INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY *of* VIRGINIA

MISSION STATEMENT

To develop men and women of character and leadership by inculcating quality Christian education through healthy institutional services so that they may make meaningful contributions to the world.

www.wuv.edu | info@wuv.edu | 703.333.5904

OMNIS ARBOR BONA FRUCTUS BONOS FACIT

"Good Tree, Good Fruit"

WELCOME

Welcome to Washington University of Virginia! We are delighted that you considered our SEVP-certified college to achieve your academic goals. We believe that our multi-ethnic, Christian college can provide an excellent, affordable education while broadening your understanding of the world. Our international students, totaling approximately 400, come from over 50 countries.

WUV has three schools: The Neal T. Jones Seminary, the School of Business & Technology, and the College of Arts & Science, offering degree programs related to Theology, Ministry, Counseling, Business Administration, Management Information Systems, Accounting, and Computer Science. Some degree programs are offered in English and Korean, and most of our faculty and staff is bilingual. In addition, our Lingua Franca Institute (LFI) offers an intensive English language program. For more information on any of our programs, check out our website **www.wuv.edu**

There is much you need to know to be a college student in the United States and at WUV. General information for all international and resident students can be found on our website and in the WUV Student Handbook.

As an F-1 international student, you must also know your responsibilities and rights and maintain your status while in the United States. This International Student Handbook will help you with that. It provides you with basic information, so it may not include *all* the situations which could affect your status in the U.S. Because immigration policies and procedures change frequently, you may need further explanation. Please contact the International Office or make an appointment with a Designated School Officer (DSO). In certain circumstances, you may also need to seek the advice of an attorney.

Student orientation at the beginning of each semester also provides you with important information from the college and degree departments. For an orientation schedule, please check wuv.edu/academic-calendars or call the International Office.

<u>Resources for studying in the U.S:</u>

Information about studying in the U.S.	**https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov**
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)	**http://www.uscis.gov/**
U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)	**http://www.cbp.gov/**
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	**http://www.dhs.gov/**

International Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) **http://www.ice.gov/sevis/**

Informational Video **www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5hMoIhPyck**

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Offices at WUV

WUV is located at 4300 & 4302 Evergreen Lane in Annandale, Virginia. For any office at the college, call the main number 703.333.5904 and dial the appropriate extension number.
The following offices are on the first floor of the 4300 building:

Admissions	Registrar	Designated School Officials (DSO)
Student Accounts	Dean of Students	Human Resources

Office Hours: **Monday to Friday**
9:00 am to 6:00 pm
(Closed for Lunch: 1pm - 2pm)

Closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Thursday & Friday), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day.

Schools & Degrees/Programs Offered

WUV has three colleges: Neal T. Jones Seminary, The College of Arts and Science, and The School of Business & Technology.

WUV has an intensive English language program: The Lingua Franca Institute.

The Neal T. Jones Seminary offers four degree programs:

- Master of Divinity (M.Div.)
- Master of Christian Counseling (M.C.C.)
- Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)
- Doctor of Clinical Pastoral Counseling (D.C.P.C.)

The College of Arts and Science offers two degree programs (in addition to providing biblical requirement courses for all undergraduate and graduate degrees):

- Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies (B.A.B)
- Bachelor of Science in Family Studies (B.S.F.)

The School of Business & Technology (SBT) offers six degree programs:

- Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)
- Bachelor of Science in Accounting (B.S.A.)
- Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science (B.C.S.)
- Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
- Master of Science in Computer Science (M.C.S)
- Master of Science in Management Information Systems (M.I.S)

The Lingua Franca Institute (LFI) offers Intensive English courses:

- Certificate of Completion each semester *(non-degree program)*

Applying to WUV

Overview: Most information necessary for the admissions process is on our website. You can click on the "Apply Now" button or go to https://admissions.wuv.edu/.

Access the information under each box to see Programs of Study, the Process Overview, How to Prepare Your Application, and the Documents you need to apply.

Admission Inquiry: Click the "Get Started" button to submit an Admissions Inquiry. This is free with no obligation to apply; it is a way to start a connection with the Admissions Office. Both new and returning students should fill out this Inquiry with their *personal* email address to start the process.

- If you are a current student who wants to change program levels, you are considered a "new" student, and you must re-apply to the college and pay the application fee again.

Application Steps:

1) After you submit an Admission Inquiry, the office will email you with follow-up questions.
2) After that, you will be sent an email to fill out the first part of the application
3) To complete the first part, you must pay the $100 ***non-refundable*** application fee.
4) Once the payment has been noted, then you will receive another email to upload your documents to fully complete the application process.

Note: If you are applying to our intensive English program, you must be placed in the program before you apply. After you do the Admissions Inquiry, the ESL Director will contact you via email.

Detailed instructions with pictures are on the website under Admissions > Apply Now.

If you have any questions, call the college at 703.333.5904 ext 101.

For important deadlines, see/wuv.edu/dates-deadlines

Obtaining Your Form I-20

A Form I-20 is also called *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status for Academic and Language Students*. This 3-page document certifies that a non-immigrant student has been admitted to a SEVP-certified school to study full-time. It contains your SEVIS number, biographical information, school and program information, dates, financial information, required signatures, and other necessary information for your program. If dependents (spouse or unmarried minor children) accompany you, they will receive I-20s with F-2 status. Certain documents and adequate financial support are necessary to report dependents on your I-20.

You should always verify your information on your Active I-20 before you sign it. Signing your I-20 acknowledges that all information on it is correct.

Process

The way you acquire an Initial Form I-20 depends on how you apply to WUV – as *an overseas student, a transfer-in student, or a change of status student*

Note: If you do not register for courses by the deadline or defer your start date, your I-20 will either be cancelled or terminated.

After classes begin, we will issue an *Active* I-20. This I-20 is emailed to your WUV email address only. If you prefer, you can pick up your I-20 in the Student Services Office.

Please keep your signed, original I-20 in a safe place. If you damage or lose your I-20, you have a digital version in your WUV email or can get a reprinted one for a small fee within 3 business days.

Overseas Students

The Chart of the International Student Life Cycle is at
https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/get-started/international-student-life-cycle

Note: If you are applying to our intensive English program, you must be placed in the program before you apply. After you do the Admissions Inquiry, the ESL Director will contact you via email.

If you would like to study at WUV and you are *currently living **outside** the U.S.*, you must follow procedures to enter the U.S. and begin your program of study. More information can be found at studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students.

1) Fill out an Admissions Inquiry on our website to be sent an email with basic info based on the program(s) you chose.
2) Then, a link to WUV's application (first part) will be sent to your email.
3) Fill out the WUV Admission Application and pay WUV's application fee If you have any questions, you can email admissions@wuv.edu or call 703.333.5904 ext 101.
4) Once your initial application has been accepted, you must provide the requested documents by uploading them to your WUV Portal account. A link for the Portal will be sent to you.
5) If you are granted admission to a WUV program, you will receive an official **Acceptance Letter and an *Initial* I-20** within 5 – 7 business days to the email address we have on file.
6) Pay the I-901 SEVIS fee at FMJFEE.com. The fee is paid directly to DHS. It is not included in the application fee for the college. This fee should be paid at least 3 business days before your visa interview.
7) F-1 Visa Interview. You must bring your Form I-20, I-901 receipt, and other required documents to a U.S. embassy or consulate for your visa interview.
8) Once you receive your F-1 visa, plan to arrive in the U.S. *no more than* 30 days before your program start date on your I-20. (See I-20 for "Earliest Admission Date") You must present your I-20 and visa to the U.S. Customs & Border Protection at the port of entry. If you arrive earlier than 30 days before your start date, your entry into the U.S. may be denied.
9) If you do **not** receive visa approval in time for your program start date, you must notify WUV before your program start date. You can find your start date on your Acceptance Letter or the first page of your I-20 in the Program of Study section. *Note: If you do not notify WUV, then your I-20 will eventually be cancelled.*

10) If you get denied visa approval and you would like to try again, you need to request a new I-20 with a new start date. There is a fee to create an I-20 with a new start date Note*: If you do not notify WUV of your decision and do not request a new I-20, then your I-20 will eventually be cancelled.*

11) Once you arrive in the US, come to the Student Services Office as soon as possible to finalize the admission process, register for courses, and make tuition payment arrangements. Bring any requested documents.

Transfer–In Students

Note: If you are applying to our intensive English program, you must be placed in the program before you apply. After you do the Admissions Inquiry, the ESL Director will contact you via email.

