

Immigration

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Introduction

Immigration regulations can be quite challenging to understand. As an international student in the United States, you must follow a number of rules that govern your F-1 or M-1 student visa.

Advisors in the International Programs Office are here to assist you with concerns about your immigration status. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) believes it is your responsibility to understand the rules for your immigration status while you stay in the United States. If you do not follow the rules, you could lose your immigration status, which means you are no longer a legal student in the United States.

If you have any questions related to your immigration status, please visit the International Programs Office for assistance.

Special Announcements

When the International Programs Office receives important information from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), we will include it here.

Currently, there are no special updates.

Immigration Advising Services

The International Programs (IP) Office provides immigration advising to all international students at Seattle Central. If you have quick immigration-related questions, you may ask for assistance at the front desk, or speak with an advisor during walk-in hours. In some cases, you may need to complete an immigration form and wait for an answer once it is processed. If you have questions that require more assistance, or are submitting an application for immigration services (OPT, reinstatement, etc.), then you may need to make an appointment with your primary advisor.

Role of the Immigration Advisor

The advisors in the IP Office will do their best to help you understand the regulations you must follow as an international student. Please remember that the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) believes it is your responsibility to understand the rules for your immigration status while you stay in the United States. If you do not follow the rules, you may be "out of status", which means you are no longer a legal student in the United States and must return home. It is very important that you seek assistance from an advisor if you are unsure of what you must do to maintain your status.

A note of caution: if you have any questions about immigration regulations or staying in status, do not ask your friends for advice! Please bring your questions to the IP Office so we can do our best to assist you with up-to-date immigration information.

Overview of DHS

The [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) is the government agency that regulates U.S. customs and immigration processes, monitors non-U.S. citizens who seek to enter the United States, and enforces border inspection.

The Department of Homeland Security is divided into three bureaus:

- [U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(USCBP\)](#) – Responsible for inspecting persons seeking to enter the United States.
- [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) – Reviews petitions for adjustment of visa status, reinstatements, citizenship and requests for other services.
- [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(USICE\)](#) – Responsible for immigration investigations, detention and deportation, and SEVIS database management.

F and M visa students will likely have some kind of interaction with these bureaus during the time that they are in the United States.

SEVP and SEVIS

The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) oversees monitoring of international students on F, M and J visas in the United States. SEVP does this using a database called the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Each international student on an F, M or J visa has a record in SEVIS, which holds information on the student's personal information (name, date of birth, citizenship, home / local address, etc.), the student's program of study, and the student's financial support.

Advisor Responsibility to DHS

In order for Seattle Central to enroll international students, advisors must report information on students to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Advisors maintain communication with all three branches of DHS, but most reporting is done through SEVIS. Advisors regularly update information in student records in SEVIS, including the following:

- Enrollment status
- Approval for reduced enrollment (less than full time)
- Approval for benefits such as vacation quarters or off-campus employment
- Student transfer to other institutions
- Violations of student status (usually involves termination of student records)

In addition, advisors are required to give information on individual students or groups of students to the Department of Homeland Security if it is requested.

Once advisors have updated a student's immigration record or responded to a specific query, they have met the requirements of DHS. Advisors will not generally contact Homeland Security directly if a student violates the rules of his / her F-1 status. Once the student's record is updated, it is up to USICE to investigate and be in touch with the student. Advisors are not police officers, so they cannot arrest students for status violations.

Forms and Links

Immigration Eforms available through [SCDGlobal](#)

- Concurrent Enrollment Request
- Enrollment Letter Request
- Graduation Request
- I-20 form Reprint Request
- Leave of Absence Request
- SEVIS Release / Transfer Out Request
- Vacation Request

Forms available as PDFs:

[Change of Program/Major & Extension Request Form](#)

[Curricular Practical Training Request](#)

[Employment Application Form](#)

[Medical Verification Form](#)

Government Links

[The U.S. Department of State](#)

- [Obtaining Visa](#)

- [Guide to U.S. Higher Education](#)

[The U.S. Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#)

- [Bureau of Customs and Border Protection \(USCBP\)](#)

- [Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#)

- [Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(USICE\)](#)

- [SEVP Student Guide](#)

[The U.S. Internal Revenue Services](#)

[The U.S. Social Security Administration](#)

Related Links:

[Foreign Embassies and Consulates in the U.S.](#)

[U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide](#)

Documents

All F and M visa students have an important set of documents to keep track of while they are in the United States. Below you will find more specific information on each one, including what to do in the event they are lost or expire.

