

Immigration Rights and Responsibilities Students in F-1 Status

Purpose

Listed below are some of the most important rights and responsibilities that you have in relation to regulations of the Department of Homeland Security and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Immigration Documents

Passport: You must maintain a valid passport at all times (unless you are exempt from passport requirements). If you lose your passport, you should take immediate steps to have it replaced.

USCIS Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record): This document is now kept electronically on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security website. Should you need a copy of your I-94, you may print one from the following location: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>. If you need help accessing a copy of your I-94, you can contact the Registrar's Office.

USCIS Form I-20 A-B: You will need this document to enter the U.S. You should read and understand the material on page 2 of Form I-20 A-B. If you lose your Form I-20 A-B, you should immediately request a new form from the DSO at William Woods University. You should carry your I-20 A-B with you at all times.

Be careful to safeguard your immigration documents. If they are lost, it takes a lot of time and money to replace them.

Medical Insurance Coverage

Because health care in the United States can be very expensive, USCIS requires that you have appropriate medical insurance while you are a student at William Woods University. If your current health insurance will not cover you while here on an F-1 visa, you are responsible for obtaining an international student medical insurance policy. This short-term temporary insurance which will cover you while you are here on your visa. You will need to bring proof of insurance coverage to the Registrar's Office when you check-in upon your arrival to campus. If you have coverage through your plan in your home country, you need to bring a document (in English) which shows you are covered while in this country.

Checking-In Upon Arrival on Campus

The USCIS requires that students "check-in" with a Designated School Official (DSO) on campus upon arriving. Once you have checked-in, your status will be updated to "REGISTERED" with the Department of Homeland Security. Unless your status is listed as REGISTERED before 30 days of your program start date on your I-20, you will be out of status and may be forced to return home. In order to check-in, you will need to:

- Visit the Registrar's Office located in Room 111 of the Woods Academic Building on campus. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM.
- Bring the following documents with you to check-in:
 - Passport with current F-1 Visa Stamp
 - I-20 Form (signed by you)
 - Acknowledgment of Responsibilities Form (signed by you)
 - Proof of Medical Insurance
- If you choose to have an American name, you should provide it to the DSO at check-in. This name will appear on class lists so that faculty and classmates may use your American name. It will not appear on your official records at WWU. You may not change this name later, so choose carefully.
- Notify the DSO if there is any WWU information that is inaccurate (such as the spelling of your name, etc...). Your information should be the same on all of your documents.

Communication

You will be given a WWU email address. You should check your email DAILY because that is the way that the DSO and other school officials will communicate important information. This information will NOT be sent to any other email accounts. You will also be given a university OwlNet account. This will be your personal portal on the WWU website. You will use this portal to manage your student financial account, to register for classes, to access grades, to access course information and to access online classes.

Address Changes

According to USCIS regulations, you must report any address change to the WWU DSO within 10 days of moving. This information is reported to the SEVIS system for updating. At the end of your program, you must notify the DSO and the WWU post office of your forwarding address.

Registration, Attendance, and Course Load

Registration and Attendance: You must register for classes and attend the school that the USCIS has authorized you to attend. You must register for each regular school term with the exception of summer terms or "short" terms (usually four weeks or less in duration).

Course Load: As defined by the USCIS, you must register for a "full course load" each semester unless:

1. You will complete all degree requirements by the end of that school term or
2. The DSO approves, in advance, a reduction in course load for one or more of the following reasons:
 - a. Difficulties with the English language or reading requirements.
 - b. Unfamiliarity with the American teaching methods.
 - c. Improper course level placement.

- d. Illness or other medical condition which compels you to interrupt or reduce your course of study.

You must resume a full course of study when the difficulties/conditions listed above have been resolved.

Undergraduate Students: According to USCIS regulations, you must register for at least 12 semester hours per academic term.

Graduate Students: William Woods University considers 6 hours to be full-time for graduate students. If you are employed through a graduate scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship, this employment is considered to be a part of your program of study and you may carry less than a full course load.

Employment

On-Campus Employment: You may be employed in most on-campus jobs up to 20 hours per week while school is in session. Full-time on-campus employment is allowed during holidays, summer vacation, and during "short" terms (usually four weeks or less in duration). You do not usually need to apply for permission from the USCIS for on-campus employment.

Off-Campus Employment: You must refrain from off-campus employment without prior authorization by the USCIS. Approval for off-campus employment may be granted by the USCIS in cases of severe economic hardship.

Practical Training. After you have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for nine consecutive months, you may qualify for Practical Training (PT). PT is work which is directly related to your major field of study. Most F-1 students are eligible to apply for two types of PT:

1. *Curricular Practical Training (CPT)* which allows you to work in a job directly related to your field of study while you are attending school.
2. *Optional Practical Training (OPT)* which allows you to work in a job directly related to your field of study for a twelve month period after you have completed your program of study.

Such work may be performed anywhere in the U.S. You must apply with the USCIS and be granted an Employment Authorization Card before the start of your employment.

Travel Within the United States

You may travel within the U.S. provided you maintain your lawful F-1 status. It is recommended that you have your valid passport and current USCIS Form I-20 A-B with you at all times when you travel.

Travel Outside the United States

You may leave the U.S. at any time. You will need authorization from the William Woods University DSO who will sign your I-20 for re-entry prior to your departing the U.S. for any reason. You have the right to return to the U.S. provided that you have (1) a valid passport containing an unexpired F-1 visa stamp and (2) a Form I-20 A-B properly endorsed by the DSO for re-entry or a new Form I-20 A-B.

If you will be returning to a different school: You must obtain a new and complete USCIS Form I-20 A-B from your new school before you attempt to re-enter the U.S. Entering this country using an I-20 A-B from a school that you do not plan to attend immediately can cause serious immigration problems.

Changing Degree Programs or Schools

Completing Coursework at Another School or Transferring to a Different School: If you wish to obtain a degree or certificate from your current school but want to temporarily take courses at a different school, you should consult with the DSO to determine if any special procedures must be followed in order to authorize this study. If instead, you wish to cease study at your current school and transfer to a different school, you must consult with the DSO before you transfer and follow proper transfer procedures.

Change of Level/Degree/Major: If you complete one level/degree/major, you may continue to another program. You should visit the DSO to request a new I-20 A-B which will reflect your new program of study.

Length of Time You May Remain in the United States: You must request a program extension to remain in the U.S. if you will require more time than noted on item #5 on your I-20 A-B.

Dependents and Other Family Members

If you are married, you may be eligible to have your spouse (wife or husband) and/or children temporarily visit you or join you for the duration of your studies. Other members of your family (mother, father, sisters, brothers, etc...), who will usually be in B-2 visitor status, may be able to visit you during your studies.

Completion of Degree Requirements

Upon completion of your degree requirements, you may have the right to: (1) continue studies at your same school or a different school for another degree or certificate or (2) apply for one year of "practical training" employment or (3) take up to sixty days to depart the country.

Failure to Comply with Responsibilities

If you fail to comply with your immigration responsibilities, you may lose your student status and thus not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students.

Further Information

Additional information is available from the DSO in the Registrar's Office at William Woods University. The DSO will be happy to offer information and assistance on any federal regulations related to maintaining your student status.