If you are attending another SEVP-accredited school and wish to transfer into WUV, you must do the following:

1) Fill out an Admissions Inquiry on our website to be sent an email with basic info based on the program(s) you chose.
2) Then, a link to WUV's application (first part) will be sent to your email.
3) Fill out the WUV Admission Application and pay WUV's application fee If you have any questions, you can email admissions@wuv.edu or call 703.333.5904 ext 101.
~~4)~~ Once your initial application has been accepted, you must provide the requested documents by uploading them to your WUV Portal account. A link for the Portal will be sent to you.
5) If you are granted admission to a WUV program, you will receive an official **Acceptance Letter and Eligibility Form** to bring to your current school. Your current school needs this letter and form to transfer your I-20 to WUV. You must fill it out and sign the student section before giving it to your school. *Note: If your I-20 is Terminated or Completed from the current school, WUV will not accept your application.*
6) When your current school completes the Eligibility Form and transfers your I-20 to WUV, we can create your Initial I-20 after you register for classes.
7) Contact the Student Services Office as soon as possible for course registration and payment arrangement of tuition. Submit any requested documents to complete the application.

Change of Status (COS) Students

Note: If you are applying to our intensive English program, you must be placed in the program before you apply. After you do the Admissions Inquiry, the ESL Director will contact you via email.

Prospective students *who currently have a visa* and want to change to F-1 status must follow the process outlined in this section. Different visas have different requirements, so please go to **uscis.gov** for more specific information or consult an attorney.

General Information

- If you want to take classes while your F-1 is pending, please talk to Admissions or the DSO.

- If you leave the U.S. while your COS is pending, USCIS will cancel your application.
- If your COS status is approved, you will get the benefits of F-1 status while in the U.S. However, you will forfeit your F-1 status if you leave the U.S. Therefore, you would have to re-apply for an F-1 at a U.S. Embassy, preferably in your home country.

Process for Change of Status (COS)

<u>To apply for a Change of Status with USCIS, you must have a school and a start date</u>.

1) Fill out an Admissions Inquiry on our website to be sent an email with basic info based on the program(s) you chose.
2) Then, a link to WUV's application (first part) will be sent to your email.
3) Fill out the WUV Admission Application and pay WUV's application fee If you have any questions, you can email admissions@wuv.edu or call 703.333.5904 ext 101.
4) Once your initial application has been accepted, you must provide the requested documents by uploading them to your WUV Portal account. A link for the Portal will be sent to you.
5) If you are granted admission to a WUV program, you will get an **Acceptance Letter and an Initial I-20.**
6) You will need this Initial I-20 and Acceptance Letter to apply to USCIS.
    - *The process to apply to USCIS can be found at **studyinthestates.dhs.gov/change-of-status***
    - *The Change of Status application is at **uscis.gov/i-539***
    - *A Designated School Official (DSO) can explain the process, but you or an attorney must complete the steps for legal reasons. Please talk with an attorney if you need further assistance.*

<u>Change of Status (COS) can take a long time. You may need to get an updated start date & extend your visa.</u>

1) While you are waiting for your F-1, *most* visa holders can take classes. However, some (example: "B" visa holders) may *not* take classes.
    - *Go to the USCIS website **www.uscis.gov/visit-united-states/change-my-nonimmigrant-status-category/change-my-nonimmigrant-status** or contact your DSO.*

2) If your current visa does *not* allow you to take classes while your F-1 is pending OR you decide not to take classes until your F-1 is approved, the college may need to update your I-20 date
    - *Your initial I-20 has a start date, but that date will change if you do not get your COS in time and register for classes. Therefore, the college must change your start date to the next session date. Contact WUV's Admissions Office for any updated dates.*

Inform the college when your F-1 is approved & complete the admission and registration process.

1) If you are taking classes while your F-1 is pending…
   Submit Notice of Action Form I-797 for your F-1 approval to the Admissions Office.
2) If you are NOT taking classes while your F-1 is pending…
   1. *Submit Notice of Action Form I-797 for your F-1 approval to the Admissions Office.*
   2. *Bring any missing documents to the Admissions Office.*
   3. *Sign up for classes before the deadline on the Academic Calendar.*
3) After classes begin, we will issue you an *Active* I-20.
   Pick up your Active I-20 at the Admissions Office.

Registering for Classes

Each semester, there is a *non-refundable* registration fee. This fee payment must be made to continue the registration process to completion. In addition, there are late fees for registering after certain deadlines and I-20 consequences for not registering by certain deadlines.

Full Courseload Minimums

Each semester you must register for a **full course load.** This is a minimum requirement to maintain your I-20. (*See Maintaining Your I-20: Credit Requirements*). These credit requirements are for your courses in your curriculum. Any courses that do not count towards graduation, *including repeated courses*, will not be counted for the minimum.

You are responsible for knowing your curriculum that was given to you at enrollment and is accessible through MyWUV. You may need to take **more than the minimum classes** to complete your program by your I-20's End Date.

You must register *online* through your MyWUV account if you are a *returning* student.

Fees

All fees can be found at **wuv.edu/tuition-fees/** or contact the **Admissions office.**

Returning Students

R*eturning* students are expected to register during the Registration period to maintain I-20.

This registration time is during the previous semester, from April until mid-May or November until mid-December. If returning students do not register for classes by the Registration deadline, then they will incur a late fee and receive email notification regarding

possible I-20 consequences. The student will have 60 days after classes end in May to fully register and 30 days after classes end in December to fully register. There will be an additional $50 fee to register during this time.

Failing to register for classes may result in I-20 termination.

Non-Returning Students

If you plan not to attend WUV the following semester, you must inform the office during Registration time (usually April and November). If you do not inform the college of your future plans, then your I-20 may be terminated. It is your responsibility to register or inform the college of your plans by certain deadlines.

New Students or Program Level Change Students

New students or students who change their program level (ex. Bachelor's to Master's) must register in-person no later than the day before classes begin. New students **cannot** register for the **first** time during Add/Drop period (ie. the first week of classes). *Note: **Admission** deadlines are earlier than registration deadlines.*

Add/Drop Period

During the first week of classes, all students can change their course registration without a penalty. Students are allowed to add, drop, and/or switch to a different class during this period *only*.

After the Add/Drop period ends, students cannot change classes. Therefore, it is very important to attend your first class. If you stay at WUV and drop less than all your courses, then you will NOT receive a refund after the Add/Drop period.

Your finalized schedule at the end of Add / Drop period must be a full courseload (unless doing an RCL). *If you are taking the minimum credit requirements and drop a course, you will be "out-of-status" and your I-20 will be terminated.*

Maintaining Your I-20

There are many requirements for maintaining your F-1 visa. The college assists you in maintaining your I-20, but ultimately it is your responsibility to know your rights and requirements.

In addition to the requirements explained below, you should also maintain a valid passport and get authorization before engaging in any kind of employment.

See ***studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students*** for more information.

Credit Requirements

To maintain your I-20, you must engage in *full-time study* during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Program Minimums. Full-time study requirements vary by program. Failure to maintain these minimum credit or hour requirements will result in termination of your I-20.

Undergraduate (Bachelors):	12 credits per semester
Graduate (Masters):	9 credits per semester*
Doctorate (DCPC / DMin):	6 credits per semester
Intensive English:	18 hours/week (2 classes)

***Prerequisites.** If your program has prerequisite courses, these must be taken above your minimums.

Other or Repeated Courses. Minimum credit requirements are for your courses in your curriculum. Any courses that do not count towards graduation, *or are repeated*, must be above the minimum requirements.

Examples:

- If you are an MBA student, but you want to take a Counseling course, you would register for 12 credits, instead of the 9-credit minimum.
- If you fail a course, you must take it again (or a comparable course) and you must take more than the minimum. *See **Academic Probation** for more information about F grades.*

Online / Live-Streamed. You may only take one on-line or live-streamed class each semester to fulfill *your minimum credit requirements*. If you take more than your minimum credits, any extra courses can be online or live-streamed.

Final Semester RCL. During your final semester of a degree program, if you do not need to take the full-course load, then you must apply for a Reduced Course Load-Final (RCL). *See the **Reduced Course Load – Final** section for more information.*

Medical RCL. If you cannot maintain your minimum requirements due to a medical issue, please talk to a DSO. Failing to take the minimum requirements without DSO permission will result in termination of your I-20. *See **Reduced Course Load – Medical** section for more information.*

Personal Information Changes

Keeping your information updated on your I-20 is important to maintaining your status.

You should always verify your information on your Active I-20 before you sign it. *Signing your I-20 acknowledges that all information on it is correct.*

When your personal information changes, you must inform the college **within 10 days** by filling out an Update Personal Information (UPI) form. This form should be sent to the Registrar's Office.

