How to Maintain Your F-1 or J-1 Student Status

Maintaining status means you are here in the U.S. legally and you are eligible for all the benefits available to the international student.

8 Easy Steps to Maintaining Student Status

1. Have a valid passport at all times.
2. Attend the school that you are authorized to attend. If you entered the U.S. on a particular school’s I-20 or DS-2019, you must attend that school for at least one term before you are eligible to transfer to another school.
3. Carry a full course of study.
   
   Average Semester
   
   Graduate 9 credit hours
   Undergraduate 12 credit hours
   
   YOU CANNOT WITHDRAW FROM YOUR COURSEWORK. YOU MUST COMPLETE THESE HOURS AND RECEIVE A GRADE. ONLY VERY EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOW FOR WITHDRAWAL AND MUST BE WITH THE CONSENT OF THE FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISOR.

4. You must notify your foreign student advisor if you are unable to complete your degree program by the completion date specified on your I-20 or DS-2019. You must obtain an extension within 30 days before date of expiration.
5. You must notify your foreign student advisor if you continue from one educational level to another (i.e., Bachelor’s to Master’s degree).
6. You must notify your foreign student advisor if you intend to transfer to another school.
7. You are limited to 20 hours per week of on-campus employment while school is in session. During breaks and vacation you may work full-time.
8. DO NOT work off-campus without the proper authorization by the INS or your foreign student advisor!
9. You must change your U.S. physical address with 10 days of moving and cannot keep a mailing or P.O. Box address with the University.
10. You cannot take more than one on-line course during a given semester.

Consequences of Falling Out of Status

1. You will be ineligible for work authorization (i.e., on-campus, off-campus, practical training, etc.).
2. Your foreign student advisor will not be able to provide any services to you such as certification letters of enrollment for military or tax purposes.
3. If the DHS finds out that you are working without authorization -- you could be subject to deportation.
4. If a student is determined by DHS to be out of status for more than 180 days he/she could be subject to a bar from re-entry to the United States.

How to Reinstatement your Student Status

Apply for reinstatement through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. You must have a strong case to do this. You must prove to the USCIS that it was beyond your ability to maintain your status. Working illegally, if discovered, is not a forgivable offense. Other alternative is to travel out of the U.S. with a new I-20 and obtain a new visa to do a re-entry.

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