

Immigration

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General Policies and Regulations

As an F-1 student, it is your responsibility to maintain your F-1 status while studying in the United States and be responsible for following immigration regulations.

Our staff are trained F-1 advisors who are committed to assisting international students regarding F-1 regulations and policies. Below is a synopsis of the services and resources we provide.

- How to maintain F-1 status
 - Academic progress
 - Reduced course load and vacation quarter requests
 - Travel
 - Transfer out
 - Lost or stolen documents
- How to regain F-1 status
- Employment
 - On campus
 - Off campus
 - Volunteering

Updating your Immigration Documents

- You can submit many requests online to update your immigration documents (I-20 Form) through [SCDGlobal](#).

Completion of Program

Upon completion of a student's program of study they will have a 60-day grace period inside the United States. During a student's 60-day grace period they have the following options:

- Apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Apply for a new program of study (Change of Education Level) at South
- Transfer out to another SEVP approved institution
- Prepare for departure from the United States

Students must apply for graduation with their international student advisor in the International Programs Office.

Grace Period for Authorized Early Withdraw

If a student decides to return to their home country before completing their program of study, they should schedule an appointment to speak with an advisor in the International Programs Office. Students may be eligible for a 15-day grace period in the United States if approved for Authorized Early Withdraw.

Out of Status Students

If a student fails to maintain their status they are not eligible for an additional period for departure and must depart the United States immediately.

Lost or Stolen Documents

If your immigration documents are lost or stolen please notify the International Programs Office.

I-20

If your I-20 is lost, stolen or damaged please talk with your immigration advisor in the International Programs Office. You can request a replacement I-20 by completing the [Request for a New I-20 Form](#).

Passport

If your passport is lost or stolen you should immediately contact your country's embassy or consulate in the United States. You can find additional information on how to apply for a replacement passport online at the embassy or consulate's webpage.

For a complete list of foreign embassy websites please visit the following page: [Contact Info for Foreign Embassies & Consulates](#).

Visa

If your visa is lost or stolen you should contact the US Embassy or Consulate that issued your visa to make sure your visa is not being used by another person. The next time you travel to your home country you will need to apply for another US Visa. For a complete list of foreign embassy websites please visit the following website: <http://www.usembassy.gov>.

I-94

You can access your I-94 number online at the following website: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>. If you are having a problem with accessing your online I-94 please speak with an advisor in the International Programs Office.

Social Security Card

You can replace your Social Security card for free if it is lost or stolen. However, you are limited to three replacement cards in a year and 10 during your lifetime. Legal name changes and other exceptions do not count toward these limits. For example, changes in immigration status that require card updates may not count toward these limits. Also, you may not be affected by these limits if you can prove you need the card to prevent a significant hardship.

To get a replacement card: Complete an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5); and You will need to show proof of:

- Immigration status – I-20, Passport, Visa and I-94
- Work eligibility – Letter from the International Programs Office or EAD Card
- Take your completed application and original documents to your local Social Security office

EAD Card – OPT or Economic Hardship

To replace a lost or stolen Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card), students will need to complete Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>

This application is a similar process to apply for the original OPT authorization, with the following exceptions:

1. At the top of the I-765 Form you should choose - Replacement (of lost employment authorization document)
2. You will need to receive an updated I-20 from the International Programs Office
3. You will need to send copies of all the supporting documents you sent for your initial authorization. For assistance please contact the International Programs Office.

Maintaining Student Status

Full time enrollment

F-1 students must enroll for a full-time course load each quarter. Students in the Intensive English Program must enroll for at least 18 credit hours to maintain full-time status at South. Students enrolled in the College Bridge Program or in a College Level program must enroll for at least 12 credit hours.

If you are planning to withdraw from a course you will need to get approval from an international student advisor in the IP Office.

Online classes

Only one online class can count towards a student's full-time course load per quarter. Student's in their final quarter of study must demonstrate on-campus presence and therefore may not enroll in online classes only. Students enrolled in the Intensive English Program and College Bridge Program are not eligible to take online classes.

Academic progress

Students need to keep over a 2.0 GPA or higher to maintain legal status. **Please note: if a student makes under a cumulative 2.0 GPA for three consecutive quarters, has a grade of NC or 0.0 for three consecutive quarters, more than four NCs or 0.0s in any three quarter period, or NCs or 0.0s for all classes in one quarter their SEVIS Record will be terminated for failure to make normal progress and will be out of legal F-1 status.**

Employment

F-1 students that are maintaining status are eligible for on-campus employment. Students must receive authorization prior to engaging in any off-campus employment. It is extremely important that F-1 students do not engage in any illegal or unauthorized employment.

