

Basic Requirements for Maintaining F-1 Status

Listed below are some common and important requirements for maintaining F-1 visa status. This is not an exhaustive list of requirements or regulations. For further information, resources, and assistance related to F-1 Visa status, please contact the PDSO, Bonnie Lui at blui@ndnu.edu or (650) 649-9168.

1. New students should report to the International Student Advisor/Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) upon arrival to the Belmont area. Students must arrive on or before the program start date listed on the I-20. Attendance at an International Orientation session fulfills this requirement. Please bring your passport, I-20, and I-94 with you to this meeting. Please contact your academic advisor for degree requirements.
2. Carry a full course load every semester (12 units for undergraduate students, 9 units for graduate students). Reducing course load in any semester needs to be approved by the PDSO *prior to the reduction in course load*. Check with the PDSO if you believe you need to take a reduced course load. A reduced course load may be authorized in very specific circumstances (such as the results of your last semester of studies or in certain medical circumstances). Again, all periods of reduced course load need to be pre-approved by the PDSO with the approved reduction noted on your I-20.
3. Make normal progress toward completion of your program. If you become disqualified from school, you may lose your F-1 status. Check the University catalog for conditions of academic and other disqualifications.
4. Keep continuity in the program of study. In general, an absence from the United States (U.S.) or any other academic break for more than five (5) months terminates a student's F-1 status, except for certain authorized study abroad programs.
5. Extend your program of study in a timely manner. Your I-20 lists the normal duration of study in your program. If you must extend it, you are required to submit an application *prior* to the expiration of your current I-20.
6. Retain all legal documents carefully. Please retain originals and photocopies of all important documents related to your F-1 status. This includes, but is not limited to your passport, F-1 visa, I-94, I-20s (current and expired), and class schedules. Please keep these documents in a safe place, and make sure you have made photocopies of these documents in case they are lost or stolen. While the PDSO keeps copies of these documents as well, it is your responsibility to retain all documents relating to your F-1 status and lawful entry into the U.S.
7. Return to the U.S. in proper F-1 status when traveling abroad. You should make an appointment to see the PDSO before you make your travel arrangements. The PDSO may need to sign your I-20 before you travel (generally, travel signatures on page 2 of the I-20 are valid for one year only). You should return to the U.S. in F-1 status using your most recently signed NDNU I-20. When you return to the U.S., make sure you have your passport, I-20, and valid/unexpired F-1 visa with you. Additionally, it is a good idea to travel with financial support documents, copies of your course registration, and copies of your previous I-94 and I-20 documents. While these may not be required, a Customs and Border Patrol Agent may ask you for additional evidence, and these historical documents can be helpful.

8. Keep your passport valid for six (6) months into the future. If you plan to travel outside the U.S. and return to continue your studies, you should have your passport valid for six (6) months beyond the date of your entry. Additionally, if your F-1 visa will have expired by the time you intend to re-enter the U.S., you will need to apply for a renewed visa prior to your return. If you need to apply for a renewed visa, please factor appointment wait times and processing times into your travel plans. You can find your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate by going to www.usembassy.gov. F-1 visas cannot be renewed from within the borders of the U.S.
9. Always update your address with the PDSO. You must report any change of address to the PDSO within ten (10) days of the change. Failing to do so may cause you to lose your F-1 status.
10. Refrain from unauthorized work. While F-1 students do have specific employment options, employment for F-1 visa holders is strictly regulated. All F-1 employment must be approved either by the PDSO or by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), depending upon the type of employment. Any unauthorized work is considered a serious violation of status and will result in the termination of your F-1 status.
11. Apply for [optional practical training \(OPT\)](#) up to ninety (90) days before completion of your degree. If you have been in lawful status as a full-time student for at least one (1) full academic year, you may submit an OPT application to USCIS after consultation/recommendation by the NDNU PDSO. If you are applying for post-completion OPT, you should submit the application up to ninety (90) days prior to the completion of your program. Please consult with the NDNU PDSO if you would like more information regarding your OPT options and the application process.
12. Apply for [curricular practical training \(CPT\)](#) if an internship is required. Check with the PDSO for the requirements and procedures of applying for CPT.
13. A US social security number is needed for most types of employment. The PDSO can assist you with this process if you have a legitimate job offer for which you are eligible.
14. Transfer with a valid status. To transfer your Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record/I-20 to another institution, you must have been accepted to a new Student & Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certified school, and you must also be eligible to transfer based on having maintained status at the current school.
15. File all requests and changes with the PDSO at least five (5 working days) prior to the date that the decision is needed. Please remember that your PDSO needs time to process your requests.