Critical Issues for Academic Advisors of F-1 & J-1 International Students

Presented by the International Student/Scholar Office (ISSO)
Who is an F-1 or J-1 Student?

- The non-immigrant visa categories issued by U.S. Consulates abroad for those who seek to come to the U.S. specifically for the purpose of study.
Immigration Terminology

- DHS: Department of Homeland Security (formerly INS)
- Visa: the travel document issued by U.S. Department of State for travel into the U.S. (the visa may expire while in the U.S. but does not determine status)
- Status: what you hold once you enter the U.S. For F-1 students, D/S “duration of status” is marked on their I-94 cards
- I-94: the arrival/departure record
Immigration Terminology

- SEVIS (Student & Exchange Visitor Information System): tracking system used by U.S. government for all F-1 and J-1 international students.
- I-20 (F-1) or DS-2019 (J-1): document issued by ISSO upon admission for purpose of visa interview and entry to the U.S.
Timeline for New F-1/J-1 Students Coming from Abroad

- Student works with Office of International Student Admissions on application & supporting documents, including proof of financial resources.
- Once admitted and file is complete, it is sent to the ISSO for I-20 or DS-2019 creation.
- I-20 or DS-2019 and orientation material mailed to student.
- Student applies for F-1 or J-1 visa at US consulate.
- Student enters U.S. up to 30 days prior to start of semester.
Role & Function of the ISSO

- Serves as the Designated School Officials (DSOs) for F-1 students and issues form I-20 immigration document.

- Serves as the Responsible Officers (ROs) for J-1 students/scholars and issues form DS-2019 immigration document.
Role & Function of the ISSO

- Responsible for compliance with government immigration regulations for all F-1 and J-1 exchange students and visiting scholars at UNC Charlotte.

- Makes regular reports to DHS via SEVIS in the areas of enrollment, changes in address & biographical information.
Role & Function of the ISSO

- Provides programs, general advising, and services for all non-immigrant international students upon arrival and throughout their programs.
Role & Function of the ISSO

- Works with departments and offices across campus on issues unique to F-1, J-1 such as...
  - Health insurance requirement
  - On and off-campus employment issues
  - Fulltime enrollment requirement
Role & Function of the ISSO

- Assists students in maintaining legal F-1 status.
Maintenance of Status

- Must be enrolled “fulltime” each semester.
  - Undergrads = 12 credit hrs.
  - Grads = 9 credit hrs, 6 with assistantship, or upon completion of required coursework continuous registration for “thesis/project” or “residency” as determined by the Graduate School.
Maintenance of Status

- Valid reasons to authorize less than fulltime requirement include the following...
  - Documented illness or medical condition
  - Initial difficulty with the English language
  - Initial difficulty with reading requirements
  - Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
  - Improper course level placement
  - To complete course of study in current term
Authorization for Reduced Course Load

Instructions for F-1 students: Immigration regulations for F-1 students require that they be enrolled as full-time students during all regular academic terms. Full-time is defined as: 12 hours for undergraduate, 9 hours for graduate, or 6 hours for graduate with assistantship. Exceptions to this must be justified by the academic department and recorded by the institution. Possible reason(s) can include: Initial English Language difficulties, unfamiliarity with American teaching methods, improper course level placement, or number of courses required for graduation. After you complete the first part of the form, ask your academic or faculty advisor to complete the recommendation section, then return it to the International Student/Scholar Office (ISSO).

Student's Name: ____________________________

UNCC ID: 800 ____________________________ SEVIS ID #: N00 ____________

E-mail: ____________________________ Phone: (_________)

Student's Major: ____________________________ Degree Level: BA/BS MA/MS PhD Other ________

Current Semester of Enrollment: ____________, 20___ Anticipated Graduation Semester/Date ____________, 20___

First time requesting a reduced course load? ______

Student Signature: ____________________________ Date: / __ / __

ACADEMIC ADVISOR RECOMMENDATION

Instructions to Academic Advisor: International students in F-1 or J-1 status are required to MAINTAIN A FULL COURSE LOAD EVERY FALL AND SPRING SEMESTER and make satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree objective. The student named above has requested an exception to the full course requirements and in order for the ISSO to assist the student with his/her request, the academic advisor must indicate that the student qualifies for one of the following four reasons.

☐ Student is compelled by illness or other medical conditions to interrupt or reduce his/her course of study. (Student MUST attach a letter from his/her doctor/physician indicating that he/she recommends the student to take a semester off or to reduce credit load for medical reasons.) Academic advisor need to sign the form.

☐ Student is having difficulty understanding the English language or he/she is unfamiliar with American teaching methods or reading requirements. This exception is generally only allowed during the first semester in an academic program in the U.S., not including “English as Second Language” Training.

☐ The current semester course level is an improper placement for this student for the following reason(s) ____________________________

☐ Student is expected to graduate at the end of this semester and needs less than the full-time credit load to complete his/her coursework.

