

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDELINES**

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## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDELINES

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### **What is USCIS?**

In March 2003, services formerly provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were assumed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under the United States Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS). In support of the DHS, USCIS seeks to promote national security, eliminate immigration backlogs, and improve immigration customer services.

**You must understand and follow USCIS, regulations in order to maintain your F-1 visa status. A student who does not maintain his/her visa status may be declared unlawfully present in the United States. If this occurs, you may be required to leave the U.S. immediately or face being denied entrance into the U.S. for a period of three (3) to ten (10) years.**

### **What is SEVIS?**

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) provides tracking, monitoring, and access to accurate and current information on non-immigrant students (F-1 visa) and exchanged visitors (J-1 visa). SEVIS enables schools to transmit electronic information via the Internet to the DHS and the Department of State throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the United States. All F-1 students and their dependents on F-2 are listed in SEVIS and have been assigned a SEVIS ID number. Your SEVIS ID is the 11-digit number above the bar code in the upper right corner of page 1 of your I-20.

### **How does SEVIS work?**

1. After DeVry University admits an international student, SEVIS is notified and the USCIS decides whether to approve the University's request to issue an I-20. If approved by the USCIS, the University transmits the new bar-coded I-20 form to the student.
2. As of September 1, 2004, SEVIS I-901 fee of \$100.00 (amount subject to change) went into effect for new students. Payments can be made at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). The printed receipt from an online payment may be used as a proof of payment. Bring this receipt with you to the U.S. Consulate. Mailing the payment to SEVIS is another option but it may take up to four weeks to process. For complete information see the SEVIS website at <http://www.ice.gov/>. **This must be paid in order for an F-1 visa to be granted.**
3. The student visits the U.S. Consulate abroad, and the consulate confirms through SEVIS that the I-20 that the student is carrying is a valid document. If everything is in order, the consulate issues the visa. A USCIS Officer at the airport (or other port of entry) reports to SEVIS the student's entry into the U.S.
4. When the student arrives on campus, he/she reports to the Designated School Official (DSO). After the student registers for classes, DeVry confirms, through SEVIS, the student's enrollment. The University continues to provide regular electronic reports verifying enrollment to USCIS throughout the student's academic career.
5. Finally, SEVIS records the student's departure from the United States.

### F-1 Student Status

This section outlines the policies and procedures that apply to DeVry international students who hold F-1 student visas. This non-immigrant status presumes that you are in the United States to study for a limited time before returning to your home country.

The Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) of the U.S. government expects you to follow the policies and procedure explained in this handbook.

### How Do I Maintain My F-1 Student Status?

Each of the regulations listed below will be explained in detail later in this handbook. Do not hesitate to see your Designated School Official (DSO) if you are uncertain about your status and documents. *Do not rely on what your friends tell you!*

1. [Full-time Enrollment](#)

As an F-1 student, you must be enrolled at DeVry on a full-time basis, that is, a minimum of 12 credits per semester and make satisfactory progress toward your degree. **You must first obtain permission from the DSO before dropping a class or falling below the minimum number of credits per semester.**

2. [Transferring to DeVry from Another U.S. School](#)

If you are transferring from another U.S. school to DeVry and you have not left the U.S. before enrolling at DeVry, **you must complete the transfer of your I-20 within ten (10) days of the start of your first semester** at DeVry.

3. [Extension of Stay](#)

If you cannot complete your degree by the date printed on your I-20 Item #5, you must request an “extension of stay” **at least one week before the expiration date** of your current I-20.

4. [Employment](#)

- You may not accept employment off campus without a written recommendation from the DSO and the permission of USCIS.
- You may not work more than 20 hours per week at a job on campus while school is in session.

5. [Transferring Out of DeVry](#)

You must notify the DSO **before** you transfer to another school in the U.S.

6. [Keep Your Passport Valid](#)

You must keep your passport valid **at all times**. For information on how to renew your passport, please contact your country’s embassy.

