This document is created for colleagues across UW Tacoma as a reference to serve international students.

Terms in BOLD are explained further in different part of this document. Please use “CTRL + F” to read further.

Please feel free to contact International Student Services for more information. Email: uwtiss@uw.edu or call 2-4695.

Thank you for work you do in serving international students!

**F-1 Student Visa Basic Rules**

**Enrollment:**
- Must be enrolled full time (12 credits for undergraduate and 10 credits for graduate) each quarter at all times. Pass/Fail, no grades are OK.
- Concurrent enrollment are allowed.
- Continuing students are allowed to take Summer quarter as a Vacation Quarter or enroll in classes part-time.
- Can apply for Reduced Course Load (RCL) to ISS.
- If dismissed from the university, must depart from US immediately or already be admitted to a new institution and request SEVIS Record Transfer.

**Record Maintenance**
- Must keep a valid passport at all times
- Must keep a valid I-20/ SEVIS Record with up-to-date personal and academic information. Must notify DSO within 10 days of change.

**Employment:**
- Can work on-campus part time while engaged in class and can work full time during breaks.
- Can apply for benefits to work off-campus (OPT or CPT) after maintaining same SEVIS record for one academic year.
ISS Basic Terminology

Government Agencies:

**ICE**: Immigration and Customs Enforcement. An agency that enforces federal customs, immigrations, and border control laws. Students meet ICE officers at port of entries to present supporting documents and seek permission to enter US.

**USCIS**: United Citizenship and Immigration Services

**US Department of State**: Students visits US Consulates and Embassies located abroad to obtain visas. US Department of State is the head organization for those posts.

**SEVP**: Student and Exchange Visitor Program is a government unit which belongs to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), United State Citizenship and US Department of Homeland Security. SEVP runs the **SEVIS** database.

SEVIS Related Terms:

**SEVIS**: Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, pronounced “see-vis” is a database operated by SEVP to track information of all international students studying in US. **P/DSOs** have responsibility to maintain integrity of data recorded in SEVIS. Although students cannot access SEVIS directly they are responsible to notify **P/DSOs** when any of their information recorded in SEVIS changed. SEVIS produces **I-20**.

**I-20**: I-20 is a 3 page immigration document issued to International Students by the school. The student takes this document to apply for F-1 student visa at US embassies/consulate abroad. This document can also be used to apply for **COS** to **USCIS**

**P/DSOs**: It contains students' personal, financial and academic program information. The 3rd page of I-20 needs to be signed by a **P/DSO** when a student has a plan to travel internationally and will be seeking re-admission to US. For current students, each signature is valid for 1 year.
**DSO**: Designated School Official. This person is authorized to maintain student record information on SEVIS. (Laura Belle Douglas & Jon Dietzen)

**PDSO**: Principal Designated School Official. The head DSO with additional responsibilities. (Akane Yamaguchi)

**SEVIS Record**: This is individual student record exists in SEVIS. It’s created by P/DSOs. Each record need to be activated by student by filing I-901 fee ($200) to SEVP. As long as the student maintains F-1 student status, his/her record remains active.

**SEVIS Record Transfer**: Students can request their SEVIS record to be transferred to another institution. After reviewing acceptance language, P/DSOs can transfer their record to a new institution. Students need to be in a new program of study at the new institution at earliest possible date or within 5 months whichever comes first.

**SEVIS Registration**: The act of a school's P/DSOs confirming that the F-1 student has arrived on campus and is registered in a full course load. Students in Initial Status must be registered in SEVIS by their school's P/DSOs when they arrive in the US, no later than 30 days after their program start date. Students in Transfer Pending Status must be registered in SEVIS no later than 60 days after the start of the current quarter.

**SEVIS Record Termination**: Sometimes student's SEVIS record must be terminated, because a student made a decision to withdraw or a student was suspended. There are many different termination reasons to choose from. Some leaves no consequences when it comes time for students to seek permission to re-enter to US or apply to get a new US via but some termination reason may flag them in their future encounter with US government agencies. After SEVIS record termination, students generally need to leave US immediately or within 2 weeks.

**I-17**: This is the ‘Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by a Nonimmigrant Student.’ It is form that contains the school information in SEVIS. It needs to be reviewed annually and some changes needs to be adjudicated by SEVP.
**Re-Certification**: SEVP-certified schools must go through the recertification process every two years to ensure school officials are following regulations when enrolling F students.

**Various Authorizations:**

**CPT**: Curricular Practical Training. Temporary employment that must relate directly to the student’s major and must be part of their program of study. May be full-time or part-time.

**OPT**: Optional Practical Training. Temporary employment that relates directly to the student’s field of study. There are three different types of OPT; Pre-completion, Post Completion, STEM Extension. Typically, students apply for Post Completion OPT and receive 12 months work permit from USCIS. STEM Extension is additional 17 months of work permit only given to **STEM majors and once per lifetime**.

**RCL**: Reduced Course Load. F-1 and J-1 visa students must maintain full-time status but may request an RCL form due to academic difficulties or medical conditions which would inhibit the student’s ability to be enrolled full-time. Students can also apply for RCL for final quarter to complete their program of study.

**Vacation Quarter**: Every summer F-1 students qualify for a vacation quarter and do not have to be enrolled full-time for the summer quarter. The exception to this rule is if a COS student has their I-20 start in the summer quarter. In these cases, the COS student will need to be full-time enrolled for summer quarter.

**Concurrent enrollment**: Students must enroll in majority of credits (7 credits or more for undergraduate students and 6 credits or more for graduate students) at UW Tacoma and can take the rest of credits other institution to maintain full time course load.
Visa Categories:

**F-1 Visa:** A type of student visa for non-immigrant full-time students. Students must obtain I-20 before applying for F-1 visas, which are only given by consulates and embassies outside of the continental U.S.

**H-4 Visa:** Visa for dependents (immediate family members) of H-1B visa holders. The USCIS issues this visa.

**H-1B Visa:** Visa for working in the US. USCIS issues this visa and US companies will sponsor it.

**J-1 Visa:** A nonimmigrant visa for exchange visitors participating in some kind of exchange program in the U.S.

Other Terms:

**Underenrolled:** Less than 12 credits for an undergraduate F-1 student; Less than 10 credits for a graduate F-1 student in the fall, winter, and spring quarters.

**STEM Majors:** Specific majors in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math that are eligible for an extra 17 months of OPT.

**Grace Period:** If F-1 students have maintained their status, at the end of their program, they are given 60 days of a grace period to wrap up their affairs and leave the US.

**COS:** Change of Status. Students may submit application to **USCIS** to change their visa status from one status to **F-1**. ISS can assist by issuing COS requested I-20.

**D/S:** Duration of Status. This is one of **F-1** student benefit. D/S means as long as students SEVIS record/ I-20 is active and students are maintaining good F-1 student status, they can remain in the US even if their F-1 student visas are expired.