

Critical Issues for Academic Advisors of F-1 International Students

Presented by the
International Student/Scholar Office
(ISSO)

Who is an F-1 Student?

- The non-immigrant visa category issued by U.S. Consulates abroad for those who seek to come to the U.S. specifically for the purpose of study.

Immigration Terminology

- DHS: Department of Homeland Security (formerly INS)
- Visa: the travel document issued by U.S. Department of State for travel into the U.S. (the visa may expire while in the U.S. but does not determine status)
- Status: what you hold once you enter the U.S. For F-1 students, D/S “duration of status” is marked on their I-94 cards
- I-94: the arrival/departure record

Immigration Terminology

- SEVIS (Student & Exchange Visitor Information System): tracking system used by U.S. government for all F-1 and J-1 international students.

Timeline for New F-1 Students Coming from Abroad

- Student works with Office of International Student Admissions on application & supporting documents, including proof of financial resources.
- Once admitted and file is complete, it is sent to the ISSO for I-20 creation.
- I-20 and orientation material mailed to student.
- Student applies for F-1 visa at US consulate.
- Student enters U.S. up to 30 days prior to start of semester.

Role & Function of the ISSO

- Serves as the Designated School Officials (DSOs) for F-1 students and issues form I-20 immigration document.
- Serves as the Responsible Officers (ROs) for J-1 students/scholars and issues form DS-2019 immigration document.

Role & Function of the ISSO

- Responsible for compliance with government immigration regulations for all F-1 and J-1 exchange students and visiting scholars at UNC Charlotte.
- Makes periodic reports to DHS via SEVIS in the areas of enrollment, changes in address & biographical information.

Role & Function of the ISSO

- Provides programs, general advising, and services for all non-immigrant international students upon arrival and throughout their programs.

Role & Function of the ISSO

- Works with departments and offices across campus on issues unique to F-1, J-1 such as...
 - Health insurance requirement
 - On and off-campus employment issues
 - Payments of tuition/fees
 - Fulltime enrollment requirement

Role & Function of the ISSO

- Assists students in maintaining legal F-1 status.

Maintenance of F-1 status

- Must be enrolled “fulltime” each semester.
 - Undergrads = 12 credit hrs.
 - Grads = 9 credit hrs, 6 with assistantship, or upon completion of required coursework continuous registration for “thesis/project” or “residency”.

Maintenance of F-1 Status

- Valid reasons to authorize less than fulltime requirement include the following...
 - Documented illness or medical condition
 - Initial difficulty with the English language
 - Initial difficulty with reading requirements
 - Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
 - Improper course level placement
 - To complete course of study in current term

Maintenance of F-1 Status

- Keep I-20 valid by...
 - completing studies prior to expiration date or;
 - requesting timely program extension
 - making timely updates such as changes in educational level, program of study, or transfer to another school

Maintenance of F-1 Status

- Report changes of address within 10 days of a move.
- Limit on-campus work to 20 hrs/week (during academic year).
- Obtain authorization for any off-campus employment
 - Curricular Practical Training
 - Optional Practical Training
 - Economic Hardship
- Depart the U.S. within 60 days of program completion or apply for Post-Completion Optional Practical Training prior to program completion

Some other critical issues for international students...

- Obtaining a North Carolina driver's license
- Obtaining a Social Security Number
- Opening a bank account
- Adjusting to English language, U.S. academic & social environment

Some classroom issues for international students and faculty...

- Requesting more time on exams
- Taking a dictionary to exams
- Taking a tape recorder to class
- Difficulty participating in group discussions

Critical Roles for Academic Advisors

- For graduate students, make timely admissions & funding decisions in order to ensure timely processing of I-20s and visa interviews abroad
- Assist students in enrolling in a full course of study and refer them to the ISSO for any exceptions PRIOR to dropping below fulltime or withdrawing from the university

Critical Roles for Academic Advisors

- Always refer international students to the ISSO for information on off-campus work authorization; violations are NOT forgiven by DHS.

Critical Roles for Academic Advisors

- Be aware of issues & challenges that are unique to F-1 students both upon arrival and throughout their academic programs.

International Student/Scholar Office

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