

International F-1 and J-1 students are non-immigrants pursuing full course of study towards specific educational or professional objectives at academic institutions in the U.S., as designated by the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Department of State (DOS). Once the educational or professional objectives have been attained, the U.S. government expects the student to return to his or her residence abroad. As an international student, you must abide by immigration regulations throughout your stay in the U.S. When you enter the U.S., you accept responsibility to abide by the conditions of your non-immigrant status. Failure to maintain lawful non-immigrant status may result in penalties.

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

**Passport:** The passport must be kept valid at all times during your stay in the U.S. It must be valid at least 6 months into the future to reenter the U.S. or to apply for a visa. The passport is usually renewable through your embassy or consulate in the U.S.

**I-20:** This 3-page document is issued to students in F-1 status by an educational institution. The I-20 must be presented to the U.S. consulate abroad to obtain a visa and to immigration officials upon each subsequent reentry to the U.S. Page 3 must contain a valid signature (no more than 6-months old) for authorized reentry in F-1 status. ONLY an International Student Adviser in ISSS is authorized to sign the I-20!

**DS-2019:** This 1-page document is issued to students in J-1 status by an educational institution or sponsor. The DS-2019 must be presented to the U.S. consulate abroad to obtain a visa and to immigration officials upon each subsequent reentry to the U.S. Page 1 must contain a valid signature (no more than 6-months old) for authorized reentry in J-1 status. ONLY your ISA can sign the DS-2019!

**I-94 Card:** This small white card is completed by you before passing U.S. immigration officials at the U.S. port of entry. This document authorizes your presence in the U.S. as a student for a specified period of time, in a specified program of study, at a specified institution. Two dates appear on the I-94; the date of U.S. entry and the date of expiration of your permission to stay. The expiration dates is usually "D/S" for "duration of status", corresponding to the I-20 date of program completion. Top number is your "Admission Number."

**F-1/J-1 Visa:** The student visa, which is a stamp or sticker placed in the passport at the American embassy or consulate permits you to enter the U.S. The expiration date on the visa is the last day you can use it to enter the U.S. Once you enter the U.S., the date does not matter. The visa may expire while you are in the U.S. You cannot and need not renew it while you are here. If the original visa expires, a new entry visa is required for subsequent reentries to the U.S. following travel abroad.

## MAINTAINING STATUS

### ALWAYS:

1. Maintain valid passport (for you and your dependents)
2. Attend the school whose name appears on the I-20/DS-2019
3. Register full-time – Do not drop below full-time without advanced authorization by your International Student Adviser
4. Maintain valid I-20/DS-2019 – Apply for extensions at least one month before your document expiration date
5. Consult your International Student Adviser in order to initiate an academic transfer
6. Obtain I-20/DS-2019 travel signature from your International Student Adviser before you depart the U.S. (for you and your dependents)
7. Maintain health insurance that meets Vanderbilt requirements (for you and your dependents)
8. Notify ISSS within 10 days of a change of address or telephone number
9. Do one of the following within 60 days for F-1 Students and 30 days for J-1 Students after program completion:
  - Depart the U.S.
  - Transfer, obtain an I-20/DS-2019 a new school/program, and enroll
  - Change to another immigration status
10. Depart the country within 15 days after academic withdrawal

**NOTE:** As an international student, you must submit U.S. tax forms each year whether or not you receive any U.S. income.

### NEVER:

1. Work off-campus without authorization from your International Student Adviser
2. Work on-campus more than 20 hours per week while school is in session
3. Take leave of absence without authorization from your International Student Adviser
4. Drop below full-time without authorization from your International Student Adviser
5. Accept an I-20/DS-2019 signature or advice from anyone other than ISSS staff

## **FAILURE TO MAINTAIN STATUS**

If you fail to maintain legal F-1 student status, your International Student Adviser will not endorse your I-20/DS-2019, and you will not be eligible for U.S. reentry or employment.

## **DURATION OF STATUS (D/S)**

Duration of status, the notation which should be on your I-94 card, allows F-1/J-1 students who are pursuing a full course of study to complete any educational level or series of programs and practical training (if you qualify). In addition, students have 60 days (30 days for J-1) to either depart from the U.S. or apply for a change of immigration status.

## **WHAT IS SEVIS?**

SEVIS is the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System that all colleges and universities in the U.S. use to report electronically to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) information about F-1 students and J-1 students and visiting scholars since January 30, 2003.

Reporting requirements include:

1. failure to enroll (termination of studies);
2. dropping below full-time enrollment without ISSS authorization;
3. unauthorized employment;
4. change in legal name and address;
5. disciplinary action taken by Vanderbilt University as the result of the student being convicted of a crime; and
6. graduation prior to expected end date as listed on the I-20 or DS-2019, and extensions if more time is needed to complete degree.

