PASSPORT QUESTIONS

I don’t have a passport, or my passport expires within 6 months of the program end date. What should I do?
The sooner you apply for a new passport, the better! If it’s at least 2 months before the St. John’s University Office of Global Studies (OGS) visa application deadline, standard passport processing should be fine. You can find information on applying for a passport on the U.S. Department of State’s website, http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english.html. You can also pick up an application form and instructions at most U.S. post offices.

How can I expedite the passport application process?
If you have at least 1 month before the OGS visa application deadline, you can apply for a passport through the same process provided above, paying $60 extra for expedited processing. If you’re within 4 weeks of the visa deadline, you may want to apply in person at the U.S. Department of State Passport Agency in Manhattan. This is a more complicated process, but will allow you to get a new passport in 8 business days. There is no additional fee for this service (beyond the $60 expedited processing fee), but you will need to obtain a letter from OGS to bring with you to the Passport Agency. For more information, and to schedule an appointment, visit the Passport Agency’s website (by visiting the Department of State passport website above, then clicking “Where to Apply,” then “Find a Facility.” From there, click on “Passport Agency” and select the New York Passport Agency).

Why do I have to send my passport with my visa application?
The Consulate will need your original passport to process your visa application, and will permanently affix your visa to your passport once the visa is issued.

I’ve already made travel plans that require my passport. What should I do?
First, see if it’s possible to change your plans – we can’t guarantee you’ll be able to get a visa if your travel interferes with the visa application process. If you’ve already planned travel that cannot be changed, and that you feel will interfere with the OGS group visa process, contact our office as soon as possible to discuss your
When will my passport be returned?
The OGS group visa process generally takes several weeks after submitting your application to the Consulate. If applying on your own, the Consulate will notify you of the time frame for pickup. If applying through the OGS group visa process, we will notify you.

GENERAL VISA QUESTIONS
What is a visa and why do I need one?
A visa is a certificate of your permission to stay in a given country for a given amount of time, and it usually takes the form of a sticker placed on a blank page in your passport. Visas are typically granted for study, tourism, business, or other reasons, and visa regulations vary depending on the country granting the visa and your country of citizenship. All students studying abroad on a St. John’s University Office of Global Studies semester program will need a visa. If you are a European Union citizen, other regulations apply, and you must contact OGS to learn how to comply. Students participating in a short-term program should consult their program’s information page on the OGS website to determine if they need a visa.

What if I am a citizen of a European Union Country?
If you are a citizen of a European Union country and want to take advantage of this, you MUST travel on the passport issued by the European Union country. If you are a European Union citizen participating in either the Paris Semester or Seville Semester program, you must contact OGS to learn how to comply with additional requirements:
- **France:** Students who are citizens of a European Union country and will participate in the Paris Semester Program, will need to apply for a resident permit at the local Préfecture upon arrival in Paris.
- **Spain:** Students who are citizens of a European Union country and will participate in the Seville Semester Program, will need to register with the Department of Foreigners (*Oficina de Extranjeros*) and apply for a NIE (*Número de Identificación de Extranjeros*) upon arrival in Seville.

Can I apply for the visa on my own, or am I required to apply through OGS?
Students on short-term programs (less than 90 days) must apply for visas on their own. Students in the Discover the World: Europe (DTW) program are strongly encouraged to apply through the OGS group visa application process, unless they are non-U.S. citizens obtaining a French or Italian visa. DTW students who choose to apply independently are encouraged to apply through NYC consulates; otherwise, they are not guaranteed to have their visa applications approved. Students in the Discover Italy, Discover France and Discover Spain programs are also strongly encouraged to apply through the OGS group visa application process – if you decide to apply on your own, you should consult the “Independent Visa Application Guide” for instructions and tips on that process. All students who apply on their own are
encouraged to visit the Office of Global Studies to have their documents reviewed before applying. You’ll also need to pick up letters from OGS to complete your application before your Consulate appointment (see below: “Do I need anything from OGS before I apply?”).

I am a non-U.S. citizen; can I apply for a visa through the OGS group visa process or do I have to apply on my own?
Due to consular regulations, non-U.S. citizens applying for a French or Italian visa cannot apply through the OGS group visa process. Currently, the Spanish Consulate does allow non-U.S. citizens to apply through the OGS group visa process. Non-U.S. citizens on the DTW program should only apply through the Consulates in NYC. All non-U.S. citizens should consult the “Independent Visa Application Guide” for instructions and tips on the application process.

