

Staying Legal in F-1 Status

While you are in the United States, you must obey U.S. immigration rules. “In status” means that you are following all of the immigration service’s rules to keep your F-1 immigration status valid. If you fall “out of status,” you cannot work (on campus or off), you cannot apply for any benefits such as Optional Practical Training, and you cannot change to another status.

If you are out-of-status, you will begin to accumulate “days of unlawful presence” in the U.S. This could prevent you from being able to travel and re-enter the U.S. And, you could be deported. Being “out of status” will affect your future in ways that you may not expect. Remember reinstatement to “F-1 Status” is difficult.

Here are some basic guidelines to help you remain in status:

- Maintain full time enrollment (12 credit hours) each semester, **for the entire semester**. If you are having problems in a class, contact staff in the International Education Center (IEC) right away so we can talk to you about your options.
 - **Do not** register for on-line classes full-time!!! You must take at least 9 credit hours on-campus and then you can take 3 credit hours or more on-line.
- Keep your passport valid at all times.
- If you transferred from another U.S. school, make sure the transfer paperwork is completed here at Brookdale with the help of the IEC before beginning your first semester.
- Attend school each fall and spring until you graduate or transfer to a new school.
- Renew or extend your I-20 form before it expires
 - Ensure that your I-20 states the major that you are studying
- If you change your major, ask IEC for a new I-20.
- **Do not** work, on campus or off campus, without meeting with the IEC staff first to get the right written permission to work.
- Before traveling, contact the IEC at least three weeks in advance of departing the U.S. so that staff may inspect and sign your immigration documents.
- Notify the IEC within 10 days if your address, telephone or personal email changes.
- During post-completion Optional Practical Training, notify the IEC of the name and address of your employer as well as changes in your address, email and phone.
- Before making any major decisions that will affect your 1-20 immigration status, meet with the IEC so we can let you know if you need to change any of your documents or file anything with immigration.