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## Maintaining your F-1 Status

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The United States immigration laws and regulations emphasize the importance of international students in F-1 visa classification to maintain their legal status in the United States. F-1 students should be aware of and fully comply with the following requirements set forth by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS):

- You must maintain a valid passport at all times, unless exempt from passport requirements.
- You must attend the college/university listed on the current I-20.
- You must complete an official immigration transfer whenever changing educational institutions. As an F-1 student, this includes notifying your current institution of your intent to transfer, obtaining a Form I-20 from the new institution, and reporting to the DSO at the new school within 15 days of the program start date listed on the Form I-20. To notify FGCU of your intent to transfer out, you need to complete a “*Transfer out of FGCU Request*” form and submit proof of admission at a new school.
- You must enroll for and complete a full course of study during Fall & Spring Semester. Full-time enrollment is defined as **9 credit hours for graduate students** and **12 credits for undergraduate students**. Undergraduate students who need to maintain 12 credit hours per semester can only count 3 credit hours of online learning to meeting this requirement. Graduate students who need to maintain 9 credit hours per semester can only count 3 credit hours of online to meeting this requirement. If a student wants to take additional online or hybrid courses during this semester, it is allowable since they have met the status requirements.

If you will not be enrolled full-time [9 credits for graduate students; 12 credits for undergraduates], you must receive authorization/permission from International Services **in advance**. To request authorization, you and your academic advisor complete the “*Reduced Course Load Request for F-1 Students*” form and submit it to the International Services Office **prior to registering for less than a full course load or prior to dropping below a full course load**.

- If you cannot complete your program of studies by the date listed on your I-20, you must apply for an ***extension*** of your program of study minimum of four weeks **prior to** the expiration date on your Form I-20. To request an extension, complete the “*Program Extension Request for F-1 Students*” form. Requests for extensions may be submitted even up to 60 days prior to the expiration date of the Form I-20.
- You must go through the appropriate admissions procedure **before** beginning a new academic program at a new level (e.g., from Bachelor’s to Master’s level, or Masters to Doctorate) and must obtain a new Form I-20.
- You must complete a “*Change of Major*” form when changing your major or program of studies and must submit copies of this form to the **FGCU Office of the Registrar**, your

academic advisor as well as *International Services Office*. International Services Office (ISO) will issue a new I-20 after a change of major is updated in the FGCU Banner system and SEVIS.

- You are NOT allowed to work in the United States without authorization. F-1 students are allowed to work on-campus only up to 20 hours per week when school is in session. Please see the International Services website for more information about off-campus work authorization in the form of economic hardship, curricular practical training, and optional practical training. Students are cautioned to obtain off-campus work permission **prior to** accepting an off-campus internship or Curricular Practical Training or OPT. Students are not eligible for off-campus work permission until they have completed one academic year (Fall & Spring) of F-1 status.
- You must report any change of address or residence to the Office of International Services within 10 days of the change. International Services will then electronically notify DHS of the change, via SEVIS, within 21 days, as required by the regulations.
- Remember to have International Services Office sign your I-20 on page three prior to traveling outside the United States, if you intend to return. To request a signature, please come with your current I-20 to International Services at least 5 days prior to the anticipated travel date. Your documents: I-20, passport, visa and health insurance must be current.
- If you wish to bring any accompanying dependents (spouse or children) to the United States in F-2 status, you should meet with an International Services advisor to obtain a dependent I-20. You will need to provide biographical information (e.g., full name, address, country of birth, etc.), immigration information (e.g., passport information, visa information, etc.) and proof of additional funding in the amount of \$ 6,000.00 per dependent.

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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This information is not exhaustive and is subject to change without notice. International students should contact International Services Office at 239-590-7925 to arrange an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns related to your legal status in the United States.

To remain up-to-date on changes in United States immigration law and/or changes in International Services policies and/or procedures, to be informed about events, workshops and sessions offered by International Services Office, and much more, please check out our news, announcements and information sessions posted at: [www.fgcu.edu/international](http://www.fgcu.edu/international)

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“I have read the information above about maintaining my legal status in the United States and understand that I must comply fully with these regulations in order to remain in legal status. I further understand that this information is not exhaustive and that I should direct any additional questions or concerns about my legal status to a professional in the International Services Office, Reed Hall 122. Tel: 239-590-7925. E-mail: InternationalServices@Fgcu.edu”

Print Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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