7. [Travel Signature for Re-Entry](#)

You must obtain the signature of the DSO on your I-20 before you travel outside the U.S. if you plan to re-enter on your student visa. Each Certification signature is valid for one year from the date it was signed.

**8. Report I-20 Changes**

You must report any change of major, degree level, or funding to the DSO. The DSO is required to report these changes to USCIS. You will require a new I-20. Failure to report these changes will cause you to fall out of status.

**9. Report Change of Address**

You must report any change of address, i.e., your actual physical residence, within ten (10) days of the change, in order for the DSO to inform USCIS of the change.

**10. Grace Periods**

Students who have completed their studies or completed their optional practical training period have 60 days to prepare to leave the U.S.

Students who drop out of school or withdraw and have prior approval from the DSO have 15 days to prepare to leave the U.S.

Students who drop out of school or withdraw *without* prior DSO approval must leave the U.S. immediately

**What Happens If I Don't Maintain My F-1 Status?**

If you have fallen “out of status,” you must apply to USCIS for reinstatement. The DSO will assist you in this process if it is your first time out of status, but you will be required to go to the Miami USCIS office in person to apply for reinstatement. The fee for this is \$195.00 (subject to change), and the forms can be obtained from the DSO. Students who have previously been reinstated and are out of status again will have a difficult time winning reinstatement.

You may also be reinstated, if it is your first time out of status by leaving the U.S. and returning on a new I-20, prepared by the DSO. However, you should discuss your options with the DSO because leaving the U.S. for reinstatement may jeopardize your eligibility for practical training.

USCIS will consider reinstating a student to F-1 status if:

1. the student has not been out of status for more than five (5) months
2. the student establishes, to the satisfaction of the USCIS, in detailed letter that:
  - the violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond the student's control; circumstances might include serious injury or illness, closure of the institution, or a natural disaster; **excuses of inadvertence, oversight, neglect, or willful failure on the part of the student are not accepted;**
  - the violation relates to a reduction in course load that would have been within the DSO's power to authorize, and that failure to approve reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to the student;
3. the student is pursuing or intending to pursue a full course of study in the immediate future at the school which is issued the I-20; and
4. the student has not engaged in unauthorized employment.

**A decision to reinstate an individual to F-1 student status is completely at the discretion of the USCIS.**

DeVry University have no control over this matter whatsoever. If you are denied reinstatement, you must stop attending class and depart the U.S. within thirty (30) days.

**If you think you may be out of status, please consult with the DSO as soon as possible.**

### **Full-Time Enrollment**

USCIS regulations stipulate that undergraduate students must complete at least twelve (12) credits of academic coursework per semester, referred to as a full course load.

The DSO is authorized by USCIS to approve a course load of less than 12 credits if one of the following circumstances applies:

- Illness or other medical condition substantiated by a physician's statement. A reduced course load due to illness or medical condition may only be approved for one (1) academic year.
- An initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods, or improper course level placement; **you must resume a full course or study in the next semester, excluding summer session, in order to maintain F-1 status. You are eligible to drop below a full course of study due to these academic difficulties only once per level of education.**
- If you are in your final semester and full course load is not needed to graduate.

**You must report to the DSO before dropping below the minimum 12 credits. If you do not do this, you will be out of F-1 status immediately and will be required to apply to USCIS for reinstatement.**

### **Grace Periods**

Students who have completed their studies or completed their optional practical training have sixty (60) days to prepare to leave the U.S.

Students who drop out of school or withdraw and have prior approval from the DSO have fifteen (15) days to prepare to the U.S.

Students who drop out of school, who are refused registration due to failure to maintain a minimum GPA, or who withdraw without prior DSO approval must leave the U.S. immediately. If you think you may be in this situation, make an appointment to see the DSO as soon as possible.

