

# F-1 Status

It is extremely important for international students to maintain their immigration status while in the United States. Failure to maintain the terms and conditions of F-1 status may be grounds for removal from the United States and may cause difficulty re-entering the U.S. in the future.

## Important Forms and Documents

The Form **I-20** shows that you are eligible for "F" status. It is issued by the college you are authorized to attend and shows how long you may remain in the United States. Students with F-1 status are allowed to enter up to 30 days before the start date and stay 60 days beyond the program completion date to gather their belongings and make arrangements to return home.

You can obtain an **F-1 visa** at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate outside of the U.S. You should have an F-1 visa in your passport upon entry to the U.S. *Note: Canadians do not require an F-1 visa in order to obtain F-1 status.* The expiration date on your visa does not affect how long you may stay in the U.S. whereas the end date on your Form I-20 does. The only reason to be concerned with an expired visa is if you wish to leave the U.S. and re-enter.

The **Form I-94** is your official "Arrival-Departure Record". It is a small white card that is issued when you arrive in the United States. The Form I-94 is an important immigration document as it indicates your immigration status, "F-1", and an expiration date. Your expiration date should be "D/S" which means "Duration of Status." This refers to the date you complete your studies or the end date of your Form DS-2019 (whichever is earlier) plus a 60-day grace period.

## How to Maintain F-1 Status

- Check-in with Slater International Center for SEVIS registration within 30 days of the program start date indicated on your Form I-20
- Attend the college/university listed on the Form I-20 used for entry
- Engage in a full course of study during normal academic periods (3 units or more)
- Make normal progress towards completing the course of study (Minimum 2.0 GPA)
- Maintain a valid passport at all times
- Follow transfer and change of educational level procedures
- Apply for program extension **prior** to the end date on your Form I-20 if you are not able to complete your studies by this date
- Receive authorization before engaging in employment
- Report a change of address/residence to Slater International Center within 10 days of the change

## Full Course of Study

F-1 student status is granted only to students who plan to study **full-time** at an approved institution in the United States. Immigration regulations define full-time study for undergraduates as the equivalent of 12 credits per semester. The Wellesley College equivalent to this is 3-4 units per semester.

Students may be considered to be maintaining valid F-1 status despite being full-time in only a few circumstances. These include:

**Annual Vacation**

An F-1 student is considered to be in status during the annual or summer vacation if the student was in status the previous semester and intends to register for the next semester.

**Medical**

If a leave of absence or reduction in course load to less than full-time is needed for medical reasons, the student must notify the International Student & Scholar Advisor (ISSA) **prior** to withdrawing to less than full-time. The student will be required to provide the ISSA with a letter from a health-care practitioner requiring or recommending the interruption or reduction in studies.

**Language/Course Placement**

During the first semester of study in the U.S., a student may be able to reduce his/her course load due to initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with American teaching methods, or improper course level placement. The student's Class Dean must provide a statement describing the problem to the ISA in advance of the reduction in credits.

F-1 students who do not fall into any of the categories above and who fail to complete 3 units each semester generally will not be able to benefit from certain privileges associated with F-1 status. These privileges include:

- ☐ DSO signature on the Form I-20 for travel and re-entry to the U.S.
- ☐ On-campus employment
- ☐ Curricular or Optional Practical Training
- ☐ Immigration transfer to another U.S. institution

**Address Reporting**

International students must report their addresses to the Slater International Center within 10 days of arrival. A student who changes her address must update the Slater International Center within 10 days of the change.

**ALL VIOLATIONS OF STATUS WILL BE REPORTED IN SEVIS  
PROMPTLY**