



POLICY
on FOLLOWING
SEVIS PROCEDURE
for F-1 STUDENT

2024

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Visa and Document Overview for Students in F-1 Status

Your Legal Obligations

It is essential to remember that you must take full responsibility for maintaining your status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). ***That is, you are responsible for finding out, knowing, and following pertinent regulations.***

If you take time early on to familiarize yourself with your obligations to the Department of Homeland Security, you should find it easy to maintain your legal status. If, however, you allow yourself to fall "out of status," it may be extraordinarily difficult to be reinstated to legal F-1 status.

The best resources to assist you in maintaining your status are:

this Website, <http://www.nycglobalcenter.com/>, and the staff of the NYC at 252 W 29th St #2FL, New York, New York 10001. Every effort has been made to provide reliable and accurate information on rules that govern student immigration classifications. When regulations change - as is frequently the case - the DSO and the staff will have current information. Feel free to come in and ask questions anytime.

As your visa sponsor, NYC Global Center has legal obligations which are met by the International Students Office (ISO). International students in F-1 status are in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), a national database through which student immigration documents are created and student records maintained. Among other things, these offices are required to make regular reports on students' enrollment status, completion of programs, and failure to maintain status.

A Few Words of Advice for Students

- Familiarize yourself with "Students Immigration Definitions" before reading anything else.
- Although most requests for documentation submitted to the ISO usually are done on the spot while you wait, it is prudent to allow at least five business days for processing.
- Bring with you your passport and all relevant immigration documents - including your I-20 and any previous I-20's - when you come to the ISO for immigration information or document processing.
- Carry financial documentation when you travel.
- If you are the least bit uncertain about your status - for example, whether your program will be full-time, whether your permission to stay is valid, or whether you can be paid for an assistantship - check with the ISO immediately. Students who do not meet the full-time or normal progress requirements may have problems restoring their status. Therefore, if you believe your circumstances warrant extraordinary consideration, it is extremely important that you consult with the ISO before registering for your program. We are here to help you and advise you.

Immigration Definitions for Students in F-1 and J-1 Status

It is very important that you become familiar with the following terms, as they are used repeatedly in information you will receive from the International Students Office, not just as you prepare to come, but throughout your stay in the United States.

Certificate of Visa Eligibility - Students who (1) have been admitted to the Institute, (2) need a student visa to enter the United States to study at NYC (except Canadian citizens who do not require a visa), and (3) have documented their ability to finance their education, will receive a Certificate of Visa Eligibility, either a Form I-20 for F-1 Student status or a Form DS-2019 for J-1 Exchange Visitor Student Category status. The document certifies eligibility for an entry visa, obtained at a U.S. consulate abroad, and must be shown to a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official at the time of entry into the U.S. in order to enter in student status. Also known as a Visa Certificate, the I-20 or DS-2019 is processed and issued through SEVIS.

SEVIS - SEVIS is an acronym for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. It is a data collection and monitoring system that creates an interface between institutions of higher education, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), consulates and embassies abroad, and ports of entry. Schools are required to make regular electronic updates in SEVIS throughout each semester on the records of their enrolled students in F-1 and J-1 status-and their dependents-and their researchers and faculty in J-1 status. This includes, but is not limited to enrollment status, changes of address, changes in level of study, employment recommendations, and school transfers.

Form I-94 - This small white card is a record of your legal entry into the U.S. and immigration status. You complete it on a flight to the U.S. or at a border crossing, and it is then processed at a port of entry. An immigration inspector usually staples it into your passport. Form I-94 notes name, date of birth, country of citizenship, and the date and port of your arrival in the U.S. It also indicates how long you can stay in the United States. The notation D/S signifies "duration of status" and refers to the completion date on the I-20. The Form I-94 is also a record of your arrivals and departures. Each time you leave the country you surrender your I-94. Only in the case of short trips to Canada, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean do you keep this form. The I-94 is an important form; we recommend that you make a photocopy of both sides of the form to keep separately in case you need to replace it.

Form I-20 - The Certificate of Visa Eligibility for Nonimmigrant F-1 Student Status is the I-20. This is the document issued by a school through SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) for presentation at a [U.S. consulate](#) abroad to apply for an F-1 Student visa. It must also be presented to an immigration official upon entry into the U.S. When traveling outside the U.S., those in F-1 status must carry a recertified I-20 and financial documentation if they intend to return to the U.S. in F-1 status to continue their studies or practical training. The I-20 and its corresponding electronic updates in SEVIS are a permanent record of one's activities as a student in the U.S.

It is your responsibility to keep all I-20s issued to you throughout your student status, no matter how long you stay in the U.S. or how many times you travel abroad. The initial I-20 used when you enter the country and stamped by the DHS is a very important immigration document. Make a copy of both sides to keep with your records. If you were not issued an I-20, or if you lose it, please come to the ISO. Under most circumstances, we can provide you with a replacement form within five working days.

Form DS-2019 - The Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant J-1 Exchange Visitor Status is the Form DS-2019. This is the document issued by the program sponsor - the institute, government agency or other

organization sponsoring the visit - through SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) for presentation at a U.S. consulate abroad to apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. It must also be presented to an immigration official upon entry into the U.S. When traveling outside the U.S., those in J-1 status must carry a recertified DS-2019 and financial documentation if they intend to return to the U.S. in J-1 status to continue their studies or academic training. The DS-2019 and its corresponding electronic updates in SEVIS are a permanent record of one's activities as a student in the U.S.

It is your responsibility to keep all DS-2019's issued to you throughout your student status, no matter how long you stay in the U.S. or how many times you travel abroad. The initial DS-2019 used when you enter the country and stamped by the DHS is a very important immigration document. Make a copy of both sides to keep with your records. If you were not issued a DS-2019, or if you lose it, please come to the ISO. Under most circumstances, we can provide you with a replacement form within five working days.

Immigration Status - This is often confused with "visa" but your immigration status, e.g., F-1, B-2, J-1, etc., is determined at the time of your entry into the U.S. by an immigration official and is noted on the Form I-94. You may have many visa stamps in your passport but, upon entry into the U.S., an immigration inspector will admit you in only one immigration status which is noted on the I-94 card (see above). Be sure the correct status is written on your I-94 card. Unlike your entry visa, your immigration status may be changed in the U.S. The [U.S. Department of State](#) web site provides further clarification on visa and status differences. Several important differences between the F-1 and J-1 immigration status are described at the end of this section.

Passport - Students in F-1 or J-1 immigration status must keep their passports valid at least six months into the future at all times. You may obtain extensions of your passport through the nearest consulate or embassy of your country. The ISO will provide you with any appropriate documents your government may require.

Entry Visa - Your entry visa is issued by a [United States Consulate](#) abroad and affixed into your passport. The only purpose of an entry visa is to apply for admission to the United States at the port of entry. The entry visa itself may expire while you are in the U.S., but your permission to stay in the U.S. remains valid. All international students - with the exception of Canadian nationals - requesting F or J immigration status are required to have a valid F-1 or J-1 entry visa in their passport at the time of entry into the U.S. Your visa specifies the type of immigration status you will hold (F-1, J-1, etc.), the date until which you may enter the U.S., and the number of entries you may make before you must apply for a new entry visa stamp. The length of validity of each visa type is determined by an agreement between your home country and the U.S. government and is not necessarily tied to the length of your program of study. Please refer to the State Department's [Visa Reciprocity](#) information on their website for more details.

NOTE: Although F-1 and J-1 entry visas may be issued up to 120 days in advance of the start date on the I-20 or the DS-2019, you are not permitted to enter the U.S. more than 30 days in advance of that date.

If you have been out of the U.S. for more than 5 months and not registered in your current degree program, any valid student visa you may have is subject to cancellation and you are required to obtain a new visa to return to the U.S.

F-1 or J-1 entry visas cannot be obtained within the U.S. Application for a new visa must be made in person at a U.S. consulate or embassy outside the U.S. The validity period of your visa does not determine the length of time you may remain in the U.S. after you enter. Your length of stay is determined by the expected completion date of your program as indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019. You are admitted to the U.S. for "duration of status" in F and J. This is notated as "D/S" on your I-94 card. The [U.S. Department of State](#) web site provides further clarification between the expiration date of an entry visa and the duration of time you are permitted to stay in the U.S. in your status.