This information includes:

- U.S. address and mailing address (if different)
- Phone number
- Personal email address

Other personal information changes may be necessary throughout your program. There are other forms and *additional fees for an I-20 update* for the following:

- Sponsor's information
- Dependent's information
- Name changes due to marriage

Addresses and Phone Numbers. On the UPI form, you can update your home address, mailing address, email address, and phone number with no charge. Your information will be changed in MY.WUV and in your I-20 record (SEVIS) system. However, this information does not appear on your I-20 (paper copy), so you will not be given an updated I-20.

Sponsor's Information. When you applied to WUV, you may have provided information for a sponsor. This support is for the first 8 months (academic year) of your program, but it stays on your I-20 for the entire program without needing to be updated**.** However, if you do need to change that information, you must request an update which comes with a fee. Contact the DSO for more information.

Adding a Dependent*.* During the admissions process, you may have applied to WUV with dependent(s) on your application (free of charge). However, if you need to <u>add</u> a dependent(s) afterwards, you must fill out a request (with a fee) and must have evidence to prove an extra $6,000 for each dependent.

The financial amount on your I-20 must change and proof of funds needs to be verified by bank statements. This updated F2 I-20 can be used to apply to USCIS or used at an embassy/consulate overseas.

Name Change. If you would like to change your name on your I-20 record, you must fill out a request (with a fee) and provide an updated *passport* with your new name. Contact DSO for more information.

Attendance

Attending classes is an important part of maintaining your I-20. Regular class attendance is expected and will be recorded in every in-person class. Refer to your specific program and course syllabus for more detailed attendance policy rules.

Failure to attend less than 75% of classes may result in I-20 termination, even in your first semester.

What is an absence?

1) Not attending class at all or a certain percentage of class. (See your course syllabus for professor's rules on absences)
2) Arriving late or leaving early three (3) times. The total is calculated at the end of the semester and added to your regular absences. If you have less than any multiple of 3, then those late / leave early do not count.

Tracking Your Attendance. Please check your MyWUV regularly to track your attendance. If you believe there is an error, talk to your professor immediately. If you need further assistance, contact your DSO.

If there is a problem that makes attending class impossible, you MUST talk to your DSO.

Add / Drop. If you add a course during the Add/Drop period, any classes you have missed will NOT be counted as an absence. It is the students' responsibility to contact their instructors for missed assignments. The instructor may allow up to two weeks for a student to complete the make-up assignments. All make-up work not completed within the given time will be given a zero by the instructor.

What is an Excused Absence?

All absences are not excused except if the student provides documentation from a licensed medical doctor, a doctor of osteopathy or a licensed clinical psychologist. You can also be excused at the instructor's discretion if you can provide *proof* of why you were absent. Please let your instructor know if you think you have an excused absence. The system will show an "~~A~~" (an A with a line through it) to indicate that the absence was excused and therefore will not count in the total.

Attendance Probation

For all programs, you must attend at least 80% percent of classes to be in "Good Standing" at the college. If you attend less than 80% of the classes, you will be put on attendance probation.

Attendance probation puts you into "Not Good Standing" with the college and can negatively impact your I-20 if you are in this status for two consecutive semesters, or three times in total over the course of your program.

Attendance probation (except for Chapel) also affects your CPT eligibility.

There are three kinds of attendance notices:

- *Attendance Probation Notice* will be given for your first semester receiving more than 3 absences in any given course. The notice warns the student about future probation consequences.
- *Attendance Probation 2nd Notice* will be given during your second *non*-consecutive semester of having more than 3 absences.
- *Notice of Ineligibility to Attend* will be given after either a) two consecutive semesters OR b) three non-consecutive semesters of failing to attend classes according to our policy.

Student Responsibilities: When you receive an Attendance Probation Letter, it is your responsibility to attend any required meeting with the Dean and / or DSO.

You must monitor your attendance the following semester. If you drop below 80%, you must talk to a DSO immediately.

Impact on I-20: Potential Terminations.

1) If you fall below 75% attendance, which is 5 or more absences, your I-20 may be terminated.
2) If you receive a Notice of Ineligibility to Attend, your I-20 may be terminated.
3) If you fail to maintain the requirements of probation, your I-20 may be terminated.

Grades (GPA)

Maintaining your grade point average (GPA) is an important part of maintaining your I-20. It is your responsibility to monitor your grades and know your GPA.

Your Term GPA is the total of grades for one semester. The Cumulative GPA is your total GPA for all semesters of study.

*Your **Term GPA** is found under "Transcript" in MyWUV .*

*Your **Cumulative GPA** is found under "Progress Audits" and/or "Transcript" in My WUV.*

Minimum Requirements by Program. A student is in "Good Standing" at the college and maintaining their I-20 if the student's Term GPA is:

- 2.5 or higher for *graduates (Master and Doctorate)*
- 2.0 or higher for *undergraduates (Bachelor)*
- "C" or higher for *Language training (ESL) students*

How Course Grades are Calculated. The grading scale for each course is included in your course syllabus. Please make sure you understand your professors' grading methods. Grades throughout the semester can be found on Moodle or Google Classroom or MyWUV, depending on your professor's preferences. If you are not sure how you will be graded or where your grades are posted, please talk to your professors.

Final Grades, Incompletes, and Grade Changes.

Final grades are posted in MyWUV within 2 weeks of the end of the semester. If you have any concerns about your final grade, talk to your professor, the Registrar, or DSO.

If you are unable to take the final exam or do your final assignment, you can request an incomplete INC grade from your professor.

If you have concerns or questions about your final grade, talk to your professor, the Registrar, or DSO. The period for any grade change ends 6 weeks after the semester ends. After that time, your grade cannot be changed, and probation letters are sent out.

Academic Probation for Term GPA

Failure to maintain your Term (semester) GPA minimums will result in Academic Probation, which puts you into "Not Good Standing".

This will have a negative impact on your ability to maintain your status and your eligibility for CPT.

Academic Probation letters will be sent after grades are posted, so ultimately, it is your responsibility to monitor your grades and know your Term and Cumulative GPA.

Student Responsibilities: If you receive probation letters in two consecutive semesters OR three times in total over the course of your program, your I-20 may be terminated.

- If you receive an academic probation letter, you will also be *required* to meet with the Dean and DSO.

There are four kinds of academic probation notices:

- *Academic Probation Notice* will be given for your first semester receiving below the minimum requirements. The notice warns the student about future academic probation consequences.
- *Academic Probation 2nd Notice* will be given during your second non-consecutive semester of failing to receive the minimum GPA required.
- *Notice of Ineligibility to Attend* will be given after either a) two consecutive semesters OR b) three non-consecutive semesters of failing to receive the minimum GPA required.
- *Notice of Failing Grade in Course(s)* will be given in any semester to a student who receives an F grade in any course(s) for the semester – even if they do not receive Academic Probation (ie. GPA is still at or above the minimum requirement)

Failed a Course(s)?

Failing a course(s) requires that you re-take the course(s) in the next semester or the next time it is offered. This course(s) must be above your minimum required credit amounts for your program.

Potential Terminations for Failing a Course(s)

- If you receive two of the *Notice of Failing Grade in Course(s) letters* in any 3 semesters you are enrolled in your program, and your I-20 may be terminated.
- If you receive failing grades in 50% - 100% of your courses, even in your first semester, your I-20 may be terminated.

Tuition

Paying Tuition

Fulfilling your financial obligations at WUV is important and could affect your class enrollment and, consequently, affect your I-20.

Every semester, you must fill out a *Payment Plan Agreement,* which is found in MyWUV, and submit it to the Student Accounts Office.

Tuition for degree programs is per credit hour and is based on your program. Tuition for the Intensive English program (LFI) is a flat rate for 18 hours/week.

- For the most current tuition rates, see www.wuv.edu/tuition-fees/

Tuition must be paid in full or by payment plan at specific times. Failure to pay according to the deadlines will result in late fees.

Tuition Refunds

WUV complies with the cancellation and refund policies of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) Code 8 VAC 40-31-160(N)(6).

The dates for refunds with the percentage amounts are in the Academic Calendar for each semester.

All refunds will be made within 15 business days from the official written notification of withdrawal.

Refunds are only given if a student withdraws **completely from the program**. If a student drops a class(es) but remains in the program for at least one class, then *no* refund is given.

A **written**, **signed, and dated** Academic Withdrawal Request is needed for all refunds.

