

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES CONTRACT

## RULES F-1 AND J-1 STUDENTS MUST FOLLOW TO MAINTAIN LEGAL STATUS

### I. EXPLANATION

International students are required by United States law to abide by immigration regulations throughout their stay in the US and are admitted to the US for the sole purpose of being a full-time student. Participation by students in any other activity in the US, from employment to vacation travel, is considered to be a privilege and is only allowable in accordance with strict Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rules. Penalties for violations of immigration law can be severe and can include deportation and 10-year bars from reentry to the US, so it is essential for students to understand their responsibilities. This handout lists rules students **MUST** follow to maintain legal student status and the documents they must have to enter the US and remain here legally. **It is the STUDENT and not the university who is responsible for knowing and abiding by all immigration rules and for maintaining legal student status. The university must report updated information and violations of student status to the government via an electronic tracking system (SEVIS) within 21 days of the violation, SO KNOWING THESE RULES IS ABSOLUTELY VITAL TO YOUR ABILITY TO REMAIN IN THE US AND TO COMPLETE YOUR ACADEMIC PROGRAM!** Changes in student requirements are expected in the next two years so please continue to read information sent to your account from [iadvisor@unm.edu](mailto:iadvisor@unm.edu).

### II. DOCUMENTATION OF LEGAL STUDENT STATUS IN THE US

International students are normally admitted to the US for "Duration of Status" (D/S). This means that they are allowed to remain in the US for as long as they "maintain legal student status", NOT for the length of time listed on their visa or I-20/DS-2019 form. **If you fail to follow all the rules of legal student status, your stay expires on the day the violation occurs.** The information below lists the documents that students **MUST** have while they are residing in the US to remain legally present. You should make copies of each of these documents and keep them in a safe place separate from the originals in case they are lost or stolen.

#### Passport

The passport is the legal document issued by your country of citizenship; it must be valid for 6 months into the future upon your entry into the US and should remain valid at all times during your stay. Your passport **MUST** be valid to work in the US. The passport can usually be renewed through your embassy or one of your consulates in the United States. If you have been issued a *Travel Document in Lieu of a Passport* by the government of the country of which you are a resident, the information above, regarding passports, applies to Travel Documents.

#### I-20 & DS-2019 - "Certificate of Eligibility"

The I-20 (for those with F-1 status) or DS-2019 (for those with J-1 status) is the document which you must present to the US Embassy or Consulate abroad to obtain a visa and which you present to immigration officials to enter the US each time you travel abroad and return; for most UNM students, the I-20 or DS-2019 is issued by the University through the Office of International Admissions or the Global Education Office (GEO). Some J-1 students have documents issued by an outside agency. You should **keep all of these and any other immigration documents for your records** even if you get new ones in the future. The I-20 and DS-2019 forms are issued via the SEVIS government tracking system and have a bar code and ID number in the top right corner. **If any of the information on these documents changes, you MUST come to GEO immediately to apply for a new document. Once again, the expiration date on the I-20 or DS-2019 is just an estimate. For F-1 students, your permission to stay in the US ends 60 days from the date you complete the last requirement for your degree. For J-1 students your permission to stay ends within 30 days of completion of the last requirement. If you fail to follow all the rules of legal student status, your stay expires on the day the violation of status occurs.**

#### I-94 Departure Record

The I-94 is your official record of entry to the US. This is the document that authorizes you to be in the US as a student (F-1 or J-1) for a specified period of time, for the specified program of study, at the institution specified on the I-20/DS-2019. Formerly the I-94 was given to you at the Port of Entry to the US. As of May 2013, travelers to the US must print their own paper I-94 after arrival by entering their entry information at [cbp.gov/I94](http://cbp.gov/I94). In addition to your class of admission (e.g., F-1 or J-1), the paper I-94 contains the date of entrance into the US and the date of expiration of your permission to stay. For F-1 and J-1 visa holders, the expiration date should be written as D/S (duration of status), which implies the date of program completion (not always the same date as graduation). The I-94, like the passport, must be valid at all times. The I-94 should be kept in a safe place and should be carried while traveling in the US. The I-94 must be presented when applying for a Social Security Number and a driver's license or state ID. Each time you re-enter the US, you should print a new I-94. The number at the top, called your "Admission Number" or "I-94 Number" may be requested on immigration applications. **Once again, if you fail to follow all the rules of legal student status, your stay expires on the day the violation occurs, even if your I-94 and I-20 or DS-2019 are still valid.**