## **FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENT**

Regulations require all undergraduate students to enroll for 12 credit hours per semester, and graduate students must enroll for 9 credit hours per semester. Graduate students whom have completed all their coursework need only to enroll in the zero-credit research only course which is considered full-time.

## **COURSE LOAD REDUCTION**

ISSS must report to SEVIS each quarter whether students are full time or part time. Those who do not maintain a full course of study will be considered out of legal status and must either depart the U.S. immediately or apply for reinstatement.

There are, however, six approved reasons for students enrolled less than full time. They are the following:

1. initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with American teaching methods, or improper course level placement (allowed only once per academic level, and undergraduates must enroll for at least six credit hours);
2. last quarter of study (may be fewer than six credits);
3. concurrent enrollment (total combined enrollment at each institution must meet the definition of full time as stated above);
4. temporary illness or medical condition for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level. Documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist is required and must be provided for each new quarter that a student is ill.

If any of the above exceptions apply to you, you MUST see an ISSS advisor to get permission prior to the start of the next semester or as soon as you know you will not be enrolled full time at Vanderbilt University.

## **TRAVEL**

If you plan on traveling outside the U.S., you must come to ISSS for a travel signature for reentry to the U.S. If you have dependents, each one must have his or her SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 with a recent travel signature in order to get a visa and/or enter the U.S. Travel signatures are good for 6 months.

## **TRAVEL TO CANADA, MEXICO AND ADJACENT ISLANDS**

If you will be visiting Canada, Mexico or an adjacent island and will stay less than 30 days, you will not need to renew your F-1/J-1 visa if it is expired in order to re-enter the U.S. because of automatic visa revalidation. You will need to travel with your most recent DS-2019 or I-20 with a valid travel signature. For a list of adjacent islands, please visit ISSS website: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/students.html#travel>.

You may need a visa to enter these countries depending upon your citizenship. To find out if you do, contact the country's consulate in the U.S. The contact information for the Canadian consulates can be found the ISSS website: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/links.html#immigration>.

If you choose to apply for a U.S. visa while in Canada, you are not eligible for automatic visa revalidation. You will need to re-enter the U.S. on your new visa. If you are denied a new visa, you will need to travel DIRECTLY to your home country to obtain a new visa in order to reenter the U.S.

## **U.S. ADDRESS REPORTING REQUIREMENT**

You must notify ISSS within 10 days of an address change. You MAY NOT use a P. O. Box as your address. SEVIS requires a street address that is the current address where you and your dependents physically reside. This can be done via the ISSS website:

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/students.html#address>.

## **F-2 AND J-2 DEPENDENT STUDY**

Individuals in F-2 status are not able to study for a degree on either a part-time or full-time basis. Therefore, those who would like to study full time toward a degree must apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a change of status to F-1. F-2 dependents may not enroll in classes leading toward a degree program until the change of status is approved.

Currently, regulations do not prohibit J-2 dependents from enrolling in full-time or part-time study toward a degree.

## **EXTENSION OF I-20 OR DS-2019**

You must obtain an extension of your I-20 or DS-2019 prior to the program end-date as noted on your current I-20 or DS-2019. Please bring the completed program extension form (available on ISSS website, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/forms.html#Student>) and proof of funding. If you do not obtain a new I-20 or DS-2019 prior to the program end-date you are in violation of your immigration status.

## **CHANGE OF ACADEMIC LEVEL**

ISSS must report a change of academic level to SEVIS within 21 days of such event. Please bring your letter from your department including any funding if changing from Master's to Ph.D. and all previous Forms I-20 or DS-2019 to ISSS. ISSS will submit the change to SEVIS after reviewing your documents and will request a new SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019. This includes students changing levels from a non-degree program, including English Language Program to Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D. Students originally planning on graduating with a Ph.D. but instead graduating with a Master's degree should also bring in a letter from their department.

## **CHANGE OF MAJOR**

Students who change their majors must complete a Change of Major Form with their academic advisor in their department and submit it to the Registrar's office. ISSS must notify Immigration within 21 days of this event. You must inform ISSS when you change your major.

## **GRACE PERIODS**

F-1 students have a 60-day and J-1 students have a 30-day grace period following completion of study or completion of Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Academic Training (AT) respectively to depart the U.S., transfer to another institution, or change status.

However, students who terminate their studies before completion of their academic program do NOT receive a 60-day grace period. These students MUST notify ISSS BEFORE terminating studies in order to receive a 15-day grace period to depart the U.S.

F-1 students who do not notify ISSS before termination of studies receive no grace period and must leave the U.S. immediately.

## **SAFEKEEPING DOCUMENTS/REPLACING LOST DOCUMENTS**

Never throw away any I-20 or DS-2019 after receiving an updated form. ICE/USCIS may request to see these forms in the future. Likewise, U.S. embassies and consulates abroad may ask to see these documents when reviewing a future visa application.

