Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

Will ISSS still process my requests through iGlobal?
Yes. ISSS advisors are working remotely and continue to process student requests. Students should continue to submit all requests in iGlobal. Processes previously conducted in person, such as submission of OPT application documents, can now be done through iGlobal.

How long will it take for ISSS to process my request or send me my document?
ISSS is working hard to process all student requests as quickly as possible. Currently we are experiencing a delay in processing times for travel signatures and we appreciate your patience. Remember that sending multiple emails delays our response time.

Do I need to have my I-20 shipped or can I request a scanned copy?
Due to coronavirus, recent guidance from SEVP and USCIS allows schools to issue students scanned copies of I-20s. However, I-20s used for travel and to re-enter the U.S. must be hard copies with an original and valid travel signature; they cannot be scanned copies. I-20s used as part of an OPT application can be a scanned copy (see OPT section below.) DS-2019s cannot be scanned and students must have the hard copy with a valid travel signature. If you are in need of a travel signature you must complete a Reprint I-20 or DS-2019 for travel e-form in iGlobal and request document shipping.

Do I need to tell ISSS if my U.S. address has changed?
Yes, if your U.S.-based address has changed, you need to update it in the Student tab in MyNewSchool. ISSS is required to report your updated address to the U.S. government within 10 days of when it changed. If you are currently outside the U.S. and will return to The New School to continue studying in the fall, then you are not required to update your U.S. address.

Where can I get more information from reliable sources?
ISSS is carefully monitoring guidance and updates from SEVIS, SEVP/ICE, USCIS, and the U.S. Department of State, as well as updates from NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the leading professional organization dedicated to international education and exchange. You can also check the
Spring 2020 Student Resource Hub for general information and resources.

Can I still apply for a Social Security number during the coronavirus outbreak?
As of March 17, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has suspended all face-to-face services in all Social Security offices. Therefore, if you do not have a Social Security number (SSN), as per the SSA website, you can request to make an appointment to apply by calling, but this is at their discretion. For more information and updates, please check the SSA website. If you apply for a SSN through your OPT application to USCIS, the Social Security Administration will still process your request.

What should I do if I am having trouble paying my student account because of the impact of coronavirus in my home country?
Students should pay what they can, when they can, and keep the Student Accounts office up to date on your plans to pay your balance.

Will international students be eligible to receive any relief from the recent stimulus package passed by the U.S. government?
ISSS has learned from NAFSA: Association of International Educators and The Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration that there is no economic assistance for international students within the new coronavirus relief bill. The tax credit in the relief package excludes people who are non-immigrants, which means international students are not eligible. In addition, this relief package does not include an unemployment insurance option (or unemployment benefits) for international students; you must be a legal permanent resident to be eligible.

Immigration Status

How will online classes affect my I-20 or DS-2019 and visa status?
The New School has announced that coursework for the rest of the spring 2020 semester will be conducted online. Students who are outside of the United States, are enrolled in a full-time course of study, and complete their online coursework are considered to be maintaining their status. Your immigration record will remain active and you may return to the United States with your current I-20 or DS-2019 (with a valid travel signature) for the fall 2020 semester.

Will the new grading policy affect my immigration status?
The New School has announced a spring 2020 grading policy change as of March 30, 2020. Under this policy, students will receive either an A, A-, “I” for Incomplete, “W” for Withdrawal, or “Z” for Unofficial Withdrawal. Please note that students who plan to withdraw or receive an incomplete are advised to schedule a Starfish appointment with an ISSS advisor to discuss the impact it will have on their F-1 or J-1 status. Students who officially or unofficially withdraw from all classes will have their government SEVIS record closed. Students who receive an incomplete in their final semester of study are not eligible for an extension of their F-1 or J-1 status.

If I am outside of the United States for more than five months, will my immigration status or my visa be affected?
USCIS has issued guidance that allows students to be outside of the United States for more than five months if you are enrolled in a full-time course of study for the spring 2020 semester and complete your online coursework. You will be considered to be maintaining your immigration status, and your I-20 or DS-2019 will remain active. You may return to the United States with your current I-20 or DS-2019 (with a
valid travel signature) for the fall 2020 semester.

