



Eastern University

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

Office of International Student Services

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Welcome to Eastern University!

We come from all over the world, with different goals and plans. We speak different languages, but we share one friendship as colleagues together at Eastern University, home of the Eagles. There will be many opportunities to enjoy campus activities, participate in student groups of various kinds, attend Christian life programs or just make friends. The Office of International Student and Scholar Services encourages you to get involved in extracurricular activities of interest to you in order to immerse yourself in U.S. culture and the English language, if you are learning English as a second language. You will find information on our website (www.eastern.edu) by clicking on “Student Life”, inquiring of the Student Development Office, or simply by asking around. We hope your experience here will allow you to grow intellectually, socially, spiritually, and culturally. Welcome to the international community of Eastern University. We look forward to getting to know you and discovering the unique contribution you will add to our community.

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Applying to Eastern University



Important Elements of the International Admissions Process

1. International Credential Evaluation

Unless your academic transcripts come from a U.S. school, you will likely be asked to send for a course by course credential evaluation from an accredited evaluation service. A list of acceptable agencies can be found on the website www.naces.org. Students are encouraged to be proactive and arrange for the credential evaluation report to be sent to the Eastern admissions office as soon as you begin the application process.



2. English Proficiency

A minimum TOEFL or IELTS score is required for admission to Eastern. For the TOEFL, that would be the equivalent of the paper score of 550 or the internet test score of 79. For the IELTS, a minimum score of 6.5. Only students for whom their primary spoken language is English AND their language of instruction has been English, can the test be waived. If you don't think you can make the minimum score, you may want to ask your admissions counselor about the possibility of starting with an intensive English program at Eastern University.

3. Financial Requirements

To qualify for the F-1 student visa, a student must show he or she is able to pay for study in the U.S. as well as the cost of living in the U.S. Ask your admissions recruiter for an estimate of expenses for your particular degree program. To document your finances for the F-1 visa, you may use the forms in the appendix of this handbook. Instructions on how to document finances can be found on page 7 of this handbook. Most Eastern pro-grams require an initial deposit as well.

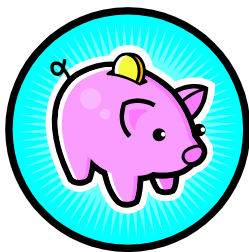
4. Health Forms and the Student Insurance Plan

The U.S. does not have public health services for non-citizens. A private health insurance policy is imperative in order to get medical services in the U.S. All F-1 and J-1 international students must carry the student insurance plan at least for their first year. You also must fill out and submit the required health forms before Eastern can send you the necessary visa papers. More information and the required forms can be found on the Eastern website.

5. The Visa Process



Information on the F-1 student visa process can be found on the following pages of this handbook, or on our website by clicking on *International Students* and then on *Prospective Students*.



Documenting Finances for Student Visas

F-1 and J-1 visa regulations dictate certain financial requirements, which Eastern as an institution must uphold in order to maintain government certification to receive international students. Basically, to be approved for a visa, the student must show that he/she has the financial resources to pay for the entire degree program. Typically F-1 visas are for students with personal or private sources of funding, whereas J-1 visas are for students with government or institutional or personal funding.

Acceptable Financial Documents

One or more of the following documents may be used to fulfill the requirements stated above. The sum total of all monies should equal or surpass the costs for tuition and living expenses.

Financial aid letter stating a scholarship of a specific amount has been awarded.

A letter granting a graduate assistantship as a type of campus employment.

Statement of Support (see instructions below).

A notarized letter or other legal affidavit promising financial support in a specific amount from a specific source, with proof of assets attached.

Receipt of an advanced deposit made directly to Eastern University

Instructions for the Statement of Support Form (The form is available on the Eastern website (https://www.eastern.edu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/student_life/int_stu_serv/financial_support.pdf) or from one of the Eastern admissions offices.)

Individual student may show personal resources available to pay for studies by filling out the Statement of Support. Any person or organization providing financial support should also fill out the form, and attaches a bank statement or other proof of assets. If in the U.S., he or she signs the form in the presence of a notary public, who provides an official seal. If the student is not in the U.S., the documents should be official by the standards of his/her country. The student, parent and any other person, group or organization providing financial support to the student should fill out forms separately. The student and/or the sponsor should be prepared to send the first payment prior to the student's start date.

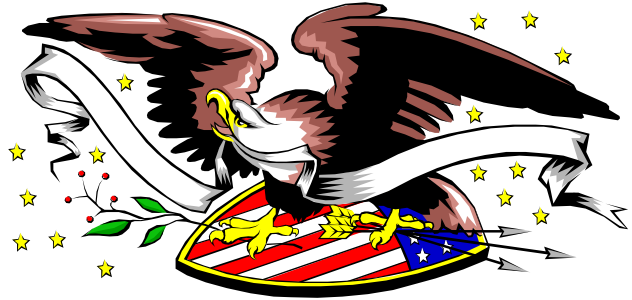
Required Initial Deposit

Before the I-20 or DS-2019 can be issued, the student, or one or more of the sponsors, must pay an initial deposit totaling at least \$5000 U.S. dollars (or whatever amount the individual Eastern program requires). This is not an additional amount, but rather it goes on the student's account as a first payment toward the actual cost of the program. Keep in mind that scheduling a visa interview (or filing for a change of status in the U.S.) may take from 60 to 90 days. The student may need to defer the start date of their program if there is not enough time to complete all processes. In the case of an F-1 or J-1 student already in the U.S., the required deposit must be paid before the transfer of the SEVIS record and the issuance of an Eastern University I-20 or DS-2019.

Two Sets of Original Documents Needed

The student must prepare two sets of original, notarized financial documents. One set will remain in the possession of Eastern University. The student keeps the second set to take to the visa interview.

Obtaining a Student Visa



You will need a student visa to enter the United States to study. Visa application packets may be obtained from the U.S. Consulate nearest you, or online at www.travel.state.gov. In order to secure a visa you will need various documents to support your application. Some of the supporting documents come from Eastern University, and others you must provide yourself. Please read all the documents and instructions carefully, and inquire at the US Consulate if you don't understand something.

At this time, all visa applicants (with the exception of citizens of Canada and Bermuda) must have a personal interview at the U.S. Consulate. Because it may take time to be assigned an interview date, you should begin the visa process at least 2 months in advance of your Eastern University start date.

You will need the following documents to support your application:

- A letter of acceptance to an Eastern University program
- A SEVIS I-20 form (F-1) or DS-2019 form (J-1)
- Proof of payment of the SEVIS fee
- A current, valid passport
- Form DS-160 or another indicated Non-immigrant Visa Application
- Evidence of financial support for the period of time and amount indicated on the I-20
- Proof that you have a permanent residence outside the United States
- One or more passport-type photographs

Additional application materials may be requested by the visa officer to prove your eligibility for a student visa. These may include: evidence of English proficiency, school records to verify academic preparation, and additional evidence of strong ties to your home country or of your ability to support yourself while in the United States. An application fee may be required. You may wish to inquire at the embassy as to what you will need to bring at the time of your interview with a consular officer.

If your application is approved, the consular officer will place a visa in your passport. If your application is not approved, the officer will give you a form with a code number or explanation as to why not. Please communicate with us about the results of your interview.

Paying the SEVIS Fee

In order to gain initial F-1 or J-1 visa status, a student must pay a one-time required SEVIS fee of \$200. Receipt of this payment will be requested at the time of the visa interview. (For citizens of Canada or Bermuda, receipt of payment will be required when crossing the border or at the immigration counter in the airport.) The student does not need to pay this fee again for the duration of the student status.

Other persons who need to pay the SEVIS fee are students who change status to F-1 within the U.S., students applying for reinstatement to student status, and students re-entering an academic program after having been out of the U.S. for more than five months (not including study-abroad students who are still considered active students during their study abroad).

Attempts to claim a refund of the SEVIS fee after having received the visa, are considered fraudulent and are subject to penalties, which might include the cancellation of the visa. Please do not believe those who say it is OK to do this.

There are three methods of paying the SEVIS fee:

1. PAYMENT IN US DOLLARS BY CREDIT CARD ONLINE

Upon receipt of the I-20 or DS-2019, a student may go to the website at www.fmjfee.com to submit the Form I-901 along with credit card payment. Debit cards, also known as check cards, may also be used if they have the Visa or Mastercard logo. The student should print out two copies of the receipt screen before logging out. Keep one copy with the I-20 or DS-2019, and another in a safe place in case one is lost. As with all documents you receive, keep copies and never throw anything away.

2. PAYMENT BY CHECK OR BANK DRAFT FROM A US BANK

Internet-generated payment coupon – The student completes the electronic form online at www.fmjfee.com, but selects “check or money order” as the payment method. The student is taken to a Payment Coupon screen, that prompts him/her to print the coupon. The student then mails the coupon along with the check or money order.

Paper I-901 option – The student goes to the website www.fmjfee.com and downloads a copy of the I-901 form, fills it in and mails it along with the check or money order.

Make checks payable to : I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee

Mail to: I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee
P.O. Box 970020
St. Louis, MO 63197-0020

By courier or express delivery to:
I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee
1005 Convention Plaza
St. Louis, MO 63101



Please Note: The check or money order must be drawn on U.S. currency. Some international banks are able to offer this service even though they are not inside the U.S.

3. PAYMENT USING WESTERN UNION *Quick Pay* SERVICE

The student goes to a Western Union office that offers *Quick Pay* service. The Western Union office collects the SEVIS I-901 fee in local currency, along with the needed Form I-901 data, and electronically submits the payment and data to the US Dept. of Homeland Security. The Western Union office then issues a receipt that serves as proof of payment for a visa interview (or at a US port of entry).



