

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

Basic Definitions:

Passport: Your passport, issued by your country of citizenship, should always be kept valid at least six months into the future. To renew your passport, contact your home government.

Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019): This certificate is an immigration document that correlates with the particular immigration status you hold. An I-20 is used for F-1 students and F-2 dependents. A DS-2019 is used for J-1 exchange visitors and J-2 dependents. Even after you have left the United States, you should retain these documents as they serve as an official record of your immigration history. They are also useful for tax purposes.

Visa: The visa is the most commonly misunderstood immigration document. It refers to the stamp in your passport that is obtained at the US Embassy or Consulate outside the U.S. The validity of the visa stamp only pertains to the period during which you may use it for admission to the US. It does not indicate the length of time you may remain in the US. In general, you may remain in the US with an expired visa as long as your I-20, DS 2019 and/or I-94 card is still valid and you are still pursuing the objectives of your stay in the US. Additionally, the visa stamp indicates the number of entries permitted, usually one, two, or M for multiple entries.

Immigration Status: This is generally related to the type of visa you were issued, and is reflected on your I-94 card. If you change your immigration status, this will be reflected on a new I-94 card that USCIS (see below for more information about USCIS) will issue.

Form I-94: This is a document you can get online at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home> (Arrival/Departure record). This is a very important document as it indicates the immigration status you are given upon entry to the United States and the length of time you may stay. Most students and exchange visitors are given “**D/S**” as the length of stay. This means that you can stay in the US until you complete your program of study as long as your I-20 or DS-2019 is valid.

F-1 Students: The F-1 classification is used for students pursuing a full course of study at an academic or language institution. This status is used solely for the purpose of study.

H-1B Temporary Workers: This classification allows a foreign national to work in the US in a “specialty occupation” for a maximum of 6 years.

J-1 Exchange Visitors: The J-1 classification is used for exchange visitors. In the University setting, this status is used for visiting faculty, research scholars, short-term scholars, specialists and exchange students.

TN: This classification allows citizens of Canada and Mexico to work in the US in certain occupations specified under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service, is the agency that is responsible for the administration of immigration and naturalization adjudication functions.

DOS: Department of State, is in charge of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, US Embassies and Consulates.

SEVIS: Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a database that schools use to communicate required information to the Department of Homeland Security and the DOS.

Record Keeping: *ALWAYS* keep your immigration documents safe. This includes keeping *ALL* copies of your I-20s and/or DS-2019s, as well as other immigration documents. Do not throw away these important documents as you may need them in the future.