

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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F-1 International students are required to carry full-load of courses, at least two courses (six semester credits) at Bethel Seminary, each semester to maintain their legal status to remain in the United States. Students who require exceptions to the full-load of studies are required to report to the international student advisor on their campus. F-1 International students are allowed to work in the U.S. with authorization; please refer to the Employment section below for details.

## Exceptions to the Full-Course-Of-Study Requirement

The exceptions to the "full course of study" requirement are limited, but very important. In the situations described below, F-1 students are considered to be maintaining status even if they are not registered for a full course of study, and they continue to be eligible for F-1 benefits if they are otherwise eligible. A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the Designated School Official (DSO) will be considered out of status. Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) limits the reasons for which an Reduce Course Load can be granted to 7 choices. The DSO must select one of these choices to process the Reduced Course Load approval.

1. Illness or Medical Condition
2. Initial Difficulty with English Language
3. Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
4. Unfamiliarity with American Teaching Methods
5. Improper Course Level Placement
6. To Complete Course of Study in Current Term
7. Part Time Border Commuter Student

## Distance Education Limits

According to the Federal Regulations, "F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken online or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination, or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An online or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission, including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no online or distance education classes may

be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement".

## Employment

### On-Campus Employment

On-campus employment is the most accessible kind of employment for F-1 students. Requirements are listed below:

- Maintain valid F-1 status.
- Notify the International Student Adviser prior to accepting any employment.
- You can only work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session; full time during official school breaks and vacation periods if you intend to register for the next academic semester.

### Off-Campus Employment

There are 3 categories of off-campus employment opportunities available to F-1 students (Severe Economic Hardship, Curricular Practical Training, and Optional Practical Training). Two of these categories are available to Bethel Seminary F-1 students.

#### Severe Economic Hardship

Any F-1 student suffering severe economic hardship as defined by USCIS is eligible to work off campus.

Requirements are listed below:

- Active F-1 status for at least one academic year (9 months).
- In good academic standing.
- Provide evidence of economic hardship based on unforeseen circumstances beyond your control.
- Show you have made a good-faith effort to find on-campus employment and that on-campus employment is not available or sufficient.
- Work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session; full time during school breaks and holidays.
- The Employment Authorization Document is valid for one year per application.

There are a number of circumstances that may qualify as severe economic hardship, including:

- Substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate
- Excessive increases in tuition and/or living costs
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support
- Medical bills or other substantial and unexpected expenses

#### Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional practical training (OPT) is employment that's related to your degree or major. You can qualify for OPT both during and after completion of your degree. Requirements are listed below:

- Your employment must be “directly related” to your program of study
- You must enroll and maintain lawful F-1 status at least for one academic year
- Apply for OPT three months before you complete all degree work.
- If you have engaged in 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT), you are not eligible for OPT.
- The standard OPT is valid for 12 months full-time employment
- You cannot begin employment until you receive your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS and have been enrolled for at least a year.

### **Social Security Card**

If you have been authorized to work either on-campus or off-campus, you may apply for a Social Security Card. The following documents are required to apply for a Social Security Card.

- Application form
- Employer’s letter
- International Student Advisor’s letter
- SEVIS I-20
- Passport

### **Health Insurance**

Bethel international students and their dependents are required to have health insurance. All students and their dependents must have:

- Medical coverage of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

This may cost up to \$850 per year for an individual student. For health insurance information: students in St. Paul may contact the International Student Advisor, students in San Diego may contact the Registrar Office.

### **Contact**

Students with any concerns regarding Form I-20, maintenance of status, medical insurance, Social Security card, on-campus and off-campus employment, curricular practical training, optional practical training, program extension, bank account, driver license, change of level/degree, transfer, reinstatement, change of status, travel, or add dependent(s) should contact the International Student Adviser on campus.

- St. Paul: Kwai-Yung Carol Chang at 651.638.6161 or [c-chang@bethel.edu](mailto:c-chang@bethel.edu)
- San Diego: Theola Campbell at 619.325.5219 or [t-campbell@bethel.edu](mailto:t-campbell@bethel.edu).