Other important notes about the SEVIS fee payment:

1. A student must have received the I-20 or DS-2019 form to be able to pay the SEVIS fee.
2. A Form I-797 receipt notice will be sent to all SEVIS fee payers, to the mailing address provided on the Form I-901. Please keep in mind that processing times may vary, as may the mail service depending on where the student lives. Paying by internet or by Western Union *Quick Pay* service will provide a temporary receipt, which is valid for the visa interview, but the student should pay at least three days in advance of the visa interview. (An internet receipt is acceptable at a US port of entry for Canadians and Bermudans).
3. The student may be able to request expedited courier delivery, by paying extra. Not all courier services offer this option.
4. Payment of the SEVIS fee can be made by a third party.
5. If a student is unable to pay the SEVIS fee by any of the three methods listed, he/she should contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services at Eastern University.
6. The student visa will be denied if the student has not paid the SEVIS fee.
7. If the student is denied the visa for other reasons after having paid the SEVIS fee, he/she may re-apply for a visa in the same category within 12 months without having to repay the SEVIS fee.
8. Doctoral students (D.Min or Ph.D.) may spend periods of time outside the US. Eastern University will maintain their SEVIS records as active students, so the SEVIS fee will not have to be repaid.



Change of Status to F-1

Sometimes in order to study at Eastern University, a non-immigrant visa-holder must seek a change of visa status to F-1. If a person is accepted to study at Eastern, but does not currently have a visa that permits study, he or she must change visa status to F-1 in order to begin studies at Eastern. A change of status may take 60 to 90 days to be approved, and in some cases, the student may not start classes until approval. If a student's current non-immigrant status permits study, but is expiring, he or she must change visa status to F-1 in order to continue study at Eastern. The application to change status should be filed within 45 days of visa expiration. This is the process for filing a change of status (COS):

1. When an applicant on another non-immigrant visa is officially accepted to study at Eastern, he or she must complete the financial documentation required of all F-1 student applicants and pay a cash deposit before the I-20 can be issued for the COS application.
2. If a current student must file for COS because his or her non-immigrant visa is expiring, he or she must visit the DSO and begin the process at least 60 days in advance of visa expiration. The student will have to show that all bills have been paid to date and that he or she has sufficient financial support to continue studies in F-1 status.
3. The accepted applicant or current student should use the Statement of Financial Support-Form (page 42) to document adequate financial support.
4. In order to file for a change of status with USCIS, one must submit a Form I-539 with fee and accompanying documents. Follow carefully the I-539 application instructions. The application packet must include:
 - Form I-20 from Eastern University
 - Form I-539
 - Fee payment of \$370 (See www.uscis.gov for updated information on fees.)
 - Acceptance letter to Eastern University
 - Original Form I-94
 - Evidence of financial capability
 - Photocopies of passport and visa
 - Additional evidence if requested by I-539 instructions
5. Make 2 sets of photocopies of all application documents, and give one set to the DSO. Keep the other set for your own records.
6. Send the I-539 application packet to:
 - USCIS Vermont Service Center
 - ATTN: I-539
 - 75 Lower Welden Street
 - St. Albans, VT 05479
7. Inform the DSO of any Requests for Evidence, and also of the results of the adjudication.
8. More information about the I-539 "Application to Change Non-Immigrant Status" can be found at www.uscis.gov.

The Office of International Student Services recommends students use the services of an immigration attorney if they find the change of status procedure to be confusing or tedious. ISS can recommend local attorneys if need be.



Transferring to Eastern on an F-1 or J-1 Visa

If a student is already in the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 visa at another school, and wishes to transfer to Eastern, either to the same academic level, or to enter a new degree program at the next level, the student must ask his/her current school to transfer his/her SEVIS record to Eastern.

An F-1 or J-1 transfer student must:

- Apply to Eastern and be accepted to the program.
- Prepare financial documents as instructed, and pay a required deposit.
- Use the Eastern University Transfer Form to request the transfer of the SEVIS record from the DSO or RO of the transfer-out school.
- Comply with all policies at the transfer-out school.
- Negotiate a release date that accommodates OPT dates, travel needs, etc.

When the SEVIS record has been transferred to Eastern:

- Student will get a “transfer pending” I-20 or DS-2019 from Eastern University. This is a temporary document that allows travel and maintains visa status until the start date of Eastern’s program.
- There can never be more than five months between the graduation date, OPT expiration date or the date of withdrawal from the transfer-out school and the start date of the new program.
- Upon the start of classes at Eastern, the DSO will complete the transfer and print out an I-20 or DS-2019 for continued attendance.

The transfer form can be found on page 44 in the appendix of this handbook.

Preparing to Come to Eastern



Checklist of Preparations



Congratulations! You have been accepted to Eastern University! Now what?

Here are a number of things you must do after you have been accepted to Eastern, but before you arrive. This may not be a complete list, but it will help you get organized. A few blank spaces are left at the bottom for you to write in others as you encounter them.

- * Complete the financial documentation required of the student visa. Submit to Admissions. Pay the SEVIS fee and schedule a visa interview with the U.S. Consulate.
 - * Already in the U.S.? Request the transfer of your SEVIS record to Eastern or talk to International Student Services about a change of visa status, if necessary.
 - * Complete all the health requirements. Get any necessary vaccinations. Fill out health forms and enroll in the student health insurance plan. (Enroll online via the Health Center page of the Eastern website.)
 - * Make your flight arrangements and if necessary, get transit visas.
 - * Make transportation arrangements from the airport to Eastern University. (Talk to your admission counselor if you need assistance.)
 - * Pay advance deposit and set up a payment plan with Student Accounts.
 - * Register for courses.
 - * Submit your housing application form.
 - * Explore off-campus housing options if necessary (graduate students or married students).
 - * Make note of move-in and orientation dates and plan to arrive accordingly.
 - * Check out student activities and consider getting involved in campus life.
-

Any questions? Talk to your admissions counselor or contact the Office of International Student Services at aallen6@eastern.edu or Tel. (610) 341-5870 or Fax (610) 341-1468.

What to do About Travel

- * Advise the admissions office of your travel itinerary. Please tell us how you plan to arrive to the university, and if possible, give us the contact information for the person who will pick you up at the airport.
- * Label your entire baggage inside and outside with your name and the address of the university. Check with the airlines regarding their baggage policy
- * Reconfirm your flight reservations 72 hours before departure.
- * Depending where you change flights, you may need a transit visa to pass through that country. Investigate this in advance so you don't have troubles en-route, or have to change flight plans at the last minute.
- * Pack a small carry-on bag with personal articles and valuables in case your baggage is temporarily lost during your journey.
- * During the flight, airline personnel will give you several forms to complete for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service and U.S. Customs. Simply follow the directions on the forms. If necessary, ask the flight attendant for clarifications.
- * Upon arrival to the U.S., you will pass through Immigration at the airport before picking up your baggage. Be sure you have your passport and immigration papers in your purse or carry-on bag.
- * Present your passport, visa, and I-20 or DS-2019 to the U.S. immigration officer.
- * The officer should automatically stamp your passport. If not, politely request this. The officer may also take your finger-prints. Usually this is done digitally on a scanner.
- * If you are called to secondary inspection, remain calm, show your papers again and answer truthfully all questions. Carry our phone number with you should the officer wish to contact our international students office.
- * After passing immigration, you will pick up your baggage and go through Customs inspection.
- * You will pass through immigrations and customs at the first port of entry to the U.S. If you change planes, you will not repeat the process at the second destination.
- * When scheduling your flights, give yourself at least two hours of layover time if you must change planes. There may be long lines for immigration and customs, and often you must pass through a security checkpoint before you reach the gate of your next flight.



Eastern's Location

Eastern University main campus is located in the western suburbs of the city of Philadelphia. Summers in Philadelphia are very hot and winters can be quite cold. Consider the need for a variety when packing clothing. The following chart notes average temperatures for each season. Keep in mind, however, there are extremes well above and well below the averages. Winter wind chill factors and summer humidity levels can change these figures.

Average Temperatures in Celsius:	High	Low
Winter	3	- 5
Spring	17	6
Summer	30	20
Autumn	19	8

The closest international airport is **Philadelphia International Airport** (PHL). Information about Philadelphia airport is available online at www.phl.org.

Other international airports and their approximate distance from Philadelphia:

	DISTANCE	DRIVING TIME
Newark International Airport (Newark, New Jersey)	93 miles	2 hours
John F. Kennedy International (New York, New York)	118 miles	3 hours
Baltimore-Washington International (Baltimore, Maryland)	99 miles	2 hours
Washington Dulles International (Washington D.C.)	150 miles	3.5 hours

Local **public transportation** is serviced by SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority). Regional Rail Paoli-Thorndale route stops in St. Davids, just a couple blocks from the university main campus. Bus route 105 also stops in St. Davids. High Speed Route 100 stops in Radnor about 1 mile from main campus. The campus security shuttle van will pick up at the Radnor station. More information about public transportation can be found at www.septa.org.

Eastern's Philadelphia Falls Center campus is located at 3300 Henry Ave., Philadelphia. See a map and directions on our website at <https://www.eastern.edu/about/campus-and-sites/falls-center-philadelphia-location>

Palmer Seminary campus is now located on main campus in St. Davis. See map and directions at <https://www.eastern.edu/about/campus-and-sites>

Living Accommodations

All full-time undergraduate students entering the College of Arts & Sciences are required to live on-campus as long as space is available. Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Student Development Office. Incoming students receive a housing contract from the Admissions Office, which must be filled out and returned with the corresponding deposit. Graduate student housing is available at the Village Apartments. More information and forms are available on our website www.eastern.edu by clicking on “student life” and then on “residence life”.

Graduate students and married students may look for off-campus housing at local apartment buildings. They may request information from their program offices in order to locate an apartment that best suits their tastes and economies. See the guide to off-campus housing on the next page.

What to Bring



Although computers are available at the library and a student computer lab, you probably want to bring your own laptop computer. Wireless internet access is available in most all areas on the St. Davids campus.

Also consider bringing personal documents like medical or eyeglasses prescriptions, or an international driver's license. Dorm rooms are furnished, but you may want to bring a few personal touches from home.

