

OISS: September 2020 Newsletter

Dear International Student Community,

Now that you have been in classes for the past 3 weeks... we would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new international students to our community and to welcome back our returning international students! We hope you have been able to settle in and that your new schedules and routines have a flow to them. Wherever you are in the world, it is our hope that you view the Office of International Student Services (OISS) as one of your homes away from home. 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!

If you are new to RISD, you might be wondering → what exactly does The [Office of International Student Services team](#) do? Our efforts to support you reach across these areas:

- Immigration Services (I-20 issuance, CPT, OPT, general questions)
- US Systems (taxes, social security, driver's licenses/state IDs, etc)
- 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!

Before we dive into this email please take a moment to complete the -->

[OISS: Wintersession & Spring Arrival Travel Form](#)

All currently enrolled students (remote or in-person/hybrid and inside the U.S. or outside of the U.S.) MUST complete this!

This allows us to support you during and after your time at RISD.

-----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 Fall 2020 Semester Drop-In Advising Hours:**
Tuesday & Thursday from 8:30am to 10am EST.

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 (Tuesday/Thursday 8:30 10)
- Speak to an OISS advisor!

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.

-----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 who are in the United States](#) - you do not require a travel signature on your I-20 until the next time you plan to leave the U.S. We will send more information on winter break travel in November. It is not recommended that you travel during the Thanksgiving break due to the global pandemic.

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- Continued Slow Reopening: U.S. embassies and consulates have continued with their “phased resumption of routine visa services” and there are still delays. We encourage you to monitor the embassies and consulates in your home country as appointment availability will depend on local conditions.

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.*

Wintersession & Spring 2021: More information will be available after October 15, 2020 on housing and academics. Please stay tuned and we will continue to keep you updated and make sure you have everything you need based on how you'll participate in classes moving forward.

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

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.

Other Things to Consider:

Slow Reopening in Social Security Administration (SSA) & RI Department of Motor Vehicles (RI DMV): Please visit the [OISS Website](#) for the updated COVID-specific Social Security Office 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!

Finally, some of you may have heard that there may be changes on the "Duration of Status" notation on your visa stamp and your I-94 Admission document. Please visit the, "Proposal to Replace Duration of Status" overview from NAFSA: Association of International Educators for more information.

The Rhode Island School of Design and the RISD Office of International Student Services are opposed to this proposal, and we will be registering objections with the US Department of Homeland Security. We will also keep you informed and updated as things progress. If you have any questions, please contact oiss@risd.edu and we will work with you on your specific concerns.

For information on upcoming programs at RISD, remember to check out Involved at: <https://involved.risd.edu/>

Please stay in touch with us! We're here for you as you continue navigating your international student experience at RISD!

Sincerely,
The Office of International Student Services Team
Kate Sacco, Director
Jennifer Dressen, Assistant Director
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