

Your Responsibilities as a Student on an F-1 Visa

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) places **responsibility on the student** to understand and comply with immigration law.

Below is a summary of the immigration responsibilities for F-1 students (details on each follow). If F-1 students do not fulfill any one of these responsibilities, they may jeopardize their eligibility for immigration benefits, including employment on- or off- campus. **Failure to comply may also result in the loss of your F-1 status!**

- **Register for and successfully complete a full course of study each semester.**
- **Obtain U.S. Immigration service approval before changing schools or academic programs.**
- **Complete your program before your I-20 expires (or get a program extension if necessary).**
- **Always obtain Employment Authorization before you begin working**
- **Keep your passport valid at all times.**
- **Notify U.S. Immigration service and OIP of any address change.**
- **Leave the US within 60 days after completing your program.**

1. REGISTER FOR AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE A FULL COURSE OF STUDY EACH SEMESTER.

The following are the minimum credit hour requirements for F-1 students to maintain full time registration:

- **Undergraduate or Undergraduate Certificate: 12 credit hours (at least 9 hours face-to-face)**
- **Graduate or Graduate Certificate: 9 credit hours (at least 6 hours face-to-face)**

Exceptions: Under a limited number of certain circumstances, F-1 students may be authorized to enroll for less than a full course of study and still meet the immigration regulation requirements for maintaining status (i.e., graduate students with an assistantship, students in the final semester of their program). Please see OIP if you feel you might meet one of these exceptions.

Summer: F-1 students are not required to register for any academic credits during the summer break, unless summer is the first semester of enrollment.

2. OBTAIN U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE APPROVAL BEFORE CHANGING UNIVERSITIES OR DEGREE PROGRAMS.

As an F-1 student, you must obtain a new I-20 each time you change your major, transfer to another university, or change academic level of study (i.e., Bachelor's to Master's).

3. COMPLETE YOUR PROGRAM BEFORE YOUR I-20 EXPIRES

F-1 students have permission to study in the United States up to the expected completion date as indicated on the I-20. However, once students have completed their program, they have 60 days to either:

- travel within or leave the United States;
- change to another status;
- or begin a new program.

To extend the program completion date on the I-20, students must demonstrate that the additional time is needed because of compelling academic reasons or a documented medical illness – requiring a letter from their academic advisor or physician.

4. ALWAYS OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION BEFORE YOU BEGIN WORKING

Students must ALWAYS obtain written employment authorization from OIP and/or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service BEFORE beginning any employment, including on-campus employment. This includes internships for which you receive any compensation (including salary, tuition, books, supplies, food, or transportation). Please contact OIP with any questions about employment options. More information is also available in the Employment section of this website.

5. KEEP YOUR PASSPORT VALID AT ALL TIMES.

Maintain a valid passport. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service will not approve applications for employment or other immigration benefits unless your passport is valid or in the process of being re-validated.

6. NOTIFY THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OF ANY ADDRESS CHANGE.

Inform OIP of any address change within 15 days of your move. We will update both your SFA and your SEVIS record with your change of address.

7. LEAVE THE US WITHIN 60 DAYS AFTER COMPLETING YOUR PROGRAM

Once you complete all requirements for your program, even if your I-20 has not expired, you have only 60 days to either:

- leave the United States
- change to another visa status
- begin a new program of study (this requires a new I-20)

FAILURE TO COMPLY

Failure to comply with these regulations will mean the loss of your F-1 student status. We refer to this as being "out of status." Falling out of status has very serious consequences. For example, you could be prevented from re-entering the U.S. for three to ten years, depending on the length of your status violation. For status violations of 180-360 days, a three-year exclusion is imposed. If you remain out of status for more than 360 days, you may not re-enter the U.S. for ten years. If you fall out of status for any reason, we advise you to meet with OIP immediately. Simply registering full-time in the next semester or stopping the unauthorized work does not put you back in status. There are steps you can take with U.S. Immigration service to recover your status, but the sooner you begin, the better your chances for approval.