What happens if I can't get a flight home and my grace period has expired?
At this time, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has not provided information permitting F-1 or J-1 students to remain in the U.S. past their approved date of stay due to circumstances related to the coronavirus global pandemic. ISSS will continue to monitor all U.S. government guidance and keep students informed. If you are unable to depart the U.S. and have to remain past your approved date of stay, please keep detailed evidence of your attempts to depart and keep ISSS informed.

What should I do if my visa is expiring and I am still in the United States?
You may stay in the United States on an expired F-1 or J-1 visa as long as you maintain your immigration status by being in possession of a valid I-20 or DS-2019 and passport and by meeting full-time enrollment requirements or, if on OPT, maintaining your work status.

What do I do if my visa is expiring and I am not in the U.S.? Can I re-enter the U.S. with an expired visa?
Once you leave the U.S. and your visa is no longer valid or it will expire before you return to the U.S., then you must apply for a visa renewal in the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Canadian and other citizens do not need a visa to enter the U.S. The U.S. State Department announced on March 20, 2020 that routine U.S. visa issuance has been suspended worldwide.

What if I am unable to complete my coursework online from abroad?
If you are unable to complete your coursework online, please contact your academic department and iss@newschool.edu to inform us and see if there are any accommodations that can be made in your circumstance or if you will need to take a leave of absence. To meet with an ISSS advisor, please make an appointment through Starfish or by calling the main phone line at 212.229.5592.

Can I extend my I-20 or DS-2019 if I am completing my program this Spring or Summer?
If you are completing your academic program this spring or summer, unfortunately you cannot extend your I-20.

What will happen to my immigration record for Summer and Fall 2020?
The U.S. government’s Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is currently allowing for some flexibility for study during the COVID 19 crisis. The New School leadership will decide on summer and fall study structure in the upcoming weeks and will inform students. At that time, ISSS will update you on how it affects your immigration status.

OPT

How will online classes affect my ability to apply for OPT?
If this is your final semester and you are applying or plan to apply for OPT, you are required to be in the U.S. to apply. If you are applying or have already applied for OPT and plan to travel internationally, please make an appointment via Starfish to speak with an ISSS advisor over the phone.

Can I apply for OPT from my home country?
No. You are required to show proof of presence in the U.S. as part of the application to USCIS. In addition, you must submit your application to USCIS from within the U.S.
Do I need to have my OPT I-20 shipped or can I receive the scanned version? 
SEVP and USCIS provided guidance that students may submit a scanned I-20 to USCIS for the OPT application. After ISSS approves your application for OPT, we will email you a scanned I-20 signed by the DSO. You will then print, sign, and date it. Make a copy of the I-20 and include it with your OPT application to USCIS. You may also request to receive the original I-20 by completing the Document Shipping Request in iGlobal, or you may pick up the original I-20 when ISSS reopens. ***Please be aware that you will need an original hard copy of your I-20 with a valid travel signature in order to re-enter the U.S.***

Can I change the start date for my OPT application? 
It will depend on the status of your application. If you have submitted your OPT request to ISSS through iGlobal, or have received your OPT I-20 but have not submitted to USCIS, you may request a change to your OPT dates by emailing iss@newschool.edu. If you have not yet applied for OPT you may choose any start date in the range of June 1, 2020 - July 30, 2020. If you have submitted your application to USCIS, it is not possible to change your request dates but do keep in mind it will take approximately three (3) months to get your OPT card. USCIS will never backdate an authorization; for example, if you selected June 1, 2020 as your start date and USCIS issues your card on July 5, 2020, then the start date of the EAD card will be July 5, 2020. You are not permitted to work until you receive your EAD card.

I am currently outside the U.S. and this is my final semester. Can I still apply for OPT? 
According to USCIS requirements for eligibility, you must be in the U.S. in order to apply for OPT. If you are currently outside the U.S. and you would like to apply, you must re-enter the U.S. by May 31, 2020 (the official program end date) in order to be eligible to apply for OPT. Unfortunately, if you are unable to re-enter the U.S. by May 31, 2020, you will no longer be eligible to apply. If you are able to re-enter the U.S. by May 31, 2020, you then have until the end of your 60 day grace period to submit your application to USCIS.

