Office of International Services (OIS)

Information Session for New F-1 and J-1 Students

Intended for Students in the U.S.
Overview

I. Introduction to the Office of International Services (OIS)
II. Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status
III. F-1 Employment Options
IV. COVID-19 Considerations
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Introduction to the Office of International Services (OIS)
International Student Enrollment at USC

USC Cosmopolitan Club, 1919
Office of International Services (OIS)

OIS supports international students and scholars as they strive to achieve their educational, professional, and personal objectives. Recognizing the many benefits of international educational exchange, OIS advocates for these benefits on campus, locally and nationally.

OIS is a resource center to help members of the USC international community make the most of their USC experience:

• Answer any questions F-1/J-1 students and scholars may have regarding their immigration status or benefits
• Provide one-on-one and group advising and support
• Offer student programs
• Assist students with navigating life in the U.S.
Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements

To maintain F-1/J-1 immigration status, students must enroll full-time in courses that apply to their degree requirements during each fall and spring semester.

Summer admits are required to enroll full-time during their first summer at USC.
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements

Students are considered full-time when enrolled in a minimum number of units, based on their degree level:

- Undergraduate students – 12 units
- Master’s students – 8 units
- Graduate Certificate students – 8 units
- Ph.D. students – 6 units
- Master’s/Ph.D. students with an assistantship – 6 units
### Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: Online Course Restrictions

- No more than 3 units of online course(s) are applicable to the full-time enrollment requirement.
- After meeting the full-time enrollment minimum for each level as described below, any additional units of coursework may be either in-person or online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Level</th>
<th>Course Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>9 units of in-person course(s) + 3 units of in-person or online course(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 unit minimum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s or Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>5 units of in-person course(s) + 3 units of in-person or online course(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 unit minimum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s/Ph.D. with an assistantship or Ph.D.</td>
<td>3 units of in-person course(s) + 3 units of in-person or online course(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 unit minimum</td>
<td></td>
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Full-Time Enrollment Requirements:
Exceptions for Reduced Course Load (RCL)

F-1/J-1 students may qualify for exception(s) to the full-time enrollment requirement for the fall and spring semester if they meet certain criteria for a Reduced Course Load (RCL) category:

1) Final Semester
2) Medical Reason
3) Academic Difficulty
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: Exceptions for Reduced Course Load (RCL)

1) **RCL due to Final Semester**
   • OIS may authorize a final semester RCL for students who are in their final semester of study and only have a few units remaining to meet academic program requirements
   • A final semester RCL can be used only *once per degree level*

2) **RCL due to Medical Reasons**
   • OIS may authorize a medical RCL due to a temporary health (physical or mental) condition(s) with an appropriate doctor’s letter recommending the RCL for medical reasons
   • To submit a medical RCL, F-1/J-1 students must provide a doctor’s letter with their RCL submission to OIS
3) **RCL due to Academic Difficulty**

- A student may qualify for an academic difficulty RCL if they meet one of the below criteria:
  - Initial difficulty with reading requirements; initial difficulty with the English language; *or* unfamiliarity with US teaching methods — *can only be used during first year of program*
  - Improper course level placement
  - Students who file an RCL must be enrolled at least part-time (6 units for undergraduate, 4 units for graduate, and 3 units for doctorate)
  - An academic difficulty RCL can be used only *once per degree level*
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: Exceptions for Reduced Course Load (RCL)

Students that meet criteria for an RCL category must submit their RCL request for processing by OIS no later than the add/drop deadline of the semester (i.e., 3rd week of the semester)
Additional Requirements for Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status: Address Updates

U. S. Address Updates
Moving to a new address?

Students must update their new address in OASIS within 10 days of moving. For instructions on how to update U.S. address, please refer to the OIS website.
Additional Requirements for Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status: International Travel

Traveling Abroad

• Students may travel internationally during scheduled university breaks
• Students returning to the U.S. from a temporary break should ensure they have the required documents to re-enter the country
Additional Requirements for Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status: International Travel

Required Documents for Re-entry to the U.S.
• Valid Passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of the re-entry to the U.S.)
• Valid F-1/J-1 visa in passport (except students from Canada)
• I-20/DS-2019 with a valid travel signature from OIS

Recommended Supporting Documents
• Financial support documents (proof of funding)
• USC acceptance letter
• Paper receipt of Form I-901: SEVIS fee payment
• Copy of USC transcript and/or proof of course registration
Employment Options for F-1 Students
F-1 Employment Options

Types of Employment
1) On-campus
2) Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
3) Optional Practical Training (OPT)

On-Campus Employment
• Does not require separate work authorization
• Limited to 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters
• May work up to 40 hours per week during summer and vacation breaks, if approved by the hiring USC department
• Review the OIS website for additional information
F-1 Employment Options

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
• Authorization for paid off-campus internships
• Requires separate work authorization from the student’s academic department and OIS
• Authorized during a student’s degree program
• Review information on the OIS website for eligibility requirements

Optional Practical Training (OPT)
• Authorization for employment after the student graduates
• Requires OIS and USCIS authorization
• Employment can be paid or unpaid and needs to be related to the student’s field of study
• Review information on the OIS website for eligibility requirements
F-1 Employment Options:
Social Security Number (SSN)

• If a student finds a paid job in one of the categories mentioned under F-1 employment options, they are eligible to apply for the SSN.

