

TRAVEL AND YOUR VISA STATUS FOR EAP RECIPROCITY STUDENTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COMING TO THE U.S....

When can I arrive in the U.S.? Can I come early to travel?

Visa regulations allow you to arrive **no more than 30 days** prior to the start of the academic program (this date will be printed on your certificated of eligibility I-20 or DS-2019) at your host UC. It is important to take this into consideration when buying your airline tickets and planning your arrival.

You will naturally want to travel and explore California and other parts of the U.S. Don't worry! There will be plenty of time to travel during and after your program. F-1 students benefit from a 60-day "grace period" which starts after the last day of your program. J-1 students have a 30-day "grace period". You will also have a several week vacation period in December and another between terms (at quarter campuses) in March.

When arranging your flight itinerary, please be aware that you will need to pass through U.S. immigration inspection at the port of entry (the first place you arrive in the U.S.). If the U.S. port of entry is not your final destination, you will need to leave sufficient time before your connecting flight for verification of your immigration documents and customs inspection.

Can I come to the U.S. as a tourist during the summer?

You can come to the U.S. prior to your EAP studies as a tourist but you should be aware that you would need to exit the country after your leisure travel and reenter the country under the F-1 or J-1 status. It may be necessary for you to return to your home country so that you can enter the U.S. and that can be very expensive. We recommend that you make any plans for travel within the U.S. for **after** your EAP studies (during the grace periods allowed) or during school vacation periods. UC Academic calendar: <http://eap.ucop.edu/reciprocity/StuGuide/0607-Calendar.pdf>

How long will it take to process my visa application?

The time-line for processing your visa application will vary depending on local conditions. Please contact the nearest consulate/embassy for specific information and instructions. Check with the consulate/embassy often to keep up with any changes in procedure. You can access visa related web links from the EAP Reciprocal Exchanges web pages at: <http://eap.ucop.edu/reciprocity/Visa/>

I would like to attend a summer course or English language instruction in the U.S. before coming to UC. Can I use my host UC issued I-20 or DS-2019 to enter the U.S.?

No. The institution where you will be completing summer study or English language instruction will issue you a visa document (usually an I-20 certificate of eligibility) so that you may attend their school. You must enter the US using the visa document issued by the institution you will be attending.

If you plan to participate in a summer study or English language program:

- 1) Contact UOEAP as soon as possible. We will put you in contact with your visa advisor so that your host UC will be alerted to your intention to transfer your visa sponsorship to UC after your arrival.
- 2) Upon arrival at your summer session or language program, you must inform the visa advisor at that institution that you will need to transfer your visa document sponsorship to UC. The visa advisor will assist you with the transfer.

I would like to participate in a work program in the U.S. before coming to UC. Can I use my host UC I-20 or DS-2019 to enter the U.S.?

No. The organization that will sponsor your summer work or internship will issue you a DS-2019 visa document (for the J-1 visa) so that you may participate in their program. You must enter the US using the visa document issued by the sponsoring organization.

If you plan to participate in a work program, contact UOEAP as soon as possible. EAP will put you in contact with your host UC visa advisor who will counsel you.

Note: *Students participating in work programs in J-1 status must apply for a change of status to F-1 before attending UC. The request for status change must be made - **prior** to the end date of your legal stay in the U.S. (30 days after the work program end date printed on your DS-2019)*

You should be aware that a change from the J-1 to the F-1 status within the United States is possible, but would have consequences as follows:

- 1) the change of status could take up to a year
 - a) while waiting for the change in status, you would **not** be eligible for benefits that you would normally enjoy such as the possibility of employment on-campus and the option of entering and exiting the country (holiday break vacations in Mexico or Canada would not be possible)
 - b) the change may not be completed in time for you to apply for internship (practical training) if you wish to do so, and if it is allowed by your host UC.
- 2) a fee of approximately \$200 is charged for the change of status application (Fee amounts are subject to change.)
- 3) there is a possibility that the application could be refused

ONCE YOU ARRIVE...