- If a student cancels enrollment *within 3 business days of applying*, no financial obligation is necessary *except* for the non-refundable application fee.
- A student who enters the school but *completely* withdraws or is terminated *before classes start* or *by the last day of the Add / Drop period* shall be entitled to a 100% refund of the cost of tuition.
- A student who enters the school but *completely* withdraws or is terminated during the first quartile (25%) of the program shall be entitled to a minimum refund amounting to 75% of the cost of tuition.
- A student who *completely* withdraws or is terminated during the second quartile (more than 25% but less than 50%) of the program shall be entitled to a minimum refund amounting to 50% of the cost of tuition.

- A student who *completely* withdraws or is terminated during the third quartile (more than 50% but less than 75%) of the program shall be entitled to a minimum refund amounting to 25% of the cost of tuition.
- A student who *completely* withdraws (or is terminated) after completing more than three quartiles (75%) of the program shall not be entitled to a refund.

Withdrawal Process: If a student decides to completely withdraw during the term, they should inform the school in writing with a request form of the day of withdrawal and a tuition refund request. *Note: You cannot attend any more classes after you submit an Academic Withdrawal and Tuition Refund request.*

Compliance of Policies and Laws

To maintain your 1-20 with WUV, you must comply with all school policies. During enrollment, you are required to sign a statement acknowledging your acceptance of the WUV Academic Honesty, Code of Conduct, and Acknowledgement of Statement of Faith.

In addition, you must follow all federal, state, local, and immigration laws at all times. If you are found in violation of any U.S laws, your I-20 may be terminated by the college or the US government.

See WUV Handbook for a list of violations.

If you are found in violation of any WUV policies, you will receive either a warning, probation, suspension, or expulsion from the college. Expulsion will result in termination of your I-20.

Violations of the Academic Honesty and Code of Conduct policies will be taken seriously and will be handled in a disciplinary process. *See Disciplinary Procedures in the WUV Student Handbook.*

Applying for Graduation

You must apply for graduation no later than the second week of your last semester.

An email will be sent from the Registrar's Office to remind you.

If you do not respond, there may be negative consequences on your ability to graduate and for your I-20.

Changes to your I-20

During your status as an F-1 student, you may need to make changes to your I-20. Some of the changes come with fees, and some require USCIS applications / approvals.

In most cases, you will receive an updated I-20 in your WUV email. We recommend that you keep all previous I-20s issued to you in a safe place as you may need them for future work or change-of-status applications.

Personal Information Changes

See Maintaining your I-20.

Travel

More information regarding travel and travel under special circumstances can be found at: **www.ice.gov/sevis/travel#_Toc81222014**

If you travel **outside the United States for a break or a temporary absence** (less than 5 months), you need:

1) a passport valid for at least six months (or less for some countries),
2) a valid visa with a date of expiry up to the time you return, and
3) a current travel signature on page 2 of your I-20 (and/or for your F2s)

If you travel outside the US, you must get a new or renewed visa to return in the following circumstances:

1) If your visa has expired or will expire before you return, or
2) If you changed your status to F-1 while in the US.

It is not recommended that you travel near the start date of a semester or during a semester *unless you can follow the rules to maintain your status.* If you are out of the U.S., you are still expected to follow all college policies (e.g. attendance, grades) and deadlines (e.g. on-time registration, add/drop, tuition payments)

Requesting a Travel Signature.

To request a travel signature, complete the following steps:

1) Check your most recent I-20 (see emails from DSO@wuv.edu). If you already have a travel signature that is within one year of your return date, you do necessarily need another signature. Verify that the info on your *entire* I-20 is correct.
2) In the MyWUV system, verify that your personal information (address and phone number) is correct. (MyWUV info is used to update I-20 records).

3) If your personal information needs to be updated, fill out the UPI form.
4) Check that you have a valid passport and valid visa in your passport.
    - If you have gotten an updated passport or visa and you haven't sent it your DSO yet, do so when requesting the travel signature.
    - If your visa has expired or you got F1 status through a change-of-status process with USCIS, then you will need a new / renewed visa to return. Make sure you have plenty of time to take care of that while away from the US.
5) Email your DSO with the UPI form (if necessary) and give a brief explanation of your travel plans, including destination and dates.
6) Your DSO will review your documents, sign your most recent I-20, and send it to your WUV email.
7) Print it. Sign and date the bottom with a pen (digital signatures of students are not accepted). Sign in ink for your F2s.
8) Do NOT put your documents in your checked luggage. You must carry your documents with you to show the Customs & Border Protection (CBP) Agent.
9) There may be some additional documents that are required or recommended you carry or have accessible (either paper copy or digital copy). Review the info below and talk to your DSO for more info.

<u>Required</u> documents to re-enter the U.S. for an official break, travel during the semester, or a temporary leave of absence:

- **Valid I-20 recently signed by a DSO** *Your I-20 must say "Continued Attendance" under Form Issue Reason in the first box on page 1.*
- **A passport that is valid for at least 6 months** (or less for some countries)
- **A valid F-1 visa** *If you received your F-1 status as a <u>Change of Status within the U.S,</u> you will forfeit that F-1 when you leave the country. You will have to re-apply for a visa at the U.S. Embassy in your home country. Contact a DSO for more information.*
- ***For OPT students*: A valid EAD (Employment Authorization Document) card.** If you haven't received OPT approval yet, it is highly recommended that you do <u>not</u> travel as USCIS may likely considered your application as "abandoned".

<u>Recommended</u> documents to re-enter the U.S. for travel during the semester (<u>not</u> an official break) or after a temporary leave of absence:

- **Verification of financial support from you or your sponsor** (ex. updated bank statements showing you have the funds to pay for tuition and living expenses)
- **An Unofficial Transcript**. On MyWUV, you can access your unofficial transcript for no charge. If you want an Official Transcript, there is a fee through Parchment.
- ***For OPT students*:** A letter from your employer stating you have permission to work remotely or not work at all for the time you are traveling.

Need a New or Renewed Visa? There are additional documents that come *with a charge*. You may need these documents if you are trying to get a new or renewed visa.

- **An Official Transcript**. You can request your official transcript for a fee through Parchment. Never open an official transcript sent to you. See wuv.edu/parchment-digital-credential-service/
- **A Certificate of Enrollment**. You can request your Certificate of Enrollment for a fee through Parchment or through the Registrar's Office. This document proves your program of study, its duration, and that you are registered for the next semester (if applicable).
- **A Letter of Support.** This can be helpful if you have special circumstances or want proof that you have been maintaining your grades and attendance.

If you have already left the United States without a travel signature, then you have two options.

1) You can contact your DSO to request an I-20 with a travel endorsement to be emailed to you. ***See steps above.*** Contact DSO@wuv.edu Make sure your travel plans provide enough time to process the request, which can take 2 – 4 business days.
2) You can arrive at a U.S. port of entry without your I-20 signed for travel. However, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer may either deny your entry into the United States OR issue you a Form I-515A. This document allows you to have temporary admission into the United States for 30 days while you respond to the request on the form. Talk to your DSO to get more information. If you do NOT respond in a timely manner, your I-20 will be terminated by the U.S. government, and you will need to leave the US immediately.

Employment

An F-1 student has *limited* work opportunities available while studying in the United States. Your financial information on your I-20 proves that you have enough funds to study without needing employment to support yourself.

Therefore, if you work *without* permission from USCIS and/or your DSO, your I-20 will be terminated, and you will have to leave the country immediately. This type of termination may impact your future travel to the U.S.

However, there are four ways a student could engage in *authorized* employment: On-campus, Off-Campus, Curricular Practical Training (CPT), and Post-completion Optional Practical Training (post-OPT).

On-campus Employment

This type of employment does not need to be authorized by USCIS, only your DSO. At this time, WUV has very few, if any, employment opportunities on campus. Contact HR@wuv.edu

Off-campus Employment

Off-campus employment is requested by a DSO and granted by USCIS. There are only two reasons whereby you can obtain approval to work off-campus that is NOT related to your course of study.

1) **Economic Hardship.** This type of request is due to financial problems that make it difficult to pay for tuition and living expenses. *See Economic Hardship section for more information.*
2) **Temporary Protected Status (TPS**) with **Special Student Relief (SSR).** *At certain designated times, p*eople from certain countries can get TPS granted through USCIS according to the Federal Register Notice (FRN). If the FRN *also* grants you Special Student Relief (SSR) benefits, you may be eligible to have employment authorization and reduced course load opportunities. Please talk to a DSO or an attorney for more information on how to maintain F-1 status while also having TPS status.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

See the CPT Page on the WUV website for more information.

What is CPT?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) was established by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to enhance a student's classroom instruction with practical experience.