☐ How many credit hours enrolled? ____________

Advisor's Name [Print] ____________________________ Signature of Academic Advisor ____________________________ Date: / __ / __

E-mail: ____________________________ Phone: (704) 687 - ________

For ISSO use only: Approved? ☐ Yes ☐ No ____________________________

spring fall: ____________

DSO signature: ____________________________ Date: / __ / __

ISSO
International Student/Scholar Office
8221 University City Blvd., CMRG # 202
Charlotte, NC 28223
Phone: 704-687-7781
FAX: 704-687-1663
http://Isso.uncc.edu
Now 01/13
Maintenance of Status

- Keep I-20 or DS-2019 valid by...
  - completing studies prior to expiration date or;
  - requesting timely program extension
  - making timely updates such as changes in educational level, program of study, or transfer to another school
ACADEMIC CERTIFICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Instructions for F-1 students: In order to allow ISSO to help you with your immigration application, please submit this form to your academic advisor to help inform ISSO with the expected graduation/completion date of your degree. After you complete the first part of the form, ask your academic or faculty advisor to complete the certification section, then return it along with your documents to the International Student/Scholar Office (ISSO).

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Student’s Name: __________________________

UNCC ID: 800 ________________________ SEVIS ID #: N00 ________________________

Email: ________________________ Phone: ________________________

Student’s Major: ________________________ Degree Level: B.A/B.S. M.A/M.S. PhD

Current Semester of Enrollment: ______, 20______ Anticipated Graduation Semester/Date ______, 20______

I am applying for:

☐ Change of Immigration Status ☐ Change of Education level ☐ Change of Major ☐ Reinstatement ☐ Extension

☐ Other

☐ I intend to leave the U.S. & re-enter. Date of Departure: ______/_____/______ Date of Re-entry: ______/_____/______

☐ I do not intend to leave the U.S. and re-enter. I wish to process my immigration request through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) while I am in the States. Please complete the back of this form

Student Signature: ________________________ Date: ______/_____/20______

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**** ADVISOR CERTIFICATION SECTION ****

(To Be Completed By the Academic Advisor)

Instructions to Academic Advisor: International students in F-1 or J-1 status are required to make satisfactory normal progress toward completion of the degree objective. The student named above has requested an immigration transaction and in order for ISSO to assist the student with his/her request, ISSO request the following information from you.

Estimated Date of Completion: ______/_____/20______ or Semester: ________________________ 20______

Reason for Change in Expected Completion Date (if any):

Please check as appropriate:

☐ Student must complete _____ credit hours to satisfy degree requirements

☐ Student has completed all course work for the degree and is currently conducting research and or writing his/her thesis/dissertation.

Signature of Academic Advisor ________________________ (704) 687-________ Phone: ______/_____/20______ Date: ______/_____/20______

*****FOR OFFICE USE BY ISSO - DO NOT WRITE BELOW*****

☐ Change of immigration Status ☐ Change of Education level ☐ Change of Major ☐ Reinstatement ☐ Extension

☐ Other

☐ Other

☐ Other

Recommended/Approved by ISSO until: ______/_____/20______

Note: ________________________

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ISSO
International Student/Scholar Office
201 University City Blvd., CHH2 # 202
Charlotte, NC 28223
Phone: 704-687-7751
Fax: 704-687-1661
http://isco.uncc.edu

New 2/14
Maintenance of Status

- Report changes of address within 10 days of a move.
- Limit on-campus work to 20 hrs/week (during academic year).
- Obtain authorization for any off-campus employment
  - Curricular Practical Training
  - Optional Practical Training
  - Academic Training (J-1 only)
  - Severe Economic Hardship
- Depart the U.S. within 60 days of program completion or apply for Post-Completion Optional Practical Training.
F1 Curricular Practical Training

University of North Carolina at Charlotte
International Student/Scholar Office

F1 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Via the Academic Department

Definition
Immigration regulations define CPT as training programs that are an "integral part of an established curriculum: defined as alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship/practicum, which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school."

Eligibility Requirements
- Must be in lawful student status for one full academic year (2 semesters).
- The student must always be making adequate progress toward degree.
- The training must be either required for a course or required for completion of a degree program (i.e., research for thesis work).
- Must be enrolled full-time in Fall/Spring semesters unless student is in final semester of coursework (additional ISSO permission is required) or has completed all coursework with thesis in progress.
- No enrollment necessary for summer internships if student will enroll the following Fall semester. Summer internships may be full-time or part-time.

Length of Training
There is no limit on the amount of curricular practical training, but students who engage in 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training are not eligible for Optional Practical Training. Part-time does not count.

Application Procedure
- Prepare the following documents:
  1. Unofficial transcript, including proof of registration for semester/term of work experience;
  2. Official job offer letter (on letterhead) including name and location of employer, position description, an indication of whether the work is full-time (over 20 hrs/wk.) or part-time (20 hrs/wk. or less) and beginning and ending date of employment;
  3. Completed recommendation form from Department Chair/Graduate Coordinator, attached.

