



INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

POLICY

MANUAL

A guide to F-1 regulations at BYU-Idaho

last revised September 1, 2026

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Introduction

Brigham Young University – Idaho is a private baccalaureate University sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It's stated mission is "to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who are leaders in their homes, the Church, and their communities."¹ The school has been accredited continuously by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) since 1936. The NWCCU is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the authority on the educational quality and institutional effectiveness of higher education institutions in the seven-state Northwest region.²

Curriculum

The curriculum of BYU-Idaho is characterized by the following priorities:

- 1) The Learning Model – a proactive teaching style in which students learn how to prepare for class, teach each other, and then apply what they learn to life outside the classroom
- 2) Internships – apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings, gaining practical experience in jobs with experts from across the globe, and building strong ties and skills for future careers
- 3) Online Learning – featuring the same structure and teaching styles as on-campus classes, online courses give students more flexibility and enable them to finish degrees faster³

Academic Calendar

These courses are taught on a three semester per year academic calendar. Students are assigned a "track" which includes two of the three semesters. While students are permitted to register for classes during any of these semesters, their admission status is tied to their track, allowing for a one semester break each year. In addition, students generally do not take classes during the seven-week summer session.⁴



Spring/Fall
(Flex Semester: Winter)



Fall/Winter
(Flex Semester: Spring)



Winter/Spring
(Flex Semester: Fall)

Semester Dates

Semester	Start Date	End Date
Spring	Mid April	Mid July
Summer Session	End of July	Early September
Fall	Mid September	Mid December
Winter	Early January	Mid April

¹ <https://www.byui.edu/about/byu-idaho-mission-statement>

² NWCCU Verification of Accreditation Letter, August 9, 2021. See also <https://nwccu.org/member-institutions/directory/>

³ <https://www.byui.edu/about-byu-idaho>

⁴ <https://www.byui.edu/admissions/three-track-system>

BYU-Idaho has an existing approval for its 14 week semesters based on the minutes calculations illustrated below.

Requirement: 750 class minutes per credit (NWCCU Section 600.2 (1))

Winter= 65 Teaching Days

MWF= 39 days X 60 minutes= 2340 minutes T TH= 26 days X 60 minutes= 1560 minutes

Spring= 65 Teaching Days

MWF= 39 days X 60 minutes= 2340 minutes T TH= 26 days X 60 minutes= 1560 minutes

Summer= 32 Teaching Days

MWF=19 days X 120 minutes= 2280 minutes T TH= 13 days X 120 minutes= 1560 minutes

Fall= 65 Teaching Days

MWF= 39 days X 60 minutes= 2340 minutes T TH= 26 days X 60 minutes= 1560 minutes

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Additional Characteristics

In addition to a unique approach to curriculum and academic calendaring, the following characteristics shape our approach to interpreting federal regulations:

- 1) Admission criteria, including English proficiency, intentionally offer low barrier to entry
- 2) Lack of academic standing policy obscures normal progress toward program completion
- 3) Low cost of attendance, subsidized generously by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- 4) Financial holds for unpaid tuition that prevent subsequent registration
- 5) Strict compliance mandate from executive leadership

The following policy statements represent BYU-Idaho's best effort to apply federal regulations to students whose experience is shaped by the characteristics of the University. These statements fall under four general categories of compliance – Financial Support, Enrollment, Employment, and Academic Progress. A few additional statements have been categorized as Other.

⁵ <https://www.byui.edu/secure/approved-academic-calendars>

Financial Support

Introduction

Because of the University's low barriers to entry, affordable cost of attendance, and the sponsorship requirements for an F-1 visa, BYU-Idaho has implemented a robust process for ensuring each student has adequate financial support for the duration of his/her program.

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(1)

(1) Admission of student --

8 CFR 214.2(f)(1)(i)(B)

(B) The student has documentary evidence of financial support in the amount indicated on the Form I-20 or successor form;¹

9 FAM 402.5-5(G)(1) (U) Determining Financial Status of F-1 and M-1 Students

(CT:VISA-1837; 09-26-2023)

- a. **(U)** The sponsoring school is required to verify the availability of financial support before issuing the Form I-20. Schools may not be as well-versed in local documentation or cultural practices as you may be; therefore, you must still ensure that the student has sufficient funds to successfully study in the United States without being forced to resort to unauthorized employment.
- b. **(U) F-1 Student:** The phrase "sufficient funds to cover expenses" referred to in 22 CFR 41.61(b)(1)(ii) means the applicant must have sufficient funds to successfully study in the United States without resorting to unauthorized U.S. employment for financial support. An applicant must provide evidence that sufficient funds are, or will be, available to defray all expenses during the entire period of anticipated study. In addition to personal funds, sources of funding may include scholarships, assistantships, fellowships, and approved on-campus employment. This does not mean the applicant must have cash immediately available to cover the entire period of intended study, which may last several years. You must, however, establish, usually through credible documentary evidence, that the applicant has enough readily available funds to meet all expenses for the first year of study. A student could potentially satisfy this requirement by presenting evidence of an existing student loan, but the mere intention to obtain a loan would be insufficient. Likewise, a student's plan to use curricular practical training (CPT) or optional practical training (OPT) to cover first-year expenses would be insufficient. You also must be satisfied that, barring unforeseen circumstances, adequate funds will be available for each additional year of study from the same source or from one or more other specifically identified and reliable financial sources. Potential funds derived from CPT or OPT may be considered for returning students seeking visa renewal who possess approval and employment authorization to engage in CPT or OPT, but the mere eligibility and/or intent to engage in CPT or OPT is speculative, both in terms of the amount of money that might be earned and whether authorization to work will be granted, and therefore may not be sufficient to demonstrate the necessary funds. See [9 FAM 402.5-5\(N\)](#) below for more information on employment for F-1 and M-1 students.²

¹ [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2\(f\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2(f))

² https://fam.state.gov/FAM/09FAM/09FAM040205.html#M402_5_5_G_1

9 FAM 402.5-5(G)(4) (U) Affidavits of Support or Other Assurances by an Interested Party

(CT:VISA-1; 11-18-2015)

(U) Various factors are important in evaluating assurances of financial support by interested parties:

- (1) **(U)** Financial support to a student is not a mere formality to facilitate the applicant's entry into the United States, nor does it pertain only when the individual cannot otherwise provide adequate personal support. Rather, the sponsor must ensure that the applicant will not become a public charge nor be compelled to take unauthorized employment while studying in the United States. This obligation commences when the visa holder enters the United States and continues until the visa holder's completion of their program of study and departure.
- (2) **(U)** You must resolve any doubt that the financial status of the person giving the assurance is sufficient to substantiate the assertion that financial support is available to the applicant.
- (3) **(U)** You must also carefully evaluate the factors that would motivate a sponsor to honor a commitment of financial support. If the sponsor is a close relative of the applicant, there may be a greater probability that the commitment will be honored than if the sponsor is not a relative. Regardless of the relationship, you must be satisfied that the reasons prompting the offer of financial support make it likely the commitment will be fulfilled.³

School Attestation, Form I-20, page 2

"I certify under penalty of perjury that all information provided above was entered before I signed this form and is true and correct. I executed this form in the United States after review and evaluation in the United States by me or other officials of the school of the student's application, transcripts, or other records of courses taken and proof of financial responsibility, which were received at the school prior to the execution of this form. The school has determined that the above-named student's qualifications meet all standards for admission to the school and the student will be required to pursue a full course of study as defined by 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6). I am a designated school official of the above named school and I am authorized to issue this form."