The employment experience must be directly related to the student's field of study. CPT must be an integral part of an established curriculum. Thus, an F-1 student needs to be authorized by the university to participate in CPT program.

CPT is defined as alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other types of required internship or practicum at an off-campus worksite that are offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.

CPT Eligibility

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is available for all degree programs at WUV. The CPT experience must be related to your course of study and an integral to the program's curriculum.

To be eligible for CPT, students must satisfy the following requirements:

1. **F-1 status for one academic year**. An F-1 student can request CPT if the employment begins after one academic year (2 semesters = 30 weeks).

    - Undergraduates (Bachelor) students must complete one full academic year at WUV in F-1 status to be eligible.
    - Graduates (Master / Doctorate) must complete one full academic year in F-1 status at any SEVP-approved school to be eligible.
    - English (ESL) students are not eligible.

2. **Be in good standing**. F-1 students who are legally maintaining their status and in good standing with WUV for grades, attendance, and financial obligations can apply.
    - Those students on academic or attendance probation cannot apply for CPT until they have one semester in "good standing".

A pattern of absences for any course during the CPT semester may result in the cancellation of any existing CPT and loss of future CPT eligibility.

- Students must pay the registration fee(s) and first tuition payment to receive their CPT I-20.
- Undergraduates (Bachelor) students must have at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA and good attendance when applying.
- Graduates (Master / Doctorate) students must have at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA and good attendance when applying.

3. **Maintain a full-course load in the Fall and Spring semesters**. Be sure to register for a full-course load not including the CPT course.

    - *If you are required to take any pre-requisite courses, these must also be taken above your minimums.*
    - In the Summer and Winter sessions, students are not required to take any courses (except the CPT one).
    - If you are doing a Reduced Course Load (RCL) for *final* semester, then at least one of your non-CPT courses must be on campus.

4. **Eligibility during an RCL.** If you request a Reduced Courseload (RCL) for final semester, you can also do a CPT in addition to your required course(s).

    - This can be part-time or full-time and at least one required course for graduation must be on campus.
    - Students are not eligible for CPT if taking an RCL for medical reasons.

WUV's CPT Policy

A) **Eligibility**: *See above.*
B) **Due Dates**: Students must apply for the CPT at least 2 weeks before the semester begins. See CPT webpage for deadlines. The completed application requires signatures from your employer and a job offer letter.

C) **CPT Frequency.** Students can apply for CPT up to 4 times during their programs. If a student completes 12 months or more full-time CPT, then they are not eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

D) **Receive I-20 to begin working**: Do not start working unless you have your CPT I-20. CPT must be approved and authorized on the I-20 prior to the employment start

date. Look for your I-20 in your WUV email account. If you have concerns, contact your DSO.

E) **Full-time study requirement**: Students must be registered in classes full-time during the *fall and spring semesters* to participate in CPT. *If you are required to take any pre-requisite courses, these must also be taken above your minimums*.

- CPT credit cannot be the only credit(s) you receive for a semester. Therefore, CPT cannot be used to extend your program end date on your I-20. *Note: I-20 end dates are never in the summer or winter sessions.*

F) **Employment time:** In the summer session, CPT can be part-time or full-time. During the fall and spring semesters, employment must be part-time. Exception: Full-time CPT can be done in your last semester.

Part-time = 20 hours or less per week
Full-time = more than 20 hours per week

G) **Employment length:** CPT is approved for one semester at a time, not to exceed the program end date. Your employment dates must begin no earlier than the semester class start date and end no later than the last day of classes. *See Academic Calendar*.
- Even if your employment date is later than the start of the semester, your application must still be submitted 2 weeks or more before the semester starts.

H) **Employment type:** CPT work is typically for an *in-person* job in Washington DC, Maryland, or Virginia (DMV) area.

- *Remote work* can be authorized *with stipulations*. There must be a signed agreement in place about how the student will be supervised.
- Working for yourself or your own company is not permissible. You must be an employee of a company with someone supervising your work.
- CPT is for one employer and cannot be changed during the semester / session. No refunds are given if your employment is ended before the CPT end date.

I) **Paid / Unpaid work**. Many students find employment that is paid. However, if your CPT internship is unpaid, then that must be clearly stated in the job offer letter. Also, you must submit a required letter from your employer at the end of your CPT verifying that you did not receive any compensation for your work.

J) **CPT Course Completion**. All CPT reports, evaluations, and any verifications must be submitted to receive credit ("CR") for your CPT course. Failure to meet requirements will result in not getting credit for your course and not being eligible for another CPT authorization.

K) **Full-time CPT affects post-OPT**: Following USCIS rules, accumulating 12 months or more of full-time CPT will eliminate eligibility for post completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) at the same educational level.
Part-time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility.

CPT Request Process

1) *Apply on time*. The deadlines are on WUV's CPT webpage.

2) *Submit a completed application*. A completed, signed application must be submitted on time along with a job offer letter related to your degree.

3) *Job Letter Requirements*
The job offer letter must be on company letterhead, signed, dated, and addressed to the student with the following:

   - Job title / position
   - Job duties / goals that show how the experience relates to the major and selected CPT course.
   - Full company name and address. For remote work, the company's physical address is still needed.
   - Exact start & end dates of employment (which cannot be earlier or later than the semester dates).
   - Number of hours per week. Part-time= 20 or fewer hours/week. Full-time = over 20 hours/week.

4) *Pay the CPT request fee*. The fee amount is on the request form and will appear in MyWUV invoices. Pay through the MyWUV system or in the office to get the request process started.

5) *Pay the registration fee(s).* The registration fee for Fall and Spring semesters is $100 each. The registration fee for the Summer and Winter sessions is $50 each. If you register for Summer CPT, both summer and fall registration fees must be paid. If you register for Winter CPT, both winter and spring registration fees must be paid.

6) *Check your enrollment in a CPT course*. The Registrar will enroll you in a CPT course. This course is related to your work duties and any previous coursework. Note: The tuition for this course will be added to your payment plan agreement total.

7) *Pay the tuition payment*. You are also responsible for making your first tuition payment in order to get your CPT I-20. Check your course list to see when your CPT course is added. You may need to make your first tuition payment early so that you

can get your CPT I-20. If you have already made a payment (ex. Plan 1), your CPT course will be added and your payment plan will be adjusted accordingly for future payments. If you are only enrolled in a CPT course for the summer/winter, you are responsible to pay the entire tuition payment.

8) *Get a CPT I-20*. When your request is approved, you will get a CPT I-20 from your DSO. Do NOT start working until you have that I-20.

9) *Get a Social Security Number (SSN)*. If you have not yet gotten an SSN and card, you must apply to the Social Security Administration (SSA) with your CPT I-20 and other documents. *Contact your DSO for more information*.

Post-completion Optional Practical Training (post-OPT)

See the OPT Page on the WUV website for more information.

What is post-OPT?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a type of practical work experience that is authorized by USCIS and is available for eligible F-1 students for up to one year. OPT is intended to provide students with work experience after graduation *that is directly related to a student's major area of study.*

WUV has ***post****-completion* OPT only, and does not offer a ***pre***-completion OPT.
See: STEM OPT section for more information about the 2-year STEM extension authorization.

OPT Eligibility

Students must be a valid F-1 who, before OPT **work** begins, will be in F-1 status for at least 30 weeks (one academic semester) and will complete all degree requirements.

Students may engage in an OPT for up to 12 months at *each degree level* (ie. Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate)

- Example: If you completed an OPT after receiving your Bachelor's degree, then you are eligible to request an OPT after completing your Master's degree.

Examples of NOT being eligible:

- Students cannot be granted multiple OPTs for the same program level.
    - If you complete an OPT after receiving a Master's degree, then complete a different Master's degree, you are NOT eligible to request another OPT. Even though it is a different degree major, it is the same program level.
    - If you do an OPT for a **non**-STEM degree then later complete a STEM degree at the **same** educational level (ex. Masters), you are not eligible to apply again to get the 2-year STEM extension.
- If you get **approval** for an OPT for a certain degree level, and do NOT use it, you cannot apply for another OPT at the same level.
- If you completed 12 months or more full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) during the same degree program level (including at other schools), then you are not eligible for OPT.
- *Note: It is risky to apply for OPT at the Bachelor's level **after** completing an OPT at the Master's level.*

OPT Policy

Employment Rules:

- OPT employment **must** be **<u>over</u>** 20 hours per week (i.e. full-time).
- Employment can be for in-person or remote work.
- Employment is typically paid. If it is unpaid, it must not be a normally paid position that a US citizen or resident would be eligible for.
- Employment can be as a W2 employee or 1099. Please consult a tax advisor for tax responsibility differences.
- Self-employment / Business Ownership is an option IF:
  - the business is related to your major, and
  - you have the proper business license(s), and
  - you can prove *active* engagement in the business.
- Students on post-completion OPT are limited to a maximum of 90 days of unemployment.

