The F-1 Student Visa Handbook
An International Student Guide to Federal Immigration Regulations

The immigration information included in this website is provided as a service to the international students and scholars of the University of Hartford. Immigration law is complex and constantly evolving, and though reasonable efforts will be made to insure the integrity of this site, its accuracy, application, and interpretative nature cannot be insured. This material is not to be construed as legal advice nor does it create an attorney/client relationship. University of Hartford students and scholars are advised to contact International Center staff regarding assistance with the interpretation of immigration law, application for USCIS benefits, or legal referral. Others viewing this site should seek the advice of an immigration attorney or specialist with regard to immigration regulations.

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Acronyms used in this text

PDSO: Primary Designated School Official – The university's International; Student Advisor
DHS: Department of Homeland Security
USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Service
SEVIS System: An on-line system that tracks the status of all International Students
DOS: Department of State
SSA: U.S. Social Security Administration
IRS: U.S. Internal Revenue Service
Introduction

Foreign nationals who wish to pursue academic studies in the United States may enter this country under several nonimmigrant visa types. The most common is the F-1 student visa. The F-1 visa covers a wide range of educational training, allowing foreign nationals to engage in studies from the elementary to the post doctoral level. Currently, 98% of the international students attending programs of study at the University of Hartford are enrolled under the F-1 visa classification. The information contained in this booklet is accurate at the time of publication.

However, international students are advised to be aware that current immigration law is subject to change by the U.S. Federal government at any time, as well as to changes in interpretation by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). When questions arise regarding the implementation and interpretation of immigration law, students are advised to consult with the staff of the International Center, in particular, with the Associate Director who is responsible for Immigration related matters. The International Center is located in the Gengras Student Union, room 327 (860.768.4873).

What is an F-1 Student?

Immigration regulations define an F-1 student as an "alien who has a residence in a foreign country which he or she has no intention of abandoning, who is a bona fide student qualified to pursue a full course of study and who entered the United States temporarily and solely for the purpose of pursuing such a course of study at an established institution of learning or other place of study in the United States." USCIS regulations further state that an F-1 student is a "foreign national who is attending a college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic institution, or, language training program, on a full-time basis, in a course of study which leads to the attainment of a specific educational or professional objective." In the case of the University of Hartford, that objective is the successful completion of a degree or certificate program.

Institutional Responsibility

The University of Hartford has been authorized by the USCIS to issue the I-20 AB Certificate of Eligibility Form to foreign nationals who wish to enroll in our programs of study. By accepting this approval, the University assumes certain responsibilities and duties assigned by federal regulations. In general, the University has agreed to follow all USCIS regulations and reporting requirements related to the acceptance, enrollment, and maintenance of status of all F-1 students. The Associate Director of the International Center has been assigned by the University to act as the "Primary Designated School Official" (PDSO). As the PDSO, the Associate Director is the person authorized to sign immigration documents, advise students, faculty, and staff on immigration matters, and act as University liaison to the Immigration Service, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

Obtaining an F-1 Visa

Prospective students who wish to attend the University of Hartford on an F-1 visa must apply for that visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad (unless exempt from visa requirements). Applicants will be required to present to a consulate official a valid passport (unless exempt from passport requirements), a
completed I-20 AB form issued by the University, a program acceptance letter, financial sponsorship documents, evidence of English language proficiency and proof of the SEVIS fee payment.

Students should also be prepared to demonstrate that they have a residence in a foreign country that they have no intention of abandoning. In most cases, an interview will be required. Upon review of the applicant's visa request, a U.S. consular official will determine whether the prospective student has met all requirements for nonimmigrant student status. If approved, the official will place a visa stamp in the applicant's passport noting the period of validity and the number of entries allowed to the U.S. The name of the University will also be placed on the visa page. The consular official will return the I-20 AB form to the student in a sealed envelope. This document will be needed to enter the U.S.

On occasion, it may be impossible for the University to deliver an I-20 AB form to the student in time for visa processing and arrival preparations. It is possible for a student to apply for a "prospective student" B-2 visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy to facilitate a timely arrival to this country. Students who find themselves in this situation should be cautioned to consult with the staff of the International Center prior to making arrangements for this type of visa. It will be very difficult to change your status from B-2 to F-1 in the U.S. and we do not recommend that you follow this procedure. It is probable that you will be required to defer your admission to a future semester.

Arrival to the U.S. and the University of Hartford

A new student may enter the U.S. no sooner than 30 days prior to the beginning of a program of study. Upon arrival in a U.S. port of entry, F-1 students are required to present their passport, visa, financial documents and I-20 AB form to a Customs Officer. If admissible, you will be allowed entry. There are some instances in which the customs officer may have additional questions and hold you for a short time in a separate area. Typically, this is not a reason for concern but is done often times as a matter of caution in verifying your documents and status.

Upon arrival at the University, F-1 students are required to visit the International Center. At that time, a staff member will review all immigration entry documents and record information that is required by the University and the USCIS (information will be entered into the USCIS SEVIS System). New international students to the University will not be allowed to "register" for classes unless they have been processed and "released" by the International Center.

In addition, students will be given an orientation to the immigration laws and University policies which affect their stay in the U.S. Additional information will be provided regarding the various University department and administrative services available to students, as well as information regarding the services and programs offered by the International Center.

F-1 Full-time Student Status Requirement

The Immigration and Naturalization Service stipulates that an international student entering the U.S. on an F-1 visa, issued by a U.S. consulate or embassy for attendance at the University of Hartford, must attend this institution and be enrolled as a full-time student.

The University of Hartford Manual of Academic Policies and Procedures (VI, B, 1 & 2) defines the criteria to be used to determine full-time status for all students.

"A minimum load of twelve credits per semester is required to be classified as a full-time
undergraduate student.”
“A minimum load of nine credits per semester is required to be classified as a full-time graduate student.”

These definitions apply to international students holding an F-1 visa, regardless of national origin or citizenship status.

*There are several programs offered by the university that require a minimum course load of 6 credits per semester. These include our doctoral programs and our Artist Diploma program.

**Reduced Course load**

The University is required to report the enrollment status of all F-1 international students to the U.S. Immigration Service. Therefore, all students who are considering the possibility of carrying less than a full-time academic load are required to discuss this fact with International Center staff before registering or withdrawing from courses. A staff member will try to determine the validity of the student's reason for a reduced course load and the effect that this decision will have on the student's immigration status. The International Center will advise the student of current immigration law and recommend a course of action best suited to the student's situation. The final decision to attend class on a part-time basis is left to the discretion of the student.

There are few reasons acceptable to the USCIS for carrying less than a full-time course load, and international students who drop below the minimum credit requirement do so at their own risk. Students enrolled part time will be considered "out of status" by the USCIS and may be required to petition the USCIS for permission to be "reinstated to student status" before they may resume their program of study (see “Reinstatement to Student Status”). Failure to maintain full-time status may result in the removal of a student from the University by the USCIS.

A student must be enrolled on a full-time basis from the beginning of a semester to its completion. Full-time enrollment is mandatory for the Fall and Spring semesters. Students who are in their last semester of study prior to graduation, and who need less than a full-time credit load to complete their program, may attend part time for that semester (a student in this situation must seek the approval of the International Center). Enrollment during the summer semester is optional unless it is specified on the student's I-20 form or required as part of the student's program of study. Courses taken on an "audit" basis may not be counted toward the fulfillment of the full-time requirement. A student who receives a grade of "incomplete" (I), "no grade" (NG), or "no record" (NR) at the end of a semester may complete that course during the following semester in accordance with University policy; the course may not be counted toward the full-time requirement of the new semester.