Study in the States, Resources for Students

Prospective F-1 or M-1 students must have the financial resources to live and study in the United States. This includes being able to cover the cost of tuition, books, living expenses and travel. Designated school officials (DSOs) must collect evidence of the student's financial ability before issuing a [Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status."](#)

Additionally, prospective students must bring their evidence of financial ability when applying for their student visa with the U.S. Department of State. It is also advised to have the evidence on-hand when entering the country at a U.S. port of entry, in the event a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer asks to review it.

A prospective student must have financial evidence showing that they or a sponsor has sufficient funds to cover tuition and living expenses during the period of intended study. Evidence of financial ability includes but is not limited to:

- Family bank statements.
- Documentation from a sponsor.
- Financial aid letters.
- Scholarship letters.
- Letter from an employer showing annual salary.

³ https://fam.state.gov/FAM/09FAM/09FAM040205.html#M402_5_5_G_4

Certain Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools may have specific requirements for acceptable forms of evidence. To verify if a form of financial evidence is acceptable, contact the school's international student office.⁴

Demonstrating Financial Support at BYU-Idaho

Prospective students who meet all admissions requirements will be conditionally admitted and invited to apply for an I-20. Students who are eligible for an I-20 will be formally admitted prior to issuance of the I-20. Students who are not eligible for an I-20 will be denied admission.

The level of financial support is tied to the [University's Cost of Attendance](#), as shown on the Financial Aid website. Because the majority of international students at BYU-Idaho live in the U.S. year round, we adjust the cost of attendance to reflect living expenses for the full year.

I-20 applicants must complete a robust process for demonstrating financial support in order to be eligible for an I-20. This process includes the following essential components:

- 1) Financial Orientation Module – students learn about government and university financial requirements, educational and living expenses, their personal responsibility for their financial support, and the important role of a sponsor
- 2) Financial Orientation Quiz – students demonstrate their understanding by answering all questions correctly
- 3) Sponsor Agreement – sponsor must acknowledge his/her role in providing full financial support for the duration of the student's program and describe how financial support will be provided
 - a. Sponsors acknowledge understanding full cost of sponsorship, responsibility for all educational and living expenses, employment limitations, student financial dependence on them, and our referral of students in need back to them
 - b. Sponsors who wish to provide financial support for more than one student will be required to show sufficient liquid funds and income capacity for all sponsored students
- 4) Financial Documentation – sponsor must provide documentary evidence of at least the first year's expenses in liquid funds (see Acceptable Financial Documentation below)
- 5) Annual Income Review – sponsor's annual income will be evaluated based on home country/currency and widely accepted cost of living comparisons to the U.S.
 - a. Examples of benchmark data include World Bank, Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, Numbeo, WorldData.info, World Population Review, and the CIA's The World FactBook
 - b. Sponsor's annual income must meet country's threshold for demonstrating capacity to provide full financial support after the first year
- 6) International Student Deposit – students must arrange for the payment of the \$4,000 deposit (\$6,000 for students who are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)
 - a. Deposit is waived for dependents of General Authorities of the Church, as their financial support is provided as a benefit and substantiated by a sponsorship letter

*Because Canadian residents do not need a visa, they will be exempted from the following requirements: financial orientation, financial orientation quiz, annual income review, and international student deposit.

*We reserve the right to deny a sponsor who misrepresents or fails to demonstrate current and future intent and capacity to provide the full financial support indicated in the sponsor agreement. This includes questionable financial documentation.

⁴ <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/prepare/financial-ability>

Acceptable Financial Documentation

- 1) Checking account
- 2) Savings account
- 3) Certificate of deposit (maturity date must be prior to program start date, if applicable)
- 4) Money market account
- 5) Student loans (Canada, occasionally Scandinavian countries)
- 6) Educational savings account (Canada) – TFSA & RESP (not PRSP)
- 7) Sponsorship letter from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – could include the Corporation of the Presiding Bishopric or the Church Educational System

Unacceptable Financial Documentation

- 1) Business accounts
- 2) Retirement accounts – 401k, pensions, PRSP (unless sponsor is already retired)
- 3) Stock portfolios
- 4) Credit cards/line of credit
- 5) Property ownership
- 6) Statement of earnings/tax returns

Sponsors with assets in the unacceptable list are welcome to liquidate them and place them into an acceptable account. As part of the I-20 process, BYU-Idaho International Services will gather and electronically retain documentary evidence of one full year of financial support. Exceptions to acceptable financial documentation must be approved by the Operations Manager or Director. In all cases, the principle of “readily available funds”⁵ should be upheld.

Students with Financial Difficulty

Because of the sponsorship requirement for a student visa, need-based aid is generally not available to international students. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints already bears at least half of the actual cost of tuition through its sponsorship of BYU-Idaho. International students who experience financial difficulty are referred to the International Services office for the following established protocols:

- 1) Initial consultation to discuss sponsorship and the nature of financial challenge
- 2) Enrollment in a peer mentoring program called Financial Literacy
- 3) Student learns how to resolve their difficulty on their own
- 4) One-time financial petition for truly short-term issues, reviewed by a campus committee
 - a. Denied petitions may result in an offer to assist the student with transportation costs to return home and continue studying online

⁵ https://fam.state.gov/FAM/09FAM/09FAM040205.html#M402_5_5_G_1

Enrollment

Introduction

Because of the University's three-track system and emphasis on internships, International Services has defined the following approach to ensuring students meet the regulatory requirement to maintain a full course of study.

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)

(6) *Full course of study* --

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)

(i) *General*. Successful completion of the full course of study must lead to the attainment of a specific educational or professional objective. A course of study at an institution not certified for attendance by foreign students as provided in §214.3(a)(3) does not satisfy the requirement of this paragraph (f)(6)(i). A "full course of study" as required by section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the Act means:

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B)

(B) Undergraduate study at a college or university, certified by a school official to consist of at least 12 semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term in those institutions using standard semester, trimester, or quarter hour systems, where all undergraduate students who are enrolled for a minimum of 12 semester or quarter hours are charged full-time tuition or are considered full-time for other administrative purposes, or its equivalent (as determined by SEVP in the school certification process), except when the student needs a lesser course load to complete the course of study during the current term;

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G)

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)

(iii) *Reduced course load*. The designated school official may allow an F-1 student to engage in less than a full course of study as provided in this paragraph (f)(6)(iii). Except as otherwise noted, a reduced course load must consist of at least six semester or quarter hours, or half the clock hours required for a full course of study. A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the DSO will be considered out of status. On-campus employment pursuant to the terms of a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship is deemed to be part of the academic program of a student otherwise taking a full course of study.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(A)

(A) *Academic difficulties*. The DSO may authorize a reduced course load on account of a student's initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods, or improper course level placement. The student must resume a full course of study at the next available term, session, or semester, excluding a summer session, in order to maintain student status. A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of

study due to academic difficulties is not eligible for a second authorization by the DSO due to academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at that program level. A student authorized to drop below a full course of study for academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at a particular program level may still be authorized for a reduced course load due to an illness medical condition as provided for in paragraph (B) of this section.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(B)

(B) *Medical conditions.* The DSO may authorize a reduced course load (or, if necessary, no course load) due to a student's temporary illness or medical condition for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level. In order to authorize a reduced course load based upon a medical condition, the student must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, psychiatrist, doctor of osteopathy, licensed psychologist, or clinical psychologist to the DSO to substantiate the illness or medical condition. The student must provide current medical documentation and the DSO must reauthorize the drop below full course of study each new term, session, or semester. A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of study due to illness or medical condition for an aggregate of 12 months may not be authorized by a DSO to reduce their course load on subsequent occasions while pursuing a course of study at the same program level. A student may be authorized to reduce course load for a reason of illness or medical condition on more than one occasion while pursuing a course of study, so long as the aggregate period of that authorization does not exceed 12 months.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(C)

(C) *Completion of course of study.* The DSO may authorize a reduced course load in the student's final term, semester, or session if fewer courses are needed to complete the course of study. If the student is not required to take any additional courses to satisfy the requirements for completion, but continues to be enrolled for administrative purposes, the student is considered to have completed the course of study and must take action to maintain status. Such action may include application for change of status or departure from the U.S.

