

Fact Sheet: Maintaining Your Immigration Status While a Student or Exchange Visitor

The United States welcomes international students and exchange visitors who come to study in our nation. While you're enjoying your time in America, it is very important that you understand and comply with the requirements governing your stay to ensure that you don't jeopardize your immigration status.

By maintaining immigration status and keeping school administrators and sponsoring officials well informed, students and exchange visitors residing in America have the opportunity to benefit from the outstanding academic and cultural programs of the United States.

Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States. If you're an international student or exchange visitor studying in the United States, know your responsibilities.

Register With the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

SEVIS is the computerized system that collects and maintains information on the current status of non-immigrant students, exchange visitors, and their dependents during their stay in the United States.

Work with your designated school officials or exchange visitor responsible officers to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. In addition, these officials can help you better understand the requirements governing your immigration status and help you avoid making choices that might jeopardize your status.

Understand the Importance of Maintaining Your Status

It's important for students and exchange visitors to understand the concept of immigration status and the consequences of violating that status. Being aware of the requirements and possible consequences will make it more likely that you can avoid problems with maintaining your status.

Every visa is issued for a particular purpose and for a specific class of visitor. Each visa classification has a set of requirements that the visa holder must follow and maintain. Those who follow the requirements maintain their status and ensure their ability to remain in the United States. Those who do not follow the requirements violate their status and are considered "out of status."

Failure to maintain status can result in arrest, and violators may be required to leave the United States. Violation of status also can affect the prospect of readmission to the United States for a period of time. Most people who violate the terms of their status are barred from lawfully returning to the United States for years.

Recognize and Avoid Status Violations

By violating the requirements that govern your immigration status, you may jeopardize your ability to remain in the United States as a student or exchange visitor. Examples of violations include the following:

- Failure to enroll by the date specified by your school or exchange visitor program.
- Unauthorized employment during your stay.
- Failure to leave the United States following completion of your course, exchange visitor program, or program-related employment.
- For academic students (visa category F-1): Failure to maintain a full course load without prior authorization for a reduction from your designated school official.
- Please note that this is not a complete listing of potential status violations. Check with your designated school official or exchange visitor responsible officer for more information.

Note: Non-immigrant students or exchange visitors who fall out of status for reasons beyond their control may be eligible to apply for a reinstatement of status. The student or exchange visitor must work with the school or program official to determine if reinstatement is an option.

SEVIS was established as part of ICE's objective to restore integrity to the immigration system. By more effectively managing status information on international students and exchange visitors in the United States, SEVIS plays a key role in ICE's homeland security mission while ensuring that all eligible international students and exchange visitors can experience the benefits of America's exceptional schools, educational programs, and cultural opportunities.

SEVIS's ongoing improvements begin with your comments and suggestions. Please contact the SEVP office with your concerns and feedback.

By email: SEVP@DHS.GOV

By phone: 1.800.892.4829 for the SEVIS Help Desk

By mail

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