### **Extension of Stay**

When you entered the U.S., the customs officer gave you a white I-94 Arrival/Departure card and returned to you your DeVry SEVIS I-20. On both of these documents, the officer should have stamped the date you arrived and written "F-1, D/S." "D/S" stands for "duration of status" and includes the period of time during which you are pursuing a full course of study (your expected completion date is listed in item #5 of your I-20), plus any periods of authorized practical training (per eligibility), plus 60 days to prepare to depart the United States.

**If you are unable to complete your program of study by the expiration date noted on your I-20, item #5, you must apply for a program extension before that expiration date. Failure to extend your I-20 will result in your having to file for reinstatement with USCIS.**

### **How do I Request an I-20 Extension?**

The procedure for requesting an “I-20 Extension of Stay” is quite simple. Extensions are granted by the DSO if you have:

- Maintained continuous full-time student status, and
- The delay in completing the degree has been caused by compelling academic or medical reasons. Such reasons might include a change of major or illness, for which we will need a letter from your physician. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are NOT acceptable reasons for extending your I-20. Under these circumstances, a student will be considered out of status and may have to apply for reinstatement to F-1 status or change of non-immigrant status.

“Extension of Stay of Request” packet will be available in Student Services. Complete the forms as best as you can. Then, bring all the documents required in the packet to the DSO. Be sure to bring with you:

- Your completed I-20AB Request Form
- Letter from your academic advisor on department letterhead, explaining why you did not complete your course of study by the date on your I-20, confirming that you are making steady, full-time progress toward your degree, and providing a new anticipated date of completion for your studies. Extensions are granted only in increments of one year or less.
- Proof of your financial support for the extended period of time or the next eight (8) months, whichever is less (bank statement, department letter, etc). Acceptable financial documents are listed in the Extension of Stay packet.
- Your current DeVry I-20
- Your valid passport

If all documents are in order, the DSO will prepare a new I-20 that reflects the new completion date. You will need to pick up your new I-20 and sign it within about five (5) working days after you submitted it. The DSO will deactivate the old I-20 and return it to you. You should keep this I-20, along with any previously issued I-20 forms, for your records.

Note: you cannot file for a program extension after you have applied for a post-completion OPT.

### **Employment**

The most important employment issue to keep in mind is the issue of legal or “authorized,” versus illegal, or “unauthorized,” employment. It is your responsibility to make sure that you engage only in legal employment, i.e., that which qualifies under USCIS regulations permissible for F-1 students. **Any unauthorized, illegal employment – even if it is for a few hours, even if you did not know it was illegal – renders you out of status and possible terminates your stay in the United States.**

**You must always make sure that you have the necessary employment authorization before you begin work, since starting work without prior authorization, even if you receive an authorization later, constitutes illegal employment.**

Always consult with the DSO before starting any employment, this is the only way to ensure that you do not engage in illegal employment and suffer adverse consequences for your future in the U.S.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

There are several categories of F-1 employment, each with its own requirements. To be eligible for any employment, you must:

1. Be enrolled for a full course of study
2. Maintain good academic standing
3. Hold a valid passport
4. Have a current I-20 form DeVry

You must maintain your eligibility throughout your employment or lose your right to continue in that job, even if it was authorized in writing.

### **Categories of F-1 Student Employment**

#### **1. On-Campus Employment**

You are eligible to work on campus up to 20 hours per week (part-time) when school is in session and more than 20 hours per week (full-time) on your semester break if you are eligible and intend to register for the next quarter. To apply for an on campus job, you will need your DeVry I-20, your passport, and your Social Security number if you have one. If you do not have a Social Security number, read below.

Any job you have on campus must end when you complete your course of study unless you are on approved OPT.

#### **2. Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

OPT provides an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge from your academic program to practical work experience. This employment must be directly related to your major field of study. If you meet the eligibility requirements (see page 7), you may be authorized for twelve (12) months of OPT and another twelve months of OPT when you change to a higher educational level. OPT requires authorization form USCIS before you can start work; this procedure takes at least 90 days but can, and often does, take longer.