There may be special occasions when your national or ethnic dress will be appropriate to wear. You may also wish to bring a few typical arts or crafted items from your country to give as hostess gifts if you have opportunity to stay with a U.S. American family over a vacation or break period.



Looking for off-campus housing?

We have the following hints that might be of help.

How much can you spend per month? What needs to be included? Where do you want to live? Do you need public transportation? Do you have a family? What space needs do you have? Do you need air-conditioning? Do you have pets? Do you want a roommate? How many? How much can you pay up front? Do you need a co-signer on the lease? How long do you need the housing? Do you want to stay there all year or only during the academic year?

As you can see from just these few questions, students' resources and needs vary greatly. While staffing limitations do not permit us to spend the kind of time that individual housing searches require, we are happy to offer advice for finding housing in the surrounding community.

In addition to looking at traditional types of housing such as rental units, many students are able to secure housing in non-traditional and less expensive ways such as private homes, over stores and so on. Here are some helpful hints for you as you seek all types of commuter housing:

Begin looking well in advance of your need. This is most important!

Housing on the "Main Line" (immediate area) is very expensive. Nearby communities where housing is less expensive are: Norristown, King of Prussia, Overbrook, Philadelphia, Upper Darby, Havertown, Broomall and other areas.

Network with other students who might be able to assist you.

Contact local churches and let them know of your need concerning your search.

Check listings in local newspapers. (Philadelphia Inquirer, Times Herald, Mainline Times)

Contact people you know in the area and ask for assistance.

If you have been enrolled and you are in good standing we will be happy to act as a reference for your prospective landlord.

Interview prospective landlords. Ask for references and check them! Read reviews online.

The Paoli-Thorndale Local train runs from Center City Philadelphia to Doylestown with the St. Davids (EASTERN) stop only 45 minutes (peak commuter times) from the city, and 60 minutes from Doylestown. The SEPTA Buses stop at Lancaster Ave and Chamounix Road. The R-100 train stops in Radnor, the next town over. The train and bus stops are a short walk from the college (10-15 min). There are many communities along these lines that are reasonably priced.



Settling into Life in the U.S.

There may seem like an endless list of things to be arranged in order to set up basic living capability. Graduate students living off-campus and commuting to classes require an additional independence that undergraduate students living on-campus don't need to worry about. The Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS) can provide any official papers you may need. Here are some tips to help you.

Social Security Number (SSN)

Although almost every process will request this personal identification number, it is not legally required in all instances. You can indeed open a bank account and sign a rental agreement without one. As a student visa-holder, you will only need a SSN if you will be employed, either on-campus, or as part of a curricular practical training required by your program.

Before a student can be paid for campus employment, he or she needs a social security number (SSN). Government regulations state that an international student must first have a campus job, and can only apply for a SSN 30 days or less prior to the start date of the employment. The student must have a letter from the campus employer and a letter from OISSS in order to apply for a SSN. After making application, the student normally receives a social security card in the mail in about 2 to 4 weeks. The student may begin working while waiting for the SSN to arrive.

Students should be careful to keep the social security card in a safe place, and should never give out the number indiscriminately. The social security number can be stolen by identity thieves, and sold on the black market, causing undue hardship to the student.

An alternative to the SSN is an ITIN number. More information can be found on-line at:
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10096.html>
ITIN: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/general-itin-information>

PA Drivers License

Eastern University is accessible by public transportation, but some students decide to get a drivers license and purchase a used car. You will need either a SSN or a letter from the Social Security office stating you have applied or you were denied a SSN.



You can also get a PA State identification card in lieu of a driver license, if all you need is a personal identification credential. More information about drivers license or state ID cards can be found on-line at:

<http://www.dmv.pa.gov/Driver-Services/Driver-Licensing/Pages/Drivers-License.aspx>

Bank Accounts

Student will find life much easier with a checking account at a local bank. A debit card, also known as an ATM card enables you to make purchases and access funds from a cash machine (ATM). Some debit cards can also be used as credit cards. Maintaining a good credit history in the U.S. is very important, and credit card debt can create economic disaster for a student. For this reason, OISSS recommends students use debit cards rather than credit cards when at all possible. Credit cards should be used with caution. If when opening a bank account, the teller requests a SSN, please note that this is not required (if you don't yet have a SSN). If the teller doesn't know how to input in the computer without the SSN, politely ask if a manager may be available to assist.

Some cash machines will accept debit cards from international banks, as long as the

international bank card permits foreign withdrawals. The student should inquire of their bank in their home country as to this possibility.

Apartment Rental Agreements

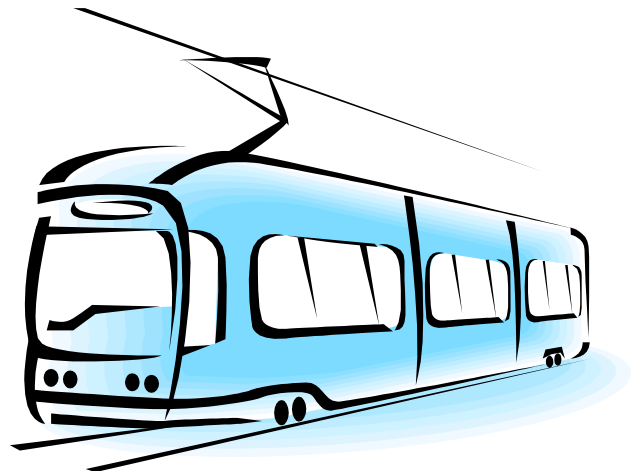
Many apartment leasing offices require documentation before agreeing to rent an apartment to you. They may request a SSN, a credit history, references, etc. You should explain that you are an international student at Eastern University, and do not have the same documents a US citizen would have. Ask what other options you might have to provide alternative documents. You could show the same financial affidavits that you gave the university, you may request a letter from OISSS to confirm your status as a student, you could show that you have applied for a SSN or an ITIN. If one leasing office stubbornly refuses to deal with you, go to another apartment complex instead.

Purchasing a Used Car

Similar documents may be required of you if purchasing a used car. Again, ask what other options you might have. Generally speaking, however, you will need to get the drivers license first and purchase automobile insurance before you can finalize the purchase of a car. You may find it easier to deal with a private individual who is selling a car, rather than a used car agency, but in any case be careful. If possible, take an American friend with you. Search websites online to find more options. If purchasing the car from an individual, you will need the services of an auto tag and licensing center to change the car's title and registration into your name, and to get a legal license plate. These services are necessary, and they are not very expensive.

Using Public Transportation

The public transit authority in the greater Philadelphia area is called SEPTA. Eastern University is located just a few blocks from the Paoli-Thorndale regional rail line and the Bus 105 route. To learn more about the various subway, train, bus and regional rail routes, go to www.septa.org. You can purchase tokens or weekly/monthly passes to use SEPTA. Generally speaking, public transit is more accessible in the Philadelphia urban center, and less so the further out into the suburbs you go.



Finding Medical Services

All international students are required to purchase the student health plan for the first year at least. Unlike many other countries, the U.S. does not have a public health system, so the only way to get medical treatment when needed is to have health insurance. Information about the student health plan is available by inquiring of the student health center at (610) 341-5955 or on our website by clicking on offices and centers and on health center.

Students with families can waive the required health plan after one year, but must show proof of having purchased a comparable insurance policy. We do not recommend travel insurance alone, because the coverage is often inadequate once the student is living in the U.S. Travel insurance may be purchased in addition to the student plan.

Some medical services are available at the student health center on the St. Davids campus, but the student may need to use a local hospital for greater services or emergency treatment.

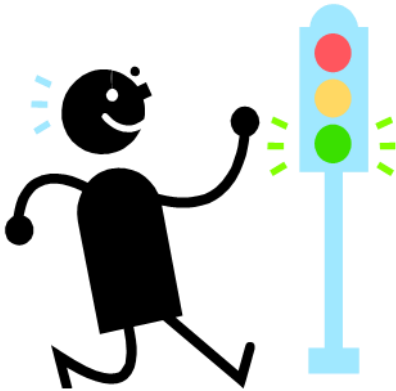
Certain immunizations will be required of international students coming to the U.S., and other immunizations will be required by the Pennsylvania Department of Health for all university students. Some immunizations can be administered at the student health center upon arrival. Please fill out and submit the university health form. You can download the form from our website. More information about required immunizations can be found on the website at:

https://www.eastern.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/student_health_record.pdf



Adjusting to a New Culture (or new country)

All students who come to college or university must make many adjustments. This is especially true for international students. You will experience many changes. There are usually four stages that people experience:



Stage 1: “Honeymoon” Phase: Everything is great. Nothing is wrong. You are having a wonderful time. (This may last days or weeks.)

Stage 2: Shock: There are so many differences in this country that you do not know how to deal with them. You did not think things would be like this. You are not sure what to do. You may want to go home. (This may last days or weeks.)

