

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

University of Connecticut ☎ 2011 Hillside Road, Unit 1083; Storrs, CT 06269 ☎ Phone: 860-486-3855 ☎ Fax: 860-486-5800  
☎ Web: <http://www.issu.uconn.edu>

## **A SUMMARY OF THE F-1 STUDENT REGULATIONS**

F-1 students are responsible for learning, understanding, and complying with U.S. federal laws and regulations governing the F visa. Failure to do so will violate the F-1 student's legal status in the U.S. As an F-1 student, your responsibilities include, but are not limited to knowing F-1 regulations: 8 C.F.R § 214 and 274A governed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. If you have any questions regarding F-1 student regulations, please contact an International Advisor/Designated School Official (DSO) at International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS).

### **SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) & Form I-20**

SEVIS is the government database which maintains accurate and current information related to F student and J exchange visitor visas. The Form I-20 is unique to each F-1 student and each F-1 student's SEVIS ID number appears on this form. The F-1 student is required to read page 2 and sign the bottom of page 1 of the Form I-20. By signing, the F-1 student is agreeing to abide by all the F-1 rules and regulations associated with being on an F-1 student visa.

The Form I-20 (the Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student) 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 degree/educational level, major, and expected program start date and end date as well as financial information of the student. The I-20 also certifies financial support for 9 months/12 months.

Before ANY changes occur on any items on the Form I-20 (i.e. change of funds, change of major, change of educational level, program end date/extension, etc), the F-1 student must contact an International Advisor at ISSS with the updated information and confirm if the changes are acceptable pursuant to F-1 student regulations.

### **PASSPORT VALIDITY**

All F-1 students must hold a passport while in the U.S. The passport must be valid for at least six months into the future at all times while in the U.S. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport validity and apply for a passport renewal in a timely fashion. The passport can usually be renewed at an Embassy/Consulate of your country located in the U.S.

### **I-94/ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE RECORD**

You will receive an entry stamp in your passport at the airport or sea landing upon arrival in the U.S. The entry stamp shows where and when you legally entered the U.S. as well as your visa status and the expiration date (it should read F-1, D/S). You may confirm your admission record online at <http://www.cbp.gov/i94> and retrieve your electronic Form I-94/Arrival Record. If you enter the U.S. through a land border with either Canada or Mexico, you will receive a paper Form I-94, which is a small white card annotated as F-1, D/S. If you find that your entry stamp and/or paper or electronic Form I-94 is annotated other than F-1 (F-2 for dependents) and D/S, please bring it to attention of an International Advisor at ISSS as soon as possible.

The entry stamp and I-94 (including a print-out of electronic I-94) are the only documents that can prove your legal status in the U.S. It is an important document, and therefore you are expected to keep it safe. The above mentioned admission record database will erase your admission record upon your departure; therefore it is important that you print out your admission record for your file as soon as you arrive in the U.S. If you lose or damage the paper I-94 arrival/departure card, you must apply to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for an I-94 replacement card. This carries an application fee. The application form for the I-94

replacement is **Form I-102**. See an ISSS advisor and visit [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) for more information about the I-102 application.

### **DURATION OF STATUS (D/S) & 60-DAY GRACE PERIOD**

Duration of Status (D/S) means the period during which the student is pursuing a full-time program (plus a 60-day grace period). This means that you **can stay in the U.S. until the 60<sup>th</sup> day after the program end date on your I-20 or the date that you complete/end your full-time study, whichever comes earlier**. If you complete your academic program before your I-20 end date, we will update your Form I-20, shortening your program. If you withdraw from your academic program, you must consult with an International Advisor at ISSS about your situation *BEFORE* withdrawal to determine if you are eligible for any grace period. In certain program withdrawal situations you may have a 15-day grace period to prepare for departure, starting from the program withdrawal date. Once the F-1 student leaves the U.S. during a 60-day/15-day grace period, his/her F-1 status becomes completed/terminated. You must leave the U.S. by the grace period end date unless you have applied for a change of visa status with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. F-1 students may not study or work during the grace period; this is a time to prepare for departure from the U.S.

As an F-1 student, you will not be eligible for any grace period if you violate your F-1 status and your F-1 SEVIS record is terminated.

### **VISA**

As an F-1 student, you must have a valid F-1 visa stamp in your passport at the time of entry/re-entry to the U.S. If your visa does not indicate multiple entries, you must apply for a new F-1 visa at a U.S. embassy/consulate abroad every time you travel outside the U.S. It is recommended that you apply for a new visa in your home country. The visa cannot be obtained or renewed within the U.S. The visa stamp is a travel document and has no bearing on your length of stay in the U.S. If the visa page expires while you are in the U.S., there is no problem as long as you maintain your legal F-1 status by complying with all F-1 regulations.

