019.

Employment Authorization

On-campus employment

On-campus employment for F-1 and J-1 students may be **up to 20 hours/week** during the fall and spring semesters and more than 20 hours/week during the summer and winter sessions. This includes any TA/RA or other graduate contract work. Students working in multiple on-campus positions during the fall/spring semesters must be sure that the total number of hours between the positions does not exceed 20/week.

F-1 students:

F-1 students may work on-campus without prior authorization from CGPS.

J-1 students:

J-1 students must have prior work authorization (in writing) from CGPS before starting any on-campus employment. The J-1 [on-campus employment application](#) requires an employment offer letter (or department funding letter) or contract stating the number of hours/week, the dates of the employment, and the worksite address. The application is employer-specific, so J-1 students working on-campus for more than one employer must submit an application and receive

authorization for each position. The authorization is valid for 12 months, and students must reapply for continued authorization.

Off-campus Employment

Prior work authorization is needed from CGPS before F-1 or J-1s can engage in any off-campus employment (including unpaid positions); off-campus work authorization may also be needed for practicums, and/or field experience, and/or training opportunities. Students must check with our office before starting any off-campus work opportunity, even those that may be considered volunteer positions.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): This off-campus employment authorization is specifically for F-1 students who are in the process of completing their degree program. Any off-campus employment while on CPT must be directly related to the student's degree program. CPT can be authorized for the following time limits:

- **Fall/Spring:** authorized for up to 20 hours/week
- **Winter/Summer:** can be authorized for more than 20 hours/week

CPT is an internal process authorized by ISSS by adding the employment authorization to the student's Form I-20 after approving the student's CPT application.

CPT is employer-specific. Students must submit a CPT application for each off-campus position. CPT is also granted on a semester-by-semester basis. Students must reapply for CPT each semester/session they wish to continue the employment.

Since CPT is curricular practical training, the work must be integral to the student's degree field. F-1 Students can fulfill the integral degree requirements by the following:

- **If required to complete the degree:** as indicated in the academic advisor's CPT recommendation. ISSS may follow up with the academic advisor if further confirmation or information is needed regarding this requirement,
- **If NOT required for all students in the degree program to graduate:** then the student must enroll in a 1-credit internship or independent study course for each session/semester they will be pursuing the CPT.
- **Students in sustaining status:** may enroll in sustaining status instead of the 1-credit CPT course if the academic advisor confirms in the CPT application that the off-campus work is required for the completion of the dissertation. This allows the sustaining student to work full-time (more than 20 hours/week) on CPT during the fall and spring semesters.
 - If the work is **not required** for the dissertation, the student must enroll in the 1-credit course for the CPT and is limited to no more than 20 hours/week of CPT during the major semesters.

To complete the CPT application, the student must provide an employment offer letter and a recommendation from the academic advisor and, for graduate students, from the Graduate College.

Adviser/Grad College Recommendation: The recommendation can be completed either electronically (sent via email to the advisor) or by paper. The recommendation request will ask for the academic advisor to provide information regarding how the position is directly related to the student's degree field and for the name of the course the student will be enrolled in for the CPT (or, if in sustaining status, confirmation that the work is required for the completion of the dissertation).

Optional Practical Training (OPT): This 12 month off-campus employment authorization is specifically for F-1 students can be either **pre-completion** OPT (used by the student before they graduate from the degree program, as with CPT), or **post-completion** OPT (used by the student after graduation). Post-OPT is the most commonly used OPT type.

- **Pre-completion OPT:** Students engaging in pre-completion OPT must continue to maintain their full course of study during the major semesters. Pre-completion authorization may be more than 20 hours/week during the summer/winter sessions but is limited to no more than 20 hours/week during the fall and spring semesters. Students who have completed all course credit work except for their dissertation/thesis and who are in sustaining status may be eligible to work full-time during these major semesters. Pre-OPT is authorized for a specific amount of time, and students may need to reapply for continued work authorization after that period. Pre-OPT may not go beyond the student's graduation date. Any time spent on pre-OPT detracts from the 12 months of OPT eligibility.
- **Post-completion OPT:** Students may apply for OPT authorization that begins after they graduate from their degree program. They can apply for OPT authorization up to 90 days before they graduate (or before their expected defense date if they are in sustaining status) and no later than 60 days after they graduate. They must request the OPT work authorization to begin within the 60 day period after graduation. Students on post-OPT have 90 days in which they can be unemployed during the 12 month period.
- OPT is approved externally by USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). The approval process usually takes an average of 90 days although premium processing is available for a fee.
 - The following is the OPT process:
 - Students must apply for the [OPT I-20](#) with CGPS within the specified time frame.
 - An employment offer letter is not needed for OPT.
 - Students must pay a fee for the OPT I-20.
 - Students will request a recommendation from the academic advisor and, for graduate students, from the Graduate College. The recommendations can be completed either electronically (the

recommendation form will be sent via email to the advisor) or by paper. The recommendation request will ask for the academic advisor to provide information regarding the student's expected graduation date and any relevant defense date information.

- Once the student submits the application to our office, they schedule an OPT appointment with a CGPS advisor.
 - During the appointment, the advisor discusses the OPT dates and timeline with the student, creates the OPT I-20, and provides instructions on applying for OPT with USCIS.
- Students use the new OPT I-20 to submit the application to USCIS via mail or through the USCIS online portal. A fee is involved with this application process.
- Students wait for their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to begin work. They continue to report employment or address changes to our office while on OPT.

Academic Training (AT): This off-campus employment authorization is specifically for J-1 students either while they are completing their degree program or after they have graduated.

