



Maintaining Legal J-1 Status

March 2004

If a J-1 student is admitted to the U.S. this implies that the purpose of being in the U.S. is to be a full time student. As such, U.S. law requires that the J-1 student comply with immigration regulations for the duration of their J-1 student status. Many other activities, including employment, are considered a privilege and strict immigration regulations are in place which must be adhered to.

Usually J-1 students are admitted to the U.S. for “Duration of Status” noted as D/S on the DS-2019 form and I-94 card. This implies that the student may remain in the U.S. as long as legal J-1 student status is maintained which can very well differ from the end date on the DS-2019.

It is the J-1 student’s responsibility to inform themselves of immigration rules and regulations and be aware that these rules and regulations can change during their stay in the U.S. It is very important that the student understands their legal responsibilities because there are penalties for violating immigration laws that can be as severe as making the student ineligible to re-enter the U.S. for 10 years or life. The Office of International Education and Programs (IEP) is here to **assist** J-1 students and help provide them with pertinent information to keep students in legal J-1 student status but it is ultimately the student’s responsibility and obligation and not the University’s for the student to maintain legal J-1 student status.

The following are a few basic things an international student can do to maintain their legal J-1 student status:

1. **Report your change of address** within the U.S. to the IEP office within 10 days of your move so your current address can be updated in the real-time web-based electronic information system called SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System).
2. **Make certain that you enroll at the institution that issued the DS-2019** you used to enter the U.S.
3. **You must be enrolled full-time each semester.** At UW-Whitewater this means that you must enroll full-time in the spring and fall semesters (12 credits for undergraduate and 9 credits for graduate students each semester). There are very few exceptions where under-enrollment is permitted and must be **authorized in advance** by an IEP advisor. Please note that in the case of on-line courses, only 3 credits per semester can be counted toward full-time enrollment.

4. **On-campus employment is limited to a total of 20 hours per week** when school is in session and must be authorized by the IEP office before you begin work. You may work on-campus full-time only during spring, summer and winter breaks. As a J-1 student you must have a letter from your home institution stating that they do not object to on-campus employment.
5. **You must be authorized by the IEP office for all off-campus employment** prior to beginning work.
6. **If you choose to transfer to another institution** you must inform your current institution of your desire to transfer and request to have your SEVIS records transferred from your current institution to your new institution. A request to transfer your SEVIS records to another institution should only be done **after you have been accepted to the new institution**. Contact the IEP office to discuss your transfer needs.
7. **You must never let your passport expire.** You should begin the passport renewal process at least six months prior to its expiration date. You can find contact information for embassies in Washington D.C. at: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html>.
8. **You must have valid health insurance coverage** that meets the minimum U.S. Department of State requirements as follows:

General Provisions

- Medical benefits of **at least \$50,000 per accident or illness**
- A co-payment not greater than 25% of the covered benefits per accident or illness
- A deductible no greater than \$500 per accident or illness
- A waiting period for pre-existing conditions that is reasonable by current industry standards
- Coverage for activities inherent to the exchange program (i.e., flight training for an aviation school)

Repatriation Provision

- Repatriation of remains in an **amount not less than \$7,500**.

Medical Evacuation Provision

- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in an **amount not less than \$10,000**.

9. **You have a 30-day grace period** to remain in the U.S. after the end date on your DS-2019.

If you think you may have problems meeting these requirements, please contact the IEP office before there is a problem so we can help you through the process.