

Maintaining Lawful F-1 Immigration Status

All international students in F-1 immigration status are obligated to meet certain requirements established by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in order to maintain their lawful immigration status during their stay in the United States (U.S.). It is the sole responsibility of the student to maintain his/her lawful F-1 status. When a student completes section 11 of the I-20, the student is certifying that he/she has read and understood all of the terms and conditions of the F-1 status and agrees to abide by them. Students who violate their status (even by accident) are considered to be “out-of-status” and will not be eligible for any USCIS benefits, including employment and the ability to transfer to another school from within the U.S. A violation of status may also result in deportation, as explained on the I-20. Under certain circumstances, students who fall out-of-status may be able to apply for a reinstatement to lawful status and should visit the Office of International Student Services (OISS) in Room 201 of the Student Center as soon as possible. Students who violate their immigration status by working in the U.S. without proper authorization will not be eligible for a reinstatement. These students will need to depart the U.S. and reenter with a new I-20 (and possibly a new F-1 visa) before they can continue their enrollment at Regent. Students who remain in the U.S. while out of lawful immigration status could be barred from reentering the U.S. for up to ten years.

Students who fail to comply with the requirements listed below will be out-of-status. In order to maintain lawful F-1 immigration status, it is YOUR responsibility, as a student, to do the following:

- 1. KEEP your passport valid at all times.** For travel purposes, passports must be valid for 6 months into the future. Passports may be revalidated or reissued in the U.S. at the embassy of the country that issued your passport. Students should begin to apply for a new passport about 7-8 months PRIOR to the date of expiration.
- 2. KEEP your I-20 valid at all times and APPLY for a new I-20 WITHIN 1 WEEK after any changes.** Students should check sections 4, 5, and 8 of the I-20 on a regular basis and notify the OISS immediately about any changes in your major, degree level (Phd to MS, etc.), or financial support. Students should also notify the OISS about any name changes, errors, or misspellings on the I-20. Failure to maintain a valid and accurate I-20 can result in serious immigration problems for you, and a student should never present an incorrect I-20 to a government official for travel or visa application purposes.
- 3. ATTEND the school you are authorized to attend as noted on your I-20 (section 2) AND as noted on your visa (for initial attendance only).** A student who attends a school without authorization from the International Student Advisor on an I-20, or without following proper USCIS transfer procedures, is considered to be out-of-status and should consult with the OISS immediately. Also, a student who does not attend the school listed on his/her visa for initial entry into the U.S. is also considered to be out-of-status and should consult with the OISS immediately.

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- 4. DO NOT drop below full-time status (for class registration) at any time during the fall and spring semesters and while mandatory classes are in session for your program. DO NOT take more than 1 on-line class or more than 3 on-line credit hours each fall and spring semester (and while mandatory classes are in session for your program). MAKE NORMAL PROGRESS toward the completion of your degree/course of study.** In general, full-time status is defined as 12 credit hours for undergraduate students, 9 credit hours for graduate students (MS/MAs), 6 credit hours for doctoral/PhD students, and 10 credit hours for JD/JSD students. A few exceptions can be made to this full-time rule, but **ONLY after receiving PRIOR WRITTEN approval** from the OISS. Students who fail to obtain prior written approval from the OISS before dropping below full-time status will be in violation of their F-1 status. A suspension or termination from one's academic program is considered to be a violation of status that will result in the termination of the student's SEVIS record. Students who are suspended/terminated are not entitled to any grace period and must be prepared to depart the U.S. immediately. **Important Notes:** F-1 regulations do **not** permit F-1 students to count more than 1 on-line class, or more than 3 on-line credits, per semester toward the full-time status credit requirement. Students who begin their degree programs in the summer are not entitled to the summer vacation benefit and must be enrolled full-time during that first summer semester. Students in academic program that require summer enrollment must also be enrolled full-time in the summer terms in addition to the fall and spring terms.
- 5. DO NOT work ON-campus more than 20 hours per week--total--while school/classes are in session (this includes the summer term for some academic programs that require summer enrollment).** Full-time on-campus employment of more than 20 hours per week total is only permitted during vacation periods, such as Fall Break and Spring Break, and as long as the student was enrolled full-time during the previous semester and will be enrolled full-time the following semester. **The 20 hour limit per week includes hours worked as a Teaching, Research, or Graduate Assistant as well as any work done as an Adjunct Faculty member, or for any offices on-campus.** Some academic programs require summer enrollment, so those students cannot work more than 20 hours/week in the summer term. CBN/Operation Blessing, etc. are not a part of Regent University and are NOT considered on-campus employment. For students who have graduated/completed all degree requirements, employment at Regent is NOT permitted without a valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD) for post-completion OPT.
- 6. DO NOT work OFF-campus without PRIOR WRITTEN Authorization from the OISS on your I-20 or without an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS; and REFRAIN from any type of self-employment.** Contact the OISS for any questions or uncertainties you might have about what constitutes off-campus employment. CBN/Operation Blessing, etc. are not a part of Regent University and are considered to be off-campus employment.
- 7. REPORT a change of address to the OISS & the Registrar's Office WITHIN 5 DAYS of the change. (The University will report the change to the U.S. government through the SEVIS system.)**
- ▶ During web-registration periods at the start of each term, all students are required to confirm or enter their correct addresses in Genisys during the web-registration process before they can register for classes. **The U.S. address that you enter/confirm in Genisys during web-registration is the address that Regent will report to the government in SEVIS.** It is your important responsibility to make sure your U.S. address is listed correctly in Genisys during web-registration periods.
 - ▶ If your address changes during the middle of the semester/outside of web-registration periods, you must report the new address to **TWO separate offices WITHIN 5 DAYS** of the change: the OISS AND the Registrar's Office. Students can still use Genisys to report the new address to the Registrar's Office outside of web-registration periods, and should use the "Information Change Form" on the OISS website to report the change to the Office of International Student Services.

