Your ND issued I-20 is an agreement between Notre Dame, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and you, the international student. Notre Dame has certain responsibilities to USCIS as a result of these agreements. For instance, ND agrees that we will make bi-annual reports to USCIS on your enrollment and address. We are also required to report any interruptions (i.e. violations) of your immigration status to USCIS. You, the international student, also have certain responsibilities as an F-1 student. It is your responsibility to know and to comply with these requirements. If you have any questions regarding any of these responsibilities, please seek the assistance of the Immigration Services Office (ISO) at 121 Main Building. Only the ISO can advise you on your immigration status. Violations of your status can affect your eligibility to enroll at Notre Dame and your eligibility to receive benefits of your F-1 status such as employment and the ability to enter the US for up to 10 years.

In order to maintain lawful F-1 immigration status, it is your responsibility, to complete the following steps. All of these points are crucial to maintaining your lawful status in the US:

**Maintain a Current Passport**

Keep your passport valid at all times. For travel purposes, passports must be valid for 6 months into the future. Passports may be revalidated or reissued in the U.S. at the embassy of the country that issued your passport. Students should begin to apply for a new passport about 7-8 months before the expiration date.

**Carry an Up-to-Date I-20**

Keep your I-20 valid at all times. Verify the accuracy of the biographical information and check this every semester and before travel outside the U.S. You should contact the ISO and complete the “Request for a New I-20” form if you have changed your name, degree level, major, anticipated graduation date or funding resources.

**Attend the School Listed on Your Current I-20**

Students must attend the school named on their current I-20. Also, this school should be named on your F-1 stamped visa, unless you have officially transferred your I-20 to Notre Dame.

**Enroll Full Time**

All F-1 students must enroll full-time every fall and spring semester and make normal progress towards a degree. Usually full-time enrollment is 12 credit hours for undergraduates or 9 credit hours for graduate students. There are exceptions to this rule but only with prior permission from the ISO. Therefore, before enrolling (or dropping a course) for less than full-time, please contact the ISO.

**A Note on Suspensions and Terminations**

If an F-1 student is suspended or terminated from their program they are considered to have violated their immigration status. ND’s ISO will be required to report this termination to USCIS through SEVIS. Students who complete their academic program successfully are granted a 60 day grace period in the U.S. However, students who are terminated do not have any grace period. Therefore, if you are having academic difficulties which threaten your enrollment at ND, please contact the ISO immediately.
On Campus Employment

F-1 students are automatically authorized by USCIS and the I-20 to work on campus for up to 20 hours/week during the academic year. Full-time on-campus employment of more than 20 hours per week is only permitted during vacation periods, such as summer, and as long as the student was enrolled full-time during the previous semester and will be enrolled full-time the following semester. The 20 hour limit includes hours worked as a Teaching, Research, or Graduate Assistant. Students who have graduated must have an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS to work at ND after graduation.

Off-Campus Employment

To work off-campus, F-1 students must have either an EAD from USCIS or special authorization from the ISO. Work should not begin without this authorization. If you have any questions or doubts on employment, contact the ISO before working. USCIS may reinstate a student’s status for minor violations, but any employment violations are not “forgiven” through reinstatement.

Changes of Address

If you move, you must report your change of address to the ISO. This includes even a change in your dormitory number. When you web-enroll, we will automatically submit your address to USCIS. If you move any other time of the year, you have 10 days to report your new address to our office. You must also report your address changes to the Registrar’s office.

Research/Study Abroad

Students who will engage in research/study abroad outside the US during the fall or spring terms must attend a mandatory information session. Students must also complete the ISO form “Notification to do Research/Study Abroad,” including the signature of the student’s academic advisor. Failure to complete these forms may result in problems or denials at the U.S. Port of Entry upon the return from a research/study abroad experience. Students on research/study abroad must also read the weekly email messages from the ISO.

Withdrawal, Leave of Absence, or Ceasing Enrollment at ND

If you wish to separate from Notre Dame, you should contact the ISO prior to leaving campus. This includes students who are taking a Leave of Absence from the University for medical reasons. You will have only 15 days to leave the US once you have withdrawn or taken a leave of absence. Therefore, please contact the ISO if you are considering it. If you do not contact the ISO, then you will not have a grace period to leave the US.

Program Extensions

If you will not graduate by the end date on your I-20 (item # 5) then you should contact the ISO to extend your I-20. Please begin the process at least one month in advance of the end date on your I-20. USCIS limits the reasons for a program extension, so please consult the ISO with any questions. If you do not complete (graduate) or extend your program by the program end date listed on your I-20, you will be out of status and will need to leave the US immediately or apply for reinstatement. You will not have any grace period.

Notify ISO of a Change of Status

If you change your immigration status from F-1 to any other status (H-4, Permanent Resident) please contact the ISO. You will need to provide the ISO with documentation of your change of status (approval notice, green card, visa stamp).
**Grace Period Following Completion of Study and OPT**

F-1 students are granted a 60 day grace period in the US after completing their course of study. Students on post-completion OPT must depart the U.S. within 60 days after their OPT expiration date on the EAD. The 60 day grace period applies to all F-2 dependents as well. Failure to depart the U.S. on time is a violation of the F-1 and F-2 status. Students who do not complete their degrees (including those who are suspended/terminated from their academic programs) are not entitled to the grace period and should consult with the ISO and plan for immediate departure from the U.S.

**Transfer Students**

If you will leave ND to attend another institution – whether you graduate from ND or not- USCIS considers this a transfer process. You should notify ND’s ISO and the new school’s international student office immediately and advise them of your plans. You must report to the new school’s international office within 15 days of the start of classes to complete the transfer process. The F-1 record must also be transferred to the new school within the 60 day grace period and you must begin coursework at the new school with 5 months of completing coursework at ND or any post-completion OPT.

**Travel Signatures**

F-1 students and their F-2 dependents must have a valid travel signature on page three of their current I-20 in order to re-enter the US after traveling internationally. Travel signatures are not required for domestic travel. Travel signatures are valid for 12 months for F-1 and F-2 visa holders, and 6 months for students on post-completion OPT. New travel signatures should be requested at least one week prior to departure from the US. Please contact the ISO if you have questions about your travel signature.

**Form I-515A**

If you attempt to enter the US without your I-20, or without a valid travel signature you may be allowed entrance and issued form I-515A. Whether or not you are allowed entrance to the US is at the discretion of the admitting officer. If you are issued an I-515A at the port of entry when you return to the US after traveling internationally, please contact the ISO immediately upon your return to campus. I-515As need to be submitted to USCIS within 30 days in order to maintain your lawful status. Please do not attempt to submit the I-515A to USCIS yourself without having spoken with an International Student Advisor.

**Special Notes:**

**Weekly Email Messages & Monthly Newsletters:** The ISO sends out weekly email messages (during the academic year) and monthly newsletters (with ISSA-Programs). These contain important information and updates or changes that may affect your immigration status. It is your responsibility to read and address any concerns to the ISO regarding information in these notices.

**Immigration/Employment/Travel Related Questions:** If you have any questions or uncertainties about your responsibilities for maintaining your lawful F-1 status, the SEVIS reporting requirements, working in the U.S., travel outside the U.S., or if you think you may need to apply for a reinstatement to lawful status, please visit the ISO (Main Building, Room 121) as soon as possible. No other office on campus can assist you with these questions.

**Departmental Assistance:** If your academic advisor or director of graduate studies has any questions about what you can and cannot do as an international student, please direct them to contact the ISO. You may also request an International Student Advisor contact your department directly if you have any problems or concerns. Remember, only the ISO can advise you on your immigration status.