### **Social Security Numbers and Taxes**

If you are offered a job in the U.S. (including on-campus), you will need a Social Security number. To obtain a SSN, you will need a letter from the DSO on official DeVry letterhead indicating your eligibility to apply. You will then take this to the Social Security Administration Office that serves your area.

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. less than five (5) years are exempt from Social Security (also known as FICA) and Medicare Taxes. Be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer, as many are unfamiliar with this provision of the tax laws. Students in F-1 status are subject to all other federal, state, and local taxes that apply.

### **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

Optional practical training is the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to a practical work experience off campus. OPT is authorized by USCIS. This authorization generally takes 90 to 120 days to obtain but can take as long as 5 months. The maximum time granted to work in F-1 OPT status is 12 months, not to exceed 14 months after completion of studies. You may use some or all of the available 12 months practical training during your course of study or save the full 12 months to use after graduation.

While on optional practical training, you will be required to provide your current address to the DeVry/DSO, along with the name and location of your employer.

### **What are the eligibility requirements for OPT?**

1. You must have been in legal status and a full-time student in a degree program for two consecutive semesters (30 weeks). **Students enrolled in certificate programs are not eligible for OPT.**
2. You must be in valid F-1 status at the time you apply
3. You intend to work in a position directly related to your major field of study.

You may be eligible for 12 months of OPT for each higher education level, i.e., 12 months after your Associate's degree, another 12 months after your Bachelor's degree, and another 12 months after your Master's degree, whether or not you complete your degree program at a different school. Some students may be eligible for additional OPT after receiving a second degree at the same level. See the DSO for details.

### **How can I use OPT before I complete my academic program?**

Students meeting the eligibility requirements listed above may apply for OPT

- Part-time (20 hours per week or less) while school is in session,
- Full-time during annual vacation periods if you are eligible to continue and intend to register at DeVry for the next quarter, and/or
- Full-time after you have completed all course requirements for the degree and have or its equivalent requirement remaining.

Any periods of OPT used before the completion of your studies will be deducted from the total allowable period of 12 months. Part-time OPT will be deducted at one-half the full-time rate. For example, four months of part-time OPT will result in two months deducted from the 12 months total.

### **How should I apply for OPT?**

It is important that you apply for OPT authorization well in advance of the date you wish to be working. You may submit your application up to 120 days before your program completion date. You may not apply for OPT after you have completed your studies. You must apply for OPT *before* the end of your last semester or session. USCIS will ask you to give a work start date that falls within 60 days after completion of your studies. If you apply too late to receive approval to begin work on your desired start date, you must still wait until USCIS has approved your OPT to begin work. This loss of time will not be added to your period of work authorization or otherwise made up. You will not be authorized for any OPT beyond 14 months after completion of your studies.

After you apply for OPT, DeVry will issue a new I-20 reflecting your OPT status.

**Do I need to have a job before I apply?**

You do not need a job offer before applying for OPT. However, if you are applying for OPT during your course of study or vacation periods, you will want to have either a job offer or a firm job prospect because periods of OPT cannot be rescinded once the period requested has been authorized

<b>DeVry Career Services office will assist in developing leads for possible employments.</b>
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**How will I know if my OPT application has been approved?**

Two to four weeks after you have mailed your application, you will receive a NOTICE of Action (Form I-765) form USCIS. Keep this letter; you will need it. Your Notice of Action will tell you to expect to wait about 80 days to receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD). The EAD is a small photo identification card which states the type and length of the period of employment authorized. The authorized work period on your EAD cannot be extended. When you receive this card, check to make certain all the information is correct. This is a crucial document; be sure you keep it in a safe place.