OPT Request Process

Before applying to USCIS for work authorization, you must request an OPT Recommendation I-20 from WUV which will be needed for your application.

- It is recommended that a student fill out the WUV request form and apply to USCIS to fit their employment plan timeline because it may take 2 – 4 months for USCIS approval.
- It is recommended that a student consider their driver's license (DL) expiration date. If you do not get your OPT approval before your DL expires, then you may have to request a document from WUV to get a DL extension from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Important Dates:

- The *earliest* you can start the request process up to 90 days before your I-20 end date.
  - For Fall (December) Graduates: start October 1st
  - For Spring (May) Graduates: start March 1st
- The *latest* you can request the I-20 Recommendation and have your USCIS application *received* is at the end of your grace period – 60 days after your I-20 *program* end date.

- If you apply for OPT and *do not get an answer* from USCIS before your grace period ends (60 days after your End Date), then you can legally stay in the US while you wait for the answer. However, if you get denied, your I-20 status will automatically change to "complete" At that point, you will have very limited options to continue your education in the US.

Requesting an OPT Recommendation I-20 from WUV:

1) Confirm you are in your last semester and have already applied for graduation.
2) Confirm you have never done 12 months or more full-time CPT or never have done OPT at the same educational level. This includes CPT/OPT authorizations you received at other schools.
3) Satisfy all WUV financial obligations and return all library books.
4) Read this information and get the request form at wuv.edu/opt or in the MyWUV system.
5) Read, complete, and sign the WUV OPT Request Form and submit it to registrar@wuv.edu
6) Pay the $100 *non-refundable* fee through the MyWUV system.
7) After you have requested, paid for, and received your OPT I-20 recommendation, you must apply to USCIS within 30 days.

You will receive an updated I-20 with the OPT request on the second page. Your I-20 with the OPT request will be in pending status until USCIS approves your OPT request.
Note: You may not be able to renew your license with a pending OPT I-20. However, you may be able to get a 30 or 60-day extension with the proper documentation. Talk to your DSO.

Applying for an OPT with USCIS_ www.uscis.gov/i-765

1) A student must submit their application to USCIS **within 30 days** from the date the OPT I-20 was issued. *If you are already in your grace period, you must talk to a DSO about strict deadlines.*
2) Fill out the online I-765 form "Application for Employment Authorization" ***Refer to WUV's Guidance on Applying for OPT.***
3) The U.S. mail does NOT forward EAD cards to a new (or forwarding) address. Make sure the address on the USCIS application will be valid for at least 4 months.

4) If you would like to **cancel** your OPT request I-20 BEFORE you submit it to USCIS, contact your DSO.

5) If you want to **withdraw your application** after it has been received by USCIS (ie. it is in pending status), it is the student's responsibility to notify USCIS in writing. The DSO cannot cancel an application in pending status.

6) If you receive a notice that USCIS *rejected* (not denied) your application or a Request for Evidence (RFE), contact your DSO immediately.

7) Do NOT begin employment. Wait for USCIS to make a decision on your OPT request. If you are approved, you will receive a receipt and an Employment Authorization card (EAD) in the mail.

After Submitting Your USCIS Application

- Processing of your USCIS OPT application may take between 2 to 4 months.
- Check the USCIS Case Status page **egov.uscis.gov** for your OPT decision.
- You will receive an i-797C Notice letter and EAD card (separately) in the mail from USCIS.
- Do NOT begin employment until you have your EAD. Wait for proof that USCIS has approved your OPT authorization.

Grace Period: If you *do not get an answer* from USCIS before your grace period ends (60 days after your End Date), then you can legally stay in the US while you wait for the answer. However, if you get denied after your grace period, your I-20 status will automatically change to "complete". At that point, you will have very limited options to continue your education in the US.

After Receiving Your EAD card / While on OPT

SEVP Portal Account: The Portal Account allows you access to your I-20 record. You or your DSO can update personal and employment information.

- Look for an email from SEVP (check spam) for instructions on how to set up your Portal Account.
- When you are approved and your start date is *in the future*, you will get the SEVP email on that start date (not before).
- If the emailed *link has expired* -or- your account is locked, contact your DSO.
- If you forget your password, use the Reset Password function.

Get an updated OPT I-20: You will be sent an updated I-20 to your WUV email *after* you submit a copy of your EAD card and your job offer letter to DSO@wuv.edu

- *Need an approved OPT I-20 to obtain a driver's license before you have a job?* Contact DSO for an updated (approved) I-20.

Start working within 90 days of your EAD start date. Failure to do so may result in your OPT being cancelled. Submit your job offer letter within 10 days of your employment start date.

Job Offer Letter Requirements

Your job offer must be submitted *within 90 days of OPT approval* and *within 10 days of job start date*.
The following information must be *on company letterhead*:

- **Company name and address.**
- **Job title/ position and duties.** *If your offer letter does not include your work duties, then you must include a brief explanation of how this job relates to your degree.*
- **Exact start & end dates.** *Your employment start date must be within 90 days of approval date. The end date cannot exceed your EAD end date.*
- **Number of hours per week.** *You must work at least 20 hours/week or have an offer for full-time employment.*
- **Name and contact information of supervisor** *(if you have one).*

Unemployment Time: A maximum of 90 days is allowed for unemployment during your authorization dates. Every day, including weekends, you do not have employment information in the system, you are "unemployed".

- You must enter your employment info in the SEVIS Portal *and/or* submit it to your DSO.
- If you change jobs, then any days between jobs is also unemployment time.

Information Changes: Notify WUV within 10 days of any changes to *employment* or *personal* info. Even if you make the change through your Portal account, you must inform your DSO.

- For employment updates, send an email to DSO@wuv.edu
- For personal info updates, fill out a *UPI form* and send it to registrar@wuv.edu

Travel: If you travel outside the U.S, you must get a DSO signature. This signature is good for *6 months only*. You must travel with your EAD card, and it is also strongly suggested that you have a letter from your employer giving you permission to be working remotely or not working.

***Grace Period / Future Plans*:** After your OPT end date, you have up to 60 days to change to a new program at WUV, transfer to new school, or leave the US**.** *Seek the advice of an attorney if you have other plans.*

***Transferring Out**:* If you transfer to another school *before your OPT end date*, your OPT will end the day your I-20 is *transferred*. You will not be allowed to work because your EAD is only valid while you are a student at WUV.

STEM OPT

STEM OPT is a type of 2-year practical work experience that is authorized by USCIS and is available for F-1 students currently in their first year of OPT who have a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM).

Requesting a STEM Recommendation from WUV

Just like the 1-year OPT, you need to request a STEM OPT Extension Recommendation from WUV on your current I-20.

The fee for this I-20 Recommendation is $150. It is for maintaining your I-20 for the next two years. There are multiple times that we need to verify information and send in updated reports along with updating employment and personal information.

Your STEM OPT employer must be in the E-Verify system. See E-Verify link for more info.

STEPS:

1) Complete the Document Request form for STEM OPT.

2) You and your employer need to fill out Form I-983. See: *Guidelines for Filling Out the 983.*

3) Submit a job offer letter. *See box below*.

4) Submit all completed forms to registrar@wuv.edu

The office will send you an email regarding paying request fee(s).

Once the request is processed, the DSO will send you (or you will pick up) your STEM OPT Recommendation I-20, which you need for the USCIS application.

STEM Job Letter Requirements

The STEM job offer letter must be on company letterhead, signed, dated, and addressed to the student with the following:

- Job title / position
- Job duties / goals that show how the experience relates to the STEM major. If the employer doesn't outline this in the letter, I can accept a written explanation from you. I need this explanation to create your I-20 and I cannot write it myself.
- Full company name and address. For remote work, the company's physical address is still needed.
- Exact start date. Must be the day after your OPT ends (see EAD). The end date is not necessary at this time but it is recommended.
- Number of hours per week or it MUST say Full-Time = over 20 hours/week.
- Name of Supervisor with email and phone number (if it is not the same as the person who signed the 983 form). You can provide this info if the job letter does not state it.

The company's E-Verify number to create the I-20 is also needed. Only the employer number is on the 983 form.

Applying to USCIS

You cannot apply *after* your current OPT end date. You must apply before your grace period starts.

After you get the STEM Extension I-20 from WUV, you must apply to USCIS. Submit the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization either online or through the mail.