From NAFSA Manual Regarding Last Semester Enrollment

3.F.2.5.4

Distance education in the final term of study

The regulations are silent on the question of whether a distance education course (see [3.F.1.7 Distance education limits](#)) can satisfy the full course of study requirement if it is the only course taken in the final semester of study. However, in the [March 2008 SEVIS Liaison Call](#), SEVP told NAFSA:

"If a student needs only one course to finish his or her program of study, it cannot be taken through online/distance education. There must be a physical presence requirement for the course. If a student remains in the United States without reporting to any class, it becomes a security issue and cannot be allowed."

Module 3 of [SEVP's Prior Online DSO Training Text](#) also states:

"If students only need one course to complete their program of study, the course cannot be completed through online or distance education."

If a student needs *more than* one class in the final term to complete the course of study, the student must still comply with the standard limit on distance/online education of [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(i\)\(G\)](#), which allows no more than one class/three credits to be counted towards the full course of study count. The "final term of study" rule of [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(iii\)\(C\)](#) does not allow a student to count more than one distance/online course towards the full course of study requirement.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(iii)

(iii) *Annual vacation.* An F-1 student at an academic institution is considered to be in status during the annual (or summer) vacation if the student is eligible and intends to register for the next term. A student attending a school on a quarter or trimester calendar who takes only one vacation a year during any one of the quarters or trimesters instead of during the summer is considered to be in status during that vacation, if the student has completed the equivalent of an academic year prior to taking the vacation.¹

Full Enrollment at BYU-Idaho

BYU-Idaho offers full semester classes three times per year. Students are assigned a “track” which includes two of the three semesters. While students are permitted to register for classes during any of these semesters, their admission status is tied to their track, allowing for a one semester break each year. In addition, students generally do not take classes during the seven-week summer session.²

Three Track System

BYU-Idaho operates year-round with three distinct 14-week semesters:
Fall, Winter, and Spring Semesters.

Each admitted student is assigned to a Track consisting of two semesters.

- Fall & Winter Track
- Winter & Spring Track
- Spring & Fall Track



Winter Semester

Early January - Mid April



Spring Semester

Mid April - Mid July



Fall Semester

Mid September - Mid December

Academic Year

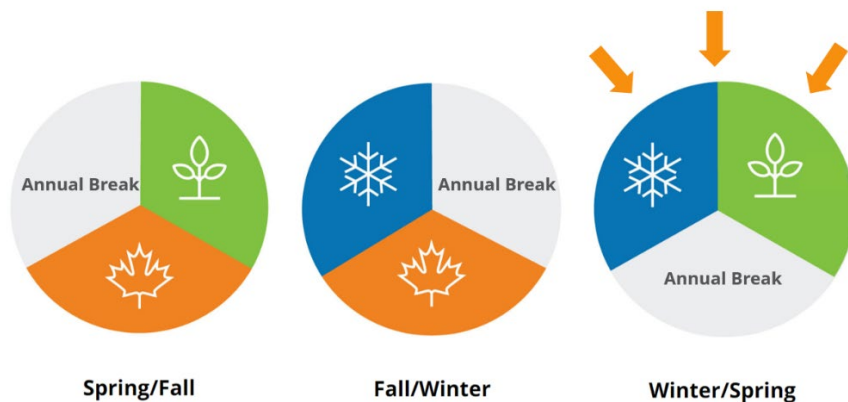
For purposes of annual vacation and Curricular Practical Training eligibility, an academic year is defined as two consecutive semesters of full enrollment. This is equivalent to a full calendar year at schools with just two semesters per year.

New students in Initial status are assigned the track that corresponds to their first two semesters on campus – this ensures compliance with the requirement that students complete a full academic year prior to taking a break.

For determining when students are required to be enrolled in a full course of study, as well as considering requests for an annual break, we use the 2:1:2 rule depicted below:

¹ [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2\(f\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2(f))

² <https://www.byui.edu/admissions/three-track-system>



2:1:2 Rule

The twos refer to the minimum number of fully enrolled semesters before and after the break, represented by the one.

Delivery Methods and Online Credits

The graphic below shows the Delivery Methods offered at BYU-Idaho and their classification as on-campus or online for purpose of calculating a full course load.³

Course Delivery Methods

A delivery method communicates where and how students will be taught. Some delivery methods are only available to specific student types.

F-1/J-1 International Students - Please note that only In-Person, Blended, and Professionally Mentored classes count as on-campus credits for maintaining your status.



Online

Classes will be taught Online (asynchronous) with digital course materials such as video lectures.

Location: Off-campus

Student type: Online and Campus students



Blended

Classes will be taught In-Person or Virtual Live (synchronous) with additional Online components. Students should be available on the days and hours listed in the Class Schedule.

Location: On-campus

Student type: Campus students only



Professionally Mentored

Students will be taught by mentors in a learning environment applicable to their degree. Typically used for internships, student teaching, and practicums.

Location: Employment or mentoring location

Student type: Online and Campus students



Virtual Live

Classes will be taught entirely in LIVE (synchronous), Online sessions (using Zoom or similar tools) on the days and hours listed in the Class Schedule.

Location: Off-campus

Student Type: Campus students only



In-Person

Classes will be taught on-campus on the days and hours listed in the Class Schedule.

Location: On-campus

Student type: Campus students only



Flexible (In-Person or Virtual Live)

Classes will be taught In-Person and virtual live. In coordination with the instructor, students choose which class location works best for them.

Location: On-campus OR Off-campus

Student type: Campus students only

³ <https://www.byui.edu/registration/course-delivery-methods>

BYU-Idaho interprets the online allowance of 1 course or 3 credits as a single 3 credit course, or multiple 1 or 2 credit courses totaling 3 credits.

Full-Time Required Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Based on the University's curricular priority to encourage students to gain practical experience in real-world settings, most of BYU-Idaho's programs require at least one internship. Students who apply and are approved for a required, full-time internship experience and CPT are considered enrolled in a full course of study, even if they enroll in less than the requisite 12 credit hours.

Enrollment Timelines

Based on daily monitoring, International Services uses a series of proactive messages to encourage students to enroll in a full course of study by the first day of class. Additional effort drives over 98% of students to full enrollment by the University's add/drop deadline (last day to register for full-semester classes). After confirming that they are not working on a full-time, required internship or a medical reduced course load, students who are not enrolled in any on-campus classes by the add/drop deadline face I-20 termination. All other under-enrolled students must be fully enrolled by day 30 of the semester (our regulatory deadline for SEVIS registration). We will not register a student in SEVIS until they are fully enrolled. Students who fail to meet this deadline face I-20 termination for Failure to Enroll.