How to Obtain F-1 Student Status

The information to follow is provided to help you get to NYC Global Center in appropriate immigration status in compliance with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations.

U.S. government regulations require you to attend the school that issues the visa certificate you use to make an initial entrance to the United States in F-1 status. Since you plan to enroll at NYC, please use our Form I-20. It may be very difficult to transfer to NYC if you enter the country using documents issued by another school unless you have attended the other school full time for at least one academic session.

How to Apply for an Initial F-1 Entry Visa if You are Outside the U.S.

Canadian Citizens - Canadian citizens do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S. from Canada, but do require an I-20, passport, financial documentation and proof of SEVIS fee payment and must follow certain procedures. See [Important Information for Canadian Student](#) on how to enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

Step 1: Make an appointment at a U.S. Consulate to apply for an F-1 Student entry visa. You will require the I-20 form from NYC at the time of your appointment. DO NOT MAKE AN APPOINTMENT UNTIL you have received the I-20 or are sure that you will have the I-20 in time for the appointment. While the U.S. Consulate will not *issue* the student entry visa until 120 days before the reporting date on the I-20 or the start date of your DS-2019 program period, you should apply for your visa as soon as possible. Check the following websites for more information on visa appointments.

[For information about current wait times for the appointment and for visa issuance.](#) Note that the processing wait times DO NOT include any extra time that may be required for security clearances.

[Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports](#) of Entry for more information regarding security clearances.

Find the U.S. Consulate at which you will apply at usembassy.state.gov and carefully read its instructions for applying for a visa (including links to required forms). Application procedures and requirements vary so be sure to pay attention to the specifics for the Consulate at which you apply. Make a list of documentation required for the interview and make all fee payments as instructed on the Consulate's website.

Step 2: Check your form I-20 for completeness and correctness! Your I-20 indicates that we have created a record for you in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), a national database for international students and scholars. Your unique assigned SEVIS ID number is in the upper right corner of page 1. Check to see that all information is correct and that your expected completion date is in the future.

If you have informed us that your dependents (husband, wife, or children under the age of 21) will come with you to the U.S., each of them will receive their own "dependent" I-20 needed for applying for their F-2

visas and entering the U.S. in F-2 status. If your family name is different from your dependents, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship.

Step 3: Make sure your passport is valid. When you apply for a visa or enter the U.S., your passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future. Some countries are exempt from this requirement and have their passports automatically extended for 6 months which means that you can use your passport until the written expiration date. This rule applies to subsequent entries to the U.S. while traveling as a student.

Step 4: Pay the SEVIS fee and print the receipt. Go to the [web site](#) and follow the instructions. You will need the I-20 available because the SEVIS number is required. Print copies of the receipt -you will need one with you for the visa interview and you should keep one for your own records. You can only access the receipt at the time of payment so be sure your printer is working before paying the fee.

If you have been a student in the U.S. and are transferring schools or beginning a program at a new level of study, it is possible you may not have to pay the SEVIS fee. Refer to information posted at [SEVIS](#) website.

Step 5: Complete the required Department of State application form DS-160. Everyone applying for a non-immigrant visa must complete this form. ***Be sure to print and keep the DS-160 barcode page.***

Step 6: Refer to step one and follow instructions for paying any visa fees required in advance of your appointment. Procedures may vary from country to country, and even post to post within the same country. Note that application and issuance fees are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students.

Step 7: Bring a passport-size photo less than six months old. Check [Nonimmigrant Visa Photograph Requirements](#) for details.

Step 8: READ! Prepare for your interview appointment by learning what to expect. You will be applying for an F-1 student visa, a non-immigrant classification. According to U.S. immigration law, "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a non-immigrant status." This means you need to establish that you have no intention of staying in the U.S. permanently, but are coming here for a temporary purpose, i.e. to pursue your educational objective. While the consular officers are aware that it may be difficult for students to demonstrate strong professional and economic ties to their home countries, you should still bear this in mind as you prepare for your interview.

In advance of your interview, please read the following:

[Applying for a Student or Exchange Visitor Visa](#) Published by Education USA, a division of the U.S. Department of State

[See You in the USA:](#) An eJournal published by DOS. Note article "On the Other Side of the Visa Window", by U.S. visa officer in Cairo

[Ten Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa](#) published by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, in consultation with the U.S. State Department. Although published in 1997, these general points provide good guidance and still are relevant today.

Step 9: Checklist of what to take with you to your visa interview:

_____ A passport valid for at least six months

____ Form I-20 (sign the form under Item 11)

____ School admission letter

____ Completed DS-160 visa application bar code page.

____ A photograph in the prescribed format (see Step 7)

____ A receipt for the visa application fee

____ A receipt for the SEVIS fee. If you have not received an official receipt in the mail showing payment and you paid the fee electronically, the consulate will accept the temporary receipt you printed from your computer. If you do not have a receipt, the consulate may be able to see your payment electronically if your fee payment was processed at least 3 business days before your interview.

____ Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study.

____ Any information that demonstrates your intention to return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.

Step 10: After the visa is processed, make sure you got what you requested! Check your passport to be sure you obtained an F-1 visa, and that any dependents obtained an F-2 visa. Also, be certain that the I-20 was returned to you, as you must have the original with you when you arrive in the United States. Sometimes, the document is returned to you in a sealed envelope, which must be presented to the immigration inspector when you arrive.

If You Are Already in the U.S.

Currently in a status other than F-1 - Students who do not plan to leave the U.S. before beginning studies at NYC, and are currently in an immigration status other than F-1 are required to change status by application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In general, non-immigrants who are maintaining lawful status may apply for a change of status to F-1. You should review the detailed information in [Application for Change to F-1 Student Status](#) and consult an ISO adviser for more information or if you have questions or concerns or to review your application before submitting it to USCIS.

Note that because your intention at the time of admission to the U.S. is an issue with a change of status application, a change of status from B-1 or B-2 visitor status may be very difficult unless the B-1/B-2 entry visa was issued with the notation "prospective student" on it. Most problematic is that an individual in B-1 or B-2 status is prohibited from enrolling in classes until the change of status to F-1 has been approved, and there is no way of knowing how long this will take. The same prohibition against beginning a course of study until the change of status has been approved by the immigration applies to individuals in F-2 status.

Currently in F-1 Status at Another Institution and transferring to NYC Global Center - Students enrolled in another U.S. school under F-1 immigration status who are planning to enroll at NYC Global Center must complete a process in which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is notified of this change. The transfer procedure begins with your current school "releasing" your SEVIS record to NYC and qualifying for a NYC I-20 and is NOT complete until you report to the ISO within 15 days of the

program start date on your I-20. The first step is to get NYC's I-20 in a timely manner. Please refer to our F-1 transfer procedures for exact details.

Continuing Students in F-1 Status at NYC Global Center - If you are completing one program at NYC and are planning to pursue another program at the Institute, DHS must be notified. The ISO needs to issue you a new I-20 for the new program within 60 days of your completion date on your current I-20 or within 60 days of completion of your program, whichever is earlier. Contact the ISO about qualifying for and obtaining a new I-20.

If You Will Be Accompanied By Dependents

If your dependents - spouse or unmarried children under 21 years of age - will accompany you to the U.S. or join you shortly after your arrival, you will need to provide the ISO with additional documentation showing your sufficient funding to meet your dependents' expenses and copies of their passport ID pages. An I-20 will then be issued for each of your dependents which they will use to apply for the F-2 visa. You may request an I-20 for your dependents at any time during your stay at NYC Global Center.

Exchange Visitor (J-1) Visa Alternative

Another visa classification for full-time study is the J-1 Exchange Visitor status. J-1 students come to the U.S. under a contract agreement that is formally known as the Exchange Visitor Program. Students who are personally financing their studies are not eligible for J-1 status. Funding for J-1 students usually is from a government or international organization. Institute funding may also qualify. Please refer to and read carefully the section on Immigration Status under student immigration definitions for a summary of some of the differences between F-1 and J-1 immigration status so that you can make an informed choice.