#### Entry visa

The entry visa is a sticker with photograph on a page of your passport that permits you to enter the US. Only Canadian citizens do not need a visa to enter the US. Individuals entering as students will have either an F-1 or J-1 entry visa. The visa may expire while you are in the US; you cannot and need not renew it while you are here, however a new entry visa will be required if the original expires and you travel out of the US and then wish to re-

enter. You must present a valid SEVIS form I-20 or DS-2019 from the school you will attend to the US Consular officer to obtain your entry visa. You may be able to travel to and return from Canada, Mexico, and adjacent islands (except Cuba) without a valid visa if you will be staying less than 30 days (check with an advisor for current regulations). Remember, **the visa does not indicate how long you are permitted to stay in the US. Your permission to stay ends once you complete your program of study (plus grace period) or when you fail to “maintain legal student status”.**

### III. REQUIREMENTS FOR “MAINTAINING LEGAL STUDENT STATUS”

#### **YOU MUST ALWAYS:**

1. Attend the school whose name appears on your I-20 or DS-2019 - in some cases, the DS-2019 may be from a different organization)
2. Provide an updated local address within 10 days of any change (notify GEO in person or via email and we notify DHS).
3. Maintain registration as a full-time student throughout every Fall and Spring semester. Summer is considered your annual vacation unless you begin your program in summer. You must COMPLETE each semester with a full-time course load. Full-time means:
  - Undergraduate students = 12 credit hours minimum to keep legal student status (15 credit hours to keep an Amigo scholarship)
  - Graduate students: 9 credit hours minimum (or 6 credits if you have an assistantship).

**NO STUDENT may drop below their minimum number of credits except under extremely limited circumstances that must be authorized in advance by an international student advisor!!! Grades that do NOT count toward your full-time minimum include:**

- **W, WP, or WF:** These grades are “withdrawals” and will be assigned by professors if you do not attend class
- **Grade option of “Audit” :** This is a non-graded course which allows you to sit in on the class without doing the work
- **More than 3 credit hours of on-line courses:** While students are permitted to take more online courses, only 3 credits can be counted toward full-time.

**If you have questions about these requirements ask an international advisor!**

4. Keep your "certificate of eligibility" (I-20 or DS-2019 form) correct and valid at all times and apply for extensions of stay at least one month before the document expires; see an advisor for a new I-20/DS-2019 if any information changes.
5. Maintain a valid passport throughout your stay in the US. Your passport must be valid for six months into the future to enter the US, and you must bring updated passports to GEO immediately so that we can report the new information when required.
6. Complete necessary "immigration transfer procedures" if changing from one school to another in the US (even if you completed the program at the prior school); contact an international advisor for details.
7. **Observe the “grace period” upon completion of studies. This means that if you are F-1 you have 60 days and if you are J-1 you have 30 days from the end of your program to do one of the following things:**
  - a. Leave the US
  - b. Get a new I-20 or DS-2019 for a new program or school and enroll in the next available semester
  - c. Apply for off-campus work authorization (OPT for F-1, Academic training for J-1). Because of application deadlines and other restrictions, you must speak with an advisor **before** completing your program in order to get this benefit.
  - d. Apply for a change to another immigration status.

**If you leave before completing your program, you do NOT have this “grace period” – please speak with an advisor for details.**

#### **YOU MUST NEVER:**

1. WORK OFF CAMPUS unless you have written authorization from the international advisor in advance on your I-20 or DS-2019 form
2. WORK ON CAMPUS more than 20 hours per week while school is in session
3. Take a leave of absence, withdraw from classes, or drop below the required number of credits without FIRST checking with an international advisor in GEO; students who terminate their program or otherwise fall out of legal status before completing do not have a grace period to leave the US, they must leave immediately!

### III. OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS:

- Once you have completed or terminated your program, or have failed to “maintain legal student status,” you can no longer legally enter the US with your I-20 or DS-2019 form and the staff of GEO can no longer sign those forms (this means that you should NOT plan to travel out of and return to the US with your current I-20/DS-2019 after you have finished your program).
- All international students are required to complete and submit US tax forms to the federal government every year regardless of whether or not they earned any money in the US.
- All students are required by UNM policy to have health insurance that covers them during their stay. J1 students are also required by the US federal government to have health insurance that meets specific requirements. Check the letter that came with your DS-2019 form to make sure your insurance meets these requirements.

**I have read and understand my responsibilities as outlined above.**

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NAME (Print)

SIGNATURE

DATE