Any student who drops below a full course of study without authorization receives a message within 24 hours that indicates his/her status is in jeopardy and that the issue must be resolved within 48 hours to avoid I-20 termination. Students in this situation usually work with their instructor and/or the Student Records and Registration Office to be reinstated to the course(s).

Under-enrollment may be resolved with an approved reduced course load up until day 30. After day 30, students are required to be fully enrolled prior to the approval of a reduced course load.

Academic Reduced Course Loads

Generally speaking, students are only eligible for an academic reduced course load during their first semester. There could be a rare instance where a student and his/her adviser might demonstrate that a reduction is necessary due to improper course level placement after the first semester.

Medical Reduced Course Loads (MRCLs)

Students who are not enrolled in a full course of study may resolve the issue by submitting a medical reduced course load up until the 30th day of the semester (SEVIS registration deadline). Because this may not actually be an approved drop below full course of study if the student is not already fully-enrolled, International Services will verify that student has cleared all holds and is eligible to register for classes. Students with holds must clear them prior to MRCL approval. After day 30, students must be fully enrolled to qualify for a reduced course load.

Documentation supporting an MRCL request must be dated, state the semester in question (only one semester per letter), designate and date a specific diagnosis, and be signed by an MD, DO, psychiatrist, or licensed psychologist. If a student's provider is located outside the U.S., and the student remains in the U.S. during the period covered by the MRCL, documentation from the provider will be accepted as long as it is accompanied by a copy of the provider's credentials. If the student resides outside the U.S. during the semester covered by the MRCL, student will be instructed to submit a Temporary Leave of Absence/Reactivation request.

Pregnancy is not considered a “temporary illness or medical condition” unless complications arise. Documentation must clearly state that unexpected complications constitute a “temporary illness or medical condition.”

International Services will not accept requests made more than 30 days before the beginning of the semester. The last day for submitting requests will be the University’s Withdrawal Deadline for individual classes (typically about five weeks before end of semester).

MRCLs cannot be backdated and will be counted as covering the entire semester in which they are granted, regardless of the number of days between the start and end dates, for purposes of calculating the maximum 12-month aggregate leave. Thus, because BYU-Idaho offers three full semesters during any 12-month period, students are allowed a maximum of three MRCLs during their enrollment at BYU-Idaho.

Last Semester RCL

When students notify International Services that they will be graduating, they are required to submit an approved graduation plan. Upon receipt of this plan, a DSO will shorten the program end date and register the student in SEVIS, indicating that it is the student’s last semester. Our interpretation of the regulation, supported by our SEVP field rep, is that a separate reduced course load authorization is not necessary.

For last semester enrollment, we apply the guidance in the NAFSA Adviser’s Manual based on information provided by SEVP (cited above). If less than a full course of study is required for program completion, students must reside in Rexburg and enroll in on-campus classes.

Unofficial Withdrawal (UW)

Definition: “**UW**” represents an unofficial withdrawal which is given to a student who meets the following criteria: Did not complete proper withdrawal procedures; has record of non-attendance that began before the last date to withdraw from individual courses without grade earned; and did not complete any work, tests, or class-related assignments after attendance ceased. The “UW” is calculated into the GPA as a failing grade value. (0.0)⁴

Any UW is cause for concern and will trigger outreach from International Services. Beginning with the Spring 2025 Semester, receiving a UW for all classes in a given semester will be considered a violation of status and the student’s I-20 will be terminated for Unauthorized Withdrawal (or possibly Otherwise Failing to Maintain Status if an academic progress issue is also present). Reinstatement may be discussed if appropriate.

⁴https://www.byui.edu/catalog/#/policy/S14qH_Spg?q=unofficial%20withdrawal&&limit=20&skip=0&bc=true&bcCurrent=Grading%20System&bclItem=policies

Curricular Practical Training

Introduction

Because of the University's three-track system and emphasis on internships, International Services has adopted a strict compliance approach to the federal regulations governing work authorization for internships.

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)

(10) Practical training. Practical training may be authorized to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full -time basis, in an approved SEVP-certified college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year. This paragraph (f)(10) also includes students who, during their course of study, were enrolled in a study abroad program, if the student had spent at least one full academic term enrolled in a full course of study in the United States prior to studying abroad. A student may be authorized 12 months of practical training, and becomes eligible for another 12 months of practical training when they change to a higher educational level. Students in English language training programs are ineligible for practical training. An eligible student may request employment authorization for practical training in a position that is directly related to their major area of study. There are two types of practical training available:

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i)

- (i) *Curricular practical training.* An F-1 student may be authorized by the DSO to participate in a curricular practical training program that is an integral part of an established curriculum. Curricular practical training is defined to be alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. Students who have received one year or more of full time curricular practical training are ineligible for post-completion academic training. Exceptions to the one academic year requirement are provided for students enrolled in graduate studies that require immediate participation in curricular practical training. A request for authorization for curricular practical training must be made to the DSO. A student may begin curricular practical training only after receiving their Form I-20 or successor form with the DSO endorsement. To grant authorization for a student to engage in curricular practical training, a DSO will update the student's record in SEVIS as being authorized for curricular practical training that is directly related to the student's major area of study. The DSO will indicate whether the training is full-time or part-time, the employer and location, and the employment start and end date. The DSO must sign, date, and return the Form I-20 or successor form to the student prior to the student's commencement of employment indicating that curricular practical training has been approved.¹

¹ [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2\(f\)\(10\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2(f)(10))

Broadcast Message: Reminder of Liability for DSOs Regarding CPT Authorization

To: PDSOs and DSOs at SEVP-certified schools

Date: August 12, 2026

BCM Number: 2608-01

General Information

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) reminds all designated school officials (DSOs) of their responsibilities regarding curricular practical training (CPT) authorization as well as increased program oversight concerning the proper use of CPT. SEVP has observed a rise in CPT authorizations that do not meet regulatory requirements, specifically those not constituting an **integral** part of an established curriculum. As a result, the program is increasing its scrutiny of CPT approvals to ensure compliance with federal regulations. Please carefully read and review the following information:

- **CPT must be integral to the curriculum:** DSOs can only authorize CPT when the training is an integral part of an established curriculum and is directly related to the student's major area of study. CPT cannot be authorized solely for the purpose of employment or for experiences that are not required or otherwise formally recognized as part of the academic program.

SEVP reserves the right to request documentation and other evidence from DSOs to identify whether CPT is indeed a core and essential part of the student's studies, without which, they would be unable to complete their degree. While SEVP recognizes that the school, not the U.S. government, defines what is and is not required to complete a degree, SEVP is also committed to identifying and investigating schools that attempt to undermine or purposely bypass federal regulations or oversight.

DSOs are reminded that F nonimmigrant students are, by their own attestation under penalty of perjury, here in the United States "*solely for the purpose of pursuing a full program of study.*" If SEVP suspects that school officials are abusing CPT to create work opportunities rather than academic studies, they may be subject to additional scrutiny and action from SEVP and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), to include potential withdrawal of the school's SEVP certification.

- **DSO certification and legal responsibility:** When you sign or re-sign the Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," to authorize CPT, **you are certifying under penalty of perjury** that all information is true and correct to the best of your knowledge. This includes confirming that CPT is required or otherwise integral to the student's curriculum.

