Financial Documentation

If you are applying for a new visa, updated financial documentation is required of you to prove that you have sufficient funding to cover the remaining length of anticipated study in the US.

Traveling to another country other than your own

If you are a student traveling to another country other than your own country, you are advised to be aware of that other country’s visa requirements. Information can be found at www.state.gov

A student who is required to make a transitional stop in another country when traveling to their home country should apply for a transit visa.

Traveling while on OPT

If you have applied for post-completion Optional Practical Training, you may travel outside of the US while your application is pending if you can show a receipt from the USCIS proving that the OPT application has been filed. If you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) you must travel with a letter from your current employer verifying your employment or job offer as well as the EAD card.

*If your visa has expired you should not travel while on OPT as re-entry into the US may be highly unlikely.

New York City College of Technology, CUNY
Office of International Student Services

F-1 & J-1 STUDENT HANDBOOK

I welcome you on behalf of New York City College of Technology (NYCCT), also known as City Tech.

As we begin the new academic year our faculty, staff and peer mentors would like you to know that we are available to assist in familiarizing you to the college. Our main goal is to provide you with a nurturing environment where you can grow personally and intellectually. City Tech offers a wide array of services some of which include providing essential information and resources that will assist you in maintaining your visa status in the US. Through the Office of International Students Services you will be made aware of the necessary immigration issues and regulations needed to keep your stay in the United States successful. We aim to assist you in accomplishing your academic goals and look forward to helping you succeed in acclimating to the college.

Being an international student comes with many responsibilities. There are several rules and regulations that must be followed in order to maintain your F-1 or J-1 status. International students should always stay abreast of updates pertaining to their legal standing in the US. Students should also plan ahead when requesting any authorization or benefits associated with their status. This will allow for a less stressful experience and more streamlined processing of your requests.

Together, we can make your stay at City Tech meaningful and valuable. We appreciate you taking the time to read this handbook and hope that your experience at the City Tech is a good one.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Villanueva
International Student Advisor
Office of International Student Services
LEGAL STATUS IN THE UNITED STATES

What is the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)?

SEVIS is an electronic system used by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The system is utilized to track the entries and departures of international students and scholars in the US.

SEVIS requires the reporting of student enrollment and changes made to your academic status, employment, residential address and/or financial information.

What is United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)?

USCIS is a unit within the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Overall, USCIS manages all immigration benefits. It is responsible for the processing of immigrant visa petitions, naturalization petitions, and asylum and refugee applications, as well as making adjudicative decisions performed at the service centers. Additional responsibilities include:

- Administration of immigration services and benefits
- Adjudicating asylum claims
- Issuing employment authorization documents (EAD)
- Adjudicating petitions for nonimmigrant temporary workers (H-1B, O-1, etc.)
- Granting lawful permanent resident status
- Granting citizenship

What is the United States Department of State (DOS)?

The United States Department of State is often referred to as the State Department. This agency is within the United States government and is administered by the Secretary of State. DOS is comparable to that of foreign ministries, foreign offices, and ministries of external relations in other countries.

US Visa

A valid US visa is not required to travel to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands except Cuba if you are an F-1 or J-1 student who has maintained your status. If you are traveling to these countries for less than 30 days, you are advised to have a valid passport and I-20 or DS-2019. If you are traveling to other countries a valid US visa is needed for re-entry into the US.

I-94 cards

You must surrender your I-94 card upon departure from the US. A new I-94 card will be issued to you upon re-entry into the US.

*If you are an F-1 or J-1 student whose US visa has expired and you are traveling to Canada, Mexico or adjacent islands for up to 30 days and resuming your studies in the US, you are advised not to turn in your I-94 card, unless you are applying for a new US visa.

Traveling to apply for a new visa

Letter of Certification

If you are applying for a new visa, you should request a letter of certification from the Office of International Student Services to verify you concurrent student enrollment at the college. It is required to apply for a new visa. This letter will also be required if you are applying for a Canadian visa.

Transcript

If you are applying for a new visa, you should request a transcript to verify your attendance at the college. The transcript is also used by the consulate to confirm that you have made satisfactory progress towards the completion of your degree.

