

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students are a vital component of the New Mexico State University (NMSU) community. After a student is admitted to a degree seeking program ISSS office may issue an I-20 after the student submits the required documents. Based on the I-20 students may apply for an F-1 visa in their home country. The US consulate officer determines the eligibility of F-1 visa of a student.

International students are admitted to the United States primarily in F-1 (student) and J-1 (exchange visitor/student) nonimmigrant classifications and are subject to federal immigration laws and regulations administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), as well as by the U.S. Department of State for J-1 exchange visitors/students. The Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) under the umbrella of the International Programs and Compliance (IPC) serves as the University's designated office for SEVP compliance and is responsible for advising international students on their immigration-related responsibilities.

## Federal Regulations

The Department of Homeland Security through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has established rules for students in non-immigrant status, such as those with F-1 or J-1 visa types. Some of these rules include the following:

### 1. Enrollment requirements

For immigration purposes, each student must maintain full-time student status

- Undergraduate - Full-time status for fall and spring semesters is defined as 12 or more credits for undergraduates (only three online credits can apply to the full-time requirement).
- Graduate - Full-time status for fall and spring semesters is defined as 9 or more credits for graduate students (only three online credits can apply to the full-time requirement).
- Summer- Generally students are not required to enroll in classes during summer semester, as it is considered as a break time. The exception being when:
  - When students are admitted in summer semester. They are required to be full time student. Full-time status for summer is defined according to NMSU requirements.
  - Students graduating in the summer semester are required to enroll in at least one in-person class. Exceptions possible for final semester. Consult ISSS officials for more details.

### 2. Employment:

- On-campus employment: Students can work 20 hours per week on campus during Fall and Spring semester. Students can work up to 40 hours per week during break. Example Summer break, spring break etc. Students on valid I-20's with F-1 visas are eligible to work on campus while studying in the U.S. Students may only work on campus while they maintain status. A valid I-20, F-1 visa and I-94 document serve as proof of work eligibility for on-campus employment.
- Off-campus employment: International students are generally not eligible to work off-campus but may be eligible to not work off campus with without prior authorization from ISSS office.

- CPT – Students are generally eligible to apply for CPT after they complete one academic year as an F-1 student. But CPT must be authorized by ISSS office prior to working. Working without prior authorization is a violation of immigration status and the students I-20 may be terminated for “unauthorized employment”.
- OPT – Students are eligible to apply for OPT if they are in valid F-1 status for an academic year. Student can generally apply for OPT 90 days prior to their graduation date or within 60 days of graduation.
- STEM OPT – Students must be in active OPT Status with employment with an e-verified employer and must have received a degree in a STEM field. Students are eligible to apply for STEM OPT 90 days before their OPT expires.

For additional eligibility requirements about CPT, OPT or STEM OPT please contact ISSS office.

### 3. Maintaining Status:

- All international students must maintain their most current USA address and phone number in their NMSU account and notify within 10 days of change their new address.
- Maintain valid passport and visa
- Have a valid I-20 reflecting the students current major and educational level at all times.