

Staying Legal in F-1 Status

While studying 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.

Being “out of status” will affect your future in ways that you may not expect. Reinstatement to “F-1 Status” is difficult and expensive.

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

- The Immigration and Nationality Act (Section 264e) requires you to always keep your immigration documents with you. **Keep a copy** of your documents (I-94, I-20, Passport) on your phone, stored in the cloud, or in your wallet.
- 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) immediately. Do not drop the class without consulting with IEC staff.
 - **Do not** register for online classes full-time! You can only take one 3-credit class online per semester as part of your full-time load.
- 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 IEC staff 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 you are studying
 - If you change your major, ask IEC staff for a new I-20.
- **Do not** work, on campus or off campus, without meeting with the IEC staff first.
- Before traveling, contact the IEC at least two weeks before 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 immigration of the name and address of your employer, and changes in your address, email, and phone.
- Before making any major decisions that affect your academic or immigration status, always meet with IEC staff. This way you will avoid making mistakes that could lead you to violate immigration rules.