Potential liability: Improper CPT authorization, such as for non-integral purposes, may subject both the institution and individual DSO to administrative or legal consequences. This includes withdrawal of SEVP certification and potential penalties for providing false information or misrepresenting the nature of the training. **Actions requested:** After reviewing the above information, DSOs should:

1. Carefully review all CPT requests and your institution's current academic requirements across all fields of study.
2. Ensure that CPT is only authorized when it is truly integral to the program. Only authorize CPT if its absence would make the attainment of a degree an impossibility and if the work associated with CPT is required for *all* students pursuing that degree.
3. Maintain thorough records supporting the curricular necessity of each CPT authorization.

Broadcast Message: Guidance for Designated School Officials regarding Curricular Practical Training

To: PDSOs and DSOs at SEVP-certified Schools

Date: August 24, 2026

BCM Number: 2608-02

General Information

On August 12, 2026, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) issued [Broadcast Message 2608-01](#). This broadcast informed all Designated School Officials (DSOs) that SEVP has observed a rise in Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorizations that appear to violate regulatory requirements which permit CPT only where the training is an integral part of an established curriculum. Accurate and timely reporting by schools and students allows SEVP to manage the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a critical tool in SEVP's mission to protect national security and ensure the integrity of the nation's educational and cultural exchange programs. Failure to comply with SEVP regulations may result in an institution losing certification to enroll foreign students.

The guidance below provides additional information on how CPT operates as an integral and required part of an educational experience.

1. How is CPT defined in regulation?

A foreign student may be authorized by a DSO to participate in a CPT program that is an integral part of an established curriculum. Curricular practical training is defined as alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.

2. How is CPT different from Optional Practical Training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is training that is not an integral part of a student's established curriculum. OPT is not intended to fulfill requirements of a student's program of study and successful program completion does not require participation in OPT; it is optional. In contrast, CPT fulfills an integral element of an established curriculum and successful completion is contingent on participation in CPT. As [defined](#) by Merriam-Webster, "integral" means "essential to completeness" as in, "an integral part of the curriculum."

3. Can CPT be offered as a part of an elective course?

In any instance where an elective course is optional, making the CPT optional, the integral and required aspects of CPT would not be met. CPT is an integral part of an established curriculum, and the practical training is required for *all students* participating in that curriculum, regardless of citizenship.

4. Because CPT is allowed only where the training is an integral part of an established curriculum, does that mean that all students enrolled in the established curriculum must participate in and complete practical training?

Yes. Unlike OPT, participation in CPT is not optional for any student participating in an established curriculum that the school has determined requires CPT as an integral part of the educational experience. This means that all students - foreign and American - are required to participate in practical training if they are enrolled in an established curriculum where practical

training is integral. While auditing and investigating schools to ensure compliance, SEVP has noted that some institutions have described CPT as if it is optional practical training and not integral, despite clear regulatory requirements. SEVP has also discovered that some institutions have not required all students enrolled in the same established curriculum to participate in practical training, despite clear regulatory requirements that CPT is permitted only where the practical training is an integral part of an established curriculum. Prior [broadcast messages](#) have clearly made this distinction between CPT and OPT and reminded DSOs of the integral and required elements of CPT.

5. Are foreign students required to proactively request CPT authorization from their DSO?

Yes. Foreign students must make an official request for authorization for CPT to their DSO so that the school can confirm that the student is participating in an established curriculum where practical training is integral, make a determination that the training is directly related to the student's major area of study, and update the student's SEVIS record to ensure that DHS can conduct proper oversight as required under federal law. A DSO's failure to maintain these verification and record-keeping requirements may face significant SEVP sanctions. 8 C.F.R. §§ 214.2(f)(10)(i); 214.3(l)(2); 214.4(a)(2).

6. Must all CPT be conducted by sponsoring employers that have established cooperative agreements with the school?

Yes. Schools should only enter into cooperative agreements with legitimate, bona fide employers who are able to provide a quality practical training experience to students.

CPT students should have access to practical training managed by an employer who has entered into a cooperative agreement with a school where it is agreed the employer will sponsor the school's students for specific training such as an alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum that is specific to the student's major area of study. Students are not expected to obtain EADs for this training, which is an integral and required part of the curriculum.

Curricular Practical Training Authorization at BYU-Idaho

The purpose of CPT is to allow students to fulfill graduation requirements of their program of study. It cannot be used as a substitute for the financial support pledged by the student's sponsor. BYU-Idaho International Services has adopted the following rules to ensure that CPT is only used for the curricular purposes intended by government regulations:

1. Students must submit an internship request in I-Plan for review by academic department faculty/internship office, and International Services. This ensures that an agreement exists between the employer and the University to provide practical curricular experience.
2. Students must provide a signed job offer letter from the employer on company letterhead that states the dates of the internship, hours per week, and job duties.
3. Students must register for the appropriate class (usually internship) and receive course credit for the practical experience.
4. CPT is only approved for one semester based on BYU-Idaho's academic calendar. It may begin and/or end during breaks between semesters but cannot include days from two different semesters.

5. Students can only work between the dates listed on form I-20 and must have their CPT I-20 in hand before starting the internship.
6. CPT may only be considered for courses that are required of all students in the major for graduation. Once the course has been completed, CPT cannot be issued to repeat the course because it is no longer required.
7. Full-time internships (more than 20 hours per week) can only be authorized as CPT for semesters when students are not required to be fully enrolled. They can no longer count as full enrollment.
8. Students who change majors must take classes in the new major for at least 2 full semesters before becoming eligible again for CPT. Exceptions may be considered for closely related majors that share required courses.

Optional Practical Training

Introduction

Because of the University's three-track system and emphasis on internships and post-graduation job placement, International Services has adopted a strict compliance approach to the federal regulations governing work authorization for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)

(10) Practical training. Practical training may be authorized to an F-1 student who has been lawfully enrolled on a full -time basis, in an approved SEVP-certified college, university, conservatory, or seminary for one full academic year. This paragraph (f)(10) also includes students who, during their course of study, were enrolled in a study abroad program, if the student had spent at least one full academic term enrolled in a full course of study in the United States prior to studying abroad. A student may be authorized 12 months of practical training, and becomes eligible for another 12 months of practical training when they change to a higher educational level. Students in English language training programs are ineligible for practical training. An eligible student may request employment authorization for practical training in a position that is directly related to their major area of study. There are two types of practical training available:

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)

(ii) *Optional practical training --*

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(A)

(A) *General.* Consistent with the application and approval process in paragraph (f)(11) of this section, a student may apply to USCIS for authorization for temporary employment for optional practical training directly related to the student's major area of study. The student may not begin optional practical training until the date indicated on his or her employment authorization document, Form I-766. A student may be granted authorization to engage in temporary employment for optional practical training:

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(A)(1)

(1) During the student's annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, if the student is currently enrolled, and is eligible for registration and intends to register for the next term or session;

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(A)(2)

(2) While school is in session, provided that practical training does not exceed 20 hours a week while school is in session; or

8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(A)(3)

(3) After completion of the course of study, or, for a student in a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree program, after completion of all course requirements for the degree (excluding thesis or equivalent). Continued enrollment, for the school's administrative purposes, after all requirements for the degree have been met does not preclude eligibility for optional practical training. A student must complete all practical training within a 14-month period following the completion of study, except that a 24-month extension pursuant to paragraph (f)(10)(ii)(C) of this section does not need to be completed within such 14-month period.¹

¹ [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2\(f\)\(10\)\(ii\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214/section-214.2#p-214.2(f)(10)(ii))

SEVP Policy Guidance: Practical Training-Determining a Direct Relationship Between Employment and a Student's Major Area of Study

Date: September 27, 2019

Policy: One eligibility requirement for practical training is that the practical training opportunity be "directly related to the student's major area of study" (8 CFR 214.2(/)(J0)(ii)(A)). Similarly, for the STEM OPT extension, the "practical training opportunity ... must be directly related to the degree that qualifies the student for such extension" (8 CFR 214.2(/)(J0)(ii)(C)(4)). "When a DSO recommends a student for OPT, the school assumes the added responsibility for maintaining the SEVIS record of that student for the entire period of authorized OPT ... " and must update "the student's record to reflect these reported changes for the duration of time that training is authorized" (8 CFR 214.2(/)(J 1)(ii) and (/)(12)(i)). Prior to making a recommendation, the DSO at the student's educational institution must ensure that the student is eligible for the type and period of OPT and that the student is aware of their responsibility for maintaining status while on OPT (8 CFR 214.2(/)(I 1)(ii)(A)). The requirement that practical training be directly related to a student's major area of study is longstanding and meant to ensure that the employment experience supplements the individual's educational pursuits.

