

IMMIGRATION MATTERS

COLLEGE



SEVIS

Overview of SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System):

SEVIS (Student Exchange and Visitor Information System) is an internet-based database used by schools, and U.S. government agencies such as Customs and Border Protection (CBP), United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and US consulates abroad to keep information about F-1 international students. All international students in F-1 status have a SEVIS record containing personal and program information. This information is updated regularly to show changes in personal information, (name, address, etc.) program information (major, dates of study) and enrollment status.

How ISS advisors use SEVIS:

ISS advisors must update personal and program information in each student's SEVIS record. For example, when you arrive and enroll in classes an ISS advisor updates your SEVIS record to show that you are a current student. Your SEVIS record is updated every quarter you are enrolled in school.

When you leave Edmonds Community College your SEVIS record may be deactivated, completed or terminated, depending on the situation and the information you provide to ISS before you leave.

What SEVIS means to you:

As an F-1 student you are responsible to report to ISS advisors any changes in your personal or program information, and then an ISS advisor will update your SEVIS record.

Information you must report to an ISS advisor:

- 1) Change of address.
- 2) Change of major.
- 3) If you plan to take a vacation quarter (if you are eligible) or return to your home country during fall, winter or spring quarter.
- 4) If you plan to drop below a full course of study (below 12 credits) because of a serious injury or illness, concurrent enrollment, vacation quarter, or graduating quarter.
- 5) If you plan to transfer to another school.
- 6) If you change your visa / immigration status.
- 7) If you decide to go home permanently.

Failure to report any of the above information to an ISS advisor may result in SEVIS termination.

It is VERY IMPORTANT for you to talk with an ISS advisor about any changes that may affect your immigration status and SEVIS record.

Immigration Rules and Procedures

1) Change of Address

If you move to a new address, have a new e-mail address or a new phone number, you must notify ISS within 10 days.

- Fill out a Change of Address Form available from the ISS front desk. The new address should not be a P.O. Box or a friend's address. ISS will update your SEVIS record with the new address.

2) Vacation Quarters and Going Home (during Fall, Winter or Spring)

A vacation quarter means staying in the United States without attending school or studying part time (less than 12 credits) for one quarter OR returning home for one quarter or more.

- **For vacation during fall, winter or spring quarters:**
 - To be eligible for a vacation quarter during fall, winter or spring quarters you must be in good immigration status, have completed 3 quarters in a row, and plan to return the following quarter.
 - You must submit a Vacation Request / Going Home Notice to ISS if you want to take a vacation quarter
 - You will not be eligible for another vacation quarter until you complete 3 more quarters (including summer quarter).
- **Going home for 1 or more quarters:**
 - You must notify an ISS advisor by submitting a Vacation Request / Going Home Notice if you will go home during fall, winter or spring quarter.
 - You do not need to be eligible for a vacation quarter to be able to go home. However, if you are not eligible for a vacation quarter you must also submit a **copy of your plane ticket or flight itinerary** showing that you will stay outside the US for most of the quarter (approximately 60 + days).
- **Vacation / going home during summer quarter:**
 - You **do not** need to submit a request for vacation during summer quarter
 - You must have health insurance during the vacation quarter if you will remain in the US, even if you do not go to school.

NOTE: Students who leave the U.S. for 5 months or more need a new I-20 to re-enter the U.S., and possibly a new visa. Your eligibility to return to the U.S. and EdCC must be checked by an ISS advisor.

Transfer Students:

- With an ISS advisor's approval, you may count quarters of study at previous schools toward the 3-quarter in-status eligibility requirement for a vacation quarter.

Summer Quarter:

- New College and High School Completion students *whose first quarter is not summer* quarter can take summer as a vacation quarter.
- New students arriving summer quarter **cannot** take summer as their vacation quarter.

3) Full Course of Study

- **You must be enrolled for at least 12 credits each quarter**, except during your graduation quarter, vacation quarter, or with advanced approval from an ISS advisor due to a documented illness or injury.
- Of the 12 credits minimum, **7 credits must be in the classroom (or hybrid)**; 5 credits may be taken on-line or distance learning. (Check with an ISS advisor for clarification.)
- **If you are considering dropping a class at anytime during the quarter, see an ISS advisor in advance if you will drop below 12 credits.**

4) Program Extension (line 5 of your I-20)

