

# UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

## OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

International Student and Scholar Services

Student Center North, Room N203, Houston, TX 77204-3024 ☎ Phone: (713) 743-5065 📠 Fax: (713) 743-5079 🌐 <http://uh.edu/oisss>

## MAINTAINING F-1 STATUS

This may be the **most important document** you will read while you are in the United States. It is your responsibility to know and obey F-1 regulations or face possible **removal** from the U.S.

### F = FULL-TIME STUDENT

1. **Be a full-time student each main semester.** You must complete (not just register) for a full course load each main semesters. To maintain your status, each spring and fall semester, undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students must **complete 12 hours** and graduate students **9 hours at the graduate level**. **Note:** Some degree programs may require more hours for academic reasons. Check with your department. Towards your full-time requirement, you may not take more than the equivalent of one class (three credit hours) per semester online or through asynchronous distance education (tape purchase or broadcast). You are required to complete **6 hours** for the summer session(s) if the program start date on your I-20 is for the summer semester. You are also required to enroll for summer if it is your final semester to complete your degree. You must receive the authorization before you drop or take below full-time hours. Please make an appointment to see an International Student Counselor **BEFORE** taking below full-time hours even if you are failing the class. *A grade of "W" does not count toward your full-time requirement.*

I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it

I have questions or need more information

### A = AUTHORIZATION FOR EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

1. **Never work off-campus unless you have current authorization from an International Student Counselor or the DHS.** You must either have authorization on page 3 of your I-20 or an employment authorization card (EAD) from the DHS. All off-campus employment has a beginning and ending date. Renewals must be done before resuming work. **Even 1 day of work without authorization is a serious violation of U.S. law.** On-campus work does not require authorization, but you must maintain your full-time student status to be eligible. On-campus work is limited to no more than 20 hours per week during the fall and spring and may be full-time during the summer. Most on-campus student jobs, by university policy, are still limited to 20 hours a week even during the summer. You may not engage in on-campus employment after your completion of study.

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### C = CARRY CURRENT DOCUMENTS

1. **Keep your passport valid at all times.** Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months into the future.
2. **You are required to carry your immigration documents (passport, I-20) with you.** You can be fined \$100 and/or sent to jail for up to 30 days if you do not have your documents with you. Local law enforcement officials have unofficially stated they are not strictly enforcing this law. They still recommend that you carry photocopies of your immigration documents with you at all times in the greater Houston area. You should carry the original documents with you outside of Houston, even if you are remaining in the U.S.
3. **Inside the U.S. you must maintain your visa status, not your visa sticker in your passport.** The visa **sticker** in your passport can expire while you are in the U.S. because its **ONLY** function is to serve as a "key" to enter or reenter the U.S. Your visa status is defined with the F-1 and D/S (Duration of Status) on your I-20 and I-94 card. You must maintain your status (not the sticker) in order to remain in the U.S. You maintain your visa status by obeying all U.S. regulations (highlighted in this handout). You only need to renew your visa sticker if you leave the U.S. and want to reenter. Be sure to only enter with an F-1 visa if you want to have F-1 status in the U.S. The type of visa sticker you use determines your status in the U.S. If you are an F-1 student and have a specific departure date on your I-94 card (there is no D/S), make an appointment to see an advisor in our office immediately.

I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it

I have questions or need more information

4. **Only attend the school listed on your current I-20.** To attend another school, you must transfer to that school (obtain approval on a new I-20) or receive a concurrent enrollment letter from our office.

I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it

I have questions or need more information

**CARRY CURRENT DOCUMENTS continued on next page...**

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5. **Apply for an extension of your I-20 before the expiration date.** The extension can only be granted by our office before the expiration date listed on item 5 of your I-20. Valid reasons include change in major, research difficulties, or a medical excuse.
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information

### T = TRANSITIONS

1. **Report any change of address to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and ISSS within 10 days of the change every time you move using DHS electronic Form AR-11 and your PeopleSoft Self-Service.** You may be fined \$200 and/or placed in jail for up to 30 days if DHS does not have your current address. The AR-11 may be filed electronically by visiting the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) and clicking on "change of address online". Form AR-11SR needs to be used if you are required to participate in Special Registration. You should also report within 10 days the new address, phone number and email to ISSS using your PeopleSoft account (<http://my.uh.edu/>) to update your SEVIS address type. **Never blank out your "SEVIS" address type in People Soft.**
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information
2. **Complete an I-20 transfer whenever you change schools.** If you plan to transfer to another school you will need to request a release of your SEVIS I-20 record from UH. An I-20 transfer (not the same as transferring academic credit) is not complete until you have received a SEVIS I-20 from the new school and reported to the new school. An I-20 transfer must be completed within 15 days of the program start date on your new I-20.
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information
3. **Obtain a new I-20 whenever you make a change in degree levels.** This includes changing levels at the same school or a new one (e.g., bachelor's to master's degree) or beginning a new degree at the same level (e.g., master's degree to a 2<sup>nd</sup> master's).
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information
4. **Obtain a travel endorsement on page 3 of your I-20 before leaving the U.S. if you plan to reenter.** This will be needed if you want to reenter the U.S. It is not necessary if you are returning home permanently. An I-20 is no longer valid for reentry once you complete the degree listed on your I-20, even if the I-20 has not expired.
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information
5. **Make a transition within 60 days of completing your degree or optional practical training (OPT).** If you are not required to take any additional courses to satisfy your degree requirements, you are considered to have completed the course of study listed on your I-20 and you must take action to maintain status. It is your responsibility to keep track of your degree progress and make a timely application for graduation. You have a 60 day grace period to transition to a new I-20 for a new degree program or depart the U.S. after completion of your degree program or OPT.
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information
6. **Complete your degree earlier than I-20 program ending date.** You must notify ISSS in order to end your I-20 properly in the SEVIS system to avoid any complications of your status or future re-entry to the U.S.
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
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### S = STAY IN TOUCH

1. Realize that SEVIS (Student & Exchange Visitor Information System) requires ISSS to report all events in the life of a student via the internet on a regular basis. Due to this close tracking, it is vital that you stay in status by following all the items on this sheet and stay in touch with our office so that you can avoid unintentional violations. The government may change or add to F-1 regulations at any time. It is your responsibility to know them by attending public information meetings when offered, visiting our website, and **by using your UH email account (or by placing a "pointer" from it to your personal email account) so that we can send you automatic alerts.**
2. I am not eligible to apply for U.S. public benefits. I will contact ISSS office if I have any questions.
- I completely understand this regulation and will comply with it
- I have questions or need more information

***"I have read all of the above statements and understand that I am required to know and obey all F-1 regulations."***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_