Documenting the Direct Relationship: Non immigrant students are responsible for providing a description of how their practical training opportunity relates to their major area of study, which the DSO must review and retain.

Assessing the Direct Relationship: As described in the regulations (8 CFR 21-1.2(1)(1 J)(ii)), when a DSO recommends a student for OPT or STEM OPT, the school assumes additional responsibilities to monitor and update the student's SEVIS record. Consistent with those responsibilities, a DSO must make a determination of whether there is a direct relationship between the job and the major area of study. The decision should be made on a case-by-case basis. The inquiry is whether there is a logical connection between the duties involved in the practical training opportunity and the student's major area of study. In the vast majority of cases, a DSO should be able to make that assessment based on the documentation provided by the student. If a DSO believes that the documentation does not provide a sufficient explanation, they should ask for additional evidence to better understand the relationship. Although not required, DSOs may make use of websites that provide a general crosswalk between jobs and programs of study. Examples of these types of websites include, but are not limited to, sites maintained by the College Board, the Department of Labor and the National Center for Education Statistics.²

USCIS: Optional Practical Training Extension for STEM Students (STEM OPT)

STEM OPT Employer Requirements and Responsibilities

If you are an employer who wants to provide a practical training opportunity to a STEM OPT student during their extension, you must:

- Be enrolled in E-Verify, as evidenced by either a valid E-Verify company identification number or, if the employer is using an employer agent to create its E-Verify cases, a valid E-Verify client company identification number.
- Remain a participant in good standing with E-Verify, as determined by USCIS.

² <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/optDirectlyRelatedGuidance.pdf>;
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/majors-careers>; <https://www.onetonline.org>;
<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/Default.aspx?v=55>

- Have a valid Employer Identification Number (EIN) issued by the Internal Revenue Service for tax purposes.
- Report material changes of the STEM OPT student's employment by submitting a modified Form I-983 to the DSO at the earliest available opportunity.
- Report the STEM OPT student's termination of employment or departure to the DSO within 5 business days.
- Implement a formal training program to augment the student's academic learning through practical experience.
- Provide an OPT opportunity that is commensurate with those of similarly situated U.S. workers in duties, hours, and compensation.

Terms and Conditions for Employer Participation

To ensure the integrity of the program and provide safeguards for U.S. workers, any employer wishing to employ a student participating in the STEM OPT extension program must ensure that:

- The employer will have and maintain a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student.
- The employer has sufficient resources and personnel available to provide appropriate training in connection with the specified opportunity at the location(s) specified in the Form I-983, Training Plan for STEM OPT Students.
- The STEM OPT student will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker.
- The training opportunity will assist the student in attaining his or her training goals.

DHS may, at its discretion, conduct a [site visit](#) of the employer to ensure that program requirements are being met, including that the employer possesses and maintains the ability, personnel, and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences consistent with the training plan.

The Employer's Training Obligation

As noted above, to be eligible to employ a STEM OPT student, an employer must have and maintain a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student. The employer must attest to this fact by signing the Form I-983, Training Plan for STEM OPT Students. To establish a bona fide relationship, the employer may not be the student's "employer" in name only, nor may the student work for the employer on a "volunteer" basis. Moreover, the employer that signs the Form I-983 must be the same entity that provides the practical training experience to the student.

An employer must have sufficient resources and trained or supervisory personnel available to provide appropriate training in connection with the specified training opportunity at the location(s) where the student's practical training experience will take place, as specified in the Form I-983. The "personnel" who may provide and supervise the training experience may be either employees of the employer, or contractors who the employer has directly retained to provide services to the employer; they may not, however, be employees or contractors of the employer's clients or customers. Additionally, under no circumstances would another F-1 student with OPT or a STEM OPT extension (who is undergoing training in their own right) be qualified to train another F-1 student with a STEM OPT extension.

While employers may rely on their existing training programs or policies to satisfy the requirements relating to performance evaluation and oversight and supervision, the student's Training Plan must nevertheless be customized for the individual student. For instance, every Training Plan must describe the direct relationship between the STEM OPT opportunity and the student's qualifying STEM degree, as well as the relationship between the STEM OPT opportunity and the student's goals and objectives for

work-based learning. Moreover, a STEM OPT employer may not assign, or otherwise delegate, its training responsibilities to a non-employer third party (e.g., a client/customer of the employer, employees of the client/customer, or contractors of the client/customer).

As noted above, DHS, at its discretion, may conduct a site visit of any STEM OPT employer to ensure that the employer possesses and maintains the ability and resources to provide structured and guided work-based learning experiences consistent with the Form I-983. See 8 C.F.R. 214.2(f)(10)(ii)(C)(11). Consistent with this provision, during a site visit, DHS may verify that the employer that signs the Form I-983 is the same entity that provides the practical training experience to the student and ensure compliance. For ICE to effectively conduct these site visits as part of its oversight responsibilities, it is important that employers report any change in a student's employment address. As indicated above, the employer and student must report such a material change by submitting a modified Form I-983 to the DSO at the earliest available opportunity.

The Employer's Training Obligation: Staffing and Temporary Agencies

Staffing and temporary agencies and consulting firms may seek to employ students under the STEM OPT program, but only if they will be the entity that provides the practical training experience to the student and they have and maintain a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student. STEM OPT participants may engage in a training experience that takes place at a site other than the employer's principal place of business as long as all of the training obligations are met, including that the employer has and maintains a bona fide employer-employee relationship with the student. Certain types of arrangements, including multiple employer arrangements, sole proprietorships, employment through "temp" agencies, employment through consulting firm arrangements that provide labor for hire, and other similar relationships may not be able to demonstrate a bona fide employer-employee relationship and, therefore, may not meet the requirements of the STEM OPT extension.

As part of the STEM OPT extension, employers must complete the appropriate parts of Form I-983, Training Plan for STEM OPT Students. In this form, employers attest that:

- They have enough resources and trained personnel available to appropriately train the student;
- The student will not replace a full- or part-time, temporary or permanent U.S. worker; and
- Working for them will help the student attain their training objectives.

DHS will review on a case-by-case basis whether the student will be a bona fide employee of the employer signing the training plan, and verify that the employer that signs the training plan is the same entity that employs the student and provides the practical training experience.³

Optional Practical Training Authorization at BYU-Idaho

The purpose of OPT is to gain practical training that is directly related to the student's program of study. International Services has implemented the following protocols for ensuring all employment reported by students meets regulatory guidelines:

1. BYU-Idaho only offers post-completion OPT. CPT will be provided for internship experiences.
2. Post-completion OPT will only be recommended for bachelor programs.
3. OPT will not be recommended for Professional Studies or General Studies because of the challenge of demonstrating that employment is directly related to the major. Students in these majors who will graduate Spring or Fall Semester 2024 are grandfathered.

