



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Office of International Education
International Student and Scholar Services

MAINTAINING F-1 STUDENT STATUS

What does it mean to be in F-1 student status?

- You entered the U.S. with an F-1 visa (or, if Canadian, used an I-20 to enter the U.S.)
OR
- You entered the U.S. with a different visa and subsequently applied for and were granted a change-of-status to F-1 by the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS).

THEREFORE, your primary purpose for being in the United States is to study.

How do I remain in lawful F-1 student status?

To maintain your F-1 status, you must comply with **ALL** of the following requirements:

- Keep your passport valid at all times. **While you are in the U.S., you must always have a valid passport.**
- Attend the school you are authorized to attend. **This means that you must report to the school whose I-20 you used to enter the U.S. or to which your last school transfer was authorized.**
- **Remain a full-time student and make normal progress toward your degree.**
 - Register for 12 credit hours each semester (except during summer vacations).
 - Register for 9 credit hours each semester if you are a graduate student who holds an assistantship.
 - Register for 1 or more credit hours each semester if you have **Certification of Full-time Status** from the Graduate School (408 Capen Hall, North Campus) while working on your thesis or dissertation.
 - Do not drop or resign courses so that you are no longer registered for a full course load.
 - Do not register for more than one distance education class (or 3 credits).
- **Have a valid and accurate I-20.**
 - Check section 5 of your I-20. The **date of expected completion of studies** must not have passed. If the expiration date is approaching and you have not finished your program, you must apply for an "Extension of Stay" before the expiration date. (ISSS will accept your application 90 days before the expiration

date. Note: You cannot apply for an extension of your I-20 after the expiration date.)

- **To re-enter the U.S.**, you must get a travel signature on page 3 of your I-20 every year. Exception: Students on OPT must get a new signature on page 3 of their I-20 every six months. Note: Only Designated School Officials (DSO's) are eligible to sign your I-20.
- **Not work off-campus unless authorized by the USCIS and/or DSO at your school.**
- **Notify UB of a Change of Address through the HUB Student Center within 10 days of your move.** ISSS will then notify the Department of Homeland Security. If you are on OPT, you must report your Change of Address to ISSS, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus or by email to intlservices@buffalo.edu.

Are there any EXCEPTIONS to the full-time course registration requirement?

There are some exceptions to the full-time course registration requirement:

- During summer vacation
- During your final semester if you need fewer than 12 credits to finish your degree requirements and graduate
 - Note: You must obtain prior authorization from a Designated School Official to reduce your course load. ISSS also requires a written recommendation from your advisor / professor.
 - Note: You may not register only for Distance Education courses in your final semester. You must be physically present and taking (a) course(s) at UB.
- One time per degree level due to difficulties with the English language or reading load, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods or improper course placement
 - Note: You must obtain prior authorization from a Designated School Official to reduce your course load. ISSS also requires a written recommendation from your advisor or professor.
 - Note: You must be registered for at least 6 credit hours to be eligible for this Reduced Course Load.
- While suffering from a medical condition or illness
 - Note: You must obtain a written recommendation from a licensed medical professional (e.g. physician, osteopath or licensed clinical psychologist) and authorization from a Designated School Official to reduce your course load. The medical recommendation must include the reason for the recommendation, the number of courses you may take and the length of time such a reduction is necessary.
 - Note: You may have a maximum of 12 months of Reduced Course Load Due to Medical Condition per degree level.

PLEASE NOTE: A Medical Leave of Absence is different from a regular “Leave of Absence.” If you take a Leave of Absence from the University, you must depart the U.S., whereas a Medical Leave of Absence (when approved by a Designated School Official) allows you to remain in the U.S. and maintain your status while seeking medical treatment

inside the U.S. If you cannot register for any classes due to a medical condition, you should apply for a Medical Leave of Absence from UB. To apply for it, you will need to meet with your Academic Advisor as well as an International Student Advisor.

Failure to comply with these requirements is a violation of your F-1 status, which may result in serious consequences, including your termination in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitors Information System), inability to re-enter the U.S., and arrest, detention and deportation from the U.S. Please direct all questions regarding your F-1 student status to ISSS, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus.