



Students with F-1 Visas at UMES

All new students must check in at the Office of Admissions and Recruitment with Visa/Passport and Initial Status I-20 during the first week of classes to activate student status!

Please be sure that I-20 information is accurate and kept current at all times.

F-1 Status

You are maintaining lawful status if you are making normal progress toward completing a course of study and complying with the immigration regulations outlined below.

Immigration Regulations

- Pursue a “full course of study” at the school listed on your current Form I-20. A full course of study is 12 or more credits per semester for undergraduate students, and 9 or more credits per semester for graduate students. Exceptions to the full-time requirement must be authorized in advance by your DSO (designated school official).
- Complete your studies on or before the program completion date listed as your program end date on your I-20.
- Keep your I-20 valid by following proper procedures for a program extension, change in educational level or field of study, and transfer of schools.
- Remain in the U.S. for no longer than 60 days after completing your current program of study or after completing an authorized period of practical training.
- Keep your passport valid at all times unless you are exempt from the passport requirement.
- Accept no employment except that which is authorized in accordance with the immigration regulations.
- Report any change of address and/or telephone number to immigration within 10 days of the change.

If you fail to maintain status, you are ineligible for any of the benefits of F-1 status (for example, employment authorization).

There are two ways to regain status: apply for reinstatement or depart the U.S. and seek a new admission to the U.S. in F-1 status. The process to regain valid F-1 status can be challenging. We want to discuss your options with you. We also encourage you to contact an immigration attorney so you can make an informed decision and consider the risks with both options.

Option 1: Reinstatement

When requesting reinstatement, you must establish to the satisfaction of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that you:

- Have not been out of status more than 5 months at the time of filing the request for reinstatement (or demonstrate that the failure to file within the 5-month period was the result of exceptional circumstances and that you filed for reinstatement as soon as possible under these circumstances).
- Do not have a record of repeated or willful violations of immigration regulations.
- Are currently pursuing, or intending to pursue, a full course of study in the immediate future at the school which issued the Form I-20.
- Have not engaged in unauthorized employment.
- Are not deportable on any ground other than overstaying or failing to maintain status.

If USCIS approves the reinstatement request, the adjudicating officer will endorse your I-20 to indicate that you have been reinstated and will return the I-20 to you. If USCIS does not approve the reinstatement request, you may not appeal the decision and need to prepare to leave the U.S. immediately.

Reinstatement Application Procedure

1. Schedule an appointment with your DSO to discuss your options to regain F-1 status. At the appointment the DSO will review your eligibility for F-1 reinstatement and will discuss the application process.
2. Prepare your reinstatement application following the list of documents below. Submit your reinstatement application to USCIS by mail. (The online USCIS application option is no longer available). Mail the following documents to the USCIS Lockbox.
 - Form I-539 (form can be found online at www.uscis.gov)
 - Check or money order made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" for USCIS filing fee
 - Photocopies of all previously-issued I-20s
 - Original I-94 or I-94 printout obtained at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/>
 - Photocopy of new Reinstatement I-20 signed by DSO
 - Evidence of source and amount of financial support

- A letter requesting reinstatement to F-1 student status which explains your situation
- Supporting documentation
- Current transcript and transcripts from other U.S. schools previously attended
- Photocopy of passport identification and visa pages; do not send your passport

Keep a copy of your entire application for your records. If you choose the paper application option, it is recommended that you send your application by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Mailing Address

For FedEx, UPS, DHL deliveries:

USCIS
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

USCIS
ATTN: I-539
2501 S. State Highway 121 Business Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

Option 2: Travel and Reentry

In some cases it may be advisable to depart the U.S. and re-enter with a new I-20, rather than applying for reinstatement. You may do this by obtaining a new I-20 from the school you are currently attending or wish to attend, then departing the U.S. to apply for a new F-1 visa .

To request a new I-20 for travel and reentry:

1. Schedule an appointment with your DSO to discuss your options to regain F-1 status. At the appointment the DSO will review your situation and discuss the travel & reentry process in detail.
2. The DSO will create and sign a new I-20 for your travel & reentry.

University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) DSOs:

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the major difference between the two options?

Students who are reinstated continue on their previous SEVIS number from the issued I-20. Students who choose travel and reentry are considered initial status students. This is most important when considering eligibility for Optional Practical Training or Curricular Practical Training. Students who reenter using a new I-20 will be required to complete one academic year before becoming eligible to apply for off-campus employment.

What are the costs associated with each option?

Reinstatement in the U.S: USCIS charges an I-539 application fee.
Travel and reentry: There is the \$200 SEVIS fee, plus any expenses incurred for travel and visa applications.

Which option is the least risky?

Each option has its risks. If your application for reinstatement is denied, you will be required to depart the U.S. immediately. If you are denied re-entry at the border, you may be required to return home immediately from the port of entry.

May I continue to study while my application for reinstatement is pending?

Yes, you must continue to study in order to maintain your F-1 status.

May I continue to work on-campus while my application for reinstatement is pending?

No. Once it is determined that you have violated your student status, you must stop working immediately.

How long will the reinstatement process take?

Reinstatement applications take approximately six to fifteen months.

Can I reenter from Canada or must I return to and reenter from my home country?

It is recommended to go to your home country. Students have gone to Canada without issue; however, you must already have a valid visa to enter Canada, if needed. The Canadian Consulate will not issue an entry visa to students with "initial attendance" I-20s.