**Combining English Language Study with a Degree Program**

Students, who have been accepted into a degree program but have not met the English proficiency standards of the University, may be required to enroll in our English Language Institute (ELI) for a minimum of one semester. At the discretion of the director of ELI and undergraduate/graduate admission staff, a student may be required to attend ELI on a full- or part-time basis. Though this program does not grant traditional course credits, it does provide equivalent course instruction which is equal to the credit hours needed to meet the USCIS full-time status requirement. A student enrolled in ELI on a full-time basis will be considered enrolled full-time by the USCIS unless it is determined that the student is in their final semester and only required part time study. A student enrolled on a part-time basis must also be concurrently enrolled in traditional course work. The total combination of ELI instruction and degree-related courses must be equal to the full-time status requirement defined at the beginning of this section.

Students enrolled in the Artist Diploma, Graduate Professional Diploma, DMA, PSY’D, and Ed.D or other doctoral programs may take a minimum of six credits per semester to meet the full-time requirement. The
International Center may require documentation from the student's academic advisor authorizing a six-credit load.

When signing a registration or drop/add form that will reduce the academic load of an international student to part-time status, academic advisors are required to have the student speak to a staff member from the international Center prior to signing. This intervention measure will insure that students understand the problems which may occur as a result of their action and allow time for possible alternative measures to be sought.

Reasons acceptable to the USCIS for part-time study may include verifiable physical or emotional medical problems, unforeseen economic difficulties, improper course/level placement, unfamiliarity with American teaching methods or reading requirements, or difficulties with the English language. The International Center may authorize part-time enrollment in a limited number of instances.

**Under no circumstances may an international student enroll part-time without the written permission of the International Center. A student who enrolls part-time without this authorization will be considered "out of student status" and possible loss of their visa.**

**Withdrawal from a course of study**

A student who withdraws completely from their program of study must depart from the U.S. within 15 days of the withdrawal. A student who remains beyond the 15 day period is in violation of Federal regulations and may be subject to deportation proceeding and other possible sanctions.

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**Enrolling in On-line/Distance Learning Courses**

The Department of Homeland Security requires F-1 international students to maintain a full course of study and that the course of study must lead to the attainment of a specific educational or professional objective. At the University of Hartford a full course of study is defined as: 12 credit hours for undergraduate and 9 credit hours for graduate students (Ph.D. and AD students must maintain a minimum of 6 credits).

Federal regulations state "For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted if taken online or through distance education in a course that does not require the students physical attendance for classes, examinations or other purposes integral to completion of class."

Therefore, F-1 students who are taking online/distance learning classes that do not require physical presence on campus for an exam, class meeting or other purposes relating to the class can count only one online/distance learning class or three credits of online/distance learning per semester toward the full course of study requirement.

This provision does not limit the number of online/distance education credits that can be used toward degree requirements, but rather the number of such credits that can be used to satisfy the full course of study requirement.

For example, an undergraduate that is required to register for 12 credits per semester to maintain a full course of study could take 3 of those credits through an online class each semester. If the student chose to take an overload of 15 credits, 6 of which were done online, all 6 credits might be counted towards the student's degree requirements, as only 3 of those credits are actually serving to maintain the student's F-1 full course of study. On the other hand, an undergraduate student who is registered only for 12 total credits, 6 of which are done online, would be considered as being below a full course of study, since only 9 of the total credits would count towards the full course of study requirement.
Frequently Asked Questions

1) What if the "one class" is more than 3 credits? What if a student wants to take two classes of 1 credit each?
   ● A student cannot take a 4 credit course online unless that course is in addition to the normal minimum in-class full time load. Students can however take multiple online courses (one or two credits) so long as the 3 credit limit is not passed.

2) Can a student take an online course as the only course in the final semester of study?
   ● If a student needs only one course to finish his or her program of study, it cannot be taken through online/distance education. There must be a physical presence requirement for the course. If a student remains in the United States without reporting to any class.

3) Summer and Winter term enrollment.
   ● Students enrolled in either summer or winter term courses are not subject to the “one-class, three-credit” rule based on the fact that DHS does not require international students to be enrolled in class during these terms.

4) Students residing either temporarily or permanently outside the U.S.
   ● A non-matriculated student residing outside the U.S. may enroll in as many online/distance courses during any semester as allowed by the internal registration policies of each college or school. A matriculated student who may be physically outside the U.S. for either the summer or winter term may take as many online/distance courses as allowed by the internal course registration policies of each college or school.

5) English Language Study
   ● If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no online/distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

F-1 Extension of Stay

F-1 students attending degree or certificate-granting programs offered by the University of Hartford are expected by the USCIS to complete their programs within a reasonable period of time. F-1 students are admitted into the United States for “Duration of Status” (see: “Note” below). Therefore, they are generally not required to apply for an extension of stay as long as they are making normal progress toward completing their educational objectives. Upon acceptance to the University, F-1 students are issued an I-20 AB form which states the anticipated completion date of their intended program of study. The International Center has calculated the typical time it will take for a student to reasonably complete a specific degree or certificate program and has noted that on a student's I-20 form. The ending date given on the I-20 form generally allows sufficient time to complete a program for virtually all students.

F-1 students who are unable to meet the program completion date stated on the I-20 AB form may, under certain conditions, be granted an extension of stay by the USCIS to complete their program of study. To file for an extension of stay, students must show that they have continually maintained full-time student status and that the delays are caused by "compelling" academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for a program extension and the USCIS may deny an extension request on those grounds. An F-1 student who is unable to complete an educational program within the time period stated on the I-20 AB form, and who does not have a "compelling" academic or medical reason to justify the extension, is considered to be "out of student status" by the USCIS. A student in this situation is required to seek "reinstatement" to student status through the USCIS (see: "Reinstatement to Student Status").

Students are advised to make note of the program completion date stated on their I-20 AB form. Should that date expire and they have not yet completed their course of study, they must seek an extension of their stay or “reinstatement” to their F-1 student status through the International Center.
An extension of stay request must be completed prior to the date of completion stated on the I-20 AB form. The following documentation must be submitted to the International Center for approval and notification to the USCIS.

1. A letter from the student explaining why an extension of stay is required.
2. A letter from a faculty advisor explaining the need for an extension of stay
3. I-20 form
   a. A photocopy of your I-94 form (Arrival Record).

The International Center will process the request for extension and issue a new I-20 form which notates the approval. The USCIS will be notified of the student's approval for an extension of stay through the SEVIS system.

An extension of stay request will be considered approved by the USCIS so long as the International Center certifies that the student has met the service's requirements.

NOTE:
Duration of Status" is defined as the "time during which an F-1 student is pursuing a full course of study at an educational institution approved by the USCIS for attendance by foreign students, or engaging in authorized practical training following completion of studies, plus 60 days to prepare for departure from the United States.

Reinstatement to Student Status

Any F-1 student who has failed to maintain full-time status or who has overstayed his or her authorized period of stay is considered to be "out of student status" by the USCIS. A student who is deemed to be "out of status" may be reinstated to lawful F-1 status at their discretion. A student who has been out of status for than 5 months is typically ineligible for reinstatement and must return to their home country.

