

F-1 Reinstatement

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Regaining F-1 Status

You are maintaining lawful status if you are making normal progress toward completing a course of study and complying with the immigration regulations outlined below. For more information on the benefits and restrictions of your F-1 student status, [contact](#) your international student advisor in the Office of International Programs.

Immigration Regulations

- Pursue a “full course of study” at the school listed on your current Form I-20. A full course of study is 12 or more credits in fall and spring semesters for undergraduate students, and 9 or more credits for graduate students. Exceptions to the full-time requirement must be authorized in advance by your OIP advisor.
- Complete your studies before the program completion date listed in item 5 of your I-20.
- Keep your I-20 valid by following proper procedures for a program extension, change in educational level or field of study, and transfer of schools.
- Remain in the U.S. for no longer than 60 days after completing your current program of study or after completing an authorized period of practical training.
- Keep your passport valid at all times unless you are exempt from the passport requirement.
- Accept no employment except that which is authorized in accordance with the immigration regulations.
- Report any change of address to immigration within 10 days of the change to OIP.

If you fail to maintain status, you are ineligible for any of the benefits of F-1 status (for example, employment authorization).

There are two ways to regain status: apply for reinstatement or depart the U.S. and seek a new admission to the U.S. in F-1 status.

The process to regain valid F-1 status can be challenging. Below are the options through which you can regain your F-1 status. We also encourage you to contact an immigration attorney so you can make an informed decision and consider the risks with both options.

Option 1: Reinstatement

When requesting reinstatement, you must establish to the satisfaction of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that you:

- Have not been out of status more than 5 months at the time of filing the request for reinstatement (or demonstrate that the failure to file within the 5-month period was the result of exceptional circumstances and that you filed for reinstatement as soon as possible under these circumstances).
- Do not have a record of repeated or willful violations of immigration regulations.
- Are currently pursuing, or intending to pursue, a full course of study in the immediate future at the school which issued the Form I-20.
- Have not engaged in unauthorized employment.
- Are not deportable on any ground other than overstaying or failing to maintain status.

You must also establish that:

- The violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond your control. Such circumstances might include serious injury or illness, a natural disaster, or inadvertence, oversight, or neglect on the part of your OIP advisor, but do not include instances where a pattern of repeated violations or a willful failure on your part resulted in the need for reinstatement, or
- The violation relates to a reduction in your course load that would have been within the international student advisor's authority to authorize, and that failure to approve reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to you.

If USCIS approves the reinstatement request, the adjudicating officer will update your SEVIS record to indicate that you have been reinstated. If USCIS does not approve the reinstatement request, you may not appeal the decision and need to prepare to leave the U.S. immediately.

Reinstatement Application Procedure

1. Schedule an appointment with an OIP advisor to discuss your options to regain F-1 status. At the appointment the OIP advisor will review your eligibility for F-1 reinstatement and will discuss the application process.
2. Submit the online I-20 request to OIP. You will be asked to upload scans/photos of financial documentation. The financial documentation must show enough funds to pay for one year of [expenses](#) (unless you are requesting an I-20 for only one semester).

Allow 10 business days for OIP processing. OIP will create a new I-20 for your reinstatement application. You will receive an email from OIP when your I-20 is ready for pick up.

3. Prepare your reinstatement application following the list of documents below. The online [USCIS ELIS](#) application option is no longer available so you must submit your reinstatement application to USCIS by mail. **Keep a copy of your entire application for your records.** It is recommended that you send your application by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Mailing Address(es) to USCIS Dallas Lockbox

1. For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

2. For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:

USCIS
ATTN: I-539
2501 S. State Highway 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

- [Form I-539](#) (write “REINSTATEMENT” at the top of the form)
- [Form I-539 fee](#) paid by money order or personal check. ***You must make your check or money order payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.***
- Photocopies of all previously-issued I-20s

- Original I-94 (the white card stapled inside your passport) or I-94 printout obtained at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/>
 - Photocopy of new Reinstatement I-20 signed by OIP advisor
 - Evidence of source and amount of financial support
 - A letter requesting reinstatement to F-1 student status which explains your situation and truthfully states that failure to maintain status was due to any or all of the reasons listed above
 - Optional: Supporting documentation (for example, a letter of support from a faculty adviser familiar with the circumstances of your case or an OIP advisor)
 - Current transcript and transcripts from other U.S. schools previously attended
 - Photocopy of passport identification and visa pages; do not send your passport
 - Completed [G-1145 Form](#) (optional; it signs you up for email/text message notification of your application's arrival at USCIS)
4. Provide a copy of your USCIS receipt notice to OIP when they send it to you.

