



## Western Oregon University Maintaining Status

### What does “Maintaining Status” mean?

US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires that individuals who enter the US on an F-1 or J-1 visa must follow specific rules related to their nonimmigrant status. If you follow these rules, you are considered to be “**in status**” or “**maintaining status**” and thus are allowed to stay in the US to study. The International Students & Scholars Affairs (ISSA) office is required to report F-1/J-1 student immigration status to DHS using the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

If you do not follow these rules, your SEVIS record may be **terminated** and you would be considered to be “**out of status.**” In such cases, you would either have to leave the US or apply for **reinstatement** of your SEVIS record to US Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS). Reinstatement is only possible if the status violation was beyond the student’s control, such as in the event of a natural disaster, illness or injury, or closure of the school. If you work illegally, you WILL NOT be reinstated. Reinstatement is expensive, takes time, and may be denied.

Maintaining status is important and certain violations of status may possibly bar you from entering the US for 3 to 10 years.

### How to Maintain Your Status at Western Oregon University:

1. Attend and enroll in classes at Western Oregon University.
  - Having an F-1 or J-1 visa allows you to come to the U.S. to study and be a student.
2. Report to WOU at the beginning of every term by completing “immigration registration”.
  - This updates ISSA records if your address, phone number or personal email changes.
  - This process helps students review the responsibilities related to their F-1 and J-1 status.
3. Maintain a full course of study each term (summer or vacation periods excluded).
  - Undergraduate students must enroll in at least **12 credits**.
  - Graduate students must enroll in at least **9 credits**.
  - Undergraduates need to register for **15-18 credits** each term to finish within 4 years.
4. Only **3 credits** of online courses can be counted toward the required 12/9 credits to maintain status. Regulations require that students are present at the WOU campus in Monmouth.
  - Example: If you take 5 credits of online classes and 9 credits of regular classes, then 14 credits are being taken but only 12 credits will count for maintaining status.
5. Get approval for a Reduced Course Load (RCL) BEFORE you withdraw from classes. You must get ISSA approval before you drop a class. The reasons for taking an RCL are:
  - *English Difficulties:* (May only request this during the first term at WOU.)
  - *Medical Condition:* (Your doctor or psychologist will need to provide a written recommendation.)
  - *Last term before Graduation:* (You only need complete 11 or fewer credits in order to graduate.)
  - *Finishing Thesis or Comprehensive Exam:* (If your major requires a thesis or exam to graduate.)
  - *Concurrent Enrollment:* (If total enrollment is 12/9 credits, you may study at WOU and at a different university.)
  - *Vacation Term:* (If you have been enrolled for an academic year, 9 months in a row, you are eligible for a vacation)

6. Make academic progress.
  - By maintaining a grade point average of 2.00 or above each term you will remain in Good Academic Standing. Falling below 2.00 leads to Academic Warning followed by Academic Probation if no improvement is made and finally Academic Suspension.
  - If you are placed on Academic Suspension, you cannot enroll at WOU and must transfer to another school or apply for reinstatement.
7. Notify ISSA before you leave the US or leave WOU.
  - Tell ISSA if you plan to do the following: travel outside the US, enroll in a study abroad program, withdrawal from WOU, take a term off, transfer to another school, or graduate.
  - Keeping ISSA informed will help you avoid unexpected problems with maintaining status.
8. Tell ISSA before you start any kind of employment. You will need work authorization or permission from ISSA before you can begin working. Understand the types of employment:
  - *On-Campus Employment*: F-1/J-1 students may work on-campus in jobs that serve WOU students directly. Limited to 20 hours per week during terms, and 40 hours during breaks.
  - *Off-Campus Employment*: Student must gain work authorization from USCIS before they can begin working off campus. Only severe economic hardship situations are eligible.
  - *Curricular Practical Training (CPT)*: Majors that require internships need to be approved by ISSA. Work on CPT may be paid or unpaid.
  - *Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1*: Usually done after graduation, 12 months of full time work off campus related to students' major. USCIS work authorization required.
  - *Academic Training (AT) for J-1*: After the J-1 program is completed, work authorization may last up to 18 months. AT is full-time work related to the student's program of study.
  - *Volunteer Work*: Work that offers no pay or other benefits for the work performed. The position involves work that is normally unpaid in other contexts.
9. Keep the ISSA office updated regarding the following changes: change of education level, change of major, or change of financial situation (scholarship, financial guarantee, etc).
10. Notify ISSA if your address changes within 10 days (even if address is temporary). Keep your phone number and personal email updated.
11. Keep your immigration documents correct and up-to-date.
  - Check for any errors or outdated information on your I-20 or DS-2019, passport, visa and I-94 card. Make copies of newly updated documents at the ISSA office.
  - If your I-20 or DS-2019 program end date is approaching, contact ISSA to extend it at least 60 days before it ends. Renew your passport 6 months before it expires.
12. Check your wou.edu email at least TWICE a week for important information.

**Notify the International Students & Scholars Affairs (ISSA) office of any concerns or need to make decisions that may impact your status.**

**THE ISSA OFFICE IS HERE TO OFFER ADVICE AND SUPPORT**