- If you cannot finish your degree by the completion date on your I-20, you must apply for a program extension within **30 days before the completion date, not after the I-20 expires.**
- You are eligible to apply if you have been maintaining legal F-1 status, and if the delay in completion is due to academic or medical reasons.
- If your delay was caused by being on probation, or you were out-of-status, your request for extension may be denied. **To apply for a program extension, see an ISS advisor.**

5) Transferring Schools

- If you are planning to transfer to another school, you must submit the following to ISS:
 - 1) A completed the **Transfer-Out Request Form** (available at the ISS office);
 - 2) A copy of **written acceptance verification** (letter, fax or e-mail) from your new U.S. school to the ISS front office.
- After reviewing the above documents an ISS advisor will e-mail you. If you are maintaining F-1 status your SEVIS record (I-20) will be released to the new school on your last day of attendance at EdCC. You will need to communicate with the new school about receiving a new, transfer I-20.

NOTE: students that are not studying full time and/or not maintaining F-1 status are not eligible for SEVIS transfer and must apply for reinstatement or reentry.

6) Concurrent Enrollment

- You may take a class at another U.S. school if the class is needed for your major and it is not offered at EdCC.
- You must get approval from an academic/faculty advisor and an ISS advisor.
- You must show your valid EdCC I-20 to the school you will take a class and **you must be enrolled for more credits at Edmonds CC than at the other U.S. college.**

7) Renewing your passport

- US law requires you to maintain the validity of your passport for at least 6 months into the future. You should know the expiration date and contact your country's consulate for information about renewal. Plan ahead! Some countries require you to apply in person. Requirements and processing times vary by country.

8) Replacing Lost or Stolen Documents (passport, I-20, I-94)

Be very careful with your immigration documents! Do NOT carry them with you unless absolutely necessary. Passports are very valuable and are often stolen – do not leave yours unattended. We recommend you keep your immigration documents in a safe and secure place in your room (such as a locked box), and keep copies separately.

Ask ISS for information about getting a Washington state identification card!

If your documents are lost or stolen, report it to the police, Campus Security (if lost or stolen on campus) and ISS immediately. If your passport is stolen you must file a police report; the report may be required by your consulate for replacement.

- **To replace your passport:** contact your country's consulate.
- **To replace your visa:** you will need to apply for a new visa the next time you return home. It is NOT possible to replace a visa in the United States. You will be allowed to legally remain in the United States without the visa, but you will need a new visa for travel and reentry.
- **To replace your I-94:** contact an ISS advisor. You must file an application with USCIS and pay a \$320 application fee.
- **To replace your I-20:** an ISS advisor can make a new I-20 for you.

9) Change of Status

- Some students are eligible to change their status, for example from student (F-1) to tourist (B-1/B2), or student to permanent resident/green card. If you change your status, **you must tell an ISS advisor so that your SEVIS record can be updated.**

10) Travel and Reentry to the United States

- What you need to reenter the United States:
 - **Passport** valid for 6 or more months into the future.
 - **Valid F-1 visa.** Request a support letter in ISS if you need to renew your visa.
 - **Valid I-20** with a recent travel signature. Come to ISS 1-2 weeks before your trip to request a new travel signature from an advisor.
 - A current **bank statement** (recommended).
 - A copy of your **transcript** and/or current registration (recommended).
- What to do:
 - Visit the ISS office with your passport and I-20 1-2 weeks before your departure.
 - An ISS advisor will check your passport, visa, and I-20 for validity.
 - An ISS advisor will verify if you have been maintaining legal F-1 status and sign page three of your I-20.

11) Travel to Canada

Students from certain countries must have a Canadian visa to go to Canada. If want to go to Canada and you are unsure if you need a visa, please contact the Canadian visa office. An ISS advisor may be able to assist you with finding information about visas to Canada.

Temporary Resident Visas (Visitor Visas): The Canadian Consulate will accept applications by mail and courier only. All applications will be returned by mail. The Consulate does not provide expedited service.

Consulate of Canada:

1501 4th Ave, Plaza 600, Suite #820, Seattle, WA 98104

Hours: 8:00am -10:30am. (Monday through Friday)

Phone: (206) 443-1777

12) Graduation and Post-Graduation

After you complete the International High School Completion or College program, you are allowed a **60-day grace period** to prepare for departure or transfer schools. Your I-20 will be automatically cancelled after the 60-day grace period. If you depart the United States during the 60-day grace period, you must have a new I-20 in order to return as a student.

