# International Student Handbook




International Student Services Department

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## WELCOME TO SFBC & CHECK-IN CHECKLIST

Welcome to South Florida Bible College! We are honored that you've chosen SFBC as your academic and spiritual home. Our mission is to support your growth not just as a student, but as a follower of Christ living and learning in a cross-cultural context.

CHECK-IN CHECKLIST:

1. Review Information Sessions & Complete Immigration Quiz
2. Fill out Immigration Check-in Form in Populi

Upon completion of the immigration check-in, your Initial I-20 will be validated on the second-third week of classes. The validated I-20 is what you will use to apply for your driver's license.

## WHO ARE DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIALS (DSOs)?

DSOs are staff members authorized by the U.S. government to assist you with F-1 visa compliance. We:

- Issue and update your Form I-20
- Advice on maintaining status
- Help with travel, employment, and transfers
- Are your point of contact for SEVIS updates

**Note:** DSOs are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice.

## MAINTAINING YOUR F-1 STATUS

To stay in compliance with your F-1 visa:

- Keep your passport valid
- Maintain full-time enrollment
- Never work off-campus without authorization
- Do not drop below full-time without DSO approval
- Report address or phone number changes within 10 days
- Request I-20 updates for changes in major, program, or personal info

## UNDERSTANDING F-1 REGULATIONS

F-1 status is a legal category for full-time students studying in the U.S.

- Key Documents to Carry or Keep Safe:
- Form I-20 (signed)
- Passport (valid at least 6 months into the future)
- F-1 Visa (for re-entry, not for status)
- I-94 (download at cbp.gov/i94)

**Authorized Stay:** Until the end of your academic program, plus a 60-day grace period.

## EVENTS THAT REQUIRE YOU TO UPDATE YOUR I-20

Report any updates to the Department of Homeland Security through SEVIS and have them reflected on your I-20. Notify ISSD of the following changes and request an updated I-20. Keep all I-20s for your permanent record, even after graduation, and do not discard old ones, including those from previous schools. ISSD archives and destroys files after a few years, so it's your responsibility to retain your I-20s for future immigration benefits.

### PROGRAM EXTENSION

If you are unable to complete your degree program within the time indicated on your I-20, you may request a program extension if the delay is caused by compelling academic or medical reasons:

- Illness (requires medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist)
- Change in major field of study
- Change in research topic
- Unexpected research problems

Application for extension MUST be made 30 days **prior** to the completion date on your I-20. Your academic advisor is required to certify that the delay in completing program requirements was caused by a compelling academic or medical reason, and that you are making progress toward completion of your degree.

You must fill out the I-20 Program Extension Request Form in Populi for ISSD to process your request.

If your delay in completing your program is not for one of the reasons discussed above, or if you do not apply prior to the completion date on your I-20, you will be considered to be out-of-status and must apply for reinstatement.

Attention: An extension of a program end date on your I-20 will NOT extend the validity of your visa in your passport. If your visa has expired, you are allowed to remain in the United States. However, if you depart the United States, you will need to plan to apply for a new visa prior to reentering the U.S. in F-1 status. A visa cannot be renewed inside the United States.

## TRANSFERRING OUT TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

If you decide to transfer to another school, you MUST submit the SEVIS Transfer Out Request Form in Populi, together with the following documents for ISSD to process your request:

- Admission letter from the new school
- SEVIS Transfer-in form to be completed by SFBC DSO, IF required by the new school

Your SEVIS transfer release date is the date on which the other school will obtain access to your SEVIS record. An SFBC DSO will typically set the transfer release date to the end date of the current semester at SFBC if you are still enrolled. If you have been authorized to work on practical training (OPT or CPT for F-1 students), your work authorization will no longer be valid after the transfer release date. Working beyond that date will result in a violation of your F-1 status. Contact ISSD if you have questions about the appropriate transfer release date to request. The SEVIS record must be transferred out no later than the end of the 60-day grace period following program completion for F-1 students.

## CHANGING YOUR EDUCATION LEVEL

If you will complete your current program of study and plan to continue at SFBC in another program (for example, change from a bachelor's degree program to a master's program), OR if you are currently enrolled at the Bachelor's

degree level and would like to graduate with the Associates degree level in the same major (and have completed less than 75 credits in the Bachelors program) – you must:

1. **Meet with your academic advisor and receive approval of the requested change.**
2. Submit the **Declaration/Change of Major** Form in Populi for the Registrar's approval.
3. Once the Registrar's Office has approved the requested, submit ISSD's **I-20 Update Request Form** in Populi so that the DSO can update your I-20 with the new program and/or degree level.
4. You will be notified via email when your I-20 has been updated.

### CHANGE OF MAJOR

If you change your major (for example, from Biblical and Theological Studies to Christian Counseling), you must request a new I-20.

### NAME CHANGE

The name on your I-20 should match the name on your passport. If you change any part of your legal name—first/given name, middle name, or last/family name—on your passport, this change should be reflected on your I-20. Conversely, if you want a different name on your I-20, ISSD will wait for you to change your passport first, before updating the I-20.

## ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES STUDENTS

The EAP program at SFBC helps non-native English speakers develop the academic reading, writing, grammar, and communication skills needed for college-level coursework. Students typically complete EAP before entering undergraduate programs.

You are enrolled in EAP as part of your F-1 visa program. You must maintain full participation and make academic progress.

### EAP: Attendance Requirements

Attendance is essential for academic progress and visa compliance. Missing too many classes may result in:

- Academic warning or dismissal
- Loss of F-1 status
- Termination of your SEVIS record

If you are sick or have an emergency, contact your instructors and the ISSD as soon as possible.

### EAP: ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

EAP students may be eligible to work on campus up to 20 hours per week during the semester and full-time during scheduled breaks.

Requirements:

- Must be in valid F-1 status
- Must get written permission from ISSD before starting
- Must have a Social Security Number (SSN) to receive payment

Employment must not interfere with your EAP class schedule or academic performance.

### EAP: MEDICAL REDUCED COURSE LOAD

If you are unable to attend full-time due to a medical condition:

- You may qualify for a Medical Reduced Course Load (RCL)
- You must provide a signed letter from a licensed U.S. doctor, psychologist, or psychiatrist
- You must request and receive RCL approval from ISSD before dropping any classes

Medical RCLs can only be granted for a maximum of 12 months per program level.

