

Rules for Maintaining Valid F-1 Status

AS AN F-1 STUDENT, YOU ARE MAINTAINING YOUR STATUS WHEN YOU:

- Keep your passport valid at all times
- Within 10 days of moving, report any change of address to the Office of International Student Services (ISS). This address change is then reported by the ISS to the federal immigration authorities.
- Attend the school that you are authorized to attend, as indicated on your I-20
- Pursue a full course of study
- Maintain registration each semester until graduation or transfer to a new school
- Obtain prior authorization from the ISS **before** dropping below a full-time course of study. The very limited exceptions to the full-time course rule are:
 1. Academic Difficulty
 2. Medical Condition
 3. Completion of Course of Study
- Follow required procedures for:
 - moving from one educational level to another (e.g., bachelor's to Master's)
 - transferring from one school to another
 - filing a timely application for program extension
- Limit on-campus employment to 20 hours per week when school is in session.
- Refrain from off-campus employment without authorization
- Possess proof of health and accident insurance which includes a medical evacuation and repatriation benefit (either the SUNY mandatory policy or an *approved* comparable policy).

Maintaining Status

What Does "In Status" Mean?

The term "in status" means complying with the regulations governing your visa status. Students who violate any of the terms described below may fall "out of status." Students who are out of status will have to apply for Reinstatement to the Department of Homeland Security and are not eligible to take advantage of any benefits that come with student status (such as on-campus employment or authorization to work off-campus). It is therefore **extremely important to be aware of what you need to do to stay in status**. Talk to an advisor in SUNY Polytechnic Institute (SUNY Poly). If you have an academic or medical issue that prevents you from fulfilling the requirements, or if you are uncertain about anything concerning your status. **Maintaining your status is your responsibility. Look at your immigration documents and know what they represent and when they expire.**

To Maintain F-1 Status, Students Must:

- Attend the school indicated on their I-20
- Take a full course load every semester
- Follow DHS procedures in a timely manner for changing degree levels within GMU, and transferring to other schools
- Maintain a valid passport at all times
- Apply for an extension of program **before** the expiration date on the I-20, if needed
- Limit on-campus employment to 20 hours a week during semesters.
- Refrain from off-campus work without authorization (**this is extremely important!**)
- Report changes of address to ISS **within 10 days**.

D/S Means "Duration of Status"

The D/S notation that appears on the I-20 or DS-2019 and on the I-94 card, when stamped by INS, stands for "Duration of Status." **D/S means that you are allowed to stay in the United States until either you finish the requirements for your degree program or until the expected completion date indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019 form, whichever comes first.** If your I-94 card does not have the D/S notation, meet with International Student Advisor at ISS immediately. If you need more time to complete your program, it is important that your I-20 or DS-2019 be **extended before it expires**. Please see International Student advisor in ISS the semester in which your document expires. F-1 students may stay an additional 60 days after program completion, and J-1 students may remain in the U.S. an additional 30 days beyond completion of program. Please be aware that these grace periods only apply if you have completed your program.

Important Immigration Definitions

General Definitions	U.S. immigration law divides all individuals seeking to enter the United States into two categories: immigrants and nonimmigrants. Immigrants are individuals who are intending to remain permanently in the United States. Nonimmigrants are individuals coming for a temporary stay. Those entering the United States as immigrants may have the intent to remain permanently and to abandon their foreign residency. Individuals admitted as nonimmigrants must demonstrate that they have a residence abroad which they have no intention of abandoning.
Department of Homeland Security	The government agency charged with enforcing immigration law and policy.
Department of Labor	The government agency designated to protect U.S. workers (U.S. citizens and permanent residents), and encourage the employment of U.S. workers.

Department of State	The government agency which operates U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, U.S. diplomatic service, and is charged with issuing visas to foreign nationals wishing to travel to the United States.
Employment Authorization Card	Provides an individual with authorization to work for any employer in the United States.
Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Card	Document issued by the immigration officer at the port of entry authorizing an individual to enter the United States stating the visa category which the person is authorized to hold, and stating the date by which the individual must depart the United States.
"Green Card"/Permanent Residence	Card which serves as evidence of an individual's lawful permanent residence in the United States.
Immigrant	A foreign national who intends to reside permanently in the United States.
Nonimmigrant	A foreign national who intends to remain temporarily in the United States, and to return to a foreign residence abroad (F-1 and J-1 students are nonimmigrants).
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)	Administers services such as immigrant and nonimmigrant sponsorship; adjustment of status; work authorization and other permits; naturalization of qualified applications for U.S. citizenship; and asylum or refugee processing.
U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Responsible for enforcement of immigration and customs laws at the U.S. borders.
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)	The largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, ICE is responsible for enforcement of immigration and customs laws within the United States, the protection of specified federal buildings, and air and marine enforcement.
Visa	Form placed in a passport by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad which allows the visa holder to enter the United States and to present him/herself for inspection by a DHS officer at the port of entry into the United States.

Travel and Visa Renewals

Students who plan to travel outside of the United States must bring their I-20s or DS-2019 form to SUNY Poly for endorsement. The endorsement validates your immigration form and verifies that you are "in status" and returning to SUNY Poly to continue your studies. For this reason, you should be registered for the upcoming term before getting your I-20 or DS-2019 signed when you get it signed close to the end of the semester. **Always check your entry visa before leaving to see whether it will need to be renewed. You should verify your visa expiration date and the number of entries on your visa before making travel plans. Please go to SUNY Poly for advising if you are unsure of the visa renewal process or expect visa renewal difficulties. To re-enter the United States after a trip, students will need a valid passport with a valid visa, and a**

valid I-20 or DS-2019, endorsed by your international student advisor . The I-20 should be endorsed every semester that you travel. (Canadian citizens do not need a visa to enter the U.S.) Please check <http://usembassy.state.gov/> for links to U.S. Embassies and Consulates around the world.

If your visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new entry visa at the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country you are visiting. Visas cannot be renewed in the United States. Take your immigration documents, proof of financial support, proof of full-time enrollment, and strong proof of ties to your home country when you go to renew your visa. There are special provisions for automatic visa revalidation for travel to Canada, Mexico, and Islands adjacent to the South Eastern Coast of the U.S (except Cuba). Please consult International Student Advisor in the ISS office if you are planning on traveling to one of these places and your visa is not valid.

Also, please consult International Student Advisor in ISS before you consider applying for a U.S. visa in a contiguous territory or adjacent island. Students from some countries will need a visa to enter Canada and Mexico, while some can enter without a visa. Contact the embassy of the country to which you are traveling to find out about visa requirements. Please check www.embassy.org for the embassy of the country you would like to visit. Also please note that many U.S. embassies and consulates around the world have longer processing times than they may have previously had in the past.

Staying in the U.S. with an Expired Visa is OK

The visa is the stamp in your passport that allows you to enter the United States. It does not determine your length of stay here, **your I-20 or DS-2019 form and the I-94 card do**. A student visa can only be obtained at a U.S. embassy or consulate **outside** of the United States. If your visa expires and you maintain your status, there is no need to travel outside of the United States for the sole purpose of renewing your visa.

Full-Time Enrollment

All F-1 and J-1 students are required to take and complete a full-time course load as follows:

- Undergraduate students: 12 credits per semester
- Graduate students: 12 credits (graduate level) per semester