Policy Statement

The F-1 student visa is a temporary non-immigrant visa that is issued only to students who are qualified to pursue a full course of study at an academic institution. It is in the interest of the University of Massachusetts Medical School to consistently enforce federal regulations regarding the admission of foreign students who require F-1 visa sponsorship.

Reason for Policy

To provide guidelines for Institutional Sponsorship of F-1 visas for students enrolled at one of the schools of the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Entities Affected By This Policy

All international students requiring F-1 visa sponsorship as well as the graduate program that has accepted the F-1 student.

Related Documents

H-1B Visa Policy 06.08.02

Scope

A. Sponsorship of the F-1 visa

1. When applying for an F-1 visa, the individual must prove to a U.S. consular official that they wish to enter the United States, temporarily and solely for purposes of study, and that they have no intention of abandoning their residence in their home country.
2. In order to obtain an F-1 visa, the prospective student must visit a United States Consulate or Embassy with the following documents: (1) SEVIS I-20 Form; (2) valid passport; (3) financial documents; (4) admission letter from the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

3. When a prospective student has been accepted by the Office of Admissions the SEVIS I-20 Form is issued by the International Students and Scholars Office. It is then forwarded to the Office of Admissions, who is responsible for delivery of the form to the student.

4. F-1 students will maintain their status by adhering to the following:
   a. Maintain a valid passport.
   b. Attend the school that issued the SEVIS I-20 Form.
   c. Pursue a full-time course of study and demonstrate normal progress toward completion of designated program of study.
   d. Follow USCIS procedures for any change, i.e., change of address, change of name, school transfer, change of level, program extension, with the approval of ISSO.

B. Optional Practical Training (OPT)

1. UMMS students who have maintained legal F-1 status for the duration of their respective program may apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). This grants a student permission to seek employment in their field immediately after completion of studies. Students must meet with ISSO in order to be granted permission to apply for OPT. Once the OPT application is approved by USCIS, the student will receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Practical training may not exceed 12 months, and students remain under the sponsorship of the University of Massachusetts Medical School for this time. If the student's address or employer changes, the student is obligated to inform the ISSO of that change.

2. It is very important that a student is certain of his or her completion date before an OPT application is submitted to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service. Once the ISSO has submitted an application for OPT the office typically will not withdraw and resubmit with an alternate completion date. Therefore, students who do not complete their program on time may lose OPT time. In order to avoid losing time, student may request an OPT begin date as late as 60 days following their program completion date.

3. Students are not permitted to work on OPT until they have received their employment authorization card, and the dates on the card are valid.

4. Students who intend to travel abroad during OPT should refer to the International Student and Scholars Office for travel advice.

C. Off-Campus Employment During the Academic Year
1. Upon completion of one full academic year of studies as a full-time student, it is possible to apply to the USCIS for permission to work due to severe economic hardship. When filing this type of application the student must meet with the ISSO to obtain a new SEVIS I-20 form recommending the off-campus employment.

2. F-2 visa holders (dependents of F-1 students) are not permitted to accept employment or receive compensation under any circumstances. F-2 dependents may not enroll in a degree granting program, but children may enroll in elementary or secondary school.

D. Extension of F-1 Visa Status

1. If an F-1 visa holder will not complete his or her program of study by the expiration date noted on the I-20 form, he or she must apply for a program extension in the thirty (30) day period before the expiration date. Failure to extend one’s stay could jeopardize legal status and will result in having to file an application with the USCIS for reinstatement to status (with fee.)

2. Extensions are granted by ISSO after verifying with the academic department that the F-1 visa holder has continually maintained full-time student status, and the delay in completing the degree has been caused by compelling academic or medical reasons.

Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GSBS- Director of Admissions</th>
<th>Provide information to ISSO regarding offers of admission made to international students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Specialist/Coordinator</td>
<td>Evaluate eligibility for visa, and issue I-20 documents for students eligible for the F-1 visa category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of International Student and Scholars Office</td>
<td>Enforce this policy and analyze requests for policy exception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Provide required information to the International Students and Scholars office in a timely manner and notify the ISSO office of any applicable changes to his or her status</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

In support of this policy, the following procedures are included:

Name | Number
NONE
Definitions

SEVIS
Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. