

Important New Immigration Regulations

Effective January 1, 2003

I. New Immigration Regulations

Please be aware that as of January 1, 2003 the following new immigration regulations are in effect for all F-1 and J-1 students:

Start and End Dates

- New international students will not be permitted to enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date of their program as is indicated on their I-20 or DS2019 form.
- New students can begin working on campus, if eligible with the proper authorization, before the start date of the program (no more than 30 days).
- Grace periods to depart the U.S.: F-1 students are permitted to remain in the U.S. for 60 days upon successful completion of a course of study or practical training. This grace period is 30 days for J-1s.;

The grace period for F-1s is 15 days if you are authorized by the Intercultural Office to withdraw from a program early. There is no grace period for a student who fails to maintain status (i.e. who do not receive authorization from the Intercultural Office to drop below full time or to withdraw from a program early).

Full time studies

- Students must receive authorization from the Intercultural Office **PRIOR** to dropping below full time, going on a leave of absence, or terminating their studies or else they will be in violation of their immigration status. Therefore you will not be permitted in UVIEW to drop below full time during the drop/add period. You will be required to add a course in to be registered full time. Likewise the Dean of your school will also not be permitted to withdraw you from a course without first getting authorization from our office, if appropriate. There are very few circumstances in which you are permitted to drop below full time and usually involve medical reasons. Failing a course is NOT a valid reason. Therefore if you are not doing well in a class you will either have to take an F or an Incomplete and try to improve your grade. Please be aware that full-time is defined for undergraduates as 12 credits per semester. For graduate students it is determined by your specific program of study so please be sure to check with your department.
- Students can take an approved reduction in full time course load for no more than one semester.
- Students can be on an approved medical leave of absence for no more than a total of 12 months.

Dependents

- The Intercultural Office must now keep biographical and immigration records on all dependents.

- F-2 and J-2 dependents will need immigration forms issued in their own names (see below for timeline).
- F-2 dependents can no longer be students and must change to F-1 to pursue a full course of study. As of right now J-2 dependents can still study full-time, however we anticipate that this will change in the near future.

Practical Training for F-1s

- Students can apply for post completion practical training from 90 days before until the date of their completion of studies. You can no longer apply for OPT after you complete your studies.
- Students can now receive 12 months of practical training for each level of education (i.e. bachelor's, master's, PHD).
- Time spent in approved study-abroad programs will count towards the one academic year requirement for practical training (not to exceed more than a 5 month absence from the U.S.).
- Authorization to engage in practical training is automatically terminated when a student begins study at another educational level.

Miscellaneous

- All students must report any change of name or address to the Intercultural Office and to the Immigration Service on Form AR-11 within 10 days of the change. (*This regulation has been in effect prior to January 30.*)
- Reinstatements of student status due to violations will only be granted by the INS in very exceptional circumstances. Therefore it is extremely important that you do not violate your status in any way or your student status will be terminated and you could be forced to leave the country. (See list below on how to maintain status.)

II. The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

As some of you may be aware, beginning January 30, 2003, there will now be a new federally mandated monitoring and tracking program for all international students and scholars (F and J visas) and *their dependents* known as SEVIS, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. Basically what SEVIS means is that the Intercultural Office will now be reporting biographical, academic, and immigration information on all of our international students and scholars and their dependents to the Immigration Service electronically on a daily basis. Additionally, all immigration processes, such as transfers, extensions, travel, work permission, practical training, etc. will now be done through SEVIS. Therefore, as is mentioned above, **it is extremely important that you do not do anything to violate your immigration status, as this information will now be reported to the INS, and your student status in the U.S. will be immediately terminated.** It is also important that you leave plenty of time for our office to process any immigration requests on your behalf. We will no longer be able to produce immigration forms directly from our office computer. Every form and procedure will now first need to be submitted, approved, and returned by SEVIS.

During the transition period from January 30-August 1, 2003, the Intercultural Office will need to be collecting and entering information on each student, scholar and their dependents into SEVIS, as well as producing new SEVIS approved bar-coded immigration forms for every individual. Therefore at any time after January 30, if you come into our office to apply for a benefit of your status (i.e. travel, work permission, program extension, dependent travel, practical training, etc.), this process will need to be taken care of, so please allow plenty of time. If you do not come into our office by August 1 to request any benefit, we will be contacting you directly prior to that date to complete this procedure.

If you are not requesting an immigration benefit at this time, please do not come into the office now to request a new form, as we will not be able to handle that large a volume of students all at once.

Please be aware that if you are traveling outside the U.S. during the course of the spring semester, and do NOT need to renew your visa, current I-20 forms with signatures on page 4 within the last 6 months, or current IAP-66/DS2019 forms with signatures on the back of the pink page, will be valid for reentry through August 1, 2003. After that date only SEVIS, bar coded I-20s and DS2019s will be accepted for entry to the U.S.

The Intercultural Office will do all we can to try to help you maintain your legal status in the U.S. but please remember that your immigration status is YOUR responsibility.

Just some reminders of how to maintain your legal student status:

- You must be enrolled full-time every semester during the academic year. You can not drop below full time without PRIOR approval from the Intercultural Office. Approval from an academic dean or advisor is NOT sufficient.
- Do not work on or off campus without the prior authorization from the Intercultural Office or the Immigration Service.
- Pay close attention to when your I-20 or IAP-66/DS2019 expires. If you need to apply for an extension, you must do it BEFORE the form expires.
- Make sure you have the appropriate travel documents in order before leaving the country.
- You can not use an I-20 form from another school to attend B.C. and you can not use a B.C. I-20 to attend another school. If you transfer to another school, be sure to complete the transfer procedure at the new school within the required time period.
- Make sure you report any change of name or address to the Intercultural Office and to the Immigration Service within 10 days of the change. You should also always keep your current local address updated on AGORA and in the University Information System.

The Intercultural Office will be organizing a general information session to explain these new regulations and to answer any questions you may have on Friday, January, 24 from 3-5 in Devlin 008. Please try to attend!!!

Please also check your BC e-mail account, and our web site at www.bc.edu/intercultural for any updates.