

# Maintaining F-1/J-1 Status

**I-20 Document Expiration and Validity: Please be aware of the dates on your I-20; this date designates how long you may stay in the U.S**

As an F-1/J-1 student, you are admitted to the U.S. for “duration of status”, which is notated as D/S on the white I-94 card in your passport. This means you are permitted to stay in the U.S. as long as you maintain your status. F-1 status is granted when you enter the U.S. and is regulated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The visa is different from immigration status; the visa stamp is placed in your passport by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate and is granted *for entry purposes only*. Even if your visa is valid, you can lose your legal student status if you do not comply with immigration laws regulating your stay in the U.S. If you fail to maintain your legal student status, you will need to speak to the Coordinator for International Student Support [CISS] to discuss your options for restoring your immigration status.

Regardless of the I-20 completion date, once you have completed your degree, you have 60 days to leave the U.S. You may request an extension of your I-20 if your program completion date will expire within the next 30 days and you need more time to complete your program of study. (The completion date can be found on #5 of the I-20 form). You must also request a new I-20 if you change your major or your degree level e.g. MDiv to MTS, MDiv to MA. Please see the CISS for more information on extending your program of study.

## **How to Maintain Your Immigration Status**

- **Maintain a valid passport at all times.**
- **Attend the school that is listed on your current I-20/DS-2019.**
- **For F-1 students, complete an immigration transfer whenever you change educational institutions.**

This process must be completed within 15 days of beginning classes at your new school. An immigration transfer is a completely separate process from transferring academic credits from another school. The transfer is not complete until you have registered for classes at the new school and received an I-20 confirming the completion of your transfer.

- **For J-1 students, the immigration transfer has to be completed within 30 days of the transfer release date from your previous institution.**
- **Complete a full course of study during the fall and spring semesters.** A full course of study is defined as 9 hours per semester for an M.Div student and a D.Min student; 12 hours per semester for a MA/GTU student. MA/GTU students and D.Min students may be eligible to enroll for less hours once all coursework has been completed and the student is enrolled in thesis or dissertation. (Please

check with your advisor or the Assistant Dean regarding such requirements). If you are a continuing student, you are not required to enroll in classes during the summer sessions

- **Apply for an extension of your program if you cannot complete your degree by the end date listed on your I-20/DS-2019.**

An **Extension of Stay** is required for students who do not complete their degree program by the completion date specified on the Form I-20.

Students must apply for an extension before the completion date stated on the Form I-20.

Students who fail to apply for an extension before the completion date on the I-20 are considered to be out of status.

**Obtain a new I-20/DS-2019 whenever you make a change in degree levels.** A new I-20/DS-2019 must be issued within 15 days of beginning classes in your new program. For example, this includes changing from a M.Div to a MA/GTU degree and from master's to a doctorate, from Optional Practical Training to a new degree.

**Work off-campus ONLY if you have received authorization from your faculty advisor [for example, Field Study] and the CIIS or USCIS.** Limit on-campus work to part-time (part-time employment is defined as 20 hours or less per week) during the fall and spring semesters. On-campus employment may be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) during the summer and official school breaks. F-1 and J-1 students do not require special authorization to work on campus. Note: J-1 students whose DS-2019 was issued by a sponsor other than PSR are required to obtain an authorization letter from their program sponsor in order to work on PSR campus.

**Request a travel endorsement on your I-20/DS-2019 from CISS before leaving the U.S.**

**Report your change of local address within ten days of your move.**

**Coordinator for International Student Support  
Holbrook 219A**