

## NEW F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RULES AND REGULATIONS PACKET

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

**Maintain Status** – follow all the rules in order to retain your legal immigration status

**I-20** – official document issued by MassArt that you use to apply for your F-1 visa stamp and will continue to use to enter the United States as long as you are enrolled as a student

**Visa stamp** – A stamp placed on a page in a passport, issued by a consular officer. The visa is only “used” to enter the U.S. Once you have entered the United States, the visa ceases to have a function until next time it is needed to enter the U.S.

**I-94** – (also called the Departure Record) = electronic form that shows the details of how you were formally admitted to the United States. You can review your I-94 here:

<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>

**Passport** – a formal document issued by an authorized official of a country to one of its citizens that is usually necessary for exit from and reentry into the country, that allows the citizen to travel in a foreign country in accordance with visa requirements.

**SEVIS** – Student and Exchange Visitor Information System is an internet-based program that has been developed by USCIS to track all students who are in F-1 status. Their dependents (spouses and children) are tracked in SEVIS as well.

**USCIS** – US Citizenship and Immigration Services is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the U.S.

**Terminate SEVIS record**– a function in the SEVIS system that will end an F-1 student’s status in the US. The student will be obligated to leave the US

**CPT**–[Curricular Practical Training](#) is the authorized, legal permission to engage in an off-campus work experience when the experience is a required part of MassArt coursework.

**OPT**– [Optional Practical Training](#) is temporary work authorization for F-1 students issued by [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services](#)(USCIS). You may apply for and be granted one year of OPT for every degree you advance during your F-1 status.

## SUMMARY OF F-1 RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Register for and remain enrolled in a full-time course during the Fall and Spring semesters (minimum of 12 credits for undergraduate students or 9 credits for Masters level students)
- If you feel you cannot take 12 credits (or 9 credits for graduate students), talk to the International Student Advisor FIRST. If you fall below 12 credits BEFORE talking to the International Student Advisor, you will fall out of status, which means you will have to leave the country immediately.
- Complete the electronic "F-1 Semester Registration Form" at the beginning of each Fall and Spring semester as part of maintaining your F-1 status. This form will be sent to your MassArt email address at the beginning of the semester
- Make "satisfactory progress" – to complete your degree on time! If you are having trouble in a class, you must let the International Student Advisor know immediately so we can help you resolve the problem. Do not wait until you are already failing a class to talk to me!
- **Before** leaving the US, ensure your I-20 has a valid [travel signature](#) whenever you travel
- Keep your records updated with MassArt and with the U.S. government
  - It is YOUR responsibility to notify your International Student Advisor of any phone or address changes **within TEN days** of their occurrence. This includes address changes over the summer as well!
  - File State and Federal [taxes](#) every year (the COF Tax Workshop is held every year in early spring semester).
  - Make sure your passport is **always valid 6 months in the future** (contact your embassy to renew it).
- Understand your "**program end date**" (estimated date of degree completion on your I-20).
  - **If you will graduate earlier than that date**, your International Advisor must change the date on your I-20 to reflect the date by which you will complete ALL degree requirements – which may be shortly before or after you actually walk in the MassArt Commencement ceremony.
  - **If you will graduate later than that date**, you must submit a [Program Extension](#) as soon as you are aware that you will not be completing your program by that date. All program extensions must be submitted at least 30 days prior to when the I-20 expires.
- Do not work or intern off-campus without permission.
  - F-1 students may not work or intern off-campus until they have completed at least 2 consecutive semesters in F-1 status. After that, there are two ways they can work or intern off campus:
    - [OPT](#)
    - [CPT](#)
  - As an F-1 student you may work up to 20 hours per week "on campus" (meaning paid through MassArt) while courses are in session.
- Understand "**grace periods**".
  - If you complete your degree, you have **60 days** during which you may remain in the US but you may not work on campus. During this grace period, you may apply to another academic institution or apply to change a different status.
  - If you withdraw from MassArt **with** the International Advisor's permission, you have **15 days** to a) receive a new school's I-20, b) apply to change to a new visa status, or c) leave the U.S.
  - If you withdraw from MassArt **without** the Advisor's permission, you have **NO grace period**.

