

OISS: August 2020 Newsletter

Dear International Student Community,

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new international students to our community and to welcome back our returning international students! Wherever you are in the world, we hope that you view the Office of International Student Services (OISS) as one of your homes away from home - even though it is a virtual home... for now. We are here to support your experience as an international student at RISD and are looking forward to working with you in person again, when that time comes!

The [Office of International Student Services team](#) supports the international and immigrant experience at RISD through immigration services, navigating US systems (taxes, social security, driver's licenses/state IDs, etc) and cultural transition. OISS is here to advocate for you, problem solve with you and to celebrate you as a valued member of our community.

We will be sending monthly newsletters with general OISS news, immigration updates and information on programs we're hosting. Please read them! They will always come from the oiss@risd.edu email - so make sure to keep your eyes open for them. And with that... we'll begin with the first official Academic Year 2020-2021 OISS Newsletter!

-----OISS NEWS-----

Meet the [OISS Team](#)!

* **You may schedule an online Zoom appointment with an advisor by calling or emailing OISS.** We have access to other modes of communication too (WhatsApp, WeChat, KakaoTalk, LINE, Skype)- just ask! We will continue to use the virtual space for our advising sessions during the Fall 2020 term.

* **OISS hours are Monday- Friday, 8:30am- 4:30pm EST;** however, exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis with the understanding that many of you are in different time zones and outside of the U.S. We will find a time that works for you.

* **OISS August Drop-In Advising Hours:**

Drop-in advising sessions are 15 minutes each, so if you require more than 15 minutes, a scheduled appointment with an advisor is recommended and can be scheduled at: oiss@risd.edu.

All you need to do to attend the OISS Drop-In Advising Hours is:

1. Register by filling out this [Google Form](#)
2. Receive the Drop-In Advising Zoom link upon completing the form.
3. Click on the link during the Drop-In Advising hours- from **Tuesday & Thursday from 8:30am to 10am EST.**

4. Speak to an OISS advisor!

-----IMMIGRATION UPDATES-----

Travel-Related

I-20 Travel Signatures: We have **temporarily** modified some of our processes regarding the I-20 Travel Signature due to COVID-19. The temporary changes have been guided by the SEVP (Student & Exchange Visitor Program) [Broadcast Message 2003-03](#): New Electronic Form I-20 Issuance Guidance on ICE.gov/COVID19 sent on March 26, 2020. If you needed to leave the United States urgently and were not able to obtain a Travel Signature on page 2 of your I-20, we can scan one for you! While the I-20 usually requires an ORIGINAL signature on the I-20, SEVP has allowed this temporary adjustment.

New Students - you do not require a travel signature on your I-20 until the next time you plan to leave the United States.

Note About Travel- *If you are currently in the United States with plans to work or study here in the near future, traveling outside of the U.S. is not recommended. With the current travel restrictions in the U.S. and in many other countries, when you might be able to return to the United States is unknown. This is not immigration-specific, but rather related to the global pandemic and the travel restrictions that are country-specific. Many are still not allowing for international travel- the U.S. included. Please contact oiss@risd.edu with any questions specific to your situation.*

Routine Visa Services- Slow Reopening: U.S. embassies and consulates are entering a “phased resumption of routine visa services” beginning July 15, 2020. We encourage you to monitor the embassies and consulates in your home country as appointment availability will depend on local conditions.

You must arrive/return to Providence by September 2, 2020. Due to the seriousness of COVID19, we can not make exceptions for late arrivals. RISD has worked hard to plan for your return while maintaining a safe environment, we must work together to accomplish this.

Note About Visas- *If you are physically in the United States and your visa will be expiring, you can remain in the U.S. on an expired visa as long as you have a valid I-20.*

[CLICK HERE](#) for the most up-to-date ICE/SEVP Policy Guidance from August 7, 2020.

If you will be traveling into the United States for the Fall 2020 Term, here are some things you MUST be aware of:

- If you have not already done so, please complete the [OISS:Travel Form](#). This allows us to support your experience traveling into the U.S.

- The official move-in period for students living on-campus is from August 30 - September 2, 2020. Students must arrive during the move-in period to ensure the health and safety of the community.
- To travel into the United States, you will need the following documents WITH YOU (NOT packed in your suitcase!!):
 - Form I-20
 - New Students only: Declaration of Finances
 - Valid F-1 Visa (if you are Canadian, you will receive this upon arrival)
 - Valid Passport
 - Printed copies of these documents:
 - 1) ICE/SEVP Policy Guidance with highlighted areas that will be helpful to you with travel (attached),
 - 2) Letter of Support from OISS (attached),
 - 3) List of classes you will be enrolled in this fall. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) will want to see that you are enrolled in 12 credits (full-time). A screenshot of the enrollment screen is acceptable.

Maintaining your Immigration Status

Please see the ATTACHED CHART to see the modality of learning you must be engaged in so you are maintaining your F-1 Immigration Status.

In addition to being enrolled in specific modalities of learning to maintain your F-1 status, you must also be enrolled in AT LEAST 12 credits to be considered a full-time student. You CANNOT drop below 12 credits without the appropriate authorization from OISS. Please email oiss@risd.edu with any questions you might have.

If you are unable to return to the United States for study we strongly encourage you to take steps towards Remote Study (remote@risd.edu) or a Leave of Absence.

Other Things to Consider:

Slow Reopening in Social Security Administration (SSA) & RI Department of Motor Vehicles (RI DMV): The Social Security Offices are slowly reopening but have different procedures. OISS is working with the Social Security Office in Providence and you can find the updated Social Security Steps to this email. We will also be updating our website with the new procedures.

The RI DMV is also slowly reopening. Please visit the [RI DMV Website](#) for more details. For information of how Rhode Island is moving through the Reopening Process, [CLICK HERE](#).

Be Aware of Possible Scams!- IMPORTANT!!! There have recently been many RISD international students who have reported receiving phone calls from people claiming that they are U.S. government (IRS or Social Security Administration), COVID contact tracers and other government officials (including people from outside of the U.S.) that are demanding money or personal information or threatening their immigration status. DO NOT GIVE THEM

ANYTHING!!! These types of calls are considered Scams and we do not want any of our students to be harmed by them. To learn more about Scams in the United States and about your rights if someone calls you to demand money- please visit the [OISS Website](#).

In general- No U.S. Government Offices will ever call you and demand money by phone! Just hang up!

Protesting: If you are (or if you already have) protesting with the Black Lives Matter Movement, we recommend that you visit the [ACLU \(American Civil Liberties Union\) website](#) to get familiar with what your rights are for protesting on a non-immigrant visa in the U.S. Be safe and don't go alone!

-----**UPCOMING PROGRAMMING**-----

It's Orientation Season! OISS will be participating in different Orientation and Quarantine events from September 3 - 16, so we hope that you will join us! We'll also be posting our fall programming schedule on the OISS website soon ... so stay tuned!!

We are excited to work with you this upcoming school year, and we're here for you to continue navigating your international student experience at RISD!

Sincerely,

The Office of International Student Services Team

Kate Sacco, Director

Jennifer Dressen, Assistant Director

Amy Andrea Iglesias, International Student Advisor

Sachi Tan, Administrative Coordinator