You can find more information regarding employment in the **On Campus Employment** and **Off Campus Employment** sections below.

F-1 students are required to report any changes to their address in the United States, phone number or email to the International Programs Office within 10 days of the change. Students will need to complete a Change of Address Form that is available in the International Programs Office.

Failure to Maintain Status

If a student fails to maintain status their I-20 (immigration record) will be terminated in the SEVIS system and they will be out-of status. Students that fail to maintain status are not eligible for an additional period for departure. Students will be considered out of status for the following reasons:

- Failure to register for a full-time course of study
- Unauthorized drop below a full course of study
- Unauthorized withdraw from classes
- Suspension or Expulsion
- Unauthorized Employment
- Failure to make normal progress towards your degree of study
- Failure to apply for an I-20 Extension prior to the end date listed on the I-20.

Please note that due to recent changes in U.S. immigration policy, as of August 9, 2018, you will begin to accumulate days of unlawful presence beginning the day after a status violation occurs.

F visa holders with status violations may be subject to 3 - 10 year bars to re-enter the United States.

If you are currently out of status please schedule an appointment to meet with an international student advisor in the International Programs Office.

Employment

On Campus Employment

For information about working on campus in a non-OPT capacity and getting a Social Security Number, see our [Student Life handout](#).

Employment - Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is one type of Practical Training which allow F-1 students to gain job experience in their field of study. Students must have been enrolled for one full academic year and maintained their F-1 status in order to apply.

CPT allows F-1 students to legally engage in an off-campus internship while receiving credits that count toward completion of their program of study. Students must submit an application for CPT to the International Programs Office. Upon approval by a DSO, the student will receive an updated I-20 with a CPT endorsement on page 2. Students may not engage in any CPT employment without first receiving the updated I-20. Please note that students who engage in full-time CPT for twelve months or more prior to graduation will not be eligible for post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT). For additional information please make an appointment in the IP Office to speak with an advisor.

Employment - Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is the second type of Practical Training which allow F-1 students to gain job experience in their field of study. Students must have been enrolled for one full academic year and maintained their F-1 status in order to apply.

OPT allows students to engage in temporary employment to gain practical experience in their field of study. Students can apply for part-time Pre-Completion OPT or full-time Post-Completion OPT with USCIS. Students approved for Post-Completion OPT will receive an Employment Authorization Document that allows them to work in the United States for up to twelve (12) months. Students can apply for OPT 90 days before their program completion date or up to 60 days after their program end-date. Applications to USCIS can 3 months or longer to receive an

approval notice. Students should plan ahead and make sure to attend the How to Apply for OPT Workshop at least one quarter before graduation.

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](#).

Severe Economic Hardship

Under special circumstances, USCIS may grant employment authorization to students who experienced severe economic hardship. F-1 students who have been enrolled in a degree or certificate program for 9 months or longer and who have experienced severe and unexpected financial hardship are eligible to apply. Please see an advisor in the IP Office for more information.

Reduced Course Load and Vacation

Vacation Quarter

An F-1 student is eligible for a vacation quarter inside the United States after being enrolled full-time and maintaining status for three consecutive quarters. During a vacation quarter, F-1 students are eligible to remain inside the United States without registering for a full course load. Students must submit their application for approval to the International Programs Office before the intended vacation quarter begins. If the student plans to remain in the United States they must pay for their health insurance for that quarter in order to continue their coverage.

You can apply for a vacation quarter at [SCDGlobal](#).

Initial Academic Difficulty

A student experiencing academic difficulty during their first quarter may be authorized to drop below a full course of study on the basis of the following reasons:

- Initial difficulties with the English language
- Initial difficulties with reading requirements
- Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
- Improper course level placement

A reduced course load based on initial academic difficulty must consist of at least six credit hours, or half the clock hours required for a full course of study. Students must submit a request for reduced course load along with an instructor's signature to the CIE Office for approval before withdrawing from any classes.

You can apply for a reduced course load for initial academic difficulty at [SCDGlobal](#).

Medical Leave

Students may be authorized to enroll less than full-time or, if necessary, in no classes at all due to a temporary illness or medical condition. Students must submit a request for reduced course load along with letter from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist to the IP Office for approval before withdrawing from any classes.

You can apply for a reduced course load for medical leave [SCDGlobal](#).

