

General Guidelines & Procedures for International Students

International students enter the U.S. as non-immigrants for the purpose of pursuing academic or educational objectives. They enter on F-1 Student visas or on J-1 Exchange Visitor visas in the student category. Their immediate dependents arrive as F-2s or J-2s, respectively.

Occasionally, an international student may enter the U.S.A on a Tourist Visa (B-1/B-2), and then change status to F-1 or J-1 after arrival and before beginning full-time study. However, this scenario is risky and not recommended. If an international student decides to enter the U.S. as a tourist, the student should seek a B-2 Prospective Student visa status. Under no circumstances should the student enter in Waiver Tourist (WT) status or in Waiver Business (WB) status on the Visa Waiver Program.

Invitation

"The invitation procedure for international students at Rice University begins after international students have applied for admission to the undergraduate program through the Office of Admissions, or to the graduate program through the individual academic department.

Once prospective graduate international students have been accepted, the graduate academic departments send admissions forms specific for international students for them to complete (e.g., Financial Declaration Form and Foreign Student Transfer Release Form). These forms are returned to the graduate academic departments with financial verification. Once the international student accepts the admission offer in writing, the academic departments forward a copy of the offer letter, a copy of the application, GSDB first page, a copy of the passport identity page, a foreign address, and other admission forms to the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS). (Note: the Foreign Student Transfer Release Form is used only for students transferring from schools inside the USA.)

Once prospective undergraduate international students have been accepted by the Office of Admissions, the files are sent to the OISS. The OISS requires the Financial Declaration form, Foreign Student Transfer Release Form (if transferring from a school inside the USA), a copy of the passport identity page and a foreign address.

The OISS reviews the admissions offers, and provided documentation is in order, issues the appropriate visa documents (I-20 for F-1 students; DS-2019 for J-1 students). The OISS will mail these visa documents directly to international students. Supplemental information is included to inform international students about consular processing and U.S. health insurance obligations. (In the case that the academic department wants to send visa documents in a secure, expedited manner using an express delivery service

with a tracking system, departments must indicate on the packet checklist that they wish to pick up the packet to mail it via FedEx or DHL.)

The international students present these documents to a U.S. Consulate or Embassy in the home country to obtain the appropriate visa stamps to enter the U.S. The F-1 visa may be granted as early as 90 days before the reporting date listed on the I-20.

NOTE: Financial verification is extremely important and must be in order before visa documents will be issued. The financial verification should be in U.S. dollars and written in English.

Arrival

Students can enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the I-20 reporting date. International students must report within 30 days of their arrival to the OISS located in Room A102 Abercrombie Lab. During check in, the OISS reviews the international students' visa documents and provides a brief orientation, discussing legal responsibilities while in the U.S.

Graduate international students are required to participate in specific orientation sessions designed for them in August. Time is set aside during these orientation sessions for international students to meet with staff from the OISS to discuss legal issues and other concerns.

Undergraduate international students are required to attend a short orientation session during "O" week with the OISS on Thursday morning.

Any graduate and undergraduate students receiving any tuition waiver, stipend, scholarship or grant *must* register for a social security number (SSN). Check with the OISS about the time, date and procedures for applying for an SSN.

Extensions

The I-20 and DS-2019 student visa documents contain expiration dates.

If an international student anticipates that the academic program will last beyond the expiration date stated on the I-20 or DS-2019, the student must apply for an extension of visa status. The extension process is not difficult, but it must be completed in full before the documents expire or the student will be out of status. International students are encouraged to speak with an OISS advisor at least 1 month before their I-20/DS-2019 expire.

Changes in Program

International students wishing to change academic programs (i.e., change level from Masters to Ph.D. or change majors) must notify the OISS at least fifteen (15) days *in advance* of securing the change so that amendments may be made to the visa documents. If a department or division becomes aware of an international

student who is changing programs, please refer the student to the OISS immediately. This referral also applies for changes in financial support.

Employment Issues

International students in F-1 status may work on-campus up to a total of 20 hours per week while school is in session and up to 40 hours per week during vacation or break times. No special permission or written authorization other than the I-20 is required for this type of employment, except completing the I-9.

International students in J-1 status may also work on-campus as long as one of the following is true:

1. The employment is on-campus in association with a fellowship, scholarship, or assistantship; or
2. The employment occurs on the premises of the educational institution the student is authorized to attend.

J-1 students must obtain written permission from the OISS prior to beginning on-campus employment.

No international student may work off-campus (internship or otherwise) unless permission is granted by the OISS or by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If a department or division knows of an international student who wishes to work off-campus, refer the international student to the OISS immediately. Students who work off-campus without proper authorization are considered out of status and could be subject to severe penalties, including deportation.

Issues of dependent employment must be addressed individually by the OISS.