

Immigration FAQs

1. What does F-1 and J-1 mean?

F-1 and J-1 are different visa statuses. F-1 status is for individuals coming to the U.S. to be full-time students. J-1 status is for individuals coming to the U.S. as students, scholars, trainees, teachers, professors, research assistants, medical graduates or international visitors. Individuals in J-1 status take part in a wide range of exchange visitor programs sponsored by schools, institutions, and organizations.

2. What is a Form I-20?

The Form I-20 shows that you are eligible for "F-1 Student" status. It is issued by the college you are authorized to attend and indicates how long you may remain in the U.S. It also indicates your major field of study. Students in valid F-1 status are allowed to remain in the U.S. until the completion of their studies plus a 60 day grace period.

3. What is a Form DS-2019?

The Form DS-2019 shows that you are eligible for J-1 status. It is issued by the college (or sponsoring organization/institution) and indicates how long you may remain in the U.S. Students in valid J-1 status are allowed to remain in the U.S. until the completion of their program plus a 30 day grace period.

4. What is a visa?

The visa is placed in your passport at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the U.S. An F-1 visa is required to ENTER the U.S. in F-1 Student status. A J-1 visa is required to ENTER the U.S. in J-1 status. **The expiration date of your visa does not affect how long you may stay in the U.S.** The only reason to be concerned about an expired visa is if you wish to leave the U.S. and re-enter.

5. What is a Form I-94?

The Form I-94 is your official "Arrival/Departure Record." It is issued when you arrive in the U.S. It indicates your immigration status (F-1 or J-1 for students) and an expiration date. Your expiration date is usually "D/S", which means "Duration of Status." This notation refers to the date you complete your studies or the end date on your Form I-20/DS-2019 (whichever is earlier). You will surrender this card when you depart the U.S., except for visits of less than 30 days to Mexico, Canada, or adjacent islands (excluding Cuba). The Form I-94 is expensive to replace so keep it safe!

6. What is SEVIS?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a Department of Homeland Security internet based electronic monitoring system for international students and scholars. Individuals seeking F-1 or J-1 status are subject to a SEVIS fee which must be paid to the Department of Homeland Security before the U.S. Consulate/Embassy interview for the initial visa. Please see "SEVIS Fee Facts and Instructions" for additional information regarding amounts and procedures for fee payment.



7. What is USCIS?

USCIS is United States Citizenship & Immigration Services, one of the branches of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

8. What does it mean if my Form I-20/Form DS-2019 expires?

While there are several important sections of the Form I-20 and the Form DS-2019, one of the more significant parts of this form is SECTION 5 on Form I-20 and SECTION 3 on the Form DS-2019. This part of the form indicates when the form expires. If you will not finish your program before the specific end date, you must come to Slater International Center prior to the end date to discuss how to apply for an extension. If you come after your Form I-20 has expired, you will be out of status and ineligible for an extension of stay.

9. What should I do if I last entered the U.S. with a B-1 or B-2 Tourist Visa?

You must meet with the International Student and Scholar Advisor (ISSA) immediately to discuss your options. You cannot begin classes until you have changed your status.

10. What do I need if I want to leave the U.S. and re-enter as a student?

- A valid Form I-20/ Form DS-2019 signed for re-entry by an ISSA within the past year
- A passport that is valid until at least six months into the future
- A valid F-1/J-1 visa (except Canadian citizens)
- Proof of financial support

11. Why do I need to have my Form I-20/DS-2019 signed for re-entry?

The signature on the Form I-20/DS-2019 verifies that you are a full-time student in valid F-1/J-1 non-immigrant status.

12. When can I get my Form I-20/Form DS-2019 signed for travel?

You can come to Slater International Center during walk-in hours or you can make an appointment. Signing the Form I-20/DS-2019 involves status and enrollment verification. You must bring all of your original immigration documents to Slater when you come to receive a travel signature. You should plan to have your Form I-20/DS-2019 signed well in advance of travel outside of the U.S.

13. What if I want to travel to Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent island for less than 30 days and my F-1/J-1 visa is expired?

If you have a valid passport, an expired F-1/J-1 visa, a Form I-20/DS-2019 with an up-to-date re-entry signature, and a Form I-94 indicating you have been admitted for Duration of Status (D/S) you can re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1/J-1 status as long as your trip is less than 30 days. You must retain your Form I-94 and tell the border official that you are taking advantage of "automatic visa revalidation." Currently, this benefit does not apply to citizens of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. In addition, if you decide to renew your visa in Canada, Mexico, or any adjacent island and your visa is denied, you may not re-enter the U.S. on automatic visa revalidation.

14. What if I decide to transfer out of Wellesley College to attend another school?

You must meet with the ISSA prior to starting classes at the new university. If Wellesley is uninformed of your transfer then your school will not be able to issue you a transfer Form I-20.

15. Can I work in the United States?

F-1 Students

Students in valid F-1 status are allowed to work on-campus up to 20 hours/week during the school year and full-time during official college breaks. No official work permission is required. For off-campus employment, authorization from both the ISSA and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is required. In most cases, off-campus employment must be directly related to your field of study, and can only be authorized after one academic year in F-1 status.

J-1 Students/Scholars

Individuals in valid J-1 status are allowed to work on-campus up to 20 hours/week during the school year and full-time during official college breaks. Written authorization from the ISSA is required prior to beginning employment. Off-campus employment authorization for Academic Training may be granted for a limited period of time during or following your studies at Wellesley. Authorization is required from the ISSA based on a specific offer of employment and a recommendation from your Class Dean.

16. Can I get a Social Security number or a Massachusetts Driver's License?

F-1 Students

F-1 students may apply for a Social Security number if they have an on-campus employment offer or have off-campus employment authorization. If your application is based on on-campus employment, you will need an "F-1 On-Campus Employment Form" to verify your eligibility for a Social Security number. If your application is based on off-campus employment authorization, you will need to show proof of employment authorization. See "Obtaining a Social Security Number" for more information.

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) requires that anyone who plans to live in Massachusetts for more than one year must obtain a Massachusetts' Driver's license within 30 days of obtaining their car. The RMV will request your Social Security number when you apply for a license. If you are not eligible for a Social Security number, the Social Security Administration will issue you a "Denial Letter" which you will include with your application for a license.

An official "International Driver's License" from certain countries may be used for up to one year if you do not plan to live in the U.S. for more than one year. Please visit the [RMV website](#) for more details.

J-1 Students/Scholars

Individuals in valid J-1 status may apply for a Social Security number at any time by completing a "J-1 Social Security Number Letter of Eligibility". J-1 students with on-campus employment need to complete the "J-1 On-Campus Employment Form". J-1 students with Academic Training authorization need to bring their letter of authorization to the Slater International Center.

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) requires that anyone who plans to live in Massachusetts for more than one year must obtain a Massachusetts' Driver's license within 30 days of obtaining their car. An official "International Driver's License" from certain countries may be used for up to one year (along with the home country drivers license) if you do not plan to live in the U.S. for more than one year. Please visit the [RMV website](#) for more details.

17. Do I have to file U.S. tax forms?

Yes! Most students will need to file at least one tax form. Students in F-1/J-1 status who have been in the U.S. for less than 5 years are usually nonresidents for tax purposes and must file the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 8843. Those who have had a U.S. source of income must also file Form 1040NR or 1040EZ and some may have to file a Massachusetts State income tax return. Slater International Center provides resources and forms to international students at Wellesley College every tax season.