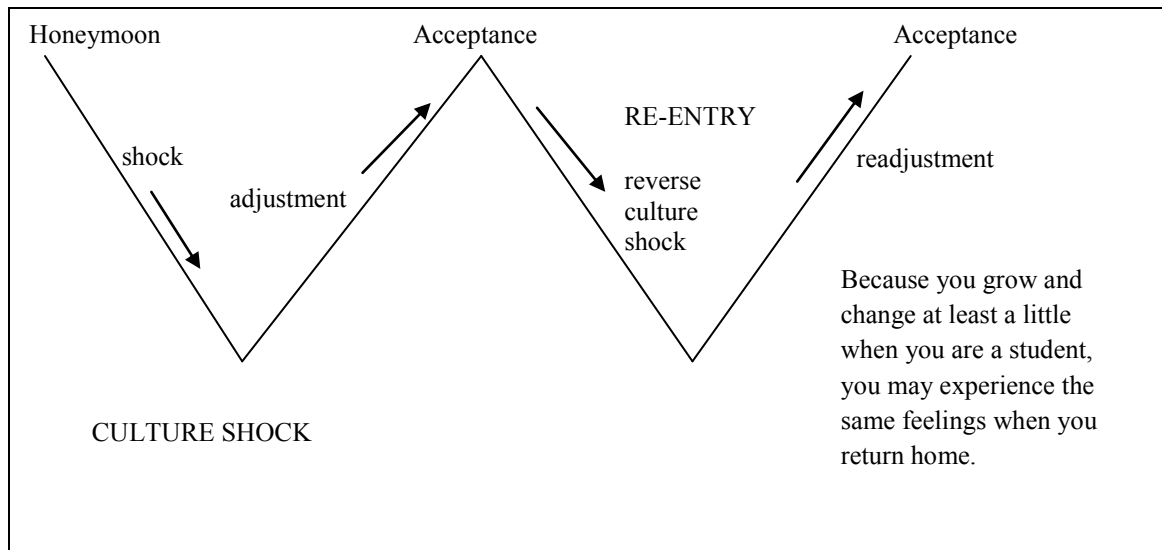
Some symptoms of “culture shock” are:

- Extreme homesickness (some homesickness is normal)
- Constant fear of being misunderstood
- Avoiding people
- A new and intense feeling of loyalty to your own culture
- Constant complaining about your new culture
- Headaches
- Upset Stomach
- Feeling sick much of the time
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Excessive concern over minor pains
- Over-eating or loss of appetite (eating too much or too little)
- Feeling very sad much of the time (some sadness is normal)
- Unexplainable crying
- Feeling sick much of the time
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of confidence
- Inability to work effectively (e.g., you cannot do your school work as well as before)
- Marital stress or family stress



Stage 3: Adjustment: You start to learn how to deal with the problems you are facing. You try to integrate your new experiences with who you are. You start to feel like you can be yourself and still belong in your new setting. This may last several months or longer.

Stage 4: Acceptance: You are able to live well in your new setting with the differences you are experiencing.



Remember:

Some culture shock is normal. It does not mean something is wrong with you or that you should not have come here.

Be patient. It takes time to adjust, but you can do it.

Understand that everyone is different. You may adjust more quickly or more slowly than another person.

It is acceptable to tell someone if you are having problems. In some cultures this is shameful. This is not true in the United States. You will find support from friends, your resident assistant and the campus chaplain. You may also talk to your international student advisor or a faculty or staff member whom you trust. People at Eastern University want to help you so you can succeed.

Presented by: Lisa Hemlick, Ph.D.
Director, Cushing Center for Counseling & Academic Support
January 16, 2009

During Your Studies At Eastern





ABC's of Your Visa Status

Attend all classes, and enroll full-time.

Be aware of your documents and their expiration dates.

Cannot work without permission.

Address changes must be reported in 10 days.

Bring your I-20 or DS-2019 to the DSO for a signature before traveling.

Come see the DSO if you plan to leave school, transfer or need medical leave.

Ask if you don't know.

Be diligent to maintain your F-1 status.

Communicate Regularly with DSO.

Maintaining F-1 Visa Status

EXPLANATION OF THE F-1 VISA

The F-1 Visa is a non-immigrant visa intended for persons who plan to enter the U.S. temporarily for the purpose of full-time study, and return to their home countries following completion of their studies. As such, the U.S. Department of State only approves the F-1 visa application if the interviewing consular officer is convinced the student has no intention of immigrating to the U.S. Some students upon graduation may receive a professional job offer, and in such a case, the student must change to another visa status for professional workers.. The Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS) offers occasional information sessions on other types of visas, and how to change visa status should such an opportunity arise.



Upon entering the U.S., an F-1 visa-holder will have an entry record in the form of I-94 with the date of entry, visa class, and personal information. If the student travels outside the U.S., he or she will only be allowed to re-enter if the visa has not expired, and he/she has a current SEVIS I-20 with travel endorsement signed by DSO on the second page. The student will have a new I-94 form upon reentry to the U.S. because the I-94 is an arrival/departure record. You should download your I-94 from the following website: www.cbp.gov/i94 and keep it securely with your passport.

MAINTAINING F-1 VISA STATUS

Once awarded F-1 status in the U.S., an international student must be careful to maintain status. The primary ways a student can fall out of status are to fail to enroll in a full-time course load in each subsequent semester, and to work illegally. A discussion about employment in F-1 status will follow later in this handbook. The D/S designation means that if a student falls out of status, and does not file for reinstatement in a timely fashion, the visa expires regardless of the date on the visa.

Reinstatement is a petition made to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to forgive the error and restore F-1 status. Applications for reinstatement require adjudication by immigration officials, and can be either approved or denied. If denied, the student will be cited with a number of days of unlawful presence, counting from the date when the SEVIS record marked as the end of status and including the time spent in adjudication. The quantity of days of unlawful presence determines how many years for which the student will be barred from re-entering the U.S. If the student shows disposition to comply by leaving the U.S. promptly, he or she will likely be able to exit the U.S., apply for a new visa, and reenter without adverse consequences.

If a student discovers he or she has fallen out of status, he/she should report immediately to the Office of International Student and Scholar Services to initiate the reinstatement process.

The F-1 student should maintain regular contact with OISSS in order to insure he or she communicates any change of address, change in course registration, travel plans, campus employment, and other such issues.

REDUCED COURSELOAD



There are some valid reasons why a student may need to take a reduced course load, such as medical reasons, unfamiliarity with English or the US education system, or last semester. With a letter from the student's academic adviser or doctor, the Designated School Official (DSO) can authorize a reduced course load in SEVIS. This is permitted only for one semester, and there are a limited number of authorizations permitted. The student and his/her academic adviser should consider this a one-time possibility under special circumstances only. Economic problems are not considered valid reasons for a reduced course load, so students can not skip a semester in order to work.

REINSTATEMENT

If an F-1 student falls out of status, he or she may be eligible for reinstatement to F-1 status. The student must make an application to USCIS for reinstatement, and abide by the adjudication result. Reinstatements must be done within five months of falling out of status, and the student must explain the reason(s) why he or she let his/her status lapse. USCIS can take one of two actions upon adjudicating the application:

- Approval. The student is reinstated to F-1 status. Adjudicating officer updates SEVIS record and DSO prints out a new I-20.
- Denial. SEVIS record is terminated and the entry visa is cancelled. Student will be charged with a status violation which can limit future benefits like a change of status. And student begins to accrue days of unlawful presence. Depending on the number of days of unlawful presence, the student could be barred from re-entering the U.S. for three or even ten years.

Often if the student complies in a timely fashion, he/she will be allowed to go home, apply for a new visa, and re-enter the U.S.

An alternative to reinstatement may be to travel out of the country and return on an initial I-20, but this recourse carries a number of risks. The student should first seek advice from the DSO.

VISA RENEWAL

An F-1 or J-1 student has a notation of D/S on his or her I-94, indicating he or she can remain in the U.S. for the duration of status. The date on the student's visa sticker may be subject to reciprocal agreements between his or her country and the U.S. Even if the visa sticker expires, the student remains in status as long as he or she is enrolled full-time and does not work illegally. However, if the student leaves the U.S., he or she will not be able to re-enter on an expired visa. (Some travel exceptions exist for Canada, Mexico and the contiguous islands.)

To renew a visa, the student must return to the U.S. consulate in his or her home country. Applying for a visa renewal in a third country may or may not be possible, but students risk being refused renewal, being stranded outside U.S. borders, and/or deportation from the third country. The ISSS Office strongly advises students to inquire of the consulate where they plan on going prior to travel.

TRAVEL IN STUDENT STATUS

If an F-1 or J-1 student plans to travel out of the country, he or she will need the following papers in order to depart and re-enter the U.S.

Current I-20/DS-2019 with the DSO/RO's signature on the the second page

Unexpired passport (passport must be valid for at least six months upon return to the U.S.)

Unexpired visa (see information about visa renewal on page

27. I-94

(Additional documents are required if the student is on OPT. See page 41)

Some travel exceptions exist for Canada, Mexico and islands adjacent to the U.S. When traveling to another country other than the student's country of citizenship, the student should always investigate what visa documents are required by that country's government for international travelers. OISSS suggests the student consult with their embassy in the U.S. when traveling to another country.

An F-1/J-1 student is permitted a maximum of five months out of the U.S. More than five months is not considered a temporary absence, and the F-1/J-1 visa will automatically expire regardless of the dates on the visa and the I-20/DS-2019. If a student must leave the U.S. for more than five months, he or she should see the DSO about possible options for returning to the U.S. Be aware that returning after five months of absence is considered an initial entry, and restarts the clock to be eligible for benefits like CPT. Studying abroad for a semester is not considered an absence because the student remains enrolled full-time at Eastern. Study abroad in an approved program does not break the duration of F-1/J-1 status, so the student can return without problems.

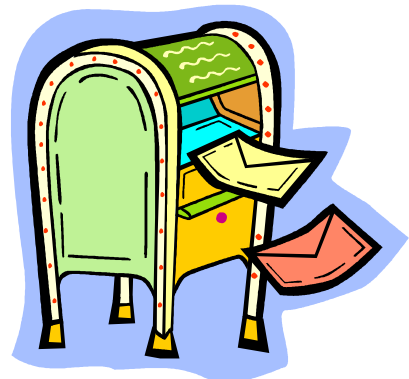
If a student changes immigration status while in the U.S., his or her original entry visa is considered expired. To renew an entry visa, the student must return home and reapply at the U.S. consulate. Always consult with the DSO/RO before traveling.

EXTENSIONS

If a student needs to extend the program end date on his or her I-20/DS-2019, the DSO/RO can make the change electronically in SEVIS and print out a new document. If the extension is due to changes in an academic program, such as a change of major, or having to repeat a course, the DSO will require a letter from the student's academic adviser with an explanation.

REPORTING ADDRESS CHANGES

USCIS requires the report of any change of address within 10 days. This can be done by filing a form AR-11, or by having the DSO/RO enter the change into the SEVIS database. Since the DSO/RO has to update SEVIS in any case, the easiest way is to simply communicate with OISSS prior to the planned move or as soon as possible. The DSO/RO must have the student's actual physical address even if the student receives mail at a campus mailbox.



