

# WHAT IS AN I-20?

## Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) I-20:

- **Definition:** a multi-purpose government form used in connection with many F-1 procedures and benefits.
- **Page 1:** Contains program and biographical information

### **Very Important Note:**

It is your responsibility to give International Student Services Office advanced notice, if you need to make any of the following changes:

- 1) **Concurrent Enrollment** – enrolling at another school part-time (to fulfill a program requirement at LLU) while also enrolling at LLU full-time.
- 2) **Program Extension** – needing additional time to complete your program; extensions must be completed before the I-20 expires
- 3) **Change your major or add a second major**
- 4) **Change your program level (Degree)**
- 5) **Transfer schools**
- 6) **Withdraw from your program**
- 7) **Leave of Absence from your program**
- 8) **Change of U.S. home address** – changes must be reported within 10 days of move

**Note:** If any of the above changes are not updated on your I-20 in a timely manner, you will be considered out of status and will be required to go through the process of reinstatement.

- **Page 2:** Contains employment authorization data and provides space for travel authorizations.

**Note:** This page will be updated by our office to reflect any type of permitted employment. Each re-entry signature by our office on this third page is valid for 6 months only. Make sure you have this page signed by our office if you think you will pass the six-month limit by the time you will be returning.

- **Page 3:** Consists pre-printed instructions and information.

**Note:** It is your responsibility to read and understand this page. By signing Page 1 of the I-20, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand the information printed on the whole I-20.

## Dependents

- Spouses or children, accompanied by the F-1 student, will be issued their own SEVIS I-20 that will indicate they will be in F-2 (Dependent) status.

## Applying for F-1 Student Visa

- An I-20 by itself is only a “certificate of eligibility” and does not grant F-1 status by itself. To obtain F-1 status, you will need to do one of the following:
  - If currently in the U.S. on another status, apply for a change of status using a LLU I-20 and filing the I-539 form (found on the USCIS website - [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov))
  - If currently out of the U.S., apply for an F-1 visa using a LLU I-20 at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate and enter U.S. with the I-20 and the F-1 visa
    - Natural Born Canadians will only need to cross the U.S. border with their I-20; they are not required to obtain an F-1 visa from the Embassy

## Duration of Status (D/S)

- An F-1 student is normally admitted to the United States for “*Duration of Status*” which is noted as “D/S” on both the form I-94 and the student’s I-20
- “*Duration of Status*” is defined as the time during which an F-1 student is pursuing a full course of study, at the school which has issued the SEVIS I-20, or engaged in authorized Optional Practical Training (OPT) following completion of their program
  - This means that a student is allowed to stay in the country even after the F-1 visa (located in the passport) has expired as long as they are maintaining their F-1 status
  - If traveling outside the U.S., a new visa (if expired) will be needed to re-enter

## Maintaining F-1 Status

- If you are maintaining your status, your visa has expired, and you wish to go out of the country, you need to make sure you make arrangements to apply for a new visa before re-entering the U.S.
- Please visit International Student Services Office for documentation you will need to take with you to the visa appointment

## Other very Important Notes

- You are in F-1 status as long as your I-20 and passport are accurate and valid, and you have not completed your program
- Your “*Program Completion Date*” will not necessarily match the “end date” recorded on your I-20, since it is usually an estimated date; therefore, the following situations may arise:
  - If your I-20 is going to expire before you finish your program, you will need to request an I-20 extension from International Student Services Office
  - If you will complete your program before the expiration date of your I-20, you need to notify International Student Services if you will transfer to another

- school, apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), or leave the U.S. within your 60 day grace period
- “*Program Completion Date*”: the day you turn in your last paper or assignment, take your last exam, finish your last rotation (internship, clinical or field practicum), or last program (degree) requirement

## **EXTENDING YOUR I-20**

### **Extension on an I-20**

Although an F-1 student is admitted to the United States for “*Duration of Status*” to complete an educational program, the student must actually finish all program requirements before the completion date indicated on Page 1 of their current I-20.

- If a student will not complete the academic program by this completion date, prior to reaching this date, they must comply with procedures for program extension

### **Eligibility for I-20 Extension**

An F-1 student is eligible for program extension if:

- They apply to the DSO for the extension **prior to the program completion date**, and the
- DSO updates the SEVIS record to reflect the extension before the completion date
- They have “continuously maintained status”
- The delay in completion is “caused by compelling academic or medical reasons”
- Submit the following documents:
  - A letter or email from an academic advisor or program director listing the reason why an extension is necessary and propose a new program completion date
  - A bank statement(s) to show funding is available to cover your tuition, fees, and living expenses during the extended period

**\*\*Legal Note:** Delays caused by academic probation or suspension are not acceptable reasons for program extension.

A student who fails to complete their program within the time listed on Page 1 of their I-20 and cannot meet the eligibility criteria for program extension, or does not return the required documents to the DSO in a timely manner, is considered out of status and must apply for reinstatement. The student’s reinstatement must be approved before they may be able to complete the remainder of their program.

## **CHANGE OR ADD MAJOR**

An F-1 student is admitted to the United States to work towards “the attainment of a specific education or professional objective.”

The DSO (the advisor at International Student Services) indicates the subject matter of the objective in SEVIS and on the form I-20. Should a student wish to change or add to their major field of study, they must comply with the procedures required by the regulations to remain in status.

If, by changing the majors, a student will need more time to complete their program than originally estimated, the procedures for Program Extension should be followed.

**\*\*Legal Note:** As a practical matter, a student should have their major field of study correctly reflected on their most current I-20, as it will have implications for their status.

## **CHANGE PROGRAM LEVEL (NEW PROGRAM AT LLU)**

Like extension of stay, changing levels or changing degree programs at the same school is a notification procedure, which requires an update in the SEVIS by International Student Services.

If you complete your program at LLU and then plan to complete an additional full-time educational level, you will need to do one of the following:

- 1)** If you want to do this new program at LLU, you will need to go through the process of issuing a new I-20 (you have to follow the steps you initially followed to be eligible to obtain an initial I-20).
- 2)** If you want to pursue this education objective at another SEVIS approved school, you need to go through the process of transferring you to that school. (See the “Transferring Schools” information enclosed).