**What if I don't receive my EAD in 90 days?**

Ninety (90) days after the receipt date listed on your Notice of Action, you may apply for a temporary EAD. Your Notice of Action (I-797) will outline this process for you. You must go in person to USCIS (Miami), where you will be issued a temporary EAD in person, or you may request an appointment time and date through the National Customer Service Center listed on your Notice of Action. The DSO will have the address and directions to the local USCIS office.

**Can I begin working before I get the EAD?**

You may **not** begin employment before you receive you EAD form USCIS, even if your desired start date has passed. Working before OPT has been authorized by the USCIS constitutes illegal employment and will jeopardize your legal status in the U.S. You may begin work only after receiving temporary or original EAD card.

**Can I travel abroad and re-enter the U.S. before I receive my EAD?**

Yes, if:

- You are apply for a pre-completion OPT and will continue as a full-time student at DeVry or
- You are applying for post-completion OPT and will re-enter the U.S. before completing your studies for the degree in progress. To re-enter the U.S., you will still require a valid travel signature on you I-20 and a current F-1 Visa.

**No**, if you have completed your studies but have not received your EAD card. If you leave the U.S. after the completion date (item #5 on you I-20) and before you receive you EAD, your OPT will be cancelled. USCIS will consider this an abandonment of your application and will not permit you to re-apply.

**Can I travel abroad while I am on OPT?**

Yes, you may travel outside the U.S., while on OPT, provided

1. You hold an EAD card, and
2. The DSO has signed page 3 of your I-20, permitting re-entry to the U.S. DSO will sign your I-20 only after seeing your valid EAD card.

### **How do I apply for OPT?**

First, pick up OPT Application Packet from the DSO. The application packet includes a copy of USCIS FORM I-765 and a DeVry OPT Application Form. If any information requested on these forms is unclear, leave them incomplete and the DSO will help you with them. The following requirements for OPT request:

- Completed form I-765
- DeVry OPT FORM signed by the Academic Dean
- Your original I-20 form
- Two (2) clear photocopies of your I-94, front and back
- Two (2) passport style photos
- A clear copy of your last EAD, front and back, if you have one
- A check or money order made payable to USCIS for the amount of \$175.00 (amount subject to change)

DSO will have the address of the Service Center to mail the OPT Request and you will be issued a new I-20.

### **Who decides if I am approved for OPT?**

The USCIS adjudicates the Form I-765 and issues your EAD on the basis of DSO recommendation unless USCIS finds the student otherwise ineligible. USCIS will notify the applicant if OPT is denied and will give the reasons for the denial. *The student applicant may not appeal the decision.*

### **Termination of OPT**

Authorization for practical training is automatically terminated when you transfer to another school or begin study at another educational level. You cannot reapply for any loss of time.

### **Employment Authorization Based Upon Severe Economic Hardship**

U.S. Immigration regulation stipulates:

“If other employment opportunities are not available or otherwise insufficient, an eligible F-1 student may request off-campus employment work authorization based upon severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstance beyond the student’s control.

“These circumstances may include loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increase in tuition and/or living costs, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student’s source support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.”

### **Eligibility**

If you feel circumstance qualify as a severe economic hardship, you should pick up an Economic Hardship Employment Authorization packet at Student Services. We recommend that you make an appointment to discuss this with the DSO.

To be eligible to apply for off-campus employment authorization based on severe economic hardship, F-1 students must meet the following conditions:

1. You must have been in F-1 status for two consecutive semesters (30 weeks).
2. You must be in good academic standing and registered full-time.
3. You must demonstrate that acceptance of employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control and that on-campus employment is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet the needs that have arisen as a result of the unforeseen circumstances.

#### **How do I know if I've been approved?**

The USCIS will adjudicate the application on the basis of Form I-20 and Form I-765 and any additional support materials. If employment is authorized, you will receive an EAD (Employment Authorization Document). **You cannot accept off-campus employment until you receive the EAD.** USCIS will also notify you if you have been denied and will include the reason(s) for the denial. There is no appeal if you are denied.

