Maintaining Legal Status

It is important that you maintain lawful F-1 status while in the U.S. Below are some simple steps you can take to ensure that your stay in the U.S. remains valid.

New Students

Complete the [First Two Weeks checklist](https://oiss.yale.edu) on our site.

Moving?

[Report any address changes](https://oiss.yale.edu) to OISS within 10 days.

Maintain Full-Time Study

- Undergraduates: Must be registered for a minimum of 12 credits. Each undergraduate course is weighted at 4 credits thus 3 courses is the minimum course load.
- Graduate and Professional Students: Each program of graduate study defines the combination of course requirements and research that equal full-time study. Check with your program.
- There are a few [exceptions to the full-time study rule](https://oiss.yale.edu). [3] You must always obtain in advance permission from OISS prior to reducing your course load.

I-20 Extension

Be aware of the expiration date of your status. This is not your visa expiration date; it is the end/expected completion date on your I-20 form. If you will not complete your academic program by the end date noted in section 5 of your I-20, you will need to apply for an extension by providing OISS a letter from your academic adviser and evidence of funding to support tuition and living expenses for the remainder of your studies. You must complete the extension process prior to the expected completion date on the I-20.

Change in Degree Program

Notify OISS when [changing educational levels at Yale](https://oiss.yale.edu) within 60 days of program end date. Submit your letter of admission to new program and evidence of funding to support tuition and living expenses for the first academic year of the new program to OISS.

Transfer to Another U.S. School

If offered admission at another college or university, discuss your plans with an OISS adviser to make sure that the required [transfer procedure](https://oiss.yale.edu) [5] can be accomplished. Notify OISS when transferring to another F-1 program within 60 days of Yale program end date.

Employment Restrictions

The F-1 regulations only permit employment under a few specific circumstances. Before accepting an offer of employment, check with OISS to make sure the employment is allowable. Off campus employment requires special permission. See under [Employment Authorization](https://oiss.yale.edu) [6] or [contact OISS](https://oiss.yale.edu) [7] to learn more about the employment.
Timely Departure or Change of Status

F-1 students have a 60 day grace period for departure following the completion of their program as noted on the I-20 or the approved OPT period. If changing to a different immigration status, such as H-1B, you must submit your change of status application to USCIS prior to the end of your program or OPT end date. If you are authorized to withdraw or take a leave of absence from your program, notify OISS prior to the effective date of the withdrawal or leave [8].

Keep Your Passport Valid

Passports can be renewed by your consulate in New York or Boston. Information about the nearest consulate [9]. Your passport should be valid for a minimum of six months into the future. Some countries have an agreement with the U.S. that automatically extends passport validity for 6 months [10], for U.S. entry purposes only.

If you do not maintain your F-1 status per above, your ability to continue studying in F-1 status may be in jeopardy.

Source URL: https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status

Links:
[1] https://oiss.yale.edu/getting-started/new-students/your-first-two-weeks
[2] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/report-your-address
[3] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/less-than-full-time
[5] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/transferring-from-or-leaving-yale
[6] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/employment
[7] https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss
[8] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/leave-of-absence-study-abroad