Transfer by F-1 Students to NYC Global Center

If you are currently in F-1 status from another U.S. institution and intend to begin your studies at NYC Global Center, you are considered a "Transfer Student" by the ISO for the purposes of issuing an I-20. A transfer of the supervision of your F-1 status from your old or current school to NYC is required by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). You will be considered a transfer student if one of the following applies to you:

- You are in the middle of a program and are leaving that program to begin at NYC.
- You will have completed a program at your current institution and will begin a new program at NYC.
- You are currently authorized for OPT from another school and will begin a new program at NYC.

There are three steps required to complete the transfer process.

Step 1. Request Transfer and Submit Documents to ISO

Once you have learned of your admission to NYC and have accepted the offer, you will need to submit the online [Application for Visa Certificate](#) and submit the required documentation as explained in the instructions. You will also need to notify your current international student advisor of your intention to transfer to NYC.

Download the [Transfer-in Form](#) and complete Section 1. You should bring this with you when you meet with your international student advisor. When you meet with the advisor, you will determine the release date of your SEVIS record so they can do the transfer-out procedure. The release date is the date that your SEVIS record will become available to the ISO. The ISO is not able to issue your I-20 before the release date. The transfer-out procedure must be requested within 60 days of completing your program at your current school though the actual release date may be later. F-1 regulations allow a student to work in the summer between schools on the campus that maintains supervision of the SEVIS record so you may want to take this into consideration when choosing your release date. You should also consider any plans to travel outside the U.S. (i.e. if you have a release date of August 15 and are planning to re-enter the U.S. on August 20, this will not be enough time to get your I-20 to you before you return).

Your international student advisor will complete Section 2 of the transfer-in form and return it to NYC.

Step 2. Wait for your I-20 and prepare for arrival

The ISO will create your I-20 and send it to you. If you are traveling or moving during the break before coming to NYC, remember to update the ISO with your current address so the I-20 is sent to the correct location.

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. after completing your studies at your previous institution but before starting your program at NYC, you must use NYC's I-20 to re-enter the U.S. If you have a valid, unexpired F-1 visa in your passport, you do not need to apply for a new visa. You may use the visa you have, even though the previous school's name is on it. If your visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa but you are not required to pay the SEVIS fee again. Go to the SEVIS [SEVIS fee website](#) for confirmation that you do not need to pay the SEVIS fee.

If you are not planning to leave the U.S. before arriving at NYC, you will simply receive the I-20 and report to the ISO upon arrival.

Step 3. Complete the Transfer Process

Upon arriving at NYC, you must report to the ISO to complete the transfer process. You are required to report in person to the ISO no later than 15 days after the start date on your I-20; we recommend that you come to complete the transfer as soon as you arrive at NYC Global Center. If you fail to report within this time frame, you will be in violation of your F-1 status. When you come to report to the ISO, you must bring your passport, I-94 card, and I-20 from NYC.

You are required to register for full-time studies at NYC in the first available term after leaving your previous school or the first term after vacation period.

Procedure to Change to F-1 Student Status

Overview - F-1 student status is appropriate if you intend to pursue full-time studies in the United States. If you are currently in the United States as a temporary worker, diplomat, exchange visitor or any other non-immigrant classification EXCEPT Visitor in WT or WB status and need to change to F-1 student status, follow the procedures indicated below.

Eligibility - In general, non-immigrants who are maintaining lawful status may apply for change of status to F-1.

Exceptions - Non-immigrants subject to the Section 212 (e) two-year home residency requirement are ineligible to apply. Those in WT or WB are also ineligible. Those in F-2, B-1 or B-2 status are eligible to apply for a change of status but cannot enroll in classes until the change of status has been approved by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Procedure

1. Qualify for a Certificate of Visa Eligibility (Form I-20) from NYC Global Center

In order to qualify for F-1 student status, you must be admitted to a full-time program of study at NYC and obtain a Form I-20 from the International Students Office (ISO). To obtain an I-20, submit the following:

1. Application for Visa Certificate of Eligibility (AVC), available online.
2. Financial documentation showing funds for you and any accompanying dependents who will be in F-2 status. The documents should show that you have sufficient funds to cover the tuition, living expenses, and fee for at least one year and show a plan for funding subsequent years.
3. A copy of your admission letter.

Once the above materials have been submitted, the ISO will prepare a Form I-20 for you within 2 weeks.

2. Take one of the following steps to change your status

Once you obtain an I-20 from NYC, you must change to F-1 student status either by **travel** or by **application** to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The ISO strongly recommends changing your status by travel if it is at all possible for you to depart the U.S. before your studies begin. A COS application to USCIS can take many months to be approved; a full term is typical and you will still need to apply for an F-1 entry visa the first time you travel outside the U.S. so that you can return in F-1 status to resume your studies.

A. Change by travel

You may change your status by departing the United States and re-entering in F-1 status. In order to re-enter the United States in F-1 status, you must have a valid, unexpired F-1 entry visa.

- If you do not have an F-1 entry visa or need a new one, you must apply for one at a U.S. consulate. Once you have obtained an F-1 entry visa, you would then enter the United States with your visa and the following:
 - Your Form I-20 from NYC Global Center
 - Supporting documents such as copies of your admission letter and your financial documentation
- If you were previously in lawful F-1 status at another school in the United States, have an unexpired F-1 entry visa, and have not been out of the U.S. for more than 5 months, you may continue to use that visa, even if it was issued for your previous school.
- If you have been out of the U.S. for more than 5 months, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa even if the one in your passport has not expired.

- If you have an F-1 entry visa that was **canceled** by a consular officer, you must apply for a new F-1 entry visa as described above.

When you are at a port of entry, you will request F-1 status by presenting your passport open to the F-1 visa page and the I-20. If all is in order, the immigration inspector will admit you to F-1 status by issuing you an I-94 card marked "F-1 D/S".

B. Change by application to the USCIS

You may also attempt to change your status by submitting a change of status application to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services. This requires that you assemble the items listed below. Be sure to include ALL documents that establish your lawful status in the U.S. If you are in a dependent status (such as but not limited to F-2, H-4, L-2), you must establish that the principal (F-1, H-1B, L-1, etc.) is in lawful status. USCIS will send you a Request for Evidence (RFE) if you omit any of the documentary requirements. An RFE stops the processing clock, and no further action will be taken on your application until the evidence has been received.

1. **Form G-1145** - This form should be on the top of your application for USCIS to notify you by email and/or text message that they have accepted your application.
2. A completed **Form I-539** (also available from the ISO).
3. Photocopies of both sides of your current **I-94 card** and photocopies of the I-94 cards of any dependents who are changing with you.
4. Photocopies of all three pages of your new Form I-20 from NYC, **signed on the bottom of page 1**. Your application will be delayed if you forget to sign the I-20. **DO NOT** send the original I-20; it will not be returned to you.
5. Copies of **financial documents**.
6. Photocopy of your valid **passport identification page - do not send your passport to the USCIS**.
7. **A bank check, money order, or personal check payable to the Department of Homeland Security with "USCIS I-539" noted in the memo line for the required \$290 fee**. The USCIS does not accept cash. This fee includes any dependents who are changing status with you. Those in A-1, A-2 or G-1 through G-4 nonimmigrant status are not required to pay the fee.
8. **Proof of SEVIS fee payment**. This fee can be paid **online** by completing Form I-901.
9. **A letter explaining why you are requesting the change of status**. This is extremely important: your letter should clearly explain your current status, your plans for study at NYC, and your longer-term plans as well. Keep in mind that F-1 status is a NON-IMMIGRANT classification. This means that you must indicate, and in certain cases may be required to document, that you continue to maintain ties to your home country--whether in the form of a residence, an expected job offer, or continuing family ties. It is not unusual for the USCIS to request documentation regarding your ties to your home country, and you should be prepared to provide such documentation.

Your letter must include the following information if you are requesting a change of status from:

H-1 or L-1 - You should give your dates of employment under H-1 or L-1 and request the date on which you want the F-1 status to be effective. For example, if your last day of employment is August 25, you should request your F-1 status be effective on August 26. Be aware that the F-1 effective date **MUST** be within 30 days of the program start date in item 5 on your I-20. If you plan to leave your employment more than 30 days before the program start date, you must depart the U.S. and apply for an F-1 entry visa at a U.S. Consulate.