EMPLOYMENT IN STUDENT VISA STATUS

There are only three kinds of employment permitted on the F-1 visa. Any other kind of employment, including babysitting, gardening and freelancing, is considered illegal and if discovered, would terminate the F-1 visa status. The three kinds of employment that are permitted are:

On-campus Jobs: F-1 students are permitted up to 20 hours per week when classes are in session. The job must be an on-campus position, and may include contractual organizations that operate on the school campus, like a food service company.

Practical Training: Practical training is an authorized employment in the student's field of study that contributes to the student's educational experience.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): is a required internship, clinical placement or supervised activity that is part of a student's academic program. CPT requires authorization on the second page of the student's I-20. To request authorization from the DSO, the student must have a letter from his/her academic adviser explaining how the employment is part of the student's educational experience. A maximum of 20 hours per week is permitted when classes are in session.

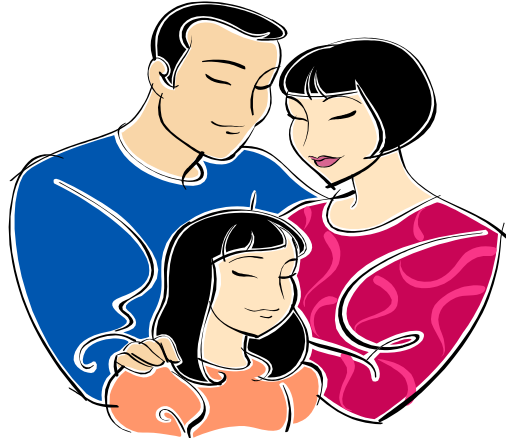
Optional Practical Training (OPT): is practical training that is not required of a student's academic program. It can be accomplished during a summer or after the completion of coursework. The student must fill out an application, prepare the accompanying documents (including a new I-20 with OPT authorization on the second page), and send these to the Vermont Service Center for adjudication. The adjudication takes between 60 to 90 days, and the student may not work until the application is approved by USCIS and he/she has the EAD card in hand.

More information about OPT follows later in this handbook.

Severe (unexpected) Economic Need: If an F-1 student encounters unexpected financial difficulty because of unforeseen circumstances like a sponsor withdrawing support or a sudden devaluation of foreign currency, he or she may apply to USCIS for employment authorization based on severe economic need. The student should see the DSO for authorization and instructions on how to prepare the required application and its accompanying documents. Only when the student's application is approved by USCIS and he or she has the employment authorization card (EAD), can he or she look for employment off-campus. The student is limited to 20 hours a week when classes are in session. The EAD must be renewed yearly. More information is available from OISSS.

Employment on the J-1 Visa: Similar rules apply to the J-1 visa. J-1 students should consult with the RO because much depends on the type of program the J-1 is participating in.





Family Members on Dependent Visas

A spouse or a minor child (under age 21) of an F-1 student would be permitted an F-2 visa. The F-2 visa does not permit employment, and study is permitted only for children through grade 12. The F-1 student is fully responsible for the economic support of his or her family members, and must show adequate financial documentation to USCIS if bringing family members to the U.S. An F-2 Sponsor Form to assist with documentation is accessible by clicking on student service forms on the right-hand menu. If a student wishes to bring family members on an F-2 visa, he or she should see the DSO to discuss the process. An F-2 child approaching his or her 21st birthday should file for a change of status in a timely manner. An F-1 spouse who finishes studies may change status to F-2 as well. The F-2 may study in kindergarten through high school education, but must change to F-1 in order to study post-secondary education in a college or university.

A spouse or minor child of a J-1 exchange visitor would be permitted a J-2 visa. J-2 visa-holders may apply for employment authorization from USCIS, as long as the employment is not for the purpose of supporting the J-1. Income from a J-2's employment can be used to support family recreational and cultural activities, for example. There are no restrictions on study for a J-2.

If an F-1 or J-1 visa-holder falls out of status, so do their dependents. If the F-1 or J-1 SEVIS record is terminated, the dependent SEVIS records are also terminated. The student or scholar with family members in the U.S., therefore, should take extra care to maintain visa status. The J-2 may also be subject to the 212e two-year home residence requirement, but may be eligible to waive the requirement if turning 21 and seeking change of visa status. OISSS recommends consultation with an immigration attorney in such a case.

An F-2 dependent must file for a change of status to F-1 if he or she is accepted to study at a university or other school. The change of status must be complete before enrolling.

CHECKLIST FOR AN F-2 or J-2 INTERVIEW

Your family members will need to schedule a visa interview with the U.S. Consulate to request a dependent visa. They should first inquire at the local consulate as to how to schedule a visa interview and what documents to provide. Most likely, they will be required to submit the following:

- Valid passport.
- Visa application forms and any other forms required by the U.S. Department of State
- Dependent Form I-20 (F-2) or Dependent Form DS-2019 (J-2) from OISSS
- Letter from OISSS confirming the visa status of the F-1 or J-1
- Academic transcripts (of F-1 or J-1 student) from the Registrar's Office or Copy of J-1 scholar's program contract from the academic department.
- Letter of recommendation from one of the student's professors or letter from scholar's supervisor
- Photocopies of your immigration documents (passport, visa, I-94 and I-20 or DS-2019)
- Financial Affidavits (students)
- Proof of your relationship (marriage license, birth certificates, etc.)
- Two Passport-style Photographs
- Evidence of intention to return upon completion of program

Please inform the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS) regarding the results of the visa interview. When your family members arrive to the U.S., make photocopies of their passports, visas and I-94s and submit to OISSS.



Things You Must See the International Student Adviser About DSO (F-1) or RO (J-1)

- ❑ **IF YOU NEED TO DROP A COURSE, WITHDRAW OR TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.** If you drop below a full-time number of credits, you fall out of visa status. Only certain exceptions exist, and authorization by the DSO/RO is imperative.
- ❑ **IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS.** Failure to report an address change within ten days is legal grounds for deportation.
- ❑ **IF YOU NEED TO EXTEND YOUR ACADEMIC PROGRAM BEYOND ITS ORIGINAL END DATE.** If you make a change to your degree program, for example. The same is true if you shorten your program. The end date on your I-20/DS-2019 must coincide with your actual program end date. Any changes must be reported in SEVIS.
- ❑ **IF YOU PLAN TO TRAVEL OUT OF THE US.** You need a travel permission signed by the DSO/RO, and it is best to review all your documentation before you go. Be sure to schedule an appointment with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services well in advance, in order to avoid last minute problems.
- ❑ **IF YOU NEED A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, DRIVERS LICENSE OR STATE ID CARD.** All of these processes require a letter and/or other documentation from your DSO/RO.
- ❑ **IF YOU ARE REGISTERING FOR AN INTERNSHIP, CLINICAL PLACEMENT, FIELD EDUCATION OR OTHER PRACTICAL TRAINING.** To be eligible to receive a stipend or salary for this kind of employment, the DSO/RO must authorize you for curricular practical training(F-1) or academic training (J-1).
- ❑ **IF YOU ARE ACCEPTED TO STUDY AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION AND PLAN TO TRANSFER.** The transfer process implies a change on your SEVIS record, and must be accomplished between the two schools. This includes applying to a new degree program after graduating from Eastern.
- ❑ **IF YOU WANT TO BRING FAMILY MEMBERS TO THE US.** Family members are eligible to apply for dependent visas. The DSO or RO must provide documentation for their visa applications.
- ❑ **IF YOU OR YOUR DEPENDENT PLAN TO CHANGE IMMIGRATION STATUS.** This change of status requires documentation provided by the DSO or RO.

Paying Taxes

Any international student who was physically present in the U.S. during the previous calendar year must file tax forms with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) between January 15 and April 15 each year, even if he or she had no income. If no income was earned, the student files the Form 8843. If the student earned income, he or she must file the Form 8843 and the Form 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ.



Students will need the following papers in order to answer all the questions on the tax forms:

- Passports (current and previous expired passports)
- Visa, I-20 or DS-2019, and I-94
- Social Security Number (if they have one)
- All entry and exit dates to and from the U.S. (passport stamps are helpful in determining the exact dates)
- U.S. and foreign address information
- University address and name/address/phone of academic director
- Tax forms received, including: W-2 forms, 1098 form, 1099 INT, and any others.
- Scholarship letters specifying the amount of scholarship received
- Copy of your 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ form from the previous year, if applicable.
- If the student has family members on dependent visas, he/she will also need ITIN numbers for these dependents. (Depending on the country of citizenship, students may or may not be able to claim tax exemption for dependent children. The student should consider this when filling out the W-4 form for employment.)

If the international student has already begun application for lawful permanent residency, he/she will file taxes as a resident, using a different set of forms and processes. There are various types of software available to help with filing taxes, but when purchasing, be sure the product will handle non-resident tax forms.

Life After Graduation?



Graduating this Semester?

As an F-1 or J-1 student, please be aware that your visa status will expire upon graduation unless you make arrangements prior to graduation to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), Academic Training(J-1) or to transfer into a new degree program. SO if you're graduating, here's a checklist for you to follow:



- Confirm your course selections with your academic adviser and be sure you will have all the credits you need to get the degree you want.
- Confirm with the Registrar's Office that you will be able to graduate as long as you complete this last semester successfully.
- Tell your International Student Adviser that you will be graduating, to be sure your SEVIS record is updated correctly.
- Request graduation letters from OISSS if you want to invite family members to come from overseas to your graduation ceremony. Remember, family members may need 60 to 90 days in order to get visitors' visas.
- Apply and be accepted to the masters (or doctoral) degree program of your choice if you plan to continue studies on the next level. Arrange for the transfer of your SEVIS record with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS).
- If you are F-1 and would like to do 12 months of OPT in order to get some work experience in your professional area, make an appointment with OISSS to begin application for OPT about 90 days prior to graduation. (More information about OPT is available from the ISS office.)
- If you are J-1, inquire in OISSS to see if you are eligible for Academic Training or not.
- If you will be changing to another visa status, be sure to consult with an immigration attorney before your current visa status expires upon graduation.
- The F-1 visa affords a 60-day grace period following graduation for students to make travel plans, transfer to another school or start OPT. If you fail to make such arrangements and don't leave the U.S. by the end of the grace period, you will begin to accrue unlawful presence, which can result in major problems.
- The J-1 visa affords a 30-day grace period for the purpose of arranging travel.
- Make your post-graduation plans early in the semester so you don't get caught in the end of semester crunch.
- Do your best and enjoy your last semester!

