

PROGRAM EXTENSION FOR A STUDENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is a program extension?

A program extension is the process of obtaining a new I-20 (for F-1 students) or DS-2019 (for J-1 students) to extend a student's authorized period of stay in the United States. A program extension is appropriate when a student is unable to complete the original study objective before the expiration date on the current I-20 or DS-2019.

Who is eligible for a program extension?

You are eligible for a program extension if you (1) have been enrolled full time throughout your period of studies (or have an OIS Part-Time Enrollment Authorization Form on file for each applicable semester), (2) have otherwise maintained your immigration status, and (3) the additional time is needed for *academic or medical* reasons.

Who is not eligible for program extension?

You are not eligible for an extension if you have been dismissed from the university. If you have been dismissed, you may want to discuss your options with an OIS adviser. Nor are you eligible if you have ever been enrolled less than full-time and do not have a completed Part-Time Enrollment Authorization Form on file with the OIS. Nor are you eligible if you have completed all terms of your program of study and simply wish to delay graduation. Nor are you eligible if you are out of status with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in any way.

When should I seek a program extension?

The regulations require *both* F and J students to obtain extensions *before the expiration date on their current I-20 or DS-2019*. Students who fail to obtain the extension *before* the I-20 or DS-2019 expires are considered "out of status" and must seek reinstatement. Reinstatement can require a long processing period, during which time a student cannot legally be employed, even on campus. ***Reinstatement may be difficult to obtain, even for simple reasons like "forgetting" that your I-20 or DS-2019 expired.***

What are the consequences of failure to obtain a program extension?

If you forget the deadline and apply late, you will be "out of status". If you are employed and overlook the date, you WILL be working "illegally" and may begin accruing "unlawful presence." Such mistakes will jeopardize prospects for obtaining employment authorization, extensions of stay, and obtaining permanent resident status. They could even lead to being banned from entering the United States.

What is the procedure for obtaining a program extension?

1. ***Get your academic adviser's approval.*** At least one month before your I-20 or DS-2019 expires (and preferably earlier than that), ask your academic adviser or department chair to complete an "Academic Adviser's Recommendation for Program Extension," a copy of which is included in this packet. Bring the form with you to your appointment with the OIS adviser (see next step).

2. ***Make an appointment to see an OIS adviser.*** After you have your academic adviser's approval, contact the OIS receptionist at 501-683-7566 to make an appointment with the OIS adviser.

3. ***Bring to your appointment a completed "Request for I-20/DS-2019" form.*** Also bring the completed academic adviser's approval form. Before the appointment please check the following:

- You must provide updated documentation (issued within last 6 months) of your financial support, such as a bank statement or offer letter for a graduate assistantship, so please bring this information with you.
- If you have been enrolled for less than full time (12 semester hours for undergraduates or 9 semester hours for graduate students) you need to have your academic adviser complete and sign the "Part-Time Enrollment Authorization Form."
This form must be completed for each semester for which you have been enrolled less than full time.

ACADEMIC ADVISER'S RECOMMENDATION FOR PROGRAM EXTENSION

To be completed by Student:

Student Name: _____

Student ID Number: _____

Email Address: _____

To be completed by Academic Adviser or Department Chair:

This form is provided for your convenience and is designed to facilitate the communication of information required by U.S. immigration regulations for students who will not complete their studies within the "normal" time frame for their level of study. If you have any questions regarding the regulations or the completion of this form, please do not hesitate to call us at 501-683-7566 or email: abhughes@ualr.edu

1. The student is engaged in the following course of study:

Major: _____ Degree level: _____

Number of Credits Earned to date:

Total Required for Degree:

New Anticipated Graduation Date: _____ / _____
Month / Year

2. The student has not yet completed the course of study due to:

- ? Delay caused by a change in area of specialization
- ? Delay caused by a change in research topic
- ? Delay caused by unexpected research difficulties
- ? Delay caused by lost credits upon transfer to the UALR
- ? No unusual delay: original completion estimate no reasonable for average student in this program
- ? Other (Please explain on the reverse side)

3. I am aware that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services does not allow program extensions due to delays caused by financial difficulties, failure to find employment, academic probation, or suspension, and I recommend that the student be granted additional time to complete the course of study.

Academic Adviser's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Academic Adviser's Name: _____ Email: _____