

F-1 and J-1 Visa

What is a Visa: A visa is a permit that allows a foreign national to apply for entry into the United States. It is the stamp in your passport that is issued by the U.S. embassy or consulate after you presented your I-20/DS-2019, financial documentation, and other required documents in support of your application to study in the U.S.

When New F-1/J-1 Visas are Needed: It is not necessary to maintain a valid F-1/J-1 visa once you have entered the United States in F-1/J-1 status and in order to remain here in lawful F-1/J-1 status. However, you must have a valid F-1/J-1 visa for reentry if you plan to leave the U.S. and return for the continuation of your studies as an F-1/J-1 student (or for your post-completion Optional Practical Training/Academic Training). If your visa will expire before you plan to reenter the U.S., or if the number of entries permitted will all be used, you will need to apply for a new visa before reentering the U.S.

Applying for an F-1/J-1 Visa: An F-1/J-1 visa cannot be renewed within the United States and generally should be obtained within the applicant's country of citizenship or nationality. Students who apply for a visa as a "third country national" in a country that is not their own, may experience additional problems or delays which they might not experience if applying from their home country. The U.S. Department of State recommends that you apply for the visa from your home country and not as a third-country national in another country. Due to heightened U.S. security, your visa application may take several weeks to process, so the appointment should be made as soon as possible, for the earliest date possible. In addition, students are advised to contact the U.S. consulate or embassy where you intend to apply for a visa, far in advance, to research the specific procedures and requirements at that location. **As a result of recent and significant immigration changes, students/dependents who are considering a visa application in Canada or Mexico must first consult with the Office of International Student Services (OISS) at least 2-3 months prior to their departure date.** Failure to do so can result in serious problems or denials with reentry into the U.S. According to the U.S. Department of State website, "*No assurance regarding the issuance of visas can be given in advance*".

Valid Visas in Expired Passports: If you have a valid F-1/J-1 visa in an expired passport and have been issued a new passport without a visa, you may continue to use the F-1/J-1 visa in your old/expired passport until that visa is no longer valid (so long as the nationality in your new passport is the same as the nationality in your old passport and on your I-20/DS-2019). Students whose passports will expire during their studies should contact their embassy in the United States, far in advance (about 7-8 months), for guidance on the passport renewal procedures.

Additional Information: For detailed information about the visa application process, and any alert notices, please visit the U.S. State Department web site: www.travel.state.gov. (Click on the "Visas" tab, then the "Study" icon. You should also check the "We Want You To Know" box.)

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► **Students Who Changed to F-1/J-1 Status from Within the U.S. Must have a Valid F-1/J-1 Visa for Reentry into the U.S. after a Departure:** All students who had a change to F-1/J-1 status approved in the United States by the USCIS must apply for an F-1/J-1 visa the next time they leave the U.S. for reentry purposes. **An F-1/J-1 visa cannot be issued in the U.S. and a new F-1/J-1 visa is required to match your new F-1/J-1 status for reentry purposes.** Failure to obtain an F-1/J-1 visa after a change to F-1/J-1 status will result in a denial at the U.S. Port of Entry, even if you have a valid passport and a valid I-20/DS-2019. In addition to the items listed below, students who were approved for a change of status from within the U.S. will also need to take their I-797 Change of Status Approval Notice, and documentation of their previous immigration status for the F-1/J-1 visa application/appointment.

► **If You Are a Current Student and Need to Apply for a New F-1/J-1 Visa:**

You should make an appointment for the earliest date possible and should consult the website of the U.S. consulate/embassy where you intend to apply for the visa for any special requirements/procedures at that particular location. **For the visa application, you will need at least the following items:**

1. **A Passport Valid for at Least 6 Months Beyond the Intended Period of Stay in the U.S.;**
2. **An original I-20 or DS-2019 signed by the Office of International Student Services (OISS) within the past 12 months, and all previous I-20/DS-2019 forms ever issued to you.** The first and last names on your I-20/DS-2019 should match the names on your passport;
3. **Financial Documentation** which shows proof of financial support for your studies at Regent;
4. **A “Certificate of Enrollment”,** which shows part-time or full-time enrollment status for all semesters you attended Regent University as an on-campus student; **AND** **an Official Transcript,** which will show that you are making progress toward the completion of your degree and a record of your current and historical classes.
(These two documents can be requested from the Registrar’s Office (Room 325, Student Center) and will take approximately 3-5 days to process, so please plan accordingly. Request forms can also be found on this page of the Registrar’s Office website: <http://www.regent.edu/admin/registrar/studentforms.cfm>);
5. **Evidence of intent to return home after studies/post-completion OPT/Academic Training since the F-1/J-1 visas are “non-immigrant” visas.** (Examples include: proof of employment in home country, land/business/house ownership in home country, family, continued membership in home country organizations, home country financial accounts and investments, etc.);
6. **2 colored photographs;**
7. **DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form;**
8. **The Visa Processing Fee and any applicable Visa Issuance Fees.** The Visa Issuance fees will vary depending on the location where you apply for the visa and visa reciprocity laws.

► **If You Graduated and are on Post-completion OPT/Academic Training and Need to Apply for a New F-1/J-1 Visa:**

F-1 Graduates who are on Post-completion OPT should first check to make sure the OISS has their employer’s name and address entered into SEVIS. Then, they will need the following items for the F-1 visa application in addition to the items listed under points 5-8 above: a passport valid at least 6 months into the future; an unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD); a Letter of Employment showing the dates of the employment and salary; all of your I-20s with page 3 of the OPT I-20 endorsed for travel by the OISS within the past “6” months; and the I-797 and documentation of previous immigration status (if applicable).

J-1 Graduates who are engaged in Academic Training will need a passport valid at least 6 months into the future; a signature on the DS-2019 that is not more than 12 months old; an employment authorization letter from the OISS; and a Letter of Employment showing the dates of the employment and salary.

For additional details, please consult with the OISS or visit the “Visas” tab at the U.S. Department of State website at: <http://travel.state.gov>