

J-1 Scholar Requirements: At A Glance

Immigration rules are very important to understand. We have prepared this quick guide to help you understand how to maintain your J-1 immigration status. You should always consult with OISS if you have any questions about maintaining status.

Maintaining J-1 Status: At a Glance

By U.S. immigration law, you must do several things to maintain your J-1 status.

You must always:

- 1) **Continually make progress towards program objective**
- 2) **Report changes in contact information within 10 days**
- 3) **Maintain proper health insurance for you and your dependents**
- 4) **Keep immigration documents valid**
- 5) **Abide by immigration deadlines**
- 6) **Understand and follow regulations concerning work and travel**

Let's explore how to accomplish each of these things in the following sections.

Progress Towards Program Objective

As a J-1 scholar, you are brought to the US for a specific purpose called your program objective. You must always be making progress towards this objective. Your objective cannot change while in the US without the consent of the US Department of State.

Reporting Changes in Contact Information

By U.S. immigration law, you must always notify us of any **change of address, phone number, or email address within 10 days** of the change. You may make your changes directly by emailing the international student and scholar advisor with your changes.

This information is reported to the US government. Both the US government and our office staff must always be able to contact you.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: Most communications are sent via email. You are responsible for checking your KGI email. It is recommended that you check your email at least a few times a week.

Maintain Proper Health Insurance

As an Exchange Visitor in the United States, you must carry health insurance for yourself and your J-2 dependents for the full duration of your J program. Government regulations stipulate that if you willfully fail to carry health insurance for yourself and your dependents, your J-1 sponsor must terminate your program, and report the termination to the United States Department of State (DOS).

You were mailed insurance requirements with your DS-2019. Should you need the handout again, please visit the J-1 Scholar Guides and Forms section of our Current Students page at <https://www.kgi.edu/international> or email the international student and scholar advisor. Remember, KGI may offer you insurance as a part of a benefits package. However, it is important to note that the Department of State (DOS) has mandated certain minimum policy coverage requirements that may not be included in the plans offered by KGI. Most commonly, repatriation benefits are not found in health insurance plans geared towards domestic participants (i.e. employee group plans). You can purchase supplemental insurance through any carrier of your choice to cover the mandated items not covered by your KGI insurance plan.

Keeping Immigration Documents Valid

You **must** always have a current DS-2019 and unexpired passport in your possession. Please take good care of these documents. Keep them in one safe location at home so you do not lose them.

YOUR DS-2019

Your DS-2019 cannot expire while you are in the US. Your DS-2019 will be issued for a specific program and for a specific length of time. This is the length of time we expect it will take you to complete your program objective. If you need more time to complete your program, please contact the International Student and Scholars Services office *at least 2 weeks before your current DS-2019 expires*. You may only extend your DS-2019 if you are continuing towards the same program objective.

By the end of your time at KGI, you may have several DS-2019s issued to you. It is very important that you keep all DS-2019s issued to you in a safe place at home – **never throw any away**. These may be needed in the future.

YOUR PASSPORT

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months. Please contact your country's embassy or consulate in the US to ask for an extension 6 months before your passport expires to begin the renewal process.

YOUR VISA

Your visa may expire while you are in the US. This is not a problem. However, if you will be traveling outside of the US after your visa expires, you will need to return to your home country and apply for a J-1 visa extension. You may not enter the US on an expired visa.

Abiding by Immigration Deadlines

After you complete your studies at KGI, you may stay in the US up to 30 calendar days (including weekends) after your last day of class. This is called your 30-day Grace Period. The day you complete your program objectives may differ from the end date on your DS-2019. You will need to calculate your 30-day grace period manually to be sure you do not overstay (you may find this website helpful: <http://www.timeanddate.com/date/duration.html>). Your 30-day grace period is designed to allow you time to make arrangements to leave the US.

Alternatively, you may pursue the following options **before the end date listed on your DS-2019**:

- 1) You may request an extension of your current program objective. J-1 research scholars and professors may extend their programs up to a maximum of 5 years. Short-term scholars are limited to 6 months. Extensions beyond these timeframes are not possible.
- 2) You may request a transfer to a new school to complete the **original objective** for which you came to the US. If you are changing your field of study you are not eligible for a transfer and must return home to apply for a new visa.
 - a. Your new program must start immediately. Discuss this timing with both your new school and me.

If you voluntarily withdraw or are dismissed from your position, you do not qualify for a grace period and must leave the country or start a program at a new school immediately.

Understanding Other Regulations

WORKING IN THE US

Social Security Numbers

You will need a social security number (SSN) to work in the US. If your appointment requires work, the international student and scholar advisor will give you a letter to take to the [Social Security Office](https://secure.ssa.gov/) (<https://secure.ssa.gov/>) to apply for a Social Security Number. Both this letter, your job offer letter, your DS-2019, passport, visa, and print out of your [I-94 card](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov) (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>) will be needed to apply for the number. Make sure that your I-94 shows admitted status until "D/S" – if it does not, come see the international student and scholar advisor immediately.



Your SSN will be mailed to your home address. Generally you can begin work while your SSN is processing.

If your post does not require employment, please inform any agency that requests a SSN that you are a J-1 scholar and do not qualify for a social security number. They will help you in another way.

TRAVEL

Travel Within the US

You do not need authorization to travel within the US. When visiting San Diego or crossing state border lines by car, it is recommended that you take your original DS-2019 and passport with you. You may need to produce these documents if stopped by an immigration officer. Otherwise, carry a *copy* of your passport and DS-2019 when traveling within California but leave the originals at home in a safe place. Always take originals when traveling by plane/boat or when visiting another state.

Travel Outside the US

Please visit the International Student and Scholars office for a travel signature on your DS-2019 at least 2 weeks before you will travel. This signature is good for 5 months. You will not be able to reenter the US without a valid signature.

NOTE: You can only obtain a travel signature if you will be returning to the program. You cannot travel outside the US during your 30-day grace period and reenter on your KGI DS-2019. If you are transferring to a new school, and plan on traveling outside of the US before starting your new program, you must inform your new school so they can give you a new DS-2019.

Make sure you have your current DS-2019 and a valid passport and visa. Most visas are issued with a multiple entry allowance (designated with an "M"). If your visa is not a multiple entry visa, you will not be able to return to the US unless you get a new visa in your home country.

If you are planning on visiting another country, you may also need a visa to travel there. Check this website to be sure: <https://www.visahq.com/citizens/>. Make sure you have obtained any needed travel authorizations before you make travel arrangements.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the information found here please do not hesitate to contact our international student advisor, Nusha Shishegar, at nshishegar@kgi.edu or 909-607-8586.