



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

Maintaining Your F-1 or J-1 Student Status at the University of Pittsburgh

It is critical that international students in F-1 and J-1 status understand how to maintain their legal status in the United States. **While OIS is here as a resource, you are ultimately responsible for maintaining your status. KEEP THIS DOCUMENT WITH YOUR IMMIGRATION RECORDS AND REFER TO IT OFTEN. You can also find this document in My OIS.** Students must be aware of and comply fully with the following requirements set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS):

You must maintain a valid passport at all times.

You must have a valid U.S. visa stamp in order to re-enter the United States.

There is an exception if you are using the Automatic Revalidation provision for travel to Canada, Mexico, and/or adjacent islands for less than 30 days. Not all students are eligible to use automatic revalidation.

You must have a valid I-94 record when in the U.S.

You can access your most recent I-94 record at www.cbp.gov/i94.

You must have a valid travel signature from a Designated School Official (DSO) or Alternative Officer (ARO) to re-enter the U.S.

- The travel signature is located on page 2 on the Form I-20 and on page 1 on the Form DS-2019.
- A travel signature is valid for 1 year from the original signature date.
- Travel signature requests are processed at OIS, 708 WPU.

You must attend the college/university DHS has authorized you to attend.

This is the school that is listed on your Form I-20 or DS-2019. You must complete an official SEVIS record transfer whenever you change educational institutions. This must be coordinated between your current and your new educational institution.

You must inform OIS of any changes to your academic program, and obtain a new Form I-20 or DS-2019 with changes listed.

- Changing Your Primary Major – OIS will create your new Form I-20 or DS-2019 upon program change.
- Changing Your Degree Level – You must receive a new I-20 prior to starting a new degree level.

You must be enrolled full-time during Fall and Spring terms. Full time is defined as:

- Graduate Students – 9 credits or Full-Time Dissertation Study (FTDS)
- Undergraduate Students – 12 credits
- You must remain enrolled on a full-time basis during the entire term.
- You may only apply 3 credits of “distance learning” (entirely online) courses toward full time enrollment.
- There are a few exceptions to full-time enrollment, but you **must** receive OIS authorization **in advance**.

You must be making normal progress toward completing your degree.

You must apply for an extension of your program prior to the end date on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.

Extension requests should be submitted 30-60 days prior to the expiration date of the Form I-20 or DS-2019 and will only be approved if you cannot complete your program by the program end date. OIS will consult with your department to confirm this.

You must notify OIS if you will complete your academic program prior to the end date on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.

The program end date listed on your SEVIS record is an estimated length of time typically needed for a student to complete the academic program. Completing your program is determined by the official academic plan of study for each program or major. If you complete degree requirements before the end date on your document, OIS will shorten the end date.

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Your grace period begins at the end of your academic program.

- F-1 students have a 60-day grace period.
- J-1 students have a 30-day grace period.
- No work is allowed during this time unless you have employment authorization; this time should be spent preparing to depart the United States if you are not applying for an immigration benefit such as Optional Practical Training or Academic Training.
- **If you academically withdraw or fail to maintain status, you need to schedule an appointment with an Immigration Specialist to discuss the grace period for your situation.**

You are allowed to work on-campus.

- **F-1 students are allowed to work on-campus** up to 20 hours per week when school is in session. There is no limit to the number of hours students may work on-campus during official academic school breaks.
- **J-1 students must receive permission from their program sponsor** prior to beginning on-campus employment.
- On-campus employment eligibility ends if you complete or withdraw from your academic program.

You are NOT allowed to work off-campus without authorization.

Off-campus employment requires permission in advance and must meet certain conditions in order to be authorized. Off-campus volunteer opportunities should also be vetted through OIS to be sure the activity does not require authorization.

You must report any change of address and/or any change of name within 10 days of the change.

Report these changes in My OIS (my.ois.pitt.edu).

ALL international students are required by the University of Pittsburgh to have U.S.-based health insurance.

In addition, J-1 students and their J-2 dependents are required by federal law to have sickness and accident insurance and medical evacuation and repatriation insurance in effect for the duration of their exchange visitor status.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This information is not exhaustive and is subject to change without notice. See your Immigration Specialist with any specific questions about your immigration status.

OIS' Role in Your Maintenance of Status

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires that OIS report certain contact, biographical, and program-specific information to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Additionally, OIS must report any of the following changes, should they occur:

- ✓ Updated Address
- ✓ Updated Name
- ✓ Failure to enroll
- ✓ Completion of studies prior to estimated end date
- ✓ Academic suspension
- ✓ Disciplinary actions taken by the school
- ✓ Unauthorized employment
- ✓ Failure to maintain status for any reason

If you become aware of a situation that may impact your immigration status, please contact OIS immediately.