³ <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-extension-for-stem-students-stem-opt>

4. In addition to the submission of OPT employment updates, students will submit a job offer letter for each position that details start and end dates, as well as job duties. The purpose is to help determine direct relationship to program of study, and to ensure alignment between the employer and the student regarding the nature of the work to be performed.
5. When the direct relationship of employment to the program of study is not readily apparent, additional information will be sought from the student. If the direct relationship is still unclear, input may be sought from the academic department chair. Except in rare obvious cases, International Services will defer to academic expertise. If the DSO still feels uncomfortable, he/she may inform the student that we cannot support the position, but the student may update through the SEVIS portal if he/she feels they can defend it.
6. International Services monitors days of unemployment and messages students with increasing urgency as they accrue. When students approach the maximum allowable days, they are warned that it is the Department of Homeland Security's responsibility to track unemployment and they could terminate student's SEVIS record at any time.
7. In general, BYU-Idaho will not approve I-983 training plans for staffing and temp agencies.

Academic Progress

Introduction

Because BYU-Idaho does not have an academic standing policy, the following policy serves to ensure students make progress toward program completion in a timely manner. Academic performance is closely monitored and managed to prevent students from reaching a point where they cannot complete their program by the program end date **and** are ineligible for an extension.

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(i)

(i) General. Duration of status is defined as the time during which an F-1 student is pursuing a full course of study at an educational institution certified by SEVP for attendance by foreign students, or engaging in authorized practical training following completion of studies, except that an F-1 student who is admitted to attend a public high school is restricted to an aggregate of 12 months of study at any public high school(s). An F-1 student may be admitted for a period up to 30 days before the indicated report date or program start date listed on the Form I-20 or successor form. The student is considered to be maintaining status if the student is making **normal progress** toward completing a course of study.¹

8 CFR 214.2(f)(7)(iii)

(iii) Program extension for students in lawful status. An F-1 student who is unable to meet the program completion date on the Form I-20 or successor form may be granted an extension by the DSO if the DSO certifies that the student has continually maintained status and that the delays are caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extensions. A DSO may not grant an extension if the student did not apply for an extension until after the program end date noted on the Form I-20 or successor form. An F-1 student who is unable to complete the educational program within the time listed on Form I-20 or successor form and who is ineligible for program extension pursuant to this paragraph (f)(7) is considered out of status. If eligible, the student may apply for reinstatement under the provisions of paragraph (f)(16) of this section.²

Academic Progress at BYU-Idaho

The University's standard for graduation eligibility is a 2.0 GPA. International Services uses this standard when evaluating international student academic performance each semester. Our tiered approach consists of the following interventions:

1. Warning – the first semester that a student earns less than a 2.0 GPA. Student receives a written warning with an invitation to meet with a DSO. This warning is followed by an invitation from Academic Advising to review available resources and create a plan for success. If a student meets the standard the following semester, he/she is removed from this tier.
2. Probation – the second consecutive semester that a student earns less than a 2.0 GPA. Student receives a written notification that his/her immigration status is in jeopardy. The student is required to meet with a DSO to review options. Those options include transferring to another school or achieving at least a 2.0 semester GPA with no failed classes. Strong encouragement is

¹ [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214#p-214.2\(f\)\(5\)\(i\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214#p-214.2(f)(5)(i))

² [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214#p-214.2\(f\)\(7\)\(iii\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214#p-214.2(f)(7)(iii))

provided to utilize campus resources to turn things around. Students remain on probation until they meet the standard for at least 3 consecutive semesters AND raise their cumulative GPA above 2.0.

3. Termination – a student on probation who fails to meet the 2.0 semester GPA/no Fs requirement. A mid-semester intervention for students not performing well in their classes will ensure the expectation and potential consequences are clearly understood. If a Transfer Out Request has not been received, the student's I-20 may be terminated after grades post, depending on a full review of past performance. International Services retains the right to exercise discretion if circumstances provide any of the following:
 - Demonstrated improvement toward the standard -OR-
 - Evidence that issues affecting performance have been resolved and reasonable expectation for immediate improvement -AND-
 - Student has enough time prior to program end date to either complete program or establish a pattern of success

The following efforts have been implemented to support this academic standard:

1. International Services and Academic Advising will work closely together to identify students in need of intervention, align communication, and mutually reinforce expectations.
2. This academic standard is presented to new students during orientation.
3. International Services proactively monitors grades during the semester and will make additional proactive outreach as needed.

Unofficial Withdrawal (UW)

Definition: **“UW”** represents an unofficial withdrawal which is given to a student who meets the following criteria: Did not complete proper withdrawal procedures; has record of non-attendance that began before the last date to withdraw from individual courses without grade earned; and did not complete any work, tests, or class-related assignments after attendance ceased. The **“UW”** is calculated into the GPA as a failing grade value. (0.0)³

Any UW is cause for concern and will trigger outreach from International Services. Beginning with the Spring 2025 Semester, receiving a UW for all classes in a given semester will be considered a violation of status and student's I-20 will be terminated for Unauthorized Withdrawal (or possibly Otherwise Failing to Maintain Status if an academic progress issue is present). Reinstatement may be discussed if appropriate.

³https://www.byui.edu/catalog/#/policy/S14qH_Spg?q=unofficial%20withdrawal&&limit=20&skip=0&bc=true&bcCurrent=Grading%20System&bcltemType=policies

Medical Reduced Course Loads (MRCLs)

Introduction

This policy defines how International Services reviews requests for reduced course loads for medical reasons. Our approach seeks to limit approved MRCLs to substantiated illnesses and medical conditions that prevent students from taking a full course of study, as allowed by regulation.

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)

(iii) *Reduced course load.* The designated school official may allow an F-1 student to engage in less than a full course of study as provided in this paragraph (f)(6)(iii). Except as otherwise noted, a reduced course load must consist of at least six semester or quarter hours, or half the clock hours required for a full course of study. A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the DSO will be considered out of status. On-campus employment pursuant to the terms of a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship is deemed to be part of the academic program of a student otherwise taking a full course of study.

8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(B)

(B) *Medical conditions.* The DSO may authorize a reduced course load (or, if necessary, no course load) due to a student's temporary illness or medical condition for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level. In order to authorize a reduced course load based upon a medical condition, the student must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, psychiatrist, doctor of osteopathy, licensed psychologist, or clinical psychologist to the DSO to substantiate the illness or medical condition. The student must provide current medical documentation and the DSO must reauthorize the drop below full course of study each new term, session, or semester. A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of study due to illness or medical condition for an aggregate of 12 months may not be authorized by a DSO to reduce their course load on subsequent occasions while pursuing a course of study at the same program level. A student may be authorized to reduce course load for a reason of illness or medical condition on more than one occasion while pursuing a course of study, so long as the aggregate period of that authorization does not exceed 12 months.