Other Information



GRACE PERIODS

The F-1 student must be aware that his or her visa status will expire upon graduation unless he or she makes arrangements prior to graduation to apply for OPT. The F-1 visa affords a 60-day grace period starting on his or her graduation date. The J-1 visa affords a 30-day grace period. The intention is to give time to make travel plans or to transfer to another school. If by the end of the grace period, the student fails to leave the U.S. or complete the transfer of his/her SEVIS record to the new school, he or she begins to accrue days of unlawful presence, which can result in major problems for the student. OISSS invites F-1 and J-1 students to visit the DSO/RO sometime at the start of their last semester in order to discuss their plans after graduation.

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

If an F-1/J-1 student transfers to another school, either before or after finishing a degree program at Eastern, the DSO/RO will have to transfer the student's SEVIS record to the new school in order to maintain the student visa duration of status. The student must request a transfer form from the transfer-in school for a in order to facilitate the passing of the SEVIS record. The student should visit OISSS before the end of the term if he or she wants to transfer schools. Failure to do this in a timely fashion can result in falling out of status.

CHANGING IMMIGRATION STATUS

There may be reasons why a student would change to another visa status. These include when a student is offered a professional job and the employer sponsors a professional worker's visa like an H-1B or a TN visa. Sometimes a student begins study on a non-immigrant visa other than the F-1, and must change to F-1 because the first visa expires.

Any change of status will require a current SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 and a series of other documents. If an Eastern international student changes immigration status to another visa, he or she will no longer be under the jurisdiction of Eastern University, and his or her SEVIS record will expire. Be aware that changing status means that the student no longer qualifies for an international student scholarship, and will likely lose on-campus employment privileges. Most other visa statuses restrict employment to the organization that sponsors the visa, and some do not permit employment at all.

A person who is in the process of changing visa status from F-1 to something else, may or may not be able to continue study or employment while waiting for the change to be adjudicated. A person changing status from F-2 to F-1, may not start classes until the change has been approved. When possible, Eastern will endeavor to keep the F-1 visa alive while the student is waiting for the change of status to be adjudicated. Then if the visa application fails, they still have a status to fall back on.

Change of status is not always possible. J-1 students may be subject to a two-year home residency requirement. Both F-1 and J-1 students can be affected by previous immigration applications, timing problems and visa caps. OISSS recommends using an immigration attorney when changing visa status because it can be a complicated process.

TWO-YEAR HOME COUNTRY PHYSICAL PRESENCE REQUIREMENT (INA 212e)

Many J-1 exchange visitors are subject to a regulation called the two-year home country physical presence requirement that prohibit the individual from returning to the U.S. in a professional capacity until having physically resided at least two years in his or her home country. The exact wording of this regulation is found in the appendix of this handbook. There are three reasons which would subject a J-1 exchange visitor to the INA 212e requirement:

1. The funding for his or her exchange program came directly or indirectly from either the U.S. government or his or her home government.
2. The skills he or she came to exercise or to learn, appear on the skills list for his or her country.
3. He or she came to the U.S. for graduate medical education or training.

Exchange visitors who are subject to the INA 212e requirement must be physically present in their home country for an aggregate of two years before they are eligible for certain U.S. immigration benefits. Until having complied with the two-year requirement, they are ineligible for:

1. an immigrant visa or an adjustment of status to permanent residence.
2. an H (temporary worker) or an L (intra-company transferee) visa.
3. a change of status in the U.S. from J to another non-immigrant visa, with exception of A (diplomatic visa) or G (international organization visa).

Even though subject to the INA 212e requirement, these J-1 exchange visitors are eligible for the benefits awarded to the J-1 status, such as extensions or program transfers according to the guidelines of their category.

In addition, some J-1 exchange visitors may be able to obtain a waiver of the INA 212e requirement based on a letter of no objection from their home government. The INA 212e requirement does not preclude returning to the U.S. on other non-immigrant visas for business (B-1), academic study (F-1) or as tourists (B-2).

If the J-1 exchange visitor has further questions about the INA 212e requirement, he or she may consult with the RO in the Office of International Student and Scholar Services.

Change of Status from F-1 to F-2



When one F-1 student is married to another F-1 student, sometimes one will decide to become dependent on the other, and seek a change of visa status to F-2. This is the procedure to change status from F-1 to F-2:

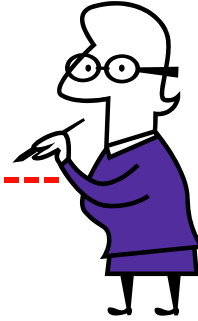
1. Inform the International Student Advisers (DSO's) of both F-1 students about the decision. The one who will change to F-2 must make arrangements with his/her DSO for the withdrawal or termination of his/her SEVIS record as a student if he/she has not yet completed his/her program.
2. The DSO of the remaining F-1 student will create a SEVIS record for the new F-2 spouse through the F-1's SEVIS record, and issue a dependent form I-20. The spouse who is changing status to F-2 must file for a change of status with USCIS by submitting a Form I-539 with fee and accompanying documents. Follow carefully the I-539 application instructions. The application packet must include:
 - Dependent Form I-20
 - Form I-539
 - Fee payment of \$370
 - Photocopies of Forms I-20 of both students (all previous I-20's)
 - Forms I-94 of both students (see I-539 application instructions to determine whether to send a photocopy or the original I-94).
 - Proof of family relationship to the F-1 principal
 - Evidence of financial capability
 - Photocopies of passports and visas of both students
4. Make 2 sets of photocopies of all application documents, and give one set to the F-1's DSO. Keep the other set for your own records. Send the I-539 application packet to:
 - USCIS Vermont Service Center
 - ATTN: I-539
 - 75 Lower Welden Street
 - St. Albans, VT 05479
6. Inform the DSO of any Requests for Evidence, and also of the results of the adjudication.
7. More information about the I-539 "Application to Change Non-Immigrant Status" can be found at www.uscis.gov.

The Office of International Student Services recommends students use the services of an immigration attorney if they find the change of status procedure to be confusing or tedious. ISS can recommend local attorneys.

IMMIGRATION ATTORNEYS

For some immigration procedures, it may be necessary to hire an immigration attorney. Attorneys charge fees, for which the student is responsible to pay. The student should inquire of OISSS as to whether an attorney is needed for a particular situation, and/or for referral to a reliable attorney. OISSS strongly encourages students to diligently follow visa regulations to minimize difficulties that might require legal services.

About Optional Practical Training (OPT)



General Information:

1. OPT (Optional Practical Training) is a type of employment permission for F-1 students, and can be full-time.
2. OPT applications normally take at least 60 days to process. Keep this in mind when calculating when you wish to start OPT employment.
3. You must apply for OPT promptly. It is not possible to apply for OPT after your 60-day grace period.
4. OPT must be related to the student's major area of study.
5. OPT usually starts following graduation. (Exception for students who complete coursework in August.)
6. A maximum of 12 months of OPT is permitted for most majors, and it must end within 14 months of the completion of one's academic program.
7. Students who graduated in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM), may qualify for an extension of up to 17 months of OPT if their employer agrees.
8. OPT is not renewable. If there is a change in graduation date or in job placement affecting the OPT start date, after OPT has been applied for, it will be necessary to cancel the application immediately before accruing any time. Then you would re-file the application at the appropriate time.
9. OPT time lost because of a failure to complete studies as planned, may not be recovered.

How to apply for OPT:

1. When you begin your last semester, set an appointment to talk to your International Student Adviser (DSO) about your plans following graduation and about OPT.
2. International Student Services (ISS) will issue a new SEVIS I-20, with OPT recommendation on the third page, for your OPT application.
3. Fill out a copy of the I-538, which will remain with ISS. Required forms are available from ISS. See page 45 of the appendix for an I-538 form.
4. Fill out Form I-765. Your eligibility category as an F-1 student seeking post-completion Optional Practical Training is (c) (3) (B). Use the mailing address where you wish to receive your OPT card. You may use the address of the ISS Office at St. Davids if you are not sure where to receive mail after graduation. The Form I-765 and current fee information can be found online at www.uscis.gov/forms.
5. Prepare to submit the following to US Immigration (USCIS) for adjudication:
 - Form I-765
 - Form G-1145
 - \$420 fee in the form of a check or money order made payable to "Department of Homeland Security".
 - Copy of the SEVIS I-20 with OPT recommendation on page 2 signed by DSO
 - Letter from International Student Adviser confirming your completion of course work and date of graduation.

Photocopies of all previous I-20s, all pages.
Photocopies of any previous Employment Authorization Documents (EADs)
Photocopy of the biographical page(s) of your passport
Photocopy of most recent visa
Photocopy of the I-94
Two color passport style photos according to USCIS specifications. (<https://egov.immigration.gov>) Submit them inside the photo envelope. Do not staple them to the application.

6. Assemble above documents in the following order:

Fee payment
Photos in envelope
I-765
G-1145
Supporting documents

8. Make sure you keep for yourself, photocopies of all documents that you are submitting to USCIS, including your check or money order. Also, give a set of photocopies to ISS.

