

The Community College of Baltimore County

MAINTAINING LEGAL F-1 STUDENT STATUS

(Revised February 2011)

Generally speaking, foreign students are admitted to the United States by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – referred to as The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) - for the purpose of being full-time students. As a foreign student, you are required by U.S. law to abide by immigration regulations (outlined below) throughout your stay here. Participation by students in any other activities (e.g., employment) is considered to be a privilege and is only allowable in accordance with strict immigration rules.

As an F-1 student, you were admitted to the U.S. for “Duration of Status” (D/S). This means you are permitted to stay in the U.S. as long as you maintain your status by fulfilling the requirements pertaining to F-1 students. Please keep in mind that there is an important difference between an F-1 **visa** and F-1 **status**. The visa is a stamp or sticker placed in your passport by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate and is granted **for entry purposes only**. F-1 **status** is granted when you enter the U.S. and is regulated by the USCIS. Even if your visa is valid, you can lose your legal F-1 status if you do not comply with immigration laws regulating your stay in the U.S.

Please note that it is your responsibility to be informed about immigration rules and any rule changes which may occur during your stay in the U.S. Penalties for violations of immigration law can be severe and include becoming ineligible for re-entry to the U.S. for up to ten years and having a visa voided, so it is extremely important for you to understand your legal responsibilities. The International Student Counselor can provide the necessary information and assistance to you, but it is the **student**, not the college, who is ultimately responsible for maintaining legal F-1 student status.

Keep your passport and I-20s together in a safe place. Make several copies of each of your I-20s and the pages in your passport showing your biographic information, visa and I-94 card. If you lose your documents, the copies will enable you to get new ones.

New federal regulations entitled “Retention and Reporting of Information for F, J and M Non-immigrants: Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)” were published on December 11, 2002. You must follow these regulations in order to maintain your legal F-1 status:

1. **Have a valid passport at all times, unless exempt from passport requirements.** You should begin to renew your passport long before it expires. Check with your embassy in Washington, D.C. to learn how long it takes to renew a passport since processing time varies greatly among embassies. Canadians are exempt from the passport requirement. Contact information for all embassies can be found on the web at: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html>.
2. **Report a change of name, address and program of study to the International Student Services (ISS) Office within 10 days of the change.** You must report the changes on the CCBC “Change of Information” form which is available in the ISS Office.
3. **Attend the college/university USCIS has authorized you to attend.**
4. **Attend school full-time each semester during the academic year. At CCBC this means at least 12 credits/billable hours. You cannot drop or audit below this except under limited circumstances which must be authorized in advance by the International Student Counselor.**

Please note:

- No more than one online/distance education class or 3 credits per semester can be counted towards your full course of study.
 - Credits received from CLEP or other proficiency exams do not count toward the full-time attendance requirement.
 - Meet with an Academic Advisor and register during CCBC's Early Registration period to help ensure getting the number of classes you need.
 - Each semester check the list of canceled classes the day it is published. If a class you have registered for has been canceled, meet with an Academic Advisor immediately to sign up for another one.
 - If you are having academic difficulties in any of your courses, immediately ask your instructor for extra help. You will not be able to withdraw from or audit a course you are doing poorly in without losing your visa status.
 - Do not rely on Late Start classes as they may be canceled leaving you with a less than full-time course load.
5. **Make satisfactory academic progress.** You should refer to the "Academic Information and Learning Support" section in the college catalog.
 6. **Complete your academic program by the ending date listed on item 5 of your I-20.** If you are not able to complete your program by that date due to valid academic or medical reasons, you must apply for an extension of your program before the ending date on your I-20. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for extensions. Please note that if you do not extend your I-20 in a timely manner, the visa stamp in your passport is automatically canceled/ invalidated. In addition, you may be subject to entrance bars that would prohibit you from entering the U.S. for up to a maximum of ten years.
 7. **DO NOT WORK UNLESS you have first received authorization from an International Student Counselor and USCIS.** If authorized, limit all employment to part-time (20 hours per week or less) during fall and spring semesters. Students are allowed to work full-time during summer and winter sessions. You must maintain your full-time student status or your employment will become illegal.
 8. **Before traveling outside the U.S. with the intention of re-entering, you must have an International Student Counselor sign page 3 of your current I-20 authorizing you to travel.** Please call to make an appointment at least 2 weeks before traveling so that the International Student Counselor can issue you a travel letter and sign your I-20. You should refer to the Travel Information Update which is available in the ISS office prior to traveling.
 9. **Complete an official transfer whenever you change educational institutions.** An immigration transfer must be completed within 15 days of the start date in item 5 of your new I-20. If you plan to transfer out of CCBC to another institution, you must notify an International Student Counselor as soon as you plan to transfer so that the counselor can release your electronic SEVIS I-20 record for transfer. Otherwise, you will not be allowed to transfer. An immigration transfer is not complete until an International Student Counselor, from the school to which you are transferring, endorses your I-20 authorizing the transfer.
 10. **Complete a U.S. tax return as required.**
 11. **As you approach the end of your degree or academic program at CCBC, do one of the following:**
 - obtain a new Form I-20 for a new school within 60 days after completion of your degree or program and attend the next available semester within 5 months of your program completion date;
 - apply to change to another immigration status within 60 days after completion of your degree or program;
 - apply for post- completion optional practical training 90 days prior to completion of your degree if eligible, or
 - depart from the U.S. within 60 days after completing your degree or program.
 12. **If you terminate from your academic program and obtain authorization from an International Student Counselor before terminating, you will have 15 days to depart the U.S. If you do not obtain**

authorization from an International Student Counselor prior to terminating, you will need to depart the U.S. as soon as possible.

- 13. If you terminate your academic program for any reason, you must notify the International Student Counselor immediately.**
- 14. If you violate your program of study, you are only eligible for reinstatement into legal status if you notify the International Student Counselor and apply to USCIS for reinstatement within 5 months of the violation.**

You should contact an International Student Counselor if you have difficulty meeting any of these requirements. We are committed to help before you have a problem. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to call or visit the ISS Office at:

Campus Address	Phone	Fax	Contact and E-mail
CCBC Catonsville International Student Services Building K-Room 102 800 South Rolling Road Baltimore, MD 21228	(443) 840-5005	443-840-4992	catonsvilleiss@ccbcmd.edu
CCBC Dundalk & Essex International Student Services Building A-Room 270 7201 Rossville Boulevard Baltimore, MD 21237	443-840-1005	443-840-2200	essexiss@ccbcmd.edu

Additional information about SEVIS is available from your International Student Counselor or the USCIS website at:

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

or the Immigration and Customs Enforcement website at:

<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/index.htm>

Appreciation is extended to the staff at Towson University's Office of International Students and Scholars for allowing CCBC to adapt their F-1 Immigration Information for use at CCBC.

Revised February 2011

Attestation

I have read the statements about “Maintaining F-1 Legal Status” and complete the information below to acknowledge my understanding of the content of these statements.

I have read the statements about maintaining my legal F-1 status in the U.S. and understand that I must abide by these regulations in order to remain in legal status during my stay in the U.S.

Signature: _____

Date _____

Printed Name: _____

Please return this completed form to the International Student Services Office at the CCBC campus you plan to attend