



Maintaining Your F-1 Status

As an F-1 student, you were admitted to the U.S. for “duration of status” (D/S is found on the white I-94 card in your passport). This means you are permitted to stay in the U.S. until you complete your program or until the completion date on your I-20. You must have maintained your status by fulfilling the requirements of being an F-1 student.

Keep in mind that there are important differences between an F-1 visa and F-1 status. The **visa** is a stamp or sticker placed on your passport by a U.S. embassy or consulate and is granted for entry purposes only. **F-1 status** is granted when you enter the U.S. and is regulated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Even if your visa is valid, you can lose your legal F-1 status if you do not comply with the immigration laws regulating your stay in the U.S. If you fail to maintain your legal status, you will need to apply for reinstatement to the DHS, or in some cases, be forced to leave the country (e.g., you must leave the country and make a new entry with a valid visa if you work illegally).

Government Regulations You Must Follow to Maintain Your Legal Status

1. Maintain a valid passport at all times (current + six months).
2. Attend the college that the DHS has authorized you to attend.
3. Complete an official immigration transfer whenever you change educational institutions. An immigration transfer must be completed within **45 days** of the beginning of classes of your first semester at the new school.
 - **Please note: An immigration transfer is a separate process from transferring academic credit from another school.** An immigration transfer is not complete until a designated school official (usually called an international student advisor) signs a new I-20 showing the completed transfer.
4. Complete a full course of study during the fall and spring semesters (12 hours per semester). You are not required by DHS to enroll in classes during the summer session unless your I-20 indicates that you start in the summer. In that case, you must complete at least 9 hours in the summer session. You should check with your department to see if they have any requirements for the summer. If you believe that you need to drop a course, make an appointment to see an international student advisor **BEFORE** you drop the course. This must be completed before the drop date of the semester; it **CANNOT** be done after you drop the course.
5. You are limited to three semester credit hours of distance education (online classes) per semester.
6. Apply for an extension of your program if you cannot complete it by the ending date listed on item five of your I-20. You can apply for a program extension within the 30-day window before the expiration date. Failure to do so will result in loss of your status.

7. Obtain a new I-20 whenever you make changes in your program of study or in degree levels. This includes changing from language studies to an associate's degree, an associate's degree to a bachelor's degree, from a master's degree to a doctorate, from an optional training program to a new degree, from one level of degree to one of the same level (master's to a second master's degree), etc.

8. Work off-campus only if you have first received authorization from an international student advisor or the DHS. On-campus work also requires authorization from your DSO, and it is limited to part-time (20 hours or less per week) during the fall and spring semesters. On-campus work may be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) only during the summer and official school breaks.

- **When you work on-campus, you must maintain full-time status or your employment will be considered illegal.**

9. Request a travel endorsement on your I-20 from the international student advisor before leaving the U.S.

10. Report a change of address to your DSO within 10 days of change.

Student Acknowledgement

I have read the statement about maintaining my F-1 status and realize that I must follow these rules to remain in legal status in the U.S.

First Name, Last Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

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