

The Office of International Education at St. Edward's University works with degree-seeking international students in the undergraduate, New College, and graduate programs, exchange students, and students who wish to study abroad.

If you have any questions regarding your immigration status or your adjustment to life at SEU, we encourage you to meet with an OIE advisor. Please call the office at 428-1051 to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 102 Moody Hall, and is open from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday.

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION:

Visa Information

Your visa is your key to enter the United States. If your visa expires, understand that you may remain in the United States as long as you are maintaining the status requirements of your visa, but that you will need to renew your visa the next time you leave the country in order to re-enter the USA.

The US Department of State now publishes an **on-line guide to obtaining US visas** (www.unitedstatesvisas.gov). The 5-page booklet, which can be downloaded or viewed in HTML format, covers issues related to F-1 student visas, J-1 exchange visitor visas, and all other visa classes. The webpage also contains a consulate locator for your country, visa updates and regulations relating to travel to the United States.

For more information regarding the regulations for all visa classes, please consult the **US Department of State** webpage (www.state.gov).

Passport

Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the time of your authorized stay in the United States. If your passport expires while you are in the US it is usually possible to renew it by sending materials to your home country's embassy post in the United States. Contact your country's embassy or consulate for instructions and guidelines.

If you need to send your passport, make sure to remove your I-94 form from your passport. Be sure to send your passport to the embassy or consulate by certified return-receipt mail.

I-94 (Arrival/Departure) Card

Anyone entering the United States from an international destination receives an I-94 arrival/departure record—whether they arrive by plane, boat or drive across the border. The I-94 card is small and white, and is sometimes stapled in your passport. It is very important to save this card. It reflects your visa status, the duration of your stay and the number that **United States Citizenship & Immigration Service (USCIS)** (www.uscis.gov) uses to keep track of your records. Every time you leave the US your current I-94 will be replaced with a new one.

Students arriving from Mexico should be aware that border officials sometimes do not issue these cards—you should be polite, but firm, that you will be required to show this card to the OIE once you arrive at St. Edward's so that you are issued the I-94 card.

Immigration Documents

*** For F-1 students: SEVIS Form I-20**

Check your SEVIS-issued I-20 to make sure the information is correct. If it is not correct you need to get a new I-20 from the OIE. You should carry your I-20 when you travel, and must have the third page signed if you wish to travel outside of the United States. **Do not throw your I-20s away, even if you get a new I-20, change your status, have finished your program or leave the U.S.**

*** For J-1 students: SEVIS Form DS-2019**

DS-2019 forms for J-1 scholars are issued for all ISEP exchange students and exchange visitors. Check the document to make sure the information is correct. If the information is incorrect or it is expired, you need to contact your sponsor to get a new DS-2019. Carry your DS-2019 with you when you travel. If you wish to travel outside of the United States while you are enrolled at St. Edward's University, please be aware that you will have to send this document to your J-1 sponsor to obtain the appropriate travel signatures. Plan your travel in advance so that you have enough time to obtain these signatures.

SEVIS

The **Student and Exchange Visitor Information System** is designed to update USCIS data base for collecting information concerning F, J and M international students and scholars.

International offices are required to enter your information, beginning with your I-20 or DS-2019, in the SEVIS data base system, which U.S. government offices and officials are able to access. USCIS may request additional information from schools concerning student documentation and status.

International Student Responsibilities Regarding SEVIS

- Read all e-mail updates sent by the OIE. Changes by USCIS occur often. We try to send out information as soon as we have reliable facts. If you have any questions, please ask us.
- Understand regulations concerning maintaining status. Be proactive in monitoring your documents and understanding how to maintain status. Remember that well-meaning friends and departmental faculty and staff are not immigration advisors. Please refer any questions or problems concerning status to the OIE.
- Keep your records updated. Be sure to update address changes on the St. Edward's web site (EdWeb) and notify the OIE of your new address within ten days of your move. This includes switching dorm rooms or residence halls. The OIE is responsible for reporting your address to USCIS via your SEVIS record, and the office must be notified of these changes as soon as possible.
- Plan travel arrangements early. All changes (major, degree program, extensions and travel validations) must be made in SEVIS, so you will need to allow time for processing.

For more information, visit: www.ice.gov/sevis/

Traveling Outside the US

International students may travel outside of the United States while they are students at SEU. F-1 students must have their I-20s signed by an international advisor in the OIE, and J-1 scholars must have their travel authorized by their sponsor. For ISEP exchange students, this means sending the DS-2019 to Washington, DC. J-1 scholars should allow sufficient time for the documents to be sent to their sponsor and returned.