• SSN is a 9-digit number issued to citizens, permanent residents and temporary (working) non-residents by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

• Primary purpose on an SSN is to track individuals for taxation purposes; it is not intended to be used for identification purposes.

Students and scholars who are not eligible for an SSN may be eligible for a Tax Identification Number (ITIN) to use for filing taxes during tax season reporting.
COVID-19 Exceptions and Considerations for Fall 2021 and Spring 2022
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has issued guidance on enrollment requirements for F-1/J-1 students effective through May 2022. DHS may change their guidance without advance notice.

Despite COVID-19 pandemic conditions, students that are in the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status are still required to meet the full-time enrollment minimum:

- Undergraduate students – 12 units
- Master’s or Graduate Certificate students – 8 units
- Master’s/Ph.D. students with an assistantship or Ph.D. students – 6 units

DHS guidance has permitted some exceptions to online course enrollment restrictions for students to meet the full-time enrollment minimum.
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: Exceptions for COVID-19

Students who enter the U.S. on an Initial Attendance I-20/DS-2019 for fall 2021 or spring 2022

- OR -

Students who transferred their SEVIS record to USC, left the U.S., and are re-entering the U.S. on a Transfer Pending I-20:

• Must enroll full-time and in at least one hybrid or in-person course
• May not enroll in 100% online classes for their first semester

To activate F-1/J-1 status, OIS will verify the student’s enrollment in a hybrid/in-person course on the date the student completes Passport Verification or on the first day of classes, whichever is later.
Full-Time Enrollment Requirements: Exceptions for COVID-19

Students who are currently in the U.S. and have remained in the U.S. since transferring their SEVIS record to USC for fall 2021 or spring 2022:

• Must enroll full-time
• May enroll in 100% online classes in their first semester or in any combination on online, in-person, or hybrid classes
On-Campus Employment Considerations During COVID-19

- F-1/J-1 students may engage in on-campus employment remotely while in the U.S., if permitted by the hiring department and until further guidance is issued by SEVP.

- Actual jobs on USC’s campus will be limited due to restrictions in access to campus and remote operation of most services.
Passport Verification (PPV)
All new international students are required to submit the following documents to OIS upon their arrival in the United States:

1. Copy of Valid Passport
2. Copy of F-1/J-1 Visa
3. Copy of Page 1 and 2 of USC I-20 or DS-2019
4. Printout of I-94 Arrival Information
5. Printout of I-94 Travel History

Refer to the Passport Verification (PPV) page on the OIS website for document submission instructions.
Passport

• F-1/J-1 students are required to always maintain a valid passport
  • Should be valid for at least 6 months into the future, especially for re-entry into the U.S. and when applying for a visa
• Students must contact their local embassy or consulate for instructions on renewing their passport
  • Students may continue to use the expired passport with the valid visa, along with the new passport, when traveling
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

F-1/J-1 Visa

• Students may stay in the U.S. on an expired F-1/J-1 visa if they maintain their immigration status by being in possession of a valid I-20/DS-2019 and an I-94 Arrival/Departure record

• Visas cannot be renewed inside the U.S.; they must be renewed at a U.S. embassy/consulate abroad
  • Review the U.S. embassy/consulate website for details on the visa renewal process including required documents
  • Check visa wait times prior to renewing to ensure you have enough time to renew and re-enter the U.S.
    • Due to security checks, it is not recommended students use the period of winter or spring breaks to renew since they may be unable to return by the first day of classes
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

SEVIS and the Form I-20/DS-2019

• The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a web-based system of the federal government that maintains information on international students (F-1/J-1 visa holders) while in the U.S.

• School create and issue the Form I-20 for F-1 students and Form DS-2019 for J-1 students/scholars via SEVIS
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

I-20
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

DS-2019
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

I-94 Arrival Record

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home
Passport Verification (PPV): Immigration Documents

I-94 Travel History

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home
Passport Verification (PPV): Registration Holds

STU50 Hold – *Removed by OIS*
- Placed on graduate student records
- Restricts course registration

STU60 Hold – *Removed by OIS*
- Placed on undergraduate student records
- Does not restrict course registration

ALI01 Hold – *Removed by USC American Language Institute (ALI)*
- Placed on all students who have not met the USC English proficiency requirement
- Restricts course registration
- Questions? Email askali@usc.edu
Passport Verification (PPV): Registration Holds

