Immigration Information for F-1 & J-1 Students
"The Basics" of Maintaining Legal Status in the United States

The following points apply to all F-1 and J-1 international students:

1) Maintain a valid (unexpired) passport at all times.

2) Maintain a valid (unexpired) Form I-20 (F-1 students) or Form DS-2019 (J-1 students) at all times. You must have correct information on your I-20 or DS-2019. Changes to your source of financial support, education level, field of study, or legal name, must be reported to ISS immediately so a new document may be prepared for you. Changes affecting your dependent(s) status requiring that he/she/they either be added to or removed from your immigration document, should also be reported to ISS immediately.

3) Register for and complete a full course of study each and every fall and spring semester as follows:
   - 12 credit hours for undergraduates
     If your program begins in the summer, 6 credit hours during the first summer session only.
   - 8 credit hours for graduate/professional students without assistantship or employment-based fellowship appointments
     If your program begins or ends in the summer, 6 credit hours during the first or final summer session.
   - 6 credit hours for graduate/professional students with assistantship or employment-based fellowship appointments.
     If your program begins or ends in the summer, 3 credit hours during the first and/or last summer session.

**NOTE:** No more than 1 course or 3 credit hours of distance education or on-line courses may count toward the minimum required credit hours for F-1/J-1 students in any single semester.

Exceptions to these credit hour limits must be pre-approved by an ISS immigration counselor. Visit a counselor before you drop below the minimum requirements.

The ONLY exceptions for dropping below minimums credit hours are:
   - Medical – (must provide a recommendation letter from a licensed medical professional who is residing in the United States or a non-US professional who has personally seen you within the past 3 months)
     Note: there is a one year MAXIMUM authorization period for medical reasons.
   - Improper course placement – (must have a written recommendation from academic advisor)
   - Initial difficulty with American teaching methodology – (first semester only – must have a written recommendation from academic advisor)
   - Initial difficulty with English language or reading requirements – (must have a written recommendation from academic advisor)
   - Final semester of a student’s academic program (graduate students must have written recommendation from academic advisor)

ISS and the departments have a form entitled, “Reduced Course Load Request Form” (RCL) available to document with these exceptions. This RCL form must be completed by you, your advisor, and an ISS immigration counselor. This form is available in our office and on our website.

Never work off-campus without written authorization from ISS or USCIS.

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4) Maintain an accurate and up-to-date local address and local phone number in Purdue's "myPurdue" system. The address must be a place of residence, not a P.O. Box or office address. Address and telephone number changes must be reported in "myPurdue" within 10 days of a move to a new address.

5) Never engage in unauthorized employment. All forms of off-campus employment require pre-authorization from either ISS or the USCIS before the first day of employment. Employment is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session (except for students on certain forms of practical/academic training). On campus full-time employment is allowed during official school breaks or during periods when the student is not required to be enrolled. (J-1 students must obtain written authorization from ISS for both on- and off-campus employment).

6) Read each and every Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS) e-mail message that you receive that is entitled, "ISS Announcements" or "Urgent Message from ISS". These announcements contain immigration news, updates, and reminders that international students need to know. Procedures regarding how to process timely applications for: extension of stay; travel endorsement; change of status; employment authorization, and other applications, are outlined on a regular basis.

   NOTE: ISS corresponds with all students by email using your @Purdue email account. If you do not use your @Purdue email account, please make sure you forward your messages from that account to your personal email account because you are responsible for anything we send to you via email through your @Purdue email account.

7) Purchase and maintain adequate health insurance for yourself and for your dependents, if applicable, in accordance with Purdue's requirements.

8) When traveling outside the United States, you will need to have the proper documents to return, including a valid travel authorization from an immigration counselor at ISS. Contact the ISS office before you travel to obtain the authorization and any other documentation that may be required. Re-entry to the US normally requires that you have a valid passport, valid entry visa, and a valid I-20 or J document endorsed by ISS for travel.

9) If you plan to have your spouse or children (less than 21 years of age) join you in the U.S or if your dependents are already in the U.S. and plan to travel out of the U.S. separately from you; it will be necessary for you to obtain proper immigration documentation for them. Check with the ISS office about the proper procedures to follow.

10) "When in doubt, check it out!" at ISS. Seek advice and clarification from ISS staff regarding immigration-related issues. The office is located in Schleman Hall, room 136. Immigration counselors are available on a walk-in basis Monday-Friday from 9:00 - 11:30 and 1:30 - 4:00, except Thursday mornings. The office phone number is 765-494-5770 and the office e-mail address is: iss@purdue.edu