Any request for an effective date for F-1 status must be prominently stated in your letter of explanation for the change of status. You may also annotate the I-539 with your effective date request by clearly printing "Effective [date]" in Part 2. Application Type 1.b. under "The new status I am requesting is: _____"

Also include a copy of the I-797 approval notice, your 3 most recent pay stubs, and other documentation establishing that you were in and maintained valid H-1 or L-1 status. The USCIS must receive your change of status application no later than the day you terminate your H-1 or L-1 employment, as there is no "grace period" for those in H-1 or L-1 status: your status as an H-1 or L-1 terminates the day you leave your H-1 or L-1 employer.

H-4 or L-2 dependents - need to submit the evidence listed above of the H-1's or L-1's status at the time the H-4 or L-2 files the application with USCIS along with evidence of the relationship such as a birth or marriage certificate.

Do not forget to include the H-1B or L-1 principal's 3 most recent pay stubs. If they are not included with your other application materials, USCIS will send you a "Request for Evidence" (RFE) and review of your application will be delayed until USCIS receives the missing evidence.

A or G - Before filing for a change of status, you must first file [Form I-566](#) with either the Department of State or the Office of Host Country Affairs at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations within 10 days of the completion of your A or G employment. The I-566 approval can take many weeks and only after the I-566 has been approved and returned to you are you eligible to file a change of status application with the USCIS. However, you **do not need** the signed I-566 form if you change your status by travel.

J-1 or J-2 - You cannot change to F-1 in the U.S. if you are subject to Section 212(e), also known as the "two-year home residency requirement", unless you have received a recommendation for a waiver of the requirement from the Department of State.

You must also include your DS-2019 form and the DS-2019 forms for any dependents also changing status from J-2 to F-2.

10. **Once completed, mail your application to the USCIS.** You may ask an ISO staff member to review your application and make suggestions. Photocopy your application and send it by certified mail with a return receipt requested or by courier service to the USCIS Vermont facility.

Courier service (FedEx or UPS)

USCIS
Attn: I-539
Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Weldon
St. Albans, VT 05479-0001

11. When the USCIS receives your application, it will deposit your payment of the fee and mail you a Form I-797 Notice of Receipt with your assigned case number. You can check the status of your application by calling the phone number on the bottom of the I-797 or [online](#) and entering your case number.
12. **After you submit your change of status application to the USCIS, please inform the ISO immediately** in order for us to update your record in SEVIS.

Your obligations while a change of status is being adjudicated are as follows:

1. Report to the ISO when you arrive at NYC
 2. Provide the ISO with any documents you receive from USCIS, including the notice of receipt of your application and notice of approval of your change of status when it has been adjudicated
 3. Maintain full time enrollment
 4. Report any change of address within 10 days using this [form](#).
13. **If you leave the U.S. after you have obtained the change of status, you must obtain an F-1 visa before your return to the U.S.** See the ISO website [How to obtain F-1 status](#) for information on applying for an F-1 visa.

Special Considerations:

If you are in lawful status and decide to change to F-1 status by applying to the USCIS, you remain in lawful status until you receive your reply from the USCIS. However, you **do not** have the privileges of student status (working on campus, applying for practical training, etc.) until the change is approved. When USCIS has made a decision, they will send you a Form I-797 Notice of Action. If your application is approved, the I-797 will include a new I-94 card(s).

Note that the USCIS can take up to 6 months to process a change of status application. If you do not receive a reply within 6 months, contact the ISO for assistance.

If you attempt to change your status by travel, but overstayed your previous visa, you must apply for a new F-1 visa in your home country; you cannot apply for an F-1 visa in a third country (such as Canada). If you overstayed your visa for more than 180 days, you may be prevented from returning to the United States for 3 years or more. Contact the ISO for further assistance.

If you have applied for permanent residency or are included in someone else's application for permanent residence, you may be considered ineligible for F-1 status. You should contact an immigration lawyer to discuss this situation.

Important Information for Canadian Students

Obligation to Comply with Immigration Regulations

In terms of immigration regulations, the only difference between Canadians and other international students coming to the United States is that Canadian citizens are not required to apply for an entry visa at a U.S. consulate.

Some Canadians have mistakenly assumed that other regulations that apply to international students do not apply to them. Canadians are subject to the same regulations regarding employment in the United States, requirement for full-time study and all other provisions for maintaining status. Other than applying for a visa, it is important that you read about and abide by all other provisions relating to F-1 status. It is **especially** important for Canadian students to be vigilant about entering the United States in proper student status, as immigration inspectors are accustomed to admitting Canadian citizens as visitors.

Obtaining F-1 Student Status

To enter the U.S. in F-1 student status, Canadians must present the items listed below to the immigration inspector:

- Form I-20 from NYC Global Center
- Valid passport
- Supporting financial documents submitted to obtain the Form I-20
- Proof of SEVIS Fee payment
To pay the SEVIS fee, click [here](#) and follow the instructions. Be sure to make a copy of the receipt for your own records.

After the immigration inspector reviews your documents, you will be given an I-94 Admission/Departure card to complete. Be sure to look at your I-94 card before you leave the inspection area to ensure that it has the notations "F-1 D/S" written on it. ALL international students, including Canadian students, must have a correctly annotated I-94 card to confirm current F-1 status. If your I-94 card does not have "F-1" "D/S", you are considered to be in Visitor (B-2) status, a status which does not permit study in the U.S.

If You Are Already in the U.S.

Currently in a status other than F-1 - Students who do not plan to leave the U.S. before beginning studies at NYC and are currently in an immigration status other than F-1 are required to change status by application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In general, non-immigrants who are maintaining lawful status may apply for a change of status to F-1. You should review the detailed information in [Application for Change to F-1 Student Status](#) and consult an ISO adviser for more information or if you have questions or concerns or to review your application before submitting it to USCIS.

Currently in F-1 Status at Another Institution and transferring to NYC - Students enrolled in another U.S. school under F-1 immigration status who are planning to enroll at NYC Global Center must complete a process in which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is notified of this change. The transfer procedure begins with your current school "releasing" your SEVIS record to NYC and qualifying for a NYC I-20 and is NOT complete until you report to the ISO within 15 days of the program start date on your I-20.

The first step is to get NYC's I-20 in a timely manner. Please refer to our F-1 transfer procedures for exact details.

Continuing Students in F-1 Status at NYC - If you are completing one program at NYC and are planning to pursue another program at the Institute, DHS must be notified. The ISO needs to issue you a new I-20 for the new program within 60 days of your completion date on your current I-20 or within 60 days of completion of your program, whichever is earlier. Contact the ISO about qualifying for and obtaining a new I-20.

If You Will Be Accompanied By Dependents - If your dependents - spouse or unmarried children under 21 years of age - will accompany you to the U.S. or join you shortly after your arrival, you will need to provide the ISO with additional documentation showing your sufficient funding to meet your dependents' expenses and copies of their passport ID pages. An I-20 will then be issued for each of your dependents which they will use to enter the U.S. in F-2 status. You may request an I-20 for your dependents at any time during your stay at NYC. Note that dependents are not required to pay the SEVIS fee.

Exchange Visitor (J-1) Visa Alternative

Another visa classification for full-time study is the J-1 Exchange Visitor status. J-1 students come to the U.S. under a contract agreement that is formally known as the Exchange Visitor Program. Students who are personally financing their studies are not eligible for J-1 status. Funding for J-1 students usually is from a government or international organization. Please refer to and read carefully the section on Immigration Status under student immigration definitions for a summary of some of the differences between F-1 and J-1 immigration status so that you can make an informed choice.

Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry

There are a number of factors that may contribute to delays in having a visa issued to study or work in the United States, regardless of whether you are applying for first or subsequent visa in any visa classification. This is a result of heightened security measures instituted since September 11, 2001.

