

F-1

STATUS

What Is Changing?

New federal rules & guidance for undergraduate F-1 students

Student meeting • September 11, 2026

Scheduled federal effective date: September 15, 2026

Goal: understand the basics, know what to watch, and know when to ask for help.

Information current as of September 9, 2026

The big picture

1 Fixed admission dates

New F-1 admissions will use a specific “Admit Until Date” on the I-94 instead of D/S.

2 More planning ahead

Some students will need a USCIS Extension of Stay (EOS) to finish a program, move to a new level, or pursue practical training.

3 Tighter academic/work rules

New limits affect early major changes/transfers, and SEVP has narrowed its interpretation of CPT eligibility.

You do not need to memorize the rules — but deadlines and authorization matter more than ever.

Three documents — three different jobs

FORM I-20

Your F-1 school/program document. It shows your program, dates, school, and certain authorizations/recommendations.

FORM I-94

Your U.S. admission record. After the new rule takes effect, the “Admit Until Date” becomes especially important.

F-1 VISA

Used to request entry to the U.S. A visa expiration date is not the same thing as your authorized stay inside the U.S.

Most important after international travel → check your new I-94.

D/S is being replaced by a fixed date

BEFORE

D/S

“Duration of Status”

No fixed expiration date on the I-94 while you properly maintained F-1 status and pursued your authorized activity.



AFTER SEPT. 15

DATE

“Admit Until Date” (AUD)

Generally tied to the I-20 program end date, with a maximum initial admission period of 4 years, plus the applicable departure period.

If you are already in the U.S. in D/S

If you are properly maintaining F-1 status in D/S on September 15, you receive a transition period.

- You may generally remain under the transition rule until the later of your EAD expiration or I-20 program end date — but no more than 4 years from September 15, 2026.
- The transition rule preserves a 60-day departure period for these D/S students.
- International travel changes the picture: after travel, readmission will generally place you into the new fixed-date system.

Travel after September 15 can move a continuing student from D/S into the fixed-date system.

Source: DHS Final Rule, new 8 CFR 214.1(m)(1), including transition and travel provisions.

After every international trip: check your I-94

1

Retrieve your I-94

Use the official CBP I-94 site after you re-enter the United States.

2

Check the date

Confirm your class of admission is F-1 and carefully review the Admit Until Date.

3

Report problems quickly

If the class or date looks wrong
— or you do not understand it
— contact your DSO promptly.

What if you need more time?

An updated I-20 may no longer be enough by itself.

STEP 1

Talk with your DSO early. The DSO determines whether an I-20 recommendation / program update is appropriate.

STEP 2

If your authorized stay will not cover the needed time, you may have to file Form I-539 with USCIS, with evidence and the required fee.

STEP 3

USCIS decides the EOS. A timely filed application can allow you to remain in an authorized period of stay while it is pending.

Do not wait until your deadline. Immigration extensions now require more lead time.

Changing your academic plans is more restricted

DURING YOUR FIRST ACADEMIC YEAR

Undergraduates generally may not:

- transfer to another SEVP-certified school
- change your major or educational level

unless SEVP authorizes an exception for extenuating circumstances.

AFTER COMPLETING A U.S. PROGRAM

Your next F-1 program must move upward.

After completing a program after the effective date, the rule does not allow maintaining/obtaining F-1 status for another program at the same or a lower educational level.

Before changing a major, school, or degree plan: speak with your DSO first.

CPT: SEVP has narrowed the standard

CPT is not simply “work related to your major.”

SEVP’s August 2026 guidance says CPT must be a core and essential part of the student’s studies — not a way to create an employment opportunity.

Federal regulation still describes CPT as training that is an “integral part of an established curriculum.”

CPT authorization is academic authorization for qualifying training — not general permission to work.

Sources: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i); SEVP Broadcast Messages Aug. 12 & 24, 2026; NAFSA AM 360.

Before you begin any internship or off-campus training

1

ACADEMIC FIT

The training must meet the federal CPT standard and be directly related to your major.

2

ELIGIBILITY

Most students must have completed one full academic year in lawful F-1 status before CPT.

3

SPECIFIC AUTHORIZATION

CPT is employer-, location-, date-, and part/full-time specific on the Form I-20.

4

BEFORE DAY 1

You must receive CPT authorization before the training begins. Never “start now and fix it later.”

Do not assume “unpaid” means authorization is unnecessary — ask your DSO before you begin.

Sources: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i); SEVP CPT guidance (Aug. 2026); Study in the States CPT guidance.

OPT still exists — but the process can involve EOS

OPT IS NOT ELIMINATED

The final rule does not eliminate post-completion OPT or STEM OPT.

FIXED-DATE STUDENTS

A student whose admission does not cover the requested OPT period generally must pair the I-765 employment application with an EOS request — or seek a new admission after travel.

TRANSITION EXCEPTION

Certain students who remain in the D/S transition and timely file OPT/STEM OPT by March 18, 2027 are exempt from filing a separate I-539 for that requested OPT period.

Graduating soon? Meet with your DSO months before your program end date.

Source: DHS Final Rule, new 8 CFR 214.1(m)(1)(i)-(ii) and 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(D).

The post-completion departure period is changing

D/S TRANSITION STUDENTS

60 days

The transition provision preserves the existing 60-day departure period for F students who remain under that transition.

NEW FIXED-DATE SYSTEM

30 days

After completing study or authorized practical training under the fixed-date rules, the new departure period is generally 30 days.

Authorized early withdrawal: 15 days. Failure to maintain status: no grace period.

Source: DHS Final Rule, new 8 CFR 214.1(m)(1) and 214.2(f)(5)(v).

What would you do?

“I want to change my major.”

If you are in your first academic year, do not make the change without speaking with your DSO. The new rule generally restricts first-year major changes.

“I found an internship.”

Great — but do not begin. A major-related internship is not automatically CPT. Ask whether it meets the federal CPT standard and obtain authorization first.

“I came back from a trip.”

Retrieve your new I-94. Check F-1 classification and the Admit Until Date. Travel after Sept. 15 may place you in the fixed-date system.

When in doubt: ask before you act.

Your F-1 checklist



Maintain full-time enrollment unless a DSO authorizes an exception.



Never begin off-campus employment/training without confirming authorization first.



Know the program end date on your Form I-20.



Plan early for CPT, OPT, program extensions, or any need for more time in the U.S.



After international travel, retrieve and check your Form I-94.



Keep copies of your I-20s, I-94s, EADs, and USCIS notices.



Talk to your DSO before changing your major, degree level, or school.

Best rule of thumb: if a decision could affect your F-1 status, ask your DSO before making it.

One final message

**The rules are changing.
You are not expected to navigate them alone.**

ASK EARLY • CHECK DATES • GET AUTHORIZATION BEFORE YOU ACT

Questions?

Because federal guidance and litigation are still developing, watch for official updates after this meeting.

Current as of Sept. 9, 2026. The final rule is scheduled to take effect Sept. 15; litigation is pending.

Primary sources & professional guidance

DHS / Federal Register

Final Rule: Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure (91 FR 44976, July 17, 2026)

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2026-07-17/pdf/2026-14439.pdf>

Study in the States / SEVP

Official F-1 student and SEVIS guidance; D/S implementation and CPT materials

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

USCIS

Form I-539 / Extension or Change of Status and Form I-765 employment authorization information

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

CBP

Official Form I-94 retrieval

<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>

NAFSA

Duration of Status Rule analysis, Adviser's Manual 360 updates, and CPT guidance summaries

<https://www.nafsa.org/duration-status>

Prepared for a September 11, 2026 student meeting • Information verified September 9, 2026