Conditions for Reinstatement

Reinstatement must meet the following conditions:

- The student is currently pursuing, or intends to pursue, a full course of study in the immediate future at the school which issued the student an I-20 AB form.
- The student has not engaged in unauthorized employment.
- The student establishes that failure to maintain status was due to circumstances beyond his or her control.
- Does not have a record of repeated or willful violations of USCIS regulations.
- The student is not deportable on any ground other than overstaying or failing to maintain status.

Documentation

The following documentation must be submitted to the USCIS to process a request for "Reinstatement to Student Status."

1. A properly completed and endorsed I-20 AB form verifying the student's full-time enrollment and request for reinstatement.
3. USCIS form I-539.
4. A check or money order for $290 made payable to the "Department of Homeland Security" (subject to change).
5. A written statement must be submitted explaining the reason(s) for not maintaining the requirements of the F-1 visa category and requesting that reinstatement are granted.

Note:
This documentation must be forwarded to the USCIS. Though there may be exceptions, students who are deemed to be "out of status" may not resume studies at the University unless they have submitted a request to the USCIS for reinstatement. Students denied reinstatement may not resume or continue studies and must leave the U.S. by a time determined by the USCIS. A student in this situation should consult with the staff of the International Center before attempting to pursue any further course work.

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**F-1 On-campus Employment**

F-1 students enrolled at the University of Hartford may be authorized to engage in on-campus employment opportunities by the USCIS. Before beginning on-campus employment, we suggest that you contact the International Center to insure your eligibility to be employed.

**F-1 Employment - Immigration and University Guidelines**

- A student must be enrolled on a full-time basis and be in good academic standing according to University standards.
- A student may work no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. A student may work on a full-time basis during other periods such as summer vacation or semester breaks.
- A student may work for any department or office within the university community, including Aramark dining services and the campus bookstore. A student may not be employed by the Watkinson School.
- On-campus employment may begin at any time following the student's initial enrollment at the University.
- On-campus employment must cease following the student's graduation, reduction from full-time status to part-time status (unless it is the student's final semester prior to graduation), or complete withdrawal from the University.
- A student may hold multiple jobs (including assistantships and internships), however, the total number of hours worked may not exceed the 20-hour-per-week limitation. Assistantships and internships (when done on campus) are considered to be on-campus employment and are governed by USCIS on-campus employment regulations including the 20-hour-per-week limitation.
- A Student participating in an on-campus employment opportunity is not required to obtain an "Employment Authorization Document" (EAD) from the USCIS.

International students who are engaged in off-campus employment, including internships, CO-OP, "economic hardship" employment, or any form of pre-completion practical training, may not work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session (exception is made only for those undergraduate students officially enrolled in an "alternating" CO-OP program). Students who simultaneously participate in both off-
and on-campus employment are restricted to no more than 20 hours of work per week, in the aggregate, while school is in session.

Students who wish to work on-campus are required to go to the Social Security Administration Office in Hartford to apply for a Social Security identification number. Generally, students are not required to pay social security taxes though they may be required to pay federal and state taxes based on income earned during the course of a year.

Students are required to complete the I-9 form (employment eligibility form) and W-4 forms (federal and State withholding tax forms) at the time they begin employment. These forms are provided to the student employee by their supervisor or the Human Resource Department (HRD).

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**F-1 Off-campus Employment “Economic Hardship”**

Students holding an F-1 visa who find themselves in financial difficulties during their academic studies at the University of Hartford may petition the USCIS for permission to engage in part-time, off-campus employment based on economic hardship. The USCIS considers economic hardship to be financial difficulties caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control (e.g., loss of scholarship, loss of financial sponsorship, unforeseen medical expenses, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rates, etc.).

**Eligibility Requirements**

- A student must be in F-1 status for one full academic year or two consecutive semesters.
- A student must be in good academic standing.
- A student must be enrolled on a full-time basis and continue in that status while employed. Employment may not interfere with the student's full course of study.
- A student may not work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. During vacation periods/summer break, a student may work full time. Students who are currently employed on campus (including assistantship awards which require work for tuition payment), or who already are in possession of an off-campus work permit (and are employed off-campus), are limited to 20 hours per week in the aggregate.
- The USCIS requires that a student make a "good faith" effort to pursue employment authorization on-campus prior to requesting employment based on economic hardship. A student should be prepared to demonstrate that such employment is not available.

**Application Procedures**

Off-campus employment based on economic hardship must be approved by the Immigration Service. The following documents should be submitted to the International Center for its recommendation prior to submitting the request to the USCIS for adjudication. The following documentation is required:

1. USCIS form I-765
2. A check or money order for $380 (subject to change and (made payable to the Department of Homeland Security).
3. I-20 (copy) with a recommendation from the international Center.
4. A written statement from the student outlining the need for off-campus employment based on economic hardship.
5. Two photos

Note: Application material must be sent to the USCIS Service Center in St. Albans, Vermont.

A student may not begin off-campus employment under "economic hardship" without the permission of the USCIS. Upon approval of a student's request, the USCIS will issue an "Employment Authorization Document" indicating that off-campus employment has been granted and the duration of that permission. The USCIS will authorize employment in one-year intervals up to the expected date of completion of the student's course of study. Students may renew their employment permission only if they are maintaining legal F-1 status and are in good academic standing. Employment authorization is automatically terminated if a student fails to maintain his or her nonimmigrant F-1 status. There is no possibility to appeal a request for employment under "economic hardship" that has been denied by the USCIS.

F-1 Optional Practical Training and STEM

An important benefit under the F-1 student visa classification is called practical training. Practical training offers international students the opportunity to participate in degree-related work experiences, either prior to graduation or upon completion of a degree or certificate program. The University is currently authorized to provide practical training recommendations to the Immigration Service, on behalf of students prior to graduation, in the form of internships and cooperative education work experiences or in the form of optional practical training during the academic year or vacation periods. Upon the completion of a course of study, the University may also recommend that the INS authorize a student's participation in an optional post-completion practical training experience.

Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training is degree-related work authorization granted to an international student prior to graduation. INS regulations authorize the University to provide two forms of curricular training: internships and CO-OP work experience.

Immigration and University Guidelines for Participation

- Students must be matriculated and enrolled on a full-time basis in degree or certificate-granting programs.
- Students must have been in the U.S., in F-1 student status, for a minimum of one academic year to qualify for curricular practical training. Exception is made for graduate students only, whose studies require immediate participation in curricular practical training (currently not available in any graduate programs at the University of Hartford).
- The internship or CO-OP experience must be directly related to a degree or certificate program of study.
- In general, students must receive credit toward their degree or certificate requirements. An internship program is normally considered to be equivalent to a 3-credit course. A CO-OP experience can range from 1 to 12 credits. In either case, there is some discretion in determining the credit to be granted for the work experience. In some instances, curricular training may include certain types of noncredit training programs; however, the training must be an integral part of an established curriculum.
- Students enrolled in an internship program may not work more than 20 hours per week during the Fall and Spring semesters. Students may work full time during the Summer semester. Students enrolled in an internship...
must have a combination of work experience and course work which meets the full-time status requirement of their program. Students enrolled in an "alternating" CO-OP experience are expected to work full time and are not required to enroll in additional course work for that semester. They will be considered enrolled on a full-time basis for immigration purposes. Students enrolled in the "parallel" CO-OP program are expected to have a combination of work experience and course work which meets the University's full-time status requirement for their program of study.

