

Extension Regulation for F-1 Students

****Please Note: Employment is generally not a valid reason for extension of stay. If you have questions contact David Garrett at david.garrett@sunyit.edu*

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) requires that you finish your program of study by the completion date on your I-20. If you will not graduate by that date, you must come into the Office of International Student Services and apply for a program extension **at least 30 days before the I-20 will expire.**

There is no fee to apply for a program extension, and no "waiting period" to hear from USCIS once the necessary paperwork is submitted. The Office of International Student Services will approve all program extension requests allowable by USCIS regulations, and notify USCIS of your new completion date.

In order to obtain a program extension, you must show that you have continually maintained status and that the extension is needed for compelling academic or medical reasons, such as a change of major or research topic, unexpected research problems, or a documented illness. Delays in completing your program caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extension approval.

Extension of stay can be granted for documented academic or medical reasons. Employment is generally not a valid reason for extension unless the internship or curricular practical training (CPT) is necessary to complete degree requirements. Issues created by the limited number of H-1B visas are also not allowable reasons for extension.

If your completion of studies date has expired or you do not meet the eligibility requirements to apply for a program extension, it will be necessary to file for reinstatement to F-1 status, for which the USCIS will charge a fee. In addition, failure to apply for an extension of stay in a timely manner is a violation of F-1 regulations, which can carry heavy penalties.

The following items are needed to process a program extension application:

- Academic Advisor's Recommendation Form (to be completed by the appropriate faculty member in your department)
- Proof of financial support

Once your program extension application is complete, the Office of International Student Services will prepare a SEVIS I-20 showing your new completion date, and notify USCIS of the change.

Be sure to keep this new I-20 and all previous I-20 forms you have been issued. They must be submitted on request to an immigration officer when you travel outside the U.S., or to the Office of International Student Services when applying for any benefits for which F-1 students are eligible.