Employment authorization may be granted in one-year intervals up to the expected date of completion the student's current course of study. USCIS will renew the EAD only if the student is maintaining status and good academic standing. **The employment authorization is automatically terminated whenever the student fails to maintain status.**

#### **Change of Educational Level**

If you are completing a degree or certificate program at DeVry in the next semester or session and have been accepted into a new program level, (e.g., you are completing your studies for your Bachelor's degree and have been accepted into the Master's program), you will need a new I-20.

#### **What is the procedure for notifying USCIS of a change of education level on my I-20?**

1. Make an appointment to see the DSO.
2. Bring your degree audit with the new academic program, this can be printed through OSS. This will indicate your acceptance to the program, the new start date of the program and the expected length of time it will take you to earn a degree.
3. Bring your current I-20.

The DSO will issue you a new I-20 for your new program only after you have completed all requirements for your current degree program.

**If you have completed the course of study on your current I-20 before the expiration date (item #5 on you I-20) and if you plan to leave the U.S. before starting your new academic program, you must use the new I-20 to re-enter the U.S.**

### **Transferring From Another U.S. School to DeVry**

As F-1 student, you must notify your current school that you intend to transfer to DeVry. To be eligible for a transfer, you must meet the following criteria:

- Your current school must release you to DeVry in the SEVIS system.
- You must be in valid non-immigrant, F-1 student status.
- You must be, and have been, a full-time student at the school you were last authorized to attend, either during the preceding term or the term preceding an authorized school vacation.
- You must intend to pursue a full course of study at DeVry.
- You must provide documentation that you are financially able to attend DeVry.

### **What are the procedures to transfer to DeVry?**

1. If admitted to DeVry, you must tell your current school that you plan to transfer, that you will attend DeVry, and that you will be ending your studies at that school by a specific date. They will then release you in SEVIS to DeVry.
2. **You must report to DeVry's DSO within 10 work days of the start of your first academic semester or session. IF YOU FAIL TO REPORT, YOUR F-1 STATUS IS LOST AND YOU WILL HAVE TO FILE FOR REINSTATEMENT.**
3. The DSO will complete the transfer process and report you to SEVIS as a new DeVry student.

### **Is the process different if I am traveling outside the U.S. before starting DeVry?**

Yes. If you are re-entering the U.S. to begin at DeVry, you will simply need to present your new DeVry I-20 at the port of entry. Your F-1 Visa stamp must be valid and you should check with the embassy or consulate in your country or with your airline to see if you will need a new visa stamp that indicates "DeVry University."

### **Transferring Out of DeVry to Another U.S. School**

The procedure is very similar to the one described above.

**It is very important that you notify DeVry University DSO at the beginning of your final semester or session at DeVry of your intent to transfer to another school.** You will need a confirmation letter from us, indicating your valid F-1 status and SEVIS release, before your new school will issue you a new I-20.

A student may remain in the U.S. up to five (5) months after transferring out of one school or ending optional practical training and before starting classed at another U.S. school.

### **Leaving and Re-entering the U.S**

#### **What final documents should I bring with me when I travel outside the U.S.?**

F-1 Visa holders must have the following documents to ensure re-entry to the U.S.:

- A passport valid for a minimum of five (5) months in the future.

- A valid U.S. visa including a stamp that is valid beyond the date you plan to return to the U.S.
- A valid Form I-20. **This must be signed on page 3 by the DSO**

**What is the procedure for obtaining a travel signature for the DSO?**

Bring your I-20 to the DSO and request a travel form. You will complete the form and leave it with your I-20 to the DSO. Usually your I-20 will be signed and ready for pick-up within the next day.

Before the DSO can sign your I-20, we must verify your full-time enrollment, determine if you are enrolled for the minimum number of credits, and confirm that you are in valid F-1 status. If you have dropped below the minimum, you are out of status and must be reinstated before we can sign your I-20 for re-entry.

