



The International Student Handbook

(A guide for F-1 Students)



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Introduction

It is recommended that you thoroughly read this publication. The International Student Advisor/DSO will gladly assist you with any questions you have regarding your status. However, please note that the responsibility of making certain that you are following any and all United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) policies/procedures necessary to maintain lawful status and/or accessing benefits of such status is ultimately yours.

- Working without proper authorization is considered by the USCIS to be the most serious violation of its regulations. It is important, therefore, that you consult the International Student Advisor/PDSO before you accept an offer of employment or begin to work. If you are eligible, the International Student Advisor/PDSO will assist you with your application for employment authorization.
- Make sure that you maintain your own status by alerting the International Student Advisor/PDSO to any changes that may arise with your status.
- If you change programs of study or levels of study or need additional time to complete your current program, please see the International Student Advisor/PDSO for further instruction.

SEVIS (Student Exchange Visitor Information System)

SEVIS serves as an on-line tracking system for International Students (F-1, J-1 and M-1 Visa holders, and their dependents F-2, J-2 and M-2 Visa holders). Through SEVIS, colleges and universities enter and update various data regarding the International Students who have been issued Form I-20's by their institutions.

Therefore, all of the vital information pertaining to you and your F-1 Status will be updated regularly on the SEVIS database. This includes but is not limited to: change of address, change of name, change of major, dropping below full-time enrollment, practical training, illegal employment and non-enrollment. These and other occurrences are considered "Reportable Events" and Delhi College is mandated to report these events. **You are required to keep the International Student Advisor informed at all times to any of these changes in your individual status so that they remain accurate on SEVIS.**

Maintaining Lawful Student Status in the United States

In order to be eligible for and receive all the benefits that the USCIS provides to International Students (practical training, etc.) it is necessary to maintain lawful status in the United States. To maintain lawful F-1 status you must:

- Keep your passport valid
- Have a valid SEVIS issued Form I-20
- Maintain full time enrollment during the Fall and Spring Semesters (a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester)
- Demonstrate normal progress toward completion of your degree or educational objective
- Accept no employment of any kind without proper authorization from the International Student Advisor/PDSO or the USCIS
- Make certain that you inform the International Student Advisor/PDSO of any legal changes to your name or any changes to your physical address (the PDSO must have your current physical address.) These changes must be reported to the International Student Advisor/PDSO within ten days of the change

FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT

Non-immigrants who are in the United States on F-1 Visas are required to maintain full time enrollment during both the fall and spring semesters (a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester). In order to maintain lawful F-1 Status you **MUST HAVE THE APPROVAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISOR/DSO BEFORE YOU REDUCE YOUR COURSELOAD BELOW 12 CREDIT HOURS FOR ANY SEMESTER.**

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

It is important to understand that the primary reason why an F-1 Visa holder is in the United States is to be a student. If they are not enrolled as a student during the academic year, then they are not engaged in the activity for which they were issued a United States Visa and they are therefore out of status. This means that while the College can grant a student an Academic Leave of Absence or a Medical Leave of Absence, the BCIS does not recognize an Academic Leave of Absence.

If you are considering taking an Academic or Medical Leave of Absence, you **MUST** meet with the International Student Advisor/DSO prior to doing so to discuss your specific situation, your options and your responsibilities.

EMPLOYMENT

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are required to have a Social Security Number to engage in ANY employment (see the section "Social Security Numbers" for more information) within the United States.

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

On-campus employment is considered any job on the school premises, with any firm that provides direct services to students or with any "educationally affiliated" location. Employment does not have to be directly related to the student's program of study. While engaged in on-campus employment, a student may not work more than twenty (20) hours per week while school is in session. When school is out of session, a student may work in excess of twenty (20) hours per week. INS authorization is NOT required for on-campus employment. If you are working on campus, please inform the International Student Advisor/DSO.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

What is Curricular Practical Training?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of off-campus employment authorization that enables international students in F-1 visa status to take part in an internship, Co-op, or practicum which is integral to their curriculum.

Who is eligible for CPT?

Your curricular major MUST require an internship for graduation in order for you to qualify for CPT authorization. You MUST have been enrolled as a full-time student and in legal status in the United States for at least ONE YEAR. You also MUST have a job offer (in writing) for an internship from a specific employer with established beginning and ending dates PRIOR to applying for authorization.