Security checks and the requirement to have an appointment for an interview are the primary causes for delays. The Department of State's (DOS) web information on non-immigrant visas is a good source of current information:

- [Visa Information for Temporary Visitors](#) provides general information for temporary visitors to the U.S., including students.
- [Visa Wait Times](#) provides approximate wait times for visa appointments and visa processing at each U.S. consulate. Note that appointments for "F" students and "J" Exchange Visitors have priority over other classifications.
- [United States Embassies and Consulates Worldwide](#) provides information on procedures, fees, and online application forms.

Another useful source is the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Although directed to those arriving in J-1 Exchange Visitor status, their fact sheet [Arriving at a U.S. Port Of Entry...What an Exchange Visitor Can Expect](#) highlights the necessary steps and procedures you will encounter when passing through immigration inspection upon arrival at the U.S. port of entry.

Visa Interview Requirement:

All nonimmigrants require a visa appointment. Note that appointments for "F" students and "J" Exchange Visitors have priority over other classifications.

Name Check by DOS and DHS

The "name check lookup" is conducted by the State Department at the time of visa application and by the Department of Homeland Security at the port of entry—irrespective of whether the visitor holds a valid visa. This name check has recently resulted in unexpected and severe problems for non-immigrants—some arising from previous overstay(s), others from discovery of a record of illegal activity in the United States, and others because of mistaken name matches with listings in the database.

Dependents of F-1 students

In the language of immigration regulations, the individual in F-1 status is the "principal alien". Your dependents—spouse and/or unmarried, minor (under age 21) children—come to the United States in a derivative status, F-2. That means their primary purpose for being in the United States is to accompany you. Their F-2 status is completely dependent on your valid F-1 status.

Each F-2 dependent will receive his or her own SEVIS-generated I-20 form, with a unique SEVIS ID number. However, it is the [F-1 principal who signs the I-20](#). The F-1 student must provide documentation showing the availability of funds in excess of their own cost of living expenses in order to obtain a dependent I-20. Currently, it is \$800 per month for a spouse, and \$400/month per child. In addition, each dependent must provide a copy of his or her passport.

Federal regulations do not allow individuals in F-2 status to be employed in the United States, or to enroll in courses of study at the post-secondary level. An F-2 who wants to work needs to find an employer to sponsor him or her in an employment-based status, such as H-1B. An F-2 who wants to enroll in a course of study would need to be admitted to a full-time course of study and change to F-1 status.

Domestic Partners

For F-1s, the dependent status of F-2 is reserved for spouses, and/or unmarried, minor (under age 21) children. This presents difficulties for those in relationships without marriage.

The Department of State has determined that B-2 (visitor) visas may be appropriate for cohabiting (unmarried) partners, whether of the same or opposite sex. Consular guidance on this may be found under [FAM 41.31 N14.4, Cohabiting Partners, Extended Family Members, and Other Household Members not Eligible for Derivative Status](#), on pages 25-26 of the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM).

Though B-2 visits are usually for short periods of time, it is permissible for the accompanying partner to intend to accompany the principal for the duration of a study program in the U.S. The accompanying partner must intend to depart at the conclusion of the principal's authorized stay in the U.S. In such cases there is a fixed end point, and therefore the B-2 applicant meets the requirement of temporary intent, even though the individual intends to stay longer than six months or a year.

Guidelines for Maintaining Lawful F-1 Student Status

Under United States immigration law, it is your personal responsibility to maintain lawful F-1 student status. Begin by reading the "Instructions to Students" on page two of your I-20. By following those instructions, as well as the guidelines listed below, you should be able to maintain lawful F-1 student status with little difficulty. You must maintain lawful student status if you wish to enjoy the benefits associated with it, such as on-campus employment, practical training, and the ability to re-enter the United States when you travel.

If you follow the guidelines listed below, you should be able to maintain F-1 student status.

1. Keep an unexpired passport valid for at least 6 months into the future. Contact your country's [consulate](#) or [embassy](#) in Washington D.C. for instructions if you need to extend your passport while in the U.S. Refer to [Immigration Definitions](#) for more information.

2. Notify the ISO of your address upon arrival and any time you change addresses. Upon your initial arrival in the U.S. to study at NYC, you must notify the ISO of your local address in person or [online](#). Thereafter, you must notify ISO of any change in address within 10 days of moving by completing the Change of Address Form. The ISO is responsible for updating your address electronically in your SEVIS record.

3. Maintain full-time enrollment and normal, full-time progress toward your certificate. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations require that you register during the Institute's published registration period. Failure to do this will result in violation of your F-1 status. You are expected to maintain full-time registration and make normal progress toward your completion. Note that the definition of "full-time" may differ from school to school and that **immigration regulations may require a more restricted definition of "full-time" than that followed by your department.** As a result, you should refer to the guide below and consult with the ISO as well as your academic adviser to determine whether or not you are a "full-time" student.

4. Obtain PRIOR authorization from the ISO (if eligible) BEFORE dropping below a full course of study, withdrawing from classes, or taking a leave of absence. There are very limited exceptions to the full-time requirement, so you must consult the ISO in advance of any drop below full-time, or you will be in violation of your status.

5. If you leave the US without completing your program of study, complete your program early or change to another non-immigrant status, notifying the ISO so that your record in the DHS database accurately reflects your current situation.

6. Do not accept any employment, either on- or off-campus, without written permission from the International Students Office and, if necessary, authorization from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Working without proper authorization is considered by the DHS as the most serious violation of its regulations. If you refer to your I-94 card, you will see the statement, "Warning: a nonimmigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation." It is most important, therefore, that you consult with the ISO before you accept an offer of employment or begin to work. We will advise you whether it is possible for you to work and assist you with the appropriate procedures. It is illegal to begin to work while waiting for authorization; you must have the appropriate authorization first. Students in F-1 status are allowed to work on-campus for the Institute for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year (unlimited during vacation periods) but **MUST** complete an I-9 form at the ISO.

7. Make timely transfers of your F-1 supervision if you enroll at NYC after attending another school in the United States. DHS regulations specify that you must use the Visa Certificate of Eligibility

(I-20 or DS-2019) issued by the school you are attending (or plan to attend) when entering the U.S. Consequently, make sure that you use NYC's Certificate of Eligibility. You are required to report to the ISO shortly after your arrival and no later than the beginning of the semester. For information on transfer procedures, see our instructions on [Transfer of F-1 Supervision](#).

8. Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay in the U.S. before your I-20 expires. If you have valid academic or health reasons for requiring more time to complete your program than that which is authorized on the NYC's I-20 or DS-2019, you must request a program extension through the ISO. Come to the ISO as soon as you know that you will need an extension and at least 30 days before the completion date noted on your I-20 or DS-2019 in order to have enough time to obtain any necessary documents. See our instructions on [Extension of Stay \(Current Program\)](#) for this purpose, or contact the ISO for more information.

If you require an extension because you will be starting a new program at Institute, you must apply for a new I-20 or DS-2019 to begin a new program within 60 days of the completion of the first program. See our instructions on [Extension of Stay to Begin a New Program](#) or contact the ISO for more information.

9. Once you have completed your studies and any practical training that is authorized, you must leave the U.S. or change to another immigration status within the appropriate time allowed. This means that you are allowed to stay for a period of time to complete a program of study plus academic or practical training and a grace period. Those in F-1 status have a 60 day grace period in which to depart the US or change to another status. Students in J-1 status have a 30 day grace period.

10. Carry a copy of your passport and I-94 card with you at all times. When traveling outside the Tri State area, you should bring the original I-94 card, I-20, and passport with you.

We encourage you to contact the ISO if you have any questions about maintaining your F-1 status.

Recertification of Form I-20

To return in F-1 status from a trip abroad, you must have a valid I-20 that has been recertified (signed) by the ISO within the last year, except for those on post completion optional practical training. Those on post completion practical training returning in F-1 status from a trip outside the U.S. must have a valid I-20 that has been recertified within the last 6 months.

In order to have your I-20 recertified, you must be able to prove that you are in valid F-1 status and that you have sufficient funds to continue your studies at NYC for at least one year. You must bring the following documents when you are requesting recertification of your I-20:

- Your valid passport (and those of any dependents)
- Your I-94 card (and those of any dependents) showing F-1 status
- Your current I-20 (and those of any dependents)
- Bank statement or other financial documents showing sufficient funds to cover tuition, fees and living expenses for one year for you and your dependents. If you are on practical training and employed, a letter stating your salary should be sufficient as long as it covers monthly expenses for you (and any dependents).