Concurrent Enrollment

Students can enroll at another SEVP-approved institution as long as their credit load equals full time and the majority of credits is taken at South Seattle College. Students must submit a request for reduced course load along with a copy of their registration from the other institution to the IP Office for approval.

Students attending North Seattle College or Seattle Central College will not need to submit a copy of their class registration and grades. If a student attends any other SEVP Approved institution they must submit a copy of their class registration with their application for reduced course load and their grades at the end of the quarter.

You can apply for a reduced course load for concurrent enrollment [SCDGlobal](#).

Final Quarter of Study

A student in their final quarter of study that requires less than 12 credit hours to graduate is eligible for a reduced course load. Students must apply for graduation and submit a reduced course load form to the IP Office for approval.

You can apply for a reduced course load for final quarter of study [SCDGlobal](#).

Transfer Out

General

Students that have applied and received acceptance from a SEVP-Approved college or university can apply to have their SEVIS record released to the new institution. Students that are currently in status and will begin school for the next available session or within 5 months, whichever is earlier, will be eligible for transfer. Students will need to complete the following transfer out procedures to have their SEVIS record released to the new institution:

1. Go to [SCDGlobal](#) and submit a completed Transfer Out Form to the International Programs Office.
2. Submit a copy of your acceptance letter to the SEVP-Approved institution

Reminder: Students that have graduated from South will need to complete the transfer out process during their 60-day grace period.

Transfer during Optional Practical Training (OPT)

If a student transfers out from South Seattle College to another SEVP-Approved school during the one year of OPT authorization this will cancel the student's remaining eligibility to participate in OPT. The student will need to be approved by the new school for any additional employment.

Travel

The International Programs Office would like to advise all F-1 students to plan ahead and make sure they have their required travel documents prior to any upcoming travel. Before traveling outside of the United States students should review their immigration documents to verify if their Passport, F-1 Visa, and I-20, with travel signature, are valid. Students can schedule an appointment to meet with a DSO prior to travel to discuss visa renewal and to have their immigration documents reviewed.

Travel Signature

Students planning to travel outside of the United States are required to obtain a travel signature on page 2 of their I-20 prior to leaving the United States. A travel signature can be provided by a Designated School Official, DSO, in the IP Office and is valid for 12 months from the date of signature.

Documents Needed for Travel

Students will need to present the following items to reenter the United States at a port of entry:

- I-20 (with valid travel signature)
- Valid Passport
- Valid F-1 Visa (See Note Below)
- Financial Evidence- Students may need to show evidence of sufficient funding for academic and living expenses
- Current Class Schedule - Students may access their class schedule by using Student Online Services at southseattle.edu
- Students on OPT should also carry their Employment Authorization Document and a letter from their employer

Note: Students can travel to Canada, Mexico or the adjacent islands for less than 30 days with an expired visa and may re-enter the United States on the Automatic Visa Revalidation program. Students from Iran, Syria, Sudan, and North Korea are not eligible for automatic visa revalidation. Please see an advisor in the CIE Office for additional information.

Travel to Canada

Travel to Canada may require a Canadian Visa depending on the nationality of the student. Citizens from countries listed on the following website will need to apply for a Temporary Resident Visa prior to travel to Canada: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp#exemptions>

Processing time for tourist visas will be 6 weeks (2 months) and there is no expedited service. For additional information please visit the following website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/apply-visitor-visa.html>

Travel around the United States

Students are advised to carry their passport along with their I-20 (with valid travel signature) and I-94 when traveling inside the United States. These documents may be required when traveling by plane, car, train, bus or ferry to prove lawful status in the U.S.

Volunteering

We advise students that they are eligible to volunteer off-campus and we encourage students to add volunteer experience to their student life transcript. We define 'volunteering' as donating time with an organization whose primary purpose is charitable or humanitarian in nature, without remuneration or any other type of compensation. This can be volunteer time at the West Seattle

Food Bank, the Red Cross, Earth Corps clean up days, and through events sponsored by the IP Office.

If the volunteer experience is related to your program of study you will need to have authorization for Practical Training. Please speak with an international student advisor in the International Programs Office before starting a volunteer position.

International students also have opportunities to legally work or have internships off-campus through CPT (Curricular Practical Experience) or OPT (Optional Practical Experience). These opportunities for practical experience can be paid or unpaid, and must be related to the student's program of study. In the case of CPT, students will register for a class that yields credit towards their degree. OPT is available to students after they complete a program of study at South.