

F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDELINES
MAINTAINING LEGAL F-1 STATUS
Middlebury College

When you enter the U.S. as an F-1 student, you are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and, in some cases, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Maintaining legal F-1 status is extremely important for international students, as it may not be possible to rectify the situation if you fall “out of status.” Students who are out of status are not allowed to work on campus and are not eligible for other F-1 benefits. Being out of status may make a student’s visa invalid and require a student to depart the U.S. Students who remain in the U.S. out of status for more than 180 days risk being banned from entering the United States for 3 years. Those who remain out of status for more than 1 year may be inadmissible for 10 years. To maintain legal F-1 status, follow these guidelines and consult with International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) about your questions.

Entry Documents and Procedures

- **Always enter the U.S. with a valid F-1 visa and Form I-20** while you are a student (Canadian citizens do not need to obtain a visa but need to enter with an I-20 for the duration of their academic program). Do not use a tourist (B-2) visa or a visa waiver to enter the U.S. If you enter the U.S. via an air or sea port of entry, you will no longer receive a paper I-94 card as this system has become automated; however, you will receive an entry stamp in your passport. This stamp should correctly state your date of admission, class of admission (F-1) and admitted until date (D/S for duration of status). If it does not, please see ISSS immediately.
- **Have a passport that is valid for a minimum of 6 months into the future.**
- **Attend the school you are authorized to attend.** As a new initial F-1 student, you are authorized to attend the school listed on the Form I-20 you present at the port of entry when you enter the U.S. You are required to report to this school within 30 days of your entry into the U.S. even if you no longer want to enroll and intend to transfer your SEVIS record to another institution.

If you are currently an F-1 student studying in the U.S. who is eligible to transfer in status to a new institution, you must continue maintaining status at your current institution until your transfer release date. On this date, your SEVIS record will be released to your new school who will issue you an updated Form I-20 with a new program start date. You will be required to report to this new school within 15 days of this program start date.

If you are transferring to Middlebury College, be sure to contact ISSS within this 15-day timeframe. Middlebury students who have transferred their SEVIS record to another U.S. institution must abide by this regulation both at the new school and when they return to Middlebury.

Full-time Enrollment

- **Be enrolled full-time.** At Middlebury, full-time is 3-5 courses per semester and one course during the January term. On average, students enroll in 9 courses each year. Exceptions may be made only for illness, initial difficulty with the English language or when undergraduates are completing their course of study in their last term at Middlebury College. ISSS must authorize these exceptions prior to their taking effect. If you drop below “full-time” without pre-approval, you will be considered “out of status.”
- **Have your I-20 signed by ISSS each Fall and Spring Term.** This travel signature (page 2 of your Form I-20) reconfirms that you are engaged in an academic program of study at Middlebury College.
- **Temporary Absence: If you withdraw from the College and a break in your F-1 status occurs,** you must obtain a new I-20 before you return to Middlebury College. The exception to this is if you are enrolled in a Middlebury College School Abroad or a pre-approved study abroad program.

Employment

- **Limit on-campus employment to no more than 20 hours per week** during the academic year (this includes exam periods). Full-time on-campus employment is permitted during official College breaks and vacations when there is a full week when classes are not in session.

- **Refrain from off-campus employment without authorization. You may not work off campus unless you receive authorization from USCIS (for Optional Practical Training) or ISSS (for Curricular Practical Training – only available during the Winter Term and in qualifying circumstances).** Contact ISSS to apply for off-campus employment authorization. *(Please note: off-campus employment must be directly related to your major program of study.)*

Address Changes

- **Report a change of residence or address within 10 days of the change through the ISSS website.**

Suspensions/Withdrawals

- **If you voluntarily withdraw with prior approval from ISSS,** you have a 15-day grace period in which to depart from the U.S.
- **If you are suspended from the College or receive other College discipline that prevents you from being enrolled full time while classes are in session, your SEVIS record will be terminated.** You have no grace period and cannot remain in the U.S. with your Middlebury College I-20. You should depart the U.S. immediately and obtain a new I-20 from ISSS if you are allowed to return to Middlebury College in the future. You may also seek to transfer your terminated SEVIS record to another institution should they support your reinstatement application with USCIS.

Program Extensions

- **If you need to remain in the U.S. longer than the period of time specified on your I-20,** you must apply to ISSS for a program extension before the program end date on your Form I-20. Program extensions can only be granted if the delay in completion of studies is due to compelling academic or medical reasons. A student who is unable to complete the program within the time listed on the I-20 and who is ineligible for extension is considered “out of status.”

Completion of Program – Options

Once your program of study is complete, you have four options. You can:

- **Depart the U.S. within 60 days after your program completion date** (May grads – date of Commencement; December grads – last day of fall term final exams; Febs – date of Feb Celebration).

OR

- **Apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT).** ISSS recommends submitting your application before your program end date as it may take up to 90 days to receive USCIS approval.

OR

- **Complete the transfer procedure** to enroll as an F-1 student at another U.S. institution. You should meet with ISSS to discuss your plans at least one month before your program end date.

OR

- **Change to another visa category.** Again, consult with ISSS for more information.

Questions?

If you are unsure about your status, please contact International Student and Scholar Services

International Student and Scholar Services

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