- An internship or CO-OP experience may not be used to extend the stay of a student beyond the normal expected program completion date unless it is a required part of a degree program.
- Internship and CO-OP programs may not be developed expressly for international students. These programs must be available to all University of Hartford students.
- Students may not begin curricular practical training until they have received final authorization from the International Center. Students will be considered "out of status" by the INS without this approval.

Filing Procedures

A student who wishes to participate in a curricular practical training experience is required to seek authorization from the International Center. The International Center will then notify the INS of the student's participation. The following documentation and approvals are required:

1. International students who wish to enroll in an internship must seek the approval of their academic advisor or department head. Permission to enroll in a CO-OP program must be granted by the director of CO-OP. In either case, written notification must be presented to the International Center indicating that permission has been granted for participation.
2. Students are required to present documentation to the International Center which will authorize the curricular practical training request, note whether the training is full time or part time, and the duration of the training period allowed.
3. The International Center will update the student's I-20 form to indicate that the training has been authorized and the period of time that the training is valid for. The International Center's endorsement is also required by the student to meet the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) requirements of an employer.
4. Students must submit a registration form to the Registrar's Office indicating enrollment in either a CO-OP experience or internship program.

Note:
Curricular practical training of 20 hours or less per week is considered part-time employment. Training above 20 hours per week is considered full-time employment.

* Students who have received one year (12 months) or more of full-time curricular practical training are ineligible for post-completion practical training.

* Students enrolled in CO-OP or internship programs may receive financial compensation for employment services rendered.

* An employer does not have to meet Department of Labor "attestation" requirements when employing University students under curricular practical training.

* Students enrolled in the ELI program are ineligible for internship or CO-OP work experiences under curricular practical training.

* There is no fee charged by the USCIS or the University to process a curricular practical training request.

* An Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is not required from the USCIS.
Optional Pre-Completion Practical Training

A student enrolled in a degree or certificate program may apply to the USCIS for permission to participate in an optional practical training work experience prior to the completion of his/her program of study for a period not to exceed 12 months.

Immigration and University Guidelines for Participation

1. A student must be enrolled in a recognized degree or certificate-granting program (students enrolled in programs offered through the English Language Institute may not engage in any form of practical training).
2. A student must be attending school on a full-time basis.
3. A student must be in good academic standing.
4. A student must be in F-1 status for a minimum of one academic year before an application for training may be submitted to the USCIS.
5. Employment may only be in a field which is directly related to a student's program of study and be commensurate with the student's educational level.
6. Optional practical training is limited to 12 months. Part-time optional practical training, 20 hours per week or less, will be deducted from the available practical training at one-half the full-time rate. For example, a student who participates part time for six months will have three months deducted from the 12-month benefit. If this student wishes to participate in further training after graduation, he/she will have nine months of this benefit remaining. A student who is employed on a full-time basis during vacation periods will have that full training period deducted from the 12-month allotment.
7. A student must have an employment offer and present a letter of employment to the International Center

A student may participate only in the following cases:

- During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session if the student is currently enrolled and intends to register for the next semester.
- While school is in session, provided practical training does not exceed 20 hours a week.

Filing Procedures and Process

The following documents must be provided to the International Center prior to requesting practical training authorization from the USCIS:

1. Passport and I-94 form.
2. I-20 AB form.
3. I-765 form
4. Two photos (signed on the back - in pencil - with your name, date of birth and SEVIS ID number)
5. A letter from an advisor supporting the employment request
6. A letter requesting practical training and describing the type of training that will be pursued.
7. A letter from an employer outlining the position and its duties.
8. A check/money order for $380 made payable to the "Department of Homeland Security" (cash payment is not acceptable).

The International Center must certify that the proposed employment is directly related to the student's field of study and is commensurate with the student's educational level. The International Center must also endorse the I-20 form to indicate that practical training has been "recommended" either full-time or part-time (including the start and end date of employment). Approved documentation will be forwarded to the USCIS Center, St. Albans, Vermont, for adjudication. The USCIS will review documents, and if approved, issue an "Employment Authorization Document" (EAD) to the student. Generally, this approval process will take four to six weeks. Students may not engage in training until they have secured this approval and are in possession of an EAD card. It is suggested that students begin the process as soon as possible to avoid delays in beginning employment but no sooner than 120 days prior to the beginning of expected employment.
Note:
In some instances, a student who is granted practical training, and who does not participate in a training experience during the time limits stated on the Employment Authorization Document issued by the USCIS, will lose that training time: this time will be deducted from the 12-month allotment whether the student works or not. The USCIS will not grant an extension of the 12-month total allotment for practical training under any circumstances.

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Post-Completion Practical Training and STEM Program

Upon the completion of a degree or certificate program, international students who possess an F-1 visa may be eligible to apply to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service for authorization to participate in a program-related work experience. Under this provision, international students must meet certain Federal government and University of Hartford requirements to be eligible. Information posted here is current as of 07/20/2013, but is subject to change by the USCIS at anytime. Please check with the International Center for the most up to date information.

Participation Guidelines

- Students must intend to complete all the course requirements of their degree or certificate program (including thesis or recital) before a recommendation may be granted by the Associate Director of the International Center (PDSO) for a particular graduation cycle
- Students must have been in F-1 student status for a minimum of one academic year or 9 months.
- Students may apply for a Practical Training recommendation from the PDSO and employment authorization from the Immigration Service 90 days prior to the completion of a program of study to 60 days following program completion. Completion of "course of study" is typically defined as the "last day of your last final exam" not the official University date of graduation (i.e. commencement). The USCIS requires receipt of your training request within that application period. Any requests submitted to the PDSO after the application period may be rejected for submission to the USCIS. Students are not required to have an employment offer to request Practical Training. A student will be granted a 12 month training period if found eligible for Practical Training by the USCIS. Students who have received USCIS permission for Practical Training, and who have not yet secured employment, must be employed within 90 days of the start of your Practical Training period.

Filing Procedures

Students who wish to participate in a Post-Completion Practical Training experience must request a recommendation from the PDSO and authorization from USCIS.

The following documentation is required to process a request:

- All I-20 forms that have been issued to you either by the University of Hartford or another educational institution.
- A current I-20 AB form to be endorsed by the AD to reflect that Practical Training is recommended for the student.
- A completed and signed USCIS form I-765
- Two passport type personal photographs, in color and white background. Photos should measure 2 X 2 inches.
- The USCIS currently charges a $380 fee (subject to change) that must accompany this application. The fee must be paid in the form of a personal check, bank draft, or money order (cash is not accepted by USCIS). Your check must be made out to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"
- A copy of your "Degree Application" that was submitted to the Registrar's Office.
- Departmental "Recommendation Form" for Practical Training indicating that you will complete your degree program at a specific time.
- A written statement from the student requesting a Practical Training work authorization to the International Center, including a description of the type of employment the student wishes to participate in.
- Photocopy of all "identifying" pages of your passport including the U.S. visa page.
Photocopy of your I-94 "Arrival/Departure Record."

Process

The PDSO will review all documentation. The PDSO will also prepare and endorse the student's I-20 AB form to indicate that Practical Training is recommended and the date that the training will commence. Students will be instructed to mail (certified mail recommended) their request to the USCIS location having jurisdiction over the University of Hartford. The request packet should include a newly endorsed I-20 Form (note that the I-20 update recommending your OPT must be filed within 30 days of the date that your OPT was entered into the SEVIS system), a completed and signed I-765 form, photocopies of all previously issued I-20 forms, photocopies of your passport, US visa and I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, a check for $380 made out to the "Department of Homeland Security," two photographs (signed on the reverse side, including your name, SEVIS ID number and birth date - in pencil, and a letter from the student requesting Practical Training approval. Upon approval of a student's request, the USCIS will return an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) to the student.