If you do the online application (Form I-765), it is faster.

Follow the instructions in the application. See: Guidelines for Filling Out the 765 Application.

Submit it with:

1) The correct application fee,

2) Your employer's name as listed in E-Verify, and

3) Your employer's E-Verify Company Identification Number or valid E-Verify Client Company Identification Number

4) The I-20 that you will get from me.

5) A copy of your STEM degree.

Note: You do NOT need a copy of WUV's accreditation. On the USCIS application, you are asked if this is from a previous STEM degree. The answer is "no". This is an application for your *current* STEM degree.

If your STEM OPT extension application is received by USCIS before your end date and your OPT period expires *while your extension application is pending,* it will automatically extend your employment authorization for 180 days or until a decision is made. *So, you just need to focus on getting it in on time and then you can just continue working while you wait for your approval.*

I-20 Extensions

Program End Date. The Program End Date is in box 3 on your I-20. The date is important to know because it is the length of time (approved by SEVP) that it takes a student to complete program requirements.

This length of time may require you to take *more than* the minimum credits per semester. Under certain special circumstances, you can extend your program by one or two semesters.

Reasons for Needing a Program Extension:

- there is a special academic situation that arises so that you cannot finish your program objectives by your program end date
- there is a special medical situation (ex. Med RCL) that arises so that you cannot finish your program objectives by your program end date
- you were granted TPR-SSR for one or more semesters.

NOT Reasons for Needing a Program Extension:

- Failing class(es). If you fail a class, you must take more than the minimum requirements to make it up and graduate on time.
- CPT employment delays. You cannot extend to do a CPT only.
- Academic probation or temporary college suspension.

Requesting an Extension:

1) Fill out an F-1 Extension of Stay request form and submit it to the Registrar's Office. The best time to request an extension is during registration period.

- request the extension *no <u>earlier</u> than* 90 days before your program end date
- request the extension at least two weeks *before* your end date to allow time for processing
- extensions <u>cannot</u> be made after your end date has passed(you will be out-of-status)

2) Pay the request fee in MyWUV
3) Verify that you have paid the semester registration fee and selected classes.

The process may take up to 7 business days and your updated I-20 will be sent via email or you can pick it up in the Student Services Office.

Changing Your Major or Program Level

Before completing a degree program, students can decide to change their major and get an updated I-20. Certain circumstances apply. Refer to the categories below.

Different Major in the Same Degree Level (excluding Seminary)

Any majors in the College of Arts and Science and the School of Business & Technology may switch majors **at the same degree level** without the need to re-apply to the school. These majors include:

- Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies (B.A.B)
- Bachelor of Science in Family Studies (B.S.F.)
- Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)
- Bachelor of Science in Accounting (B.S.A.)
- Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science (B.C.S.)
- Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
- Master of Science in Computer Science (M.C.S)
- Master of Science in Management Information Systems (M.I.S)

Different Major in the Same Degree Level in Seminary

Any majors in the Neal T. Jones Seminary may switch majors **at the same degree level** without the need to re-apply to the Seminary school. These majors include:

- Master of Divinity (M.Div.)
- Master of Christian Counseling (M.C.C.)
- Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)
- Doctor of Clinical Pastoral Counseling (D.C.P.C.)

If you wish to switch from the Seminary to College of Arts & Science or School of Business & Technology (or vice versa), you must apply **again** to WUV.

If you wish to change degree level (ex. Bachelor to Master), you must apply **again** to WUV.

If you want to **change your major in the *same ~~program~~ degree level*,** you must pay a fee and submit a request form to the Registrar's Office.

- For example, if you started a Bachelor's degree in *Accounting*, but you want to change to a Bachelor's degree in *Business Administration*, then you need to change your *major* only. You are not changing your program *level*. You will be issued an updated I-20 with your new major.

Deadlines For New Major:

To start new major classes in the **Fall semester, the deadline** to receive the request form is *the previous* **March 31st.**

To start new major classes in the **Spring semester, the deadline** to receive the request form is *the previous* **September 30th.**

These deadlines allow the office sufficient time to process your request so that you can pay your registration fee on time and register for classes by the registration deadline.

Different Degree Level

If you want to change to a **new degree level** (ex. Bachelor to Master), you must re-apply to WUV, pay all fees, and submit the appropriate documents. You will be issued an updated I-20 with your new program level (and major).

- For example, if you completed our English (ESL) language training program, and you want to pursue a Bachelor's degree, you need a new I-20 with the same SEVIS number which shows your Bachelor's level.

Deadlines for a New Program: To apply for a new program, contact the Admissions Office and check our Admissions deadlines on our website. wuv.edu/dates-deadlines/ for dates.

Requesting a Level / Major Change: To change program levels and get a new I-20, you must re-apply to WUV, pay all fees, and submit the appropriate documents.

- Submit new financial proof that you can support your new program.
- If your I-20 End Date is past, then you must apply to the college within **two months (60 days)**. After 60 days, you will be out-of-status, and you will not be able to get a new I-20.
- See *Applying to Our School* for more information or contact the Admission Office.

Reduced Course Load (RCL)

Note: An RCL is not a Leave of Absence (LOA). If you plan to leave the U.S temporarily, see Leave of Absence for more information.

The US government requires that F-1 students maintain a full course load while studying in the U.S. A full course load is 12 credits for an undergraduate (Bachelor degree) and 9 credits for a graduate student (Master degree), 3 credit hours for a doctorate (PhD degree), and 18 hours/week for Language Training (LFI – English).

- You can request a reduction in your course load in any amount: one, two, or all classes.
- If you do not take any courses, you are still a student at WUV and expected to check your WUV email regularly for important information.

There are two situations in which you can drop below these credit amounts or take no credits at all: 1) final semester and 2) medical reason. A DSO must approve your request. Dropping below a full course of study without prior approval of the DSO results in I-20 **termination.**

Final Semester:

If this is your last semester at WUV *as a degree student*, and you do not need a full course load to complete your program, then you must request an RCL before the semester begins. You must take at least 3 credits and complete your program's course requirements on RCL. Also, if you only have one course left, that course CANNOT be online. *Note: LFI-English students can never take a Final Semester RCL.*

For a Final Semester RCL request, you must…

- Pay the registration fee, and
- Register for required class(es) to finish your degree program, and
- Fill out an RCL Request Form and submit it to the Registrar's Office BEFORE classes begin.

Medical Conditions

If you have a medical condition that will prevent you from being a full-time student, you can request an RCL for one semester and then request it again for the next semester, if necessary. *The maximum time for Medical RCL is 12 months.*

A letter from a *licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or clinical psychologist* must be sent with your Med RCL request.

This letter must include …

(a) the medical condition (if student wishes to reveal) with verification that the condition impacts or prevents your ability to study,
(b) a recommendation of a reduction in coursework for the semester.

(c) be on letterhead with a signature and date.

***IMPORTANT:** If the letter is NOT from a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or clinical psychologist, it will NOT be approved. If the letter does NOT contain the required explanation, it will NOT be approved.

For Medical RCL request, you must…

1) Register for a **full course–load** and pay the registration fee,
2) Talk to a DSO about your situation to get initial approval
3) Wait for final approval and ONLY then can you drop your class(es).
4) If your RCL is done after the Add/Drop period, you must pay any outstanding tuition.

Leave of Absence (LOA)

Note: A Leave of Absence is not a Reduced Course Load (RCL). If you plan to stay in the U.S., you must request an RCL. See Reduced Course Load for more information.

Students who wish to *leave the U.S*. for an emergency or personal reason can withdraw from all courses and request a Leave of Absence (LOA). If your F-1 Visa has expired, please talk to a DSO to know how this affects your return.

Depending on the timing, however, you may be out of the country for more than 5 months. Therefore, you may not be able to return on the same I-20 or F1 visa. Talk to your DSO.

To be eligible for a Leave of Absence, you must…

- be "in good standing" for grades and attendance
- have completed at least one semester of study in the U.S.
- plan to withdraw from ALL courses *with permission*
- plan to leave the United States

To request a Leave of Absence, you must…

1) Contact your DSO and explain your situation, and
2) Read the information and fill out the LOA request form.
3) Fill out the Academic Withdrawal form.
4) Submit both forms to registrar@wuv.edu

Process for LOA

A requested LOA with an academic withdrawal will result in I-20 *Termination* due to Authorized Early Withdraw. This type of termination does not negatively impact re-entry to the US.