Passport

Your passport is issued by your country of citizenship, and must be carried whenever you travel outside the United States. The information on your I-20 form, I-94 card, and other official documents normally must match the information in your passport.

Non-immigrants are required to have a passport that is valid for at least 6-months when entering the United States. Students should ensure that the passport is valid during their stay. Be sure to check the expiration date on your passport and plan to renew it if it will expire. The International Programs (IP) Office recommends that you allow at least 6 months to renew your passport while in the United States. To renew your passport, please contact the closest embassy or consulate for your country of citizenship.

Lost / Stolen Passport

If you lose your passport while in the United States, or if your passport is stolen, take steps immediately to replace it. Notify the International Programs (IP) Office that your passport is missing, and then contact your embassy or consulate as soon as possible to find out what steps to take to replace it. If your passport was stolen, file a police report with the local police office.

I-20 Form

All current international students on F-1 visas must have an I-20 form. This form was issued to you when you were admitted to the college.

The I-20 form indicates the start and end dates of your program, your level of study, your major, the financial cost of your program, and the source of your financial support (please see information below on individual sections of the I-20 form). The third page of the I-20 form is also used for special endorsements, such as travel signatures and authorization for off-campus employment.

Student Responsibility for I-20 Information

As an F-1 visa student, it is your responsibility to make sure that the information on your I-20 form is accurate and up-to-date. It is highly recommended that you keep all original I-20 forms issued by Seattle Central and by other schools. We also recommend that you make back-up copies for their records.

The Department of Homeland Security may ask you to show copies of your previous I-20 forms when you apply for work permission, or if you apply for some other immigration-related benefit (for example, OPT, change of visa status, or reinstatement).

Note that copies of the documents in student files are for Seattle Central use only. The International Programs (IP) Office will not make copies of documents in student files for student use, including the I-20 form. If you lose your I-20 form while you are still enrolled at Seattle Central, your advisor can print a replacement copy through SEVIS.

Sections of the I-20 Form

Personal Information

Review all personal information, including name (first, last, middle), date of birth, country of birth and country of citizenship to make sure it is accurate. The information on your I-20 form should match the information in your passport. If you feel any information must be changed, please contact your advisor for assistance.

Program Start / End Dates

The dates should indicate the start and end of your current program of study. Advisors do not track the end date for each student's I-20 form, so it is very important that you know when your program will end. If you do not finish your program of study before the end date, you may be in violation of your student status. If you are close to the end date of your program and believe you will not have enough time to graduate or finish your program, [request an extension](#) as soon as possible.

Program of Study and Major or Level of Program

The program of study should reflect your current major. Because SEVIS limits what can be put in this field, the major listed may not match your intended major exactly. Also, if you are in a college transfer program, the major listed might reflect the classes you are taking, and not the major you will eventually complete in your 4-year degree. If you plan to change your program of study, or your major, [request a change of major](#) as soon as possible.

Level of Program

Your I-20 form will have one of three program levels:

- Language Study (for students in ESL only)
- Associate (for University Transfer, IP Short-Term Certificate, High School Completion Plus, or Career Training programs)
- Bachelor's (for the Bachelor of Applied Science degree programs)

Normally, you will not change program levels unless your program of study will be different from the one which you applied for. Your level of program will be determined by your advisor when you request a change of program.

Financial Information

The financial information listed on the I-20 form reflects the estimate for tuition, fees, living expenses and miscellaneous expenses at the time you were admitted to Seattle Central. It also shows the amount of funds guaranteed by you or your sponsor, and the source of your funds

(e.g., Family, US Sponsor, etc.). If your source of funding has changed, you must notify your primary advisor as soon as possible so your I-20 form can be updated.