MRCLs at BYU-Idaho

International Services applies the following principles to ensure that MRCLs are available to eligible students with demonstrated medical need:

- 1) **Eligibility** – students must be in good standing with the University and eligible to register for classes to submit an MRCL request. This means that all registration holds must be cleared prior to submitting a request. This includes, but is not limited to, past due debt and ecclesiastical endorsement holds.
- 2) **Medical Documentation to Substantiate Illness/Medical Condition** – the documentation provided by the student must include the specific diagnosis, the date the diagnosis was made, the semester for which the reduction is needed, and a professional opinion that a specific level of reduction in course load is an essential part of the student's treatment plan. MRCL requests

for conditions that can be accommodated through the Accessibility Office will be referred to the Accessibility Office for evaluation prior to approval.

- 3) Residency - if a student's provider is located outside the U.S., and the student remains in the U.S. during the period covered by the reduced course load, documentation from the provider must be accompanied by a copy of the provider's credentials. If the student resides outside the U.S. during the semester covered by the MRCL, student will be instructed to submit a Temporary Leave of Absence/Reactivation request.
- 4) Timeline for Submitting Requests – International Services will not accept requests made more than 30 days before the beginning of the semester. The last day for submitting requests will be the University's Withdrawal Deadline for individual classes (typically about five weeks before end of semester).
- 5) Maximum MRCLs - MRCLs cannot be backdated and will be counted as covering the entire semester in which they are granted, regardless of the number of days between the start and end dates, for purposes of calculating the maximum 12-month aggregate leave. Thus, because BYU-Idaho offers three full semesters during any 12-month period, students are allowed a maximum of three MRCLs during their enrollment at BYU-Idaho.
- 6) Misrepresentation - Students may not use MCRLs to mask non-medical issues (e.g., financial difficulty, living out of state, poor academic performance). Students who attempt to fraudulently secure MCRLs or who misrepresent the nature or severity of medical conditions in an MCRL application may be subject to university discipline, up to and including dismissal from BYU-Idaho. If students are struggling financially, they should consult with their sponsor and the International Services Office to discuss available resources. Students who are struggling academically are encouraged to consult with Academic Advising to gain access to tutoring and other resources.

Other Protocols

New Student Check-In

During an internal audit in 2021, the International Services office was encouraged to create and enforce the expectation that students arrive and check-in by the Initial Session Start Date.

Regulatory Foundation

Initial student reporting – if the student has Port of Entry (POE) information: All initial F-1 and M-1 students should report to a DSO as soon as possible upon admission into the United States but no later than the Initial Session Start Date (start of classes) as listed in SEVIS. ([8 CFR 214.3\(g\)\(iii\)\(C\)](#))¹

New Student Check-In at BYU-Idaho

The International Services office proactively communicates this expectation several times leading up to the Initial Session Start Date. If a student enters the U.S. on or before the Initial Session Start Date, they may complete the new student check-in online or at our office.

In rare cases where a student's planned travel is delayed due to circumstances beyond his/her control, late check-in may be considered with proof that the student's travel arrangements allowed for on-time arrival.

Allowance may also be made for students with an I-94 entry by the Initial Session Start Date, provided there is an adequate reason for the delay.

International Services will either cancel or defer I-20s for students who have not checked in by the Initial Session Start Date.

Reinstatement

BYU-Idaho takes a strict approach to reinstatement.

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)

(16) *Reinstatement to student status --*

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)

(i) *General.* USCIS may consider reinstating a student who makes a request for reinstatement on Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status, accompanied by a properly completed Form I-20 or successor form indicating the DSO's recommendation for reinstatement. USCIS may consider granting the request if the student:

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(A)

(A) Has not been out of status for more than 5 months at the time of filing the request for reinstatement (or demonstrates that the failure to file within the 5 month period was the result of exceptional circumstances and that the student filed the request for reinstatement as promptly as possible under these exceptional circumstances);

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(B)

(B) Does not have a record of repeated or willful violations of DHS regulations;

¹ <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/dso-requirements>

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(C)

(C) Is currently pursuing, or intending to pursue, a full course of study in the immediate future at the school which issued the Form I-20 or successor form;

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(D)

(D) Has not engaged in unauthorized employment;

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(E)

(E) Is not deportable on any ground other than section 237(a)(1)(B) or (C)(i) of the Act; and

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(F)

(F) Establishes to the satisfaction of USCIS, by a detailed showing, either that:

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(F)(1)

(1) The violation of status resulted from circumstances beyond the student's control. Such circumstances might include serious injury or illness, closure of the institution, a natural disaster, or inadvertence, oversight, or neglect on the part of the DSO, but do not include instances where a pattern of repeated violations or where a willful failure on the part of the student resulted in the need for reinstatement; or

8 CFR 214.2(f)(16)(i)(F)(2)

(2) The violation relates to a reduction in the student's course load that would have been within a DSO's power to authorize, and that failure to approve reinstatement would result in extreme hardship to the student.

Reinstatement at BYU-Idaho

International Services will only recommend reinstatement in rare cases where the violation of status was truly outside the student's control. As a general rule, BYU-Idaho will not recommend reinstatement for students whose SEVIS records are transferred from another school in Terminated or Completed status.

Students who violate their status are encouraged to reestablish F-1 status through re-entry. In most cases where sponsorship can be demonstrated, International Services will consider providing a new initial I-20 for re-entry or consular visa renewal.

I-20 Extensions

While most students complete their program by the program end date, others may maintain their status throughout the duration of their I-20 (9 required semesters, 12 credits per semester) and not earn the minimum number of credits required for graduation (120).

Regulatory Foundation

8 CFR 214.2(f)(7)(iii)

(iii) *Program extension for students in lawful status.* An F-1 student who is unable to meet the program completion date on the Form I-20 or successor form may be granted an extension by the DSO if the DSO certifies that the student has continually maintained status and that the delays are caused by compelling academic or medical reasons, such as changes of major or research topics, unexpected research problems, or documented illnesses. Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extensions. A DSO may not grant an extension if the student did not apply for an extension until after the program end date noted on the Form I-20 or successor form. An F-1 student who is unable to complete the educational program within the time listed on Form I-20 or successor form and who is ineligible for program extension pursuant to this paragraph (f)(7) is

considered out of status. If eligible, the student may apply for reinstatement under the provisions of paragraph (f)(16) of this section.²

I-20 Extensions at BYU-Idaho

Students are expected to proactively plan to graduate on time. First-time extension requests based on documented compelling academic or medical reasons will generally be approved by our processing team. Requests based on less compelling circumstances will be reviewed by a full-time adviser/DSO. This review will include an appointment to better understand the student's circumstances.

BYU-Idaho does not currently administer academic probation or suspension, so poor grades followed by improvement will not likely result in an I-20 extension denial.

Because of BYU-Idaho's three track system, I-20 extensions may include an "off-track" semester as part of the student's annual break. We will not force students to take classes when eligible for a break. This opens the door for possible CPT authorizations during an extension. Exceptions to our CPT policy after an I-20 extension will be subject to additional scrutiny and are unlikely to be approved.

An I-20 cannot be extended solely for the purpose of CPT employment that does not fulfill a curricular requirement. Students who have completed program requirements will need to apply for post-completion OPT and negotiate start dates that coincide with their EAD card.

During Winter Semester 2024 we discontinued the requirement for sponsorship. Instead, students are required to clear any past due debt holds preventing registration as a way of demonstrating financial viability. The I-20 will not be extended until financial holds are cleared, which means they must resolve outstanding debt prior to the program end date.

It is very unlikely that an extension will be granted beyond an aggregate of 6 years for a bachelor program. Rare exceptions may be considered by the full-time DSO team where compelling circumstances exist.

² [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214#p-214.2\(f\)\(7\)\(iii\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/part-214#p-214.2(f)(7)(iii))