The ISO will not recertify your I-20 if you do not submit the required documents. If all required documents are submitted, ISO staff can normally recertify your I-20 at the time of your request.

Academic Certification

Academic Certification

An academic certification is an official document provided by the School Registrar verifying dates of attendance, award of completion, and student status (full-time or part-time) by term. It is typically requested for health insurance, visa, employment and credit verification purposes. There is no fee for this service.

Certification Request Methods

Note: If you are requesting a certification for a visa, you should make certain that your expected completion date is included on your record before leaving and returning to the United States.

Online

Student Services Online (SSOL)

In-person

Your academic certifications will be processed while you wait at the locations listed below.

Mail

Mail a copy of the [Academic Certification Request Form](#) to:

New York Campus

Office of the Registrar
NYC Global Center of NY
108-10 72nd Ave.,
Forest Hills, NY 11375

Travel and Re-entry in F-1 Status

While you are in F-1 status, you are permitted to leave the U.S. and re-enter in F-1 status provided you present the required documentation. If you intend to re-enter the U.S. and continue your full-time course of study, you must always be admitted to the U.S. in F-1 status. This section provides detailed information on the requirements for traveling outside the United States and re-entering in F-1 status. The following topics are addressed:

- Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status
- Obtaining a New F-1 Visa
- Travel to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean
- Travel for Canadian Students
- Travel while on Post-Completion OPT
- Extended Stays Outside the U.S.
- Travel within the United States

- Travel to a Third Country
- Travel for Dependents

Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status

You are required to carry the following documents with you to re-enter the U.S. as a F-1 student. We encourage you to use this section as a checklist to ensure that you have everything you need to successfully re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

___ Passport valid for at least 6 months into the future: Some countries have the expiration dates of the passports automatically extended for 6 months based on an agreement with the U.S. If your country of citizenship is on this list, you may enter the U.S. using your passport until its actual expiration date. If your passport will expire, contact your [consulate](#).

Canadian citizens do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S. from Canada, but DO require an I-20. All Canadian citizens entering the U.S. are required to show a passport.

___ Unexpired F-1 visa valid for further entries: You should always be aware of the expiration date and the number of entries allowed on your visa. Most visas have "M" written under entries. This means that there is no limit on the number of entries for which you can use your visa. If your visa is expired or you have already used the number of entries you are allowed, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa in order to re-enter the U.S. See the section [Obtaining a New F-1 Visa](#) for more details. An exception to this requirement exists for travel to certain countries.

___ Valid I-20 [recertified](#) within 12 months of the date of on which you will return to the U.S. Recertification (travel signature) is on page 3 of the I-20. It indicates that you are maintaining valid F-1 status. Only staff at the ISO is authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to sign your I-20. Each signature is valid for 12 months, although you may have the I-20 signed more frequently if you wish.

The ISO can only sign your I-20 for travel if you are maintaining valid F-1 status and can show that you have the financial resources to cover all expenses for one year. Continuing students may be required to show updated funding documentation to have their I-20 recertified. You must plan ahead to get your I-20 signed before you leave the country. Request recertification of your I-20 at least five business days prior to your departure.

If you will be outside the U.S. for more than 5 months, please see [Extended Stays](#) Outside the U.S.

We also recommend that you carry the following documents with you. It is possible that an immigration officer could ask you for these documents.

___ Receipt of SEVIS I-901 Fee (if applicable). For information on who is required to pay this fee, go to www.fmjfee.com

___ Current financial documentation issued within the last 3 months.

___ Proof of full-time enrollment. You can print out a copy of your registration history from [Student Service Online](#).

Obtaining a New F-1 Visa

If your entry visa has expired and your travel does not qualify for [visa revalidation](#), you must apply for a new visa at an [American consulate](#) before re-entering the U.S. Entry visas can only be issued outside the United States. We recommend that you apply for the new visa in your home country; however, if you are unable to return to your home country and need to travel to a third country, it may be possible to apply for a visa there. We recommend in this case that you first contact the U.S. consulate in the country where you will be traveling to confirm that they will review your application. It is possible they would refuse to do so and ask you to travel to your home country. You should also be prepared for [potential delays in visa issuance](#). A list of [visa wait times](#) is available on the Department of State website.

When you go to the consulate, you will need to bring your passport, I-20, financial documentation, and proof of full-time enrollment, as well as any other documents requested by the consulate.

If you have ever overstayed your authorized stay (as noted on your I-94 card) in the United States, you will be required to return to your home country to apply for a new entry visa.

Travel to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean

If you are traveling only to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda) for fewer than thirty days, you may return to the U.S. with an expired F-1 entry visa in your passport. To qualify for this privilege, you must:

- Be in lawful F-1 status.
- Have an unexpired I-94 card indicating your F-1 status in your passport when you enter the U.S. Do not surrender the I-94 card when you leave the U.S. If you do, you will not be eligible for visa revalidation.
- Have a current, [recertified](#) I-20 in your possession.
- Have a passport valid at least six months into the future on the day you return to the U.S.
- Travel only to one of the destinations named above and for fewer than thirty days. For example, you cannot use automatic revalidation to enter Canada, depart to another country, return to Canada, and then return to the U.S. within 30 days.
- Not apply for a U.S. visa while in Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. If you apply for a U.S. entry visa during your visit to one of these destinations, you must wait for it to be issued before you return. If your visa application is denied by the American consulate, you are not allowed to use automatic revalidation to return to the U.S. You will be required to travel to your country of citizenship to apply for a new visa.
- Have a F-1 visa (expired or valid) in your passport or an approval notice for change of status to F-1 and the invalid visa of your previous non-immigrant status in your passport.
- Be a citizen of a country other than Syria, Iran, Sudan or Cuba. Nationals of these countries are not eligible for visa revalidation. If you are a national of one of the above countries, you must always have a valid visa in your passport to enter the United States.

Travel for Canadian Students

Canadian citizens do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S. from Canada, but DO require an I-20. All Canadian citizens are required to show a passport to enter the United States.

Those entering the U.S. to study should request F-1 status at the border and must always show the Form I-20 and supporting financial documentation to the immigration inspector at the port of entry. Be sure to check your I-94 card before you leave the inspection area to ensure that the I-94 card was properly notated with F-1, D/S. Often, your I-94 card will not be removed from your passport when you leave the U.S., and you will not receive a new one when you re-enter. This is not a problem. Just be aware that if the I-94 card is removed, you must get a new one with the F-1 notation when you re-enter.

Travel while on Post-completion Optional Practical Training

The entry requirements while you are on OPT are similar to the requirements while you are a student; however, you will need to show some additional documentation. The Department of Homeland Security allows for re-entry while on OPT "to resume employment after a temporary absence".

All individuals who have applied for post-completion OPT must carry the following documents:

___ Passport valid for 6 months into the future

___ Valid F-1 entry visa, unless using visa revalidation

___ I-20 **recertified** within the past 6 months. Please note that this is a change in the length of validity of recertifications. Recertifications are generally valid for one year, but once you are on OPT, they are valid for only 6 months.

** See [Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status](#) for document descriptions.

If you have applied for OPT, but not yet received the EAD, you must also carry the following:

___ Original receipt notice issued by the Vermont Service Center confirming your request for OPT.

If your OPT has been approved, you must also carry the following:

___ EAD card

___ Letter from employer confirming that you are employed or have been offered employment. Please note: this letter must be for the duration of your OPT and not for a permanent position.

The guidance from DHS states that if an individual has been approved for OPT and leaves the U.S. prior to receiving a job offer, the OPT authorization ends. If you are planning to leave the U.S. and do not have all of the required documentation, please speak with an advisor at the ISO.

If you require a new entry visa while on OPT, be aware that there is no guarantee that you are eligible for one. You are required to establish non-immigrant intent every time you apply for a non-immigrant visa. This may be harder to establish when you are working rather than studying. If you have an expired F-1 entry visa, speak with an ISO advisor before planning a trip abroad.