How do I apply for CPT?

To apply for CPT, submit the following information to the International Student Advisor/DSO:

- Proof of registration of class requiring internship (ex. HOSP 435) - transcripts are available at the registrar's office
- 1 Photocopy all previous I-20 forms
- Academic Advisor's recommendation letter
- YOU CANNOT BEGIN OFF CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT OF ANY KIND UNTIL YOU HAVE RECEIVED AUTHORIZATION ON YOUR I-20 FORM FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISOR/DSO

Please Note:

- If you plan to complete CPT after the program completion date listed on your I-20, you will need a program extension
- Once you have applied for CPT, it could take up to 3 weeks to get approved. HAVE YOUR APPLICATION COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED AT LEAST 30 DAYS IN ADVANCE TO AVOID MISSING YOUR WORK-START DATE
- It is recommended that you make copies of all the materials submitted for CPT authorization and keep them for your own records
- You are still required to register full-time if you are authorized for curricular practical training during the academic year
- While engaging in Practical Training, you still must keep the DSO informed of any changes in your status
- F-1 students are not limited in the amount of curricular practical training they may utilize however if you engage in full-time CPT for twelve months or more prior to graduation, you will not be eligible for optional practical training before or after completion of studies
- The CPT application process must be completed prior to the student's departure from campus

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training is an F-1 student benefit granted by the USCIS to work in a job related to your major area of study. It is meant to supplement your academic experience with practical experience prior to or upon your completion of studies.

Who is eligible for OPT?

To be eligible for OPT, you must document that:

- You are currently in valid F-1 status
- You have legally been a full-time student for at least one full academic year (two semesters) at SUNY Delhi*

*NOTE: You may submit your application for OPT up to 90 days prior to having been enrolled for one full academic year, provided the employment will not begin until the completion of the full academic year.

When should I apply for OPT?

It is recommended that you apply for OPT 90 days prior to the program completion date listed on your current I-20 form. It could take as long as 3 months for your application to be processed.

ONCE YOU'VE COMPLETED YOUR STUDIES AT SUNY DELHI, YOU CAN NO LONGER APPLY FOR OPT.

How do I apply for OPT?

Submit an application and supporting documents for an Employment Authorization Document ("EAD Card"). Your EAD card will be mailed to you if you are granted authorization for OPT.

What do I send to BCIS to apply for my EAD card?

With the international advisor's help, mail the following to USCIS:

- A completed form I-765 (download this at www.immigration.gov)
- Photocopy of your SEVIS I-20 – page 1 and page 3 (with OPT recommendation from international advisor on page 3)
- Photocopies of all pages of all previous I-20's
- Photocopies of your passport (biographical and photo pages), front and back of I-94 card and US visa stamp page in your passport. DO NOT SEND ACTUAL PASSPORT.
- Two (2) identical natural color photographs of yourself, taken within 30 days of this application. In pencil, please write your name and I-94 number lightly on the back of your photos. It is recommended that you refer to the USCIS website, www.uscis.gov to ensure your photos are done properly.
- Application fee. Send a check or money order payable to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Please Note:

- It is recommended that you make copies of all the materials you send to the processing center and keep them for your own records.
- Make SURE you have included a return address that you will have access to for up to 5 months. If you are moving off campus during that time, find a friend with a permanent address you can use as a return address and have the EAD card sent to this address.

YOU ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE YOUR APPLICATION IS FILED CORRECTLY AND BEFORE YOUR PROGRAM HAS ENDED. THIS IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISOR.

Extension of Stay to Continue in the Same Academic Program

Students with F-1 Status are limited in the amount of time they may continue in an academic or language program. The length of study and expected completion date indicated on the initial Form I-20 determines whether you must apply for a "Program Extension" to remain in the United States to complete your academic program. If you will not be able to complete your current academic program by the date shown on your Form I-20, you must apply for an extension before that date.

