



F-1 AND J-1 STUDENT  
RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COMPLYING  
WITH IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS

This handout is to inform our F-1 and J-1 international students of their responsibilities for complying with immigration regulations under the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). **Please read through this information carefully and keep this sheet as a reference for the duration of your F-1/J-1 status. Consult with an International Student and Scholar Advisor in International Student and Scholar Services with questions or to discuss your specific case.**

## WHAT IS SEVIS?

SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) is a database used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to track the arrival, enrollment, and departure of international students and their dependents. **All F-1 and J-1 students must comply with the reporting requirements to maintain valid immigration status in the United States.**

## WHAT DATA IS THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL REQUIRED TO REPORT TO SEVIS FOR F-1 AND J-1 STUDENTS?

### BIOGRAPHIC

B

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Country of Birth
- Country of Citizenship

### FINANCIAL

F

- Source of Funding
- Amount of Financial Resources

### ACADEMIC

A

- Level of Study
- Program of Study
- Program Start and End Dates
- Early completion or termination of studies, along with date and reason for termination
- Failure to complete the academic program or academic ineligibility
- Academic or disciplinary action taken by the school due to a criminal conviction
- School Transfer
- Reinstatement

### ENROLLMENT

EN

- Arrival on Campus
- Enrollment Status or Failure to Enroll
- Registration for less than a full course of study without PRIOR authorization from ISSS

### ADDRESS

AD

- U.S. Residential Address
- Mailing Address
- Permanent Address in Home Country
- Telephone Number
- Email Address

### EMPLOYMENT

E

- Employment updates when working off-campus on OPT, CPT, or AT
- Periods of authorized employments:
  - F-1: CPT, OPT, Authorization due to severe economic hardship
  - J-1: On-Campus Employment, Academic Training, Employment due to economic hardship

SEVIS requires all schools with international students to report information regarding the student program as a condition for enrolling international students. However, ISSS and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are NOT part of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or any other federal agency. Our staff is dedicated to assist you in achieving your educational goals at the University. An important part of achieving educational goals in the United States is to protect your immigration status and future immigration options by following requirements for maintaining valid immigration status. **United States immigration regulations may change. Be sure to check with an ISSS advisor before making decisions that may impact your immigration status. ISSS is your on-campus resource for advice and assistance with student immigration issues. International Student advisors remain up to date with current regulations and SEVIS requirements.**

The following is a list of regulations you MUST follow in order to maintain your status in the United States. Failure to follow these regulations may result in termination of your F-1 or J-1 immigration status. It is very important that you understand the following information.

## ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, AND EMAIL ADDRESS REPORTING

ISSS must report a change in your U.S. address or your preferred phone number to SEVIS. You MUST update your physical U.S. address (no Post Office Boxes) or phone number ***within 10 days*** of any move you make within the U.S. while in F-1 or J-1 status (this includes temporary moves for the summer, if residing in the U.S.).

The University of North Carolina allows you to do this reporting online through ConnectCarolina (<http://connectcarolina.unc.edu>). There are multiple address fields for international students. The “**SEVIS IMMIGRATION REPORTING ADDRESS**” is the U.S. address that will be used for immigration reporting. The “**SEVIS FOREIGN ADDRESS**” should be the permanent address outside of the U.S. In order to prevent any interruption in your mailing, you must also have an address in “Local” address but this address is not sent to SEVIS. This may be a duplicate entry, but both address fields must be filled in. **IMPORTANT NOTE FOR J-1 STUDENTS:** J-1 students must also submit a notice of change of address in writing to ISSS at [ISSS@unc.edu](mailto:ISSS@unc.edu) or by completing and submitting a change of address form to ISSS.

For reporting to SEVIS, ISSS reports the “preferred” phone number as updated in ConnectCarolina. While students are enrolled at UNC, their UNC email address will be uploaded to SEVIS. Once you complete your program of study, you should update the preferred email address in ConnectCarolina to your personal email address.