13) Withdrawal

If you do not graduate but you decide to stop studying you must discuss your plans with an advisor during your last quarter of attendance. You may be able to request Authorized Early Withdrawal and receive a 15-day grace period to prepare for departure from the US. If you do not discuss your plans with an advisor before you stop attending, you will fall out of status you will not be allowed a grace period.

Employment

On-Campus Employment

F-1 students who are in-status and are not on academic probation are allowed to work on campus.

- Students may work up to 19.5 hours per week when classes are in session and up to 40 hours a week during academic breaks and vacation quarters.
- New students may receive work authorization after registration and tuition is paid in full.
- If you are offered a job on campus, pick up an authorization letter from your supervisor and ISS to apply for a Social Security number.
- Visit the Social Security office to get a Social Security number (information available at ISS).
- Get a PAF (Personal Action Form) from ISS and submit it to be signed by an ISS advisor. You will need to submit a new PAF each quarter.
- Submit your PAF to the Human Resources (Clearview 1st Floor).

Off –Campus Employment

Employment off-campus is **NOT** permitted unless approved by USCIS under very limited circumstances.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

CPT is a special internship or work experience required for graduation for certain degrees/certificates. Work can be on or off campus, paid or unpaid. F-1 students who have been enrolled full-time in a degree or certificate program for 3 quarters or longer are eligible to apply. To apply, schedule an appointment with an ISS advisor.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

- **OPT** is paid a work experience directly related to the student's field of study approved by USCIS. F-1 students who are in-status, and are in a degree or certificate program for 3 quarters or more are eligible to apply for OPT upon completion of the program. Schedule an appointment with an ISS advisor to apply.
 - **OPT during studies**
Both full-time and part-time OPT during studies are possible.
 - **Post-completion OPT**
Twelve months of OPT can be granted after completing a degree or a certificate.

Severe Economic Hardship

If you experience a severe and unexpected financial hardship, you may be able to apply for Severe Economic Hardship employment authorization after 3 quarters of studying full time in good immigration and academic status. Eligibility is **very limited** and is not guaranteed. With the assistance of an ISS advisor, an application must be prepared and sent to USCIS for processing. The application costs \$340. USCIS will review your request and make a decision within 2-3 months. For more information, make an appointment with an ISS advisor.

Maintaining F-1 Status

F-1 status: IN status

Once you enter the U.S. in F-1 status, you can remain in the U.S. if you follow USCIS regulations for F-1 Student Status.

- **In status:** you are staying in the U.S. legally (maintaining your status)
- **Out of status:** you are staying in the U.S. illegally (violating your status)

You will be in status if you:

- Have a passport valid for at least 6 months into the future.
- Have a valid I-20. You are responsible for keeping your I-20 current.
- Enroll full-time at the school you are authorized to attend.
- Make normal progress towards completion of your program of study.
- Maintain a grade of 2.0 GPA (grade point average)
- Have authorization for any paid employment.
- Do not get involved in any criminal activities.

Note: If you are considering dropping a class during the quarter and you will have less than 12 credits remaining, you must see an ISS advisor before you drop.

F-1 status: OUT of status

You will be out of status if you:

- Take less than 12 credits without ISS approval.
- Do not make progress toward completion of your degree / certificate.
- Are dismissed from EdCC.
- Leave EdCC without notifying ISS.
- Your I-20 expires.
- Your passport expires
- Do not follow proper school transfer procedures.
- Work without authorization.
- Do not report address, phone number or e-mail address change to the ISS office within 10 days of the change.

Reinstatement and reentry

If you fall out of status, you must see an advisor immediately to discuss reinstatement or reentry options. You must take action as soon as possible to avoid consequences, such as ICE investigation.

If the violation was caused by circumstances *outside of your control*, such as a natural disaster (floods, earthquake, volcano erupting) or a major accident (for example if you were seriously injured in a car accident) then you may be able to request reinstatement through USCIS. This process is not guaranteed and you will need to pay a \$300 application fee. You must apply no later than **5-months** after falling out of status.

As an alternative to reinstatement, some students may be able to seek **reentry** through a US border with a new I-20. This option can be risky is not available for everyone.

Keep in mind that each student's case is unique and students must consult an ISS advisor individually.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT IMMIGRATION:

It is **YOUR** responsibility to be familiar with and follow all immigration rules. ISS advisors can help you understand the immigration rules.

Students who do not follow the immigration regulations will lose benefits such as employment and may have problems with visas, travel, transferring schools and possible investigation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Falling out of status is a serious matter, so **please be sure to talk with an ISS advisor if you have any questions.**

Thank you!