DeVry University *travel endorsements are valid for twelve (12) months* from the date stamped on page 3 of your I-20. If you have multiple entries on your valid U.S. visa stamp, you may re-enter the U.S. as many times as you wish as long as you enter no later than twelve (12) months after the last date stamped.

**Do I need a valid U.S. visa to return to the U.S. if I travel to Canada, Mexico, or Caribbean Islands?**

If you visit Canada or the Caribbean (excluding Cuba), you will need a valid passport, a signed DeVry SEVIS I-20, and your I-94 Arrival/Departure card. You will be allowed to re-enter the U.S. if your visa has expired and you are outside the U.S. less than 30 days for pleasure and not to renew your visa. This is referred to as “Automatic Revalidation.” If your visit will last longer than 30 days, you must have a valid U.S. visa to re-enter the U.S.

If you are traveling to Mexico, you will need a valid passport, a signed and stamped SEVIS I-20, and your I-94 card. If your SEVIS I-20 is not stamped but your visa is valid, you will be required to pay \$6.00 (amount subject to change) for a new I-94 card and will be sent to Secondary Inspection, which may delay your return to the U.S. up to several hours. If your SEVIS I-20 is not stamped and visa has expired, you must apply for and receive a new visa in Mexico before you will be allowed to re-enter the U.S. This may take several days or weeks. For this reason, if your visa will expire in the near future and you plan to visit Mexico soon, we recommend you go to Mexico before your visa expires and have your SEVIS I-20 stamped.

**IMPORTANT**

**The “automatic revalidation” of visas will not apply for individuals, regardless of nationality, who apply for a new visa in Canada or Mexico or the contiguous islands. If you apply for a new F-1 visa in Canada or Mexico, you must receive the new visa before being able to re-enter the U.S. Having your passport stamped “Application Received” does not allow you to re-enter the U.S.**

**If your application is denied, you will likely have to leave (Canada or Mexico) and return to your home country to obtain a new F-1 visa in order to return to the U.S. Some students may be subject to a security clearance which may take as long as 20 days or more to obtain. These students will not be able to return to the U.S. under the provisions of automatic revalidation.**

**These regulations also apply to F-1 dependents (F-2).**

The governments of Canada and Mexico may require citizens from your home country to have a visa before entering their countries. You may need to pay a visa-processing fee to enter these countries. Before making your travel plans, you should contact your DSO.

**Do I still need a visa documents to travel to Canada if I am a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant of Canada?**

You will need to have your I-20 properly endorsed for travel and will need your valid I-94 Arrival/Departure Card. We recommend you also have a passport with you.

**Travel within the United States**

Air passengers maybe subject to extensive security checks before domestic as well as international flights. You are advised to carry your passport and immigration documents (I-20, I-94) with you when traveling in the U.S. While it is extremely unlikely you will be questioned, having these documents with you provides immediate proof of your lawful status in the U.S.

### **F-2 Dependents**

F-2 visas are issued to the spouses and children of F-1 students. USCIS regulations stipulate that the spouse and minor children who plan to join the F-1 student in the U.S. are eligible for admission to the U.S. if the F-1 student is, or will be within 30 days, enrolled in a full course of study or if the student is engaged in approved practical training following completion of studies.

The eligible spouse and minor children will be issued I-20 forms of their own. A new I-20 form is required when there has been any change in the information on the student's current I-20, such as change of major, change in financial source or amount etc. You must also provide evidence of financial support for your dependents.

Your dependents on F-2 visas are considered to be in status in the U.S. as long as you are in status. Your dependents should have I-94 Arrival/Departures forms that show "F-2" and "D/S."

### **Employment**

Your spouse and children on F-2 status may not accept employment under any circumstances.

### **Can my spouse and children attend school?**

Your spouse may not enroll in any full-time study. Your children may attend school full-time only if they are in elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade). Your spouse and children are eligible to enroll in classes that are avocational or recreational. You should consult the DSO if you have any questions about this.