### EAP: COMPLETING THE EAP PROGRAM & NEXT STEPS

Upon completion of the EAP program:

- You will take the English Placement Test
- Based on your score, you may:
    - Enroll in a bridge semester (transitional academic coursework)
    - Enroll directly into a full course load of college-level classes

ISSD will issue a new I-20 reflecting your next program of study.

### EAP: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

**Q: Can I work while studying in EAP?**
A: Yes, on-campus only, and with written authorization from ISSD.

**Q: Can I miss classes for travel or vacation?**
A: No, regular attendance is required. Travel must be during breaks and approved in advance.

**Q: How do I extend my I-20 if I need more time in EAP?**
A: Contact ISSD at least 30 days before your I-20 expires.

**Q: What if I want to transfer to another school?**
A: Talk to ISSD to transfer your SEVIS record before the end of your program.

## FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT & REDUCED COURSE LOAD

Full-Time Requirements:

- EAP: Required attendance
- Undergraduate: 12 credits
- Graduate: 9 credits
- Doctoral: 6 credits

Only one online class may count toward your minimum load. Speak with your DSO before dropping or withdrawing.

Reduced Course Load (RCL) Options:

- Academic difficulty (first semester only)
- Medical condition (with proper documentation)
- Final semester (fewer credits needed to graduate)

## FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT EXCEPTIONS

### ACADEMIC REDUCED COURSE LOAD

A. Difficulty with English Language or Reading Requirements*

B. Unfamiliarity with U.S. Teaching Methods*

C. Improper Course Level Placement*

*Reduced course load authorization is only applicable during the first semester in the degree program. Students must also maintain at least six credit hours, if authorized.

If you believe one of these applies to you, you must fill out the reduced course load request for DSO authorization.

### ILLNESS OR MEDICAL CONDITION

A student's temporary illness or medical condition can be reason for a reduced course load (or, if necessary, no course load). Authorization for a reduced course load due to medical reasons is limited to a total of 12 months (cumulative 365 days) per degree level. A student must provide a letter on letterhead signed by an appropriate medical official in order to request an RCL for medical reasons.

Students must discuss their request for a medical reduced course load with their Academic Advisor, prior to submitting the request form.

**Submitting Medical RCL Request:**

**Step 1:** Request Authorization for Reduced Course Load

- You will need to upload the Medical Leave Request Form and a letter (on letterhead) from your Licensed Doctor containing the following:
    - Be on the medical/clinical practice's stationary/letterhead
    - Include the student's full name and date of birth
    - Recommend the student take a reduced course load due to the student's own medical health reasons
    - Be signed by a currently practicing licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy or licensed clinical psychologist, and include the medical/clinical official's license number
    - Be dated and specify for which semester the reduced course load (or, if necessary, no course load) is recommended.

**Step 2:** Once approved by the Vice President of Student Life, contact the billing office to make payment for the applicable maintenance fee and verify any pending fees due to course withdrawal.

**Step 3:** Once cleared by the billing office, DSO will process your request and update your I-20. You will be notified via email with a PDF version of your updated I-20.

**Applicable Maintenance Fee(s):** International students requesting a reduced course load (RCL) due to illness or medical condition must pay the following one-time maintenance fees:

- First RCL request: $750.00
- Second RCL request: $1,250.00

**Responsibility for Tuition upon Course Withdrawal:** In addition to the maintenance fees, students are responsible for tuition according to the course withdrawal policy outlined in the Student Handbook, Populi, and on the website:

- 2nd Week of Class: Responsible for 25% of tuition
- 3rd Week of Class: Responsible for 50% of tuition
- 4th Week of Class: Responsible for 75% of tuition
- 5th Week and Beyond: Responsible for 100% of tuition

*Note: A medical reduced course load request must be authorized by the Vice President of Student Life, based on a formal recommendation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist, specifying the recommended leave duration. The note must also state if the student should remain in the U.S. for treatment or return to their home country. Students must provide appropriate medical documentation to support the request.*

**Withdrawing from courses:** International students must get prior approval from the SFBC&TS Academics Department before withdrawing from courses due to illness or medical conditions. Students must fully follow their medical or psychological treatment plan and seek to improve their health and stability.

**Currently on approved medical RCL:** If a student is currently on an approved reduced course load and their physician recommends a reduced course load for the following term, the student must submit an updated Reduced Course Load form along with new medical documentation, including a letter from their clinician. ISSD will then send the request to the Vice President of Student Life for final approval.

**International students are not authorized for work while on an authorized medical reduced course load.**

### LAST SEMESTER AT SFBC

Students in their final semester may be approved for a reduced course load if they need fewer than 12 credit hours to complete the course of study.

You must fill out the reduced course load request for DSO authorization.

## EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS: ON-CAMPUS, OPT & CPT

On-Campus Employment:

- Max 20 hrs/week during semesters
- No prior authorization is needed, but you must maintain F-1 status

Optional Practical Training (OPT):

- Up to 12 months after each degree level
- Must relate to your field of study
- Requires DSO recommendation and USCIS approval

Curricular Practical Training (CPT):

- Must be tied to a course or program requirement
- Requires DSO authorization before starting
- Typically used for internships

## ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

### DEFINITION OF “ON-CAMPUS” EMPLOYMENT

On-campus employment includes:

- Employment for SFBC (examples: teaching assistant, library student worker, etc.)

You are allowed to work:

- Part-time (20 hours per week or less) during your regular full-time semester.
- Full-time (more than 20 hours per week) during summer vacation semester.

## EXPIRATION OF ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY

Your on-campus employment eligibility ends:

- When you graduate. It expires on the last day of your final semester (per SFBC calendar), even if your I-20 expiration date is in the future.
- If you transfer to another university, your work authorization expires on the day of your SEVIS record release date.
- If you violate your F-1 status.

## FINDING A CAMPUS JOB

SFBC students must submit their resume to the Human Resources office. On-campus jobs are also advertised on flyers posted on campus in the student lounge and Populi.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITY: KNOW THE RULES

It is your responsibility to research and understand your on-campus work eligibility. It is generally not the job of SFBC staff to thoroughly know the immigration regulations. It is possible you will be offered employment that you are not eligible to accept or for your employment eligibility to expire without the payroll coordinator notifying you. Be sure to review all information provided by ISSD and consult ISSD if you have any concerns or questions.

# OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a form of training, often paid, that directly relates to your program of study. You can apply for OPT during your program of study, which is known as pre-completion OPT, or after you finish your program of study, known as post-completion OPT.

In order to apply for OPT, F-1 students must request approval from their DSO. A DSO makes this recommendation in SEVIS and by endorsing a student's Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status." The student must then file the Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization" and supporting documents with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and if approved, USCIS will issue a Form I-766, "Employment Authorization Document." You cannot begin your training until you receive your authorization from USCIS.

Pre-completion OPT is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session but can be full-time during breaks and annual vacation.

You can apply for 12 months of OPT at each education level, (i.e., you may have 12 months of OPT at the bachelor's level and another 12 months of OPT at the master's level).

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT OPT

- Available to students who have been enrolled in a full course of study in the U.S. and have maintained F-1 status for at least one academic year, prior to the start date of OPT
- Available to students who have not exceeded 12 months of full-time CPT.
- Does not require an employment offer at the time of application
- Can be submitted up to 90 days prior to the desired OPT start date
- Requires recommendation from the DSO and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).
- Authorized once for each degree level (bachelor's, master's, doctorate) for up to 12 months
- Must be received at USCIS within 30 days of the date DSO enters OPT recommendation in SEVIS
- Employment can begin only on or after the start date on the EAD card
- Allows for no more than 90 days of unemployment during the 12-month employment period. Thus, employment must begin no later than 90 days after the start date of the EAD card.

## PRE- VS POST- OPT

A) Pre-completion OPT (Code: (c) (3) (A))

- Can be applied for at any time during the program of study (after completing at least one academic year)
- Granted prior to degree completion; cannot exceed program completion date listed on the I-20
- Authorized part-time (20 hours per week or less) while school is in session, or full-time during the summer semester (if not enrolled full-time) and other official breaks and holidays, if currently enrolled and expecting to enroll for the next available semester
- Deducted from the 12-month period of OPT eligibility (students must apply separately for post-completion OPT for the period not used as pre-completion OPT-90-day unemployment period doesn't apply)

B) Post-completion OPT (Code: (c) (3) (B)))

- Should be applied for during the semester in which student expects to receive the degree and up to 90 days prior to the desired OPT start date
- Must be received by USCIS no later than 60 days after the program completion date listed on the I-20
- Authorization granted for full-time OPT up to 12 months (less any period of authorized pre-completion OPT)

## TRAVEL DURING OPT

- Students engaged in Pre-completion OPT must follow the same travel requirements that apply to all F-1 students who are currently enrolled
- Students engaged in Post-completion OPT should consult with ISSD prior to making travel arrangements
    - Traveling before receiving EAD card and an employment offer should be avoided. When traveling, page 2 of the I-20 must have the DSO's travel endorsement (valid for six months).
    - Traveling with a pending OPT application is not recommended.
    - Obtaining a new F-1 visa while on OPT can be risky.
    - Consulting with an ISSD advisor before making plans to travel outside the U.S. is recommended - each travel situation is different and may require individual advising.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS DURING OPT

IMPORTANT: The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will automate the SEVIS termination of any OPT record which does not contain the employment information by day 90 of the OPT authorization (calculated from the start date listed on the Employment Authorization Document your receive from USCIS in order to begin your OPT employment).

In order to ensure that all records are properly updated, we ask that you report your OPT employment to our office by submitting the OPT Reporting Form. If this information is new or different from the information currently stored in your SEVIS record, we will print a new OPT I-20 for you and contact you for pickup or mailing arrangements.

SFBC is responsible for the F-1 SEVIS record and I-20 for the duration of OPT. Students must keep ISSD informed of the following:

- Initial employment information within 90 days of the OPT start date (employer name, location, address, contact information, including email) as well as any subsequent changes in employment.
- Completion of OPT prior to OPT end date due to change of status or return to the home country
- Acceptance to another degree program in F-1 status will require SEVIS transfer if going to another school in the U.S.
- Student's current address and contact information (including a non-SFBC email address); change of address information must be provided within 10 days.
- Transfer of schools to begin a new academic program prior to OPT completion.
- Plans to travel outside the U.S. to renew F-1 visa.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR OPT

Whether you plan to apply online or by mail with USCIS you must first follow these steps to receive a new I-20 from ISSD specifically recommending you for OPT on page 2. Please follow the steps below:

**Step 1:** Please review the online OPT workshop and complete the quiz before you submit the I-20 OPT Request Form to International Student Services Department. (When you receive a score of 100%, save a PDF copy of your results showing your score, email, name, student ID. You will need to upload this PDF in the form. Note: I-20 OPT Request Forms without confirmation of 100/100 quiz score will not be processed.

Workshop:
https://sites.google.com/sfbc.edu/issd/current-students-employment/optional-practical-training-opt/opt-online-workshop

Quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/mhSN0YYG97

**Step 2:** Please submit electronically your OPT I-20 Request Form and upload through this e-form all required documents listed (OPT quiz results, passport, I-94, etc).

**Step 3:** It will take 7 -10 business days to process your OPT request.

**Step 4:** ISSD will send you an e-mail to inform you the new OPT I-20 is ready, which will be attached as a scanned copy to the same email. Detailed instructions will be provided in that same email. You will be responsible for submitting all the necessary documents to USCIS on your own.

If you have any questions, please contact ISSD at 954-637-2294 or send an email to issd@sfbc.edu.

## OPT APPLICATION DEADLINES

OPT applications are accepted the fourth week of classes to accommodate SEVIS registration. OPT may be filed with USCIS, no sooner than 90 days before the official semester end date for final term of study and no later than end of 60 day grace period.

To view USCIS processing time information please click here.

Please note that ISSD has no control over the USCIS processing time. It will take up to 10 business days for ISSD to issue the new I-20 for your OPT application. After receiving the new I-20 you will need submit your complete application to USCIS within 30 days of the OPT I-20 issue date. It will take on average 1 to 3 months (or more) for USCIS approval.

*You will need to choose an OPT requested start date as part of your application for OPT.

## TO-DO AFTER OPT APPROVAL

Important: After your OPT has been approved and once you have employment, please be sure to complete the mandatory OPT Reporting Form.