Travel Procedures & US VISIT

The **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** has implemented US-VISIT at all major air and seaports. **US-VISIT** is a series of security procedures and identity verifications that begin when an individual applies for a visa to travel to the United States, and continues through entry and exit at U.S. air and seaports. DHS plans to implement US-VISIT at land border crossings, as well.

At this point in time, DHS requires the majority of visa holders to have their two index fingers scanned and a digital photograph taken to verify the identity of the visa holder. Centers to register individuals with non-immigrant visas in the US-VISIT system are located at air and seaports and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. Visitors traveling under the Visa Waiver program are also subject to the US-VISIT program.

US-VISIT does not impose new travel regulations, but you will need to allow yourself sufficient time in the airport to go through at US-VISIT procedures. If you are *leaving* the United States, you should be prepared to “check out” with a US Customs and Border Protection Officer who will review your documents. This can be done at the air or seaport from which you are departing. Some airports also have sanctioned DHS kiosk for US-VISIT registration where you can scan your own documents before leaving.

Upon *entering* the United States, a customs official will check your passport, immigration documents, and your I-94 card. The customs officer will scan your fingerprints and take your digital photograph, and based on this information will determine whether or not you are able to enter the country. All of the information collected during US-VISIT registration is entered into your travel record.

For more information, visit www.dhs.gov

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

For Undergraduate Students:

All undergraduate F-1 and J-1 students must take a minimum of 12 credits hours per semester. 12 hours is considered full-time enrollment, and generally constitutes 4 course selections. Students in H1-B status may take courses part-time only (less than 12 credit hours) and students in E-2, L-2, or H-4 status may take courses full- or part-time. If you are in the United States on a visa class that is not listed in this document, please consult with an OIE advisor regarding your enrollment requirements.

Students should consult with their assigned academic advisor when making their course selections.

Students may take more than 12 credit hours per semester, provided they are able to handle the work load. This applies to exchange students as well as degree-seeking international students. Students considering dropping courses should consult with the Office of International Education before making any change to their schedules.

For Graduate Students:

All graduate F-1 and J-1 students must take a minimum of 9 credits hours per semester. 9 hours is considered full-time enrollment, and generally constitutes 3 course selections. Students in H1-B status may take courses part-time only (less than 9 credit hours) and students in E-2, L-2, or H-4 status may take courses full- or part-time. If you are in the United States on a visa class that is not listed in this document, please consult with an OIE advisor regarding your enrollment requirements.

Students should consult with their assigned academic advisor when making their course selections.

Enrolling In and Dropping Courses

Students will enroll in courses with the help of their academic advisor. A student must complete all steps of the registration process prior to attending classes. No credit will be granted for any class for which the student is not properly registered for.

Students must be enrolled in their final schedule of courses by the 12th day of the semester. Up until that day, students are permitted to drop courses they no longer wish to take, provided that they maintain 12 credit hours of instruction. Students who wish to drop a course should consult with the OIE before doing so.

EMPLOYMENT & DOCUMENTATION

On-Campus Employment

F-1 students must be authorized by the OIE to work on campus and **must** receive this authorization before they begin working. Students must be in status with USCIS and classified as full-time to be eligible to work on campus.

On-campus work can **NOT** exceed **20 hours per week during regular semesters and 40 hours per week during the summer, designated vacations and intersession breaks.** Intersession breaks begin the day following the last official class day of the semester and end the first day of the next semester. **Graduate students should see an OIE advisor about designated vacation.**

In order to work on campus, students must have a Social Security number **BEFORE** beginning to work. Please see the **Obtaining a Social Security Number** section of this document for more information.

After you have received your Social Security card, take it to the Office of the Registrar and the Student Financial Services Office in the Main Building. Tell the Registrar's Office that you are submitting the number for work purposes.

When looking for a job on campus, you must look for a *Non-College Work-Study* position. International students are **NOT** eligible for Work-Study positions. Work-Study positions are federally funded and are only available to U.S. citizens.

How to find a job on campus:

- Look at the [SEU Student Employment](#) web site, which can be found on the St. Edward's University homepage (www.stedwards.edu) under Search/Index. Please note that not all SEU jobs are posted on the web site.
- Visit offices on campus and ask if they have positions available.
- Attend the Job Fair sponsored by the Office of Student Financial Services the first week of classes.

Offices that often have Non-College Work-Study positions are:

Post Office, Library (Circulation Desk and Technical Support), Instructional Technology (IT), Computer Labs, Office of Institutional Research, RCC, Ragsdale Center Information Desk, Bookstore, Undergraduate School offices: Business, Natural Sciences, Humanities, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Education.

