



FAQS FOR INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON F-1 & J-1 VISAS RE: COVID-19

Updated 07/22/20

Please be reassured that Rutgers University is closely monitoring and responding to the COVID-19 situation, and that we at Rutgers Newark will continue to share additional information as soon as it becomes available.

Stay regularly tuned to university and government resources:

- [President Holloway](#) and [Chancellor Cantor's](#) messages on July 6, 2020 regarding Rutgers fall operating status.
- The University's [website](#)
- Immigration updates on our [OISS website](#) and your Rutgers email inbox for updates from the university and our offices.
- For further information, especially concerning travel advisories, you should continue to follow the relevant [U.S. Department of State \(U.S.DOS\)](#) and [CDC](#) sites.

Feel free to contact [our office](#) if you have any questions that are not answered by the FAQs below.

1. Will classes be online or in-person in the Fall 2020 semester?

On Monday, July 6, 2020, [President Holloway](#) announced that Rutgers will be delivering mostly remote instruction with a limited number of in-person classes in fall 2020. [Chancellor Cantor's](#) message further outlines how remote instruction, student services, and social engagement will be offered in the fall.

2. What are the current travel restrictions I should be mindful of?

The U.S. government has suspended entry for any non-U.S. citizens and non-permanent residents who were physically present within the following countries during the 14-day period preceding their entry to the U.S.

- People's Republic of China (excluding Hong Kong and Macau)
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- European Schengen area countries - Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.
- United Kingdom and Ireland (as of Monday, March 16, midnight)
- Brazil (May 24)

Canada-Mexico Essential Travel Restrictions - COVID-19 restrictions that restrict entry to the United States through land ports of entry along the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico borders to "essential travel" only.

Presidential Proclamation (June 22, 2020) - Temporarily Suspending Entry of H-1B and Certain J Nonimmigrants to the U.S. The Proclamation does not affect any students in F-1 or J-1 status. No Immediate effect on those presently in the U.S.

National Interest Exceptions for Certain Travelers from the Schengen Area, United Kingdom, and Ireland (July 16, 2020) – This guidance from the Department of State allows certain travelers eligibility of National Interest Exceptions (NIE) to travel to the US even while the travel bans remain in effect. According to the guidance, F-1 students from the "Schengen Area, the students who qualify for the NIE should be able to enter through a designated airport.

Please note that the situation is changing daily. For further information, please review travel advisories available from the U.S. State Department, the CDC, and the country/countries outside of the US from which you want to fly from or to.

Feel free to contact our office if you have any other questions.

3. What is the general process to receive my I-20/DS-2010?

The admissions office will provide you with instructions on providing the documentation needed to issue the I-20/DS-2019. You will also be asked to provide copies of your passport, and financial documentation. Please follow these instructions as you receive them, to request your new I-20/DS-2019.

5. Will COVID-19 impact my application for an I-20/DS-2019?

Admissions offices are working remotely and will process I-20s with electronic signatures. Please apply for your I-20 so you can make a visa appointment as soon as the Embassies and Consulates reopen for visa processing. If you are starting at Rutgers in J-1 status, we will make special arrangements to mail your DS-2019 to you.

6. The COVID-19 crisis has impacted my financial situation. Can I still I apply for my I- 20/DS-2019?

I-20s and DS-2019s can only be issued if you can show enough funds to cover the first year of tuition/fees, living expenses, and health insurance. If you find that you are ultimately unable to come for your program, you can contact OISS to either cancel your I-20/DS-2019 or defer to a future term provided admissions and your academic program grants the deferral. Please note that F-1 students are not eligible for paid off-campus work authorization until after they have completed one academic year at Rutgers (in the United States). New students are eligible for on-campus employment provided they are in the U.S.

If your financial documents are more than six months old by the time of your visa appointment, we recommend that you get updated documents for the visa appointment.

7. Will I have any issues with a digitally signed I-20?

US government guidance indicates that I-20s issued electronically or with electronic signatures remain valid until students have a need for an updated I-20. This same guidance indicates that both the US Department of State (the unit that issues US visas) and Customs and Border Protection (the unit that checks documents at US borders and entry points) are in support of this action.

8. I am a new student starting my studies in the fall/summer session at Rutgers University. Can I begin my studies in the fall/summer if I cannot come to the U.S. in time?

Yes, you can still begin your program from overseas if your department/school provides remote instruction options, but your immigration status would only be activated when you are able to enter the U.S. In this case, you will need to change your I-20/DS-2019 start date to a future semester.

Please note that the deferral of your I-20/DS-2019 and the deferral of your actual enrollment at Rutgers are separate processes. If you are unable to come to the US in time for the fall semester, your I-20/DS-2019 start date will need to be deferred.

9. What is the process of changing my I-20/DS-2019 start date?

- You must accept your offer of admission and pay the \$150 enrollment fee
- Email the Admissions Office (admissions@newark.rutgers.edu) and let us know which semester you plan to defer to (i.e. Spring 2021, Fall 2021)
- If you plan on taking any courses for credit at another institution, you must reapply to the university and submit new transcripts.
- All fees paid (application/enrollment) are non-refundable.

