FAQs for Yale Administrators and Faculty

COVID-19 FAQs for Yale Departments

Updated 4/16/20. This content is subject to change. Please continue to monitor this website.

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New Scholars

Given the state of the COVID-19 outbreak, Yale University guidance [1], and the announcement from the Office of the Provost about non-essential research closures [2], OISS is instituting the following protocols for international scholars who have not yet arrived in the U.S.

Q1: How soon can a new J-1 scholar start at Yale? (not yet in the U.S.)

A: Per an April 3rd memo from Mike Crair, Vice Provost for Research and Lisa D'Angelo, Associate Provost for Research sent to all faculty, new postdoctoral and postgraduate hires should not plan on starting at Yale (arriving in the U.S.) until July 1st or later. Therefore, OISS will adjust the start dates for any submitted J-1 sponsorship requests to July 1st, 2020.

Q2: When will the new (or amended) J-1 DS-2019 be mailed?

A: Because mailing options are limited, and university protocols regarding in-person interactions have changed the mailing of DS-2019 forms will be somewhat delayed. If you have an urgent situation, please work with us on this and let us know about any exceptional situations.

The option of picking up the DS-2019 has been suspended for the time being. In an effort to streamline our mailing of documents, please only use Fed Ex (uploading FedEx courier shipping labels in OISS Connect.)

Q3: Are there any exceptions to how early a new scholar can start?

A: Please work with the Provost and Dean's Office policies (posted above) regarding any exceptions. At the moment it is nearly impossible to secure an appointment for a visa (see updated State Department announcement [3] 4.8.2020.)

Q4: What if a new J-1 scholar manages to arrive in New Haven?

A: If you learn of a new scholar who has managed to arrive prior to July 1st please send a brief email to Nathan Duddles [4] informing him so that OISS can collect their documents and complete record keeping. When appropriate OISS will also complete an I-9 in accordance with COVID-19 temporary procedures. OISS orientations have been suspended for the time being, OISS advises scholars that before going into any Yale building or department, they must contact their faculty hosts and department by email to understand the COVID-19 protocols about access.

Q5: What should I do if I want to submit a J-1 new request?

A: OISS will continue to process New Sponsorship Requests [5] in OISS Connect, converting the earliest start date to July 1, 2020. We encourage you to submit new requests as they come up – not to delay collecting and submitting the documentation. OISS will be monitoring the availability of visa appointments and will print and mail forms as soon as can.
Q6: What about J-1 Student Interns?

A: Visiting Undergraduates in Research/Clinical Activities appointments are being pushed back by OISS to September 1st. No action is needed by departments at this time. There are additional logistical hurdles in this J-1 process. Departments will need to decide whether to pursue J-1 Student Internship sponsorship or not. OISS will accept new requests and work with departments to keep these records active as outlined in #2 above - however in some cases the criteria for the J-1 Student Intern may be difficult to meet (must still be enrolled in a degree program, etc.).

Current J-1 Yale Scholars

Q7: What do I do if a current J-1 scholar needs an extension?

A: Please continue to submit extensions by using the Extend DS-2019 requests button in OISS Connect for scholars whose appointments are being extended. OISS will process these extensions in the Department of Homeland Security system maintaining their legal status in the U.S. Once the new extension has been processed by OISS, we will email both the department and the scholar. If appropriate OISS will also process the I-9 extension for the scholar which is our normal protocol.

Q8: How will the scholar obtain the new DS-2019?

A: Because mailing options are limited, and university protocols regarding in-person interactions have changed we will not be mailing DS-2019 forms in most cases. OISS will accommodate exceptions depending on the situation (scholars who are traveling, or for J-2 work permission applications.) Please work with us on this and let us know about any exceptional situations.

Q9: We have heard that the State Department extended all J-1 visa status by 60-days. Is that true?

A: The U.S. Department of State—which oversees the J Exchange Visitor program—took an unprecedented measure and pushed 60-day extensions for all J-1 visa holders with DS-2019 end dates between April 1st and May 31st in order to allow them time to depart from the U.S. or extend their Yale appointments. OISS is contacting these scholars directly, asking them to report if they are staying at Yale or not. As you can imagine this gets complicated as some may no longer have appointments with Yale. John Alvaro is aware that some of these scholars will be requesting extensions of their appointments through his office.

Q10: What happens if we missed the J-1 extension deadline?

A: These are exceptional times and the State Department has been working with universities across the U.S. to explore options. Therefore please submit all extensions by using the Extend DS-2019 requests button in OISS Connect. OISS will work with the State Department to explore options for all J extensions, even if a deadline was missed. In most cases scholars would still need to meet all the requirements: extended Yale appointment, continued funding at university minimums and health insurance coverage.

Q11: Are J-1 scholars allowed to work remotely? Even if they are not in New Haven?

Please continue to follow guidance from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Yale University guidance, and the announcement from the Office of the Provost about non-essential research closures. There are university protocols for Yale appointees who are working for Yale from outside the New Haven area as well as from outside the U.S.

Q12: What happens if we can’t extend the appointment, but the J-1 scholar can’t get back home?

A: Please let us know of any cases where the scholar is stuck in the U.S. As stated above the State Department is working with universities to try make exceptions to normal extension protocols where possible. Offices across campus (host departments, OPDA, OISS, etc.) need to work together to try and find reasonable solutions for these situations. While in some cases a J-1 extension may not be possible, it is our first plan of action. However, OISS relies on departments and scholars to communicate any such situations with OISS ASAP.
reach out to your OISS adviser [7].

Q13: What should we do if a scholar quits their position permanently?

Please report any resignation or termination in by using the Shorten DS-2019 request button [6] in OISS Connect.

H-1B Employees

Q14: Is there anything new about H-1B employees?

A: Due to our inability to post paper H-1B notices in most buildings, OISS has adjusted its H-1B posting process for all new H-1B cases (extension or initial.) Your OISS adviser will contact you about the process at the time a posting is required – there is nothing you need to do at the moment.

Q15: What about the checks needed to file the H-1B application?

A: OISS has made arrangements to pick up Yale checks once a week (on Wednesdays) and have them delivered to the OISS adviser working on the H-1B case.  Please request checks for these cases at the earliest possible moment so OISS can be assured of having the checks when the case is ready to submit.

Q16: Is it true that there is no more Premium Processing?

A: As OISS has been reporting [8] for the past few weeks, USCIS suspended Premium Processing temporarily. Please continue to provide OISS with the Premium Processing checks, since USCIS may begin accepting Premium Processing in the next 2 months.

At this moment, USCIS states that the processing of H-1B applications will take between 2-5 months.  The absence of Premium Processing may create a gap in employment authorization for some individuals changing from J-1 or F-1 to H-1B.  It may also create a delay for newly appointed faculty and researchers who are currently overseas.  Any current H-1B employee who is now outside the U.S. and who will need a new visa to return may also face delays.

Your OISS adviser will inform you if any of your H-1B cases are likely to face delays – no action is needed from departments at the moment.

OISS Office Hours and Advising Access

Per University guidance, OISS is temporarily suspending walk-in advising hours. Office business will continue with staff working remotely from home until the university policy changes. Students and scholars should make appointments with their OISS adviser [7] by phone or through Zoom. Departments should also set appointments to speak with their advisers. OISS will make arrangements for emergency requests when it is necessary.

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Links:
[1] https://communications.yale.edu/covid-19-information
[5] https://connect.oiss.yale.edu/
[7] https://oiss.yale.edu/node/184