9. Send the packet to the Vermont Service Center for adjudication.

USCIS Dallas Lockbox	USCIS
P.O. Box 660867	Attn: AOS
Dallas, TX 75266	2501 S. State Hwy 121, Suite 400
	Lewisville, TX 75067

10. Inform ISS when you have received approval of your OPT application from USCIS.

11. Submit a photocopy of your I-797 receipt and of your OPT card to ISS. If you receive a form from USCIS stating that your application has been received, and will be processed in a given number of days, keep this form as a temporary proof of your valid status. Give a photocopy of this form to ISS.

12. If you receive a Request for Evidence, or any communication from USCIS requiring your response by a certain date, please see the DSO as soon as possible. Your application will be delayed until you respond according to the instructions given you. **READ CAREFULLY ANY CORRESPONDENCE YOU GET FROM USCIS!**

13. Your student status will extend until the date printed on your OPT card. At that time, you will need to either return home, or be officially accepted to study at a different program at Eastern or at another institution.

14. Post-completion OPT is a legal permission for full-time employment. "Full time" is simply translated as anything more than 20 hours per week. There is no maximum limit of hours. Students may work 40 hours or more.

15. If you enter another degree program at Eastern or at another school, your OPT permission will end regardless of the expiration date on your OPT card.



OTHER OPT ISSUES



Transferring to Another School while on OPT:

1. If you plan to enroll in another academic program at Eastern, you must arrange with the DSO, to update your SEVIS record at the completion of OPT. All admissions requirements for final acceptance to the new program must be met, including any financial documents and deposits, before the OPT end date.
2. If you plan to enroll in another academic program at another institution, you must arrange with the DSOs of both schools to transfer your SEVIS record before your OPT end date. Transfer can not be done until you are officially accepted at the new school, and all corresponding transfer forms have been submitted.
3. The act of registration at the new school will terminate OPT regardless of the end date printed on the OPT card. For this reason, it is important to negotiate the SEVIS transfer release date with the DSOs of both schools, to assure your OPT authorization is not terminated too soon.
4. When you reach the end date printed on your OPT card, or you are registered at the new school, whichever comes first, you must stop working in your OPT employment.

Travel and Re-entry to the U.S. while on OPT:

1. Regulations indicate that an F-1 student with an unexpired EAD issued for post-completion OPT may re-enter the U.S. to resume employment after a period of temporary absence. However, departure from the U.S. while an application is pending is often considered an abandonment of that application.
2. There are three scenarios that could result differently if traveling in OPT status.
 - You filed for OPT, but adjudication is still pending. Technically, if you return to the U.S. and the application is still pending, you may re-enter to search for employment. But this scenario is risky because if the application is approved while you were out of the U.S., you will not be permitted for re-entry. We don't recommend traveling while OPT is pending.
 - If your OPT was approved and you depart before you get a job, your OPT ends and you can not re-enter the U.S. We do not recommend traveling on OPT if you haven't already begun your employment.
 - If your OPT was approved, and you have begun your employment, you may travel and re-enter the U.S. to resume work at the same job. We only recommend travel under these circumstances.
3. Documents you will need when traveling and re-entering the U.S. while on OPT:
 - An I-20 with OPT authorization on the second page, and endorsed by the DSO within the preceding six months.
 - An unexpired OPT card.
 - A valid F-1 visa.
 - A current passport
 - A letter from your present employer confirming your employment will continue upon your return.



Change of Employer/Address Change while on OPT

It is possible to change employers while in OPT status.

Changes must be reported to USCIS. You are also required to report any change of address to USCIS within ten days of moving. You will be required to set up an account in SEVIS portal to report any changes mentioned above. You may also contact your DSO to report changes.

E-filing an OPT Application

An OPT application can be filed electronically by going to the following website. After e-filing, you must submit supporting documentation by mail to the USCIS Service Center having jurisdiction in your region.

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/i-765.htm>

E-filers should:

- Review the instructions for the e-filed form to determine what documentation is necessary.
 - Gather the supporting documentation as instructed.
 - Print a copy of the Confirmation Receipt notice, and attach it as a first page in the supporting documentation package.
 - Do not include a copy of the e-filed application itself with the supporting documentation.
 - Do not include any paper-based applications or fees with your supporting documentation.
 - Make copies of everything in your supporting documentation package for your records. Give another set of copies to the DSO.
- Place all supporting documentation into one package and mail it to the address provided on the Confirmation Receipt notice.

About the OPT Extension for STEM Majors

A 17-month extension to OPT has been approved for students with select majors. The list of majors included in this provision is very specific to the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Unfortunately, Nursing is not on the list. The purpose of this extension is to give STEM students a way to overcome the H-1B visa cap gap, which can delay the issuance of the H-1B visa from 5 to 17 months.

General Provisions:

- STEM students need to file another form I-765 and pay the fee a second time.
- F-1 students who file timely (at least 90 days prior) for a STEM extension may continue employment while the application is pending until a final decision from USCIS, or 180 days, whichever comes first.
- Approved extensions allow for students to remain working for the STEM employer on the new EAD. If denied, the student must make preparations to depart or transfer to another school to continue studying.
- F-1 classified nonimmigrant students (other than STEM students) whose employer has filed an H-1B petition on their behalf and whose petition is selected, may now receive an extended/authorized stay for employment for the five months until the H-1B takes effect.
- The employer must verify the student employee through the E-Verify system..



J-1 STUDENT ACADEMIC TRAINING

J-1 STUDENT ACADEMIC TRAINING

According to the J-1 visa regulations, academic training is training related to a student's field of study, prior to or after graduation, and can be paid or unpaid. Academic training may or may not be possible depending on the J-1 student's program. The student must receive a recommendation from his/her academic advisor and written approval from the Responsible Officer (RO) in OISSS in advance of the training experience.

Both the student and his/her academic advisor must sign the J-1 Academic Training Application Form and the adviser must confirm that the proposed academic training relates to an integral part of the student's curriculum, and is a praxis experience that enhances the objective of the student's program.

The student must present to the RO at least 15 days in advance of the program end date on the DS-2019, an explanation from his/her academic advisor or graduate program coordinator setting forth:

- (A) The goals and objectives of the specific academic training program;
- (B) A description of the academic training program, including its location, the name and address of the training supervisor, number of hours per week, and dates of the training;
- (C) How the academic training relates to the student's major field of study; and
- (D) Why it is an integral or critical part of the academic program of the student.

The student must acknowledge the following when signing the application form:

1. I understand that academic training must fulfill the objectives of my exchange program.
2. I understand that academic training can be done concurrently with study or must start no later than 30 days after completion of coursework.
3. I understand that academic training must not conflict with class sessions, nor can it extend beyond the period of any government funding I receive.
4. I understand that my work authorization is limited to the employment outlined in this application, and any changes in employment would have to be approved by my academic advisor and by OISSS.
5. I understand that my academic training is only for the employer and for the dates specified on my DS-2019.
6. I understand that my RO has the legal responsibility to rescind my authorization should I violate the terms of my agreement.
7. I understand that working without the correct employment authorization constitutes a violation of visa status, resulting in the termination of my SEVIS record.

For more information, or to determine if he/she is eligible for academic training, the J-1 student should inquire of the RO in the Office of International Student and Scholar Services.

Appendix



Eastern University
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete two sets of all documents. Submit one set to Eastern University Admissions Office, which is kept in the student's file at Eastern. The student keeps the other set to take to the visa interview.
2. Students who are already in the U.S. and are transferring from another college, need only submit one set of documents. Students who are in the U.S. and are applying for a change of status, will need to submit one set of documents to Eastern admissions, and send one set as evidence along with the change of status application.
3. Fill out the forms and attach bank statements or other proof of assets to both forms. Evidence must be attached or forms are not acceptable.
4. Both sets of documents must be signed in the presence of a public notary and stamped or sealed accordingly. If such a person is not available where you are, seek assistance from the appropriate bank officer or legal authority needed to make the documents legal affidavits.
5. Supporting information must be in English, and all money stated in U.S. dollars.
6. Complete financial documentation showing sufficient income must be submitted before an I-20 can be issued. Students on F-1 visas can not accept unauthorized employment; therefore, the sponsor is required to provide enough evidence to prove the student will not need to work for the duration of their studies.
7. If family members will accompany the student, the sponsor must show sufficient finances to cover the cost of living for these members too. \$5000 must be added for a spouse, and \$3000 for each child. Spouse and dependents come on the F-2 visa, and can not take employment of any kind.

If the student has more than one sponsor, each sponsor should prepare a separate set of documents. If the student is providing a form for his/her own funds, write "SELF" as the name of sponsor and as the relationship to student.

Eastern University International Student
STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Name of sponsor _____
Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Sponsor's occupation _____

Annual salary in US dollars _____

Relationship to student _____

Name of student _____

Student's foreign address _____

Degree program (to which the student is applying) _____

This program is usually completed in _____ # years.

Name of student's spouse and/or children accompanying the student to the U.S. If no family members are accompanying the student, write "NONE".

Name Date of Birth Country of Birth/Country of Citizenship Relationship
(month/day/year)

		/	
		/	
		/	

I will provide the funding per year as noted below (in U.S. dollars):

1st year _____
2nd year _____
3rd year _____
4th year _____
TOTAL _____

I intend to support the student in the following way (if providing room and board, transportation or other types of support):

Which is valued at: _____

For how long? _____

Signature of Sponsor _____

Sworn to and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____

(day) (month and year)

Signature of Notary _____ Place seal here:

EASTERN UNIVERSITY
International Student Transfer Form

FOREIGN STUDENT:

This form is required of all international students who are transferring their visa to Eastern University. In addition to this form, we request you send copies of current I-20, visa, passport and I-94 forms. Please ask the Foreign Student Adviser at the school you currently attend, that is the school that holds your SEVIS record, to complete the information below. He or she should then send the form directly to:

Augusta Allen, International Student Services Eastern
University
1300 Eagle Road, St. Davids, PA 19087
Tel. (610) 341-5870 Fax. (610) 341-1468 aallen6@eastern.edu

Applicant's Full Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

I authorize the transfer of my SEVIS record to Eastern University.