## **TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER UNIVERSITY**

Students must notify ISSS no later than 60 days after the program end date on their I-20s or 30 days after the end date on the DS-2019. Students will not be able to receive an I-20 or DS-2019 from the new school unless the following steps are completed:

1. notify ISSS of your intent to transfer by completing the Student Departure Form (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/forms.html#Student>) along with the name and copy of admission letter of the new school to which you intend to transfer;
2. ISSS will then set the SEVIS release date "transfer out". The release date is typically the last day of the semester or the date of expected transfer.
3. you may request to cancel the "transfer out" at any time prior to the release date;
4. as of the release date, the new school will have full access to your SEVIS record and will issue you a new SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019;
5. you must contact the international office at the new school within 15 days of the start date listed on the SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 to avoid violating your status;
6. the new school will verify enrollment with SEVIS, thereby acknowledging that you have completed the transfer process; and

## **F-1 STUDENT EMPLOYMENT**

### On-Campus

F-1 students may work on campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and more than 20 hours per week during official breaks (winter, spring, summer). Other types of employment in the U.S. require authorization by USCIS or ISSS.

### Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

F-1 students may participate in a CPT program if it is an integral part of an established curriculum. CPT is defined to be alternate work/study, internship, or any other type of required internship or practicum. CPT may be full-time or part-time. However, if a student is authorized for 12 months or more of FULL-TIME CPT, he or she will no longer be eligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Students engaged in part-time CPT must still enroll full time. A student is not eligible to use CPT until he or she has been enrolled full-time for one academic year (9 months). Students who are finished with all coursework may not apply for curricular practical training, unless they are graduate students who will incorporate research conducted in the workplace into their thesis or dissertation. For more information on CPT, see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/iss/students.html#F>.

## Optional Practical Training (OPT)

F-1 students may apply for OPT authorization for temporary employment directly related to the student's major area of study.

ICE/USCIS regulations state that:

1. students may apply for 12 months of OPT to begin after completion of their course of study and may become eligible for another 12 months when he or she changes to a higher educational level;
2. students may apply for OPT up to 120 days prior to completion of studies, but may not apply for OPT after completion of studies; and
3. authorization to engage in OPT is automatically terminated when the student transfers to another school or begins study at another educational level.

For more information on OPT, see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/students.html#F>.

## **J-1 STUDENT EMPLOYMENT**

### On-campus

J-1 students holding assistantships and may work on-campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session.

With prior approval from ISSS, J-1 students other than those holding assistantships may work on-campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session and more than 20 hours per week during official breaks (Winter, Spring, Summer). ISSS will issue the J-1 student a letter of authorization that will become part of your immigration record.

### Academic Training (AT)

J-1 students remain eligible for Academic Training (AT) work authorization. However, ISSS must authorize the period of academic training prior to the first day of employment.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS (SSN)**

F-1 international students must have employment before they can apply for social security numbers. Once you have obtained a job, you may go to the ISSS website to download the Social Security Letter form that needs to be completed before going to the Social Security Administration Office. Please see: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/forms.html#General>. Note that the form must have your employment information and your employer's signature before an ISSS advisor can sign it. Directions to the SSA office can be found on the ISSS website at, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/links.html#Government>.

## **INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (ITIN) INFORMATION**

An ITIN number is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) not the Social Security Administration. IRS issues ITINs to individuals who are required to have a U.S. taxpayer identification number but who do not have, and are not eligible to obtain, a Social Security Number from the Social Security Administration. ITINs are for federal tax reporting purposes only. To find out more about ITIN numbers, please visit <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96287,00.html>.

In order to apply for an ITIN number, please download the application at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw7.pdf>.

## **I-9 AND GLACIER**

Students who are working on-campus must complete their payroll employment eligibility form online with ISSS. Glacier is an online international tax program that must also be completed when working on-campus. Please contact the International Tax Office for Glacier processing at [nrtax@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:nrtax@vanderbilt.edu).

## **REINSTATEMENT TO LEGAL STATUS**

Students who have violated immigration regulations and have fallen out of legal status should immediately contact an International Student Advisor at ISSS in order to regain legal status in the U.S.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

- It is up to you to know your legal responsibilities as an international student.
- Ask ISSS if you do not understand anything related to immigration.
- DO NOT rely on advice from your friends.

## **ISSS ADVISING SCHEDULE**

Walk-in hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10:00am – 12:00pm and 1:30pm – 3:30pm  
Wednesday 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Your primary student adviser is listed below. If you are unable to meet with your primary adviser, you may meet with any adviser that best fits your schedule.

Last names beginning with A-H	Marci Angevine, International Student & Scholar Adviser
Last names beginning with I-K	Heather Jones, International Student & Scholar Adviser
Last names beginning with L-Q	Radhika Reddy, International Student & Scholar Adviser
Last names beginning with R-Z	Heather Young, Assistant Director

Please take time to review the International Student and Scholar Handbook, and ISSS Helpful Links, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/issv/links.html>.