

F-1 Student Requirements: At A Glance

Immigration rules are very important to understand. We have prepared this quick guide to help you understand how to maintain your F-1 immigration status. You should always consult with your Admissions and International Student Advisor if you have any questions about maintaining status.

Maintaining F-1 Status: At a Glance

By U.S. immigration law, you must do several things to maintain your F-1 student status.

You must always:

- 1) **Be a full-time student**
- 2) **Report changes in contact information within 10 days**
- 3) **Keep immigration documents valid**
- 4) **Abide by immigration deadlines**
- 5) **Understand and follow regulations concerning school breaks, work, and travel**

Let's explore how to accomplish each of these things in the following sections.

Being a Full-Time Student

To maintain full-time student status, you must do three things. The first thing you must do is **enroll for a full-time course load**. Full-time for students is defined as 12 units per semester. It is most important that you satisfy the immigration rule of being a full-time student.

Full-time enrollment alone is not enough! You must also **attend class**. This is very important. All F-1 students have a physical presence requirement – this means that they must physically be in class. In addition, you must always **make satisfactory academic progress** towards the completion of your program. This means that you must pass your classes and earn your completion certificate or degree within the expected timeline. You may be placed on academic probation if you are not succeeding academically. Immigration rules will allow for you to be placed on academic probation once, but if you are dismissed from the program you will lose your F-1 status.

Please also note that incomplete grades are not appropriate for international students. Incomplete grades are regarded by immigration officials to represent a voluntary inability or unwillingness to attend class and/or complete assignments. Immigration regulations do not permit international students to stop attending class or not complete coursework.

Reporting Changes in Contact Information

By U.S. immigration law, you must always notify us of any **change of address, phone number, or email address within 10 days** of the change. You may make your changes by emailing the Admissions and International Student Advisor with your changes.

This information is reported to the US government. Both the US government and our office staff must always be able to contact you.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: Most communications are sent via email. You are responsible for checking your KGI email. It is recommended that you check your email at least a few times a week.

Keeping Immigration Documents Valid

You **must** always have a current I-20 and unexpired passport in your possession. Please take good care of these documents. Keep them in one safe location at home so you do not lose them.

YOUR I-20

Your I-20 cannot expire while you are in the US. Your I-20 will be issued for a specific program and for a specific length of time. This is the length of time we expect it will take you to complete your program. If you need more time to complete your program, please contact the Admissions and International Student Advisor *at least 2 weeks before your current I-20 expires*.

You may only extend your I-20 if you are continuing in the same program. If you need to change programs (i.e. you have completed the MBS and will continue in the Ph.D. program,), you will need to contact the Admissions and International Student Advisor *at least 2 weeks before you change programs OR your current I-20 expires (whichever comes first)*.

By the end of your studies, you may have several I-20s issued to you. It is very important that you keep all I-20s issued to you in a safe place at home – **never throw any away**. These may be needed in the future.

YOUR PASSPORT

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months. Please contact your country's embassy or consulate in the US to ask for an extension 6 months before your passport expires to begin the renewal process.

YOUR VISA

Your visa may expire while you are in the US. This is not a problem. However, if you will be traveling outside of the US after your visa expires, you will need to return to your home country and apply for an F-1 visa extension. You may not enter the US on an expired visa.

Abiding by Immigration Deadlines

After you complete your studies at KGI, you may stay in the US up to 60 calendar days (including weekends) after your last day of class. This is called your 60-day Grace Period. In most cases, your last day of class will differ from the end date on your I-20. You will need to calculate your 60-day grace period manually to be sure you do not overstay (you may find this website helpful: <http://www.timeanddate.com/date/duration.html>). You have **three options** during your 60-day Grace Period:

- 1) You may leave the US. You must make arrangements to leave the US by the 60th day.
- 2) You may request a transfer to a new school.
 - a. You must be accepted into the next available program at your new school and your new program must start within 5 months.
 - i. **NOTE:** You are not allowed to stop studying once accepted to a new school. You need to complete the semester to be eligible for a transfer.
- 3) Apply for Optional Practical Training.

You are only eligible for a 60-day grace period if you complete a term (semester). If you withdraw or are dismissed from the program, you do not qualify for a grace period and must leave the country or start a program at a new school immediately.

Understanding Other Regulations

WORKING IN THE US

Working on Campus

You may work on campus (including the Claremont Consortium campuses) up to 20 hours a week without any permission. F-1 students do not qualify for work-study, which is a federally-funded program, so make sure you search for non-work-study positions.

Social Security Numbers

You do not need a social security number (SSN) unless you get a job. If you get a job, please visit your Admissions and International Student Advisor with your job offer letter. The job offer letter must contain specific information. We have created a template for the offer letter that you may give to your employer as a guide. You will find this template on our [Current Students](#) page. The Admissions and International Student Advisor will then give you a second letter to take to the [Social Security Office](#) to apply for a Social Security Number. Both letters will be needed for your appointment.

In the meantime, inform any agency that requests a SSN that you are an F-1 student and do not qualify for a social security number. They will help you in another way.

Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows you to gain experience prior to graduation in specific jobs, internships, or employment-related activities, relevant to your field of study. If your program requires an internship, CPT may be authorized by the Admissions and International Student Advisor at any time during your program. If your program does not require an internship, you will only qualify for CPT after being in F-1 status for at least 9 months (this

includes time spent in F-1 status at another school). Please visit our [Current Students](#) page to learn more about CPT and how to apply.

Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows you to gain experience, typically after graduation, in specific jobs, internships, or employment-related activities, relevant to your field of study. You will only qualify for OPT after being in F-1 status for at least 9 months (this includes time spent in F-1 status at another school).

Initial OPT

OPT is initially granted for one year. During the initial year, you may work full or part-time, the work may be paid or unpaid, and you may be self-employed.

24 Month STEM Extension

After the initial year of OPT, you may apply for the 24-month STEM Extension. If approved, you will be granted an additional 24 months of work authorization. To apply for the STEM Extension, you must have a full-time paid position with an E-Verify approved company. Self-employment, volunteering, and unpaid internships are not appropriate for the STEM Extension.

Please visit our [Current Students](#) page to learn more about OPT and how to apply.

TRAVEL

Travel Within the US

You do not need authorization to travel within the US, but be sure that you are not missing class. Plan your trips for the weekend or during school breaks only. When visiting San Diego or crossing state borderlines by car, it is recommended that you take your original I-20 and passport with you. You may need to produce these documents if stopped by an immigration officer. Otherwise, carry a *copy* of your passport and I-20 when traveling within California but leave the originals at home in a safe place. Always take originals when traveling by plane/boat or when visiting another state.

Travel Outside the US

Please visit your Admissions and International Student Advisor for a travel signature on your I-20 at least 2 weeks before you will travel. This signature is good for 6 months. You will not be able to reenter the US without a valid signature.

NOTE: You can only obtain a travel signature if you will be returning to the program. You cannot travel outside the US during your 60-day grace period and reenter on your KGI I-20. If you are transferring to a new school, and plan on traveling outside of the US before starting your new program, you must inform your new school so they can give you a new I-20.



Make sure you have your current I-20 and a valid passport and visa. Most visas are issued with a multiple entry allowance (designated with an "M"). If your visa is not a multiple entry visa, you will not be able to return to the US unless you get a new visa in your home country.

If you are planning on visiting another country, you may also need a visa to travel there. Check this website to be sure: <https://www.visahq.com/citizens/>. Make sure you have obtained any needed travel authorizations before you make travel arrangements.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the information found here please do not hesitate to contact the Admissions and International Student Advisor at international@kgi.edu or 909-607-7176.