

DISP 303 Summary of F-1
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A SUMMARY OF THE F-1 STUDENT REGULATIONS

USCIS – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service has a profound effect on the regulations governing F-1 students.

The following information is a brief summary of the changes that appear in Code 8 of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 214 and 274A. If you have any questions, contact an International Advisor/Designated School Official (DSO) at the Department of International Services and Programs (DISP).

Please remember that it is student's responsibility to maintain his/her F-1 status and comply with all the USCIS' regulations.

• SEVIS I-20

The SEVIS I-20 is the Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status. The form is unique to each student and each student's own SEVIS ID number is on this document. The student must read page 2 and sign page 1 [#11].

The I-20 is issued by the University that you will attend and certifies that the student will be/is enrolled full-time. It shows the student's academic program information including the educational level, major, and program start date and end date as well as financial information of the student. F-1 legal status ends on the completion date indicated on #5 of the SEVIS I-20 or when the student terminates full-time study, whichever comes first. The I-20 also certifies financial support for 9 months/12 months.

When any changes on any items on the I-20 occur (e.g. change of funds, change of major, change of address, change of educational level, program end date/extension, etc), the student must contact the International Advisor with the updated information and receive a new SEVIS I-20 reflecting the updated information. The student must request a travel signature from the International Advisor if he/she plans to travel abroad in order to be able to reenter the U.S.

If a student loses or damages his/her SEVIS I-20 form, the International Advisor/DSO may issue a replacement copy bearing the same information.

• DURATION OF STATUS (D/S)

Duration of Status (D/S) means the period during which the student is pursuing a full course of study in any educational program (plus 60 days as a grace period). However, the student must complete the course of study by the date on the original/initial SEVIS I-20. Thus, D/S terminates when a student completes his/her program.

• VISA CLARIFICATION

When you transfer to another school, it is not necessary to have the name of a new school endorsed on an existing visa that shows the name of the previous school. 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 if the I-20 states initial. The student may stay in the U.S. legally with an expired visa as long as he/she complies with all F-1 regulations.

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• PASSPORT VALIDITY

It is specified that a passport must be valid for at least six months into the future at all time (unless there are automatic revalidation provisions in existence). If the passport does not meet the validity requirements, the student is considered in violation of his/her immigration status.

• I-94/ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE RECORD

An F-1 student is expected to safely keep his/her arrival/departure card (I-94). The I-94 shows where and when you entered the U.S. as well as what status you were admitted on and when your status expires. The student should keep a photocopy of all I-94's received for his/her file. If the student loses or damages the I-94 arrival/departure card, it can be replaced by applying for an I-94 replacement to the USCIS. The application form for the I-94 replacement is **Form I-102** (can be downloaded at www.uscis.gov) and an application fee is applicable.

• **DEFINITION OF FULL TIME STUDY**

An F-1 student who fails to maintain a full course of study without the approval of the International Advisor/DSO or otherwise fails to maintain status is considered violating his/her status and does not qualify for any grace periods of 60 or 15 days. Students are **limited to one on-line course counting toward full-time status per semester.**

Full-time course load

Undergraduate 12 credits

Graduate 9 credits

For a student who is having difficulty maintaining full-time status, he/she must receive permission from the International Advisor **first** before dropping below a full course of study.

ONLY ONE AUTHORIZATION FOR AN ACADEMIC REASON (#1-4 above) FOR DROPPING BELOW FULL COURSE OF STUDY IS ALLOWED AT THAT PROGRAM LEVEL.

• **TEMPORARY ABSENCE**

Under certain circumstances, an F-1 student may take a temporary leave of absence from the University. Please note that your SEVIS record will be terminated at a certain point after your leave of absence starts and timing of termination will be determined case by case. Once your SEVIS record is terminated, you must not stay in the U.S.

The F-1 student whose SEVIS record was terminated and is returning to the U.S. after a temporary leave of absence, he/she will need to be issued another SEVIS I-20. For DISP to process your new I-20 after a temporary leave of absence, we need to receive a letter from the academic advisor which will prove the need to return to the U.S. to continue study at the University and indicate a new expected program completion date after your return. In addition, financial documents to support your remaining education at the University will be needed.

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• **ANNUAL VACATION**

An F-1 student is considered to be in status during the University's official break periods (summer and winter) period if the student is eligible and intends to register for the next semester. Class registration for summer courses is optional.

• **ILLNESS OR MEDICAL CONDITION**

An F-1 student who is compelled by illness or a medical condition, which interrupts their full-time enrollment, you will need to contact an International Advisor/DSO as soon as possible. A letter from his/her medical doctor on letterhead, which certifies 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 the International Advisor/DSO is given. Once the International Advisor/DSO approves the request, the student will be notified and the SEVIS record will be reflected on page 3. The medical condition cannot exceed a period of 12 months at one program level and the student must get authorization from the International Advisor/DSO first before dropping below a full course of study for medical reasons. Upon recovery, the student must also notify the International Advisor/DSO prior to resuming a full course of study.

• **EXTENSION OF STAY**

An F-1 student who is unable to complete a full course of study in a timely manner **must** apply for a program extension within 30 days **before** the completion date on the I-20 form. The student's academic advisor must indicate the reason for the extension on the Extension/Departure Notice Form .