Can I travel outside the U.S. while my OPT is pending? 
ISSS advises against international travel when OPT is pending. If you decide to travel while your OPT application is pending we recommend you return to the U.S. prior to your I-20 expiration date. If you choose to depart and return after the I-20 expiration date you must have the approved EAD card and appropriate documents to re-enter the U.S. during your OPT period. All students should understand the required documents needed for travel--for information visit Travel Signatures and Documents. If you must travel, please make a virtual appointment through Starfish with an ISSS advisor before you leave so we can advise you.

What should I do if I exceed my unemployment time while on OPT? 
New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo declared that all New Yorkers should stay inside and non-essential businesses have temporarily closed. This may have negatively impacted your work situation. Unfortunately, the federal government has not yet provided guidance regarding the 90 days of unemployment rule for OPT and the 150 days of unemployment rule for STEM OPT. Therefore, you would be required to update your employment information using the e-form in iGlobal or the SEVP Portal. ISSS recommends that students who are no longer working due to the coronavirus outbreak keep all documentation (e.g., emails or notices of being laid off, furloughed, etc.) and keep notes regarding what you did during the days you were unemployed. ISSS will continue to monitor all government updates and advocate for relief for international students in this situation.
Do I still need to report my employment during the coronavirus outbreak?
Yes. Please continue to report any changes in your employment to ISSS by completing the OPT Employment Update e-form or update your employment within the SEVP Portal. You can use either option, you do not need to use both.

Taxes

Do I still need to file a tax return during the coronavirus pandemic?
Yes. There are two forms - (1) All international students and scholars, regardless of their status, income, or other tax filing obligations, must file Form 8843. (2) If you earned any taxable income from employment, scholarships, or other sources, you may need to file additional U.S. federal, New York State, New York City, or other U.S. state tax forms. Due to the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. the Internal Revenue Service has extended the tax filing deadline to July 15, 2020, but we strongly encourage students to file by April 15 if at all possible.

I heard ISSS sent a code so I can file my federal tax forms for free. Where is the code?
ISSS sent the code to all enrolled students (and students currently on OPT) in an email on February 26. Search your inbox for the subject line “IRS tax compliance for International Students and Scholars” and you will find the code and instructions in that email. This code allows international students to use the Sprintax platform to file their federal tax forms for free.

Where can I get more information and answers to my tax-related questions?
Please visit the Programs and Resources tab of our webpage.

Travel

Do I need to notify ISSS if I leave the country?
If you plan to complete the spring 2020 semester online from outside of the United States, you do not need to notify ISSS. If you choose to travel, please visit the Travel Signatures and Documents section of our website. You will need a valid visa, passport, and travel signature to re-enter the United States, and re-entry is subject to federal policies and CDC guidelines. Students can request a travel signature through iGlobal and can ask to have it shipped to them abroad.

What documents do I need when I travel?
You can find information in the Travel Signatures and Documents section of our website.

How can I get a travel signature?
You will need a valid travel signature and visa when you return to the U.S. You do not need an updated travel signature to depart the United States. Therefore, if you require an updated signature, please wait to make the request until three (3) to (4) weeks before you plan to return to the U.S. by completing the Reprint I-20 or DS-2019 e-form in iGlobal. At that time, ISSS will create an I-20 or DS-2019 and then you
can request to have it shipped to you through the *Document Shipping Request* e-form in iGlobal.

**What if I dropped off my I-20 or DS-2019 at ISSS before the coronavirus situation?**
If you previously dropped off your I-20 or DS-2019 and planned to pick it up at ISSS, you will now need to make a document shipping request in [iGlobal](https://iglobal.newschool.edu). Regrettably at this time, ISSS is unable to offer in-person services, so students must request that all documents be shipped to them.

**Will I be able to return to the U.S. in August for the fall semester?**
We are hopeful that all our students will be able to re-enter the U.S. and resume their studies. However, we do not know for sure at this time. We will continue to process student requests for travel signatures and answer your visa- and travel-related questions. Please read your newschool.edu email and check our website for updates on coronavirus. We encourage you to also check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)) travel updates and the Department of State information on visa services.

**Can I travel with an expired visa?**
You can travel outside the U.S. with an expired F or J visa. However, if you plan to re-enter the U.S., the visa in your passport must be valid. As of March 20, 2020, routine visa services are suspended in all U.S. Embassies and Consulates, so you will not be able to renew your visa until the U.S. has lifted that suspension.