**Post-completion OPT Employment Reminders:**

- Only start working after your OPT has been approved and only work within the official authorization dates printed on the EAD card - employment authorization document/work permit.
- Student must report on employment (complete e-form above) before accruing 90 days of unemployment time, which begins from the official OPT start date printed on the EAD card.
- You must report at least 20 hours per week minimum of employment as paid or unpaid work.
- There is no maximum to the number of hours worked per week.
- The work should directly relate to the I-20 major as printed on the form I-20 for which the OPT is being approved for.
- Unpaid internships/volunteer work may be acceptable for post-completion OPT if the work is related to the degree and is 20 hours per week.
- Employment must be for a US-based employer; foreign employment cannot be reported as OPT employment.
- Self-employment is permitted during 12-month post-completion OPT. ISSD cannot advise extensively on opening a business, but you may review this helpful government site to get started: https://www.sba.gov/
- You may work for more than one employer during the OPT authorization period. Each employment, including self-employment, must be reported via the OPT Reporting Form.
- For students working on-campus positions: you can only work up until the final date of classes (in final term of study), which will reflect as your new program end date (page 1 of I-20) after receiving the new I-20 issued with OPT recommendation.
    - You may only resume working on or after the official OPT start date as printed on the EAD card (following USCIS approval). The work must relate to the major and be 20 hrs per week minimum.
    - Do not work during any gap period between I-20 program end date and official OPT start-doing so is considered unauthorized employment!

## SEVP PORTAL

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) launched the SEVP Portal, which streamlines the SEVIS update process by enabling F-1 students participating in post-completion optional practical training (OPT) to report personal and employer information directly to SEVP. Link to the SEVP Portal: https://sevp.ice.gov/opt/#/login

Through the portal, students can now:

- Add or edit their phone number.
- Add or edit their mailing and physical address.

- Add or edit their employer information.

For more information on how SEVP Portal works click here.

## CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

International students who are interested in engaging in internships must apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorization after they secure an internship and before they begin the internship experience.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JOB AND AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship includes a learning objective; it is an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills through experiential learning as a complement to the theoretical knowledge gained in an academic setting. International students can only be authorized for internships that are an integral part of their academic curriculum. A job is a position of regular employment.

### WHEN CAN I BEGIN MY INTERNSHIP?

You may begin your internship as soon as you meet the minimum eligibility criteria ISSD and you receive the proper authorization. You should only work during the approved CPT dates reflected on page 2 of your I-20.

**Additional requirements for international students:**

F-1 students must fulfill at least one academic year at SFBC (two consecutive full-time semesters equal to at least **30 weeks** minimum of credit seeking courses compliant with F-1 enrollment requirements) prior to being eligible for CPT, which in turn will allow participation in an internship.

**Exceptions:**

Students who pursue a graduate level degree with the required practical component (immediate internship participation required) within the program of study may engage in CPT from their first semester at SFBC.

Students who are transferring from another program in the U.S. or starting a new program following a period of OPT may request CPT in their second semester of study at SFBC.

### DO I NEED TO GET AUTHORIZATION FROM ISSD IN ORDER TO ENGAGE IN THE INTERNSHIP?

**Yes**.
Paid and unpaid on-campus internship positions may be authorized as on-campus employment if not exceeding 20 hours per week or as CPT if exceeding 20 hours per week. Please note that regular on-campus jobs cannot exceed 20 hours per week during fall and spring (but may exceed 20 hours per week during the summer session for students continuing enrollment from spring).

- Paid and unpaid off-campus internships must always have CPT authorization and may be authorized full-time or part-time depending on the internship criteria. ISSD advisors will advise you accordingly.
- ISSD limits CPT authorizations to no more than two semesters per degree level. While there is no regulatory limit on part-time internships, students who wish to engage for a third internship must meet with an ISSD advisor prior to requesting authorization. We must ensure that this opportunity continues to be integral to students' program of study (for degree credit or degree completion requirements) and establish new learning objectives with each CPT authorization.
- Students who completed all coursework except for thesis or dissertation credits may apply for CPT under the condition that the internship is required to collect research directly for thesis/dissertation.
- Students cannot be approved for only CPT in their final semester; student must take a course required for degree completion in addition to CPT authorization in the final term to be considered for approval.
- 12 months of full-time CPT will cancel eligibility for OPT.

## DO I NEED TO REGISTER FOR A COURSE? WHAT IF I DON'T NEED IT FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT?

Yes. Only one internship course may apply per CPT authorization and the course must be taken concurrently with the CPT experience.

## DO I NEED A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN) IN ORDER TO APPLY FOR OR ACCEPT AN INTERNSHIP OFFER?

An SSN is not required to apply for positions; however, you do need the SSN to engage in a paid internship. The SSN is only issued for paid internship (not for unpaid positions). You will be eligible to apply for the SSN after you receive the CPT authorization.

Please read the Social Security application guide for more details. To request SSN letter from ISSD office please complete the Letter Request Form.

## STEPS FOR AN INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY

1. Meet with the faculty advisor for the internship program to discuss internship options and requirements.
2. Register for the internship course through your department
3. After you secure an internship position and enroll into your internship course, submit your CPT Application Form and supporting documentation to International Student Services.
4. Apply for your Social Security Number (SSN) if you do not already have one. To request SSN letter from ISSD office please complete the Letter Request Form.
5. Submit appropriate documentation to your employer/internship supervisor.
6. Complete all internship program requirements by the deadline dates to ensure that you receive a Satisfactory grade for the internship/co-op course.

## CPT ONLINE WORKSHOP AND QUIZ

**Step 1:** Please review the online CPT workshop and complete the quiz before you submit the paperwork to the International Student Services department. (When you receive a score of 100% Total Points 100/100. Please be sure to print your results to include your score, Email, Name, Student ID# and attach to your CPT application. Note: CPT applications without confirmation of 100/100 quiz score will not be processed)

Workshop:
https://sites.google.com/sfbc.edu/issd/current-students-employment/curricular-practical-training-cpt/cpt-online-workshop

Quiz: https://forms.office.com/r/JWEh5QJ5RX

**Step 2:** Please submit electronically your CPT Application Form to the ISSD office.

**Step 3:** It will take 5-10 business days to process your CPT request.

**Step 4:** ISSD office will send out an e-mail to inform you the new CPT I-20 is ready.

**If you have any questions, please contact the DSO at 954-637-2294 or send an email to ISSD@sfbc.edu.**

**If you do not already have an SSN then please read below:**

You do need the SSN to engage in a **paid** internship. You will be eligible to apply for the SSN after you receive the CPT authorization. You will not be able to apply for an SSN for an **unpaid** position.