Bursar’s Receipt

You should have a current bursar’s receipt showing that you have registered for classes and made payment towards the upcoming semester.
TRAVEL

Within the US

Immigration documentation is essential if traveling within the US. It is important to travel with your passport, visa documents (I-94 and SEVIS I-20 or DS 2019), and NYCCCT student ID card. Also, make sure that the signature on the SEVIS I-20 or DS 2019 has been updated by an authorized signatory in the Office of International Students Services.

Abroad

You must always travel with your immigration documentation and in some circumstances travel with additional information to prove that you have maintained legal status in the US.

- Passport – must be valid at least six months after entry into the US.
- SEVIS I-20 or DS 2019 – must travel with the most recently issued certificate of eligibility. The I-20 or DS 2019 must be signed by an authorized signatory in the Office of International Student Services.

*You should travel with all issued I-20s or DS 2019 to avoid any mishaps upon re-entry.

NSEERS Registrants

NSEERS registrants coming from one of the 25 designated countries or citizens of Cuba, Liberia, North Korea, Iran, Sudan or Syria are required to go through a special registration process at the port of entry and/or a special exit procedure before exiting the US. Failure to follow these procedures may result in permanent barring from entrance into the US. Information regarding these procedures should have been given to you during your registration inspection.

They are responsible for foreign affairs activities, which include representing the US abroad, administering foreign assistance programs, countering international crime and managing foreign military training programs.

As stated by the Department of State, its purpose includes:
- Protecting and assisting U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad;
- Assisting U.S. businesses in the international marketplace;
- Coordinating and providing support for international activities of other U.S. agencies (local, state, or federal government), official visits overseas and at home, and other diplomatic efforts.
- Keeping the public informed about U.S. foreign policy and relations with other countries and providing feedback from the public to administrative officials.
- Providing automobile registration for non-diplomatic staff vehicles and the vehicles of diplomats of foreign countries having diplomatic immunity in the United States.

How to maintain your F-1 and J-1 status?

Students who come to the US under a nonimmigrant classification of “F-1” or “J-1” are required to follow certain regulations in order to keep their legal status in the country. It is your responsibility to understand and follow these rules as they apply to your status. The most important rules for F-1 or J-1 are as follows:

- You must attend the institution you have been authorized to attend on your I-20/DS2019.
- You must pursue a full course of study each semester during the academic year. Full time enrollment at City Tech is 12 credits per semester.
- Do not pursue employment without proper authorization.
- Report any changes from one program or educational level to another (associates to bachelors).
- Apply for program extensions at least 30 days before the completion date on your I-20 (item #5 of the I-20) or DS 2019 (item #3 of the DS 2019).
- Report any change of address within 10 days of change.
• Do not attempt to change your major without discussing it with the Office of International Student Services first.
• If you are a student transferring from another college, you must process your SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 no later than 30 days after your previous school has released your record or 15 days after the start of classes, whichever date comes first.
• Notify the Office of International Student Services before transferring to another institution or taking a leave of absence.
• Always keep your passport valid.
• You must have health insurance that meets US State Department requirements if you are a J-1 visa holder.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Program Extension
You may apply for a program extension if you are nearing the completion date on your SEVIS I-20. The request must be justified by an advisor within your academic department. It must be approved by the Office of International Student Services at least 30 days before the expiry date of the SEVIS I-20. Failure to apply before your completion date is a violation of F-1 regulations, which may result in serious consequences and a need for reinstatement.

Additional financial support will be required.

Change of Status
An individual may apply for a change of status from another non-immigrant classification if they are eligible for the purposes of pursuing full-time study at NYCCT. You may do a change of status in one of two ways:

Change by travel
You may change your status by traveling out of the US and re-entering under an F-1 status. It is imperative that you hold a valid F-1 visa if you have not been issued an entry visa already.

Change by application to the USCIS
You may change your status by submitting a change of status application through USCIS.

IMPORTANT IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Passport
The US government requires international students keep a valid passport for at least six months after the date of reentry. Only your government may issue the renewal or extension of your passport. Contact your country's embassy or consulate in the US for further information. A listing of addresses and telephone numbers for foreign embassies in the US are available on the web at http://www.embassy.org.

Form I-94
The Form I-94 is a small white card stapled in the passport which lists the visa status issued to a non-immigrant visitor in the U.S. at the U.S. point of entry. The Form I-94 card is returned to Immigration when you leave the U.S. Upon re-entry a new I-94 is issued.

