

FAQ's FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

More questions? Check out our website at: www.uga.edu/oie/ISSIS

Office location: 110E. Clayton St. 4th floor, Bank of America Bldg. Athens, GA 30602

Phone: (706)425.3154 Email: visahelp@uga.edu

How can I ask a question from an international student advisor? F/J advising options

Walk-in Advising:

International students and scholars may schedule appointments in advance to see advisors or obtain assistance without an appointment **during regularly scheduled walk-in hours**. During walk-in assistance, students and scholars will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis.

F-1 & F-2:

9-11 a.m. Mondays

2-4 p.m. Wednesdays

9-11 a.m. Thursdays

The **maximum amount of time** allowed for your meeting with an advisor is **10 minutes**. Complex situations are best addressed by scheduling an appointment with the appropriate advisor.

Individual Appointment:

A student who has a more complex question (more than 15 minutes) that *cannot be answered* by email or who is *not available during walk-in advising* can call the OIE receptionist at 706-425-3154. All appointments must be made with **at least 24 hours notice**. Advisors are normally not available on Fridays when they spend the day catching up with paperwork.

E-mail visahelp@uga.edu:

visahelp@uga.edu is an e-mail account checked multiple times daily by the OIE advisors. An advisor will consider your question and respond with an answer if possible within two days. If an e-mail answer is not possible (complex situations) then the advisor will respond and request that you make an appointment with an advisor to discuss the situation and get a solution.

How do I extend my visa?

Visas can only be “extended” or “renewed” outside of the United States. Since visas are only used as a pass that allows you to come to the border of the U.S. and your I-20 or DS-2019 is what allows you to actually enter and remain here legally, a valid visa is **not needed** to *maintain* your status. Renewal, when needed, is best done at the US Embassy in your home country.

What if I need to extend my I-20?

OIE will send you a letter **60** days before your I-20 is supposed to expire. If you know that you will not be graduating on time, it is your responsibility to fill out a **Program Extension Form** (this can be downloaded online from our website under “For Students” and “Forms” or stop by our office) during the semester prior to graduation. The preferable time to extend would be within **one month in advance**, in case any problems arise, so that there is adequate time to process this request. You will need a letter from your Academic Advisor, **original** financial documents (no print outs or copies will be accepted) and the form completed and returned to OIE. (Complete details on what you need to do can be found on the form)

Do I have to have insurance coverage during summers or if I stay after graduation?

As an international student at The University of Georgia you must have health insurance coverage the ENTIRE time you are physically in the U.S. If you remain in the U.S. for the summer then you should be insured. Once you graduate from the University of Georgia then you are no longer required to show us proof of insurance unless you need to register for classes. You will have the option of maintaining this insurance after graduation, if you would like.

Do I have to be enrolled in the summer? Can I work full time?

As a student in F-1 status you do not have to be enrolled during the summer, **unless** it is your first semester in school. Summer is considered your official vacation time from school, so you may remain in the U.S. and not enroll in any classes. If you do decide to enroll you can and there is no minimum or maximum enrollment requirement. Another great thing about the summer is that as long as you will be attending here in the fall you can work full time on campus. During any official university break, you may exceed 20 hours a week of work. These vacations are summer, spring break, fall break, winter break and Thanksgiving. However, if working **off campus**, you **must** obtain work permission first. These forms can also be found on our website or in our office.

Am I allowed to work or do an internship while at UGA?

As an F-1 or J-1 student you are allowed to work 20 hours a week **on campus** during fall and spring semesters and full time during the summer semester. If you want to work off-campus you will have to apply for permission. F-1's that have been in status for 9 months or more should attend a CPT/OPT session to find out more information. You can call or email to sign up for one of these sessions. The employment session schedule is also listed online for your convenience.

How far in advance should I apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training)?

The earliest time you can apply is 4 months in advance. It is strongly recommended for you to apply as early as possible. You should allow up to 2 weeks for our office to process the first part of the application, and allow one week for mailing the application to the USCIS service center. Once they receive your application, they will send you a receipt notice (sent to our office) and then allow **up to 90 days** after the receipt notice to receive your employment authorization card. After USCIS has processed your card, it will be mailed to our office.. If you have moved by the time your card reaches our office, we can make arrangements to send that to your new address. *** Once the application leaves our office, there is nothing we can do to speed up the process of your card, so please be patient (as there are thousands of applications processed) and we will notify you via email immediately when your card arrives.

What if I want a family member to visit me?

The Office of International Education does help students to bring their spouses and children to the U.S. to visit or live with them. If this is the case please complete an I-20 or DS-2019 request form indicating that this will be used by your dependents. Once you submit this form to our office along with financial documentation you will be issued a new I-20 or DS-2019. This new I-20 or DS-2019 should be mailed to your family members so that they can take it to the U.S. Embassy in their country to apply for the F-2 or J-2 visa. This process is very similar to when you obtained your visa to enter the U.S. If you want to invite your parents or friends to visit you in the U.S. please refer to the "Invite a Visitor" handout.

What if I'm not taking enough hours?

If you are not registering for and completing a full course load each semester then you will be considered "out of status." Graduate students must complete 9 hours and undergraduates 12 hours each fall and spring semester to maintain their status and to be eligible for benefits such as working and travel signatures. If you are not taking enough hours then you will not be allowed to work (this includes assistantships) or obtain travel signatures for re-entry into the U.S. You will be illegally in the U.S. and you will need to file a reinstatement application with UCIS to get your status back. If this is the case you will need to see the international advisor to help you with this. Please remember to talk to an advisor BEFORE you drop a class.

What kind of financial aid can international students get?

At this time there are few types of funding available to international students at UGA. The only funding available from UGA is in the form of assistantships and these are applied for through your academic department. There are some loans and scholarships not affiliated with UGA that you may be eligible for and this information can be obtained from our website under "For Students" and "Forms." Some students may be eligible for an **out-of-state tuition waiver**. More information on this can be obtained from our website. This waiver form can *only* be filled out online, then printed out and brought to our office.

What do I need to do if I am Transferring?

If you are currently enrolled in classes as an F-1 or J-1 student at the University of Georgia, and wish to transfer to another university in the U.S., you will need to submit a Transfer Release Request form (found online or in our office) and a copy of your Admission letter (from your new school) to our office at least one week in advance. Please allow a few days for your records to transfer from our system to your new school, and they will issue your new I-20. Please communicate with the appropriate admissions office at your new school to ensure that the proper I-20 is issued and that any travel plans are well established with the admissions advisor as they will advise you of the proper steps for your individual situation.

When do I need a Travel Signature?

You should obtain a travel signature when you travel outside of the country. You may bring your I-20 or DS-2019 to our office at least one week before your travel date. Each travel signature is valid for **one year** and will allow you to travel as many times needed in and out of the country within that year. However, if you are on OPT, you will need a valid travel signature every **6 months**.

Do I need to pay taxes? Where do I go about taxes?

All international students must file with IRS. Even students that do not work must complete a form. The International Student Life (ISL) office located in 210 Memorial Hall can help you complete and file these forms. You can email the ISL office at isltax@uga.edu with your tax questions.