

# **Rules and Regulations of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**



**Cerritos College  
Office of International Student Services  
Santa Barbara Building  
11110 Alondra Boulevard  
Norwalk, CA 90650-6298  
(562) 860-2451 ext. 2133  
Email: [ois@cerritos.edu](mailto:ois@cerritos.edu)  
Web: [www.cerritos.edu/ois](http://www.cerritos.edu/ois)**

**Department of Homeland Security  
United States and Immigration Services  
F-1 Student Responsibilities**

**PURPOSE**

Students in F-1 status have certain privileges and obligations from the regulations of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the Department of Homeland Security. This document outlines the most important of these rights and responsibilities. If you have questions, come to the Office of international Student Services (OISS) or the USCIS website at <http://www.uscis.gov>

**IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS**

**Passport.** Your Passport must be valid at all times. If you lose your passport, immediately contact your home country's embassy/consulate and replace it.

**Form I-20.** Read and clearly understand the information on the Form I-20. If you lose your I-20, you should immediately request a new I-20 from the OISS. The I-20 is specific to the program and your major and is valid until the date you graduate or transfer, whichever comes first. Please contact the OISS if there are any changes made to your academic program that is not on your I-20. Please keep in mind that you are expected to keep your initial I-20 bearing the admission number and any other copies which have been issued to you.

**F-1 Visa.** All international students must have a valid F-1 visa before they can study at Cerritos College. If you have the "D/S" (Duration of Status), written on your I-94 card, and you continue to remain "in-status" (being full-time, not working illegally, etc.) then your F-1 status will not expire (no matter what the expiration date of the F-1 visa in your passport) until you either graduate, go out-of-status, complete your OPT experience or leave the U.S.A.

**Form I-94.** This is your Arrival/Departure record. Now in electronic format, it can be retrieved at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>

**REGISTRATION, ATTENDANCE AND COURSELOAD**

**Registration and Attendance.** You must register for classes and attend the school that USCIS has authorized you to attend. You must register in 12.0 credits or more in the Fall and Spring semesters at Cerritos College. The Summer Term is optional, unless your I-20 indicates that your start date is the Summer term.

**Full Course Load Minimum Requirements**

You must register for and complete at least 12 credit hours of instruction per semester. You must maintain a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher.

**Online/Distance Education Courses** - Only one on-line or distance education course (or 3 units) per semester may count toward the 12 units required to maintain full-time status. (3 online + 9 units in class). This does not apply to Intensive English Program (IEP).

## **CHANGE OF STUDY OR PROGRAM**

If you complete your program and wish to continue your studies in another program at the same school, you are responsible to request a new I-20, which will reflect your new program of study, before you begin your new program.

**Reduced Course Load.** With approval, in advance, from the OISS, you may register for a course load less than that normally required by immigration regulations under the following conditions:

- **Academic Difficulties.** You may carry a reduced course load on account of initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with the U.S. teaching methods, or improper course level placements. You must resume a full course of study the next available semester in order to maintain student status.
- **Medical Conditions.** You may carry a reduced course load due to a temporary illness or medical condition for a period of time not to exceed 12 month while you are pursuing a course of study at a particular program level. You must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor to the OISS to prove the illness or medical condition. You must provide current medical documents to drop classes for each new semester.
- **Completion of Course of Study.** You may carry a reduced course load in your final semester if fewer courses are needed to complete the course of study (Associate's Degree or Transfer Program). Once the course of study has been completed, you must take action to maintain status. Such action may include transfer, application for OPT, application for change of status, or departure from the U.S. You must communicate your intentions to the OISS **BEFORE** completing your program of study.
- **Improper Course Level Placement.** Determined by International Counselor.

Remember, you must have approval from the OISS **BEFORE** you may take less than 12 units. A student who drops below a full course of study without prior approval will be considered "Out of Status" and will be reported to USCIS.

## **MEDICAL INSURANCE**

All F-1 students must have proof of medical insurance at all times. Medical coverage is expensive in the U.S., therefore, medical insurance is mandatory. **BEFORE** going to a doctor or hospital for medical treatment, go to the Student Health Services Center to get a "waiver". After office hours, call insurance office for referral.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

**On-Campus.** On-campus employment is allowed after successfully completing your 1st semester at Cerritos College. You must have a Social Security Number to work on-campus (see the OISS about acquiring a SSN to complete agreement form). You will complete the proper forms in the Human Resources office showing that you are eligible to work in the U.S.

**Off-Campus.** You must have a recommendation from the OISS and authorization from the OISS and authorization from the USCIS prior to obtaining employment. **WORKING OFF CAMPUS WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORIZATION IS A VIOLATION OF F-1 STATUS!!**

## **Practical Training Employment**

### **Pre-Completion OPT**

A student may file an application up to 120 days before the proposed OPT start date if he/she has completed a full academic year.

### **Post Completion OPT**

Optional Practical Training for F1 students is intended to provide hand-on practical work experience complementary to the academic program. An F1 student is eligible for a **MAXIMUM OF 12 MONTHS** of employment. A student will be able to file the OPT application up to 90 days before the degree completion date and up to 60 days after the degree completion date. Processing of OPT application generally takes three months. You must obtain employment **within 90 days** of approval from USCIS to maintain OPT.

### **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

CPT is defined as "alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. CPT is temporary employment authorization directly related to an F1 student's academic program. According to immigration regulations, CPT must be "an integral part of an established curriculum". For more information, please contact the Office of International Student Services.