To request SSN letter from ISS office please complete the Letter Request Form.

## SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER & DRIVER'S LICENSE

### DRIVER'S LICENSE

International students and scholars who drive in the U.S. must have a valid driver's license. A Florida driver's license or a State of Florida identification card can be obtained at any Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV) office.

Driver's licenses are issued for one year at a time, renewable until the end of the student's program. F-1 students who have completed a course of study or optional practical training (OPT) can be granted a license for an additional 60-day period to allow them to prepare for departure or to process a transfer.

Dependents of F-1 students (i.e. dependents in F-2) are allowed the same period of driver's license validity as the F-1 students.

You may walk into the FLHSMV offices; however, many offices require appointments for services. It is recommended visiting their own website or calling for additional information. Visit the Locations page for addresses, telephone numbers and hours of operation. Below are the two locations closest to the SFBC Campus:

| |
|---|
| **Palm Beach County: Delray Beach Location**<br>501 S. Congress Avenue<br>Delray Beach, FL 33445<br>Phone number: 561-355-2264<br>Hours: Mon-Fri: 8:15 am – 4:30 pm<br>By reservation only |
| **Broward County: Deerfield Location**<br>2265-A W. Hillsboro Blvd.<br>Deerfield Beach, FL 33442<br>Phone number: 954-596-2110<br>Hours: Mon-Fri: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm |

**Step 1:** If you do not have a driver's license from your home country, you must complete a Traffic Law and Substance Abuse Education (TLSAE) Course before applying for a license in Florida. Visit the Approved TLSAE Course Providers list here.

Once you complete a Traffic Law and Substance Abuse Education course through a registered provider your completion information is automatically submitted to their department and this information is available at all Driver's License Offices! Paper certificates are no longer required at the driver's license office.

It is recommended that you take your foreign driver's license if one has been issued. You may be exempt from the mandatory TLSAE Course, the driving test, or parts of it.

**Step 2:** Study the information in the Florida Driver's Handbook: http://www.flhsmv.gov/handbooks/

**Step 3:** If you have never been issued a social security number, you must go to the Social Security Administration and request a "Letter of Ineligibility."

Here are two SSA that are closest to the school:

**Social Security Administration - Margate**
5195 Coconut Creek Pkwy, Margate, FL 33063
Monday to Friday – 9AM - 4PM
Phone: (800) 772-1213

**Social Security Administration – Boca Raton**
621 NW 53 Street suite 400, Boca Raton, FL 33487
Monday to Friday – 9AM – 4PM
Phone: (800) 772-1213

**Step 4:** Go to the office with the following documentation:

A. Valid passport;
B. F-1 or J-1 status documentation (Form I-20 or DS-2019);
C. Proof of non-immigrant classification provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Form I-94);
D. Social Security Number card or a Letter of Ineligibility for SSN issued from the Social Security Administration;
E. $48.00 processing fee
F. Two original proofs of residence such as the following examples:

a. Educational institution transcript forms for the current school year;
b. Home utility bill (cable bill, cell phone, electric bill) issued no more than two months before;
c. Mail from financial institutions, including checking or saving account statements;
d. An address verification letter issued by the ISSD office. You can submit a Letter Request here.

**Step 5:** Take the exams:

A. Hearing - Drivers applying for a license who are deaf or cannot hear conversation spoken in a normal tone of voice, are restricted to driving with an outside rearview mirror which should be mounted on the left side of the vehicle or wearing a hearing aid.

B. Vision - Vision testing, using an eye machine located on the counter, is conducted in all driver license offices. Visual acuity readings worse than 20/40 are referred to an eye specialist. Color blindness will not cause any special conditions for licensing.

C. Knowledge Exam - 50 multiple-choice questions about traffic laws and traffic signs. To prepare, review the Florida Driver License Handbook and take the Class E Knowledge Practice Test. Class E knowledge examinations are available in Arabic, Chinese, English, Haitian Creole, Russian, and Spanish.

D. Driving Test - You must provide a vehicle for the driving test. The vehicle must have a valid tag, proof of insurance, and pass a vehicle inspection. During the driving test, the examiner will observe your ability to control the vehicle and how well you obey traffic laws.

## APPLYING FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

F-1 students who are employed in the U.S. must apply for a Social Security number. Dependents in F-2 status are not eligible for a Social Security number.

To issue a Social Security number, the Social Security Administration requires evidence that you are eligible to work in the U.S., that you are a full-time student, and that you have received a formal offer of on-campus employment, or have been authorized for off-campus employment through Curricular Practical Training or Optional Practical Training. ***A Social Security number is not required to obtain a cell phone, credit card, insurance, admission to an academic institution or other "non-work" reasons.*** The Social Security Administration must also verify your immigration documents and status with Immigration before issuing the Social Security number. Note that new students may not apply for an SSN earlier than 10 business days after arriving in the U.S. **The Social Security number itself is not a work permit.**

**Gather the following documents:**

- Form SS-5 (available at SSA office or online at http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf
- At least TWO documents to establish your age and identity: passport, driver's license, etc.
- Form I-20
- Form I-94 (if you never received a paper form I-94, print you form at http://www.cbp.gov/i94.
- If applicable, the change of status approval notice I797A to F-1.

**If you have an on-campus job, you will receive a letter signed by your employer. Then, you will need to submit the following to ISSD:**

- Understanding of International Student Employment Eligibility Form found on Populi
- The letter prepared and signed by your Employer

So that ISSD can issue you a letter verifying active student status. Allow 3-5 business days for processing of any documents from ISSD.

**If you are on CPT or OPT:**

CPT:

- You will need to take form I-20 that is endorsed with CPT employment authorization (page 2 of I-20)
- Letter from your employer

OPT:

- You will need to take the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by USCIS

**Schedule an appointment and where to go:**

**Margate**

5195 Coconut Creek Pkwy, Margate, FL 33063

Monday to Friday – 9AM - 4PM

Phone: (800) 772-1213

**Boca Raton**

621 NW 53 Street suite 400, Boca Raton, FL 33487

Monday to Friday – 9AM – 4PM

Phone: (800) 772-1213

## TRAVEL REMINDERS

### TRAVEL WITHIN THE U.S.

When traveling within the United States, regardless of the mode of transportation, you should be prepared to present proof of your legal status if requested by law enforcement officers. To ensure compliance, all international students must always carry the following documentation:

- I-94 Arrival-Departure Record (printed copy) or proof of a pending application to replace a lost, stolen, or damaged I-94.
- Valid and current Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status).
- Employment Authorization Document (EAD) if you are on Optional Practical Training (OPT).
- REAL ID-compliant identification (for more details, visit REAL ID | Homeland Security).
- Carrying these documents ensures you are prepared for any verification requests and helps maintain compliance with U.S. immigration regulations. If you have any questions, please contact the international student services office.

### INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Holiday breaks are an exciting time off from coursework, and possibly a chance to leave campus to travel. To travel outside of the U.S., international students need a current* travel signature in their I-20. Also, we recommend that you carry an unofficial transcript or copy of your current course schedule as proof that you are currently enrolled and maintaining status. If you believe you do not have proper travel documents, email issd@sfbc.edu or call 954-637-2294.

*Please note that a current travel signature means received within the last 2 months for I-20. For OPT students, travel signatures are valid for 6 months.

### TRAVEL SIGNATURE

To request a travel signature, please submit a Travel Signature Request eForm at least one week before the day of travelling. Students can drop off the original documents at the ISSD office during office hours. The ISSD will notify students when the endorsed documents are ready for pick up. Each travel signature will be valid for 12 months on the I-20.

### WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

Be reminded about the following rules during travel:

1. While traveling, you should keep important documents with you and not in a checked suitcase. Important documents include:

- A signed Form I-20 - make sure you bring this form for signature to the International Student Services Department minimum of 5 days before you travel to allow processing;
- A current passport, valid for at least six months to the future;
- A valid student visa (if visa is expired, you will need to renew it at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate before returning to the U.S.).
- Proof of financial support.
- It is recommended that you bring proof of enrollment for continuing students (transcripts, letter from the Registrar)
- OPT students should have a valid EAD or official receipt notice if I-765 is pending for approval; while not prohibited, ISSD does not recommend traveling outside the US if the OPT is pending for approval.

2. If you are traveling outside the United States to a place that is not your home country, you should know that country's visa requirements and plan accordingly. Please contact that country's embassy or consulate for the necessary information.

3. If you (and/or your dependents) are traveling to Canada, Mexico or an adjacent island for less than 30 days on an expired visa, you may be permitted to re-enter the United States under the automatic visa revalidation.

One final important reminder for students is to have fun and stay safe!

### TRAVEL AFTER COMPLETION OF STUDIES

If you do not apply for OPT, you have a 60-day grace period after the last day of your final semester. Once you leave the U.S. (including short trips to Canada and Mexico) after completing your studies you cannot reenter the U.S. with your current I-20. The grace period is for travel within the U.S. and preparation for departure.

## INVITING FAMILY MEMBERS

As graduation approaches, you may want to invite your parents or other family members to celebrate commencement with you. Here are some suggestions to help them apply for a visitor's visa (B-2) at a US consulate or embassy in their home country.

To facilitate their visa interview process, you should do the following:

- Write a letter of invitation. Include the purpose of the visit, your relationship with the individuals, a statement of your status here, itinerary details and the length of time they will be visiting (usually less than three months). It is best to emphasize the temporary nature of the invitation and to demonstrate their intention to return to their home country following the visit. If you will provide their financial support while they are here, include that information as well.
- Include an Enrollment Verification Letter from ISSD confirming your student status.
- Provide details of the Commencement Ceremony.

- For additional information about U.S. consulate/embassy locations and application procedures, review the U.S. Department of State visa information.

## ADDING A DEPENDENT (F-2)

Dependents may accompany you, the F-1 student, to the U.S. or follow to join you at a later date. Dependent family members hold F-2 status. In order to qualify for F-2 status, individuals must establish to the satisfaction of the officer at the U.S. consulate and the immigration officer at the port of entry that the individual:

- Is your spouse (marriage license) or child (birth certificate) of you, the F-1 student. You must officially be married before ISS can issue a dependent I-20 for your spouse.
- Has sufficient funds to cover expenses while in the U.S.
- Intends to leave the U.S. upon completion of your F-1 status.

Each F-2 dependent must have their own original I-20.

### HOW TO REQUEST A DEPENDENT I-20

1. Gather the necessary documents:
    a. Scan or photos of passport biographical page for your dependent(s)
    b. Scan or photos of funding documentation. The funding documentation must show enough funds to pay for at least 12 months of expenses: tuition and living expenses for you and your dependent(s).
    c. Submit the I-20 Update Request form in Populi.
    d. Allow 5 business days for ISSD processing. A new I-20 will be issued to you and each dependent. Your new I-20 will show the addition of your dependent(s) as well as their living expenses.
    e. You will receive an email from the ISSD office (issd@sfbc.edu) when your documents are ready for pickup. The new dependent I-20 issued by ISSD does not grant F-2 status itself. A dependent must use the new I-20 to officially obtain F-2 status by either applying with USCIS or at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

F-2 dependents may not accept employment or engage in business under any circumstances. Employment is defined as providing services, part-time or full-time, for financial or other compensation, including self-employment.

An F-2 dependent's status is valid only if you maintain status. Though the regulations do not define the amount of time an F-1 student can be outside the U.S. without affecting the status of the F-2 dependents who remain in the U.S., such periods of separation should be brief.

The spouse of an F-1 student may not engage in full-time study, and the F-2 child may only engage in full-time study at an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through twelfth grade). F-2 dependents can study part-time in an academic or vocational curriculum at an SEVP-certified school (this new benefit began May 29,

2015). F-2 dependents can also study in avocational or recreational programs–hobbies. An F-2 spouse or child who desires to engage in full-time study, other than as described above, must obtain F-1 status.

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS

ISSD: issd@sfbc.edu | 954-637-2294

Campus Security: 941-628-7020

Local Emergency (Police/Fire/Medical): 911

FEMA Website: www.ready.gov

## MAINTAIN F-1 STATUS IN EMERGENCY EVENTS

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) understands that international students studying in the United States may face emergency situations while attending their SEVP certified school. These emergencies can range from natural disasters to man made events and can affect your safety and impact school operations.

It is important that F students maintain their nonimmigrant student status, even during emergency events. This means F-1 students should continue to take all the necessary actions to remain in status, to the extent possible under the circumstances, and communicate with their DSO about the emergency plans on their campus.