For RBS Students:

- You must accept your offer of admission and pay the tuition deposit
- Email the RBS – Graduate Admissions' Office (admit@business.rutgers.edu) and let us know which semester you plan to defer to, you are able to defer up to one year
- All fees paid (application/tuition deposit/program/SS&C) are non-refundable.

The OISS will be able to issue you an updated I-20 with a later start date and the same SEVIS ID number, when needed.

10. What is the process of deferring my enrollment at Rutgers?

Should you need to defer your enrollment at Rutgers, please access the below link with our deferral process.

<https://admissions.newark.rutgers.edu/deferral-admission>

Should you need to defer your enrollment at Rutgers Business School, please e-mail

admit@business.rutgers.edu

11. I am planning to attend Rutgers in the summer or fall and am already in the U.S. What should I do?

New students who are already in the U.S. (in high school, or at a different institution), can have their SEVIS records transferred to Rutgers and stay in the U.S. even if their program at Rutgers begins in the fall. Please consult with the international services office in your current school about your transfer eligibility and timelines.

12. I am a student currently enrolled at another institution in the U.S. Do I need a new visa to begin study at Rutgers in the fall?

You do not need a new visa to begin the new program at Rutgers if you remain in the U.S. while between schools. If you choose to travel internationally, you will need to check with your embassy or consulate to determine if you need to apply for a new visa. If you have a valid visa (valid at the time of expected entry to the U.S.), chances are you won't need to apply for a new one. Students from the UK and Ireland with valid F-1 and M-1 visas do not need to seek a national interest exception to travel. Students from those areas who are traveling on a J-1 may contact the nearest embassy or consulate to initiate an exception request.

F-1 students can have their record transferred to Rutgers within 60 days of their program completion date at the current school. Your program at Rutgers must begin within five months of the date of last enrollment at your current school (program completion date) or the last date of authorized Optional Practical Training (OPT).

If you are unable to enter the U.S. to start your program due to COVID-19, the 5-month rule could be waived with approval from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). This will require the OISS office to work with SEVP to correct your F-1 program start date to the next available session. OISS will work with transfer students in this situation on a case by case basis.

J-1 students can transfer their SEVIS records to Rutgers, but their new program must begin immediately after completion of the current program (no gap allowed).

If choosing to travel while between programs, please note that you still need to consider changing travel restrictions and your personal situation before deciding if travel is the best option. If you do not have a valid visa, you should consider not leaving the US, as the new visa process may prevent you from returning in time to start your program.

13. What happens if the embassies do not open before the fall semester?

In response to the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 20, 2020, the Department of State suspended all routine visa services at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates world-wide. As global conditions evolve, the Department of State is now (as of July, 2020) beginning a “phased resumption of routine visa services”. Students should check with the embassies or consulates near them as they prepare for their visa applications. We would also recommend checking the [Department of State website](#) for the status of operations at the embassy where they intend to apply for a visa.

Students should continue to monitor the news, airline travel information, and [our website](#) for additional changes or updates.

14. If I get the F1 visa, but cannot go to the US because of travel restrictions, is the visa still valid?

If you have an F-1 visa, it will remain valid until the expiration date on the visa stamp. You can use it to attend Rutgers at a later semester, even if you receive an updated/new I -20 from the university.

15. I will start fall 2020 remotely and expect to be on campus in spring 2021. When do I apply for my visa?

You should apply for a visa when a visa appointment is available at the Embassy or Consulate close to you. If you are not able to get a visa in time for the start of fall 2020 classes, you can apply for the visa later in the fall semester. However, you will need an updated I-20/DS-2019 document from Rutgers to show a deferred start date. Please contact your admissions office for your updated I-20.

16. What should I do to prepare for questions that may be asked of me during the visa interview?

Please review the [pre-arrival information on our website](#) for resources and tips on how to navigate the visa interview.

17. If I start the fall semester online, can I come to campus mid-semester?

If you start your semester fully online, you will not be able to come to campus mid-semester unless your program requires you to attend in-person. Please consult with an [OISS advisor](#).

18. I am a new incoming graduate student with a TA/GA/Fellowship appointment? What impact does the COVID crisis have on my appointment?

International students cannot be on University payroll unless they have reported to Rutgers to activate their SEVIS status and have applied for a social security number. We are awaiting final guidance on this issue and will update this answer as more information becomes available.

19. Is the tuition less for students who will take classes remotely than for students who will take classes on the Rutgers campus?

No, tuition charges are the same.

20. What if I am currently in another immigration status and wish to apply for a change of status to F-1 or J-1 and not travel to get a new visa to return?

We highly advise consulting an immigration attorney to review this option. Please [contact us](#) for more information.

Please note: Information is subject to change based on United States Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement official guidelines.