Signatures

The I-20 form should be signed on the front page by the person who issued the form. It should also be signed and dated by you, and by your parent / guardian if you are under the age of 18.

If you plan to travel outside the United States and return as an F-1 student, make sure that you have a travel signature on page 2 of the I-20 form (please see the section on Travel for more information).

Visa

Most students enrolled as an international student at Seattle Central will have an F-1 or M-1 visa in their passport. If you applied for a change of status in the United States from a different visa category, you might not.

The F-1 / M-1 visa is used to enter the United States to study at a college or university.

Visa Renewals

If you wish to renew your F or M visa, you must do so outside the United States: it is not possible to renew the F or M visa in the United States. Typically, you must apply for a new visa in your home country, and not in a different country where you permanently reside.

When to Renew a Visa

If you plan to remain in the United States for the full duration of your studies, then it is not necessary for your visa to remain valid. As long as your I-20 form has not expired, and you are maintaining student status (full-time study, satisfactory progress, etc.), then your visa can expire with no consequences.

Your visa must be valid if you plan to travel outside the United States, and re-enter the country as an F-1 student. If your visa is not valid at the time you re-enter, then you may not be allowed to return to the United States.

Exception: F-1 and M-1 students may normally re-enter the United States after a visit of less than 30 days to Canada or Mexico, so long as they have a passport, I-94 card, and signature on page 2 of their I-20 form. The visa does not have to be valid. There are exceptions to this situation – please speak with an advisor in the International Programs (IP) Office if you have additional questions.

I-94 Admission Record

When an F-1 student enters the United States, USCBP will create an Arrival and Departure Record, referred to as the I-94 Admission Record.

If you arrive in the United States by air or by sea, you will have an electronic I-94 Admission Record. If you make your initial entry to the United States through a land border (for example, drive into the country from Canada), you will be issued a paper I-94 Admission Record. In both cases, the USCBP Officer will stamp your passport with the date of entry, visa class of admission, and the date you must depart the United States. The electronic record will include

your name and the same information indicated with the passport stamp. Note that F-1 students are admitted for Duration of Status, which allows them to stay in the United States as long as their I-20 form is still valid.

You can view your [electronic I-94 Admission Record](#), or print a copy directly from USCBP's website. If you have a paper copy of your I-94 Admission Record, keep it stapled in your passport opposite your F-1 visa. Additional [information on the I-94 Admission Record](#) can also be found on USCBP's website.

F-1 Basics

The following section covers the most essential information for F and M visa holders attending Seattle Central College. There are many more details related to F and M visa status that are not included here. If you have additional questions regarding F or M visa regulations, please contact the International Programs (IP) Office and speak with an advisor.

Maintaining Status

For F-1 students, "maintaining / being in status" means following the rules of their student visa. This includes the F-1 Basics as well as reporting requirements, normal progress requirements, and proper documentation and procedures.

Out of Status

A person is out of status if he/she does not follow the rules of his/her visa. A student who is out of status loses the benefits of his/her visa, which means that he/she cannot:

- transfer to a new school in status
- obtain a travel signature on page 2 of the I-20 form (I-20 signature)
- take a vacation quarter (stay in the United States without studying full-time)
- work on campus (F-1)
- receive permission for practical training or any other off-campus employment
- receive any other benefits of being an F-1 or M-1 student

When a student falls out of status, the IP Office will terminate the student's SEVIS record. The student is also in danger of becoming an overstay, which results in serious immigration consequences (see Overstays section below). Once a student's SEVIS record is terminated, all future applications for visa renewal may be affected.

Common reasons for falling out of status include:

- not meeting full-time requirements without prior authorization
- withdrawing in the middle of a school term without prior authorization
- academic suspension or dismissal

- taking too many NC's or Withdrawals
- staying longer than 60 days after finishing a program (when ineligible for vacation quarter)
- allowing an I-20 form to expire

Getting back in status can be time consuming and costly. Therefore, students are strongly encouraged to seek help whenever they experience academic or personal difficulties, and to communicate with their advisors and instructors, so they do not risk losing their status.