- All students on LOA *must* leave the country within **15 days from the date of their LOA**.
- If you have a valid visa that will not expire before you return, request a travel endorsement signature on your I-20 before you leave. If your visa is not valid, then you will need to show a renewed visa before getting a travel signature.
- Dropping below a full course of study without prior approval of the DSO results in I-20 termination due to Unauthorized Early Withdraw. This type of termination requires you to depart the U.S. immediately and may negatively impact future re-entry into the US.

Taking a LOA for *less than 5 months*

Taking an LOA for *less than 5 months* is recommended to avoid certain fees and complications.

To calculate the 5 months:

- **Start date** = your last date of attendance OR the date you requested your LOA – *whichever is later.*
- **End date** = the start date of the next session (semester) you will return to school. *Note: The end date is NOT when you plan to **return** to the U.S.*

Since WUV operates on a Fall / Spring semester schedule, it may be difficult to do an LOA. Please coordinate your return with the schedule of classes.

- Example: If your last date of attendance or date of LOA request is February 15, your next class must start before July 15. Since WUV starts classes in August, you will be away from classes more than 5 months.

What You Need to Do to Return

- Contact your DSO to get your Terminated status changed back to Active 30 to 60 days before you wish to return to the U.S.

Important: The DSO requests a correction back to Active status, but USCIS makes the final decision to reactivate your I-20. As such, USCIS may ask for additional information, and that could delay your approval.

- ***If your Visa has expired***, you must apply for an F-1 at the Embassy or Consulate in your home country. You will need the updated I-20 to do this. Please plan enough time to get your F-1 and return to the U.S. before 5 months.

- Pay a $20 fee for an updated I-20 to process your request.

- Pay the registration fee for the semester you are returning. If you plan on returning for the *Winter or Summer session*, you must also pay *full tuition due* for the session you are returning PLUS registration fees for the following semester (Fall or Spring).

- Once your status is ACTIVE again, your DSO will contact you and you can travel back to the US within 30 days of your start date.

- Make sure you have all the necessary documents to travel. If you wish to request a Support Letter to re-enter the U.S., contact the Student Services Office.

Taking a LOA for ***more than 5 months***

Taking a LOA for *more than 5 months* essentially starts the process over again. Students who decide to continue their LOA *past 5 months* must do the following:

1. Request a NEW I-20. That means you will get a new SEVIS number. You should make this request two to three months prior to your intended return date and pay the necessary fees.

2. Pay the SEVIS I-901 fee. See **fmjfee.com** (This fee must be paid because you have a new SEVIS number.)

3. If your visa is expired, apply for a new F-1 visa. If your visa has not expired, check with your U.S. Embassy. The U.S. Embassy MAY request that you get a new visa *even if your current visa is still valid*.

4. Enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the start date on the new I-20.

5. Because you will be entering on a new initial I-20 record, you may not be eligible for work authorization until you complete two semesters.

Economic Hardship

If paying for school becomes difficult, an F-1 student may request authorization from USCIS to work *off campus* due to economic hardship. This financial hardship must be due to unforeseen circumstances which are defined on the USCIS website **uscis.gov** as the following:

"These circumstances may include loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses."

Process for Economic Hardship (EH)

In order to request a DSO recommendation to work based on economic hardship, all the following **must be true**.

- You have been in F-1 status **for 1 academic year** *(at WUV or another college)*. For degree students, an academic year = 30 weeks.
  For ESL students, an academic year = 26 weeks.
- You are maintaining normal progress and taking a full course load.
- The hardship was due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control, and you have evidence to prove it.
- Your employment will not interfere with maintaining normal progress in a full course load.
- On-campus employment is not available or not sufficient.
- You are aware of the **USCIS application fee** and **up to 90-day wait time** to authorize a work permit.

If your request is accepted, you will be charged $20 for an I-20 update to use in your USCIS application.

What you need to know about your employment

1. Your employment will not allow you to be excused from class or drop below a normal course load.
2. The USCIS grants an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) in one-year increments only. You must reapply to the USCIS each year to renew the work authorization.
3. You cannot begin working until you receive the valid EAD. (Working before approval is cause to terminate your I-20.)
4. Employment does not need to be related to your studies and will not affect your eligibility for CPT/OPT.
5. Your employment is limited to up to 20 hours during the semester and up to 40 hours during breaks.
6. The employment authorization will **automatically** terminate if you graduate, transfer to another school, or fail to maintain your status.

Requesting an EH

STEP 1: *Document the Circumstances Which Caused the Economic Hardship.*

- Write a letter describing the economic need and how this situation was unexpected and beyond your control. Attach documentation as evidence. (For example, change in family circumstances or proof of a currency devaluation) If you have a sponsor on your I-20, you can also include information about the economic hardship of your sponsor.

STEP 2: *Send your information to DSO@wuv.edu*

- In order for you to submit a request to WUV and the application to USCIS, you must first get a recommendation from a DSO at WUV. The DSO will review your information/documentation to determine if you have enough evidence for USCIS. If the DSO says you do, then you must request an updated I-20 for Economic Hardship.

STEP 3: *Send two (2) forms to registrar@wuv.edu Pay the $20 fee through the MyWUV system.*

(1) the first page of this request form – filled out and signed at the bottom, and
(2) the "I-20 Request Form" found on the MyWUV system. Check I-20, then Update. This I-20 also comes with a support letter that you need for the USCIS application.

STEP 4: *Prepare USCIS Application Materials. S*end them WITHIN 30 DAYS of your I-20 issue date. See Request Form for more information***.**

For further assistance with the EH application process, contact USCIS or an attorney.

Concurrent Enrollment

Concurrent Enrollment is when an F-1 student takes **one** degree-related course at a different SEVP-approved college. The credits must be transferred to WUV to complete your degree.

If there is a course for your degree program that you wish to take at another college, you must follow certain requirements and get permission *before* registering for the course. After the DSO grants permission, you can take the form to the other college to register.

Student Requirements

- **Students must be enrolled in a full course of study.** The total number of semester credits at WUV and another college must equal 12 for undergraduate and 9 for graduate students.
- **Provide evidence that you have successfully registered** for a course at the other college. *This must be submitted within the first two weeks of the beginning of the semester.*
- **Submit an unofficial copy of your transcript from the other college** showing that you completed the course. *This must be submitted within 2 weeks after the semester ends.*

Leaving WUV

Students can leave WUV for different reasons:

- complete their program and/or OPT, or
- transfer out, or
- change their status, or
- depart the US

IMPORTANT: *If you leave the U.S before your I-20 End Date without officially withdrawing from the school, then your I-20 will be terminated with a reason that could negatively affect you entering the U.S. in the future.*

Program Completion

After you complete your language program, degree program, or OPT at WUV, you have a 60-day grace period to remain in the U.S. During this time, you can apply for OPT, change to another degree program, transfer to another SEVP-approved school, change to another immigration status, or prepare for your departure from the U.S.

If you plan to begin a new program, it must start at the college's next start date which must be within 5 months of your last class or last day of work.

Transfer Out

If a student wishes not to be enrolled at WUV, a student can transfer to another SEVP-approved school at any time. If you did NOT register during registration month for the following semester, then you must follow certain deadlines, or your I-20 may be terminated.

Follow this process to transfer:

- You must fill out WUV's Transfer Out form.
- You must pay any tuition/fees and return all library books.
- You must submit an Acceptance Letter (required) and the Eligibility Form from your new school (if they provide one).
- The transfer process takes approximately 7 – 10 business days. Plan accordingly.
- Any negative remarks will be transferred to your new school.
- You must start another program at the college's next start date which must be within five months of your last class at WUV.

If you have COMPLETED a program at WUV and wish to transfer to another school, you must do it within 60 days of your program end date. The transfer process takes approximately 7 – 10 business days. Plan accordingly.

Once your I-20 is transferred to another school, WUV doesn't have any control of it. Please make sure that your next school is definitely the one you want to transfer to.

IMPORTANT: If you transfer to another school while on OPT, your OPT will end the day your I-20 is transferred to the new school. You will not be allowed to work after your EAD is only valid while you are a student at WUV.

Change/Adjustment of Status (pending or approved)

If you have not finished your program and have a pending or approved change or adjustment of visa status, you should inform WUV as soon as you get the approval so we can update your records.

Departing the United States

Depending on the reason you are leaving and the status of your I-20, there are various deadlines to depart the US.

- Completed your program or OPT experience: *60-day grace period* (you cannot leave and come back on the same I-20 during your grace period)
- I-20 termination for Authorized Withdrawal or LOA: *15 days from end date or requested date.*
- I-20 termination for a negative reason, such as failing to maintain your status:

  0 days (must leave immediately to avoid future issues returning)