Admission Number:
The 11-digit number on the top left hand corner of the I-94 card.

Expiration Date:
On your I-94 you will find the notation "D/S". This means "Duration of Status". You may legally stay in the US until the expiry date of your I-20/DS 2019. Once you have completed your program, you are eligible for a 60 day grace period if you have F-1 status or a 30 day grace period if you have J-1 status.
Identification

Social security numbers may be used for identification purposes when applying for apartment rentals, bank accounts, cell phones and/or purchases however the SSN is issued for employment purposes only therefore you are not legally required to provide a SSN for such applications.

If you have not been offered employment, you may request that the Social Security Administration office provide you with a “Social Security Denial Letter”, which may be issued to you on the same day. This letter provides legitimate proof that you are ineligible to receive an SSN due to your status. At times this may be sufficient to complete certain transactions. You may be issued a driver’s license or a New York State ID with this evidence at the Department of Motor Vehicle.

APPLYING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER ID

The Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is a tax number issued by the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and it is not related to the USCIS or the Social Security Administration. The ITIN is only issued for tax purposes. An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) does not provide the right to work or live in the United States.

TAX OBLIGATIONS

Students are generally exempted from Social Security and Medicare taxes if they have been in the US less than five years. However other federal, state and local taxes can be withheld from your paychecks.

During the months of February thru April of each year, students may use their SSN to submit a “tax return” to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). These tax returns report a student’s income during the previous year and allow you to request a refund for taxes withheld and/or taxes owed.

SEVIS ID Number:
The 11-digit number usually written on the back of your I-94 card. It is the same number that is printed above the bar code on your I-20/DS-2019.

Front Side

![Front Side Image]

Back Side

![Back Side Image]

Record of Changes

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I-20 (F-1 Students and their Dependents)

This document is a certificate of eligibility for students on an F-1 student status. It provides information, such as, your name (item #1), the school of acceptance (item #2), your expenses and funding source (items #7 & 8) and the length of time you will have to complete your academic program (item #5).

- Remember to check your I-20 for errors.
- Remember to apply for a program extension before the completion date of your I-20 (item #5)
- If you make any changes you will need an updated I-20.

DS-2019 (J-1 Students and their Dependents)

This document is a certificate of eligibility for a student under the J-1 Exchange Visitor status. It provides information about the student (item #1), the J-1 program sponsor (item #2), the dates the DS-2019 becomes effective and expires (item #3), the academic program (item #4) and funding (item #5).

- Remember to apply for an extension or transfer of your DS-2019 before it expires. Failure to do so is a violation of immigration regulations.
- If you make any changes you will need an updated DS-2019.

Entry Visa

A visa is the actual document affixed in a person’s passport that allows that person to enter the United States in a particular status for which the visa was issued (e.g., “F-1” or “J-1”). Visas are issued through U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. For further information on non-immigrant visas, visit http://www.travel.state.gov.

F-1 students may apply for OPT up to 90 days before the completion date or semester end date or up to 60 days after your completion date. Students in the “STEM” (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) areas are eligible for a 17 month extension.

If you are a J-1 student applying for post-completion OPT, you must apply for authorization within 30 days of program completion.

APPLYING FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY

Employment

Students offered any paid employment are required to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) and card. The processing and issuance of a SSN may take several weeks. In some instances an employer may allow employment to begin while the SSN application is pending; others will postpone the employment until the SSN is issued.

What is the procedure for applying for an SSN?

Once you have been offered an employment opportunity, ask the employer to provide you with an official letter on departmental letterhead that confirms the job offer. The letter should include the start and end dates of employment, your job title, duties and hours per week scheduled to work.

*You are only allowed to work 20 hours a week while school is in session.

The letter should then be forwarded to the Office of International Student Services for the issuance of another letter, which will be submitted to the Social Security Administration office. The Social Security Administration Office will also require you to provide them with your I-20 or DS 2019, passport, visa and I-94 card and an application for the request of the SSN.
Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training refers to employment based on an integral part of an established curriculum. Employment is considered an integral part of an established curriculum if it is required of you to graduate or if it is a training program that is essential for your program of study. CPT must be related to the major. With the approval of your program you may engage in alternative work/study, internship, or cooperative education opportunities offered and/or arranged through or by your academic program. CPT may take place during the academic semester and/or summer months. It is limited to 20 hours a week while school is in session. Students may work full-time when school is not in session as long as they have maintained their status. CPT must be authorized and approved by the Office of International Student Services.