If your spouse wishes to enroll in full-time study, he/she must obtain I-20 from the school or institute and change to F-1 status. Failure to do this is a serious violation of F-2 status and may require reinstatement proceedings, if the offender is eligible, or deportation.

### **Health Insurance**

Due to high medical costs in the U.S., we strongly recommend you that insure your dependents. Uninsured dependents face grave risks without adequate medical coverage and limited admittance to clinics and hospitals.

### **Leaving and Re-entering the U.S.**

Spouses and children of F-1 students traveling outside the U.S and unaccompanied by the F-1 student must carry all those documents that the F-1 student is required to have to re-enter the U.S. The same regulations apply to your dependents regarding "automatic revalidation" if traveling to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands (excluding Cuba).

### **Visa vs. Immigration Status**

It is important to clarify two legal terms in order to fully understand how to maintain your legal status in the U.S. People are often confused about the terms “visa” and “immigration status.” Students frequently say to us, “My visa is expired. How do I get my visa extended?” In some cases, the students mean the visa stamp in their passport has expired while others are referring to the I-20 Form. In order to be of help, the DSO must clarify whether you mean, in fact, the visa stamp or your I-20.

If you are referring to the F-1 visa stamp in your passport, the stamp cannot be renewed in the U.S. You can renew your visa only at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the U.S. However, you do not need to renew your visa if you will remain in the U.S., hold a valid I-20 and have remained in valid F-1//F-2 status. If your SEVIS I-20 has expired, then you will need to see a DSO about a program extension or reinstatement.

The paragraphs below offer detailed explanations of these terms.

#### **Visa**

You obtained the visa stamp in your passport at a U.S. embassy or consulate in your country or the country where you have been living. This stamp is used for entering the U.S. The expiration date on the visa stamp does not indicate the length of time you are allowed to stay in the U.S.; it indicates only the latest date on which you may apply to enter this country. When entering the U.S. through a “port of entry,” the Immigration inspector examines your passport, your visa, and your I-20 or Certificate of Eligibility and determines whether you are admissible to the United States. The visa basically functions as a key to enter the U.S. Once you have entered, you will not have to worry about whether your visa is valid or expired. However, when you leave and need to re-enter the U.S., you must have a valid “key,” or visa, to return.

Note: Canadian citizens are not required to have a visa if entering from the U.S. within the Western Hemisphere. However, they must show their I-20 and proof of Canadian citizenship at the U.S. port of entry in order to obtain the F-1 visa status.

#### **Immigration Status**

Once the Immigration inspector at the port of entry determines you are admissible to the U.S., he will grant you an immigration status, which is indicated on your I-94 Arrival/Departure Card and on your I-20. The I-94 card is a very important document so be sure you always keep it safely with your passport. The inspector will write on the card “F-1” and below it “D/S” which refers to your status and the length of time you are permitted to remain in the U.S. “D/S” means “duration of status.” The number at the top of the I-94 card is your USCIS admission number, which you will keep for the duration of your studies, unless you leave the U.S. for a period of five (5) months or more. You will be issued a new admission number when you re-enter after that period of time.

### **Helpful Websites**

*The following websites provide information and resources useful to international students and scholars at DeVry University:*

Electronic Embassy	<a href="http://www.embassy.org">www.embassy.org</a>
Embassy information	<a href="http://www.embassyworld.com/">http://www.embassyworld.com/</a>
The Embassy Page	<a href="http://www.embpage.org/">http://www.embpage.org/</a>
SEVIS	<a href="http://www.ice.gov/">http://www.ice.gov/</a>
Social Security Administration	<a href="http://www.ssa.gov/">http://www.ssa.gov/</a>
United States Citizenship & Immigration Services	<a href="http://www.bcis.gov/">http://www.bcis.gov/</a>
U.S. State Department (visa and travel info)	<a href="http://www.travel.state.gov/">http://www.travel.state.gov/</a>