

RESPONSIBILITIES OF F-1 or M-1 STUDENTS UNDER SEVIS
At Lenoir Community College

MAINTAINING YOUR LEGAL STATUS

1. Keep your passport, I-20, and other immigration documents current. If you need to leave the country, you will need a Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) signature on your I-20, and possibly a new I-20. Please allow two weeks for your records to be checked. If you have not maintained your status, we cannot sign the I-20. If you plan to transfer to another school upon your return, you must let us know so that you can be officially “released” in SEVIS and can then obtain a new I-20 from the new school.
2. Register and maintain a minimum of 12 semester hours every Fall and Spring Semester and a minimum of 9 semester hours to complete your final semester). Any leaves of absence and reduced course loads for medical reasons or other reasons must be approved **in advance** by the PDSO. There are certain regulations we must follow. **(Academic advisors cannot grant approval.)**
3. Make satisfactory progress toward your degree goal.
4. If you change your program of study, you must obtain a new I-20, and possibly show new financial support documents. If you need to extend your studies beyond the date authorized on your I-20, you must request an extension of stay and show new financial support documents **before the completion date. An extension cannot be granted after your completion date.** A letter from your academic advisor explaining the reasons will be required.
5. Report any changes of legal name, address, telephone numbers, or receipt of social security number to the PDSO. We must update your information in SEVIS. **Do not rely on a new registration form each semester for this purpose.**
6. Notify the PDSO when you are planning to leave Lenoir Community College for any reason. We must notify the USCIS through the SEVIS system.
7. Keep your health insurance and driver’s license (if you have one) valid throughout your stay in the United States. Observe all federal, state, and local laws. We must report any criminal activity.
8. You have been admitted to the United States for “duration of status,” which means as long as you are pursuing a full course of study and making normal progress toward completion, plus any time working in authorized “Optional Practical Training” (if you qualify). **IF YOU FAIL TO MAINTAIN YOUR STATUS, YOU WILL BECOME “OUT-OF-STATUS.”**

EMPLOYMENT

1. You are not permitted to work off campus in your first year as an F-1 or M-1 student. Although on-campus employment for under 20 hours per week is permitted, Lenoir Community College rarely has an on-campus job available. **Working illegally off campus will put you "out-of-status."**
2. If you are experiencing economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances, you may apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) authorizing off-campus work. You must have been in F-1 or M-1 status for one full academic year, be in good academic standing, demonstrate that employment will not interfere with your studies, and explain to the USCIS the reasons for your economic hardship. There is a substantial fee for this application and some students are not approved. You will also need a new I-20. Please allow at least two weeks for Lenoir Community College to process this application and several months to receive a response from USCIS.
3. You may apply for 12 months of temporary employment called Optional Practical Training (OPT) in your field of study as you near completion. Application is made **prior to completion of studies. You cannot apply for OPT after graduation.** To be eligible, you must have been in F-1 or M-1 student status for at least nine months, and the employment must be directly related to the major area of study indicated on your I-20. Non-degree students are not eligible. You must continue to report any address or other changes to Lenoir Community College during this period, as Lenoir Community College is required to continue maintaining your records.
4. Any Employment Authorization Documents approved by USCIS for F-1 or M-1 students are automatically terminated when you transfer to another school.
9. F-2 dependents (spouse and children) of an F-1 student are **not eligible for employment at any time.** If an F-2 dependent wishes to take courses for credit, the F-2 dependent must apply for a change of status to F-1, and may not enroll until the approval is received.

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

1. You are eligible to transfer to another school if you have attended the school that issued your original I-20 for at least one academic year and have maintained your F-1 or M-1 status.
2. Please notify the PSDO of your intention. We have to "release" your record in SEVIS before the new school can issue a new I-20. It is NOT advisable to have Lenoir Community College put you in "transfer status" with the USCIS until you have been officially accepted by the new school and are definite about your plans, as it is very difficult to reverse the process.
3. If you are transferring to Lenoir Community College from another school, we cannot issue an I-20 to you until the previous school releases your record in SEVIS.