The International Advisor must then certified in SEVIS that the student has continually maintained status and that the delays are caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, a change of major or research topics, unexpected research problems or documented illness. An extension request with the reason of delays caused by academic probation or suspension is not acceptable reasons for program extension. **If a student is unable to complete the educational program within the time period listed on the SEVIS I-**

20 and does not apply for a program extension within a timely manner, the student is considered to have violated their status. Under these circumstances, the student must apply for reinstatement and meet with an International Advisor/DSO to go over the viable options.

• TRANSFERRING OUT TO ANOTHER COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

If an F-1 student wishes to transfer to another college/university, he/she must first notify an International Advisor/DSO at SCSU of the intent to transfer and for what semester/term prior to the issuance of form I-20 from the new school. The International Advisor/DSO at SCSU is responsible for determining that the student has been maintaining status and is eligible to transfer. An F-1 student who was not pursuing a full course of study at SCSU.

is ineligible for school transfer and must apply for a reinstatement to F-1. **An F-1 student is not permitted to remain in the U.S. when transferring between schools or programs unless the student will begin classes within 5 months of the transfer out date.**

If you are on OPT with your old school, your OPT employment authorization becomes invalid upon your SEVIS record's transfer to the new school. In this case, you must stop working by your SEVIS record release date.

• EMPLOYMENT ON CAMPUS

An F-1 student who has been issued a SEVIS I-20 may not begin on campus employment more than 30 days prior to the actual start date of classes. 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 (during spring break, summer session, etc.). In addition, a student who has been issued an I-20 to begin a new program and who intends to enroll for the next regular academic term or session at the College/University that issued form SEVIS I-20, may continue to work on campus employment incident to status.

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• PRACTICAL TRAINING

Practical Training is available to F-1 students who have been enrolled full time for at least one academic year. The employment for Practical Training must be in the student's field of study. There are **two** kinds of Practical Training:

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): Graduate students who are required to have immediate participation in a Curricular Practical Training (CPT) program are waived from the one academic year of full-time enrollment. The International Advisor may authorize an F-1 student to participate in a CPT that is an integral part of an established curriculum. 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 12 months or more of full time CPT are ineligible for OPT. The academic advisor must indicate to the International Advisor the reason for the CPT, specifying the dates, the location of the site and the name of the company (please contact the International Office at (203)392-6821 for a sample letter to give to your academic advisor). All CPTs authorization must be done before the student starts the employment. If the student engaged in cumulative 12 months or longer full-time CPT, he/she will become ineligible for OPT. To engage in employment **without** the International Advisor's approval is a violation of status.

Optional Practical Training (OPT): OPT is granted for a total of up to 12 months per degree level. Thus, a student can get OPT against a Bachelor's degree, another OPT against Master's degree, and another OPT against a PhD degree. For those students majoring in specific STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) majors with designated CIP codes by the Department of Homeland Security, there can be an additional 17 months of OPT beyond the initial 12 months if all eligibility qualifications for a STEM extension are met. For more detailed information on OPT STEM extension, please refer "F-1 OPT 17-Month Extension Guidelines (DISP 351)." This 17 month rule can only be applied once, not for each degree level like the initial 12 month OPT. There are two types of OPT: pre-completion OPT and post-completion OPT. A job offer is not required at the time of OPT application as long as the employment is in the student's field of study. All OPT applications must be filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS' processing time varies in average from 2 months to 4 months depending on the season when you apply (you may check with USCIS' website regarding the current processing time at your application: <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsps/ptimes.jsp>). The student must **NOT** start working unless he/she

receives an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS. OPT automatically terminates when the student transfers to another College/University or begins to study full time at another educational level. Students in an English Language Training (ESL) program are not eligible for practical training.

Pre-completion OPT:

Pre-Completion OPT allows the student to work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and more than 20 hours during school's official break periods. Pre-completion OPT applications may be accepted by USCIS up to prior to 120 days of a requested OPT start date and within 30 days from the date that a DSO recommended OPT in SEVIS.

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Post-completion OPT:

Post-completion OPT can be requested only for full-time. If you use a part of 12 months for pre-completion OPT, a used time will be subtracted and you may request only for the remaining time for post-completion OPT. All regular post-completion OPT applications, excluding the STEM extension, have a filing time frame of 90 days prior to completion of study to 60 days after the completion of study. Within this filing time frame, the application must be filed with USCIS within 30 days from the date that a DSO recommended OPT in SEVIS. STEM extension application must be filed with USCIS before the initial 12 month post-completion OPT end date on the EAD..

• **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

U.S. immigration regulations require all non-immigrants in the U.S. to notify USCIS of their **physical residence address (not P.O. Box, or departmental address which you may use as your mailing address)**. F-1 students may do this by using PeopleSoft (as change of address is a self service item) and you are required to do so within 10 days of your permanent move. You do not need to report a temporary change of address in PeopleSoft. The International Advisor/DSO will notify USCIS through SEVIS on the students' behalf to comply with this rule.

Failure to report your address in SEVIS will result in a violation of F-1 visa status.

Contact the International office (203)392-6821 to request an update form **or** visit our website at:

<http://www.southernct.edu/internationalstudents>

Mandatory International Students Orientation

At the beginning of each semester, International students are required to attend an orientation scheduled by the International advisor (PDSO). This orientation will serve as an informative session for the New and transfer F-1 students where they learn about important F-1 regulations in addition to other important university regulations. The primary purpose of this orientation is to clarify any questions the new student may have and to familiarize them with the international advisor and other students and faculty members.

*** Failure to attend the mandatory orientation will result in a hold placement on the student's record which will prevent class registration.**