

The Dual-Degree Program in Engineering at Dartmouth College

Addendum for Prospective International Applicants

This document provides additional information for dual-degree applicants who require F-1 student visa status to study in the U.S. Although addressed to the applicant, it is important for advisors, registrars, and international offices to understand how the program works.

Visa sponsorship

During the first year of the dual degree program, you are considered to be at Dartmouth on exchange from your home college. As a result, your visa must continue to be sponsored by your home college during your first year. This is true whether you are a junior or senior (on the 2-1-1-1 or 3-2 schedule, respectively). When you return to the Thayer School for the second year to complete the Bachelor of Engineering degree, you will be a Thayer School student and Dartmouth will sponsor your F-1 student visa status. Your home college will transfer your SEVIS record/I-20 to Dartmouth College and Dartmouth will issue a new I-20 for the B.E. program.

Enrollment patterns

Dartmouth operates on a year-round academic calendar with four full terms – summer, fall, winter, and spring – each ten weeks in length. Under Dartmouth academic rules, in the first year of the dual degree program you may potentially attend any three of the four terms – for example, summer-fall-winter, summer-winter-spring, or fall-winter-spring. Courses are offered in different terms, and depending on your engineering interests, some enrollment patterns may be more advantageous than others. However, students from a semester school, who opt to enroll at Dartmouth in any pattern other than fall-winter-spring, should be aware of Annual Vacation provisions that apply to F-1 visa status.

A student attending a school on a quarter or trimester calendar who takes only one vacation a year during any of the quarters or trimesters instead of during the summer is considered to be in status during that vacation, if the student has completed the equivalent of an academic year prior to taking the vacation. 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(iii).

The regulations require a full year of enrollment before the student “earns” a vacation or leave term; then, immediately after the leave term, the student must enroll again or lose their visa status.

The same principle applies to eligibility for Optional Practical Training (“OP”) or Curricular Practical Training (“CPT”).

“Practical training may be authorized to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full time basis, in a Service-approved college,....for one full academic year.” 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10).

The following examples illustrate the issues involved. For a student on a fall-winter-spring enrollment pattern at Dartmouth, here is what the dual degree program would look like:

	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
First and second years	Leave	Home		Home
Junior year	Leave	Dartmouth	Dartmouth	Dartmouth
Senior year	Leave	Home		Home
BE year	Leave	Thayer	Thayer	Thayer

The leave term comes, as usual, in the summer, and there is no interruption of the student’s visa status. The example student above should be eligible to apply for pre-completion OPT from their home school during the summer leave terms, and for post-completion OPT from their home school after completion of the Bachelor of Arts degree.

Students can amend the plan but it sets the pattern off and can cause a termination of visa status. In the next example, a student comes to Dartmouth for a summer-fall-winter enrollment plan. He finishes Dartmouth courses in mid-March, but the home college’s spring semester ends in May. The student would be non-enrolled for about 6 months, the equivalent of Dartmouth’s spring and summer terms. The student’s visa would be terminated, and he would have to leave the U.S., then return for his senior year at the home college with a new I-20, new visa, etc. Students should discuss this process with their home school immigration advisor.

	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
First and second years	Leave	Home		Home
Junior year	Dartmouth	Dartmouth	Dartmouth	?

Senior year	?	Home		Home
BE year	Leave	Thayer	Thayer	Thayer

Another common dual degree scenario is the summer-winter-spring enrollment pattern:

	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
First and second years	Leave	Home		Home
Junior year	Dartmouth	?	Dartmouth	Dartmouth
Senior year	?	Home		Home
BE year	Thayer	Leave	Thayer	Thayer

This is a problem for international students because Dartmouth transfers the student's I-20 from the home college and then, with the student having been enrolled at Dartmouth *for only one term* (Summer), we are asked to authorize a leave (or vacation) term in the fall. The regulations speak to an annual vacation term but they do not address transfer students being allowed an *earlier* vacation term just because they have been in status at the prior school and then transferred to Dartmouth.

To summarize: For any departures from the fall-winter-spring schedule, there should be coordination between Dartmouth and the home college so that everyone understands your intentions and what the implications are for your visa status.

In the second year of the dual degree program, students normally enroll in Dartmouth's fall, winter, and spring terms. Any variation on that pattern should be approved by Thayer School and discussed with the Dartmouth College Office of Visa and Immigration Services (OVIS). Admitted students will be contacted by OVIS to coordinate transfer of the SEVIS record/I-20 to Dartmouth so that there is no break in immigration status and to allow for any post-completion Optional Practical Training the student may have requested from the home college.

Course loads

The normal course load at Dartmouth is three courses per academic term (for a total of nine per academic year). As a dual degree student, you will normally take two engineering courses and one non-engineering course in each term of the first year, and three engineering courses per term in the second year. Subject to written permission from your home college, we will allow you to take one two-course term during the first year (skipping the non-engineering course).

International students in F-1 visa status are required to enroll full time to maintain their visa status. Regulations define "full time" as 12 quarter or semester hours per term. Two courses at Dartmouth are valued at 6.6 semester hours or 10 quarter hours. Therefore, students who are sponsored by their home college should discuss their course load with their international student advisor and registrar to ensure they will be considered "full time" at the home college.

Work authorizations

To work in the U.S. international students in F-1 visa status require some form of work authorization.

On-Campus work authorization: As a benefit of the F-1 visa status, international students are allowed to work "on campus" for their home college. In the first year of the dual degree program, F-1 students will also be allowed to work on the Dartmouth College campus if (a) their home college has provided them permission to work "on campus at an off-campus location;" (b) the work is in their field of study; and (c) the paycheck is from Dartmouth College.

In the second year of the dual degree program, F-1 students are sponsored by Dartmouth College and will be allowed to work for any Dartmouth College employer on campus, receiving a Dartmouth College paycheck.

Off-Campus work authorization: After the first year of the dual degree program, *i.e.*, in the leave term, study at Dartmouth has ended so permission to work "off campus at an off-campus location" also ends. International students on an F-1 visa will not be eligible to work on the Dartmouth campus unless they have obtained pre-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) work authorization from their home college.

After graduation from the home college, international students on an F-1 visa should be eligible for post-completion OPT work authorization. F-1 students are eligible for twelve months of OPT at every level of education. Students should keep

in mind that they have twelve months of OPT for the entire period of Bachelor's level work, which includes the home college Bachelor's degree and the Bachelor of Engineering degree. Students who wish to use OPT following the home college Bachelor's degree should take care not to request a full year of OPT if they wish to use OPT after the Bachelor of Engineering degree. Before requesting any post-completion OPT from the home school, students are encouraged to review the latest guidance on splitting OPT between two schools at the same level of education. For more information about that please contact the home school immigration advisor and/or OVIS at Dartmouth.

Students who want to work at Thayer School between completing their home college degree and beginning the second (B.E.) year of the dual degree program should contact OVIS to discuss transfer of the I-20 immediately following completion of the home college degree.

Financial aid

A condition of maintaining visa status is ability to meet expenses while studying in F-1 visa status. The college issuing an I-20 must have reliable documentation that the student possesses adequate financial resources to meet those expenses.

First year dual degree students are not eligible for Dartmouth financial aid. Those students must work with their home college to ensure that the costs of their education at Dartmouth are covered, and that they are maintaining visa status by meeting those financial requirements.

Second year dual degree students may be eligible for Dartmouth (Thayer School) financial aid depending upon their financial status and other rules or regulations pertaining to loans or other aid to international students. For the Dartmouth I-20 to be issued, second year students will be required to provide evidence of financial ability to pay any costs assessed by Dartmouth that are not otherwise covered by some form of aid or assistance.