Reinstatement

A person who is out of status can get back in status while remaining in the U.S. by applying for reinstatement. Once reinstated, he/she regains legal student status and may remain in the country. DHS will consider a student for reinstatement if the failure to maintain status resulted from reasons beyond the student's control. DHS provides the following examples:

- natural disaster
- closure of the school
- serious injury or illness
- mistake on the part of the international office

Students who wish to apply for reinstatement must meet with their primary advisor.

Note: A student out of status for more than 5 months is not eligible for reinstatement.

If DHS denies a reinstatement request, the student visa will be cancelled. The student will be asked to leave the U.S. immediately. At that point, the student may want to consult an immigration lawyer if he/she intends to remain in the United States.

Overstays

If a reinstatement application is denied by USCIS, the student must leave the United States immediately. Students who do not leave will become an "Overstay". There are significant penalties for people who are judged to be an overstay, including:

- automatic cancellation of the visa, even if it is good for several more years
- for overstays of more than 180 days, the person will be banned from the U.S. for 3 years
- for overstays of more than 1 year, the person will be banned from the U.S. for 10 years

Students who stay in the United States beyond their grace period will fall out of status and be subject to deportation. Please consult with an IP advisor for more details.

Re-Entry

Some students may be eligible to make a new entry into the U.S. and regain their F-1 status. Re-entry means to leave the country and re-enter the U.S. on a new I-20, created from a new

SEVIS record. In order to re-entry, a student must have a valid F-1 visa. Students interested in doing re-entry should contact their primary advisor.

Personal Information

Regulations require that F-1 students' personal information is kept up-to-date in SEVIS. Personal information includes:

- Legal name
- Date and place of birth
- Country of citizenship
- Current home country address
- Address in the United States (address where you physically live and mailing address)
- Telephone number
- Email address

Changes to the items above must be reported to the school / advisor within 10 days of any changes.

How to Make Updates

Updates to your U.S. addresses, telephone, or email can be made through your online student account. The updated information will be uploaded directly to SEVIS by the IP Office.

Updates to all other information must be made through the IP Office. For updates to name or citizenship, legal documentation of the change will be required.

Full-Time Requirements

DHS requires that students on F-1 visas must enroll full time. Minimum full-time requirements for Seattle Central's programs are below:

SCIE, Institute of English (Levels 1 and 2)	20 credits
College Bridge (Levels 3-5)	12 credits (likely 15 credits)
College programs	12 credits

Failing to Enroll Full-Time

Enrollment for less than 12 credit hours at any time will put a student in violation of status. This includes the following:

- A Withdrawal (W) from a particular course, with remaining credits less than 12;
- An "N" grade (audit) for a course, with remaining credits less than 12;
- Students may only take one distance learning class each quarter as part of the full-time requirement. Distance Learning includes online, correspondence and video courses.

Please see the **Maintaining Status** section to learn about the consequences of falling out of status, and ways of regaining status.

Reduced Course Load

In certain situations, students may be approved to enroll for less than full-time. If you want to take less than full-time for any of the situations below, you must complete the Reduced Enrollment Request Form and submit it to the IP office before the quarter begins. Following are possible reasons for enrolling below full-time:

- Student is on an authorized vacation quarter (see Vacation Quarter section below)
- Student is on approved medical leave (see)
 - Complete Part 1 of the [Medical Verification Form](#)
 - Have a Medical Doctor, Doctor of Osteopathy, or Licensed Clinical Psychologist complete the Part 2 of the form
 - After the form is fully completed, upload document to [SCDGlobal](#) in the "Additional Document Upload" section in "F-1 Student Services"
- Student in final quarter and needs less than 12 credits to graduate ([Reduced Course Load Request E-Form](#))
- Student is having academic difficulties due to improper course level placement, initial problems with English, or unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods (only possible in the first quarter of attendance, contact your advisor)

Vacation and Leave of Absence

Vacation Quarter

SCIE and College program students who attended school in the U.S. for three consecutive quarters may be eligible to take a vacation during the following quarter, provided they will continue to study in the U.S. for the academic term after the vacation. A vacation quarter means the student will remain in the U.S. but not study full-time. Students with questions regarding eligibility for vacations should contact the International Programs (IP) Office.