**MAINTAINING LAWFUL F-1 STATUS: What is “Lawful F-1 status”?**

1. By entering the U.S. as an F-1 student, you declared to Immigration (Department of Homeland Security or DHS) that you intended to follow the rules and regulations of the F-1 student category.
2. If you follow all the F-1 regulations, then you are “maintaining lawful F-1 status” and are eligible to request permission to leave and re-enter the U.S., and to apply for F-1 benefits including permission for Optional Practical Training and Curricular Practical Training.
3. Understand the difference between “**Visa**” and “**Status**”
  - **Visa** refers to the visa stamp inside your passport that allowed you to enter the United States but it *does not* give you legal status in the United States.
  - **Status** refers to your legal immigration standing in the United States and is based on the following:
    1. If you are following all of the F-1 rules and regulations
    2. If your I-20 document is valid and current
    3. If you were admitted in the correct status when you entered the United States
    4. If your computerized Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record is valid and current
  - Once you are inside the United States, the **visa** has *no bearing* on your legal **status** here.
    1. For example, you can be admitted to the US legally and still be residing here illegally because you are not maintaining your **status** by following the required rules.
    2. Likewise, you can legally remain in the US with an expired visa and still be in valid **status**.
4. Understand your International Student Advisor’s responsibilities to report to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
  - Your International Student Advisor (ISA) uses SEVIS to report regularly to USCIS about every F-1 international student
  - If you do not follow the rules and regulations, your ISA is required to update SEVIS to reflect this.
  - If you tell your ISA that you are not following the rules and regulations, your ISA is required to report this to SEVIS
5. If you do NOT follow all the F-1 student rules, then you are “out of status.” If you are “out of status,” the International Student Advisor is required to terminate (cancel) your F-1 SEVIS record and you must leave the United States immediately. The longer you are out of status, the harder it will be to return to the U.S. legally in the future.

## F-1 STUDENTS FAQs: WORK & INTERNSHIPS

**1. Am I allowed to work while I am here as an F-1 student?**

You are only allowed to work “on-campus” and up to 20 hours per week during while classes are in session.

**2. What is “on-campus” work?**

“On-campus” work means that whatever job you are doing is being paid by MassArt, through MassArt’s payroll office.

**3. Am I allowed to work or volunteer off-campus?**

Only if you have received authorization for [CPT](#) or [OPT](#) from your International Student Advisor. You must have been in F-1 status for 1 academic year in order to be eligible to apply for CPT or OPT.

**4. What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?**

[CPT](#) is the authorized, legal permission to engage in an off-campus work experience when the experience is a required part of MassArt coursework. Normally F-1 students will follow the [Career Development process](#) for applying for and finding an internship for credit at MassArt. If you are interested in learning more, you should attend one of our CPT workshops.

**5. What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

[OPT](#) is an opportunity for students to gain work experience in their major field of study. For every degree level, an F-1 student is allowed to earn 12 months of OPT permission. Most student choose to use OPT after they graduate from MassArt. Students can choose to use some of their OPT during their summers or part-time during the semester, but this is not recommended due to the lengthy processing time (approximately 12 weeks from date of request) and fee (\$410). If you are interested in learning more, you should attend one of our OPT workshops.

**6. I would like to build my resume so I want to find an internship. Is this allowed?**

Only if you are receiving academic credit for the internship opportunity and you apply for and are granted Curricular Practical Training prior to beginning work. You must speak with your International Student Advisor immediately if you are interested in finding an internship.

**7. I have many friends who are working in internships but have arranged them on their own. Can I do this too?**

No. As an F-1 student, you are required to follow a specific set of US immigration regulations pertaining to your status and that includes obtaining formal authorization for any employment you are seeking.

**8. What if the internship I want to do is unpaid? Do I still need to speak to my International Student Advisor?**

Yes. Any work, even unpaid work, must be authorized by your International Student Advisor prior to beginning work.

**9. What happens if I work without authorization from the International Student Advisor?**

Any unauthorized work, either paid or unpaid, is a violation of your immigration status. Status violations will result in the termination of your SEVIS record and your departure from the United States

**\*\*\*\*\*With any paid or unpaid work or internships you must speak to Maggie Shirland\*\*\*\*\***

- You are not allowed to work off-campus, even if unpaid, without authorization from the International Student Advisor.
- The definition of "work" includes unpaid and paid work, as well as receiving money or compensation for artwork

