

Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status



International Student & Scholar Services ♦ UT-Austin International Office

As an F-1/J-1 student, you are admitted to the U.S. for “duration of status”, which is notated as D/S on the white I-94 card in your passport. This means you are permitted to stay in the U.S. as long as you maintain your status. F-1 status is granted when you enter the U.S. and is regulated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The visa is different from immigration status; the visa stamp is placed in your passport by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate and is granted for entry purposes only. Even if your visa is valid, you can lose your legal student status if you do not comply with immigration laws regulating your stay in the U.S. If you fail to maintain your legal student status, you will need to speak to an Immigration Advisor at International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) to discuss your options for restoring your immigration status.

How to Maintain Your Immigration Status

Maintain a valid passport at all times.

Attend the school that that is listed on your current I-20/DS-2019.

For F-1 students, complete an immigration transfer whenever you change educational institutions.

This process must be completed within 15 days of beginning classes at your new school. An immigration transfer is a completely separate process from transferring academic credits from another school. The transfer is not complete until you have registered for classes at the new school and received an I-20 confirming the completion of your transfer.

For J-1 students, the immigration transfer has to be completed within 30 days of the transfer release date from your previous institution.

Complete a full course of study during the fall and spring semesters. A full course of study is defined as 12 hours per semester for an undergraduate student and 9 hours per semester for a graduate student. However, graduate students may be eligible to enroll for 3 hours once all coursework has been completed and the student is enrolled in thesis or dissertation. (Note: If you have an academic appointment, please check with your department for coursework requirements). Correspondence courses and in absentia registration do not count toward a full course of study. If you are a continuing student, you are not required by USICE to enroll in classes during the summer sessions. (Note: If you plan to graduate in the summer semester, please be sure to enroll in at least one academic course at UT Austin). If you need to drop below a full course of study, see an Immigration Advisor in ISSS before dropping any courses.

Apply for an extension of your program if you cannot complete your degree by the end date listed on your I-20/DS-2019.

Obtain a new I-20/DS-2019 whenever you make a change in degree levels. A new I-20/DS-2019 must be issued within 15 days of beginning classes in your new program. This includes changing from English language studies to a university degree, from bachelor's to master's, from master's to a doctorate, from Optional Practical Training to a new degree, etc.

Work off-campus ONLY if you have received authorization from an Immigration Advisor or USCIS. Limit on-campus work to part-time (part-time employment is defined as 20 hours or less per week) during the fall and spring semesters. On-campus employment may be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) during the summer and official school breaks. F-1 and J-1 students do not require special authorization to work on campus. Note: J-1 students whose DS-2019 was issued by a sponsor other than UT Austin are required to obtain an authorization letter from their program sponsor in order to work on UT Austin campus.

Request a travel endorsement on your I-20/DS-2019 from ISSS before leaving the U.S.

Report your change of local address within ten days of your move. To change your address, go to UTDirect at: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/utdirect/bio/address_change.WBX.

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