- Bring all of the above items with you to your appointment at the International Student/Scholar Office to process the I-20 for CPT, authorizing employment in the U.S. Please allow 2 days processing time.

Additional Information
- Each and every period of approved employment must have CPT authorization.
- Students participating in Curricular Practical Training, as with other employment, are subject to withholding for federal and state tax unless a tax treaty applies. At the same time, such students are exempt from Social Security tax (FICA) and Medicare withholding.
F1 Curricular Practical Training

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING VIA THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
RECOMMENDATION FOR F-1 STUDENT

This form provides the information required for the ISSO to grant off-campus employment under Curricular Practical Training for F-1 international students. The student's Department Chair or Graduate Coordinator must complete and sign this form. If you have questions, please direct them to Tarek Elshayeb (telshayeb@uncg.edu) or Denise Medeiros (dvme-dei@uncg.edu) in the ISSO or by calling 687-7781.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name: ____________________________ Major: ____________________________

Check one: ___ Bachelor ___ Master ___ PhD

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

As per immigration regulations, in order to qualify for Curricular Practical Training, the student MUST either get credit in a course (such as an internship course or an independent study) which has a work requirement, or the work MUST be required for the degree. The Department Chair or Graduate Coordinator must certify and check one of the following categories:

1. ___ The student will get credit in a course that requires a work experience. (The course must be taken either concurrently or in the fall semester immediately following a summer work experience)

   Course Title & Number ____________________________ Credit hrs. Offered ________

   Semester student will take course: ____________________________

2. ___ The work experience is a required part of the research for this graduate student's thesis, project or dissertation. Please be specific about how it is required:

   ____________________________

   a. Thesis/Project has offered for this experience _____________

   b. Semester student will have the work experience: _____________

3. I certify that this student is making adequate progress toward his/her degree ____________

Department Chair/Graduate Coordinator Certification:

I understand that by signing this form, I have reviewed the job offer letter and am certifying that this work experience is a short-term training program which meets one of the criteria of Curricular Practical Training described above.

Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

Print Name ____________________________ Title ____________________________

Department ____________________________

Email ____________________________ Phone ____________________________
OPT Recommendation Form

International Student/Scholar Office
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
College of Health & Human Services Building, Room 202
Tel: (704) 687-7781; Fax: (704) 687-3168

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Recommendation Form for
Academic Adviser, Department Chair, or Program Coordinator

This form must be completed in its entirety for the ISSO to accept the student’s OPT application.

- ITEM 1 MUST BE COMPLETED FOR ALL APPLICANTS.
- Box 2 should be checked if applicable to the student’s situation.

The student listed below is requesting the ISSO recommendation for employment authorization in his/her field of study. In order to issue a recommendation, we are required to obtain the following information. We ask that you please complete and sign the section below. If further information is advisable or necessary, describe in an accompanying letter.

This is to confirm that:

Student Name:__________________________________________________________

1. is expected to complete [bachelors / masters / doctoral] degree (please circle one) requirements by

   (DATE: mm/dd/yyyy) Note: For terms other than spring, this is not the degree conferral date. It is the end of the term in which degree requirements are met.

   Please check any box that is applicable to this student:

2. ☐ has/will complete all coursework by __________ but has thesis/dissertation outstanding.

   Faculty/Adviser Name (please print) ____________________________________________

   Title and Department _______________________________________________________

   Email __________________________________ Phone ext. _______________________

   Signature __________________________ Date _____________________
Some other critical issues for international students…

- Obtaining a North Carolina driver’s license
- Obtaining a Social Security Number
- Opening a bank account
- Adjusting to English language, U.S. academic & social environment
Some classroom issues for international students and faculty...

- Requesting more time on exams
- Taking a dictionary to exams
- Recording class lectures
- Difficulty participating in group discussions
- Confusion about academic integrity rules/regulations
Critical Roles for Academic Advisors

- For graduate students, make **timely** admissions & funding decisions in order to ensure timely processing of I-20s and visa interviews abroad
- Assist students in enrolling in a full course of study and refer them to the ISSO for any exceptions **PRIOR to** dropping below fulltime or withdrawing from the university
Critical Roles for Academic Advisors

- Always refer international students to the ISSO for information on off-campus work authorization; violations are NOT forgiven by DHS.
Critical Roles for Academic Advisors

- Be aware of issues & challenges that are unique to F-1 students both upon arrival and throughout their academic programs.
- Always feel free to reach out to the ISSO staff to consult on a challenging situation or get perspective.
International Student/Scholar Office
Contact Information

CHHS Room 202
704-687-7781
www.isso.uncc.edu

- Tarek Elshayeb, Director
  - mebeane@uncc.edu

- Denise Medeiros, Assistant Director
  - dvmedei@uncc.edu