It will typically take the USCIS 8-12 weeks to process a request (this is an estimated time frame which could be shorter of longer and there is no guarantee that your OPT request will be approved by USCIS or the International Center). Upon receipt of the card, students are required to present this document to the International Center so it may be copied and placed into the University record. Students who have employment offers may begin to work once the USCIS has issued the EAD (but in no case before the completion of studies). USCIS regulations state that a student may not appeal a denial of a Practical Training request issued by the service.

The USCIS Service Center located in St. Albans, Vermont (the office that will review all Practical Training requests for students residing in Connecticut) may require up to 8 weeks or more to adjudicate a Practical Training request. Regardless of the time it takes the USCIS to complete the process; students may not begin employment until they have been issued an Employment Authorization Document by the Service Center.

Note

- The University cannot guarantee the approval of a Practical Training experience for any international student. Final authorization may only be granted by the USCIS, provided the student meets all requirements and is found eligible (the University may only recommend, not authorize Practical Training to USCIS on a student's behalf).

- Securing employment is the responsibility of the student. The International Center is not obligated nor will it seek employment opportunities for individual international students.

- Students may apply for a Practical Training recommendation from the International Center and employment authorization from USCIS 90 days prior to the completion of a program of study. Completion of "course of study is typically defined as the "last day of your last final exam, not the official University day of graduation. The USCIS requires receipt of your training request by that date. Any requests submitted to the International Center after that date will be rejected for submission to the USCIS.

- The maximum amount of time granted for post-completion Practical Training is 12 months. Generally, students may be authorized only one twelve-month training period although a student may be eligible for a second period of training following the completion of a new program of study. The new program must be at a higher level than the previous program, i.e. bachelor to masters, or masters to doctorate.

- On and Off-campus employment positions held by students while enrolled at the University will not generally affect the 12 month Practical Training benefit. Students who have engaged in a full-time Curricular Practical Training experience (CO-OP or internship) prior to graduation for 12 months or more; will be prohibited from engaging in Practical Training following graduation. In some instances, Curricular Practical Training may be deducted from the 12-month training allowance. Please speak with the International Center if you have been employed under a COOP arrangement or participated in an off-campus internship.

- Students will be required to secure a Social Security number that is valid for employment. Students may be required to pay Federal and State income taxes based on the amount of earned income. Generally, students
are not required to pay Social Security taxes while employed under the F-1 visa category, though if you have been in the U.S. for five or more years you may be subject to the tax. International students are advised to become familiar with Federal and State laws regarding the payment of income and social security taxes.

- Students will be required to complete an I-9 Form for their employer within 3 days of the start of work.
- Generally, students who have requested Practical Training should not travel outside the United States until they have been granted employment authorization and have been issued an Employment Authorization Document by the USCIS. In addition students are required to have a written document specifying that they either are currently employed or are being offered employment. This letter must be on company letterhead.

Students who leave the U.S. following their completion of studies without obtaining their EAD card from the USCIS or a letter of employment, may risk difficulty re-entering the U.S. to pursue Practical Training. You should speak with the International Center about your travel plans before they are made to insure there are no potential problems with your travel arrangements

- Students completing our ELI program or short-term certificate programs may not participate in Post-Completion Practical Training.
- Though a student may no longer be enrolled in a program of study, the University still maintains certain reporting requirements to the USCIS. The USCIS considers a relationship to exist between the student and the University of Hartford while that student participates in a Practical Training experience; for example, students on Practical Training are still required to obtain a current signature from the Center for travel and must report any change of local or permanent address to us within ten days.

Practical Training Sample Letter

An F-1 International Student who wishes to participate in a Post-Completion Practical Training work experience is asked to submit a written request to the International Center for its recommendation to the USCIS. In writing this letter you may wish to follow the suggested format below.

Date
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
Vermont Service Center
St. Albans, VT 05479-9765

RE: Request to participate in Post-Completion Practical Training

To whom this may concern:

My name is (insert), and I am currently enrolled as a full-time student at the University of Hartford. I am a matriculated student in the (name of degree program) and will complete my course of study on (insert date). I wish to apply for Post-Completion Practical Training work authorization.

This second paragraph should explain why you wish to apply for Practical Training, what type of training you are interested in receiving, and how this training will benefit you when you return home.

Please grant my request for Practical Training, so I may have the opportunity to apply the theory learned in class to the realities of a work environment. Upon completion of my Practical Training, I intend to return my home country, (insert country name).

Your Name, Your Address and Phone Number

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Regulations Governing Practical Training

Once your application is approved, USCIS will issue you an Employment Authorization Document which looks similar in size to a CT driver’s license or CT State ID card. Make a copy of your EAD and write your University of Hartford ID number somewhere on the page. Scan and email to lazzerini@hartford.edu with a note indicating you applied for OPT and have received your EAD.

Your F-1 status continues through the OPT period.

You must stop your employment when the end date on the EAD card is reached, though you may remain in the U.S. for up to 60 days (grace period).

You may begin working once

- you have obtained the EAD card *(you should not begin employment* if your OPT has been approved but you have not yet received the EAD in the mail)
- the start date on the card has been reached.

The EAD is not employer specific, so you may change employers at will. However, employment must be directly related to your field of study. Any employment outside your field of study is unauthorized and is a substantive violation of your status. All changes to your employer must be submitted to the International Center immediately.

OPT Employment Requirements and Reporting

You are expected to be employed in your field of study during OPT and you are required to submit employer information to the International Center. The International Center will electronically update your SEVIS record, there by notifying the USCIS that you are employed. The International Center requires that you submit a letter from your employer, on company letterhead that includes the company's name, address and telephone number. This letter must indicate the date that you were hired and the position you will be employed in. The letter must contain a complete job description of your duties and responsibilities.

Documenting OPT Employment

It is recommended that you keep documentation of all your employment. In the future, you may be asked to provide proof that your employment during OPT was in your field of study. Specifically, you should maintain evidence — for each job — of the position held, proof of the duration of that position, the job title, contact information for your supervisor or manager, and description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your degree, we highly recommend that you obtain a signed letter from the employer's hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your degree is related to the work you performed. Keep this in your personal records.

Types of employment allowed during pre- and post- completion OPT

All OPT employment, including post-completion OPT, must be in a job that is related to your degree program. This employment may include the following *(does not apply to students on a STEM extension)*:

- **Paid employment:** Students authorized for post-completion OPT may work part time (at least 20 hours per week) or full time.
- **Multiple employers:** Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program. Employment during pre-completion OPT cannot exceed the allowed per week cumulative hours.
- **Short-term multiple employers (performing artists):** Students who are musicians and other performing artists may work for multiple short term employers (gigs). The student should maintain a list of all gigs, the dates and duration. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing a list of all gigs.
- **Work for hire:** Work for hire means that an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship rather than an employment relationship. It is sometimes called “1099 employment” because people who “work for hire” receive Internal Revenue Service Form 1099-MISC – which shows how much money, was earned for a
particular year – from the contracting company. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

- **Self-employed business owner:** Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full time. The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student’s degree program.

- **Employment through an agency:** Students on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

- **Unpaid employment:** Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this does not violate any labor laws. The work must be at least 20 hours per week for students on post-completion OPT. These students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

### Reporting Employment

Students are required to report employer information or any changes to that information to the International Center as soon as possible. This information must be input or updated on the SEVIS system. We recommend that you report changes immediately but no more than 10 business days of the change to avoid situations where a USCIS official may determine you to be out of status.