To be eligible for a program extension you must:

- Be in lawful F-1 status under the visa supervision of Delhi College
- Have maintained unbroken full-time status for every semester of your current program during which you have been in F-1 status
- Delays in completing your studies must be "caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extensions" (8 CFR 214.2)

***To be considered for an extension of stay, you MUST see the International Student Advisor BEFORE your program completion date.**

Please note:

- If you are unable to complete your educational program (your degree) within the program start and end dates indicated on your Form I-20, and if you are ineligible for an extension of stay, you will be considered "out of status"
- If you do not file for an extension of stay, or if you file late, you automatically lose your student status and you will need to apply for Reinstatement (if eligible). Reinstatement is a complicated, expensive and difficult procedure that will take months for approval
- When you have determined that you will need an extension of stay to complete your academic program, it is your responsibility to notify the International Student Advisor/DSO who, after verifying this, will assist you with the application process which includes the issuance of a new Form I-20
- To qualify for a new Form I-20, it is necessary for you to provide the International Student Advisor/DSO with updated financial documentation that demonstrates that you have the ability to meet all financial obligations associated with your extended stay at SUNY Delhi to complete your program of study

TRANSFER INFORMATION

In addition to following the school's academic and administrative procedures for transferring to another school, F-1 Students must complete the transfer procedure established by the USCIS.

According to the USCIS, a "transfer" occurs when an F-1 Student moves from:

- One ESL program to another
- An ESL program to an academic program
- An undergraduate program to a graduate program
- Full-time Optional Practical Training to another academic program

To be eligible for a transfer you must: have held good status as a non-citizen for your entire stay in the United States.

You MUST see the International Student Advisor before transferring onto another school, as you need to be transferred out of SUNY Delhi's SEVIS system before your new school can issue an I-20 form. Most schools will issue the student a transfer report once they are accepted, to be filled out by your International Student Advisor at SUNY Delhi.

REINSTATEMENT

In the event that an F-1 Student violates his/her status, they are required by the USCIS to apply for a reinstatement.

Definition: If it is determined that a violation of status has occurred, the USCIS will decide whether or not to issue a reinstatement to lawful F-1 status (a judgment to forgive the violation of status or not to).

In order to be eligible for a reinstatement, the student must establish (through evidence) to the satisfaction of the USCIS that either:

- The violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond the student's control, or
- Failure to receive reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to the student.

Application Procedure:

Before applying for a reinstatement, it is important to determine if it is necessary. Call USCIS (800-375-5283) to speak with an immigration officer and determine if you are indeed out of status before applying for reinstatement.

Send an application packet for reinstatement to the USCIS. The application packet should include the following materials:

- Form I-539
- Attachment to Form I-539
- Evidence to support application
- Form I-20
- Photocopies of all previously issued Form I-20s
- Photocopy of your passport/visa
- I-94 (Original)
- Photocopies of financial documents
- Application fee

The USCIS issues a statement regarding the student's application for reinstatement. The two possible results are:

- The USCIS issues a Reinstatement, and you are returned to "Lawful F-1 Status"
- The USCIS denies a Reinstatement, and the student needs to leave the United States

Points to Consider:

- It generally takes the USCIS 6-12 months to process applications for reinstatement
- You cannot begin working on-campus while waiting for adjudication or apply for OPT or CPT
- While waiting for adjudication, you can travel and study using your old Form I-20
- Time periods that you were out of status do not count toward the time required to be eligible for the various benefits of F-1 Status, such as OPT
- If the USCIS denies you a Reinstatement, and your violation of status was less than full-time enrollment, you are subject to the penalties of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act of 1996, which means you can be barred from entering the United States

Applying for a Social Security Number

F-1 students may apply for a Social Security Number as soon as they arrive to Delhi College and are encouraged to do so. The only way to obtain a Social Security number is to formally apply for one. Your College Identification Number is not a Social Security Number! To apply for a Social Security Number you must first obtain employment on campus. You may then submit an application in person at a Social Security Administration office.

To apply, you will need to bring with you the following items:

- Your original passport
- Your Form I-20
- Your I-94 card
- A letter of recommendation from the International Advisor
- A letter from your on-campus employer stating job duties, hours per week, and hourly wage.

The Social Security Card issued to nonresident F-1 students often specifies that it is "valid only with employment authorization".

HOW TO REENTER THE UNITED STATES AFTER TRAVELING

If you are an F-1 Student planning to travel outside the United States, make sure you do not have any difficulty returning by having all the documents you need to reenter! Check the list below and make sure you have everything ready before you leave.