You must have been enrolled for at least one full year to be eligible for CPT.

*Note: Use of 12 months or more of full-time CPT eliminates you from OPT eligibility.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

If you have been enrolled on a full-time basis for at least one year then you may be eligible for Optional Practical Training, which refers to employment directly related to your field of study for the purposes of gaining practical experience. You may engage in OPT during the following times:

- During your annual vacation as long as you intend to register for the upcoming semester.
- You may work while school is in session as long as the practical training does not exceed 20 hours per week.
- After the completion of your studies you may be authorized for 12 months of practical training. An additional 12 months of practical training is allowed upon the completion of a higher education level.

YOU MUST SECURE YOUR IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTATION

Safekeeping all of your original immigration documentation is extremely important for several reasons some of which include self-identification, applying for employment authorization, proving your status, and maintaining a record of your status throughout your stay in the US. Also, keep photocopies of your each of your I-94 cards.

FULL COURSE OF STUDY REQUIREMENT

Immigration requires all international students with F-1 and J-1 visas to register for a full course load each semester. As a full-time student at City Tech, you are mandated to enroll for a minimum of 12 credits each semester. It is the responsibility of the college to verify and report this information to immigration on a regular basis.

You may not under any circumstances fall below full-time status during the semester. Failure to abide by this regulation may result in the imminent loss of your current status.

If you fall below 12 credits in the middle of a semester due to withdrawal, you are in violation of your status and will be terminated.

*Exceptions to the full course requirement

In some instances a student may request authorization to take less than a full course load during their academic term. However, you must apply and receive approval for a reduced course load from the Office of International Student Services before the start date of the semester.
INSURANCE REQUIREMENT

City Tech requires all J-1 students and their dependents to acquire health insurance. Failure to maintain insurance coverage will result in the termination of your J-1 program and the loss of your legal status in the US.

LOSS OF YOUR STATUS

If you do not abide by F-1 or J-1 regulations, you will lose your status. You will lose all benefits and will not under any circumstances be eligible for employment. Your SEVIS record and that of your dependents will be terminated. Immigration will be notified, thus subjecting you to possible deportation.

REGAINING YOUR LEGAL STATUS

There are two options to regain your legal status: filing an application for reinstatement with USCIS or reentering the US on an initial attendance document. This does not guarantee that your legal status will be reinstated.

Reinstatement

This process is done in the US. It requires you to submit an application and supporting document to USCIS for F-1s or the DOS for J-1s.

*Must be done within 5 months of losing your status.

Reentry

This process is done by departing the US and re-entering with an initial attendance I-20 issued by the Office of International Student Services.

Both options carry risks and success is not guaranteed. You must visit the Office of International Student Services upon notification of termination. You can not regain your legal status without documentation from our office and that of your J-1 sponsor.

*You must have a valid visa for this option. If you do not have a valid visa you must apply for one.

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

On-Campus Employment

As an international student you are eligible for on-campus employment. Employment is limited to a maximum of twenty hours per week while classes are in session. Students may work full-time when school is not in session as long as they have maintained their status. Before beginning on-campus employment you must receive approval from the Office of International Student Services. Once you have been offered a position bring your offer letter to the office for the issuance of your employment authorization.

Off-Campus Employment: Severe Economic Hardship

Economic hardship refers to financial difficulties that are the result of unforeseen circumstances beyond your control. Some of the reasons may include the death of a financial sponsor, a sudden increase in tuition and/or living expenses. If an F-1 or J-1 student has maintained his/her status for one full academic year and is in good academic standing, he/she may apply to USCIS for off-campus employment based on unforeseen circumstances.

To qualify you must:

• Be able to document the economic hardship
• Be able to show that part-time opportunities on-campus are insufficient to meet your needs.

Approval of employment through the economic hardship option does not preclude you from the 20 hour a week requirement while school is in session. You may only work full-time during annual breaks.