Signature: _____

FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISER:

The student named above is applying for admission to Eastern University. Would you kindly complete the requested information below and return it to the address above.

I-94 Admission No. _____ **Visa Type:** _____

Program end date on I-20: _____ **SEVIS No.** _____

Is the SEVIS record still valid or is it terminated/completed? _____

Is/was student pursuing a full course of study? _____

Any problems regarding the student's status with USCIS? (please explain)

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, the above information is correct.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Name and Title (please print) _____

Institution _____

Address _____

Telephone No. _____ **Email** _____

SEVIS RECORD TRANSFER RELEASE DATE: _____

Eastern University, St. Davids, PA SEVIS ID# PHI214F00444000

EASTERN UNIVERSITY
International Student Request for Reduced Course Load

F-1 visa restrictions include the necessity for the student to be enrolled full-time in consecutive terms in order to maintain immigration status. Any exceptions need to be authorized by the Designated School Official. Please complete the following information and bring this form in person to International Student Services.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT:

Name _____

Local Address _____

Telephone _____ **Email** _____

Degree Program _____ **Credits completed** _____

Term/courses for which RCL is requested _____

Current I-20 Expiration Date _____ **SEVIS #** _____

Student's signature _____ **Date** _____

Please attach a copy of your current transcript, I-20, visa and I-94 if these are not already on file in the International Student Services Office.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ACADEMIC ADVISER:

There are only a few exceptions granted by USCIS for an F-1 student to take less than a full course load. By immigration law, the international student must be full-time during each regular academic term. If the student has special circumstances dictating a need to reduce course load (eg., medical reason), or if the student's activity is equivalent to full-time, but does not require a full-time number of units (eg., writing a thesis), this form is to be endorsed by the academic adviser. Please check one of the following reasons:

- Student has a medical reason for having to reduce course load. (Attach a doctor's note.)***
- Student is in his/her first semester and is having difficulties with English language or is unfamiliar with U.S. educational culture and practices.***
- Student has less than a full course load remaining to complete his/her degree program.***
- Student is involved in a required internship or field semester.***
- Student has completed all formal coursework, and is engaged in thesis or dissertation research.***
- Student has for academic or medical necessity, taken the one year leave permitted in the D.Min program.***
- Other (please explain)*** _____

I endorse a less than full-time registration for the semester requested by this student for the above reason.

Academic Adviser's Signature *Print Name* *Date*

International Student Services *Signature* *Date*

**EASTERN UNIVERSITY
F-2 Sponsor Form**

Name of Student _____

Address _____

Degree Program _____ **Expected Graduation** _____

1. Provide the names and birthdates of your family members for whom you wish to request F-2 visas. Please spell the names as they will appear on their passports.
2. Please attach an official bank statement or other proof of assets to confirm the availability of the funds you will need to support your family members. You need evidence of \$5,000 for a spouse and \$3,000 for a dependent child per year.
3. Have this form notarized with the bank statement attached.

I execute this affidavit on behalf of the following family members:

Spouse	Sex
Date of Birth	

Child	Sex
Date of Birth	

Child	Sex
Date of Birth	

Child	Sex
Date of Birth	

I agree to support financially the aforementioned individuals according to the terms specified below. I list amounts in U.S. Dollars. Also, with this form, I submit proof of assets verifying that the funds indicated are available for distribution. Both are notarized.

	<u>YEAR</u>		<u>AMOUNT OF SUPPORT</u>
1 st	\$	_____	USD
2 nd	\$	_____	USD
3 rd	\$	_____	USD
TOTAL	\$	_____	USD

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE _____ **DATE** _____

Phone # _____ E-Mail _____

**International Student Services
Information Update Form for OPT Student**

Please use this form to report any changes of employment, personal contact information or visa status to Augusta Allen in the International Student Services Office, Eastern University, 1300 Eagle Road, St. Davids, PA 19087. Fax # 610-341-1468. Email: aallen6@eastern.edu.

CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Name: _____
2. Current U.S. Address (actual physical address): _____

3. U.S. home phone: _____ 4. Cell phone: _____
5. Email address: (other than eastern.edu) _____
6. If you have filed for a change of visa status, an adjustment of status or permanent residence. Visa status requested: _____ Date application was filed: _____
If the new status is already approved, when was it approved? _____. Please send photocopies of your I-797 receipt notice and/or notice of action.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

1. Employer: _____
2. Employer's Address: _____

3. Employment Start Date: _____
4. If this is a change of employer, give the end date of your previous employment: _____
Name of previous employer _____

SCHOOL TRANSFER INFORMATION

If you are going to enter a new academic program, such as a graduate degree, following OPT, please report your intended degree program and the name of the school you plan to attend:

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS AND CODES

AICE American-International Cultural Experience is a student group on the St. David's campus. Palmer Seminary refers to their campus group as the ISF (International Student Fellowship).

AR-11 A USCIS form used to report a change of address. For F-1 students, an easier way to report a change of address is simply to enter the change in the student's personal information in the SEVIS record. A change of address must be reported within 10 days.

CPT Curricular Practical Training is an internship or other form of practical training that is integral to the student's academic program.

CBP Customs and Border Patrol are the officers in authority at a port of entry to the U.S.

DHS Department of Homeland Security, of which USCIS and ICE are a part.

DMV Department of Motor Vehicles is the Pennsylvania state agency responsible for the issuance of drivers licenses. Special laws apply to internationals requesting drivers licenses.

DOS Department of State is responsible for issuing visas to non-immigrants entering the United States.

D/S Duration of Status. A notation on the I-94 of the F-1 visa holder. This means the visa-holder may remain in the U.S. for as long as he or she is "in status", that is, as long as he or she is enrolled as a full-time student or authorized for OPT.

DSO Designated School Official is responsible for maintaining school policies regarding USCIS regulations. The DSO has an authorized signature for the I-20. Also referred to as the International Student Adviser.

DS-2019 A form used to denote J-1 EV status, and indications regarding the nature of the EVP.

EAD Employment Authorization Document, also referred to as a work permit.

ESL English as Second Language.

ESLI English Second Language International. An ESL school on the St. Davids campus of Eastern University.

EV Exchange visitor, a holder of the J-1 visa. **EVP** denotes Exchange Visitor Program.

F-1 The student visa. F-2 designates the dependent spouse or child of an F-1 visa holder.

I-20 A form used to denote F-1 student status. The I-20 is adjusted to reflect various changes in a student's tenure, such as a CPT authorization, extension of program or change in major. Employment authorizations are noted on the third page of the I-20.

I-94 An entry/departure record. Usually a white card inserted into the passport bearing the date of entry into the U.S. and a notation as to how long a non-immigrant can stay legally in the U.S. The I-94 is inserted into the passport at the port of entry, and collected again upon departure. Eastern University Office of International Student and Scholar Services 10/2010 2

ICE Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the government agency responsible for enforcing immigration laws. SEVP is a division of ICE.

IELTS An English proficiency test, similar to the TOEFL, but geared more toward British

English rather than American English.

Illegal Presence A period of time a person spends in the U.S. without valid immigration documents, or that a student spends out of status. Days of illegal presence accrue, and certain bars to re-entering the U.S. are based on the number of days accrued.

INA 212e The regulation code referring to the two-year home country physical presence requirement.

IRS Internal Revenue Service is the tax-collecting agency of the U.S.

ISO International Student Orientation is offered to new international students twice a year.

ITIN Individual Tax Identification Number is an alternative to the Social Security Number (SSN) for the purpose of filing taxes. The SSN is no longer available to non-immigrant visa holders unless they also have employment authorization.

J-1 The EV visa. **J-2** designates the dependent spouse or child of a J-1 visa-holder.

Notarization The process for creating legally binding documents, such as a financial affidavit. In the U.S., this is accomplished by the seal of a notary public.

OISSS Office of International Student and Scholar Services is the office within Student Development department that provides services specific to international students and exchange visitors.

OPT Optional Practical Training is a form of practical training not required by a student's academic program, but related to the course of study. OPT is usually done in the 12 months following graduation. OPT authorization appears on the third page of the I-20 as a work permit.

Out of Status A phrase meaning that the F-1 student has violated the terms of his or her visa, most often by failing to enroll full-time in consecutive terms, or by working illegally. If a student is out of status, he or she must either leave the U.S. or apply for reinstatement.

PAIEN Philadelphia Area International Educator's Network meets monthly in Philadelphia.

POE Port of Entry. An airport or border crossing where internationals first enter the U.S. Eastern University Office of International Student and Scholar Services 10/2010 3

PTS Palmer Theological Seminary, the Seminary of Eastern University.

Reinstatement A process of regaining F-1 status in order to continue full-time studies.

RO Responsible Officer is responsible for maintaining school policies regarding USCIS regulations. The RO and the **ARO** (Alternative Responsible Officer) have authorized signatures for the DS-2019.

SEVIS Student and Exchange Visitor Information System is a internet database used by ICE to track the status of international students. The university maintains student records in and prints out I-20s from this database.

SEVP Student and Exchange Visitor Program is a division of ICE responsible for enforcing immigration regulations concerning F, J and M visas. SEVP runs the SEVIS database.

SSA Social Security Administration is the government agency responsible for the retirement pensions of workers. Employers regularly deduct social security wages from worker's paychecks, which are banked until such time as the worker retires.

SSN Social Security Number. This is a number assigned to a worker by SSA, and used for tax reporting purposes and to record a consumer's credit history.

Sponsor An individual or organization providing financial support to a student.

TOEFL Test of English as a Foreign Language. A test that determines English proficiency.

USCIS United States Citizenship and Immigration Services is the government agency responsible for immigration services and regulations. Formerly known as INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services).

Vermont Service Center The USCIS service center with jurisdiction over Pennsylvania where most F-1 student documents are adjudicated.

Visa A document issued by the U.S. Department of State, granting permission for a non-citizen to enter the U.S. Usually a sticker inserted in the passport. If a student leaves the U.S., he or she can't re-enter without a valid visa.