1. A valid passport (unless you are exempt from passport requirements)
2. A valid F-1 visa. You must have a valid F-1 visa in your passport. There is one exception to this requirement. If you are maintaining F-1 status and are returning to the United States after a trip of less than 30 days to Canada, Mexico or adjacent islands in the Caribbean, you do not need to have a valid visa to return. Instead of the valid visa, you must have the Form I-94 Departure Record stapled in your passport.

If you entered the United States in another nonimmigrant classification and changed your status to F-1, you must obtain an F-1 visa before reentering from any country except a neighboring country. It is not possible to obtain a new visa inside the United States.

3. A Form I-20. Make sure that your program of study is still correct and that the date you are expected to complete your program has not expired. **You must have a valid reentry signature on the third page to reenter.** If you are starting a new degree program, your completion of study date has passed, or you need to obtain a new visa, you will need to obtain a new Form I-20. Make sure your personal information listed on your I-20 is updated and completely accurate and that your International Advisor has signed the 'authorization for travel' (page 3 of the I-20) within the past year.

4. Financial documents. Take photocopies of your financial documents showing that you have adequate funding for your studies. If you are going to apply for a new visa from the American embassy or consulate at home, you will need to have original financial documents, not photocopies.

It is recommended that you always carry copies of all of the documents listed above when traveling in a foreign country as a non-citizen.

HEALTH INSURANCE

All International students are required to have HTH Worldwide Student Health (medical) Insurance and repatriation insurance at all times. The HTH Student Health Insurance plan is intended for your protection and is a federal and state regulatory requirement while providing the student with quality, comprehensive healthcare coverage while studying in the U.S. and maintaining an I-20.

All international students on F-1 student visas will be automatically be enrolled in the HTH insurance plan. International students are enrolled with HTH Worldwide Insurance at the beginning of each semester. The enrollment fee is then billed to the student.

To learn more about HTH Worldwide Insurance visit www.hthstudents.com.

A Brief Tax Overview for International Students

The information provided here is intended to give you a general sense of taxpaying requirements. The International Student Advisor/DSO is not qualified to answer individual questions from students regarding their specific tax liabilities. US tax law is extremely complex and each student's situation varies. It is the responsibility of each international student to understand his or her own tax situation.

All International Students in the U.S. are required to file taxes with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) each year. Since most international students are not U.S. citizens in many cases they are exempt from the tax laws that apply to U.S. citizens. Most countries have tax treaties with the U.S. that allow for their citizens (if they are employed in the United States) to receive certain tax benefits.

If you worked over the past year it is highly probable that you will be refunded the majority of the taxes deducted from your paychecks over the previous year.

In order to file taxes as an International Student it is necessary that you obtain and/or complete the following documents:

- If you are an international student who **did not work** over the previous year you are only required to file Form 8843
- If you are an International Student who worked on-campus or off-campus then you will need to complete the forms below:
 - Form 8843
 - Form 1040NR or Form 1040NR-EZ should be used by those students who have not brought dependents (i.e. children, a spouse, etc.) to the United States with them
 - Form 1040NR should be used by those students who have brought dependents (i.e. children, a spouse, etc.) to the United States with them

IMPORTANT TIPS

- Make a photocopy of all materials that you send to the USCIS
- Never send cash through the mail. Use a personal check, money order, or bank check. Money orders can be obtained at any United States Post Office
- All checks or money orders sent to the USCIS should be stapled to the appropriate documents
- All materials should be mailed to the USCIS as "Certified Return Receipt"
- Make certain that you inform the International Student Advisor/PDSO at your institution (the institution who issued you your current Form I-20) of any legal changes to your name or any changes to your physical address. (The PDSO must have your current physical address.) These changes must be reported to the International Student Advisor/PDSO within ten days of the change
- Set up a file for all of your USCIS related paperwork, and keep this file in a safe place
- If you have any questions regarding your rights and responsibilities as an F-1 student contact the International Student Advisor/PDSO
- Keep your passport, I-20, I-94 Departure Card and all other important documents in a safe place, and have at least one photocopy of each in case it should be lost or stolen
- Never mail your passport! ALWAYS make a copy to mail