Maintaining Your F-1 Status

Under United States immigration law, it is your personal responsibility to maintain lawful F-1 status. Begin by reading the "Instructions to Students" on page two of your I-20. By following those instructions, as well as the guidelines listed below, you should be able to maintain lawful F-1 student status with little difficulty. You must maintain lawful student status if you wish to enjoy the benefits associated with it, such as on-campus employment, practical training, and the ability to re-enter the United States when you travel. A violation of status may result in termination of your SEVIS record, which could subject you to immediate detention and/or deportation.

Follow the guidelines below to maintain your F-1 Status, and contact the Kearney International Center with questions.

1. Keep an unexpired passport valid for at least 6 months into the future.
   Contact your country's nearest consulate or embassy in Washington D.C. (http://www.embassy.org/embassies/) for instructions if you need to extend your passport while in the United States.

2. Notify the Kearney International Center of your physical address (hint: you can’t live in a campus mailbox or post office box) upon arrival during your check-in meeting and within 10 days any time you change addresses. Failing to maintain a current physical address with MSU is a violation of F-1 status.

   Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations require that you register during the University’s published registration period. Failure to do this will result in violation of your F-1 status. You are expected to maintain full-time registration (12 credits each Fall and Spring semester for undergraduates and 6 credits for graduate students).

   Obtain PRIOR authorization from the Kearney International Center (if eligible) BEFORE dropping below a full course of study, withdrawing from classes, or taking a leave of absence.
   There are very limited exceptions to the full-time requirement, so you must consult the International Center before any drop below full-time, or you will be in violation of your status and your SEVIS record will be terminated.

4. If you leave the United States without completing your program of study, complete your program early or change to another non-immigrant status, you must notify the International Center so that your record in the SEVIS data base accurately reflects your current situation.

5. Do not accept any off-campus employment without written permission from the International Student and Scholar Services Office, and, if necessary, authorization from the Department of Homeland Security.
   Working without proper authorization is considered by the DHS as the most serious violation of its regulations. If you refer to your I-94 card, you will see the statement, “Warning: a nonimmigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation.” Students terminated for unauthorized employment are not eligible for F-1 reinstatement.

   It is most important, therefore, that you consult with the Kearney International Center before you accept an offer of employment or begin to work. We will advise you whether it is possible for you to work and assist you with the appropriate procedures. It is illegal to begin to work while waiting for authorization; you must have the appropriate authorization first. Students in F-1 status are allowed to work on-campus for the University for a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year (unlimited during vacation periods).

6. Make timely transfers of your F-1 supervision if you change schools.
   DHS regulations specify that you must use the Certificate of Eligibility (I-20) issued by the school you are attending (or plan to attend) when entering the U.S. Consequently, make sure that you use MSU’s Certificate of Eligibility. You are required to report to the ISSO shortly after your arrival and no later than the posted deadline for the semester. For information on transfer procedures, see instructions at http://www.mnsu.edu/international. If you want to transfer to another school from MSU, you must meet all of the other school’s admission and transfer requirements by the necessary deadlines. DO NOT simply show up at another school and expect a new I-20.

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7. Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay in the U.S. before your I-20 expires.

If you have valid academic or health reasons for requiring more time to complete your program than that which is authorized on the MSU I-20, you must request a program extension through the Kearney International Center. Contact the International Center as soon as you know that you will need an extension and at least 30 days before the completion date noted on your I-20 in order to have enough time to obtain any necessary documents. In most cases, an e-mail will be required from your Academic Advisor explaining the academic reasons for an extension. If the extension is needed for medical reasons, you must submit documentation from a medical professional.

If you require an extension because you will be starting a new program at MSU (for example, if you are moving from a bachelor’s degree to a master’s degree program), you must apply for a new I-20 to begin a new program within 60 days of the completion of the first program. Contact the Kearney International Center for more information.

8. Make normal academic progress toward your degree.

Normal or satisfactory academic progress is defined as maintaining a 2.0 cumulative grade point average and a 67% course completion rate. More details on the academic policy can be found at http://www.mnsu.edu/policies/satisfactoryacademicprogressforundergraduatestudents.pdf. Failure to maintain normal academic progress may result in the termination of your SEVIS record.

9. When you have completed your studies and any practical training that is authorized, you must leave the U.S. or change to another immigration status within 60 days.

This means that you are allowed to stay for the period of time to complete a program of study plus academic or practical training and a grace period. Those in F-1 status have a 60 day grace period in which to depart the US or change to another status.

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**Internet Resources**

- International Student and Scholar Services, Elizabeth and Wynn Kearney International Center
  http://www.mnsu.edu/international

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)
  www.uscis.gov

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
  www.ice.gov

- SEVIS Information for Students
  www.ice.gov/sevis/students/

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250 Centennial Student Union
Mankato, MN 56001
isss@mnsu.edu
507-389-1281