



This page contains information about immigration regulations international scholars and faculty that can be useful during the COVID-19 situation

On March 10, 2020, President Loh issued a [statement](#) to address concerns over the transfer of COVID-19 in the workplace. In support of efforts to keep our campus community safe and healthy, ISSS is moving its services to an online platform.

On March 13, 2020, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) in the U.S. Department of State announced that all programs with travel to, through and/or from countries at CDC Alert Level 2 and above, or State Department Level 3 and above, are **suspended for 60 days beginning March 11, 2020**. As the State Department has now issued a **Global Level 3** travel advisory, this suspension **applies to all countries**.

ISSS Services from March 18 - April 10, 2020

Starting March 18, 2020 to until the University announces it will resume on campus activities, ISSS will provide all necessary support services online to international scholars/faculty, academic departments and research centers.

- [Appointments](#) will be offered via phone or the online Webex platform.
- Staff will access and respond to email and phone calls. In addition, we have a dedicated customer service phone line at 301.405.1617. Ashley Reynolds will be able to assist with general questions.
- Requests for H1B and J-1 extensions/amendments and change of status submitted via [iTerp](#) will be processed, provided the applicant is inside the United States.
- J-1 orientations will move to an online format and will be offered the first and third Thursday of each month. When your scholar completes their online documents checklist in iTerp, the scholar will receive an invitation by email for the next online orientation. This is the step that will register the scholar for the orientation.
- **New Service:** [Online chat](#) will be offered for quick questions.

Processing for H-1B Employment Visas

- Under the current guidance, ISSS is aware that some H-1B employees will be working from home during the period of March 18 – April 10, 2020. H-1B Labor Condition Applications (LCA) do not need to be updated to reflect the employee's home address and do not need to be posted in the employee's residence.
- ISSS is working with UHR to implement an online process to post the Labor Condition Applications. This new method of posting will satisfy the posting requirements for the University.
- ISSS will continue to process H-1B petitions to extend, amend, transfer and create a change of status (F-1/J-1 to H-1B) for employees. New applications for tenure-track faculty are being

processed at this time. Please note that the visa processing environment overseas is extremely unpredictable and this decision may need to be revised.

Processing for J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

- ISSS will continue to process J-1 extensions, amendments and transfers.
- U.S. Department of State has requested all J-1 sponsors to suspend processing of DS-2019s for 60 days as of March 13, 2020. DS-2019s that have been issued with a start date in the 60-day suspension period will be canceled due the uncertainty of the current situation. ISSS is creating an e-form process to capture these applications and will be working closely with the departments to amend the start dates to no earlier than August 1, 2020 and confirmation of funding for the new program period.
- Effective March 13, 2020, ISSS is not processing new J-1 DS-2019s **for exchange visitors coming from abroad**. As per Department of State guidance, this will remain in effect for 60 days. An August 1, 2020, start date is the earliest available start date for a university program request. If a department needs an earlier date, they should be looking at an applicant already in the United States. Please do not submit new requests for DS-2019s during the suspension period. Processing will resume on May 12, 2020, provided the suspension period is not extended.
- For J-1 exchange visitors who will now need to work from home due to the COVID-19 situation, the U.S. Department of State has temporarily permitted this change and DS-2019s will not need to be updated with the new sites of activity. This is a temporary accommodation to permit programs to continue.
- **Please keep in mind: Due to regulations, DS-2019s cannot be sent electronically to scholars.**

Travel Guidance

As a reminder, the University has issued the following travel guidance:

As of March 10, 2020, the following travel guidance is in effect for the next 60 days and will be reevaluated in 30 days. This guidance applies to all upcoming travel, including any that previously has been approved.

- All university-related international travel is not permitted.
- All personal international travel is strongly discouraged. We strongly urge extreme caution and judgment for your personal travel decisions as it may not be possible to return to the United States.
- All university-related, non-essential, out-of-state domestic travel is not permitted.
- We strongly urge extreme caution and judgment for your personal domestic mass transit travel. Take into account the possibility of travel delays or the potential need for self-isolation in the future.
- Any UMD faculty member, staff member or student returning from a country currently at Warning Level 3 status should stay away from campus, **self-monitor and self-isolate for two weeks** post-return.

- Please keep in mind that additional countries are being added to the U.S. list of countries suspending travel into the United States. President Trump's proclamations regarding travel restrictions can be found on the [ISSS immigration update page](#). Additionally, U.S. embassies and consulates are stopping visa issuance around the world, therefore it is important to go to the [U.S. Embassy website](#) to confirm the availability of visa processing.

ISSS remains available to assist our international faculty, visiting scholars and departments during this uncertain time.