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8. **NOTIFY the OISS if you plan to withdraw, transfer, take a leave of absence, or cease your enrollment at Regent for any reason at all.** All students MUST notify the OISS BEFORE they terminate their studies at the University (without completing the degree) and **will have a 15 day grace period to depart the U.S.** Students who do not notify the OISS before terminating their studies will have no grace period and are expected to depart the U.S. immediately.
9. **NOTIFY the OISS WITHIN 5 DAYS if you complete all of your degree requirements before the end date on your I-20 (in section 5).**
10. **APPLY for an F-1/I-20 program extension at least 30 days BEFORE the end date in section 5 of your current I-20** if you cannot complete your degree by that date. F-1/I-20 program extensions can only be granted for certain reasons, so you MUST consult with the OISS--far in advance--for proper planning to see if you will qualify for the extension.
11. **NOTIFY the OISS WITHIN 5 DAYS if your immigration status changes from F-1 to any other status (H-1B, Permanent Resident, etc.), or if you use the benefit of another immigration status (travel on Advanced Parole, employment with an EAD, etc.).**
12. **LEAVE the United States WITHIN 60 DAYS after the graduation date on your I-20 (section 5), OR within 60 days after your actual program completion date, whichever date comes first. Students on post-completion OPT must depart the U.S. within 60 days after their OPT expiration/date on the EAD.** The 60 day grace period applies to all F-2 dependents as well. Failure to depart the U.S. on time is a violation of the F-1 and F-2 status. Students who do not complete their degrees (including those who are suspended/terminated from their academic programs) are not entitled to the 60 day grace period and should consult with the OISS and prepare for immediate departure from the U.S.
13. ► **TRANSFER STUDENTS:** NOTIFY the OISS/International Student Advisor at the school you will be leaving, and submit a "Request to Transfer-Out"; NOTIFY the International Student Advisor at the school you will be attending; OBTAIN an I-20 from the new school; and REPORT to the International Student Advisor/OISS at the new school within 15 days of beginning attendance there. (**Special Note:** One's F-1 immigration record MUST be transferred in SEVIS from the old school to the new school within 60 days after your degree/OPT completion.) Failure to follow these procedures will result in the loss of one's lawful F-1 status and ability to transfer schools from within the U.S.

Special Notes:

► **Weekly Email Messages, Monthly Newsletters, and Student Responsibility:** The OISS newsletters and email messages contain important immigration information that you will need to know for maintaining your lawful F-1 status, so you are expected to read them carefully. If, for any reason, you are not receiving the newsletters or the weekly email messages, it is YOUR responsibility to inform the OISS immediately.

► **OISS Website:** Additional immigration related information and request forms (for an I-20/DS-2019 Travel Signature, Dependent I-20, Request for a New I-20, etc.) are available on the OISS website at: **www.regent.edu/iss**

► **SEVIS/Government Reporting:** All U.S. institutions that sponsor F-1 students are required to report various types of F-1 student information to the USCIS electronically through a system called SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). The information includes, but is not limited to: address changes, violations of status, failure to enroll, last date of attendance, unauthorized drop below full-time status, etc.

► **Immigration/Employment/Travel Related Questions:** If you have any questions or uncertainties about your responsibilities for maintaining your lawful F-1 status, the SEVIS reporting requirements; restrictions on working in the U.S.; U.S. reentry procedures; or if you think you may need to apply for a reinstatement to lawful status; please visit the OISS (Student Center, Room 201) as soon as possible. No other office on campus can assist you with these questions.