College program students are also allowed to take a vacation during their first Summer Quarter, provided that Summer is not their first quarter of study after their initial entry into the country.

To request a vacation quarter, you must submit a [Vacation Quarter / Quarter Off Request E-Form](#) before the intended vacation quarter begins.

Leave of Absence

If you are not eligible for a vacation quarter, but you must return to your home country due to unusual circumstances, you may be eligible to take a leave of absence. You must remain outside the U.S. during your leave of absence. You must submit your leave of absence request before the first day of the quarter and your departure ticket must show that you will depart the U.S. within 15 days of when the request is submitted.

Even if you do not plan to return to Seattle Colleges, please also submit this Leave of Absence request form. If you do not plan to return, we will not request reactivation of your SEVIS record.

Submit a Leave of Absence request through SCDGlobal here: [Leave of Absence Request E-Form](#).

Normal Progress

Seattle Central College has specific policies regarding normal academic progress. In addition to the college policy, DHS also has special requirements regarding normal progress for F-1 and M-1 students. This section describes the normal progress policy for international students at Seattle Central, which takes both the college policy and the DHS requirements into account.

Academic Suspension or Dismissal

International students who are academically suspended or dismissed have not maintained their immigration status and will face the penalties for falling out of status.

GPA

College students may be academically suspended from the college for failing to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher for 3 quarters or more. Certain Career Training programs may have higher requirements than this. Students in these programs should consult with the program counselor.

Grading Options: W, NC, I and Y

International students in SCIE and the College must take the following grade restrictions into account:

- A Withdrawal (W) that puts a student below full time will cause the student to fall out of status.
- A No Credit (NC) or 0.0 grade may not cause a problem on a one-time occasion; the credits may still count toward the full-time requirement.
- Multiple NC's, 0.0's and W's in non-consecutive quarters will be reviewed by the advisor on a case-by-case basis to determine whether normal progress has been made. In

general, if a student's degree program must be extended because he/she did not pass enough classes, then the student will be out of status.

- An Incomplete (I) or a Y grade will show as a non-completed course until a student finishes the course requirements. Students must make arrangements with the instructor and should be sure to finish the class in order to get a final grade. An excessive number of uncompleted I or Y grades could cause problems with program completion.

Which to choose: 'W' or 'NC'?

When students are not passing a class, or perhaps finding it very difficult, the first thought might be to drop the class. The instructor might even recommend that a student withdraw rather than continue. This might be fine academically, but it poses a problem for maintaining immigration status!

In general, it is better for a student to take a No Credit (NC) for a class rather than a Withdraw (W), if dropping the course would place the student below 12 credit hours. An NC may keep a student in status, but a W will automatically put the student out of status. Students who definitely want to Withdraw from a class must meet with the International Student Counselor or Advisor first. It may be possible to add another class that will allow a student to maintain status.

Program Completion, Extension or Withdrawal

Program Completion

College policy requires that students complete their program in a timely manner. Students on F and M visas must complete their program of study by the program end date in Section 5 of their I-20 form. If you have not completed your program of study by the end date, you will fall out of status. If you know before the program end date that you will not complete the program in time, you must request a program extension (see below).

Grace Period

Following completion of your program of study or of your authorized period of post-completion OPT, you will have a 60-day grace period. The grace period starts the day after the final date of your program of study or the final date of OPT. Before the end of the grace period, you must do one of the following:

- Leave the United States
- Apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Transfer your SEVIS record to another institution to begin a new program of study
- Update your SEVIS record to begin a new program of study at Seattle Central

If you do not exercise one of the options above, your SEVIS record will automatically "complete", and you will be out of status. Once a record is completed, your advisor can no longer make changes to the record, but can only advise you on options for regaining status (see the section on reinstatement under "**Maintaining Status**")

If you plan to leave the United States before finishing your program, you will not have a 60-day grace period, but possibly only 15 days, or none at all. Contact the International Programs (IP) Office as soon as possible if you plan to leave before finishing your program.