### Periods of Unemployment

Students on post-completion OPT are only allowed a total of 90 days of unemployment.

**What counts as “unemployment time?”**

- Unemployment time is counted each day during the OPT dates indicated on the EAD.
- Students who have OPT extended due to the cap gap provisions continue to accrue unemployment time and are subject to the 90-day limitation on unemployment.
- If you have a job offer that begins more than 90 days after your OPT begins, you will exceed your allowable unemployment time. Receiving a job offer within the 90 days is not sufficient; you must be employed in one of the employment types listed above.
- If you travel outside of the United States while unemployed, the time spent outside the United States will count as unemployment against the 90 day limit.
- Permanently leaving the U.S. without notifying the International Center may result in the accidental accrual of unemployment. For this reason, you must contact the International Center if you decide to abandon your OPT.

**What does not count toward “unemployment time?”**

- Periods of up to 10 days between the end of one job and the beginning of the next job will not be included in the calculation for time spent unemployed.
- If you travel abroad while employed either during a period of leave authorized by an employer or as part of your employment, the time spent outside the United States will not count as unemployment.

### Consequences of exceeding allowable period of unemployment:

If you exceed the allowable period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT, you are considered to have violated your status.

If you cannot find employment that meets the definition of OPT employment, you may have the following options:

- Apply to the University of Hartford or another university to continue your education by a change of level or transferring to another institution. See “Starting a New Program” below.
- Depart the United States (be sure to notify the Center if you abandon your OPT and leave)
- Change status to another legal status if possible
Ending OPT Early / Abandoning OPT

If you decide to abandon your OPT before the end date of your EAD and leave the U.S., you must notify the International Center so we can end your SEVIS record. Please send an email to lazzerini@hartford.edu telling us that you have decided to abandon your OPT and the date you plan to depart the United States. We will end your SEVIS record effective the date you indicate you plan to leave the U.S. or the date you notify us, whichever is later.

Starting a New Program — at UofH or at another Institution

During the period you are authorized for OPT; you may decide to apply to another academic program, either at UofH or another University. Once you are admitted to another degree program, it is important to discuss the situation with an advisor at the International Center, as the issuance of a new I-20 will effect/terminate your OPT. Please call the Center to request an appointment. If you are admitted to a degree program at another University, the International Center must transfer your I-20 to that institution so they may issue a new I-20 for you.

- Admission to UofH for a new degree program/change of level. Once you have been admitted to a new degree program at UofH, the Center will issue a new I-20 to you. The issuance of this new I-20 does not end your OPT immediately. Your EAD is terminated as soon as you enter the U.S. with the new I-20 or you check-in for the new program, whichever is earlier. Either one of these events will activate your SEVIS record for the new degree and deactivate your OPT SEVIS record. This means you must immediately stop employment regardless of the card's appearance of validity if you reenter with your new I-20 or check-in at the Center.

- Transfer to another school in the U.S. in order to begin a new degree program. Authorization for OPT is not transferable. Your authorization for OPT ends on the transfer release date. If you wish to complete OPT, set the release date for a date after the OPT ends. You can set the transfer release date to occur during the 60-day grace period following post-completion. On your transfer release date, you must stop employment regardless of your EAD card's appearance of validity.

- In order to maintain your F-1 status, a new I-20 for change of academic level, new degree program, or transfer must be issued before the end of your 60 day grace period.

Change of Status during OPT

- If you change your immigration status (e.g. from F-1 to H-1B, F-2, or J-1) during the period of your OPT your OPT ends on the effective date of the USCIS "action notice" and any unused OPT time is lost (you cannot have both F-1 OPT status and another status at the same time, nor can you return to OPT if your new status is terminated for any reason).

- The University is required to notify USCIS of your new status and requests that you notify the International Center immediately. To officially record your new status, the Center will need a copy of the approval notice you received from USCIS. You can get this information to the Registrar’s Office in one of two ways:

- Please mail a letter which includes your name, your current status, your UofH ID number and your signature asking for an update on your visa status. Include with the letter a copy of the documentation you received from USCIS.

Travel outside the U.S. and Reentry

You may travel outside the United States once you have received your EAD authorization from USCIS and either have employment or have been offered employment,. You must carry a letter stating that you are currently employed or when you will be employed. You must also have your I-20 signed by the International Center prior to leaving the country. If your F-2 dependents travel outside the U.S. and reenter without you during your OPT period, they should carry their own original documents along with photocopies of all the documents you are required to carry for reentry.
29 Month Post Completion Practical Training Rule /STEM Program Extension

Summary of Key Provisions

- **OPT extension to 29 months for STEM students.** The 12 month limit on F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) will be extended by 17 months, for a total of 29 months, for certain STEM degree holders (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) in the following fields: [Click Here](#).

**Other requirements for 17-month extension.** Additional requirements for the 17-month extension include:

  - Student must be currently participating in a 12-month period of OPT, working for a U.S. employer in a job directly related to the student’s major area of study.
  - Student must have successfully completed a bachelor’s, masters, or doctoral degree in a field on the DHS STEM Designated Degree Program List, from a SEVIS-certified college or university.
  - Student must have a job offer from an employer registered with the E-Verify employment verification system.
  - The student has not previously received a 17-month OPT extension after earning a STEM degree.
  - The PDSO must recommend the 17-month OPT extension in SEVIS, after verifying the student’s eligibility, certifying that the student’s degree is on the STEM Designated Degree Program List, and ensuring that the student is aware of his or her responsibilities for maintaining status while on OPT.
  - Student will have to apply for the 17-month extension on Form I-765 with fee.
  - Students who timely file an application for the 17-month OPT extension will be able to continue employment while the extension application is pending, until a final decision on the I-765 or for 180 days, whichever comes first.
  - The employer must agree to report the termination or departure of the student to the PDSO or through “any other means or process identified by DHS.” An employer must consider a worker to have departed when the employer knows the student has left employment, or if the student has not reported for work for a period of 5 consecutive business days without the employer’s consent.

- **H-1B cap-gap extension of D/S and work authorization until October 1.** Duration of status and work authorization will be extended for a student on OPT, who is the beneficiary of a timely-filed H-1B petition requesting an employment start date of October 1 of the following fiscal year. This would apply to all students on OPT, not just STEM students. The extension of duration of status and work authorization would automatically terminate upon the rejection, denial, or revocation of the H-1B petition filed on the student's behalf.

- **I-765 filing window.** Under the current rule, the I-765 must be filed no later than the student's program end date, and it is not specified how soon before the program end date the application can be filed. Under the new rule, a student will be able to file his or her I-765 up to 90 days prior to his or her program end date, and up to 60 days after his or her program end date.

- **Duration of employment authorization**
  - Employment authorization will begin on the date requested or the date the employment authorization is adjudicated, whichever is later.
  - Exception: The employment authorization period for the 17-month OPT extension begins on the day after the expiration of the initial post-completion OPT employment authorization, and ends 17 months later, regardless of the date the actual extension is approved.

**Reporting Requirements while on OPT**

  - All students on OPT are required to report to the PDSO:
    - any change of name or address, or
    - any interruption of such employment
  - In addition, students with an approved 17-month OPT extension:
    - Must report to the student’s PDSO within 10 days of any change of:
      - legal name
• residential or mailing address
• employer name
• employer address, and/or
• loss of employment.