VISA APPLICATION FORM AND REQUIREMENT QUESTIONS
*Please note that an application form with several important pre-filled answers is included in the visa application checklists for semester-program participants – you must use this visa application form.*

Do the photos required for the visa application have to be the same photos I used for my passport application?
The photos you provide with your visa application must be passport-style front-facing, color photos with a white background. Size: 1.5” square photo. These photos do not have to match the photo on your passport. Please note you cannot be smiling, have your hair covering your eyes, or be wearing glasses or a hat or other head covering in these photos. (Please contact the Office of Global Studies if you wear a head covering for religious reasons.)

What does it mean when it says a form must be notarized?
When a document is notarized, it means that a Notary Public has watched you sign the document, and puts a stamp on it verifying that your signature is authentic. The notary cannot be a relative, and you can usually find one at your local bank branch.

Where can I find a notary?
Most bank branches have a notary, and will provide their services at no charge if you’re a bank customer. Again, please note that the notary cannot be someone that you’re related to.

I plan on traveling before or after the program. What do I write down for the date of arrival/departure and duration of stay?
Your application should indicate your actual dates of travel. If those are different from the established arrival and departure dates for your program, =be sure to update the “duration of stay” as well!! The verification letters OGS provides will only list the program dates. Depending on your nationality, you may have to show a hotel reservation or proof of accommodation for the remainder of your stay.
FLIGHT ITINERARIES AND PERSONAL TRAVEL QUESTIONS
Do I have to book a round-trip flight?
Yes, the Consulate will want to see that you have a means of getting to your destination and also that you’ve booked a flight home.

What should I do if I can’t book a round-trip flight prior to the visa application deadline?
If you have a special situation that will prevent you from providing a round-trip itinerary, please let OGS know so that we can discuss options.

I had planned on traveling before/after the program. What can I do?
Just provide whatever flight itineraries you have – the most important thing is that the Consulate can see that you have a way of getting home after the program. Depending on your nationality, you may have to show a hotel reservation or proof of accommodation for the dates of your stay that are outside the program dates.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT DOCUMENTS QUESTIONS
*Bank documents are required by most Consulates, but not all. Refer to the checklist of required documents in your visa application checklist or the Consulate’s website to see if you are required to submit bank documents as part of your visa application.

Why do I need to provide financial support documents?
Your financial support documents show the Consulate that you have access to adequate financial resources to pay your own way while you’re abroad – it basically ensures that, in case you run into an emergency while abroad, your host country won’t have to foot the bill, and you won’t be stranded in their country. The amount you need to show is determined by the amount of time you will spend abroad, and the country issuing your visa.

Can my parents/relatives provide proof of financial support on my behalf?
This depends on which country you’ll be getting your visa from. Many consulates will accept documents provided by your parents as evidence of financial support, but the Italian consulate, for example, will only accept a bank letter that lists you as an account holder (though accounts held jointly by you and another person are acceptable).

INDEPENDENT VISA PROCESSING QUESTIONS
How do I apply for my visa if I’m not participating in the group application process?
If you’re going to be applying for your visa independently, whether you’re a short-term program participant, a non-U.S. citizen who can’t participate in the OGS group visa process, or just choosing to apply on your own, please refer to the OGS Independent Visa Application Guide. The guide includes instructions on making an appointment, completing your application, and making sure you have everything in
order before submitting your visa application to the Consulate! We ask that you please read the guide before addressing your questions to OGS, but feel free to contact us if anything seems unclear.

**OGS GROUP VISA PROCESSING QUESTIONS**

*Semester-program students only*

**What happens if I miss the visa application deadline?**
Although it’s our goal to help every student study abroad, students who miss the visa application deadline will unfortunately not be able utilize the OGS group visa process, and therefore may not be able to study abroad. You can still apply independently, but it will be up to you to make sure that you get a visa.

**When can I submit my visa to the Office of Global Studies (OGS)?**
All visa applications for the group appointment must be submitted during the Required Document Submission Sessions. The times and locations of the Required Document Submission Session are available on the Accepted Students website ([www.stjohns.edu/goingabroad](http://www.stjohns.edu/goingabroad)).

**What happens after I submit my visa application and passport to OGS?**
A member of the OGS team will review your application with you for errors/omissions, and let you know if anything else is required of you. We’ll then submit all complete applications received by the deadline to the appropriate Consulate. Once consular officials have reviewed each application and granted all visas (a process that can take several weeks), OGS will pick them up and bring them back to our office.

**How long does the OGS group visa process take?**
Typically it takes at least 6 weeks to process visas through the OGS group visa process, though this can depend on a variety of factors, particularly Consulate processing time (which typically takes between 2 and 4 weeks). OGS will notify students when their passports are ready to be picked up.

**How will I know when I can pick up my passport and visa?**
OGS will email you to let you know that your passport and visa are ready to be picked up. If you live out of state (or more than 60 miles from the Queens campus) and classes are not in session, you can also request that we mail your passport to you.