

Students on F-1

USCIS - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service has imposed rules and regulations governing F-1 students. The following information is a brief summary of the changes that appear in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 214 and 274A. If you have any questions please contact the International Office at (203) 392-6821 or (203) 392-6947

1. Duration of Status

Duration of status (D/S) means the period during which the student is pursuing a full course of study in any educational program (plus a 60 day grace period). However, the student must complete the course of study by the end date of the original SEVIS I-20. Thus, D/S terminates at the completion date that appears on the SEVIS I-20. If for any reason the student is unable to complete the course of study by the end date, an extension of the program end date on the I-20 would be crucial. Contact the International office at least 30 days before the program end date. If a student is unable to complete the educational program within the time period written on the SEVIS I-20 and does not apply for a program extension within a timely manner, the student is considered to be out of status. Under these circumstances the student must apply for reinstatement and meet with an International Advisor to go over options.

2. Visa Clarification

It is not necessary to have the name of a new school endorsed on an existing visa that might show the name of the previous school. However, the new rule clearly indicates that an F-1 student may be admitted into the U.S. for a period up to 30 days before the start date listed on the I-20.

4. SEVIS I-20

An F-1 student is expected to safely keep his or her SEVIS I-20 as well as his/her arrival/departure card (I-94). If a student loses his/her SEVIS I-20, the DSO may issue a replacement copy bearing the same information. If the student loses the I-94 arrival/departure card it can be replaced by downloading the Immigration form called, **I-102** from the USCIS website <http://www.uscis.gov/>. There is a fee of \$160.00 to replace this lost or stolen card.

5. Temporary Absence

An F-1 Student returning to the U.S. from a temporary leave of absence of five months or more will need to be issued another SEVIS I-20 as well as a letter from the Academic Advisor which will prove the need for return to the U.S. to continue study at the University. A leaves of absence for more than 5 months will result in a termination of your SEVIS I-20 and your F-1 visa.

6. Annual Vacation

An F-1 student is considered to be in status during the annual summer vacation and semester breaks periods.

7. Illnesses or Medical Condition(s)

An F-1 student who is compelled by illness or a medical condition, which interrupts their full-time enrollment, needs to contact an International Advisor as soon as possible. A letter from his/her medical doctor on letterhead, which certifies the situation of the medical condition as well as indicates the length of time the student will need to be below full-time status is required before approval from a DSO is given. Once approved by an International Advisor (DSO), the student will be notified and the SEVIS record will be relected on page 3. The medical condition cannot exceed for a period of 12 months. The student must also notify the International Advisor (DSO) prior to resuming a full course of study upon recovery.

8. Definition of Full Course of Study

An F-1 student who fails to maintain a full course of study without the approval of the DSO or otherwise fails to maintain status violates his status and does not qualify for any grace periods of 60 or 15 days.

Undergraduates: 12 credits or more per semester is required for full-time status.

Graduates: A graduate student who has at least a half-time assistantship (either teaching or research) needs to only register for 6 credits each semester.

The student must get permission from the DSO first before dropping below a full course of study.

ONLY ONE AUTHORIZATION FOR DROPPING BELOW A FULL COURSE OF STUDY IS

ALLOWED AT THAT PROGRAM LEVEL.

10. Transferring out to another College or University

If an F-1 student wishes to transfer, he/she must first notify the school he/she is presently attending of the intent to transfer prior to the issuance of form I-20. The DSO at the present school is responsible for determining that the student has been maintaining status and is eligible to transfer. Once the semester has started and the student has registered, the student will need to show the new College/University the Transfer pending I-20 so that the new College/University can issue a continuing attendance I-20 form to the student. The student has 15 days from the start of the semester to do so. An F-1 student who was not pursuing a full course of study at the school he or she was last authorized to attend is ineligible for school transfer and must apply for a reinstatement. An F-1 student is not permitted to remain in the United States when transferring between schools or programs unless the student will begin classes within 5 months of transferring.

Rules and Procedures of Employments for F1 Students

11. Employment on Campus

An F-1 student is eligible to work on campus, whether it is employment in your academic department, the library, the computer center, the housing office, etc. The student may only work on the campus of the school that issued the I-20 and the work may not exceed 20 hours a week when school is in session and full time when school is not in session.

12. Employment off campus due to Severe Economic Hardship

An F-1 student must have been present in the U.S. at least for one academic year before applying for work permission off campus. The student must demonstrate to both the DSO and USCIS that there are now some unforeseen economic circumstances that occurred after his/her arrival in the US. The student must be in good academic standing and show documented proof of the unexpected event that caused the request. The DSO must recommend the work permission and review all required Immigration documents with the student before the student mails them to the USCIS. The application is then reviewed by the USCIS for severe economic hardship work permission if the International Advisor (DSO) certifies that the international student has suffered severe economic hardship which was unforeseen and beyond the student's control and that the jobs on campus are not sufficient to meet his/her needs. Please schedule an advisory appointment with an International Advisor if you have questions.

13. Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Practical Training is available to F-1 students who have been enrolled full time for at least one academic year. Exceptions to this rule apply to graduate students who are required immediate participation in a curricular practical training program. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) can be authorized by the International Advisor (DSO). CPT is defined to be alternate work/study, an internship, cooperative education or any type of required internship or practicum, which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. Students who have received one year or more of full time curricular practical training are ineligible for post completion optional practical training. The academic advisor must indicate to the DSO the reason for the curricular practical training, specifying the dates, the location of the site and the name of the company. All curricular practical trainings authorization must be done before the student starts the employment. To engage in employment without the DSO's approval is a violation of status. Please consult with an international advisor if you have questions.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) :

The student must have been in enrolled full time for one full academic year in order to apply for OPT. You can apply for OPT only after completion of all course requirements for the degree, excluding thesis or its equivalent. You can start the filing process for OPT 120 days before the completion of all degree requirements with a job offer and 90 days before the completion of all degree requirements without a job offer. A student cannot apply after all course requirements have been completed. An F-1 student can only for OPT which is directly related to the student's major area of study. The

approval of the employment and issuance of the EAD card usually takes 6-8 weeks to receive the card in the mail (processing times can vary and are subject to change at any given time).

Important issues to keep in mind:

- Student should have fulfilled the one year academic requirement,
- It could take approximately 6-8 weeks to receive any EAD card in the mail (whether it's based on economic hardship or OPT).
- You do not need to show you have a job to apply for OPT,
- You cannot start to work until you have the EAD card in your possession,
- Authorization to engage in OPT is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level,
- If you do not have a Social Security card, one will need to be issued to you. You will need to visit the local Social Security Office on Main Street in Willimantic, CT to start this process- receiving the card in the mail could take up to 3 weeks to receive,
- F-1 students who engage in employment are subject to federal and state income taxes.

14. Reinstatement to F-1 student status

The local Immigration Officer may reconsider reinstatement of an F-1 student who makes a request for reinstatement by submitting form I-539. The student must meet the expectations of the Immigration Officer and prove that the violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond the student's control or prove that failure to receive reinstatement would result in extreme hardship. This student must also be pursuing a full course of study, cannot be engaged in unauthorized employment and is not deportable on any other grounds. Please discuss your own personal set of issues with an International Advisor (DSO).

15. Study in F-2 Status

Students dependents may study for a vocational or recreational purposes, but not attain a degree. They may not study full-time, unless they change to F-1 status.