Final Considerations

- A decision to reinstate an individual to F-1 student status is at the discretion of the USCIS.
- Processing times at USCIS vary greatly. Expect to wait 2-4 months before receiving a response.
- While reinstatement application is in process, you **MUST** enroll in school in **FULL-TIME** status with a minimum of 12 credits as an undergraduate and a minimum of 9 credits as a graduate student.
- You are **NOT** eligible for any F-1 student benefits, such as OPT authorization or on-campus employment, unless the USCIS reinstates you to F-1 student status.
- You **should not travel outside the US while a reinstatement application is pending**. It may be considered an abandonment of the application. If you need to leave the US meet with an OIP advisor prior to travel.
- If application is approved, USCIS will endorse your new I-20 form and return it to the mailing address listed on the I-539. OIP will contact you if

we receive any updates on your behalf. Please also contact OIP when you receive information from USCIS. (F-2 dependent status is automatically reinstated with the reinstatement of the F-1 student.)

- If denied, you will begin to accrue days of unlawful presence in the US (accrual of more than 180 days of *unlawful presence* could subject a person to a 3-year or 10-year bar from reentering the US.). Students who are denied reinstatement have the option to file an appeal with the USCIS, but we strongly encourage these students to hire a competent immigration attorney OR leave the country immediately and re-enter, if there are no travel restrictions.

Option 2: Travel and Reentry

In some cases, it may be advisable to depart the U.S. and re-enter with a new I-20, rather than applying for reinstatement. You may do this by obtaining a new I-20 from the school you are currently attending or wish to attend, then departing the U.S., applying for a new [F-1 visa](#) if the F-1 visa stamp in your passport has expired, and returning to the U.S. Note that students who violated status are not eligible for [automatic visa revalidation](#). A re-entry to the U.S. after a status violation is viewed by Immigration as “initial attendance” in F-1 status. As such, you are bound by restrictions placed on new students, such as the academic year waiting period for eligibility for practical training.

To request a new I-20 for travel and reentry:

1. Schedule an appointment with an OIP advisor to discuss your options to regain F-1 status. At the appointment the OIP advisor will review your eligibility for F-1 reinstatement and will discuss the application process.
2. Submit the online I-20 request to OIP. You will be asked to upload scans/photos of financial documentation. The financial documentation must show enough funds to pay for one year of [expenses](#) (unless you are requesting an I-20 for only one semester).

Allow 10 business days for OIP processing. OIP will create a new I-20 for your reinstatement application. You will receive an email from OIP when your I-20 is ready for pick up.

3. OIP will create a new I-20 for your travel & reentry. Allow 10 business days for I-20 processing.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the major difference between the two options?

Students who are reinstated continue in their previous F-1 status. Students who choose travel and reentry are considered initial status students. This is most important when considering eligibility for [Optional Practical Training](#) or [Curricular Practical Training](#). Students who reenter using a new I-20 will be required to complete one academic year before becoming eligible to apply for off-campus employment.

What are the costs associated with each option?

Reinstatement in the U.S: USCIS charges a [Form I-539 filing fee](#).

Travel and reentry: There is the \$350 [SEVIS fee](#), plus any expenses incurred for travel and visa applications.

Which option is the least risky?

Each option has its risks. If your application for reinstatement is denied, you will be required to depart the U.S. immediately. If you are denied re-entry at the border, you may be required to return home immediately from the port of entry.

May I continue to study while my application for reinstatement is pending?

Yes, you must continue to study in order to maintain your F-1 status.

May I continue to work on-campus while my application for reinstatement is pending?

No. Once it is determined that you have violated your student status, you must stop working immediately.

How long will the reinstatement process take?

Reinstatement applications take approximately six to nine months and as long as one year.

Can I reenter from Canada or must I return to and reenter from my home country?

Reentry from Canada is fine; however, you must already have a valid visa to enter Canada, if needed. The [Canadian Consulate](#) will not issue an entry visa to students with “initial attendance” I-20s. For more information, contact your OIP advisor.