### ITEMS TO KEEP SAFE

F-1 students should keep the following items in a safe, secure place so that they are easily accessible in the event of an emergency:

- Passport and Visa
- I-20
- DSO emergency contact information
- Contact information for SEVP
- Social Security Card (if applicable)
- Financial records
- Cash
- Travel-related documents like boarding passes and plane tickets, if applicable

### PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

Campus disruptions can range from natural disasters to manmade events, pandemics or campus violence. The impact of these events can be far-reaching and highlight the need for all students to have an emergency plan in place.

We encourage F-1 students to take the following actions to begin making their own emergency preparedness plan while they study in the United States:

- Build an emergency kit
- Visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website
- Sign up for campus emergency alerts and local information so you can remain informed about what to do while situations unfold and stay updated on the operational status of your school.

## CULTURAL TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO U.S. LIFE

- Professors expect class participation
- Being on time is considered respectful
- It's okay to ask questions and use office hours
- Avoid plagiarism—cite all sources
- Be proactive: join a club, attend chapel, and meet peers

## COMPLETING YOUR PROGRAM & NEXT STEPS

After graduation, you must:

- Apply for OPT (if working)
- Transfer to a new school
- Start a new degree
- Depart the U.S. within 60 days if taking no further action

### GRACE PERIOD

If you do not apply for OPT, you have a 60-day grace period after the last day of your final semester. Within this 60-day period you have the following options:

- Depart the U.S. Once you leave the U.S. (including trips to Canada and Mexico) after completing your studies you are not eligible to reenter with your I-20. The grace period is meant for travel within the states and preparation to depart the U.S. If you travel to Canada or Mexico and plan to reenter the U.S. for your final flight home, you must enter the U.S. as a tourist. Occasionally students encounter delays and problems at the U.S. border when trying to reenter the U.S. as a tourist immediately after completing studies in F-1 Status.

- You will be issued a new I-20 if you will be continuing at SFBC in a new degree (change of level).
- Transfer your SEVIS record to a new school.
- Apply to change status to another visa category.

## STARTING A NEW DEGREE PROGRAM AT SFBC OR ANOTHER SCHOOL?

- **SEVIS Transfer (if you are changing schools):** If you will begin a new degree program at another school soon (not SFBC) you must contact your ISS Advisor to coordinate the transfer of your SEVIS record. This request must be made before the end of the 60-day grace period.
- **Change of Level (if you are starting a new degree at SFBC):** If you are competing a degree at SFBC and have accepted an offer to begin a higher-level degree program, you will be issued a Change of Level I-20 which will reflect the new program dates.

## TRANSFERRING OUT

Admission to a new school does not by itself authorize an international student in F-1 status to begin studying full-time at the new school. You must request your current school (SFBC) to transfer/release your F-1 U.S. government SEVIS I-20 record to your new school before you can begin full-time studies there. The U.S. government calls this process a "SEVIS transfer." (It is different from an "academic transfer.")

There are several benefits to a SEVIS transfer:

- You do not pay the $350 SEVIS fee again
- You can remain in the U.S. in between programs
- You maintain the same current SEVIS ID number (which may make you eligible for certain benefits at your new school earlier, such as CPT eligibility)

The U.S. government considers all the following examples to be possible "SEVIS transfer" situations:

A. Completing a program at one school and starting a new program at a different school

   Examples:

   - A student graduates with a bachelor's degree and will begin graduate study
   - A student graduates from high school in the U.S. and will begin study at a community college or university
   - A student completes an intensive English program and will start a university degree

B. Currently studying at a school and deciding (before completing the program) to change to a new school

Example: A student is studying for a bachelor's degree. The student decides after only two quarters at their current school that they want to change to a different school.

C. Currently doing OPT and starting a new program of study at a different school

Example: A student graduated with a bachelor's degree and started 12-month standard OPT. During their OPT they also apply to graduate schools. They are admitted and decide to start a master's degree that will begin before or after completion of the 12-month standard OPT.

### ELIGIBILITY FOR A SEVIS RECORD TRANSFER

- You must currently be maintaining F-1 status
- You must have an offer of admission from a new school
- If you have already graduated or completed OPT, you must still be within your 60-day grace period
- The start of classes at your new school must be within 5 months of one of the following:
    - Academic program completion at SFBC
    - Last day of enrollment at SFBC (if not graduating from SFBC)
    - OPT authorization end date
    - For students not completing OPT period, the requested SEVIS I-20 transfer/release date

If the period between F-1 activities is longer than 5 months, your SEVIS record is not eligible for transfer. Your new school must issue a new initial I-20 with a new SEVIS number.

### WHAT IS THE SEVIS I-20 TRANSFER/RELEASE DATE?

Only one school at a time can access your F-1 SEVIS record. On the SEVIS I-20 transfer/release date, SEVIS access "transfer" from SFBC to your new school.

The SEVIS transfer affects your F-1 benefits, including employment, travel, and I-20 validity.

#### *FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION*

**My new school requires a transfer verification form to be completed by ISS before they can make the admission decision. How do I submit this form to ISS?**

Most schools make admission decisions independent from immigration status. They offer admission first. Then, as part of the I-20 request process, they may require a transfer verification form (it might have a different name). You may submit this form to ISSD by filling out the SEVIS Transfer-out Form in Populi.

## AUTHORIZED EARLY WITHDRAWAL

F-1 students must speak with your DSO to request a leave of absence before leaving school. If the DSO approves your request to withdraw or take a leave of absence, you will be granted a 15-day departure period from the United States, and your SEVIS record will be updated to reflect "Terminated" status due to authorized early withdrawal.

This 15-day departure period is only available if you discuss your plans with the DSO. If you do not inform your DSO of your intent to leave, you will not qualify for this departure period, and the DSO will terminate your SEVIS record for unauthorized early withdrawal. This could affect your ability to re-enter the United States.

When planning to return to the U.S., you must choose a return date that meets the following criteria:

1. Within five months from the date your DSO changed your SEVIS record to Terminated status.
2. At a time when you can resume your studies, such as the start of a new semester.

Before returning, you must consult with your DSO (preferably at least a month before your planned return) to have your SEVIS record reinstated to "Active" status. If you have been outside the U.S. for more than five months without being in Active status, your SEVIS record will remain in Terminated or Completed status. In this case, you will need to obtain a new Form I-20 with a new SEVIS ID number from your DSO to continue your studies. After receiving the new I-20, you will need to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee (using the new SEVIS ID on your new I-20).