Withdrawal

If you must withdraw from your program due to unforeseen circumstances and return to your home country, contact the International Programs (IP) Office for guidance. Please submit a Leave of Absence request form through SCDGlobal here: [Leave of Absence Request E-Form](#).

If your withdrawal is due to a health issue, and you plan to remain in the United States, you should request [medical leave for the quarter](#).

Extension of Program

It is possible to request an extension of your I-20 form if you need additional time to complete your program. Please complete a [Change of Program / Major & Extension Request Form](#) and submit it to the International Programs (IP) Office before the program end date on your I-20 form. F-1 visa regulations prohibit extension of a program if it is due to poor academic performance on the part of the student.

Travel

Students who wish to travel home or to visit any country outside of the United States and plan to return to the U.S. as an F-1 student must obtain a travel signature on page 2 of their I-20 form. Students should drop off their I-20 at the International Programs (IP) Office front desk three business days before their planned departure date. An advisor will sign the I-20 if the student is in status and intends to pursue fulltime study the following quarter. Please note that students may also be required to obtain a visa from the country they wish to visit.

REMEMBER: International student advisors in the International Programs (IP) Office are the only designated school officials (DSO's) who can sign I-20 forms. Instructors and counselors are not authorized to sign this form.

Students must show their passport, F-1 visa, I-20 and financial statement at the border when re-entering the United States. All forms must be valid at the time of re-entry. Exception: For some students, travel to Canada for less than 30 days with an expired visa may still be possible on the Automatic Visa Revalidation program. Please see an advisor in the International Programs (IP) Office for more information.

If F-1 students stay outside of the United States for more than 5 months, their F-1 visa and I-20 will automatically expire. To return to a school in the U.S., students must reapply for a visa, pay the SEVIS fee again, and enter as a new student with a new I-20.

Transferring Out

Students are generally allowed to transfer from one SEVIS-approved school to another, as long as they are maintaining status. If you are planning to transfer, but have not maintained visa status, plan to speak to the advisor at your new school about regaining F-1 status on transfer.

The information below and the [Transfer Out Guide](#) provide students with details on the process of transferring out.

Timelines for Transfer

If you are completing a program of study (for example, graduating with a degree), you must be accepted and transfer out within the 60-day grace period following your last day of attendance (please see the Program Completion section for more information on the grace period). You must start at the new school at the next available start date, or within 5 months of your last day of attendance, whichever might come first.

If you are completing the current academic term, but are not finishing your program, you must transfer out and start at the new institution at the next available start date.

If you wish to transfer before completing the current academic term, contact the IP Office for more guidance.

Steps for Transfer

1. Apply to the new school (submit application, financial documents, transcript, etc.) and get accepted!
2. Bring the following documents to the IP Office:
 - a. Transfer/ Status Verification Form (if applicable)
 - b. A copy of the acceptance letter from the new school or admission confirmation
3. Submit your [SEVIS Release Request E-Form](#) and acceptance letter from your new school

After you complete ALL the steps above, the advisor will schedule release of your SEVIS record. Records are normally released at the end of the student's last quarter of attendance. If the final quarter has already ended, then the record will normally be released in within 2-3 business days.

Once the new school has your record, it will release a transfer pending I-20 form for the quarter you will begin.

Important things to remember

Once the SEVIS record has been released to your new school, your Seattle Central I-20 form is no longer valid. If you will travel outside the United States before transferring to the new school, be sure to use the transfer pending I-20 form for re-entry.

Changes from F or M Visa

During your period of stay in the United States, you may have reason to change your visa status from F or M visa status to another status (for example, B, H, J, Permanent Resident, etc.). The new status might change your ability to study in the United States. If you have plans to change your visa status, please contact an advisor in the IP Office for more information.

