

International Student Responsibilities Contract

Rules F-1 and J-1 Students Must Follow to Maintain Legal Status in the U.S.

I. *Explanation*

International students are required by U.S. law to abide by immigration regulations for the duration of their stay in the U.S. F-1 and J-1 nonimmigrant students are admitted to the U.S. for the sole purpose of being full-time students. Participation by students in any other activity in the U.S., from employment to vacation, is considered to be a benefit of maintaining status and is only allowable in accordance with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations. Penalties for violations of U.S. immigration law can be severe and can include deportation and a 10-year bar on re-entry to the U.S. This handout outlines several rules F-1 and J-1 students **MUST** follow to maintain legal nonimmigrant student status and the documents they must have to enter the U.S. and remain here legally.

It is the student who is responsible for knowing and abiding by all immigration rules and for maintaining legal F-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant student status. The University of Colorado, Boulder must report information updates and violations of status to the government via the Student Exchange Visitor Information System ([SEVIS](#)), an electronic government tracking database, within 21 days of the change or violation. **Abiding by the immigration regulations is required to remain in the U.S. legally and complete your academic program!**

II. *To Maintain Your Legal Student Status, You Must Always:*

Attend the school you are authorized to attend by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). You are authorized to attend the school indicated on your valid I-20 or DS-2019. In some cases, the DS-2019 may be issued by a program sponsor that is not the school.

Maintain full-time enrollment every Fall and Spring semester.

- **Undergraduate Students:** At least 12 credit hours (the number of online/remote credit hours that count toward the 12 minimum may be restricted; please check with an ISSS advisor on your specific situation)
- **Graduate Students:** Generally at least 5 graduate credit hours
([Graduate School rules for full-time status apply](#))

Dropping below a full course of study without prior approval from ISSS will result in the immediate termination of your immigration status. NO student may drop below full-time in the Fall or Spring semesters except under extremely limited circumstances and only with prior authorization by ISSS.

- Each fall and spring semester an s70 hold is placed on all F-1 and J-1 student records to prevent them from dropping a class without prior permission from ISSS and unintentionally falling below [full-time enrollment](#), a violation of status. This hold does not affect a student's ability to add a class or drop classes related to future semester enrollment. If students in F-1 or J-1 status wish to drop a class, they must contact an ISSS advisor to request permission to

drop the class(es). If dropping the class(es) will not result in under-enrollment, then the ISSS drop hold will be removed for 48 hours in order to allow students to drop the approved class(es).

- Only a maximum of 3 credits of online/distance education courses can be counted towards full-time enrollment credit requirement.
- **Getting a grade of Incomplete Withdrawal (IW), Incomplete Pass (IP), or Incomplete Fail (IF) Grades will count toward your full-time minimum enrollment only if the grade posts in the term in which you originally took the class!**
- Classes taken as “Audit” do NOT count toward the full-time enrollment credit requirement.
- Summer is considered your annual vacation and therefore full-time enrollment is not required unless you are in your first or last semester in which case full-time enrollment is required.
- If you plan to graduate in the summer, you must be registered for credits that require on-campus presence in the summer—no exceptions.
- Remember! It is not your date of graduation that is important, it is your last day of required enrollment.

Ensure that the information on your I-20 or DS-2019 is correct and valid at all times. If you will not complete your degree by the end date on your document, you must apply for an extension at least one month before the document expires. See an ISSS advisor for a new I-20/DS-2019 if any information changes, including changes related to your major and F-2 or J-2 dependent(s) occur.

Report personal (e.g., name, address, contact information) and program information changes (e.g., a change of major, change of degree level) to ISSS within 10 days of any change. You must report your U.S. address upon entry to the U.S. so that your SEVIS record can be registered. (This is the address where you live; P.O. boxes and departmental addresses are NOT acceptable.) Address updates should be reported using the **mailing address option** in [Buff Portal](#). ISSS will update your SEVIS record according to address information submitted in Buff Portal. Additional information that should be reported to ISSS within 10 days of any change includes: name, major, home country address, and for J-1 students, current telephone number and email address.

Maintain a valid passport at all times throughout your stay in the U.S. Your passport must be valid for 6 months into the future beyond your date of entry/re-entry to the U.S. If you renew your passport, please submit an updated passport copy to ISSS (C4C S355 or iss@colorado.edu).

Complete necessary “SEVIS record transfer procedures” if changing from one school to another in the U.S. If you will require ISSS to transfer your SEVIS record to another school, you must submit the Transferring your SEVIS Record from CU Boulder Form along with a copy of your admission letter.

