

## MAINTAINING F-1 (STUDENT) VISA STATUS

1. It is vital that you understand and abide by the following summary of F-1 visa laws since *any violation of visa status makes you subject to arrest, detention, and deportation*. If you are ever in doubt as to how a planned action may impact your visa status, please contact your DSO.
2. Enter the U.S. with an **I-20 issued by the school you will attend!** When the I-20 is for “initial attendance”, you can enter the U.S. no more than 30 days before the reporting date shown in item #5 of your I-20.
3. Take a **full course load** every fall and spring semester.
  - 12 credit hours are considered a full course load. (no more than 3 hours distance learning or online courses can be applied toward full-time requirements).
  - If you think there is a legitimate reason for you to take less than a full course load, talk with a DSO ***in advance***.
  - You are permitted to drop and add courses during the official schedule adjustment (drop/add) period. At the end of schedule adjustment, you must be registered for a full course load, and you may drop below a full course load at any point in the semester.
  - You may remain in the U.S. in legal F-1 status during summers without taking classes as long as you are returning to school fall semester. You may take classes part-time during the summer as long as it is not your first term.
4. Report the following to a DSO **within 10 days**:
  - Your new address
  - Your new name
5. Your **passport must not expire**. You should apply for a new passport at least six months before the expiration date.
6. Your I-20 must state your current program of study and must not expire:
  - Current Program of study
    1. Names the school you are currently attending
    2. Indicates the correct program level (Associates, Bachelors, etc.)
    3. Indicates your current major
  - The expiration date is listed in item #5
    1. If you will not graduate before your I-20 expires, you must talk with a DSO to get information for a program extension before the expiration date.
    2. Program extensions cannot be granted for academic difficulties, so work hard not to be put on exclusion (expelled)!
  - Change of Program level or transfer
    1. If you will change program levels (i.e., undergraduate to graduate), you must submit a SEVIS Data Form and Current financial documentation.
    2. Talk with a DSO if you plan to transfer to a different U.S. school.
    3. Submit application materials well in advance of application deadlines to ensure continuity of your F-1 visa status.
7. Concerns **upon completing your program** of study:
  - Within 60 days of completing your program of study you must:
    1. Leave the country,
    2. Continue in F-1 status documented with a new I-20, or
    3. Apply for a change of status.
  - If you did not complete your program and are not studying the next semester, you must:
    1. Immediately leave the U.S., or
    2. Apply for a change of status