Generally, Seattle Central recommends that you maintain your student status until your new visa status is approved. If you have engaged a lawyer to assist you with the change, please consult with your lawyer for advice.

Permanent Residence and Enrollment at Seattle Central

If you have been approved for permanent residence in the United States and have received your Permanent Resident card (Green Card), please report this change to the International Programs (IP) Office. The IP Office will need to see your PR card and make a copy for its files. Your primary advisor will change your status in the school system from F or M visa holder to US permanent resident.

Employment

International students on F and M visas are not generally allowed to work off-campus in the United States. However, student visa holders may be eligible to apply for certain benefits that will allow for off-campus employment. These benefits normally relate to a student's program of study. You may use this [Employment Application Form](#) to apply for a job on campus.

On-Campus Employment

The actual physical location of the school you are currently attending (the school that issued your I-20 form) is considered on campus. However, you may work for a company operating on your campus providing direct services to students. For example, employment at the Seattle Central Bookstore, which is owned and operated by Barnes & Noble, is regarded as "on campus". Although you do not need authorization from the U.S. government to work on campus, please see an advisor at the International Programs (IP) Office to make certain you are eligible.

F-1 students may work on campus up to 19.5 hours a week while school is in session and full time during breaks and vacations. Please note, however, that the Seattle College District Human Resources has additional restrictions related to hourly work. M-1 visa holders are not allowed to work on campus.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is an alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.

CPT permits eligible, in-status F-1 students to engage in a formal training program or internship while receiving credits that count toward completion of the degree or educational objective.

CPT may be paid or unpaid. It may be part-time while pursuing a full course load, or full-time during an approved vacation.

CPT must qualify as an “integral part of the established curriculum” (students must earn credit that will count toward completion of the degree or educational objective). It must also be approved by the appropriate program counselor and an IP advisor.

A [request for CPT authorization](#) must be submitted and approved by an IP advisor before class registration. Upon approval, a new I-20 form will be issued with a special CPT endorsement on page 2. Students may NOT engage in practical training without written authorization in their I-20 form.

Students who have received one year or more of full-time CPT are not eligible for post-completion Optional Practical Training.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is an option for F-1 or M-1 students to pursue a paid internship or employment, to gain practical on-the-job experience relevant to their field of study. Employment authorization is available as either part-time Pre-Completion or full-time Post-Completion OPT.

Students may apply for part-time Pre-Completion OPT as soon as they are eligible to take an internship class or a practicum. They should first check with their program counselor and/or IP advisor to learn if they have earned enough credits and have the skills necessary for work experience.

Students may apply for full-time Post-Completion OPT up to 90 days before their program completion date (graduation), or 60 days after. Students are encouraged to apply for OPT as soon as possible during their final quarter because U.S. immigration may require several months to process the application.

Interested students must attend an OPT Workshop. Student can attend the workshop in the quarter before their final quarter of study, their final quarter of study, or in their 60-day grace period. Current OPT Workshop dates/times are shared in the IP E-Newsletter.

Post Completion Services Fee

What is the Post Completion Services Fee and how much is it?

The Post Completion Services Fee (OPT Reporting Fee) is charged to international students at Seattle Colleges who apply for post completion Optional Practical Training (OPT).

The fee will be collected by International Programs when graduating students apply for OPT. This one-time fee is \$80. This amount is subject to change.

Who pays the fee?

Graduating or recently graduated F-1 students who apply for post-completion OPT work authorization. A new OPT application on a new degree level requires a new fee payment (ex. Completing OPT at a certificate level and applying for another OPT on a higher degree level).

Do currently enrolled students pay the fee?

No, if you are currently enrolled in your degree program and not graduating at the end of the quarter, you do not pay the fee. The fee applies to students who are requesting OPT to work in the U.S. after graduation. If you participate in Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or pre-completion OPT while enrolled in your degree program, you will not be charged a fee.

When should I pay the fee?

