

Maintaining Your Status

While studying in the United States, it is important to maintain your F or M student status. Your status relates to the purpose, or reason for why you want to come to the United States. The U.S. [Department of State](#) issues you your visa based on your intended purpose.

If the Department of State issues you an F or M student visa, this means that you are coming to the United States to study. You should not take any action that detracts from that purpose.

Maintaining your status means:

- Fulfilling the purpose for why the Department of State issued you your visa.
- Following the regulations associated with that purpose.

F-1 and M-1 students share the same primary purpose for coming to the United States however, F-1 students enroll in more traditional academic programs, while M-1 students enroll in vocational programs. Because these two types of programs are different in nature, the types of benefits an international student may be eligible for and how long they may remain in the country depend on whether they are an F-1 or M-1 student. Learn more about these specific differences by reviewing the [F&M Student Status: Know the Difference infographic](#).

Below are actions to take in order to properly maintain your status.

NOTE: The Archdiocese of Hartford does NOT enroll M-1 status students.

Arrival

When arriving to the United States, both F and M students must:

- Enter the United States no more than 30 days before your program of study begins.
- Immediately contact your designated school official (DSO) when you enter the United States.
- When you arrive at school, you need to contact your DSO again, no later than the program start date listed on your [Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status."](#)

Education

While studying in the United States, both F and M students must:

- Attend and pass all your classes. If school is too difficult, speak with your DSO immediately.
- If you believe that you will be unable to complete your program by the end date listed on your Form I-20, talk with your DSO about requesting a possible program extension.
- You must take a full course of study each term; if you cannot study full-time, contact your DSO immediately.
- Do not drop a class without first speaking with your DSO.

Work and Practical Training for F Students

NOTE: The Archdiocese of Hartford is not certified to authorize student CPT or OPT.

An F student may only work when authorized by a DSO in some cases, and [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) in others. If you choose to work without authorization, you will be forced to leave the United States immediately, and you may not be able to re-enter the United States at a later date.

F students are eligible for curricular practical training (CPT) at either the undergraduate or the graduate level during the program of study. CPT employment must be an integral part of an established curriculum and the position must directly relate to your major area of study. Your DSO can give you the school's policy on this option.

F students are also eligible for optional practical training during or following the program of study. OPT is a form of temporary employment that directly relates to your program of study.

For more information about employment and training options available for F-students, visit the [Working in the United States page](#) and talk with your DSO.

Practical Training for M Students

M-1 students are not eligible for employment during their program of study, but may obtain authorization for practical training employment. You may participate in practical training employment after the completion of your vocational program.

If you want to participate in practical training employment in the United States, talk with your DSO about your options. Practical training employment requires your DSO's recommendation and authorization from USCIS.

If you choose to work without authorization, you will be forced to leave the United States immediately. You may not be able to re-enter the United States at a later date.

Upon Program Completion

F and M students must take action to maintain legal status or depart the United States after completing your program of study.

Once you complete your program of study and any authorized period of practical training, F students have 60 days after completion of your program (the program end date on your Form I-20) to leave the United States. If you wish to extend your stay in the United States, talk with your DSO to learn more about doing one of the following:

- [Transfer to another school.](#)
- Change your education level (e.g. bachelor's to master's).
- [Apply to change status](#) to another visa status (e.g. H-1B-temporary worker; O-extraordinary ability in science, art or business; P-athlete).

M students have 30 days after completion of their program (the program end date on your Form I-20) to leave the United States. The latest date you may remain in the United States is the “admit until” date on your [Form I-94, “Arrival/Departure Record,”](#) unless you filed for an extension with USCIS.

Talk with your DSO first

If you are an F or M student studying in the United States, your DSO should be the first person you talk with if you have any questions regarding the legal requirements of your stay in the United States. Your DSO can assist in answering your questions or help you find someone who can help.

F-1 students should speak with their DSO if you are planning to do any of the following:

- Change your major, program, or degree level.
- Change your education level.
- Transfer to a new school or take a leave of absence.
- Take a break from school.
- Travel outside the United States.
- Move to a new address.
- Request a program extension.

M-1 students should speak with their DSO if they are planning to do any of the following:

- Take a break from school.
- Travel outside the United States.
- Move to a new address.
- Request a program extension.

Both F and M students may contact SEVP by email at sevp@ice.dhs.gov if your DSO is unable to assist you or if you would prefer to ask someone else.

In your email, please describe your situation and include any questions you have. SEVP provides responses on a first-come, first-served basis. Answer times may vary depending on the current number of inquiries.