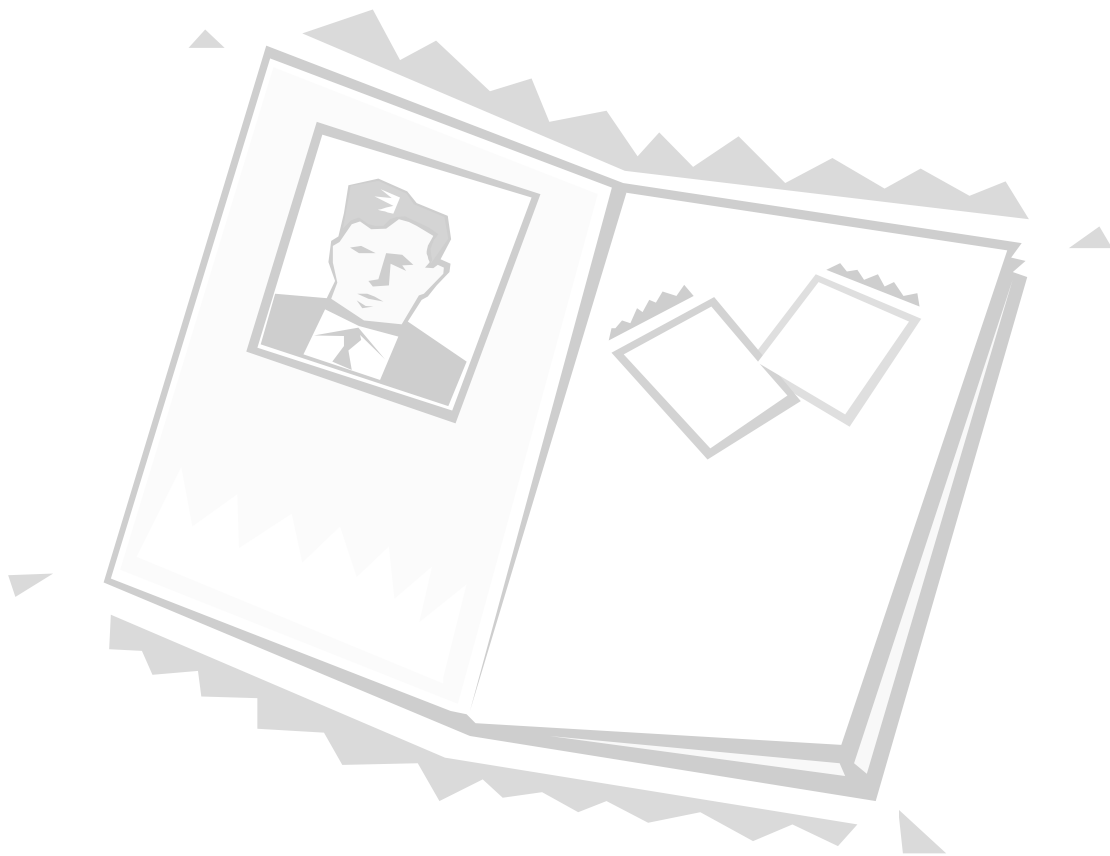


# IMMIGRATION MATTERS

INTENSIVE ESL



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# SEVIS

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## **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) If you plan to take a vacation quarter (if you are eligible) or return to your home country during fall, winter or spring quarter.
- 3) If you plan to study part time or not study because of a serious injury or illness, vacation quarter, or graduating quarter.
- 4) If you plan to transfer to another school.
- 5) If you change your visa / immigration status.
- 6) 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.**

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# Immigration Rules and Procedures

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## 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

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.

### IMPORTANT:

### Summer is NOT an automatic vacation quarter

- Vacation quarter:
  - To take a vacation quarter 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).

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:

- IESL students must study during the summer, unless you plan to return home. If you will go home, tell an ISS advisor and show a copy of your flight schedule.

## 3) Program Extension (line 5 of your I-20)

- If you cannot finish the program 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.

#### **4) 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.

#### **5) 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.

#### **6) 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.

#### **7) 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.**

## **8) 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.

## **9) 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 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, Plaza 600, Suite #820, Seattle, WA 98104

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

Phone: (206) 443-1777

### **Important messages about TRAVEL and IMMIGRATION:**

- If you violate your F-1 status (fall out of status) you must talk to an advisor about **reinstatement** or **reentry** as soon as possible.
- Remember that you may continue studying with an expired F-1 visa if you have a valid I-20, a valid passport, and an I-94 form stamped "F-1, D/S." However, if you leave the U.S. you must have a valid (unexpired) visa, passport, and I-20 in order to return.
- Remember you must be in good immigration status, your documents must be valid and your SEVIS record active to be able to come back to the United States. Check with an ISS advisor before you go!

## **10) 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.

# 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 in each class
- 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:

- Study less than full time.
- Do not make progress in your classes
- 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.

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**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; but ISS advisors are not responsible if you choose not to follow them. You will face negative consequences if you break immigration rules.**

Students who follow immigration regulations may be eligible for benefits such as on- and off- campus employment, travel and reentry to the United States, WA state identification cards and driver's licenses, visa and passport renewals, support letters and school transfer.

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.**

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**Thank You!**

