

**Maintaining Status for F-1 International Students:** This memo is a reminder of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Failure to follow these rules could result in dismissal and loss of student status. Designated School Officials (DSOs)/International Student Advisors (ISAs) in the Office of International Student Services are required to enforce these regulations. Please read this carefully.

**PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT:** Records of International Students at Liberty University are maintained on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and reported to USCIS. To abide by USCIS regulations and Liberty University policies while an international student, you must do the following:

1. **Form I-20:** You must have a valid, non-expired Form I-20 at all times to maintain your student status with USCIS. Students are usually admitted for "Duration of Status." ("D\S" is stamped on your I-94 card in your passport.) This status is valid for as long as you are a full-time student until the "Complete Studies" date on Item 5 of your I-20.

\*The length of your I-20 is eight semesters –If it takes you longer than this period to graduate, you will not receive your scholarships.

2. **Full-time Enrollment:** You must be enrolled full-time each fall and spring semester. This means:
  - Twelve (12) hours per semester for undergraduates
  - Nine (9) hours per semester for graduate or seminary students
  - Six (6) hours per "term" for Doctoral Level students

You must have permission in advance from the Office of International Student Services to drop below full-time enrollment for any reason. Failure to do so will cause you to fall out of status.

You may not drop below full-time even after the Add/Drop Period.

You are not required to be enrolled during the summer term. You may enroll for less than full-time during your final semester in a degree program only after completing a request form and receiving approval from the FSA prior to the beginning of your final semester.

3. **Online Courses:** Only one online class may be counted towards your full-time load during the fall and spring semesters. However, once your full-time load requirement is met for a given semester, you may take as many distance learning courses as you wish.
4. **Program Extension:** If you find that you must extend your stay at Liberty beyond the date specified by the Program End Date on your Form I-20, you must submit an Application for Program Extension to the International Student Advisor 30 days before the expected completion date. (Extension of stay will only be approved by the DSO for academic or medical reasons that were unforeseen and not under the control of the student). Failure to do this will put you out of status with USCIS.
5. **Passport:** Keep your Passport valid at all times. You will not be eligible for employment, a Social Security card, or driver's license if your passport is expired. To renew an expired passport, you must return to your home country or visit the nearest embassy of your home country.
6. **Visa:** Your visa can expire while you are in the United States. Your F-1 visa can only be renewed **OUTSIDE** of the U.S. The visa is only a key to ENTER the United States. Your I-20 and your I-94 card/stamp are what keep you here legally, NOT your visa.

7. **Travel Outside the U.S.:** When you leave the United States for a temporary absence, you should take with you your passport, I-94 card/stamp, and I-20 form signed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page by a Designated School

Official/International Student Advisor. A DSO certification signature is valid for one year. It is recommended that you also take along a copy of your transcript and your student ID card. You always need a valid Student (F-1) Visa to re-enter the United States. If your visa has expired, you should include a visit to the U.S. Consulate in your travel plans.

8. **On-Campus Employment:** You may not work more than a total of eighteen (18) hours per week any time school is in session (fall & spring semesters). You may work as many hours as your department allows during summer and whenever school is not in session (e.g. Christmas break, fall break).
9. **Off-campus Employment:** Work authorization granted only by USCIS is required to work off campus. You may not apply for off-campus work authorization during your first year at Liberty on F-1 status.
10. **Curricular Practical Training (CPT):** Only legal way to work off campus and get paid while pursuing your degree.
11. **Social Security Number:** You must apply for a Social Security Number to work on or off campus. To apply for a Social Security Number, you must first have a job offer. Your retention specialist at the international student center will help you apply for a Social Security number once you have a job offer.
12. **Optional Practical Training (OPT):** Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit for F-1 international students at the completion of their degree. It gives the student 12 months of employment authorization in the area of their study to gain practical experience.
13. **Taxes:** ALL international students must file with the Internal Revenue Service by APRIL 15<sup>th</sup> each year. If you work in the United States you must complete all required income tax forms for both federal and state reporting of your income after the end of each year. If you don't work, you still must file Form 8843 with the IRS.
14. **Driver's License:** As a new student, you must wait at least 21 days after your arrival in the U.S. to apply for a driver's license. You will also need to meet with your International Student Advisor to have your SEVIS record activated, before going to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office to apply.
15. **Local Address:** If you move or live off campus, you must notify the Office of International Student Services anytime your address changes. Liberty University must maintain a correct address on SEVIS.
16. **Transfer to Another School:** If you desire to transfer to another school, including attending another school following graduation from Liberty University, you must meet with your International Student Advisor to begin the transfer process.
17. **Dependents:** Your dependents (spouse, children) in F-2 Status may now enroll part-time. They must contact an admissions representative to fill out an application. Spouses and children in F-2 status may not be employed unless the spouse has work authorization from USCIS.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY:** Liberty University is required by law to notify USCIS when a student has failed to maintain status, violated immigration laws in any way, changed status, or is no longer attending school. Liberty may refuse admission to students who have not met USCIS requirements for F-1 status.