Maintaining Status for Students

It is important that you maintain lawful F-1 or J-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: Your First Two Weeks

There are a few important actions you must take as a new student, such as checking in via OISS Connect and attending your orientation. See the full list at Your First Two Weeks [1] and complete all the steps.

Report any Address or Phone Changes

All students in F-1 and J-1 status must maintain the following in their SEVIS record:

- current U.S. address
- foreign address
- U.S. phone number (if you have one)

OISS reports this information to SEVIS, but you must first update the information in the Student Information System (SIS) [2].

Any change in your addresses or phone number must be reported in SIS within 10 days of the change.

Maintain Full-Time Study

You are required to be enrolled full-time every semester. Instruction cannot be 100% online.

Undergraduates

Undergraduates must take at least three courses per semester and meet all Yale College requirements for promotion.

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 or refer to your school bulletin for more information.

Exceptions

There are a few exceptions to the full-time study rule. [3] You must always obtain advance permission from OISS prior to reducing your course load or dropping any classes.
Leave the U.S. Before Your Grace Period Expires

F-1 Students

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 [4] prior to the effective date of the withdrawal or leave.

J-1 Students

J-1 visitors are allowed a 30-day grace period beyond the end date on their DS-2019 to prepare for departure. This additional 30-day period is NOT for employment, extensions, or transfers. If you travel outside the U.S. during your 30-day grace period, you forfeit the remaining grace period and may not re-enter the U.S. under J-1 status.

Obtain Proper Employment Authorization and Understand Employment Restrictions

Work only with permission and within hourly limits. The F-1 regulations only permit employment under a few specific circumstances. J-1 regulations requires prior authorization. Before accepting an offer of employment, check with OISS to make sure the employment is allowable. Off-campus employment requires special permission. See our Employment pages for F-1 [5] or J-1 [6] students, or contact OISS [4] to learn more about the employment.

Make Sure Your Visa Documents are Accurate and Up-to-Date

Be aware of the expiration date of your status. This is not your visa expiration date in your passport; it is the end/expected completion date on your I-20 or DS-2019 form.

If you will not complete your academic program by the end date noted (section 5 of your I-20 or section 3 of your DS-2019), 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 for the remainder of your studies. Learn more on the F-1 [7] or J-1 [8] Student Extension pages. You must complete the extension process prior to the expected completion date on the I-20.

Keep Your Passport Valid for Up to 6 Months into the Future

Passports can be renewed by your consulate in New York or Boston. Find information about the nearest consulate [9] here. 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.

Travel with the Appropriate Documents & Travel Signature
International Travel

It is very important that your travel documents are up-to-date to avoid any problems at your departure airport when you’re returning to the U.S. and at a U.S. port of entry when you arrive. Check our Traveling pages for F-1 [11] and J-1 [12] students well in advance of a planned trip.

Travel Signature

Make sure your document has a valid travel signature within the last year, as a travel signature is valid for one year at a time. This will be on page 2 of your I-20 or on page 1 of your DS-2019. Only Yale-sponsored visas will have Yale travel signatures. If your F or J visa is sponsored by a third party, your travel signature will be obtained through your sponsor.

Visa

You need a valid visa to re-enter the U.S. Canadian citizens do not need a visa.

Passport

Make sure your passport is valid at least 6 months into the future.

Domestic Travel

In New Haven

You should carry copies of your immigration documents while in New Haven. Leave the originals in a safe place at home.

Outside of New Haven

If you are more than a few hours outside of New Haven, you should carry your passport and immigration documents should an officer ask you to present them.

F-1 Students on OPT: Follow OPT Reporting Requirements

Report Post-completion OPT and STEM OPT updates as described on our OPT Reporting Requirements page [13]. OISS will send you reminder emails, so be sure to pay attention to them.

J-1 Students: Maintain Health Insurance

Comply with U.S. Department of State health insurance requirements for J-1 visa holders and their families.

