



Information for International Students with an F-1 Visa Currently Enrolled at Anne Arundel Community College

Maintaining Your F-1 Status

The college must report updated information and violations of student status to the US government using the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), an electronic tracking system, within 21 days of violation. It is the student's responsibility to maintain legal status and abide by the regulations for international student enrollment. The International Student Adviser and Principal Designated School Official (P/DSO) are available to assist you. To maintain F-1 status, a student must abide by the directions listed below:

1. Maintain a valid passport. Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after enrollment.
2. Attend AACC, the school you are authorized to attend. You must attend the school that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) last authorized for attendance. To determine this, look at the DHS stamp in the **upper right corner** of the I-20ID.
3. Apply for an extension of program **before** the expiration date on the I-20. Students must apply 30 days before the program's end date on the I-20 form.
4. Follow the USCIS procedures for changing from one program or educational level to another. For example, a change from the English as a Second Language program to an associate's or bachelor's degree.
5. Follow the USCIS procedures for transferring from one school to another.
6. Limit on-campus employment to 20 hours a week while school is in session. Full-time on-campus employment is permitted during vacation periods such as summer, as long as the student was enrolled full-time during preceding terms and intends to be enrolled full-time the following term.
7. Refrain from off-campus employment without authorization. Limit off-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session. The student must obtain authorization for off-campus employment which is approved based on hardship or for part-time practical training.
8. Enroll in no more than one online course per semester.
9. Report a change of address to the P/DSO **within 10 days** of the change.
10. Pursue a full-time course of study and make normal progress towards the completion of the course of study. A full-time course of study is defined in the regulations as follows:
 - a. An undergraduate student must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours per term, or the equivalent as determined by the district director in the school approval process.
 - b. A student enrolled in postsecondary language, liberal arts, fine arts, or other nonvocational program which confers associate or other degrees must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 clock hours of instruction a week or its equivalent as determined by the district director in the school approval process.

Full-Time Enrollment Requirement

International F-1 students may not drop below the required number of credits during the fall and spring semesters with few exceptions and this action must be authorized in advance by the International Student Adviser or P/DSO in the Admission Office. Summer is considered the student's "annual vacation" and enrollment is not required unless the student is beginning a program of study during the summer semester.

Exceptions to Full-time Enrollment Requirement

International F-1 students in their **final semester** of study may be considered full-time with fewer than 12 credit hours. In order to qualify for this exception, the student must submit an approved and signed **Academic Adviser's Recommendation for Less than Full-time Enrollment Form** to the Admission Office at the beginning of the semester. This form should state that the student will graduate in the current semester and is enrolled in the courses required to complete a program of study.

Request for Waiver of Full-Time Enrollment Requirement

The International Student Adviser or P/DSO must approve all requests for a waiver of the full-time enrollment requirement in advance of the student's part-time enrollment. Students who drop below full-time enrollment without prior authorization are in violation of their immigration status and must be reported to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within 21 days of enrolling in less than full-time study. The request for an exception must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Legal exceptions are as follows:

1. Initial difficulties with the English language
2. Initial difficulties with reading requirements
3. Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
4. Enrollment in a course for which the student has not met the prerequisites
5. Illness - The student must submit an official letter from a licensed physician or psychologist documenting the illness with a recommendation of part-time study.

Procedures for I-20 Extension

If you are unable to complete your program of study by the "completion of studies" date listed on the front of your most recent I-20 form in Item 5, you must apply for an extension. If you are eligible, the International Student Adviser or P/DSO will help you extend your I-20 to complete your studies. You must consult with the International Student Adviser 30 days prior to the I-20 completion date.

To apply for an I-20 Extension, submit the following to the Admission Office:

- Completed and approved **Academic Adviser's Recommendation for I-20 Extension** 30 days prior to the end date on the student's I-20.
- Completed **AACC Financial Resource Form** with supporting documents, including an official bank statement or official bank letter. If a sponsor is supporting you, you must submit their bank statement and Form I-134 stating the type of support that will be provided for the amount of time needed to complete your program of study.

