

F-1 Student Responsibilities

Immigration rules are very important to understand. We have prepared this quick guide to help you understand how to maintain your F-1 immigration status. You should always consult with ISO if you have any questions about maintaining status.

Maintaining F-1 Status: At a Glance

By U.S. immigration law, you must do several things to maintain your F-1 student status.

You must always:

1. **Be a full-time student**
2. **Report changes in contact information within 10 days**
3. **Keep immigration documents valid**
4. **Abide by immigration deadlines**
5. **Understand and follow regulations concerning school breaks, work, and travel**

Let's explore how to accomplish each of these things in the following sections.

Being a Full-Time Student

To maintain full-time student status, you must do three things. The first thing you must do is **enroll for a full-time course load**. Full-time is defined as 12 units per semester. A minimum of 9 units must be in-person (only 3 units of online enrollment can count towards the full time course load requirement). It is most important that you satisfy the immigration rule of being a full-time student.

Full-time enrollment alone is not enough! You must also **attend class**. This is very important. All F-1 students have a physical presence requirement – this means that they must physically be in class. Not attending class may also result in you being dropped from a class. If you are dropped, and this drop results in you being enrolled in less than 12 units, you will lose your F-1 status. A “W” does not count towards full time enrollment.

In addition, you must always **make satisfactory academic progress** towards the completion of your program. This means that you must pass your classes and earn your certificate or degree within the expected timeline. You may be placed on academic probation if you are not succeeding academically. Immigration rules allow you to be placed on academic probation once, but if you are dismissed from the program you will lose your F-1 status.

Please also note that permanent incomplete grades are not appropriate for international students. Incomplete grades are regarded by immigration officials to represent a voluntary inability or unwillingness to attend class and/or complete assignments. **Immigration regulations do not permit international students to stop attending class or not complete coursework**. If an emergency arises that stops you from going to class, you may need to request an [incomplete](#), but must work to complete the course according to the contract with your professor.

Questions? Contact us at gcciso@glendale.edu or 818-240-1000 x6645.

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Reporting Changes in Contact Information

By U.S. immigration law, you must always notify us of any **change of address, phone number, or email address within 10 days** of the change. You must make your changes directly in MyGCC.

This information is reported to the US government. Both the US government and our office staff must always be able to contact you. Make sure you activate the voicemail features on your phone and check your GCC email.

IMPORTANT: Most communications are sent via email. You are responsible for checking your GCC email. It is recommended that you check your email at least a few times a week.

Keeping Immigration Documents Valid

You **must** always have a current I-20 and unexpired passport in your possession. Please take good care of these documents. Keep them in one safe location at home so you do not lose them.

YOUR I-20

Your I-20 cannot expire while you are in the US. Your I-20 will be issued for a specific program and for a specific length of time. This is the length of time we expect it will take you to complete your program. If you need more time to complete your program, please submit your [I-20 Extension Request Form](#) and supporting documents to the International Student Office *at least 2 weeks before your current I-20 expires*.

You may only extend your I-20 if you are continuing in the same program. If you need to change programs (i.e. you have completed a certificate program and will continue to the associates program), you will need to complete the [I-20 Request Form](#) with your academic counselor *at least 2 weeks before you change programs OR your current I-20 expires* (whichever comes first).

By the end of your studies, you may have several I-20s issued to you. It is very important that you keep all I-20s issued to you in a safe place at home – **never throw any away**. These may be needed in the future.

YOUR PASSPORT

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months. Please contact your country's embassy or consulate in the US to ask for an extension 6 months before your passport expires to begin the renewal process.

YOUR VISA

Your visa may expire while you are in the US. This is not a problem. However, if you travel outside of the US after your visa expires, you will need to return to your home country and apply for an F-1 visa extension. You may not enter the US on an expired visa.

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Following Immigration Deadlines

After you complete your studies at GCC, you may stay in the US up to 60 calendar days (including weekends) after your **last day of class**. This is called your **60-day Grace Period**. In most cases, your last day of class will differ from the end date on your I-20. You will need to calculate your 60-day grace period manually to be sure you do not overstay (you may find this website helpful: <http://www.timeanddate.com/date/duration.html>).

You have three options during your 60-day Grace Period:

1. You may leave the US. You must make arrangements to leave the US by the 60th day.
2. You may [request a transfer](#) to a new school.
 - a. You must be accepted into the next available program at your new school and your new program must start within 5 months.
 - b. **NOTE:** You are not allowed to stop studying once accepted to a new school. You need to complete the semester to be eligible for a transfer.
3. Apply for [Optional Practical Training](#).

You are only eligible for a 60-day grace period if you complete a term (semester). If you withdraw or are dismissed from the program, you do not qualify for a grace period and must leave the country or start a program at a new school *immediately*.

Understanding Other Regulations

REGULATIONS ON WORKING IN THE US

Working on Campus

You may work on campus up to 20 hours a week without permission. F-1 students do not qualify for “workstudy,” which is a federally-funded program, so search for non-workstudy positions.

Social Security Numbers

You do not need a social security number (SSN) unless you get a job; see our [Social Security Numbers - Fact Sheet](#) in the meantime. If you find a job, please review our [Working in the US](#) document for guidelines on obtaining a required job offer letter from the appropriate source and applying for a Social Security Number.

In the meantime, you can tell any agency that requests a SSN that you are an F-1 student and do not qualify for a social security number. They will help you in another way.

Curricular Practical Training

[Curricular Practical Training](#) (CPT) allows you to gain experience prior to graduation in specific jobs, internships, or employment-related activities, relevant to your field of study. You will only qualify for CPT after being in F-1 status for at least 9 months (this includes time spent in F-1 status at another school). In most cases, you must be enrolled full-time at GCC for one year (Fall and Spring) before being eligible for CPT. **Never work off campus without authorization.**

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Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows you to gain experience, typically after graduation, in specific jobs, internships, or employment-related activities, directly related to your field of study (your major). You will only qualify for OPT after being in F-1 status for at least 9 months. This includes time spent in F-1 status at another school.

OPT is granted for one year. You may work full or part time, the work may be paid or unpaid, and you may be self-employed. You can only be unemployed a maximum of 90 days during the year.

Please visit our [Immigration](#) page to learn more about OPT and how to apply.

REGULATIONS ON TRAVEL

Traveling Within the US

You do not need authorization to travel within the US, but be sure that you are not missing class. Plan your trips for the weekend or during school breaks only. When visiting San Diego or crossing state border lines by car, it is recommended that you take your original I-20 and passport with you. You may need to produce these documents if stopped by an immigration officer. Otherwise, carry a copy of your passport and I-20 when traveling within California but leave the originals at home in a safe place. **Always take originals when traveling by plane/boat or when visiting another state.**

Traveling Outside the US

Please [request a travel signature](#) at least 2 weeks before you will return to the US. This signature is good for 6 months. You will not be able to reenter the US without a valid signature.

NOTE: You can only obtain a travel signature if you will be **returning to the program**. You cannot travel outside the US during your 60-day grace period and reenter on your GCC I-20. If you are transferring to a new school, and plan on traveling outside of the US before starting your new program, you must inform your new school so they can give you a new I-20.

Make sure you have your current I-20 and a valid passport and visa. Most visas are issued with a multiple entry allowance (designated with an "M"). If your visa is not a multiple entry visa, you will not be able to return to the US unless you get a new visa in your home country.

If you are planning on visiting another country, you may also need a visa to travel there. Check this website to be sure: <https://www.visahq.com/citizens/>. Make sure you have obtained any needed travel authorizations and review our [Travel Guidelines](#) document before you make travel arrangements.

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