Extended Stays Outside the U.S.

If you leave the U.S. and do not register during the normal academic year for your program, your record in the SEVIS database will be terminated. If you want to return, refer to the instructions on [F-1 Leave of Absence Suspension or Withdrawal](#).

If you are registered full-time while outside the U.S., contact the ISO to verify that your F-1 status will remain valid.

Travel within the United States - In general, special permission is not required to travel within the U.S. We recommend that you carry your passport, I-94 card, and I-20 with you whenever you travel outside the New York metropolitan area.

Travel to a Third Country - When traveling to a third country (a country other than the U.S. or your home country), you are responsible for knowing whether you need an entry visa for that country. Travel to Canada and Mexico is common from the U.S.

Canadian visas - Persons from many countries are required to obtain a Canadian entry visa when entering Canada from the U.S. Visas may be obtained from the [Canadian Consulate General](#) at 1251 Avenue of the Americas (at 50th Street, telephone (212) 596-1600). Consult the Canadian Consulate General for visa regulations concerning your country before making travel arrangements.

Mexican visas - Tourist cards or visas may be required for travel to Mexico. Information is available from the [New York Consulate General of Mexico](#), 27 East 39 Street, telephone (212) 217-4600.

Travel for Dependents

Entry requirements for dependents are essentially the same as those for holders of F-1 visas. Each dependent must carry his/her original I-20. If traveling separately from the principal visa holder, dependents should also carry a photocopy of the F-1's visa, I-94 card, and I-20. Note that if F-2 status was obtained through a change of status application, the F-2 will not be issued an F-2 entry visa unless the student has already obtained an F-1 entry visa.

Entry document checklist for dependents:

___ Passport valid for at least 6 months into the future

___ Valid F-2 entry visa

___ I-20 recertified on page 3 within the last 12 months

___ Photocopies of the principal visa holder's passport, I-94 card, and I-20

** See [Documents Required for Re-Entry in F-1 Status](#) for document descriptions.

Govt Q & A for F-1 Travel

http://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel/faq_f.htm

DHS Information on Arrival Problems

<http://www.dhs.gov/dhs-trip>

F-1 Student Program Extension to Complete Current Program

Department of Homeland (DHS) regulations require students in F-1 status to complete their program by the expected completion date noted in item 5 on the initial Form I-20 ("...and complete studies not later than (date)____."). The stated length of study and expected completion date on the initial I-20 used to begin your current program of study at NYC Global Center determines whether you must apply for a "Program Extension" to remain in the U.S. to complete your program.

If you will not be able to complete your current program by the expected completion date because of valid academic or medical reasons, you must apply for a Program Extension with the ISO, which is then responsible for notifying the DHS of this change.

THE PROGRAM EXTENSION MUST BE REQUESTED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION OF THE EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE. An F-1 student who is ineligible for a Program Extension either because of missing the deadline or not meeting the eligibility requirements listed below is considered out of status. The student may apply to the USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) for [reinstatement](#), if eligible.

Eligibility:

1. You must be in lawful F-1 status under the visa supervision of NYC Global Center.
2. You must have maintained unbroken full-time status for every semester of your current program during which you have been in F-1 status.
3. Delays in completing your studies must not be caused by academic probation or suspension.

Deadline: You must submit your application to the International Students Office (ISO) BEFORE the completion date on your I-20. There is no prescribed period in which to do so, except that an extension of an I-20 must take place before the current one expires.

Procedure: The complete application includes the following documents:

1. **Your I-20 and I-94 card**
2. **Your passport**
3. **Financial documentation showing that you can meet the costs of the additional time needed to complete your program.**
4. **Documentation establishing valid reasons to continue beyond your I-20 time limit.** This documentation will be a letter to the ISO from your academic advisor stating the academic reasons for your need to extend your stay at NYC and the expected date of completion of your program of study, **or** your school or department reflecting approval of your request for a reduced

course load or medical leave of absence based on a physician's certification. Examples of compelling academic reasons contributing to a delay in completion include changes of major or research topic or unexpected research problems.

The International Students Office will:

1. Review your application for eligibility
2. Prepare a new I-20 extending your completion date and update your SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) record.

You must sign and date the new extended I-20

F-1 Extension to Begin a New Program

If you are moving from one program at your current Institute to another, you must obtain a new I-20 and have your SEVIS record updated. By processing a new I-20, the Department of Homeland Security is notified of a student's new program of study and an extension of the time permitted to stay in the U.S., as required. ***Note that failure to complete the procedure in a timely manner is considered a violation of F-1 student status, necessitating an application to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for reinstatement.***

You must obtain an extension and new I-20 when you move from:

- a degree program to a joint degree program
- a bachelor's degree program to a master's degree program
- a master's degree program to a doctoral degree program
- a language program (ALP) to an academic program
- special student status to any degree program
- any degree program to special student status
- a bachelor's degree program to another bachelor's degree program
- a completed master's degree program to another master's degree or a professional degree program

The above are some of the typical (but not the only) situations in which a new I-20 and extension is necessary. If you have any questions about whether or not you need to obtain an extension of stay, you should consult an adviser at the ISO.

Eligibility: In order to be eligible for the extension procedure, you must meet both of the following criteria:

- you must currently be in lawful F-1 status under the visa supervision of your current school.
- you must have been admitted to a new full-time program of study at your current school.

Deadline: The new I-20 can be issued any time after admission to the new program, but not later than 60 days following the completion of the current program. For example, if you are completing a bachelor's

degree on May 17, 2006, you must have a new I-20 issued for an M.S degree by July 16th. If not, your SEVIS record will automatically be completed and inactivated after the 60th day. You may apply for the new I-20 as early as your official offer of admission.

Procedure: Once you have been admitted to a new program of study, you need to have a new I-20 issued. Specifically, you must provide the ISO with the following information:

- A copy of your admission letter to the new program of study
- Financial documentation which shows that you have adequate resources to meet the tuition, fees, and living expenses for at least the first year of your new program of study
- Copies of all of your previously-issued I-20s
- Your passport and I-94 card

An ISO staff member will review your application and issue a new I-20 if it is determined that you are eligible. This will put you in "initial" status for the new program; your SEVIS record will need to be made active some time between the completion of the current program and the beginning of the new program. The timing of this may depend on whether you will be on Optional Practical Training or traveling abroad in the intervening time— the ISO adviser will discuss this with you.

Special Considerations: If you are planning to pursue another program at a school other than current school, you must follow procedures for Transfer of F-1 Supervision.

Reinstatement to F-1 Status

As a student in F-1 status, you are expected to comply with immigration regulations. If you fail to comply with these regulations, you will be "out of status". When you are out of status, you are no longer eligible for on-campus employment, practical training, recertification of your I-20 for re-entry to the US, or any other benefits of F-1 status.

The following are considered violations of your F-1 status:

- Failure to attend the school whose I-20 you used to enter the United States
- Failure to report to NYC's ISO for initial registration in SEVIS upon arrival
- Failure to maintain full-time registration (see [Maintaining F-1 Status](#) for more information.)
- Failure to request a transfer from NYC within 60 days of completion date or OPT end date from the previous school
- Failure to apply for a Program Extension **before the completion date on your I-20**, if you need more time to complete your current program
- Failure to obtain a new I-20 if you change your educational program or degree level
- Failure to report address change to the ISO within 10 days moving

Reinstatement allows you the opportunity to regain valid F-1 status and have the mistakes you made corrected by USCIS. You may be eligible for reinstatement only if you:

- Are currently enrolled or intend to enroll for a full-time course load
- Can establish that the violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond your control
- Have not engaged in unauthorized employment
- Have not been out of status for more than 5 months
- Can document sufficient financial resources to pursue a full-time course load
- Do not have a history of repeated violations
- Are not deportable from the US on any other grounds

Note that working in the US without appropriate authorization from the ISO or the USCIS is a violation of your status that ***cannot be corrected through reinstatement***. If you are in violation of your status due to unauthorized employment, you can only regain your status by departing the United States.

Procedure: The application for reinstatement is made by you directly to USCIS. The ISO does not have a role in approving your application. Only USCIS can reinstate your status. However, ISO advisers are available to review your application before you submit it if you wish.