OIS70 Hold – Removed by OIS
- Placed on students who began their degree program from abroad as non-F1/J-1 students may have an OIS70 hold on their account
- Does not restrict course registration
- Will be removed once student completes mandatory immigration check-in with OIS

ADM40 Hold – Removed by USC Registrar
- Placed on students who are required to submit their previous degree documents to IERF
- Does not restrict course registration
- Deadline to submit is by end of student’s first semester
- Contact: https://ierf.org/uni-evaluation/usc/, usc@ierf.org
Life in the U.S.
After arrival in the U.S., it is common for students to experience a period of cultural adjustment.
Life in the U.S.: Culture Adjustment

STAGE 1: Honeymoon Stage
• Taking care of practical matters
• Observing new culture/environment
• Meeting new friend/staff/professors
• Seeing/trying new things
• Able to understand/be understood (if English is not first language)

STAGE 2: Conflict (Culture Shock) Stage
• Negative feelings (isolation, frustration and depression)
• Homesickness
• Problems with subtleties of language
• No time to make new friends/time spent with friends from home culture
• Complain about host culture/blame for problems
Life in the U.S.: Culture Adjustment

**STAGE 3: Critical (Adjustment) Stage**
- Choose to explore a new culture
- Accept the challenge of self-reflection
- Assume responsibility for own cultural adjustment

**STAGE 4: Adaptation Stage**
- Language skills improved
- Better understand actions of the members of the host culture
- Made friends in the host culture
- Developed greater tolerance for strange and new environment
- Become a mediator between two cultures
Life in the U.S.: Punctuality

Being on time, or punctual, is very important.

What is “on time”?  
- About 5 minutes early

Consequences of tardiness  
- Lose appointments, negative impact on reputation

Proper notification  
- Call/email if you are going to be late
Life in the U.S.: Health and Wellness

• Medical centers and other health administrators may ask personal questions to gather information in order to provide you with better, individually-tailored health services – *this is a normal part of the intake process*

• **In the U.S., medical information is legally required to remain confidential and private**

• In the U.S., it is common and encouraged to seek professional help if you need help with a medical or mental health issue
  • Counselors and therapists are trained to listen to you and offer help; they can provide treatment for issues such as homesickness, stress, depression, social anxiety, and more

• Are you worried about a fellow Trojan are unsure how to help? Submit a Trojans Care for Trojans (TC4T) report to connect them with important resources

• Review comprehensive list of USC Health and Wellness Resources
Life in the U.S.: California Driver’s License

• Students are encouraged to obtain a California Driver’s License from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) if they plan to drive a car in the US
• California does not recognize an International Driving Permit (IDP), International Driver’s License or an International License as a valid form of driver’s license
• A California driver’s license is required to purchase a car and obtain auto insurance
• Social Security Number (SSN) is not required to apply for a driver’s license
• Must pass written and driving exams
• Apply for the driver’s license after the add/drop deadline of 1st semester at USC
Life in the U.S.: Beware of Scams

Watch the OIS video for information on how to protect yourself from scams.

Know the Facts
IRS or other government agencies will never:
- Ask for money over the phone or online
- Request or accept payments in the form of gift cards or Bitcoin
Law enforcement agencies will never:
- Request payment of citations, warrants, etc., via the phone

Safety Tips
- Never provide your credit card information or your Social Security number over the phone or online to someone you don’t know
- If you visit a website that asks for your Social Security number, don’t provide it
- If you receive an email from a stranger or company asking you to click on a hyperlink and/or open an attachment and enter your financial information, delete the email
- Do not respond to friend requests from strangers
- Hang up on telemarketers

If you’ve been the victim of a scam or suspect you’ve been scammed, contact:
USC Department of Public Safety (DPS) (213) 740-6000
Life in the U.S.: Resources for International Students

Campus Involvement and Student Organizations
• Get involved with various nationality-based or interest-based student organizations for community support
• For more information, see Campus Activities

Los Angeles (LA) Activities
• Explore LA museums, visit amusement parks and enjoy the numerous beach/hiking trails

International Update (IU)
• Stay up-to-date with the weekly OIS e-newsletter
• Subscribe today
OIS Contact Information
Contact OIS

The Office of International Services is providing remote assistance to our international community via email, one-on-one advising, or through group advising sessions. The physical offices at UPC and HSC are closed until further notice.

OIS Live (Virtual Front Desk/Drop-in Advising via Zoom)
OIS Advisors are available for one-on-one consultation Mondays through Fridays via Zoom. Advising hours and Zoom meeting link are posted on the [OIS website]. No appointment necessary.

Zoom Group Advising
OIS will offer group advising sessions via Zoom. Refer to the [OIS eCalendar] to view upcoming session topics.

Email
For all F-1 student related inquiries: [ois@usc.edu]
For all J-1 student related inquiries: [J1exchg@usc.edu]