

## IMMIGRATION TERMS

Source: UC Berkeley International Office

<http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/travel/travel.php>

**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 international students and scholars in F, J, and M (vocational programs) immigration statuses and their dependents, 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 or attempted employment 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".

## PASSPORTS

Passports must be valid at all times during your stay in the U.S. Generally, it is required that a passport be valid for at least six months into the future. Passports can usually be renewed at your home country consulate in the U.S. Consulates are located in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York or Washington, D.C. A Canadian passport is not required for entry to the U.S. from within the western hemisphere. Beginning December 31, 2006--Canadian citizens will be required to have a passport and visa to study in the U.S. For more information, see: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc\\_2223.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html) .

## U.S. ENTRY VISA

Non-immigrant visas are granted to international visitors who can demonstrate that they intend to return to their home country after they complete their visit to the U.S. (The only exception is the H-1B classification which allows for intention to immigrate.) The visa is the multi-colored or blue stamp entered on a page of your passport at a U.S Embassy or Consulate abroad. It is used to allow you to enter the U.S. for a certain number of times (ranging from one to multiple - "M") until a particular date.

- The visa needs to be valid on the day you enter or re-enter the U.S.
- The visa does not need to remain valid while you are in the U.S. However, if you leave the U.S. and the visa stamp has expired, you must get another one at a U.S Embassy or Consulate abroad before you can return.
- The visa is only an "entry" permit-it does not determine how long you can remain in the U.S. (This is designated on the I-94 card).
- New visa stamps cannot be obtained in the U.S.
- Canadians do not presently need visas.

## FORM I-94 ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE RECORD

The Form I-94 (also called a "Departure Record") is a small white card (or green-colored card for WB or WT status) stapled in your passport by the Immigration Inspector at your port-of-entry into the U.S.. This card is one of the most important documents you have. Do not lose it! It is expensive and difficult to replace.

The I-94 is the document that indicates your "immigration status" and how long you may remain in the U.S.

- **F-1 status.** The Form I-94 should be marked "F-1" with the letters "D/S" which stand for "Duration of Status." The F-1 student has sixty days after the end date of the I-20 or completion of his/her

program to depart. The student may not exit and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during this sixty-day grace period.

- **F-2 or J-2 (dependent) status.** The Form I-94 should indicate either "F-2" or "J -2" with the letters "D/S" which stand for "Duration of Status." The For J dependents can remain in the U.S. only while the For J principal is in valid status (see just below).
- **J-1 status.** The Form I-94 should be marked "J-1" with the letters "D/S" which stand for "Duration of Status." Duration of Status authorizes the visitor to stay in the U.S. for the period of time designated on the Form DS-2019 (or for students, the end of their program of study, if earlier than the document end-date) plus thirty days for "satisfactory departure." One may not exit and re-enter the U.S. in J-1 status during this thirty-day grace period.
- **B-1/ B-2 (on the white card), WB/ WT (on the green card).** The date by which the visitor must depart is marked on the I-94. There is no "grace period" beyond that date.

### **I-20 CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY**

This is issued by U.S. schools to international students who have been admitted to their academic program and who have presented evidence to the school of sufficient financial support to study in the U.S. The I-20 is used to obtain the F-1 visa stamp at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy. The completion date noted is an estimate of the average length of time it takes to complete a specific degree. Students must finish on or before that date, or must request an extension of their document from the school before that date has passed. However, regardless of the I-20 completion date, once you have completed your degree, you have 60 days to leave the US, apply for another visa (or Optional Practical Training), or gain admission at another school authorized to issue I-20s. Contact the International Students's office if you have questions about the information on your I-20.

### **DS-2019 (CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY) FOR J-1 STUDENTS OR SCHOLARS**

This is the document needed to obtain a J-1 visa and J-1 status in order to study, teach or conduct research at an academic institution in the U.S. as an "Exchange Visitor." The right to issue DS-2019 forms is granted by the United States Department of State to certain academic research institutions, agencies, and organizations. Student documents are issued for the length of their program of study, or two years, whichever is shorter. Scholar documents are issued for the length of the campus approval of their visit, up to a maximum of three years (plus an additional six months by International Students' office approval).

### **F-2 and J-2 DEPENDENTS**

Dependents who accompany a F-1 or J-1 visa holder are issued their own individual I-20 or DS-2019 documents in order to apply for a visa. For U.S. immigration purposes dependents are defined as spouse (only one) and children under the age of 21.

### **IMMIGRATION STATUS**

The Immigration Status is designated on the I-94 by an Immigration Inspector at the U.S. port-of-entry. It is this designation, not the "visa" that is significant while in the U.S.

Once inside the U.S., a visitor is considered by Immigration officials to have a specific immigration status. A person admitted to the U.S. as a "nonimmigrant" (J-1, F-1, B-2, etc.) means that they will return to their residence abroad at the end of their stay in the U.S.

The immigration status designation is usually the same as the visa stamp, but it is possible to enter the U.S. with one type of visa - e.g., B-1 Business - and then change from B-1 to J-1 status. Such an individual would have a B-1 visa stamp in his/her passport, but a J-1 status designation on his/her I-94 card. Consult a International Students' office adviser if you have questions about changing your immigration status.