Your reinstatement application must include the following documents:

1. A request for reinstatement, written by you, explaining why you fell out of status and why the circumstances were beyond your control
2. A new, original, I-20 created for you by the ISO for the purposes of reinstatement which you have signed and dated. You must send the original I-20 for reinstatement applications
3. 3. A completed [Form I-539](#). Note: Write "REINSTATEMENT" in red ink at the top of the Form I-539. In Part 2, question 1, check "C" and write: "Reinstatement to F-1 status"
4. Financial documentation showing one year of tuition, fees, and living expenses
5. Copies of your passport, visa, and I-94 card
6. Copies of all I-20s previously issued to you
7. Transcripts (copies from SSOL are sufficient)
8. A bank check or money order payable to the Department of Homeland Security in the amount of \$290.

If you have dependents in the US, you must also include them in the application since a violation of your F-1 status affects your dependent family members as well.

We recommend that you copy your application materials for your own records before sending it to USCIS. Send the application by certified mail, return receipt requested to:

US Citizenship and Immigration Services
ATTN: I-539
Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, VT 05479

If your request for reinstatement is approved, the USCIS officer will stamp your I-20 to indicate that you have been reinstated and return it. Once the reinstatement is approved, you are once again eligible for the benefits of F-1 status. If the application is denied, you will be notified and required to leave the US.

Special Considerations

Processing times for reinstatement applications vary; however, it may take as long as 6 months for the application to be adjudicated. Although you may continue to study while the application is pending (In fact, you are required to register full-time during this period.), you will not be eligible for any type of employment until the reinstatement is approved.

Alternative to Reinstatement

You also have the option of traveling to regain status instead of applying for reinstatement. When you travel to regain status, you are issued a new I-20 for "Initial attendance" with a new SEVIS ID number. You then leave the US and re-enter using the new I-20. When you enter the US and receive an I-94 marked "F-1 D/S", you will once again be in valid F-1 status. However, if you choose to travel to regain status, you will forfeit any time you have accrued toward practical training eligibility. You will need to be registered for one academic year in order to qualify for practical training.

Leave of Absence, Suspension, or Withdrawal from School by Students in F-1 Status

While in the United States, students in F-1 non-immigrant status must be continuously enrolled full time during the academic year until the completion of their programs of study. If you take a non-medical leave of absence, withdraw voluntarily, or are suspended or required to withdraw from the school, you are required to leave the United States within 15 days of this action. The only exception to these rules is a medical leave of absence.

If you take a leave of absence, withdraw from your program, or are given a suspension, you must contact the ISO immediately to discuss your immediate plans and any plans you may have to return.

Medical Leave of Absence

The only exception that allows you to stay in the United States without transferring to another school or changing to another non-immigrant status is a medical leave of absence. Once your school has approved a medical leave of absence, you must also receive approval from the International Students Office. The ISO requires a letter from your school approving the medical leave and a letter from your physician stating 1) your medical condition, and 2) advising the ISO that you are unable to register as a student at the time the leave is granted. If the doctor's letter meets immigration regulations, you are allowed to stay in the United States during the semester as long as you register for the following semester.

If you are on a medical leave and depart the United States, you may return using your current documents (valid passport, valid F-1 entry visa and recertified I-20).

Withdrawal, Voluntary Leave of Absence, Dismissal, Suspension

For all the above categories, F-1 students are required to depart the United States. Your current F-1 status is "terminated" in the SEVIS database and you will need to request a new initial I-20 to return to the U.S. Apply for your new I-20 certificate of eligibility online. Be sure to follow all the instructions on the web site. You will also need to pay a new [SEVIS fee](#) and have a valid F-1 entry visa to return.

When you return to the U.S. using your new initial I-20, you must report in person to the ISO so that your

return to school can be reported to SEVIS. Bring the new I-20, your passport and I-94 card within the first week of your entry to the U.S. This is very important as you will lose your F-1 status if SEVIS is not updated in a timely manner.

Important Considerations:

- If you have not registered during the academic year for any reason other than a sanctioned medical leave of absence, you **will not** be eligible for practical training until you have completed one academic year in F-1 status.
- If you wish to make short-term, temporary visits to the U.S. during the period that you are on leave, suspended or withdrawn from school, you should not enter in F-1 status but rather on a different visa, such as a B-2 visitor's visa. You may enter in Student Status only if you are returning for the purpose of resuming your studies.
- If you have taken a medical leave in the United States, you are not permitted to engage in any student-based employment in the U.S., whether on-campus or off-campus, until you have been cleared to return to your studies. If you wish to take a leave of absence to pursue employment or any other activities in the U.S., you will have to change your immigration status accordingly and should speak with an ISO adviser about your plans.

Departure Upon Completion of Studies

You are required to notify the International Students Office (ISO), either in person or in writing, of the completion of your studies or practical training and of the date of your final departure from the United States. Please leave an address with the ISO so that you can be contacted if necessary. Before returning home, you should check with your country's consulate to determine customs procedures for bringing personal belongings such as computers back with you.

When you are leaving, give your I-94 card to the appropriate official (airline employee or immigration officer) so that your departure is recorded. If you find that you have not done so, you should return the I-94 card by following the instructions on the [Customs and Border Protection website](#).

If you intend to leave NYC but plan to remain in the United States to study at another school, please notify us of your intention. According to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations, NYC must "transfer" your record in SEVIS to your new school. This transfer must be completed within 60 days of the NYC program completion date.

Request for Registration Below Full-time During Last Term for Students in F-1 Status

Under Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations, students in F-1 status who are eligible to enroll for less than a full-time course load during the last term of their academic program must have authorization from the ISO. This authorization must be requested and granted in advance of the last day of the normal registration period for your final term. Submit this online form after you have registered for your part-time course load, but by the end of the normal registration period. The ISO must report to the DHS on authorized reduced course loads.

If your school has a minimum registration requirement, you are still required to comply with that requirement, even though immigration regulations allow for a lesser number in the last term.

Students who fail to request and receive authorization and who enroll for less than a full-time course load during the last semester will be out of status and must request "reinstatement" from the DHS. Reinstatement is uncertain in both outcome and processing time. If you are in violation of F-1 status at the time of completion of your program of study, you will not be eligible to apply for optional practical training.

Before requesting authorization for less than a full-time course load during your last term, consult closely with your academic adviser so that you are certain you will meet all requirements.

Inviting Relatives or Friends to Visit You in the U.S.

The ISO does not issue invitation letters for students' family members or friends. According to guidance from the U.S. Department of State, such a letter is neither necessary nor useful for the application for a B-1/B-2 Visitor's visa. B-1 is the classification for a Visitor for business, and B-2 for a Visitor for pleasure.

For general information on qualifying and applying for a visitor visa, go to the Department of State's information on [Visitor Visas - Business and Pleasure](#). Specific instructions on documentation requirements for the B-1/B-2 visa application at the embassy or consulate where your relatives will apply can be found at [Websites of U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Diplomatic Missions](#) page on the Department of State's website.

Writing an Invitation Letter - You may write a letter for your relatives inviting them to visit you. Include your family member's name, birth date, relationship to you, passport number, the purpose and length of time of the visit, and whether you will provide for their room and board during their visit.

Academic Certification - The School Registrar is the office from which to obtain official documentation to confirm your enrollment. You may request an [Academic Certification](#) in person or through Student

Services Online (SSOL). The document will be printed while you wait if requested in person.

You should also include a copy of your I-20 or DS-2019 and I-94 card as evidence of your immigration status in the U.S.

U.S. immigration law requires an applicant for a visa to overcome "the presumption of immigrant intent". This means that the individual should demonstrate that they have strong ties to their home country such as employment, property, and family and have no intention of staying permanently in the United States.

Change of Address for Individuals in F and J Status

If your address changes, you are required to notify the ISO within 10 days of the change by completing and submitting this form. The ISO will update your SEVIS record, thereby notifying the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of your new address.

You must also go to [Student Service Online](#) to update your address in the central student information system.

If you have changed to a status other than F or J, you must complete Form [AR-11](#) online to update your address with the authorities.