**Hours of Employment.** All employment, whether on or off-campus, must not exceed a total of 20 hours per week while school is in session. For more detailed information, please contact the OISS.

**Income Tax Filing.** Students need to file State and Federal income tax, on or before April 15, with authorized employment in the U.S. For more information go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

## **EXTENSION OF PROGRAM AT CERRITOS COLLEGE**

You may study in our present educational program for the time allowed on your I-20. If you need additional time to complete your program and meet certain eligibility requirements, you may apply for an "extension" of your program and have it granted **BEFORE** the completion date listed on your I-20. Come to the OISS for information.

**Early Withdrawal with Prior Approval.** If you obtain approval from the OISS to terminate your course of study before it is completed, you have a **15-day grace period** for departure from the U.S.

**Early Withdrawal without Prior Approval.** If you terminate your course of study without prior approval from the OISS or otherwise fail to maintain status, **you must leave the U.S. immediately.** You may apply for reinstatement to F-1 status.

## **COMPLETION OF DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

Upon completion of degree requirements, you may have the right to 1). continue studies at Cerritos College or transfer to a new school for another degree, 2). apply for up to 12 months of "Practical Training" employment or, 3). must depart from the U.S. within 60 days.

## **TRAVEL**

**Within the U.S.** You may travel freely within the United States if you maintain a lawful F-1 status and have your valid passport, I-20 and I-94 in your possession at all times.

**Outside the U.S.** You may leave the U.S. at any time. To return to the U.S., you must have, 1) a valid passport containing an ***unexpired*** F-1 visa and, 2) an I-20 properly endorsed by the OISS for re-entry. If you need to get your F-1 visa renewed or need to apply for an F-1 visa, you should contact the U.S. Embassy/Consulate **BEFORE** you travel to learn the process and how much time it may take.

**Returning to the U.S.** Before departing the U.S. , bring your I-20, I-94 card and passport to the OISS and request travel authorization. A request for a travel endorsement on your I-20 should be submitted to the OISS at least a week or two **BEFORE** you travel. If you plan to transfer, you must obtain a new I-20 from your new school before you attempt to re-enter the U.S. Entering this country using an I-20 from a school you do not plan to immediately attend can cause serious immigration problems.

## **CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT**

If you wish to obtain a degree from Cerritos College but want to also take courses at another school, you should consult with the OISS to approve your request. If you want to stop studying at Cerritos College and transfer out to a different school, you must, 1) consult with the OISS before you transfer, indicating the school you intend to transfer, 2) obtain a new I-20 from the school you plan to attend, and 3) submit the new I-20 to the OISS at your new school within 15 days of the program start date listed on the I-20.

## **TRANSFER OUT TO ANOTHER SCHOOL**

If you plan to transfer from Cerritos College to another school in the US, meet with an OISS advisor and counselor to discuss your plans. Your SEVIS I-20 will be released upon receipt of acceptance letter from the new school.

## **DEPENDENTS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS**

F-2 dependents are in good standing as long as the F-1 student is in status. All F-2's should maintain their individual I-20's. Those on F-2 status are allowed to study part-time. If your dependents are in your home country, they may be eligible to temporarily visit you or join you for the duration of your studies. See the OISS for procedures on bringing an F-2 visa dependent into the U.S. Other members of your family (father, mother, etc.) may be able to visit you (usually in B-2 visitor status) during your study.

## **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH RESPONSIBILITIES**

Failure to comply with your immigration responsibilities can cause you to lose your student status and not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 visa students. **If you have further ques-tions, come to the OISS or visit the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)**

## Highlight of USCIS Regulations

We have highlighted the most important changes in USCIS regulations in this publication. Remember, it is **YOUR** responsibility as an F-1 student to maintain your status. Reviewing this publication and visiting the USCIS Website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) will help you avoid violating any F-1 regulations.

- ♦ F-2 dependents or spouses can enroll part-time, and issued a separate I-20's. F-2 dependent child 18-20 years old can enroll part-time until reaching the age of 21. You must apply for Change of Status to F-1 and be approved by USCIS to enroll in college beginning at age 21.
- ♦ Prior approval to drop below full-time status (12 units) during a major term (Fall and Spring) is required from the Office of International Student Services or you will be reported as "out of status" to the USCIS. (See page 3 "Reduced Course Load").
- ♦ USCIS requires you to notify them of a change of local U.S. address within 10 days. Notify the Office of International Student Services of a change of address and also report the changes to USIS on form AR-11. USCIS requires a complete address, a P.O. Box is not accepted.
- ♦ Changes in any of the following must be reported to the Office of International Student Services:
  - Name
  - Major/Field of study
  - Dependent Information
  - Financial Support
  - Permanent Address outside of the U.S.
  - Local Address
  - E-Mail Address
- ♦ The Office of International Student Services must report to the USCIS on your academic status each term on the events listed below:
  - Registration (full-time and part-time)
  - Drop below full-time without authorization
  - Failure to enroll
  - Start date of the next term
- ♦ **Applicants for Optional Practical Training (OPT) may apply 90 days prior to completion of their program or within 60 days after completion of AA Degree.**
- ♦ Students must apply for extension of program/I-20 BEFORE the completion of their program of study.
- ♦ You must notify the Office of International Student Services of the school you plan to transfer BEFORE completing your program at Cerritos College.
- ♦ A transferring student must present the transfer I-20 to the transfer school within 15 days of the program start date listed on the I-20 form.
- ♦ International Students must have medical insurance at all times while studying at Cerritos College.

***Success starts at Cerritos College — Thank you for your attendance.***