August 2023

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Welcome to UChicago!

For those of you still preparing to make your way to Chicago, we wish you safe travels, and for those of you already here, we hope you're settling in nicely! Autumn Quarter is quickly approaching, so we wanted to send some last important reminders about maintaining your F-1 or J-1 status while at UChicago and share some useful resources to help you get oriented on campus.

For information about making your way to the U.S. and getting to UChicago's campus, please review last month's newsletter here.
Please make sure to complete the **International Student Check-In Form** within 5 days of your arrival to Chicago. This form is your gateway to all of your F-1/J-1 benefits. If you do not complete your check-in in a timely manner, your F-1/J-1 status will automatically terminate due to "no show" and you will have to depart the U.S. immediately.

**Check-In Requirements:**

1. Update your SEVIS U.S. address in my.UChicago.edu.

Part of your responsibility while on F-1/J-1 status is maintaining an up to date U.S. address. You can find instructions on updating your SEVIS U.S. address [here](#).

2. Upload a copy of your I-94 entry record.

The I-94 is an official record of your entry/exit to the U.S. and is updated by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) every time you arrive or depart the United States. This record confirms your legal entry to the United States as an F-1 or J-1 student and verifies your approved length of stay.

3. Make sure you have paid your **I-901 SEVIS fee**.

The SEVIS fee is required before we are able to process your check-in in SEVIS.

Detailed instructions for the check-in can be found within the form.

**Orientation Sessions**

Keep an eye out for communications from your admitting department with information about any mandatory and optional orientation sessions. These will not only be a great way to prepare yourself for your academic program, but also to meet your peers! OIA will also be partnering with your programs to provide orientation sessions specific to students in F-1/J-1 visa statuses. We look
In addition to your program-specific orientation sessions, the Center for Identity + Inclusion will host a virtual pre-orientation program for graduate/professional students this month the following dates:

Tuesday, August 22nd
Tuesday, August 29th

The program is designed to help foster a strong sense of community and belonging for students of color and LGBTQIA+ graduate/professional students across all divisions. Registration is free and students will be assigned a Peer Advisor who will supplement our formal content sessions with advisor sessions and office hours. Questions can be directed to janellewhite@uchicago.edu.

F-1/J-1 Visa Category Basics

In order to maintain your F-1/J-1 status, you must do the following:

- Be enrolled full-time for the duration of the program listed on the form I-20/DS-2019 except during official school breaks, or unless approved under a specific exception, in advance.
- Keep your Form I-20/DS-2019 valid by following proper procedures for extension of stay, change in educational levels, change in programs of study or transfer of schools.
- Do not work off-campus, including unpaid positions, unless specifically authorized by OIA under F-1/J-1 regulations.
- Limit on-campus and off-campus employment to 20 hours per week during an enrolled term. Students may only work more than 20 hours per week when they are on official school breaks.
- Keep your passport valid six months into the future.
- Report a change of address via my. Chicago - https://portal.uchicago.edu/ais/ within 10 days of the change, so that your SEVIS record is updated.
If you have questions about any of these items, please reach out to your OIA adviser. We are here to help you navigate your immigration status and avoid violations.

Resources on Campus

OIA is here to provide guidance on immigration regulations, but also to connect you with other resources on campus! In addition to your program faculty and staff, there are many offices on campus that are dedicated to supporting you in your overall health, well-being and success during your time at UChicago. Please explore the links below:

- International House
- UChicago GRAD
- UChicago Student Wellness
- English Language Institute
- Center for Identity & Inclusion
- Center for Leadership & Involvement

Ways to Get Involved

In addition to the resources on campus to support your success at UChicago, you can find ways to build your community through several student organizations:

**International House (I-House)**

- Events and programming focused on cultural exchange
- Fellowships and internships available to graduate students
- Global Mentorship Network
  - Collaboration between OIA and I-House
  - Goal: provide networking opportunities for graduate students to engage in a cohort-based model

Visit their [website](#) and subscribe to get notifications about upcoming events.
• UChicago is home to over 350 Recognized Student Organizations which are open to both graduate and undergraduate students!
• To learn more about these RSOs or find one you might be interested in, please visit: https://blueprint.uchicago.edu/
• In addition to RSOs, the university also has many advisory boards or councils that students can participate in. OIA will share opportunities like these in our student newsletters.

**International Graduate Student Advisory Board (IGSAB)**

• Co-Advised by UChicagoGRAD and OIA
• IGSAB liaises directly with Graduate Council
• Advocate for international student needs based on student feedback

The goal of IGSAB is to coordinate communication, provide supportive programming, and plan activities to enrich the academic, personal, and professional experience of international students at UChicago.

See more about IGSAB and their programs below.
The International Graduate Student Advisory Board (IGSAB) was established in 2021 to improve international graduate student outcomes and foster a sense of community and belonging at the University of Chicago. Comprised of 10 students across divisions, our mission is to coordinate communication, centralize efforts in advocacy and supportive programming, and plan activities to enrich the academic, personal, and professional experience of international students.