A new I-20 with a new SEVIS ID is required for the following students:

- Those who have been out of status for more than five months.
- Those who have been outside the U.S. for more than five months, without participating in a study abroad program or being on a medical reduced course load.

For additional information on visa renewal, visit the Department of State's website. To determine whether the five-month deadline applies to you, contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you plan to renew your visa.

**Required Steps for Authorized Early Withdrawal**

1. Submit the Authorized Early Withdrawal Request form in Populi.
    a. You will be asked to state the reason for the early withdrawal and providing any necessary documentation (e.g., medical records, family emergency documentation).
2. Upon submission, the DSO will effectively terminate your I-20 on the date you provided in the form. Upon termination, you will have 15 days to depart the U.S.
3. **IMPORTANT**: Before completing the form, make sure to read and comply with the following:
    a. Pay any outstanding balances with the SFBC Financial Office.

b. Know that this may impact your future eligibility and "reset the clock" for F-1 benefits, such as CPT, OPT, etc.

c. Once authorized early withdrawal has been approved in SEVIS, you must leave the U.S. within 15 days or you will be out of status and in violation of your non-immigrant status.

d. You will need to return to the U.S. within 5 months to keep your immigration status and begin classes at the next available semester.

If you are absent from the U.S. for more than 5 months, you will need a new I-20, and you must pay the SEVIS fee, and you may possibly need to apply for a new F-1 visa.

## CHANGING YOUR IMMIGRANT STATUS

Many students transition from F-1 status to become a U.S. permanent resident (Green Card holder). If you become a U.S. permanent resident, ISSD must terminate your electronic F-1 SEVIS record. ISSD cannot terminate a SEVIS record (I-20) for Approved Change of Status if the new status is still pending. If a student decides to violate their F-1 status, they will be terminated for the violation. ISSD recommends that students maintain their F-1 status, while their Change of Status application is pending. Please consult with your immigration lawyer for further guidance.

Please note that ISSD advisors are not immigration attorneys and do not have the expertise to advise about how to become a permanent resident. For questions about eligibility and applying for a Green Card, review the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services information and/or consult an immigration attorney.

### WHEN TO NOTIFY ISSD

Notify the DSO of the following situations:

1. Your permanent resident status is approved.
2. You travel internationally and use your advance parole document to reenter the U.S.

How to notify ISSD:

1. Submit the I-20 Termination Form in Populi
    a. You must upload the approved change of status notice (I-797A) to the form for ISSD for the DSO to successfully terminate your I-20 with the reason 'Change of Status Approved.'

If you do not submit this form and fail to maintain full-time enrollment at SFBC, the DSO will issue a 10-day notice regarding your failure to maintain status. If no corrective action is taken, your I-20 will be terminated for 'failure to maintain status.

## OUT-OF-STATUS PROCEDURES

### REINSTATEMENT

**Students who violate any of the federal regulations under the F-1 nonimmigrant visa classification are considered OUT OF STATUS. They may regain F-1 status through *(1) Reinstatement** or **(2) Travel and Re-Entry**. All students who are out of status must make an appointment with the DSO at ISSD immediately to discuss their case and fully understand the violation of status.

**Eligibility Criteria (Federal Regulations 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i))**

- The applicant has been out of status for less than five months when USCIS receives the application at the Vermont Service Center (VSC).
- There are no prior instances of repeat or willful violations of F-1 status.
- The student is enrolled in a full course of study.
- The student has not engaged in unauthorized employment.
- The student is not deportable under sections 237(a)(1)(B) or (C)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

**Reinstatement Application Checklist**

- Updated I-20 from ISSD with reinstatement request.
- Enrollment confirmation from Admissions.
- Completed Certification of Financial Responsibility form.
- Draft USCIS Form I-539 (available at USCIS Form I-539).
- $420 application fee (for online filing).
- Request letter to USCIS explaining the status violation.
- Academic transcripts from SFBC and any previous U.S. institutions attended.
- Copies of all I-20 forms from SFBC and previous schools (if applicable).
- Passport identification page and the expiration page.
- F-1 visa stamp or Change of Status approval notice.
- Electronic copy of I-94 card (available at I-94 Portal).
- Final ISSD appointment for documentation review prior to filing.

**Important Reminders**

- Students remain out of status until USCIS approves the reinstatement.

- Employment is prohibited until reinstatement is approved.
- Traveling outside the U.S. while the reinstatement application is pending will void the request, and a new I-20 will be required for re-entry.

## TRAVEL AND RE-ENTRY

Students who are ineligible for reinstatement within the U.S. or choose not to file may travel abroad and apply for readmission with an initial F-1 status. Upon re-entry into the U.S., students must present a new Form I-20 and will receive a new I-94.

**Required Steps for Readmission**

- Updated I-20 from ISSD with reinstatement request.
- Enrollment confirmation from the Admissions Department.
- Completed Certification of Financial Responsibility form.
- Valid F-1 visa (if expired, apply for a new visa at a U.S. consulate abroad).
- SEVIS Fee ($350): Pay upon receiving the new I-20 at www.fmjfee.com.

**Important Reminders**

- Re-entry and travel abroad will restore F-1 status, like the initial F-1 entry.
- On-campus employment may resume after successful re-entry, provided the student is enrolled full-time and remains in compliance with F-1 regulations.
- Eligibility for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) begins after completing one full academic year (two semesters) and meeting F-1 requirements.
- Upon re-entry, students must report to ISSD with the following documents:
- New visa (if applicable).
- Electronic I-94 record.
- New I-20 form.

# ISSD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Processing Time: 7–10 business days
- Students are responsible for application deadlines
- Keep all I-20s for future use

- ISSD is not liable for late or incorrect submissions
- Helpful Links:
- Study in the States
- CBP I-94 Website

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

**Q: Can I travel home over winter break?**
A: Yes, if your I-20 has a recent travel signature.

**Q: Can I drop below full-time if I'm struggling?**
A: Only with DSO authorization and valid academic or medical reasons.

**Q: When should I apply for OPT?**
A: Up to 90 days before and within 60 days after your program end date.

**Q: What should I do if I lose my passport?**
A: File a police report and contact your home country's embassy.

**Q: How do I change my major?**
A: Complete the Change of Major Form in Populi and request a new I-20 from ISSD.

**We are here to serve you with excellence and Christ-like care. Welcome to SFBC!**