Must make a validation report to the PDSO every six months starting from the date the extension begins and ending when the student's F-1 status ends, the student changes educational levels at the same school, the student transfers to another school, or the 17-month OPT extension ends, whichever is first. The validation is a confirmation that the student's name and address, employer name and address, and/or loss of employment are current and accurate. The report is due to the PPDSO within 10 business days of each reporting date.

Limited Periods of Unemployment to Maintain Status

- During post-completion OPT; F-1 status is dependent upon employment.
- Students may not accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during any post-completion OPT carried out under the initial post-completion OPT authorization.
- Students granted a 17-month OPT extension may not accrue an aggregate of more than 120 days of unemployment during the total 29 month OPT period.

F-1 students who are transferring to the University of Hartford from another college or university in the U.S. may be required to notify the Immigration and Naturalization Service of their intention to transfer. Students should follow the procedures outlined below according to their personal situation. These procedures are for transferring from one SEVIS school to another.

Students Traveling Outside the U.S. Prior to Enrollment at the University of Hartford

F-1 students who are in possession of valid student visa, an expired visa, or, who never obtained an F-1 visa because they changed their status in the U.S., should:

- Inform your present foreign student advisor of your intention to transfer to the University of Hartford.
- Your current foreign student advisor must "release" you from its SEVIS record.
- If necessary, go to a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad and apply for an F-1 visa. Students should have in their possession a valid passport, I-20 AB form issued by the University of Hartford, an acceptance letter from the University, and documentation of financial support. Depending upon your situation, you may be required to pay a SEVIS fee prior to making your appointment for a new visa. For information regarding the SEVIS fee, please visit http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/intcenter/SEVISfee.html.
- A U.S. consulate official will issue a visa to the student and write the name of the University of Hartford on the visa page.
- Students re-entering the U.S. must present their passport, I-20 AB form issued by the University of Hartford, previous I-20's from other institutions and financial sponsorship documents to a port of entry official. A student will be admitted to the U.S. if the documentation is acceptable to an immigration officer.
- The International Center at the University of Hartford will process and complete your transfer by notifying the INS of your transfer through the SEVIS program within 15 days of the program start date listed on our I-20 form.
**Students not Leaving the U.S. Prior to Enrollment at the University of Hartford**

- You must notify your current foreign student advisor of your intention to transfer to the University of Hartford. You will be required to present written documentation indicating your enrollment on a full-time basis (or equivalent full-time basis) from your previous school. This documentation must be in the form of a written statement from your current foreign student advisor attesting to your full-time status and eligibility to transfer. You may download the University of Hartford's Transfer Request Form here. This form must be presented to the International Student Advisor at the University of Hartford to complete your transfer process.
- The University of Hartford will issue a new I-20 to you and process the form to indicate that the student has transferred through the SEVIS system.
- This process must be completed within 15 days of the student's enrollment.

**F-1 Transfer to another Institution from the University of Hartford**

F-1 students who are transferring from the University of Hartford to another U.S. college or university are required to notify the USCIS of their intention. Students should follow the procedures outlined below. These procedures are for transferring from one SEVIS school to another.

**Students Traveling Outside the U.S. Prior to Enrollment in a New School**

F-1 students who are in possession of valid student visa, an expired visa, or, who never obtained an F-1 visa because they changed their status in the U.S., should:

- Before departing the U.S., notify the International Center of their intention to enroll in a new school.
- Complete a "Transfer Out Form" from the International Center and return it to the new school.
- The International Center will "Release" the student from its SEVIS record at the University of Hartford.
- Go to a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad and apply for an F-1 student visa. Students should have in their possession a valid passport, an I-20 AB form from the new school, documentation of financial support, and an acceptance letter from the new school.
- A consulate official will give the student an F-1 visa and write the name of the new school on the visa page.
- Students re-entering the U.S. must present to a port-of-entry officer their passport, new I-20 form from the new school, and their financial documents. A student will be admitted to the U.S. if his or her documentation is acceptable to an immigration officer.
- The foreign student advisor of the new school will process and complete your transfer by notifying the USCIS through the SEVIS program within 15 days of the program start date listed on the school's I-20 form.

**Students not Leaving the U.S. Prior to Enrollment in a New School**

- Students should notify the International Center of their intention to transfer to a new school. The International Center will issue a "Transfer Out Form" to the student indicating his or her enrollment status during the current or preceding semester at the University of Hartford. This form should be returned to the new school.
- The International Center will "Release" the student from its SEVIS record at the University of Hartford.
- The foreign student advisor of the new school will issue a new I-20 form and process your transfer by notifying the USCIS through the SEVIS program within 15 days of the program start date listed on the school's I-20 form.
**Note:**
The International Student Advisor's notification to the USCIS on the SEVIS system is essential to complete the transfer process (if the student is transferring schools without leaving the U.S.). Without this notification, the transfer is not validated and the student will be considered "out of status" by the USCIS within 15 days following enrollment at the new school.

**F-1 Visits Abroad and Re-entry to the U.S.**

All international students in possession of an F visa, who wish to leave the United States temporarily and return to the University of Hartford to continue studies, must secure the necessary documents to permit entry to another country and re-entry into the United States.

**Entry into another country from the United States**

Students who are in F status and wish to visit their home country of citizenship or permanent residence, or, who wish to travel to a third country (one in which they are not a citizen or permanent resident), should be in possession of the following documents:

- A valid passport
- Immigration form I-94
- Evidence of return transportation to the U.S.
- Sufficient funds for the duration of their stay outside the U.S., particularly if they are traveling to a third country
- An original I-20 form, properly endorsed by the International Center
- Depending upon the country that is to be visited, students may be required to obtain an entry visa. Visas may be obtained through consular offices located in New York City, Boston, or Washington, D.C. Addresses and phone numbers are available from the International Center
- Evidence of full-time student status in the form of a Transcript (this may be obtained from the Registrar's Office) or a verification letter from the International Center

**Re-entry into the United States**

Students in F-1 status must present the following documents to a U.S. port of entry officer upon their re-entry into the United States following a temporary absence:

- A valid passport and visa (unless exempt from passport or visa requirements).
- A properly endorsed I-20 form with a current signature from the International Center.
- Financial support documentation.
- Evidence of full-time student status in the form of a Transcript (this may be obtained from the Registrar's Office) or a verification letter from the International Center and a copy of a current or future course registration form.

**Visa Revalidation**

To re-enter the U.S., students must be in possession of a valid F or J visa stamp in their passport (exceptions may be made for students re-entering the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, or some Caribbean islands, or, if they are exempt from visa and passport requirements). Consequently, students who entered the U.S. in another nonimmigrant visa classification and have changed status to that of an F or
J student must obtain an F-1 visa before re-entering the U.S. It is not possible to obtain an F or J visa inside the United States. F-1 students must apply for a visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad if they need to obtain a visa in order to enter the U.S. after a temporary absence.

While it is possible for international students to secure an original or renewal of an F-1 visa in a foreign country other than their own, they may face more stringent requirements than those imposed by U.S. consular officials in their home country of residence. In addition to proving eligibility for an F-1 visa, you may have to convince the consular official that there is a legitimate reason for making the application outside your home country. In some instances, the consular official in the third country will find it necessary to check with a consular official in the student's place of residence to insure his or her eligibility for a nonimmigrant visa. This can be time-consuming and can result in a financial charge to the student if information is requested by cable rather than diplomatic mail. Students are advised to make travel plans which allow for possible delays. Depending on your country, appointments to obtain a visa may take up to several months.