Observe the “grace period” upon completion of studies. F-1 students have 60 days and J-1 students have 30 days from the end of your program to do one of the following things:

- Exit the U.S.;
- Obtain an I-20/ DS-2019 for a new program or new school and enroll in the next possible semester (gap between programs cannot exceed 5 months);
- Apply for off-campus work authorization following the completion of your program (Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1; Academic Training for J-1). Due to application deadlines and other restrictions, speak with an ISSS adviser **before** completing your program in order to apply for this benefit; or
- Apply for a change to another immigration status.

If you exit the United States before completing your F-1/J-1 program, you do NOT have this

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“grace period”—please speak with an ISSS advisor for details.

III. *You must never do the following:*

1. **Work off-campus unless you have written authorization from an ISSS advisor in advance of beginning employment.** Consult an ISSS advisor for details. [Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 students or Academic Training (AT) for J-1 students work authorization must be indicated on your I-20/DS-2019]. OPT also requires an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by USCIS.
2. **Work on-campus for more than 20 hours per week while school is in session;** or
3. **Take a leave of absence, withdraw from classes, or drop below full-time without FIRST checking with ISSS advisor.** Students who end their program or fall out of legal status before completing do not have a grace period to leave the U.S., they must leave the U.S. immediately!

IV. *Documentation of Legal F-1 Or J-1 Student Status in the U.S.*

International students are typically admitted to the U.S. for "Duration of Status" (D/S). This means that they are allowed to remain in the U.S. for as long as they maintain legal F-1 or J-1 student status, NOT necessarily for the length of time indicated on their visa and/or I-20/DS-2019. **If you fail to follow all the F-1 or J-1 regulations, your legal status in the U.S. expires on the day the violation occurs.** If students complete their degree requirements prior to the end date on their I-20/DS-2019, their [SEVIS records](#) and I-20-/DS-2019s will be shortened to the last day of the student's last required semester. An F-1/J-1 student's permission to stay in the U.S. following the completion of the degree (referred to as a grace period to depart the U.S.) is indicated below:

- For F-1 students in valid status, your permission to stay in the U.S. ends 60 days after your last day of required enrollment.
 - **For F-1 PhD students:** There are a few options to use as your I-20 program completion date; please discuss these options with an ISSS advisor at least one semester prior to your defense date.
- For J-1 students in valid status, your permission to stay in the U.S. ends 30 days after your last day of required enrollment.

The grace period is intended to provide students time to pack up their belongings, travel within the U.S., and depart the U.S. in a timely fashion.

Documents that F-1 and J-1 students MUST have while they are residing in the U.S. to remain legally present in valid nonimmigrant status are listed below. Keep them in a safe place in the event that you need to document your U.S. immigration history. ISSS only keeps copies for three years after students leave or complete their program.

Passport

The passport is the legal identity document issued by your country of citizenship. Your passport must be valid at least 6 months beyond your period of intended stay. When you enter the U.S., you should make sure your passport is valid at least 6 months beyond your period of intended stay unless your country of citizenship is part of the [“six-month club,”](#) in which case your passport must

only be valid until the end of your period of intended stay. The passport can usually be renewed through your home country embassy or consulates in the United States. If you have been issued a *Travel Document in Lieu of a Passport* by the government of the country of which you are a legal permanent resident, the information above, regarding passports, also applies to Travel Documents.

I-20 & DS-2019 - "Certificate of Eligibility"

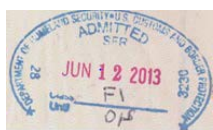
The I-20 (for F-1 students) or DS-2019 (for J-1 students) is the document generated using [SEVIS](#) which indicates your program information. For most CU Boulder students, your SEVIS record and I-20 or DS-2019 are created by CU Boulder's International Admissions or International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS). Some J-1 students have SEVIS records and DS-2019s created by an outside agency or program sponsor; in this situation the agency or sponsor will provide your immigration advising.

You must present your I-20 or DS-2019 to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad to obtain a U.S. visa. You must also present your I-20 or DS-2019 to U.S. port of entry officials each time you travel abroad and return to the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant student status.

The expiration date on the I-20 or DS-2019 is an estimate. Your SEVIS record and I-20/DS-2019 will be shortened if you complete your degree prior to the end date on your I-20. If you fail to follow all the F-1 or J-1 regulations, your legal status in the U.S. expires on the day the violation occurs. It is highly recommended that you keep all I-20s/DS-2019s that are issued to you and any other immigration documents for your records even if you are issued new or updated documents in the future.