IGSAB serves the entire international graduate student community, including but not limited to: i) International students on a University-sponsored student visa (F-1 or J-1), ii) International students on a visa sponsored externally (dependent visa classifications, employer-sponsored visas, and others such as Fulbrights) and iii) Undocumented students, DACAmented students.

Our Initiatives:

- **Settling into Chicago:** we created a resource guide ([https://uchicagoigsab.org/student-resources](https://uchicagoigsab.org/student-resources)) to provide useful information regarding administrative processes, housing, transportation, emergency & food assistance programs, and more for incoming students.
- **International Allies mentorship program:** we host a one-on-one peer mentorship program created to help international graduate students build community and adapt to life in the US and at UChicago. Applications will open in October.
- **Rainbow Passport group:** we formed a biweekly safe space for queer international students to socialize and discuss how their cultural/ethnic and queer identities intersect. The first get-together of the year will be on Monday, October 2 at 5:30 pm at International House.
- **Career development initiatives:** we are working on additional resources to help international candidates navigate the unique job-search related challenges faced by visa holders.
- **Visa & tax resource improvement:** we are working with the Office of International Affairs and UChicagoGRAD to provide streamlined and clear guidelines on visa eligibility, travel rules, employment authorization, and tax filing, among other topics.
- **Annual student survey:** we conduct a survey every Spring to collect information on the needs of the international student body and advise on institutional priorities for the upcoming year. Below are the aggregate responses to one question on the survey:

![Student priorities for additional programming graph]

Apply to join the board:

Keep an eye out for IGSAB events to kick off the new academic year!

[https://uchicagoigsab.org/](https://uchicagoigsab.org/)

https://mailchi.mp/uchicago/pre-arrival-newsletter-august2023
Rainbow Passport

Are you a queer international graduate student, postdoc, or teaching fellow looking to build community? Do you feel LGBTQ+ discourse doesn't always represent or resonate with you? Are you searching for a space to explore cultural experiences with queerness? Come together, make new friends, and enjoy light eats at International House’s Rainbow Passport.

We realize that it can be challenging to walk into a room full of peers you may not know, but we hope you will take the leap of faith and discover this supportive, judgment-free space. All are welcome, regardless of where you are in the process of coming to terms with your sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Allies are also invited to join us. This community will meet biweekly in a peer-to-peer format without a staff facilitator.

First meeting of the academic year on:
Monday, October 2nd, 5:30-7:00PM.
Assembly Hall @ International House.
1414 E. 59th St.
Enter on S. Dorchester Ave.

This event is exclusively for graduate students, postdocs, and teaching fellows with a valid UCID. Registration is not required.

Persons with disabilities who may need assistance should contact International House in advance of the program at (773) 753-2274 or email i-house_programs@uchicago.edu.

In collaboration with:

Incoming International Student Webinars

OIA has one last webinar for incoming international students. We encourage you to join! Find the schedule and registration links below. The webinars will all be recorded, and the recordings will be published here.
I-20/DS-2019 Request Process, Visa Acquisition, and Travel Planning
SEVIS Transfer Information Session
U.S. Academic Culture & University of Chicago
F-1/J-1 Student Visa Basics, Pre-Arrival Preparation & Reminders

UPCOMING:

Thursday, August 17, 2023
08:00-09:15 AM CDT
Campus Resources, Student Campus Resources, Student Wellness, and Safety & Security
Register here!

Please feel free to contact your OIA adviser should you need anything!

Frequently Asked Questions

- **My passport is about to expire (or has expired). Can I still apply for my I-20/DS-2019 or do I need to wait until I get my new one?**

  You can apply for your I-20/DS-2019 with your current passport, but you’ll need a passport with at least 6 months validity for your visa appointment. There’s no need to update OIA once you have your new passport as long as there are no biographical information changes (ex. Name).

- **The "Passport Name" and "Admission Number" fields are blank on my I-20. Is this okay?**

  Yep! This is normal and nothing to worry about.

- **When is the earliest I can arrive in the U.S.?**

  F-1 and J-1 students can enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before their program start. F-1 students can find their “Earliest Admission Date” listed on page 1 of their I-20. This date should be early enough for students to attend any orientation programs happening.
The major listed on my I-20 doesn’t have the same name as my program. Is this a problem?

The program name listed on your I-20 may be different than the name of your program used by the University. The CIP code and major name reflected on your I-20 document reflects the U.S. governments’ classification for the program to which you have been admitted and may not match exactly the full name of your program at UChicago. The I-20 is a U.S. government document and as a result the program name listed cannot be manually adjusted to match exactly the name of your program at the University. This should not pose an issue when you apply for a visa as this is common for all students coming to the U.S. for study.

Important Links

Office of International Affairs
- OIA Staff Directory
- Newly Admitted Students Page
- Visa Appointment Resources

UChicago GRAD Publications

English Language Institute (ELI) Resources

Connect with OIA
Like us on Facebook
Follow us on Instagram
Questions? Email international-affairs@uchicago.edu