### **NORMAL ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND EXTENSION OF STAY**

All F-1 students are required to make normal academic progress by completing the degree program by the program end date on the Form I-20. You may not study toward your degree after the program end date has been reached. An F-1 student, who is unable to complete a full course of study by the program end date and has a legitimate academic or medical reason for not completing on time, **must** apply to the International Advisor at ISSS for a program extension at least 30 days **before** the completion date on the Form I-20. The student's academic advisor must indicate the reason for the extension on the I-20/DS-2019 Extension Request Form (ISSS 913). If you are eligible for an extension, the International Advisor must certify in SEVIS that you have continually maintained status and that the delays are caused by compelling academic reasons such as change of major or research topic, unexpected research problems or documented medical reasons. An extension may not be granted if the delay was caused by academic probation or suspension. **If a student is unable to complete the educational program within the time period listed on the Form I-20 and does not apply for a program extension in a timely manner, s/he is considered to have violated his/her status.** Under these circumstances, the student must meet with an International Advisor at ISSS to go over viable options.

### **REPORT YOUR ADDRESS CHANGE**

U.S. immigration regulations require all non-immigrants in the U.S. to notify USCIS of their **physical residence address** “Current Local Address” (not P.O. Box, or UConn department addresses) within 10 days of moving. Update your “Current Local” address in StudentAdmin (PeopleSoft) at <http://go.uconn.edu>. Please visit <http://global.uconn.edu/about/iss/forms/address-requirements-how-to-update-your-address/> for instructions on how to update your address in StudentAdmin.

### **FULL TIME STUDY REQUIREMENT**

All F-1 students must maintain a full-course of study to maintain F-1 status. An F-1 student who fails to maintain a full course of study without prior approval from ISSS is considered to have violated his/her F-1 status. Under these circumstances, the student must meet with an International Advisor at ISSS to discuss

his/her options. Students in this situation must either leave the country or apply for reinstatement of their F-1 status.

Please note that **only one on-line course may count towards full-time enrollment per semester.**

**Full-time course load**

Undergraduate	12 credits
Graduate with assistantship	6 credits
Graduate without assistantship	9 credits
LLM	9 credits
JD	12 credits

**Non-degree students:** Same credit amount as undergraduate/graduate, depending on degree level at home institution. Courses must also be appropriate for the degree level and field of study.

Under certain circumstances students may be eligible to study less than full-time and may request a **Reduced Course Load (RCL)**. F-1 students are eligible for a Reduced Course Load Authorization *only* under the following academic/medical circumstances:

1. Initial difficulty with reading requirements\*
2. Initial difficulty with the English language\*
3. Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods\*
4. Improper course level placement\*
5. Illness or medical condition
6. To complete course of study in current term

**\* Academic reasons (#1-4) may justify an RCL only once per degree level. Students are only eligible for an RCL based on reasons # 1 & 2 during the first academic year (two terms) in the U.S.**

F-1 students *must* receive permission from the International Advisor/DSO **first** before dropping below a full course of study.

**ILLNESS OR MEDICAL CONDITION**

An F-1 student who suffers illness or a medical condition which interrupts his/her full-time enrollment, will need to contact an International Advisor at ISSS 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 is given. Once the International Advisor approves the request, the student will be notified and the Form I-20 will be updated on page 3 to reflect the RCL. The RCL authorization for medical condition cannot exceed a period of 12 months per degree level and the student must get authorization from the International Advisor **before** dropping below a full course of study for medical reasons. Upon recovery, the student must also notify the International Advisor prior to resuming a full course of study. Please be advised that pregnancy/childbirth and dependents' medical conditions are NOT considered medical conditions per this rule and are not qualifying reasons to take a RCL.

**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 and in most cases you may not stay in the U.S. in F-1 status during the leave period. The timing of termination will be determined case by case. The F-1 student whose SEVIS record was terminated and is returning to the U.S. after a temporary leave of absence will need to receive a new SEVIS I-20, and may need to apply for a new visa stamp, even if the current stamp is still valid. Please contact ISSS to initiate the process for obtaining a Form I-20; you will need to submit a letter from the academic advisor which confirms you will resume your full time study in the U.S. and indicates a new expected program

completion date. In addition, you will need to submit new funding documentation to demonstrate how you will support your educational and living expenses in the U.S.

### **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.

### **TRAVEL ABROAD**

F-1 students are allowed to travel outside of the U.S. during their period of study at UConn, but they **must get a travel signature** from an International Advisor at ISSS **BEFORE** leaving. Travel signatures are issued on page 3 of the Form I-20 and they must be less than 12 months old at the time of your next entry to the U.S. while being enrolled at UConn. F-1 students must always carry their Form I-20 while traveling. For more information on travel requirements, visit <http://global.uconn.edu/about/issss/forms/travel-questions/>.

