

F-1 Visa Frequently Asked Questions

What is an F-1 student visa?

An F-1 visa is a non-immigrant visa issued by a United States Consulate abroad to an alien who is coming to the United States to pursue full-time studies in a United States academic institution. Generally, the US consular officer has the total discretion to grant the visa or not.

Who is an F-1 international student?

F-1 International Students, as defined in the immigration laws, are foreign students pursuing a full course of study in approved colleges, universities, seminaries, conservatories, academia high schools, private elementary schools, other academic institutions, and in language training programs in the United States.

What privileges does an F-1 student have on an F-1 visa?

- An F-1 visa allows students to come to the United States to pursue an academic program leading to an undergraduate or graduate degree.
- Legally work on-campus on part-time basis when school is in session or full-time during vacation periods.
- Bring your dependents to the United States under F-2 visas.

What are the restrictions on an F-1 visa?

- F-1 students are not allowed to work off-campus except with USCIS authorization.
- Students must maintain full-time status which means 12 credit hours for an undergraduate program and 9 hours for the graduate.

How long can a student stay in the United States with an F-1 visa?

The I-20 indicates the specific time students should begin and finish their academic programs. As long as they are in status, the students are allowed to remain in the United States until they finish their course of study. Students may apply for an extension if necessary.

Under what circumstances can a student fall out of status?

- Failure to maintain full-time enrollment.
- Work off-campus without USCIS authorization (illegally)
- Failure to request a program extension or transfer before the I-20 completion date.

What happens if the visa expired while the student is in the U.S.?

The F-1 visa does not determine how long the student can stay in the United States. As far as the student holds a valid I-20 and remains in status she/he can stay in the U.S. until they complete their academic program. If the student decides to leave the country and his/her visa is expired, he/she will need to apply for a new F-1 visa to re-enter the country.