

Maintaining your F-1 status

F-1 students are required to adhere to the following guidelines to validly maintain their F-1 status. It is the student's responsibility to comply with these guidelines and maintain their status. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences including the termination of the student's SEVIS record.

Enrolling In a Full Course of Study

Students must enroll in a full course of study each quarter to maintain their F-1 status.

- F-1 students in a Bachelor's degree program must enroll in 12 credits per quarter (8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B)).
- F-1 students in a Master's degree program must enroll in 6 credits per quarter.
- F-1 students in a PhD or Doctorate program would need to refer to the specific structure of the program stated in the [Academic Catalog](#). This may range from 4-5 credits per quarter depending on the program. If the student is in a PhD program which has a dissertation requirement and the student has advanced to candidacy, the full-time enrollment requirement will be fulfilled with 3 credits per quarter.

F-1 students **may not** enroll in **more than one online course of 3 credits** per quarter (8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G))

Please note the WIL/BIP CPT course is 0 credit and does not count towards the full course of study, although it is required for degree completion.

Students will be automatically enrolled in courses for their first quarter at Sofia University, but they enroll independently from their second quarter onwards.

If a student has any reason why they cannot enroll in a full course of study, they must first request authorization from a DSO. Reasons why students may be permitted to enroll in less than a full course load include 1) if they are approved for a medical reduced course load 2) if they are approved for a vacation term after completing three consecutive quarters of full time enrollment 3) if they are in their final quarter and only need one more course to graduate and have been approved by a DSO to take less than 6 credits 4) if they are new F-1 student who is studying in the U.S. for the first time and facing initial challenges with adapting to the U.S. education system.

Attendance and Satisfactory Academic Progress

International students are required to attend all classes. Each residential class has a minimum of three (3) required, on campus class meetings during the quarter. If a student is withdrawn from a course due to violation of the attendance policy this could result in the student falling below the minimum enrollment requirement. If the student is no longer enrolled in a full course of study due to being withdrawn from a course, a DSO would be required to terminate the student's SEVIS record.

Students should also be aware that SEVP or USCIS may request student attendance records or transcripts as evidence that the student was actively pursuing their program.

International students must also maintain [Satisfactory Academic Progress](#) as failure to do may result in the termination of the student's SEVIS record.

Termination of a SEVIS record is a final action for a student on a F-1 visa and the student would be required to immediately depart the U.S. Failure to depart the U.S. after SEVIS termination will result in accrual of unlawful presence and other legal implications. An exception may apply if the student has a different status which permits them to remain in the country.

Updating address and personal/contact information

Please immediately notify DSO if you change your legal name, address, phone number or email address. This should be reported within 10 days of the change.

Students should also update their address using the Student Portal.

Change of Status

Please also notify DSO if you have a pending application or petition with USCIS. If you receive an Approval Notice for a Change of Status application, this should be reported to DSO as soon as possible and no later than 10 days from the date of the change.

Students are also required to immediately notify DSO if they receive any communication from an embassy or consulate relating to a visa approval, denial or revocation. Students must also keep DSO notified if there are any circumstances which may result in a loss or termination of their visa, such as being arrested, cited, or detained.

Work authorization

Students must seek prior authorization from a DSO prior to engaging in any type of work including on-campus, off-campus. CPT, OPT or STEM OPT. Working without the correct authorization can be grounds for SEVIS termination.

OPT, STEM OPT and off-campus employment require adjudication and approval by USCIS.

Students approved for CPT should be aware that CPT is approved for a specific employer for a specific time period. Working for any other employer or working outside the specific approval dates on the I-20 is not permitted.

If you have any doubts regarding whether a specific type of activity will constitute “employment” we recommend you clarify with DSO.

Please notify DSO immediately if there is any change to an approved work authorization.

Travel authorization

Students must seek approval from DSO to travel abroad and re-enter the U.S. Students should be aware that they may not be granted re-entry without a travel endorsement on their I-20. If you wish to request a travel signature, please email DSO@sofia.edu for further guidance.

Program dates and grace period

Please be mindful of the program end date indicated on your I-20. If you require further time to complete your program, please notify DSO immediately. Please note that if you require an extension to your end date, it is your responsibility to ensure that the program end date on your I-20 is correctly updated before the current end date passes. Program extensions can only be granted for “compelling academic or medical reasons”.

If you are on CPT, on-campus employment or off-campus employment please note that your employment authorization cannot continue after your program end date.

When you have completed your program, you will have a grace period of 60 days from the program end date to either start a new program with Sofia University, transfer your SEVIS record to another school, change your status with USCIS or depart the U.S. and return to your home country.

Optional Practical Training/ STEM OPT

If you believe you may be eligible for Optional Practical Training after your program ends, please email DSO for further information. The application period for OPT is 90 days before your program end date and 60 days after your program end date.

If a student has been approved for OPT and has completed a degree with a CIP code which is STEM designated, the student is also eligible to apply for STEM OPT. The application for the STEM OPT extension must be made 90 days before the EAD end date or no later than the EAD end date.

Passport

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future. To renew your passport, contact the nearest embassy or consulate of your home country.

Document Retention

It is important that you keep all documents pertaining to your immigration status in the United States. This may include current and expired passports, all I-20's, EAD's (off campus work authorizations), etc. These records are important to establishing your compliance with U.S. immigration laws.