TRANSFER OUT

Transferring from Anne Arundel Community College to Another College or University

Students who do not wish to continue as a student at Anne Arundel Community College and want to transfer to another college or university **and** do not intend to leave the United States before beginning another program of study at a new college, must submit a **Transfer Out Request Form** to the International Student Adviser or P/DSO in the Admission Office. The International Student Adviser will update your SEVIS record as a "Transfer Out". If you change your mind and decide not to transfer and wish to continue as a student at AACC, you must notify the International Student Adviser **before** the transfer out release date. AACC international student representatives will no longer have access to your SEVIS record once the transfer date occurs and the student will lose all privileges as an international student with an AACC I-20. The student will be required to cease all on-campus and off-campus employment privileges associated with possession of an AACC I-20 after the transfer release date.

EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS FOR F-1 STUDENTS

On Campus Employment

International F-1 students are eligible to work on campus for no more than 20 hours a week during the fall and spring semesters. If a student wishes to work on campus, they must do the following:

- Meet with the International Student Adviser to gain initial approval
- Obtain an official letter or employment offer from on-campus department. The letter must be signed by the hiring supervisor.
- Submit the International Student Adviser's approval letter and an official offer of employment from an AACC department to the Social Security Administration Office to obtain a social security card.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

International students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year can apply for curricular practical training (CPT). The training must be relevant to the established curriculum in the student's program of study. Examples of curricular practical training are internships, cooperative education, workstudy or other types of internships or practicum offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. Student must have an employment offer to qualify for CPT and may be approved for part-time (20 hours) or full time (over 20 hours) employment during annual vacation or when AACC is not in session. Students enrolled in the English as a Second Language Program (ESL) program are not eligible for CPT. The students does not need to obtain USCIS approval to participate.

A student must submit the following to the P/DSO for approval to participate in curricular practical training:

- CPT Request Form
- A letter of confirmation from the department chair or supervising faculty member indicating that the student will receive academic credit for participation
- An official letter from a prospective employer describing the employment opportunity

F-1 students who engage in a total of 12 months or more of full-time CPT become ineligible for optional practical training (OPT) at the same educational level or degree.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

International students who have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year are eligible for optional practical training. Optional practical training is defined as temporary employment for the purpose of gaining practical experience during a student's enrollment in an academic program of study. Students are eligible to engage in optional practical training for a maximum of 12 months. Students may only apply for authorization for optional practical training that is directly related to their academic program of study. Application for OPT must be made before the student completes the final requirement for the degree or they will not be eligible for training. All students **must apply 90 days prior to the completion of the academic program** in order to be approved for a full year of OPT.

Optional practical training may be part-time during the student's studies and full-time during vacations and holidays. Participation in OPT after course completion must be full-time. The application to participate in OPT requires a DSO's recommendation in SEVIS and approval by the USCIS Service Center. If the USCIS approves the request for participation in optional practical training, it will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), Form I-766.

The United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) will terminate a student's participation in OPT if the student enrolls in another educational program after graduation from AACC or when the student fails to comply with F-1 regulations. A student does not have to have an offer of employment to apply for OPT. Students who want to travel while on OPT must see the college P/DSO prior to making travel arrangements.

Application Procedures for Optional Practical Training

- Submit a completed and approved Unofficial Graduation Audit form signed by an academic adviser to the P/DSO.
- Submit the following documents to USCIS:
 1. Completed and signed Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765)
 2. Completed and signed Certification by Designation School Official (Form I-538) or handwritten letter explaining how and when the student will use their degree.
 3. Current official transcripts obtained from the AACC Records and Registration Office
 4. Valid and original I-20 with OPT request and any previous I-20's
 5. Photocopy of valid passport page, visa page, I-94 (front and back) and any change of status information
 6. Two (2) ADIT (immigration photos) specified as in I-765, Part 3, with your name and SEVIS ID on the back and placed in a ziploc bag.
 7. Photocopy or original of any previous Employment Authorization Documents
 8. **A check or money order for \$340.00** payable to the U.S. Citizenships and Immigration Services.

