

# Legal Status in the U.S.

Information regarding maintaining legal status in the U.S. can be found on this page, in the [International Student Handbook](#), or in the [Additional Resources](#). It is the responsibility of the student to understand and comply with the regulations of your stay in the U.S. The International Students Office is a resource to help you understand these regulations, and your Collin College International Advisor will answer any questions and concerns regarding your legal status in the United States.

## [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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### IMPORTANT NOTE

If you have questions regarding a visa status other than F-1, or have fallen out of status, we recommend that you seek the advice of an immigration attorney.

Pro-Bono List: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/file/ProBonoTX/download>

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## Maintaining F-1 Status:

Upon arrival in the United States, after transferring institutions, and throughout your studies, there are many updates you will need to report to the International Students Office (ISO). In order to maintain your F-1 status at Collin College, you may need to take one or more of the following steps.

- **Report to your Institution (Immigration Check-In):** Report to the institution that issued your Initial I-20 within 10 days of entry to the U.S.
- **Meet Transfer Deadlines:** When transferring institutions within the U.S., ensure that you follow proper deadlines. If transferring out of Collin, the request form to transfer out can be found [here](#) or under “[Forms](#).”
- **Maintain a Valid Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months into the future.
- **Report Changes in Address or Phone Number:** Changes in address or phone number must be reported within 10 days. The address form can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).
- **Report Change of Name:** Report a change in name after the name in your passport is changed as well.
- **Report Change of Major:** Immediately report your change of major to the ISO according to college policies and degree plan for a new I-20. The request form for a new I-20 can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).
- **Make Normal Academic Progress:** You must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 in order to be considered as making normal academic progress toward the degree on your I-20 according to college policies.

- **Obtain Travel Endorsement:** If traveling outside of the U.S. during your studies at Collin College, view the [Travel Information](#) to ensure you maintain your status and can legally re-enter the U.S.
- **Extend your I-20:** Request an extension at least 30 days prior to your I-20 end date if you have not yet completed the stated program. The request form for an I-20 extension can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).

## Enrollment Requirements:

- **Minimum Enrollment of 12 Credit Hours:** During long semesters (fall or spring) you must be enrolled in at least 12 face-to-face credit hours. During the first summer I-20, this minimum is reduced to 6 credit hours.
- **One Online Class:** During long semesters, only one online class is permitted. No online classes are permitted during the first summer I-20.
- **Follow the Degree Plan:** Taking classes not on the degree plan on your I-20 may result in the denial of an I-20 extension application.
- **Concurrent Enrollment:** Concurrent enrollment at another college or university must be approved by the international student advisor prior to the semester start date, and a transcript is required at the end of that semester. The request form for concurrent enrollment at another institution can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).
- **Financial Obligations:** Any financial obligations must be met by the deadlines to avoid withdrawal from all classes. You can pay in person at the Cashier's window or online using the payment function on your [CougarWeb](#) under the "Student" tab.

### *Exceptions:*

- **Reduced Course Load (RCL):** Dropping below a full course load for academic reasons according to USCIS regulations must be authorized at the beginning of the semester, prior to dropping below 12 credit hours. The request form for a reduced course load can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).
- **RCL for Medical Reasons:** Reduction in course load due to medical reasons must be authorized with the assistance of a licensed medical doctor, a doctor of osteopathy, or a licensed clinical psychologist. The request form for a reduced course load for medical reasons can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).

## After Graduation

After graduation, international students have several options available for the immediate future. Students with an F-1 visa must either leave the U.S. or take action to maintain legal status after completing their program of study. You may choose to continue your studies, apply for work authorization, or apply for a change of immigration status to remain in the U.S.

- **Continuing Education:** Contact your international student advisor at least 30 days prior to the end of the semester following graduation, as changing your educational level to

another college-level program will require updated financial support documents. The request form for a new I-20 can be found [here](#) or under [Forms](#).

- **Transferring Schools:** For more information on transferring schools as an international student, visit the [Department of Homeland Security](#) website.
- **Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT):** As a benefit of the F-1 status, international students completing their degree in the U.S. may apply for up to 12 months of work authorization related to their major. More information regarding OPT can be found [here](#).
- **Change in Status:** Within 60 days after graduation, apply for a change of immigration status with USCIS.

## Guides:

### *Checklists*

U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) has a [guide](#) to help navigate the U.S. immigration system. The guide includes all necessary steps to study in the United States, from pre-arrival to departure.

In addition to the guide from ICE, Collin College also has created checklists for before and after you arrive in the U.S.

<a href="#">Pre-Arrival (Credit)</a>	<a href="#">Pre-Arrival (ESL)</a>
<a href="#">Post-Arrival (Credit)</a>	<a href="#">Post-Arrival (ESL)</a>
<a href="#">Post-Arrival (Transfer-Credit)</a>	<a href="#">Post-Arrival (Transfer-ESL)</a>

### *Travel*

If you plan on traveling outside of the United States during your studies, view the [Travel Information](#) for guidance.

## Forms:

### *Regarding I-20*

[Request for I-20](#)

[Request for I-20 Extension](#)

[Termination of I-20](#)

[Request for Reduced Course Load](#)

[Request for \(RCL\) Medical](#)

### *Admissions*

[ISO Local or Foreign Address](#)

[Letter of Guarantee](#)

[Status Letter](#)

*Transfer*

[Concurrent Enrollment For Collin F-1](#)

[Transfer Out Request Form](#)

*OPT*

[Request for OPT Post-Completion](#)

[OPT Reporting Form](#)

## Additional Resources:

[Accrual of Unlawful Presence and F, J, and M nonimmigrant](#)

[U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#)

[Study in the States](#)

[U. S. Department of State](#)

[U. S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

[USA.gov](#)

[IRS.gov](#)

[Driver License](#)

[Social Security](#)