Comply with U.S. Tax Filing Requirements

EVERYONE must file taxes in the U.S., even if you had no U.S. income. Learn more on our U.S. Taxes page [14].
Do not Apply for or Accept Government/Public Assistance

When applying for a nonimmigrant visa, applicants have to document that they have the financial resources to support themselves and any family members with them. Accepting taxpayer-funded public benefits can jeopardize your legal status and future visa applications, change of status applications and admission to the U.S. if it is determined that you could become a public burden. Public benefits that count towards the “public charge inadmissibility” rule broadly include any Federal, State, or local cash assistance for income maintenance, SNAP (commonly known as food stamps), certain government housing programs, and Medicaid. Refer to our Accepting Public Assistance page [15] or USCIS Public Charge Fact Sheet [16] for additional information.

Follow U.S. Laws and Yale Policies

Comply with Yale’s academic and conduct polices and all U.S. federal and state laws. Violating a Yale policy or U.S. law may have negative consequences for your U.S. immigration status. Learn more on our Legal Considerations [17] page.

Keep Copies/Files of All Immigration-Related Documents

Save copies of each immigration document you are given throughout the duration of your studies. You may need them in the future:

- to document your employment history and your compliance with U.S. immigration regulations
- for future USCIS and/or visa applications

Organizing documents is easy with Google Drive, iCloud, Box.com, or many other electronic options.

When to Notify OISS

Let your OISS adviser know if there are any pertinent changes to your educational or immigration status. See the following for examples. Reach out to your OISS adviser [4] if you have any questions.

Changing Degree Program or Level

Notify OISS when changing educational levels at Yale [18] 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 [4].

Transferring to Another U.S. School

If offered admission at another college or university, discuss your plans with an OISS adviser [4] to make sure that the required transfer procedure [19] can be accomplished.

F-1 Students: Notify OISS [4] when transferring to another F-1 program within 60 days of Yale program end date.
Finishing or Ending Degree/Program Earlier than Expected

If you plan to leave early, be sure to talk to your OISS adviser ahead of time.

Finishing Degree/Program Later than Expected

If you will not complete your academic program by the end date noted (section 5 of your I-20 or section 3 of your DS-2019), 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. Learn more on the F-1 or J-1 Student Extension pages.

Notify OISS if you are approved for an extension of your program to stay beyond the date on your immigration form.

Changing Your Immigration Status or Category

Talk to your OISS Adviser if you are planning to change to another nonimmigrant status or if you become a permanent resident (“green card”).

Taking a Leave of Absence

If you are considering a leave of absence, you must consult with OISS before making your final decision. In most instances, a J-1 student may not remain in the U.S. in J-1 student status during a leave of absence. An F-1 student may not remain in the U.S. in F-1 status during a leave of absence. You will need to either depart the U.S. or make arrangements to obtain another nonimmigrant status.

Doing Study or Research Abroad

If you plan to study or conduct research outside the U.S. for an academic semester or longer (not including summer term), please check with an OISS adviser before you leave. Arrangements will be made to keep you in lawful student status and enrolled in absentia so that you can return to New Haven without delay. Address reporting requirements still apply while you are outside the U.S. and in some cases, a new visa will be required to return.

Consequences of Not Maintaining Your Status

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

Family Members
Your dependents' F-2 or J-2 status is tied to your immigration status. If you fail to maintain your legal status, your dependents will also lose their legal status.

Help! I Think I Violated My Status

Contact your OISS adviser IMMEDIATELY [4]. There are many things we can do to help you navigate a status violation once we are aware it has happened. However, there are problems we will not be able to solve if you have accrued too much unlawful presence time [21].

Source URL: https://oiss.yale.edu/maintaining-status-for-students

Links:
[1] https://oiss.yale.edu/getting-started/new-students/your-first-two-weeks
[2] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/report-your-address/f-1-j-1-students
[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/employment
[6] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/j-1-students/employment
[7] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/extension
[8] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/j-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/extension
[12] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/j-1-students/traveling
[13] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/employment/optional-practical-training/opt-reporting-requirements
[18] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/change-of-education-level
[19] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/transferring-to-and-from-yale
[20] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/report-your-address
[21] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/maintaining-legal-status/unlawful-presence-policy-for-f-1-students