The college's P/DSO will review all documents for submission prior to the student's mailing them to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). All documents must be accepted for filing by the USCIS Service Center before the program end date on Form I-20. Send all documents by "return receipt" or "express mail" to insure delivery before the program end date on the Form I-20 to:

USCIS Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
St. Albans, Vermont 05479-0001

Off Campus Work Due to Severe Economic Hardship

Severe Economic Hardship is an employment authorization granted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to an F-1 student who has suffered severe economic hardship due to **unexpected economic problems**.

To obtain a recommendation from the DSO for severe economic hardship, you must submit the following:

- Completed I-765.
- Letter of explanation detailing the need for employment authorization
- Supporting evidence of economic hardship
Examples: Newspaper articles, pictures, letters and medical bills from relatives/sponsor documenting an incident in your home country that illustrates the devaluation of currency.
- 2 passport photos. Write your name, SEVIS number and I-94# lightly on the back. Place the photos in an envelope
- Check or money order totaling \$340.00 payable to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services **or** Department of Homeland Security
- Photocopies of passport, visa, all I-20's issued to you and the most recent I-94 card (back and front). If you have been issued an EAD card in the past, provide a copy of this, too.

The DSO or International Student Adviser in the Admission Office will review all documents prior to mailing.

F-2 Dependent Visa

The spouse and unmarried minor children of students with F-1 visa status are required to have a valid passport and visa for entry into the US. The dependents of a student with an F-1 visa must apply for an F-2 visa at a US Consulate or Embassy. Each applicant must present the consular officer with a dependent form I-20 and any other documents that may be required to demonstrate eligibility for F-2 status. These documents may include proof of relationship to the F-1 student such as a marriage certificate and birth certificate. Dependents with an F-2 visa may remain in the US as long as the F-1 student maintains status. The restrictions for F-2 dependents are as follows:

1. F-2 dependents may not work under any circumstances
2. F-2 dependents may not engage in full-time study except as children eligible to enroll in kindergarten through the twelfth year of high school
3. F-2 dependents may study part-time for "vocational or recreational" purposes only. This is defined as a course that does not meet a certificate or degree requirement and does not satisfy a prerequisite.

When an F-2 dependent wants to engage in full-time study at AACC, they must apply for a change of status to F-1 visa status. They cannot begin full-time study until the change of status has been approved. **See the directions for changing visa status to F-1 student visa status under the heading, Application Procedures for Change of Non-Immigrant Status on the International Student Web page.**

Travel and Re-entry

To obtain a new F-1 entry visa, you must contact the US embassy or consulate in your home country and schedule an appointment. For more information about visa wait times, go to <http://www.travel.state.gov/visa>.

If you are traveling outside of the US, you will need the following documents in order to re-enter the US:

- Valid F-1 Entry Visa**

A passport that is valid for 6 months from the date of re-entry into the US. If a student's passport has expired or is close to expiring, the student must renew it before re-entry into the US. If a student's

visa has expired, they must visit the US Embassy or consulate in their home country to apply for a new visa for re-entry into the US

□ **Valid I-20**

An I-20 that must be properly endorsed by the DSO, which means that the endorsement or signature is valid for less than 12 months for re-entry and less than 6 months for F-1 students applying for OPT.

□ **Financial Documents**

Submit two copies of financial documents to prove that you can meet the financial requirements for international students studying in the US.

□ **Official Anne Arundel Community College Transcript**

Submit an official AACC transcript as proof of full-time enrollment. Transcripts may be obtained from the Records and Registration Office in the Student Services Center.

□ **Employment Authorization Document and /or other employment information**

An EAD is required only for F-1 students at the post-completion stage of OPT.

□ **Employment Offer**

An official offer of employment must be presented for F-1 students participating in an OPT.

Taxes

All F-1 students must file Form 8843 (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition: For Use by Alien Individuals Only) by June 15. If an F-1 student has dependents living in the US, they must also file Form 8843. Students with an F-1 visa who have earned income in the US must also file Form 1040NR- EZ by April 14. For more information, go to <http://www.irs.gov/instructions/i1040nre/ar01.html>.