

# F-1 Visa Regulations

While you are studying at Highline College, please consult the advisors in the International Student Programs (ISP) office for information and advice regarding your F-1 status. We are here to provide you with the best information available, but you are responsible for following the rules of F-1 nonimmigrant student status.

Read each section carefully and keep this paper for future reference.

## Important Documents:

- **I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status):** This provides details about your personal information and program of study. The program end date is printed in the “program of study” box on page 1 of your I-20. **Your I-20 must not expire.** See below for information about extending your I-20 program length.
- **Passport: Your passport must not expire.** Your passport should be valid for at least **6 months** in the future. You may renew your passport within the US; contact your embassy or consulate at least 6 months before the expiration date.
- **F-1 Visa:** This allows you to enter the US. It is not necessary for you to have a valid visa while you’re in the US. Visa renewals cannot be done within the US.

## Changes in your Situation:

You must report the following for you (and any F-2 dependents you may have) to ISP **within 10 days:**

- Change to your legal **name**
- Change to your local **home address** in the US (location of physical residence)
- Change to your local **phone number** in the US
- Change to your **major** or **program level** (e.g. changing from certificate to associate’s degree)
- Filing or approval of an application/petition to **change immigration status from F-1 to any other status**

## Extending your I-20:

If you need more time to complete your program of study at Highline, request an extension at least **2 weeks** before the program end date printed on your I-20. You must have a compelling **academic** or **medical** reason for the extension or your request will be denied. If you believe you need 3 or more additional quarters on your I-20, you must provide an updated bank statement showing that you have access to funds in the amount of \$18,000 or more.

## The 12 Credit Rule:

You must be a **FULL-TIME** student every quarter.

- Register for and complete **12 or more credits each quarter** at Highline.
- Register for **7 or more “in-class” credits each quarter**. “Hybrid” classes count towards the “in-class” requirement, but “online” classes do not.
- Contact the ISP office if you have any registration problems. If there is a reason you cannot register for 12 credits, you must seek written permission from the ISP office. This is only allowed in certain documented academic and medical circumstances.
- Do not drop below 12 credits during the quarter without permission from the ISP office. At the end of each quarter, you must still have 12 or more credits on your schedule.
- Contact the ISP office if you wish to take a **vacation quarter**. Students are permitted to take one vacation quarter each academic year, but you must have approval from the ISP office to do so.

### Normal Progress Rule:

To maintain status, you must maintain a cumulative GPA of **2.0 or higher**. If your GPA drops below 2.0, you will be placed on **probation**. Three quarters below 2.0 can result in **dismissal** from Highline and **termination** of your I-20.

### Working on Campus:

As an F-1 student, you **can** work on-campus, part time, in a “General Fund” position, **if** you have met these conditions:

- International students who began their Highline program in Winter 2017 or earlier are required to have earned credit in College Survival (SSER 100), First Step Program, or equivalent.
- International students who began their Highline program in Spring 2017 or later must have completed all required Smart Start Workshops.
- All international students must have earned a minimum GPA of 2.5.

### Working off Campus:

As an F-1 student, you can **NOT** work off-campus unless you obtain special written permission from the USCIS. If you complete a 2-year degree or 1-year certificate, you may apply for 12 months of Optional Practical Training (OPT), which will allow you to work off-campus in a job related to your field of study. OPT must be approved by USCIS and is not available for all majors.

### Tuition Payments:

- Payment of tuition and fees is due in full by the quarterly payment **deadline**, found here: <http://registration.highline.edu/calendar.php>.
- Payments may be submitted **online** or **in person** at the Cashier's office in Building 6.
- Failure to pay tuition will result in Highline **dropping** your classes. If you are unable to re-register, your SEVIS record will be **terminated**.

### Traveling Outside the US:

- Submit your I-20 to ISP for a travel signature at least **2 business days** before you plan to leave the US. Travel signatures are valid for **6 months**.
- Obtain a **visa**, if needed, to travel to your destination.
- Renew your F-1 visa, if needed, while outside of the US.

### Completing your Studies:

Submit an **Exit Form** to the ISP office during your final quarter.

- If you complete a 2-year degree or 1-year certificate, you are given a **60-day** grace period.
- If you do not complete either a degree or a 1-year certificate, you are given a **30-day** grace period.
- Before the end of your grace period, you must **leave** the US, **transfer** to another school, or make other permissible arrangements, such as applying for OPT or a change of immigrant status.
- If you leave the US during your grace period, you may **not** re-enter the US using your Highline I-20.

### Transferring to Another School:

- If you plan to transfer to a new school, you must submit an **Exit Form** and your **acceptance letter** to ISP before the end of your grace period (see above).
- You must begin classes at the new school on their **next start date**, which must be **within 5 months** of completing classes (or OPT) at Highline.
- ISP strongly recommends that you schedule an advising appointment with an ISP advisor before you complete your studies at Highline.

### Additional Information:

Please visit <http://international.highline.edu/thunderworld/onlineAdvisor.htm> for further details about many immigration-related questions.

Most requests and changes of information may be submitted online at <http://bit.ly/ISPFORMS>.