### **RECEIVE TRANSFER AUTHORIZATION PRIOR TO LEAVING UCONN**

F-1 students must receive authorization from an International Advisor at ISSS before transferring from UConn to another university/college. Please consult with an International Advisor at ISSS when you are admitted to another university/college and decide to transfer to the new school. The International Advisor is responsible for determining that the student has been maintaining F-1 status and is eligible to transfer. An F-1 student who was not pursuing a full course of study at UConn is ineligible for school transfer and must apply for a reinstatement to F-1 or depart the U.S. **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 end of the course of study at UConn (e.g. program completion date, the last day of the semester that you enrolled at UConn) or the SEVIS record release date set by the International Advisor at ISSS, whichever is earlier.**

If you are on OPT with your old school, your OPT employment authorization becomes invalid once your F-1 SEVIS record is transferred 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 an initial Form I-20 may begin on campus employment up to 30 days prior to the program start date on the Form I-20. The student may only work on the campus of the school that issued the Form I-20 and the work may not exceed 20 hours per week when school is in session and full time (more than 20 hours per week) when school is not in session (during spring break, summer session, etc.). On campus employment authorization ends as of the I-20 program end date, or the student's actual program completion date, whichever is earlier.

### **EMPLOYMENT OFF CAMPUS (ECONOMIC HARDSHIP)**

A student must have been present in the U.S. in F-1 status for one academic year before applying for work permission off campus. The student must demonstrate to both an International Advisor at ISSS and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that there are unforeseen economic circumstances that occurred after his/her arrival in the U.S. that require the student to seek employment off campus. The student must be in good academic standing and show proof of the unexpected event that caused financial hardship, and demonstrate that the financial need cannot be met through on-campus employment opportunities. The International Advisor must review all required support documents with the student and recommend the work permission before the student applies to USCIS for work permission. USCIS adjudicates the application for severe economic hardship work permission based on the hardship situation and the recommendation of an International Advisor. Please schedule an appointment with an International Advisor at ISSS if you have questions. Students who receive this type of work permit may work off campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and more than 20 hours per week during school official vacation periods.

## **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 types of Practical Training: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

***Curricular Practical Training (CPT):*** An International Advisor at ISSS may authorize Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for some F-1 students whose academic programs require participation in required training experience for the degree. CPT is defined to be alternate work/study, an internship, cooperative education, clinical rotations, or any type of required internship or practicum, which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. Graduate students who are required by their program to have immediate participation in an internship or field placement program are waived from the one academic year of full-time enrollment rule. CPT may only be authorized for positions that are "training/learning experience" in nature. CPT is required both for paid and for unpaid training experiences. Students who have received 12 months or more of full-time (more than 20 hours per week) CPT are ineligible for OPT. The academic advisor must confirm to the International Advisor how the proposed training is curricular, and verify the dates, location and name of the training site. CPT must be authorized **BEFORE** the student starts the training. To engage in training activities **without** the International Advisor's approval is a violation of status. Under these circumstances, the student is considered to be out of status. The student must meet with an International Advisor to go over options for regaining status.

***Optional Practical Training (OPT):*** OPT is granted for a total of up to 12 months per higher 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. However, sequential OPT must be against a higher degree than a previous OPT. For those students majoring in specific STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) majors that are designated by the Department of Homeland Security as having STEM-eligible CIP codes, there can be an additional 17 months of OPT beyond the initial 12 months if all eligibility qualifications for a STEM extension are met. The OPT STEM extension can only be granted once, not for each degree level like the initial 12-month OPT. For more detailed information on OPT and the OPT STEM extension, please visit <http://global.uconn.edu/opt-information-and-forms/>.

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 student will seek employment related to their field of study and appropriate to the degree level. All OPT applications must be filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS' processing time averages from 2 - 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/>). 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 university/college 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 90 days prior to the requested OPT start date and within 30 days from the date that a DSO issues the Form I-20 for OPT application.

### **Post-completion OPT:**

Post-completion OPT must be full-time (over 20 hours per week). If you use any part of your 12 month OPT period for pre-completion OPT, this time will be subtracted from the amount of time eligible 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 up 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 issues the

Form I-20 for OPT application. STEM extension applications must be filed with USCIS before the initial 12 month post-completion OPT end date on the EAD (no earlier than 120 days before the 12 month OPT will end).

**F-2 DEPENDENTS**

F-2 spouses are not permitted to study in the U.S. F-2 children are permitted to study in elementary and secondary education only. F-2 visa holders are not allowed to be engaged in employment in the U.S. Because the F-2 visa holder’s status is dependent on the legal status of the F-1 visa holder, should the F-1 status end early the F-2 status will no longer be valid. Please make an appointment with an international adviser to find out more information.

*Should any questions arise during your stay at UConn, please consult with an ISSS International Advisor. Please plan ahead when submitting your requests to ISSS. ISSS request processing time is approximately two weeks after receiving a complete request.*

**International Student & Scholar Services**

Failure to return your signature results in a “hold” that prevents you from future/current class registration.

I certify that I have thoroughly read “**Summary of the F-1 Student Regulations (IS 303A)**” and understand its content.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(print your name)

UConn ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_