

# MAINTAINING STATUS

Now that you have entered the U.S. as a nonimmigrant in F-1 or J-1 student status, it is critically important that you are aware of and abide by the regulations that govern your stay. The Office of International Programs (OIP) can assist you in maintaining your legal student status and dealing with various U.S. government agencies. However, **you are responsible for finding out, knowing, and following pertinent regulations.** Under the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), an internet-based system that facilitates the transmission of data to and from the federal government, your records, including name, date and place of birth, country of citizenship, current address, academic status, and employment information, can be checked regularly by several government agencies. The consequence of you falling out of your status is severe. If you are the least bit uncertain about your status—whether your permission to stay is valid or whether you can be paid for an internship—check with OIP immediately.

**To maintain your legal student status, you MUST:**

**1. Keep your passport valid at all times.**

Your passport must be renewed 6 months before it expires. Without a valid passport, you do not have legal immigration status and are ineligible for employment of any type, including on-campus jobs, practical training, etc. Visit your country's consulate website to learn how to renew your passport.

You should have a copy of your passport and your I-94 Admissions/Departure Record separate from the actual documents. Your home country's embassy's or consulate's contact information should also be easily accessible.

**2. Maintain full-time enrollment and normal progress toward your degree, as defined below:**

You must register and complete a full course of study each fall and spring semester.

Undergraduate: 4 courses per semester  
Graduate: Check with your school

The measure of normal progress is the rate at which the average full-time student in your program advances toward his or her degree. Working to complete courses or projects designated as incomplete from previous semesters is not maintaining normal progress. If you find yourself in this situation, or if you have an academic reason to carry a less than full-time load, you must consult with OIP immediately, in addition to your Dean.

**3. Notify OIP immediately (within 10 days) if you:**

- change your address; You must always maintain a local address with the college.
- declare or change your major(s);
- change your financial support; or
- change your U.S. immigration status.

**4. Limit your on-campus employment to a maximum of 17.5 hours per week\* while school is in session. You can work on-campus full-time during vacation periods.**

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- 5. Never work off-campus without prior authorization from OIP and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).** Beginning to work off-campus without proper authorization from the USCIS is considered the most serious violation of your status; it renders you illegally present in the U.S.

As the off-campus employment authorization can take up to three months to obtain, it is very important that you consult with OIP **before** you plan to work. Please also keep in mind that if you are applying for post-completion optional practical training, the USCIS must receive your application within 60 days of your program end date.

It is illegal to begin to work in anticipation of being granted permission to do so; you must have permission first.

- 6. Keep your I-20 Form (F-1 student) or DS-2019 Form (J-1 student) valid.** If you plan to continue studying beyond the date in item #5 of your I-20 or in item #3 of your DS-2019, you must apply to OIP for a "program extension" **30 days before** the expiration date.

You must receive proper signature from a Designated School Official (DSO) before departing the U.S. A DSO signature is valid for one year. We recommend you check in with OIP at least **three** days before you are scheduled to leave the country.

To continue at Bryn Mawr in a different academic level (i.e., bachelor's to master's), you must also apply for an extension. You must verify your admission to the new program and your ability to finance the program. The Office of International Programs will issue a new I-20 or DS-2019 indicating your correct academic program.

If you are considering transferring to another school, consult with OIP, in addition to your Dean, before making the decision.

- 7. Once you have completed your studies and any practical training that is authorized, you must leave the U.S. or change to another immigration status within the appropriate time allowed.**

If you are in F-1 student status, you are allowed to stay in the U.S. for 60 days beyond the completion date.

If you are in J-1 student status, you are allowed to stay in the U.S. for 30 days beyond the completion date.

\*Although US immigration regulations permit on-campus employment up to 20 hours per week while school is in session, Bryn Mawr College procedures limit on-campus employment to 17.5 hours per week.