

Maintaining F-1 Status



The primary purpose for a student entering the U.S. on an F-1 visa is to study and therefore should not take steps to detract from that purpose. It is important to maintain your status by following the F1 immigration rules and regulations. Below are actions to take in order to properly maintain your status.

Registration Requirements

F-1 students are required to maintain full-time enrollment status and be making progress towards completion of their degree requirements. Failure to maintain full-time enrollment status may result in termination of your F-1 visa status.

- Undergraduate students must be registered for a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester.
 - Online Classes: Only one online class per semester counts toward the full-time credits required to maintain your F-1 status. At least 9 credits per semester must be classes that meet on-campus (meaning, at least 9 of your 12 credits must be “on-campus” classes). You must attend classes regularly.
- Graduate day students must be registered for a minimum of 9 credit hours.
 - Online Classes: Only one online class per semester counts toward the full-time credits required to maintain your F-1 status. At least 6 credits per semester must be classes that meet on-campus (meaning, at least 6 of your 9 credits must be “on-campus” classes). You must attend classes regularly.
- Graduate, Certificate and Ed.D. evening students must be registered for a minimum of 6 credit hours.
 - A minimum of 3 credits per term must be classes that meet on-campus (meaning, at least 3 credits must be “on-campus” classes NOT online) towards your degree program. You must attend classes regularly.
- Graduate day certificate must be registered for a minimum of 5 credit hours.
 - A minimum of 5 credits semester must be classes that meet on-campus (meaning, at least 5 credits must be “on-campus” classes NOT online) towards your degree program. You must attend classes regularly.

Dropping Below Full-Time Enrollment

Withdrawing or dropping courses without informing the International Student Services Office and receiving prior authorization is a serious violation of your F1 status that may result in termination of your F1 visa status. If you are having difficulties—financial, medical, personal—please visit the ISSO for guidance and to go over your immigration options.

Summer Vacation

Summer is the only semester/term that students are allowed to be enrolled in no credits, all online, or less than full-time credits without any specific approval from ISSO. However, if begin or end your program in the summer, you must be enrolled in full-time credits on-ground. If you are not sure, please visit the ISSO for guidance.

Also, it is very important that you seek advice from your academic department to determine whether or not you need to take summer classes. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are following your academic program requirements, have enough courses/credits to be full-time enrolled, and making progress toward your degree completion.

Last Semester Enrollment

A last semester is when a student has only one semester left prior to the completion of their program of study. You may qualify to drop below full time, but must request authorization to register for part time credits to complete your studies by submitting a Reduced Course Load (Academic) on the ISSO Student Portal.

Withdrawal, Temporary Break in Studies, Not Returning

In order to maintain good F1 status, you must inform the ISSO if you will be withdrawing from the university, taking a break in studies, or submitting a “not returning” form. The ISSO will need to close your SEVIS record accordingly. If you inform the ISSO in advance, we can close your SEVIS record for “Authorized Early Withdrawal.” This is a voluntary and positive termination of your record.

Not informing ISSO in advance could result in the following negative terminations:

- Failure to Enroll: continuing student that was expected to report to school at the next available session and failed to do so.
- Unauthorized Withdrawal: continuing student stopped going to school without notifying the ISSO.

Unable to register or having courses dropped due to financial obligations

If you cannot enroll and begin courses by the beginning of the semester or term due to a financial obligation to the University, you run the risk of becoming out of status and having your SEVIS record terminated.

Here are some ways this can impact your immigration status:

- If you cannot start classes due to an unpaid balance, you will need to make plans to depart the US as soon as possible to avoid falling out of status. It is very important that you contact or meet with the ISSO PRIOR to the beginning of the semester to discuss your options and have the option of an Authorized Early Withdrawal.
- If you do not inform/meet with the ISSO PRIOR to the beginning of the semester or term, your SEVIS record will be terminated as “otherwise failing to maintain status” and will no longer be valid to re-enter the U.S.
- You will not have access to your academic transcripts and may not be allowed to register in the future.

We strongly advise that you work with the Student Financial Services department to see how you can resolve any unpaid balance prior to the beginning of the semester to avoid falling out of status. We want to make sure that you are aware of the consequences this can have on your immigration status and avoid any negative outcomes for future immigration benefits.

Suspensions, Dismissals, Expulsion

An F1 student who is at risk of or is suspended, academically dismissed or expelled from Lynn University should seek advice from the ISSO immediately to go over how this will affect their immigration status.

- Students may transfer to a different school. The student must first get admitted to a different school or program and submit a Transfer Out form on the ISSO Student Access portal and upload a copy of the new school’s acceptance letter. The SEVIS record will remain active as long as the transfer is done in a timely manner—this must happen before the decision becomes final. Once the decision becomes final, the SEVIS record must be terminated for the appropriate reason and the student will have to depart the US.
- You may withdraw from the university and have your SEVIS record cancelled for Authorized Early Withdrawal PRIOR to the decision becoming final. You will have a grace period of 15 days to depart the US from the official date of withdrawal.
- Students who take no action and do not inform the ISSO will have their SEVIS record terminated and will be out of immigration status. Students who remain in the U.S. will begin to accumulate days of overstay.

Employment and Practical Training

Employment opportunities are limited for F-1 students and therefore, before coming to the United States, F-1 students must prove they have the financial ability to pay for tuition and living expenses while studying.

There are a few employment opportunities available for F-1 students while studying in the U.S.

- On-Campus Employment (no prior authorization needed from ISSO)
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT) (prior authorization needed)
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) (prior authorization needed)

F1 students cannot engage in any type of employment, internship, practicum, volunteer opportunity, etc. –paid or unpaid— off-campus without the proper prior authorization from the ISSO. If you choose to engage in any type of off-campus employment/internship without the proper authorization, your immigration status will be terminated for illegal employment. You will have to depart the United States immediately and you may not be able to re-enter the United States in the future. For more information about employment and training options available for F1 students, please stop by to speak with an Advisor in the ISSO.

Changes in contact information

Any changes in address and contact information must be reported to the Department of Homeland Security within 10 days. You can update your contact information including your personal email and phone through your myLynn account. Please note that your local U.S. address must be your physical address, not a P.O. Box and you must include the apartment number if applicable. Not updating this information is a violation of your F1 Status.

See an Advisor in the ISSO if...

- Are doing a change your education level
- Plan on transferring to a new school or take a leave of absence
- Take a break from studies
- You are having financial difficulties and are not able to enroll
- Are at risk of being academically dismissed, suspended or expelled
- Your I-20 is expiring and you need more time to complete your degree—you will need to request an I-20 program extension BEFORE your I-20 expires