If any of the information on your I-20/DS-2019 changes, you MUST report the updated information to ISSS or your program sponsor within 10 days of the change so an updated I-20 or DS-2019 can be issued.

U.S. Admission Stamp in your Passport and I-94 Record of Arrival



The stamp entered in your passport at the U.S. port of entry documents your date of entrance into the U.S., nonimmigrant status (F1 or J1 / Dependents: F2 or J2), and the date your permission to stay in the U.S. expires. For F-1 and J-1 visa holders, the expiration date should be written as **D/S (duration of status)**, which indicates that your status is valid until the date of program completion (not always the same date as your graduation, I-20/DS-2019 expiration date, or visa expiration date).

Upon entry to the U.S., **obtain your electronic I-94 arrival record** and the I-94 of any dependents who traveled with you. Check the I-94 to ensure that your entry was recorded properly (Class of Admission: F1 or J1 (Dependents F-2/ J-2) / Admit Until Date: D/S).

To download your I-94 access the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection website](#).

- For additional information about accessing your I-94 or obtaining an I-94 correction, review our [Printing Your Electronic I-94](#) handout.

U.S. Entry Visa (Canadian citizens do not need a visa to enter the U.S.)

The entry visa is a sticker with your photo in your passport that permits you to seek entry into the U.S. in a particular immigration status. Individuals entering as students will have an F-1 or J-1 visa.

The entry visa may expire while you are in the U.S. as long as all of your other immigration

documents are valid and up-to-date and you are otherwise maintaining your status. If you travel outside the U.S. during your program, you are required to have a valid visa to re-enter the U.S. If your visa has expired, you will need to apply for an extension/new visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate outside of the U.S., you cannot review your visa from inside the U.S. **Exception:** travel to Canada, Mexico, or Adjacent Islands for less than 30 days and qualify for [Automatic Visa Revalidation](#). Prior to traveling, please review the [ISSS travel information](#).

Remember, the visa does not indicate how long you are permitted to stay in the U.S. It is only an entry document. Your permission to stay inside the U.S. in your F-1 or J-1 status ends after your grace period following the completion of your program of study or when you fail to maintain legal F-1 or J-1 student status.

V. Other legal requirements for students:

- **Travel signature for re-entry to the U.S.** Before you leave the U.S., check your I-20/ DS-2019 for a valid travel signature. A travel signature is generally valid for re-entry to the U.S. within 1 year of the signature date or until the end date on the I-20 or DS-2019, whichever occurs first (exception: travel signature is only valid for six months for students on OPT). If you require a travel signature, please contact ISSS.
- **Carry the following documents to re-enter the U.S.** Students should be prepared to [present the following documents](#) when seeking re-entry to the U.S.: I-20/DS-2019 with valid travel signature; valid passport; valid student visa; current financial support documentation; unofficial transcript and/or verification of enrollment showing full-time status; and SEVIS I-901 fee receipt.
- **J-1 students are required by the U.S. federal regulations to maintain health, evacuation, and repatriation insurance that meets [minimum requirements](#).**
- **All international students are required by U.S. federal tax law to [complete and submit U.S. tax forms](#) to the federal government every year regardless of whether or not they earned any money in the U.S.** ISSS advisers are not tax experts and cannot advise on tax law.
- **Once you complete all the requirements for your degree, you cannot maintain your status through enrollment.** You must take action to maintain your status, e.g. apply for post-completion employment authorization (Optional Practical Training or Academic Training) or for a change of status. Meet with an ISSS advisor at least one semester before you complete your degree requirements to discuss your options as the academic and immigration rules may be different at that time.
- **Once you complete or withdraw from your CU Boulder program, transfer to another school, or fail to “maintain legal student status,” you can no longer legally enter the U.S. with your CU Boulder I-20/ DS-2019.** [Exception: If you complete your academic program and have employment authorization (e.g., Optional Practical Training, Academic Training) and a valid travel signature.] You should **NOT** plan to travel outside of and return to the U.S. with your current I-20/ DS-2019 after you have [finished](#) your CU Boulder F-1/J-1 program (this includes completion of degree and OPT/AT; transferring, withdrawing, violating status.)

I have read, understood, and accepted my responsibilities as outlined above.

- I recognize that it is **my responsibility** to maintain valid F-1 or J-1 status.
- I understand that a violation of status will result in the termination of my SEVIS record and legal status in the United States.