How do I maintain my student visa status once I arrive in the U.S.?

- 1) You must attend campus check-in and orientation at your host UC campus.

NB: Remember to bring your passport (with I-94 card) and visa document (I-20 or DS-2019 form) with you to check-in.

Campus check-in is mandatory.

- 2) You must be enrolled **full-time** each term of your participation in the EAP program.
- 3) You must report your California address and any changes of address during the time you are a student to your host UC campus. At your check-in and international student orientation you will receive instruction on how to update your address at your host UC, usually through the student information system.

What is full-time enrollment?

Undergraduates must enroll in a **minimum of 12 units** (at UCB most colleges require **13 units minimum enrollment**). Graduates must enroll in the minimum number of units as required by their host UC and department for full-time enrollment.

What will happen if I am not able to enroll full-time?

Full-time enrollment requirements are strictly enforced. Students who need less than full-time enrollment must receive the approval of their host campus visa advisor **prior** to pursuing a reduced course of study. A reduced load may be approved by a visa adviser under very strict immigration guidelines. If not approved, you will fall **out of status**. It is critical to see an adviser **before** falling below full-time.

What is SEVIS?

SEVIS (pronounced SEE-viss), the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, is the system that US immigration services and DOS (Department of State) uses to track the status and dependents of international students and scholars in F, J, and M (vocational) programs, from the time of the production of the initial visa document to the individual's program completion or departure from UC, or in the case of those students who elect to participate in what Immigration calls "Optional Practical Training" or "Academic Training" - a period of employment (internship) after the completion of studies.

There are two main components in SEVIS: (1) visa document production (generation of the I-20 or DS-2019 form with barcode); and (2) reporting "events".

What F and J international student information is reported to SEVIS?

- The information on the I-20 (for Fs) or the DS-2019.
- Examples of "events" for students include:
 - Registration each term
 - Full-time enrollment

- Residential address and any changes (Post office boxes and departmental addresses are not accepted)
- Changes of major
- Leaves or reasons for interrupting the program of study through withdrawal - this must be reported to your visa advisor **before** any change takes place
- Completion of program - either earlier than the date specified on the I-20 or DS-2019, on that specified date, or on a later date (which requires an extension) - exceptions must be reported to your visa advisor **before** the current end date
- Dependent information (if applicable)

When do I need to leave the U.S.?

If you are in **F-1 status** you have **60 days** after the end date of the I-20 or completion of program to depart. You may **not** exit and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during this sixty-day grace period.

If you are in **J-1 status** you have **30 days** after the end date of the I-20 or completion of program to depart. You may **not** exit and re-enter the U.S. in J-1 status during this thirty-day grace period.

If you **officially withdraw** prior to the end of your program, you have **15 days** to depart. You may **not** exit and re-enter the U.S. during this period.

If you do **not officially withdraw** from the program but stop attending UC, you must depart **immediately**.

Can I return to my home country or travel outside the U.S. during vacation periods?

Before you leave the U.S. you will need to receive an authorization for your return. Be certain to make an appointment to talk with your host UC visa advisor well in advance of your planned travel.

Immediately after my EAP study program, can I exit the U.S. (to travel to Mexico or Canada, for example) and re-enter in the tourist status or as visa waiver visitor before returning to my home country?

We advise that you do not make such travel plans. It will be at the discretion of the U.S. immigration officer whether to admit you in the tourist or visa waiver status at the time you are re-entering the U.S. There are no assurances that you would be allowed to re-enter the U.S. in the tourist/visitor status and, as mentioned above, you could not enter in the J-1 or F-1 student status. If the U.S. immigration officer denies your re-entry to the U.S., you would have to return to the country you were visiting (i.e., Mexico or Canada in this example) and then return to your home country from there.

Who do I contact if I have questions about my immigration documents, status or travel?

You should contact your visa advisor in the office of international students and scholars on your host UC campus. You will find contact information for the International Students Office in the pre-arrival instructions for your host UC on the Reciprocal Exchanges web pages at: <http://eap.ucop.edu/reciprocity/>