

STAYING IN STATUS GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL [F-1] STUDENTS

- International students are designated by the U.S. government as being in F-1 status. As long as the student is a full-time student, he/she is here “legally.”
The student must be registered as a full-time student!
- Full-time is decided by the school – by PSR and/or the GTU. It is not decided by the U.S. government. For MDiv students full-time is 9 credit hours. For MA students full-time is 12 credit hours. For D Min students full-time is typically 9 credit hours. When a MA student or a D Min student is writing a thesis at the end of the academic program, the number of credit hours considered full-time may vary.
- For any F-1 student in the last semester of the academic program, there is no minimum number of credit hours. The student may take the number of credit hours needed to complete his/her program and still be considered full-time.
- An F-1 student does not need to take courses during regular school breaks such as summer.
- It is important to understand the difference between a F-1 student’s status as an international student and the student’s visa. A visa is permission to enter the United States. A visa is issued because the U.S. government has accepted the person as an F-1, international student. Once the student is inside the U.S. attending school, the date on the visa or in the student’s passport is not important.
- However, if a F-1 student wishes to travel outside of the U.S. during his/her time as a student, the student’s visa must be current and the passport must be current, that is, the passport must not be expired. If that is not the case, that student must get a new passport and/or apply for a new visa to re-enter the U.S.. Therefore, it is not wise for an F-1 student to leave the U.S. unless all his/her documents are current.