In this section, we will cover how to maintain your status and other important information as an F-1 or J-1 student.

**Module 1: Maintaining your Status – acronyms and Abbreviations**

Acronyms are words formed from the initial letters or parts of a word. Abbreviations are a shortened form of a word or phrase used chiefly in writing. The US government and our office often use acronyms and abbreviations. We feel it would be useful to you to have a list for future reference.

- SD Mines or SDSM&T South Dakota School of Mines & Technology
- IIC Ivanhoe International Center
- DSO Designated School Official
- SEVP Student & Exchange Visitor Program
- SEVIS Student & Exchange Visitor Info System
- DHS Department of Homeland Security
- USCIS US Citizenship & Immigration Service
- ICE US Immigration & Customs Enforcement
- CBP US Customs & Border Protection
- ESL English as a Second Language
- D/S Duration of Status

You can download a copy of these on the Resources page. Now that you know your acronyms and abbreviations, move to part 2.

**Module 2: Maintaining your Status – Common Regulations**

While you’re in the US, you must follow the U.S. government regulations regarding your F-1 or J-1 status. If you have an I-20, make sure you read the regulations on page 3. For the DS-2019, please see page 2. When you sign your document, you agree to the regulations on these pages. If you do not understand something, make sure you ask.

A couple general requirements and responsibilities to keep in mind as a student admitted to the United States in F-1/J-1 status, you must:

You must:

- have a passport that is kept valid at all times. If your passport has expired or will expire shortly, it is your responsibility to have it renewed
- attend the school you were authorized to attend on your I-20/DS-2019
- carry a full course of study – this means a minimum of 12 credits for an undergraduate student and a minimum of 9 credits as a graduate student. In you very last semester, you may have less than full course of study. If this is the case, you need to contact our office and do paperwork.
- You can take online courses, however, ONLY one course (3 credit hours maximum) of distance/online education is allowed per semester to count towards your full course of study. If you are receiving funding from an outside entity like a government, you may have restrictions on this. You should contact your sponsor to make sure.
- If your I-20/DS-2019 is expiring and you are not finished, contact us to see if you are eligible for an extension.
• If you are changing your educational level (e.g. from the bachelor’s to the master’s level) at the same school, you will need to update your I-20/DS-2019. There is a process and we will help you with this.
• If you change your major, you will need to update your I-20. There is a procedure we must follow. You will first need to change your major with the university, then come and talk to us about your I-20/DS-2019. Do not wait until the last minute or right before you graduate to do this. This can have negative effects on your status.
  o Undergraduate students can change their major at any time. They must go through the registrar’s office to do this.
  o For graduate students, it is more complicated and you should speak to the graduate office.
• If you want to transfer to another school, please contact our office so we can help you through the process. Every university does transfers differently. Make sure you understand the process.
• If you have a job on campus, you are limited to a total of 20 hours per week when school is in session. We will talk more about this in the next video.
• You must have special work authorization to work off campus. Do NOT work off-campus without authorization (CPT or OPT). We will talk about this in the next video.
• When you shift or move residence, you must report your address change to our office within 10 days of the change. Not doing so can have adverse effects on your status.
• You are required to enroll in mandatory health insurance authorized by the South Dakota Board of Regents. Hear more about this under the insurance videos.
• If you travel outside the US, you will need a travel signature from the Designated School Official or DSO. You can make an appointment with our office to do this.

Module 3: Working – In General

International students, whether you are an F-1 or J-1, have restrictions on working while in the US. Working illegally can not only violate your status but can have deep consequences for your future in the US.

In general, on campus jobs that are not federally funded or contracted by the university, such as the dining services, are legal jobs that international students may work for. Some departments may have positions such as graduate assistantships and some professors may have research opportunities that pay.

There are some jobs on campus that international students are not eligible to work. Federal Work-Study positions are held for U.S. Citizens or permanent residents that qualify for federal financial aid. Some outside companies may be affiliated with the University but are not ‘university’ jobs. If you are not sure, check with the international office before you apply. We can help you determine if you can work there or not.

When school is in session, you cannot work more than 20 hours a week. When school is on breaks, such as winter break, spring break and summer break, you can work more than 20 hours a week. If you work more than 40 hours a week, talk with your employer to make sure they are paying you overtime. Some companies and our university, do not like to pay overtime so you should never work more than 40 hours a week without special permission.
Working off campus is only allowed with special work authorization. There are many regulations for this type of work and it must be directly related to your field of study. We will discuss two types of work authorization in the next video.

For more information on working in the US, visit the Documents section for links to our Employment Authorization page.

Module 4: Working – Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training

After one academic year at South Dakota Mines, you are encouraged to start looking for internships and co-ops that are directly related to your field of study.

An internship is a summer job in your field of study and a co-op is a summer plus semester or approximately six-month job in your field of study. So, what do you need to do to get authorized to work?

First, your CP (cooperative education) credit and your CPT (Curricular Practical Training) work authorization are two separate procedures. Signing up for one does not automatically complete the second procedure. We have workshops to help you through this process. You can find more information and the application instructions on the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) webpage [https://www.sdsmt.edu/Campus-Life/Ivanhoe-International-Center/Current-International-Students/Working-in-the-USA/Curricular-Practical-Training/](https://www.sdsmt.edu/Campus-Life/Ivanhoe-International-Center/Current-International-Students/Working-in-the-USA/Curricular-Practical-Training/).

If you want to get a job after graduation, need to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). OPT is a lengthy application process that can take approximately 90 days or more. Starting early is important even if you do not have a job yet.

We have workshops on how to apply for OPT each semester. You should attend these to know what the current regulations are for OPT. All instructions and a downloadable checklist are on this page: [https://www.sdsmt.edu/Campus-Life/Ivanhoe-International-Center/Current-International-Students/Working-in-the-USA/Optional-Practical-Training/](https://www.sdsmt.edu/Campus-Life/Ivanhoe-International-Center/Current-International-Students/Working-in-the-USA/Optional-Practical-Training/)

You can find handouts regarding CPT and OPT in the documents section.

Module 5: Maintaining your Status – Last Thoughts

Currently the U.S. government is becoming stricter day by day. Requirements are constantly changing, strictly enforced by the US government and reported electronically by our office. Any allowable exceptions must be requested and approved PRIOR to the semester in which the exception occurs. We want to make sure you have a great and successful academic career which means maintaining your status to the best of your ability. We are always happy to answer questions and help you understand the requirements of your status.

If you have questions or need documents signed, PLEASE send us an email at international@sdsmt.edu to set up an appointment so we can be prepared to help you effectively and efficiently.