The documents needed for visa revalidation include:

- A valid passport
- A current photograph
- A valid I-20 form with a current endorsement from the International Center
- Proof of financial support
- A Transcript of your academic record at the University

**Travel to Canada**

F-1 students who wish to travel to Canada require a Canadian visitor's visa unless they are citizens of countries exempt from Canadian nonimmigrant visa requirements (the International Center has a list of countries whose citizens are exempt from this requirement). The Canadian government advises that, at least three weeks in advance of a planned trip to Canada, students submit to the appropriate Canadian consular office a completed Visitor Visa Application form (form IMM 1296), valid passport, I-94 form, two passport-size photographs, proof of adequate funds for the intended stay in Canada, a current I-20 AB form and any old I-20 AB(s). These documents may be sent by certified mail, along with a return envelope with postage paid for certified mail, to a Canadian consulate in the U.S.

Students holding an expired F-1 visa may enter Canada. A Canadian visa is not required so long as the stay in Canada is less than 30 days. However, students must have a valid passport and meet all other requirements for their entry to Canada and their return to the U.S.

All students planning to visit Canada, or any other area outside the U.S., are required to present their immigration documents (I-20 AB form and passport) to the International Center for an authorization signature. Failure to obtain the appropriate signature on the I-20 form for travel outside the U.S. may result in the denial of a student's re-entry to continue studies.

Questions regarding travel plans outside the United States should be referred to the International Center. Students requiring authorization for travel should make those arrangements one to two weeks prior to their departure from the U.S.
F-2 Dependent Status

The spouse and unmarried minor children of a student holding an F-1 visa may accompany the student to the United States or follow to join the student at a later date. They will be accorded F-2 status provided they establish to the satisfaction of a consular official (and later to a U.S. port of entry officer) that (a) they have sufficient funds to cover their expenses while in the U.S., or, that other arrangements have been made to provide for their expenses, and (b) they intend to, and will be able to depart from the U.S., upon the termination of the status of the principal alien (F-1 student).

Obtaining a Visa

An F-1 student's spouse/children must apply for an F-2 visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy (unless exempt from visa and passport requirements). The applicant must present to the consular official an I-20 AB form issued in their name and any other documents that may be required to demonstrate eligibility for F-2 status. These documents may include such items as marriage and birth certificates, financial statements of support, and proof that the applicant will return to his or her home country of residence following the termination of the principal alien's course of study.

University Requirements to Obtain an I-20 AB form for an F-2 Visa

F-1 students who wish to bring their spouse or minor children to the U.S. must meet certain University of Hartford requirements before an I-20 AB form may be issued:

- Clearance from the student's home government, international organization, or U.S. agency which provides financial support to the student, if applicable.
- Satisfactory evidence of financial support. This evidence may be presented to the International Center in the form of (a) an official statement of savings on deposit in a U.S. bank, (b) a certified guarantee from a sponsor living in the U.S., including bank statements showing that funds are available, (c) an official document from the student's home government or sponsoring agency authorizing currency exchange for dependents, (d) personal or family financial support documents or, (e) a combination of the above.
- Marriage certificate

The International Center will determine whether the documentation meets the financial requirements of the University in order to issue an I-20 AB for an F-2 visa. Students should consult with the International Center regarding current requirements.

On arrival to the University, the student and dependent(s) are required to meet with a staff member of the International Center to insure that the immigration documents of the dependent are in order.

Employment

Individuals holding F-2 dependent student status may not accept full or part-time employment, or engage in business activities under any circumstances while in the U.S. Employment cannot be authorized for either on-campus or off-campus work. Dependents in F-2 status, discovered to be working on or off campus by the USCIS, may be subject to removal from the U.S.

Visits Abroad and Re-entry to the U.S.

An F-2 dependent leaving the U.S. temporarily must be certain to carry the documents necessary to enter the country being visited and to re-enter the U.S. F-2 dependents should have in their possession (a) a valid passport and visa, (b) a properly endorsed I-20 form with a current signature from the International Center. Dependents should contact the International Center to discuss their travel arrangements and to insure that their travel documents are in order.
Extension of Stay

It is not necessary for an F-2 spouse or minor children to apply for an extension of stay, unless the duration of stay for the F-1 student has expired. An F-2 spouse and minor children are included in the F-1 student's request for extension of stay made to the USCIS. The approval of an F-2 extension will be made at the time of the F-1 approval and should be valid for the duration of stay given to the F-1 student.

School Attendance

An F-2 dependent may enroll in a program of study, including degree or certificate-granting programs, only on a part-time, non-matriculated basis; they may not enroll in a program which leads to the attainment of a degree. Dependents may remain in a course of study as long as the F-1 principal alien continues to maintain legal F-1 status. If the F-2 dependent wishes to continue studies beyond the expiration of the F-1 student's status, the F-2 dependent must apply for a change of status from F-2 to F-1 or to another legal status which allows educational studies. An F-2 dependent who wishes to enroll in a course of study as a full-time student must change their status to F-1.

A child dependent(s) of an F-1 student may only attend an elementary or secondary school on a full-time basis. They are prohibited from attending higher education programs and must apply for an F-1, J-1, or M-1 visa to do so.

Departure or Termination of Status

The status of an F-2 dependent is terminated upon the completion of the F-1 student's program. An F-2 dependent is expected to leave the U.S. no later than the departure date of the F-1 student. F-2 dependents may remain in the U.S. with their spouse no longer than 60 days following the completion of the student's program of study.

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U.S Federal Income Taxes

All international students who possess an F-1 or J-1 visa must file a Federal income tax return with the U.S. government (IRS) each year based on income earned from a U.S. source(s) during the previous year. You must file an income tax return form even if you made no income from a U.S. source(s).

In addition, international students and scholars must file a State of Connecticut income tax return if your income from a U.S. source(s) is over $14,000 per year. If, while in the U.S., you have earned an income (through on-campus employment, assistantships, scholarships, practical training, dividends or interest from stocks, bonds, or bank accounts, etc.), you may have to pay income tax.

Federal government taxation on income is generally based on the amount of money earned, your student status, the number of years you have resided in the U.S., your marital and dependent status, and any tax treaties in force between the United States and your government.

Students who have earned an income must file an income tax return form to the U.S. government by April 15th of each year (for income earned the previous year). Students who have not earned an income must file a return (form 8843) no later than June 15th of each year.

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A U.S. Social Security Number (SSN) is a nine-digit number issued by the U.S. Social Security Administration. It is used as a personal identification number by all government and most commercial institutions in the United States (for employment, taxes, bank accounts, credit card applications, etc.). The Social Security Administration has placed limits on who may apply and for what reason(s) the number is needed. Typically, only those international students and scholars who have on or off-campus work authorization will receive a number.

The Social Security Administration will not issue you a number for a bank account, credit card, U.S. income tax return, or other non-work related reasons - you must have an employment offer to secure a number.

_On-Campus Employment and your Social Security Number_

Any international student who is employed by an academic or administrative department or office of the University of Hartford is required to have a social security number. Students employed by ARAMARK food services or the Follett Bookstore must also have a SSN. On-campus employment includes all work performed on our campus for hourly pay or tuition remission. Graduate assistants are also required to have a social security number. Students who are have been offered a position on campus may not begin work or receive pay until they have secured a SSN.