



# International Student Rules, Regulations, & Advice

These are explanations of some of the most important aspects of being an international student in the United States. Please take the time to read through this section, and also note that your International Student Handbook will give you more detail on more subjects. Please read through your handbook carefully, as **you are responsible for maintaining your own status.**

## Employment

Employment for international students is **very limited**. Whenever you are approached with a job or service opportunity, or whenever you are interested in pursuing such an opportunity, it is very, very important that you come and talk with us here at the International Office. Unauthorized employment can result in your being deported, and unauthorized employment is also the “unforgivable sin” in the government’s eyes: they won’t give you a second chance.

Even volunteer work, in many cases, can be considered unauthorized employment. It’s crazy, we know, but it’s the law; it is always best for your safety as a student to come and check with our office before starting any kind of work, whether paid or not.

The good news is that there are some limited opportunities to work. For example, on-campus employment is permissible. More information about on-campus employment can be found in the Human Resources section of the SWBTS website. There are also options called Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT). These are special jobs that are related to your degree program. If you have any questions or are interested to learn more about these options, come by the office and we’ll be glad to help you. For Social Security Number information, please refer to the Social Security Numbers section on our Helpful Information page.

## Academics

International students are required by the government to maintain a “full course of study.” This is important because your academic performance will affect whether or not you can take a full course load each semester. Specifically, if a student’s grades drop below a 2.0 GPA for a semester, that student will be placed on Academic Probation and will be unable to take a full course load the next semester. If a student takes a reduced course load, we must notate that on their I-20, and that will stay on their record with the government and make it very hard to extend their I-20 in the future if an extension were needed.

If a student fails to get out of Probation in the next semester, the student will be placed on Academic Suspension, which prevents the student from taking any classes for a whole year. That would mean that the student is “out of status,” and thus we would have to cancel that student’s I-20 and the student would have to go home or transfer to another school and get their status reinstated.

Obviously we don’t want these things to happen, so we encourage you to study hard and do well in your academics! If you struggle with writing, the Writing Center, located in the library, is ready and willing to help you. We also encourage you to work closely with



your professors; many will be willing to help you with any issues you may be having.

## **Travel**

Temporary travel within the United States is no problem; in fact, we highly recommend that you see as much of the United States as you can while you are here. There are many wonderful places to visit (Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming are two of our favorites).

However, when traveling outside the United States, there are some important things to keep in mind. First, make sure your visa will not expire while you are gone! If your visa expires, you will need to plan on renewing it in your home country before you can return to the United States. Second, check with our office to make sure you have a recent DSO signature on your I-20. Third, please simply notify our office that you will be leaving! It will be a big help to both you and us.

When traveling, we highly encourage you to purchase travel insurance; it is relatively cheap and always wise. If you get hurt in a foreign country and have no insurance, your medical costs could end up being very, very expensive.

Check the embassy websites for the countries that you wish to visit. The country's embassy website will provide critical information on what is required to travel there.

You should always have your key documents with you, such as your I-20. Take very good care of them!

We also encourage everyone to make sure they have proper immunizations for visiting various countries. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention website will help you plan accordingly: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

As a final recommendation, the Department of State provides travel information on every country in the world. It is intended for U.S. Citizens, but you are welcome to read the helpful information; a lot of it will be helpful to anyone, not just Americans! The Department of State travel website: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>

## **Dependents**

Dependents of F-1 students (e.g. spouses and children) are classified as F-2 visa holders. An F-2's status is contingent on the status of the F-1 they are dependent on; if the F-1 student goes "out of status," so do the F-2's.

F-2's are not allowed to work. This is important. Please refer to the employment section of this page, above, to see how important employment issues are. If you ever have a question or a doubt, come and talk to us.

F-2's can study in a degree program (this is a recent change in Federal law), but only on a part-time basis.

## **Non-F Visa Holders (R, H, B, etc.)**

Other visa types other than F visas each have special rules associated with them. Contact our office with questions regarding such visas.