Students who have graduated (or who are no longer enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill) and are on F-1 Optional Practical Training or J-1 Academic Training are also required to report changes in address and phone number in ConnectCarolina. If needed, you may need to request a guest ID to complete this. Additional information can be found on our website: <http://iss.unc.edu/current-students/address/>.

## ENROLLING FULL-TIME

Undergraduate students MUST be enrolled for at least **12 CREDIT HOURS PER SEMESTER**. Graduate students must be registered for **9 CREDIT HOURS** per semester. Once a graduate student has completed all coursework for their program and has advanced to candidacy (doctoral students only), the student may enroll in research hours (992, 993, 994) for thesis or dissertation. However, regardless of the number of hours, you must be certified full-time by the University Registrar’s Office in order to be considered full-time for immigration purposes. Summer enrollment is not typically required unless it is the **FIRST** or **LAST** semester of your program. More information can be found online: <http://iss.unc.edu/current-students/enrollment/>.

## DISTANCE AND ONLINE LEARNING

Federal Regulations limit the number of distance and online courses you may apply towards full-time enrollment. **No more than one course or 3 credits per semester may be used to reach full-time enrollment.** All other credits in that semester must be credits taken through in-person classes on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus.

## DROPPING BELOW FULL-TIME

If for any reason you do not intend to enroll full-time during a semester (personal reasons; medical problem; initial academic difficulties such as course level placement or the English language; or if you are an undergraduate in your final semester and you do not need 12 hours in order to graduate, etc.) you **MUST** talk with an advisor at ISSS and obtain permission from an ISSS advisor **BEFORE** you drop below full-time. This permission must be documented in SEVIS before dropping below full time enrollment. Only ISSS has the authority to approve an underload in SEVIS. **NOTE: STUDENTS WHO DROP BELOW FULLTIME ENROLLMENT WITHOUT APPROVAL BY ISSS IN SEVIS ARE OUT OF IMMIGRATION STATUS AND ARE INELIGIBLE TO REMAIN IN THE U.S.**

## CHANGE TO PROGRAM OF STUDY

Any change to the program information contained on the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 must be updated in SEVIS. These changes include a change of major, program or degree level (i.e. Bachelors to Masters). *It is the student's responsibility to make sure the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 reflects accurate information regarding the program of study.* Students should not assume that any changes made in the University system are automatically updated in SEVIS. Students should meet with an advisor at the ISSS office to discuss any changes to the program of study, since some changes may require additional documentation and issuance of a new Form I-20 or DS-2019. The timing of this change may have an impact on a student's status and plans for the future, so it is important to get information before changing degree levels.

## PROGRAM EXTENSION

The Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 (Certificates of Eligibility) must remain valid at all times. **F-1 AND J-1 STATUS END DATES ARE DETERMINED BY YOUR FORM I-20 (SEE PROGRAM END DATE) OR FORM DS-2019 (SEE ITEM 3).** Requests to extend Forms I-20 or Form DS-2019 must be made **prior to the program end date of the form.** A student whose program end date has passed who has not yet completed the academic program is out of status and ineligible for F-1 or J-1 student benefits such as on-campus employment, OPT or Academic Training. For information on how to extend your Form I-20 or DS-2019 see our website: <http://iss.unc.edu/current-students/extension/>.

## TRANSFER OF SCHOOLS

Students who plan to transfer to another school should discuss the transfer process with an ISSS advisor. The SEVIS school code for the new school, and the start date at the new school will be required for transferring a SEVIS record. See the website for additional information: <http://iss.unc.edu/current-students/transfer/>.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE OR WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

Before planning to take a leave of absence or to withdraw from school completely, students must notify ISSS. F-1 students who withdraw from school in the middle of a term without PRIOR authorization from ISSS must depart the U.S. immediately, and are not entitled to any grace period. F-1 students who *notify ISSS and receive authorization from ISSS BEFORE withdrawing from UNC-Chapel Hill* are allowed a 15-day grace period to depart the U.S. For J-1 students, if your program is terminated by the University, there is no grace period allowed.