After you've found a job:

You must complete your paperwork before you begin working. Go to the Office of Student Financial Services for a work authorization form, complete it, and bring it to the OIE. The OIE will process your work authorization within 48 hours. After 48 hours you may return to the Office of Student Financial Services for your payroll form.

Working Off Campus

International students (F-1 and J-1) are **NOT** allowed to work off campus without authorization from the OIE and USCIS. Employment is defined broadly by the U.S. government and may include volunteer and internship positions. **Discuss all off campus endeavors with the OIE before undertaking such activities.** Curricular Practical Training (Internships) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) handouts are available in the OIE.

Obtaining a Social Security Number

Ask your international advisor about how to get a social security number when you meet to discuss your work authorization. You can also pick up a handout about getting a social security number while you are at the OIE.

It is important that you wait 10 days after your initial entry in the U.S. to apply for a Social Security number. **IN ORDER TO WORK ON CAMPUS, YOU MUST HAVE APPLIED FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER BEFORE YOU CAN BEGIN WORKING.**

The St. Edward's OIE will issue you a form that your supervisor will fill out verifying that you have been offered an on-campus job. You then need to bring it by the OIE so that your international advisor can sign the form as well. To obtain a social security number take the OIE form, your passport, I-20, I-94 and a form of identification (school ID or driver's license) to the Social Security Office in Austin.

J-1 visa holders should take their copy of the DS-2019, and **DO NOT** need a letter of employment, but do need confirmation of enrollment (available from the OIE). Apply for a Social Security number and make sure you provide a valid address. Ask for a receipt. Your receipt can be used for banking purposes until you receive your Social Security card.

If you do not receive your card after several weeks, call 1-800-772-1213 for more information.

The **Social Security Office** in Austin is located at 1029 Camino La Costa. Hours are 9am to 4 pm, Monday - Friday. The phone number is 1-800-772-1213. For more information, visit www.ssa.gov

Federal Income Tax

Everyone who works has to file an income tax return with the **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**. The forms that you file may depend on your status and your situation, so you should do your research before the April 15 filing deadline. All forms and instructions can be found on the **IRS webpage** (www.irs.gov).

The OIE recommends that students consult the **Tax Preparation website** created by the **International Students and Scholars Office at the University of Texas**. (<http://www.utexas.edu/international/taxes/index.html>). The site can help you determine whether or not you are required to pay federal income tax.

If you are employed on-campus, please check with the SEU Business Office to find out if your country has a tax treaty with the U.S. If your country *does* have a tax treaty, you will NOT have taxes taken out of your salary in the U.S. If your country *does not* have a tax treaty with the U.S., St. Edward's will deduct federal income tax from your paycheck. Ask the Business Office if you have questions.

Social Security Taxes

International students do not pay U.S. Social Security taxes when they first come to the U.S. Make sure to fill out an exemption form and give it to the Office of Student Financial Services.

Texas Driver's License

Please note: International students may now be required to present their Social Security card when applying for a Texas driver's license. If you do not have a Social Security card, you can get a letter from the Social Security Administration that says you are not eligible or do not need a Social Security number.

- Study the **Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Handbook**. Go to the DPS office early to sign up for the computer test.
- You are required to bring your Social Security card and your passport. The cost of the license is \$25.
- If you have any dependants (spouse, children) who would like a driver's license, they will need to request an affidavit at the DPS office stating that they have never applied for a Social Security number. They must present a valid passport and visa along with the affidavit.
- After taking the computer test, sign up for the driving test. The sign-up sheet is handled on a daily basis and is first come, first served. You will need a car for the driving test and someone to drive you to the DPS for the test. You will also need to show proof of insurance for the car that you'll be using for the test.
- Once you have passed both exams, you will be issued your Texas Driver's License.

DPS Locations:

South

4719 South Congress Ave.
 444-5241
 Mon., Tues., Wed., Fri.- 8 a.m.-5 pm.
 Thursday - 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

Central

6121 North Lamar
 424-2076
 Mon., Wed., Thurs., Fri. 8-5
 Tuesday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

Texas Identification (ID) Card

We suggest that you get a Texas ID card if you do not get a Texas driver's license. It may be helpful for you to have a form of Texas ID with your photo on it while you are here. Your Texas ID will be valid for 6 years.

Take the following to the Texas Department of Public Safety:

- Passport, Visa, and I-20 or DS-2019
- SEU Student ID Card
- Cash or check for \$15.00

This document was adapted from the Office of International Education *International Student Handbook*, which is available on-line at www.stedwards.edu/apss/international The on-line version of this document is more complete and covers information about housing, living off-campus, student services, and life in Austin.