

Immigration Terms to Know

The Office of Global Education understands that immigration regulations can often seem confusing, complicated and involve unfamiliar terms or concepts. To help you understand the essentials, we offer you this glossary of immigration terms to guide you through the process. Our office also offers information that covers important areas such as employment, taxes, etc.

Completion Date

Refers to the date the student completes the requirements for his or her degree program; i.e., it is the date the student finishes the last class, turns in a required thesis or dissertation, or otherwise meets the requirements for the degree. It is not the date of graduation, which may follow the completion date by weeks if not months.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

DHS is responsible for securing American borders and managing the immigration process. Under DHS, the newly created United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) focuses exclusively on providing services such as efficiently processing applications for U.S. citizenship, administering work authorizations and other permits and providing services for new residents and citizens.

School Official (DSO)

An employee or agent of an educational institution who has been authorized by USCIS to verify information and certify documents for F-1 students.

DS-2019

A certificate of eligibility issued by an authorized Exchange Visitor program. The certificate enables eligible individuals to obtain a J-1 visa to study, conduct research or teach in the United States. The J-1 exchange visitor, while traveling and re-entering the United States must also carry the DS-2019. The DS-2019 form functions as a record of J-1 status throughout the exchange visitor's stay in the United States. It is an important government document that should be kept at all times as a part of the exchange visitor's permanent records.

Duration of Status (D/S)

"Duration of Status" or "D/S" is the length of time for which individuals in F and J status are admitted into the United States. D/S allows students to remain in the United States as long as they are pursuing full-time studies and are otherwise complying with all immigration regulations.

D/S is not, however, for an indefinite period of time. D/S is based on the completion date on your I-20 or DS-2019, plus a 60-day grace period for F-1 students and a 30-day grace period for J-1 students.

Employment Authorization Document

Known as the “EAD Card,” it is a photo ID card issued by USCIS to nonimmigrants, which grants employment authorization for specific periods of time. F-1 students need to apply for an EAD card to have permission to do optional practical training and off-campus employment (based on economic hardship). J-2 dependents may also apply for an EAD card to have any type of employment.

F-1 Student

A nonimmigrant who is admitted into the United States to pursue a full course of study. F-1 student’s educational expenses are usually met by personal, family or MC funds.

F-2 Dependent

A spouse or child of an F-1 student.

F-2 spouses and children may not be employed while in the United States.

F-2 spouses may not study full time.

F-2 children may study full time only if it is in elementary or secondary school.

Grace Period

F-1 students have 60 days to remain in the United States beyond completion of studies to either prepare for departure or begin any authorized practical training;

J-1 students have 30 days.

I-20 (SEVIS I-20)

A certificate of eligibility issued by an authorized educational institution enabling eligible individuals to apply for F-1 or M-1 student status. The student, while traveling and re-entering the United States, must also carry the I-20. This document reflects the student’s biographical data, school and program information and financial resources. The student should keep the I-20 as a part of his or her permanent records.

IMPORTANT: A nonimmigrant may have more than one “visa” but will always have only one “status.”

I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)

The Form I-94 arrival/departure record provides nonimmigrants evidence that they have been lawfully admitted to the United States. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) gathers travelers’ arrival/ departure information automatically from their electronic travel records (CBP will still issue a paper form I-94 at land border ports of entry). To

retrieve your I-94 admission record, visit the following CBP website:
<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>.

J-1 Student

A nonimmigrant who has been selected to participate in an exchange visitor program. J-1 students generally are financially sponsored by an educational institution in the United States or abroad, a U.S. or an international government, or a private agency in support of international educational exchange. For individuals holding J-1 status, there is usually a “two-year home country residency requirement” and “health insurance.” (Refer to J-1 Scholar section under each heading.)

J-1 Scholar

A nonimmigrant who has been selected to participate in an exchange visitor program.

J-2 Dependent

A spouse or child of a J-1 student or scholar. J-2 dependents are eligible to apply for employment through USCIS.

Nonimmigrant

A person who is in the United States temporarily to pursue a specific activity or purpose (e.g., study, travel, business). Most nonimmigrants, including all F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents, must have an established residence abroad to which they intend to return.

Passport

A formal permit to travel abroad from and return to the issuing country. With few exceptions, it is issued by one’s country of citizenship. All individuals in F and J status are required to have a valid passport (must be valid at least six months from your date of entry into the United States) at all times. It is your responsibility to extend or replace your passport BEFORE it expires.

PDSO and DSO (Principal Designated School Official and Designated School Official)

Located in the Office of Global Education; responsible for Mississippi College’s compliance with the immigration regulations as well as any system alerts generated by SEVIS. Point of contacts for students/scholars.

Responsible Officer (RO) and Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO)

Responsible Officers in charge of over- seeing and hosting the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program and reporting to the U.S. Department of State; point of contact in the Office of Global Education for exchange visitors.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

An Internet-based database for electronically tracking and reporting foreign students and exchange visitors in the United States. I-20s for F-1 students and DS-2019s for J-1 students/scholars are generated using SEVIS.

Special Registration

A system that enables the U.S. government to keep track of nonimmigrants that come to the United States every year. Currently, there are three categories of nonimmigrants who will have to do special registration:

- 1) citizens or nationals of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Syria will be registered at the point of entry;
- 2) nonimmigrants who have been designated by the State Department; and
- 3) any other nonimmigrant identified by immigration officers at airports, seaports and land ports of entry will also need to register in accordance with 8 Code of Federal Regulations 264.1(f)(2).

State Department

The U.S. Department of State oversees diplomatic affairs and foreign relations for the United States. It is also responsible for issuing visas to foreign nationals who wish to enter the United States and regulates the Exchange Visitor Program, which includes J-1 students.

Status

Once nonimmigrants enter the United States, they are classified by USCIS according to the purpose of their visit. This classification is known as “status.” Students are in either F-1 or J-1 status and their dependents are in F-2 or J-2 status. USCIS regulates nonimmigrants according to the rules specific to that status. For example, one of the requirements of F-1 status is full-time study. A person’s status also determines how long he or she may remain in the United States.

Visa

An official notation placed in the passport granting permission for an individual to enter a particular country. The visa indicates the purpose of someone’s visit. The visa is also valid for a specified number of entries to the United States: one, two or “M” (multiple) until its expiration date. The visa does not indicate how long a person may remain in the United States, but only whether a person may enter the United States to pursue a particular type of activity (visit friends, study, work). Only U.S. consulates and embassies outside of the United States issue visas.