## EMPLOYMENT REGULATIONS

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### J-1 STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

International students in J-1 status must have **PRIOR** approval in writing from their J Program sponsor (i.e. ISSS or the other institution or organization that issued your DS-2019) for **ON-CAMPUS OR OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**, including Academic Training. Unpaid internships or practicums may still be considered “employment” depending on certain factors and so they may still require employment authorization. Please discuss any “work” or “volunteer” opportunities with an advisor at ISSS before beginning the opportunity. You can also find more information on our website:

<http://iss.unc.edu/student-employment/>.

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### F-1 STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Students in F-1 status are allowed to work on-campus no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session but may work full-time on-campus during the summer and winter vacations between semesters of study. (On-campus does NOT include positions paid by UNC Hospitals, the Carolina Inn, or businesses on Franklin Street). All off-campus employment for F-1 students must be approved **PRIOR** to beginning employment either by ISSS, or in the case of F-1 Optional Practical Training or F-1 Economic Hardship, by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). You can find more information about employment on our website: <http://iss.unc.edu/student-employment/>.

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### F-1 CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

F-1 CPT must be an integral part of an established curriculum, either required for all students in the academic program or fulfilling a specific academic objective. If the degree program has an academic activity that requires off-campus employment (i.e. practicum, internship, or field research), students must obtain CPT authorization on their Form I-20 before beginning this work. Detailed information regarding CPT is available on our website (<http://iss.unc.edu/student-employment/cpt/>). **F-1 EXCHANGE/NON-DEGREE STUDENTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR CPT.**

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### F-1 OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Off campus work that is related to your field of study, but not required by your academic program may be authorized as OPT. Students may use OPT during or after the completion of a course of study. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must receive applications for post-completion OPT **NO LATER** than 60 days after the program completion date; students may apply as early as 90 days before program completion. Students may apply for 12 months of OPT per academic level. Students in a STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) field meeting certain eligibility requirements, may be eligible for an additional 24-month extension of OPT. Detailed information on OPT is available on our website (<http://iss.unc.edu/student-employment/opt/>). **F-1 EXCHANGE/NON-DEGREE STUDENTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR OPT.**

## DEPENDENTS

A separate SEVIS record is required for F-2 and J-2 dependents, and each dependent receives a separate Form I-20 or DS-2019. Dependents travelling outside the U.S. should obtain a signature from an ISSS advisor or J-1 program sponsor prior to departure from the U.S. This signature verifies immigration status and is required for re-entry to the U.S. If the dependents depart the U.S. for a considerable length of time, ISSS must be notified.

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### NOTE FOR F-2 DEPENDENTS

F-2 dependents may study part-time in any certified program at an SEVP-certified school. Dependents in F-2 status may not study full-time apart from minor children studying in K-12 schools.

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### NOTE FOR J-2 DEPENDENTS

Dependents in J-2 status are eligible to apply for employment authorization through USCIS. At this time, J-2 dependents may also pursue a full-time degree program. J-2 dependents are also required to maintain health insurance that meets the minimum requirements for the duration of their DS-2019.

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### HEALTH INSURANCE FOR DEPENDENTS

The estimate of expenses for dependents includes required health insurance. All UNC Students and their dependents must have health insurance in the United States. UNC has a contract with GeoBlue insurance and we recommend enrollment as soon as possible for students and dependents.

## TRAVEL

Re-entry following travel outside of the U.S. requires a valid and unexpired Form I-20/DS-2019, signed for travel by ISSS (or J-1 program sponsor), valid passport and visa for re-entry to the country. Students should travel with a certificate of enrollment from their academic department or the Registrar's office, and proof of funding. Visa and travel requirements change often, so always check with ISSS before you plan travel outside of the U.S. to make sure that you know the latest re-entry requirements.

## GRACE PERIODS FOR PREPARATION TO DEPART

After completion of studies, international students have a grace period during which they may remain in the U.S. in legal status. For F-1 students the grace period is up to 60 days after the program completion date and for J-1 students the grace period is up to 30 days after the program completion date. Once a student departs the U.S. during the grace period, the student forfeits any remaining time of their grace period.