

How to maintain your student visa status in the US

As an international student in the US, it's important for you to understand that it is your responsibility to keep your F-1/J-1 status legal and valid throughout the duration of your studies in the US. Make sure you follow these guidelines while you are an international student at IC.

Keep your immigration documents valid and unexpired.

- Your passport should be valid at least six months into the future at all times. If your passport is expiring soon, renew it in your home country or at your consulate in the US.
- Check your [I-94 record](#) and print it out and retain your latest I-94 record every time you travel abroad and reenter the US to ensure you entered the US in the correct visa status.
- Your I-20 or DS-2019 must be accurate and unexpired. Keep all original I-20s or DS-2019s ever issued to you in a safe place. Do not throw away any I-20s or DS-2019s. If any information is incorrect or you need to update anything on your I-20 or DS-2019, contact isss@ithaca.edu or make an advising appointment with the OIP. If your I-20 or DS-2019 is about to expire, request an extension in a timely manner.
- Your student visa must be valid if you are traveling abroad and reentering the US.

Register for full time enrollment every Fall and Spring semester.

- You must register for full time enrollment every fall and spring semester: minimum of 12 credits for undergraduate students and minimum of 9 credits for graduate students. You must also be making normal progress towards your program completion.
- Only one online course (3 credits) may count towards your full-time enrollment in any Fall or Spring semester.
- If you think you need to enroll part-time or take a leave of absence, contact the OIP in advance to get advice and obtain advance authorization. In your final semester, you may register part-time. Make sure that you discuss this with the OIP in advance in order to obtain the correct authorization.

J-1 students cannot consider online course enrollment as part of their required full-time enrollment. Online course enrollment should be in addition to full-time in-person enrollment.

Provide a US address and phone number in your OIP record and update within 10 days of any changes.

- You must keep a current US address and US phone number in your OIP record. If there are any changes, you are required to update the information within 10 days.

Do not work without authorization.

F-1 Students can **work on-campus** without prior authorization if you:

- are a full-time student
- have a valid, unexpired I-20 from IC
- have an [I-94 record](#) indicating you are in F-1 status

You can work on campus for a maximum of 20 hours/week when school is in session. During the winter and summer breaks, you can work for more than 20 hours/week.

J-1 students must contact the OIP before beginning work on-campus in order to request employment authorization.

You must have a Social Security Number before you can be paid.

NEVER work off-campus without PRIOR authorization. Always discuss off-campus work with the OIP before you start working off-campus.

Follow IC and US government requirements.

- You must have health insurance while you are a student at IC.
- You are required to obey all local, state, and federal laws during your stay in the United States. Any violation of the laws could negatively impact your immigration status.

Carry all the required documents when traveling and reentering the US as an international student.

- Obtain a **travel signature** from the OIP before you depart the US.

Decide your plans by the end of your grace period and notify the OIP.

Upon completion of your degree program, F-1 students have 60-days and J-1 students have 30 days to do the following:

- Prepare to depart the US. Students may not exit and reenter the US in F-1 or J-1 status during their grace period. This includes any travel to Canada or Mexico.
- Transfer to another US school/degree program
- Change to a different immigration status
- Apply for work authorization, such as Post-Completion OPT for F-1 students and Academic Training for J-1 students

It is important that you understand **it is your responsibility to maintain your student status**. Failure to follow compliance and reporting procedures may result in violation of your student visa status.

How can I make sure that I maintain my immigration status?

- Follow all the regulations listed above.
- If you are not sure – ask. The OIP staff are here to answer your questions and to help you to the best of our ability or to refer you for additional assistance.
- Submit required information and updates as required.
- Plan ahead and submit your inquiries and requests to the OIP in advance. We do our best to assist quickly but we may be unable to respond to last-minute requests.
- Pay attention to the e-mails sent out by the OIP directly to you or via the international listserv international-students@lists.ithaca.edu and respond to them in a timely manner.