

MAINTAINING F-1 AND J-1 VISA STATUS

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for F-1 students and the Department of State (DOS) for J-1 students each have regulations regarding how to maintain visa status. As long as you continually meet these obligations, you will be considered “in status” or “maintaining your visa status.” International Student Advisors are available to answer questions and assist you with maintaining your status; however, it is your responsibility to know and follow the regulations. A brief overview of how to maintain your visa status is provided below.

PASSPORT VALIDITY

It is important to keep your passport valid at all times. Contact your country’s embassy or consulate in the U.S. for instructions on how to renew your passport at least 6 months before it will expire.

REGISTRATION

F-1 and J-1 students must register for and complete a full course of study each term during the academic year. Full-time status for undergraduates is 12 credits per term. Full-time status for graduate students is 9 credits per term (12 or 16 credits for graduate students with assistantships). **Students in the Conditional Admission Program (CAP) or an INTO OSU program must follow the registration requirements of their specific program. INTO OSU students must be enrolled in 3 consecutive terms before being eligible for a vacation term**

Summer and vacation periods normally do not require registration as long as you are a continuing degree or exchange student. Students in INTO OSU programs must request a vacation term. Since audited courses and withdrawals do not count toward full-time enrollment, it is very important NOT to withdraw from or audit any classes that will result in less than a full course load. Also, no more than 3 credits of distance education (E-Campus) classes can count toward full-time enrollment per term. If you have serious academic or medical concerns, you will need to make an appointment with an International Student Advisor to discuss possible exceptions prior to dropping below full-time status.

If you do not pass a course or wish to improve your grade, you may retake a course. Both grades will appear on the academic record, but only the second grade will be counted in the cumulative grade point average, and the credits will only count one time toward graduation requirements. Be aware that any requests for a program extension may be denied if you repeatedly retake courses, use the S/U grading option for courses requiring a letter grade, or otherwise fail to progress in your academic goals.

Undergraduate students may apply for a “Reduced Course Load” at the start of their final term if they have less than 12 credits remaining to complete their degree. Graduate students who have completed all required coursework and all requirements listed on their specific graduate program of study may apply for a “Reduced Enrollment.” Reduced Enrollment may be approved for up to 4 terms for a master’s student or 6 terms for a doctoral student. Both forms are available on the OIS website and in the OIS reception lobby.

HEALTH INSURANCE

All OSU international students and their accompanying dependents are required to maintain health insurance coverage throughout their stay in the U.S. Please direct all health insurance questions to the Student Health Insurance Liaison in 110 Plageman Hall (541-737-7568).

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you move to a new residence, immigration regulations require that you inform OIS within ten (10) days. Your address must be your physical residence; P.O. Boxes are not allowed. To Update your Current US Address, go to <https://ipconnect.oregonstate.edu> Click on  Select biographical information, then Local U.S. Address E-Form. * You are required to report your address to SEVIS to maintain your immigration status.

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

Fully-admitted F-1 and J-1 students may engage in part-time employment (up to 20 hours per week) on the OSU campus while classes are in session. Students may work on-campus full-time (more than 20 hours per week) in between terms and during the summer vacation as long they plan to be a full-time student the following term. J-1 students who are sponsored by Oregon State University must request authorization for employment from OIS *before* beginning employment. The J-1 Student Employment Authorization Request form is available on the OIS website and in the OIS reception lobby. J-1 students who are sponsored by an agency other than OSU should contact their program sponsor directly to obtain work authorization. If you have questions about types of jobs that qualify for on-campus employment, please make an appointment with an International Student Advisor.

Please note: Students in the Conditional Admission Programs (CAP or CAPN) or studying in any INTO OSU programs (Pathways, AE, GE, etc.) are not eligible to work on or off-campus at any time.

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

F-1 and J-1 students may NOT participate in any type of off-campus employment unless authorized by OIS and/or the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Internships which are required or integral to the student's program of study must be authorized by OIS prior to the internship start date. Students interested in off-campus employment should make an appointment with an International Student Advisor before accepting an employment offer. OIS also holds regular information sessions on off-campus work authorization for F-1 students. Students in the Conditional Admission Programs (CAP or CAPN) or studying in any INTO OSU programs (Pathways, AE, GE, etc.) are **not** eligible to work on or off-campus at any time.

TRANSFERS

If you are transferring to Oregon State University from another U.S. school or from OSU to another U.S. school, you will need to complete an immigration transfer and acquire a new I-20 or DS-2019 form within the first 15 days of your first term at the new school. Transfer In and Transfer Out forms are available on the Office of International Services (OIS) website and in the OIS reception lobby. This does not include students changing to OSU from INTO OSU Programs.

CHANGE OF MAJOR OR DEGREE LEVEL

If you change your major or degree level at any time during your studies at OSU, you will need to notify OIS. Students changing from an INTO OSU program to a degree program at OSU will complete a change of level. Once the change of major or level has been approved by Oregon State University, OIS staff will prepare an updated I-20 or DS-2019 form.

PROGRAM EXTENSION

If you are unable to complete your academic program by the end date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019, you must request a program extension. You will need to show funding for the duration of the extension as well as compelling academic or medical reasons for your request. It is important to apply for an extension one to two months before the expiration date on your I-20 or DS-2019. Program Extension Request forms are available on the OIS website and in the OIS reception lobby.

TRAVEL

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. during your studies, you will need to obtain a travel signature from an International Student Advisor prior to leaving the U.S. Travel signatures are valid for one year (refer to the bottom of page 3 of your I-20 or the lower right section of your DS-2019) and for 6 months for F-1 students on Optional Practical Training. If your visa has expired or will expire while you are outside the U.S., you will need to apply for a visa renewal at a U.S. consulate or embassy before returning to the U.S. (unless you will visit Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days). For more comprehensive information, please see the "Travel Outside the U.S." handout available on the OIS website and in the OIS reception lobby. **Note:** Federal regulations require visitors to the U.S. to carry proof of identification and immigration status at all times. If you are traveling within the U.S., be sure to carry the following items: 1) a valid passport, 2) a valid I-20 or DS-2019 form, and 3) the I-94 arrival/ departure card.

COMPLETION OF PROGRAM

Once you complete your degree program (and final term of registration), immigration regulations allow you a 60-day grace period (F-1 visa holders) or a 30-day grace period (J-1 visa holders) in which you may remain in the U.S. The grace period begins from the last day of the term for which you were last registered and not from the expiration date on the I-20 or DS-2019. If you plan to apply for off-campus work permission following your degree, you should attend an employment workshop (F-1 visa holders) or meet with an International Student Advisor (J-1 visa holders) *prior* to your degree completion. If you do not intend to apply for off-campus work authorization, please inform OIS by completing the "Notice of Departure Form" available on the OIS website and in the OIS reception lobby.

FAILURE TO MAINTAIN STATUS

In cases where students do not maintain their immigration status, there may be some options available to help students regain valid F-1 and J-1 status. However, please note that falling out of valid immigration status may require you to submit an application to the U.S. government or travel outside the U.S. and re-enter with new documents. In all cases, it can be a stressful and potentially expensive process, and may impact a student's ability to complete their program. Please make an appointment with an International Student Advisor if you have any questions about specific situations and how they may impact your immigration status.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your visa status, please meet with an International Student Advisor by calling the OIS Student Services receptionist at (541) 737-6310. Our office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at University Plaza, Suite 130.