



Regaining F-1 Status

F-1 status is a nonimmigrant visa category that allows international students to enter the United States to pursue academic studies at a recognized U.S. educational institution. It grants them temporary permission to reside and study in the US while adhering to specific regulations regarding their academic progress, employment, and other aspects of their status.

A student may lose their F-1 status by:

- Failure to maintain a full course of study (without approved reduced course load)
- Unauthorized off-campus employment
- Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress
- Failure to apply for a program extension at least 2 weeks prior to I20 expiration date
- Failure to complete transfer procedure before the add/drop deadline at the start of the semester
- Failure to report their arrival to the US to a DSO
- Being out of the US for more than 5 months
- Failure to leave the U.S. within 60 days of completing degree program (60 days from last day of semester)
- Additional violations as determined by the US Government

Losing F-1 status will result in the student's I20 being terminated. Two ways to regain F-1 status are:

1. File for Reinstatement through USCIS
2. Travel and Re-entry with a new initial I-20

Before pursuing either of these options, contacting an experienced immigration attorney is highly recommended.

Option 1: Apply for Reinstatement Through USCIS

Reinstatement is the process through which a student who has fallen out of F-1 status due to certain violations may apply to regain legal status through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). **This option is only permissible if you have not left the United States.**

Eligibility Criteria:

USCIS may consider reinstatement if:

- You have not been out of status for more than 5 months, unless exceptional circumstances are shown.
- You do not have a record of repeated violations.
- You are currently pursuing or intend to pursue a full course of study at MSOE.
- The violation resulted from circumstances beyond your control.
- You have not engaged in unauthorized employment.
- You are not deportable for any other reason.



Multicultural Affairs Student Affairs and Campus Inclusion

The information that is shared here is based on federal regulations and university policies as of April 2025. This information is subject to change in the future.

Steps:

1. Meet with a [DSO](#) to discuss eligibility.
2. Provide financial support documentation for TWO semesters of study at MSOE, or ONE semester if that is all you have left to earn your degree. Documents may not be older than 6 months.
3. DSO will issue a new Form I-20 for reinstatement.
4. Prepare application (working with an immigration attorney is recommended):
 - Form I-539: Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status
 - I-20 marked for reinstatement
 - Letter of explanation detailing:
 - Circumstances of your status violation
 - Your intent to continue studying full-time
 - Why reinstatement is justified
 - Transcripts and proof of enrollment
 - Proof of financial support
 - USCIS filing fee
 - Copy of passport, visa, I-94, and any previous I-20s
5. Submit application
6. Continue to attend classes while waiting for a decision. You cannot work on or off-campus until reinstatement is approved.

Processing Time:

Typically 3 to 12 months. Do not travel internationally during this time, as it will cancel your application.

Option 2: Depart and Re-enter the U.S.

The second option could be faster and easier, especially if you have a valid visa. It is the only option for students who have already departed the U.S.

1. Request a new Initial I-20 from MSOE (email international@msoe.edu).
2. Depart the U.S.
3. Apply for a new F-1 visa (if your old one is expired).
4. Re-enter the U.S. in valid F-1 status.

Note: You will restart your SEVIS record, and you must wait one full academic year before qualifying for CPT or OPT.

Additional opportunities may be available to you. Please consult with an experienced immigration attorney to understand your options and choose what is best for your situation.