The fee will be required for any F-1 student requesting an I-20 for post-completion OPT on or after September 16, 2022. You may apply for OPT up to 90 days before or 60 days after your I-20 completion date (graduation). After we have confirmed your eligibility to apply for OPT, you will be directed to pay the fee online. You will be required to provide a copy of your payment receipt/confirmation number during your OPT filing appointment with your advisor.

How will I pay the fee?

The fee must be paid online through this secure payment portal: <https://seattlecolleges.flywire.com>. A copy of your payment confirmation will be required when you meet with an advisor for your final OPT application review.

Why is this fee charged?

International advisors have mandatory reporting requirements to SEVP when students engage in OPT. This fee allows International Programs to maintain SEVIS records of students who are on OPT. Payment of this fee does not guarantee that you will be approved for OPT by USCIS.

Can the fee be refunded?

No, the Post Completion Services Fee cannot be refunded. Refunds will not be granted to those who change their mind about applying for OPT, submitting OPT applications late to USCIS, delays by USCIS, denial of OPT by USCIS, withdrawal of an application, failure to graduate, or any other reasons. A new OPT application submission will require a new fee payment.

Is this different from the USCIS OPT application fee?

Yes. The Post Completion Services Fee is paid to International Programs, which supports the continued reporting requirements during OPT. The USCIS OPT application fee is paid to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. For more information on Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization filing fee, please see [USCIS website](#).

Economic Hardship

In some cases, students who suffered severe economic hardship may be able to get permission from USCIS to work off-campus part-time. Normally, the circumstances must be severe enough to prevent the student's sponsor from continuing to provide adequate financial support, and must be out of the sponsor's control. Examples might include a severe natural disaster, sudden economic crisis, or severe medical issues that affect the sponsor's business.

If you have questions about applying for work permission based on severe economic hardship, please contact your advisor in the International Programs Office.

Adding Dependents and Inviting Family

Adding Dependents

A dependent is the husband, wife or child of an international student. The dependents of an F-1 visa holder can be in the United States on an F-2 visa. Please note these important regulations around F-2 visa status:

- If an F-2 visa holder is present in the United States, the F-1 visa holder must be as well. An F-2 visa holder cannot be in the United States while the F-1 visa holder is outside the country.
- F-2 visa holders are not allowed to work in the United States.

If you have dependents on F-2 visas, and have questions about their status here, please see an advisor in the International Programs (IP) Office.

Inviting Family

Family members (other than your spouse and children) wishing to visit the United States must apply for a B-2 "tourist" visa at the U.S. embassy or consulate in their home countries.

Visitors from certain countries may be eligible for the [Visa Waiver program](#).

Check the website for your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for the specific steps to [apply for a B-2 visa](#). The following pieces of evidence will assist your relative to apply for their visa:

Invitation letter from you - Write a letter of invitation that includes the following:

- Your name and your reason for living in the U.S. (include your SEVIS number)
- The names of your family members who wish to visit (include their date of birth and passport number)
- The purpose and approximate length of the visit
- Whether you will provide room and board or any other financial assistance for the visit

Family Members' Evidence of Funding: Your family members must demonstrate how they will pay for their travel expenses. They should provide proof of their own funds (a bank statement, employment verification or other evidence of funding) or of funds from another person or source.

If you provide room and board or any other specific expenses of the trip (such as airfare), you should supply evidence of your funding, such as a bank statement or employment letter. There is no minimum dollar amount that you must reflect, and you are not required to provide financial support. If you do, though, you should indicate an amount that is reasonable for the level of support you are providing.

Evidence of your status in the United States: [Request a Letter of Enrollment](#) from the IP Office, via [SCDGlobal](#).

Evidence of intent to return home: Your family members must prove that they will return home after visiting the United States. A round-trip airplane ticket will be helpful, but additional documents showing employment, property ownership, close family relations in home country, or enrollment in school (in the home country) are considered good evidence of intent to return home.

If you are inviting your spouse or children (under the age of 21) to the United States, visit an International Student Advisor during walk-in hours for information about dependent visas.