Academic Training:

- Must be directly related to the student's degree program.
- Can be **up to** 20 hours/week during the fall/spring semesters.
- Can be **more than** 20 hours/week during the summer/winter sessions.

Students using AT before graduation must continue to enroll full-time during the major semesters. AT is an internal process and our office provides this authorization in their SEVIS record after receiving and reviewing the student's AT application. The student receives a new DS-2019 reflecting the Academic Training information.

- **Bachelor's or Master's** students may receive AT for up to 18 months or the length of their degree program, whichever is shorter.
 - Bachelor's or Master's students in STEM programs may be eligible for up to 36 months of AT (or the length of their program, whichever is shorter).
- **Doctoral** students are eligible for AT up to 36 months or the length of their degree program, whichever is shorter.

To apply for Academic Training, J-1 students must complete an [Academic Training application](#) **before** they graduate. To be granted Academic Training approval, the following documents are required:

- **A letter from their UD academic advisor** confirming the following:
 1. The goals and objectives of the specific training program
 2. A description of the training program, including:
 - a. the exact location
 - b. the name and work address of the training supervisor

- c. the number of hours per week of employment
 - d. the start and end date of the training
3. How the training relates to the student's major field of study
 4. Why it is an integral or critical part of the academic program of the exchange visitor student.
- **An employment offer letter** specifying salary amount

Students can only begin working off-campus once they receive **written Academic Training authorization** from our office.

Travel Regulations

Initial F-1/J-1 students: may arrive in the U.S. **up to 30 days prior to the start** of their program as listed on their I-20/DS-2019.

Continuing F-1/J-1 students: may travel and reenter the U.S. any time between semesters/sessions. A travel signature is needed on their I-20/DS-2019 for reentry. Students apply for the travel signature with our office and the signature is valid for 12 months or until graduation, whichever is earlier.

After graduation, students are on either a **60-day grace period (F-1)** or a **30-day grace period (J-1)** and are not permitted reentry into the U.S. during that time if they have left the country. Students on post-OPT or J-1 Academic Training may continue to travel and reenter the U.S. with certain documents on hand.

F-1/J-1 students must have the following for entry into the U.S.

- A valid F-1/J-1 visa
- A valid DS-2019/I-20 signed with a valid travel signature
- A valid passport at least 6 months into the future.
- Supporting documentation (financial documents, UD admission letter, etc) is recommended to keep on hand in case they are asked to provide additional information.

F-1/J-1 students may leave the U.S. during the major semesters but should have the approval of their academic department/professors if they will miss any classes during their travels. They should limit their travel during the major semesters as they must be in the U.S. studying to maintain F-1/J-1 status. Students outside of the U.S. for the fall/spring semesters due to dissertation research may be able to maintain status if they provide a department letter to CGPS confirming that time outside of the U.S. during that semester is for dissertation research purposes.

Students working on-campus and traveling during work periods should contact their department and UD Payroll for information on payment policies while working outside of the U.S.

For more information, please see [Travel & Visas](#).

Sponsored Students

Many international students at UD are sponsored by their home government, from countries such as Oman, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey. These students often have special requirements to follow as outlined by the sponsors when it comes to a reduced course load, leave of absence, billing, and employment. CGPS serves as a liaison with many sponsoring organizations. Please contact CGPS to check if they need to get approval from their sponsors before engaging in employment or requesting any changes to their academic program or immigration status.

The other sponsored student category is Fulbright Foreign Students. These students are typically degree-seeking graduate students. However, their immigration documents were not issued by CGPS. Instead, their immigration documents are typically issued by either the State Department, Institute of International Education (IIE), or Amideast. Fulbright students also may have certain restrictions and requirements as it relates to their academic program, billing, health insurance, employment, and others. CGPS serves as a liaison with Fulbright managing organizations. Please check with CGPS to check if any Fulbright students need to get prior approval from their sponsor before engaging in employment or requesting any changes to their academic program.

Programming and Engagement

- a. **Pre-arrival webinars:** CGPS provides pre-arrival webinars covering a variety of topics to help incoming international students prepare for their arrival and transition to the US and to UD. These topics include, but are not limited to, understanding healthcare and health insurance in the US, academic preparedness, travel and arrival preparations, managing finances in the US, and off-campus housing and community resources.
- b. **International student orientation:** Upon arriving in the US and before the start of every semester, CGPS hosts an international student orientation program that covers the basics of understanding immigration rules and responsibilities, introduction to key campus resources, and an introduction to career readiness. This program also offers an opportunity for new international students to meet CGPS staff and socialize amongst themselves.
- c. **International Coffee Hour:** CGPS, co-sponsored by the Division of Student Life and Dining Services, hosts a weekly coffee hour at Trabant Student Center every Friday from 4 to 6 pm. Coffee Hour provides opportunities for socialization and intercultural engagement. It is also often co-hosted by student organizations and co-sponsored by UD offices and other organizations.
- d. **iBuddy Mentoring program:** CGPS coordinates a student mentoring program that matches incoming students with current UD students, known as iBuddies. iBuddy

mentors are available to assist incoming students with their transition before arriving in the U.S. and throughout the semester. IBuddy mentors are trained every spring semester and are paired with new students in the summer.

e. Other signature programs:

- i. International Student Essay Contest: Every fall semester, international students are invited to submit an essay about their experiences and journey as an international student at UD. First and second prize essay winners are chosen for the undergraduate, graduate, and ELI levels.
- ii. Thanksgiving Dinner: Every fall semester, CGPS hosts a Thanksgiving dinner for international students, scholars, and their families.