



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

F-1 and J-1 Student Program Extension Guidelines and FAQs

Students in F-1 and J-1 visa status may request a program extension to their I-20 or DS-2019 end date *if they have a valid academic reason* for needing more time to complete their program.

Who is eligible?

The federal government stipulates that students must be making *normal progress towards degree completion* to receive an extension of their I-20 or DS-2019 end date.

- OIS **can** extend an I-20 or DS-2019 if a student needs more time to complete required courses, fulfill requirements for a minor/certificate, or complete their thesis or dissertation.
- OIS **cannot** extend an immigration document if the student has repeatedly failed courses or has completed all their academic requirements and wants to take more non-required credits.
- Program extensions can only be granted *prior* to the I-20 or DS-2019 end date. OIS cannot grant an extension *after* a student is in their grace period.

How do I submit a Program Extension request?

- OIS recommends applying *at least a month before* your I-20 or DS-2019 expires.
 - OIS also recommends that students discuss their Program Extension request with their academic advisor or departmental representative before submitting the e-form.
- Students must submit the "Program Extension" e-form in [My OIS](#) under the "F-1 Students" or "J-1 Students" tabs.
 - As part of the process, students must list appropriate contact information for their academic advisor or departmental representative.
 - The student's academic advisor or departmental representative **must** complete a separate part of the e-form to explain why the student needs more time to complete their program.
 - **NOTE:** Program Extension requests are **not** complete without the advisor's portion.
 - **NOTE:** J-1 students must upload updated financial documentation to the "Program Extension" e-form.
- After receiving the academic advisor or departmental representative's input, OIS will review the e-form within 5 to 7 business days.
- If OIS approves the request, OIS will create a new I-20 / DS-2019 with an updated end date.
 - I-20s: Students will receive a digitally signed I-20.
 - DS-2019s: Students will work with their [Immigration Specialist](#) to receive their DS-2019.



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FAQs:

Do I need a new visa stamp if my current visa stamp expires *before* my updated I-20 or DS-2019 end date?

- No. You can remain in the U.S. with an expired visa stamp. The I-20 or DS-2019 determines how long a student can remain in the U.S., provided that the student is [maintaining their immigration status](#).
- A valid visa is required at the border for re-entry into the U.S., with some very specific exceptions. Review OIS' [Travel website](#) for more information about international travel in F-1 or J-1 status.

Can I extend my program to a summer term end date?

- Yes. However, you will be required to *enroll in the summer term*. You must enroll full-time, or have an approved [reduced course load](#), for your final summer term.
- OIS will confirm your enrollment in the summer term via your PeopleSoft record before extending your I-20 or DS-2019 end date.

Can I request a Program Extension after I have already applied for [post-completion OPT](#)?

- Since an OPT request is directly tied to the I-20 end date, it is very difficult to extend your I-20 end date if you have already submitted your post-completion OPT application to USCIS.
 - If you are in this situation, contact your [Immigration Specialist](#) *immediately* for guidance. There are several factors that impact students' options.
- For this reason, OIS strongly recommends you carefully consider your I-20 end date prior to requesting OPT.

Do I need to re-verify my I-9 for on-campus work once I get an extension?

- Yes. You will need to re-verify your I-9 if you want to work beyond your original I-20 or DS-2019 end date. Students should reach out to their hiring department and/or [Human Resources](#) for details on this process.

If I need an extension, but I don't have enough remaining courses left to be full-time in my final term, what do I do?

- Please make sure your academic advisor or departmental contact knows that you will be taking less than a full-time course of study in your final term. They can note this in their section of the Program Extension e-form.
- You may also request a final term [Reduced Course Load](#) authorization separately.

Do J-1 students have special requirements for Program Extensions?

- Yes. J-1 students also need to upload updated financial information, as part of their Program Extension e-form.

If you have specific questions about F-1 or J-1 student Program Extensions, please reach out to [your Immigration Specialist](#).