

## **M1 Student Visa Requirements**

As a U.S. foreign student (on an F-1 or M-1 visa), your right to remain in the U.S. depends on your maintaining your student immigration status throughout your studies. That means abiding by all of the rules of your student status, for example, going to school as expected and getting approval from your DSO or USCIS before pursuing any changes in your overall plan.

If you violate these rules, you are said to “fall out of status.” The consequence of this is that your right to be in the United States goes away instantly. What’s more, if you brought along a spouse or children on F-2 or M-2 visas, they too will lose their right to be in the United States. You and your family could be deported and your unlawful stay in the United States entered onto your permanent immigration records.

Many students break the rules and lose their student status by reducing their course load below full-time study without permission from their DSO (or just dropping out altogether), working without permission, or switching schools or programs without advising the right people (your DSO or USCIS). You will also be violating your status if you lie or give false information to USCIS or are convicted of a crime of violence.

Unfortunately, one violation tends to cause another. For example, if your expected completion date as shown on your Form I-20 passes by and you don’t notice, and you continue working at your on-campus job, you will technically be working without authorization -- on top of having overstayed your student status. In fact, any employment becomes unauthorized as soon as you fall out of student status. This compounding of violations can create problems because different violations may have different legal consequences.

When in doubt about whether something you are planning to do will be a violation of your visa or student status, talk to your DSO. It is especially important to talk issues over with the DSO before you take action, because once you have violated your status, the DSO must report the violation on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

### **Being Sick Is Not a Violation**

USCIS does not expect you to drag yourself to school if you come down with a serious illness or become pregnant. If this happens, talk to your DSO so that he or she understands the situation and can authorize a reduced course load of study through SEVIS. As soon as you are fully recovered, you are expected to resume a full-time course load. If your illness prevents you from completing your studies by the date on your I-20, you will need to apply for an extension of time.

## School Vacations Are Not Usually Violations

Most foreign students do not have to worry about school vacations or exams breaking their status. For F-1 students, as long as your course of study extends into the next school term and your program does not require coursework during school vacations, scheduled school vacations (summer included) are not considered to break your full-time course of study or to violate your visa status.

F-1 students whose school follows a quarter or a trimester calendar can shift their summer vacation to another season, so long as they study for a whole academic year first. Exam periods (when the school gives you a couple of weeks off from classes to study for exams) are similarly not considered to break your F-1 status.

If you are an M-1 student, exam periods and short vacations will not break your status. However, M-1 students are eligible for a summer vacation only if they have completed an academic year prior to that summer and are eligible and intend to register at the same school after the summer vacation. In addition, you will maintain your M-1 status while taking a vacation only if vocational students at your school normally take a summer vacation. If, for example, your vocational program is only 12 weeks long, it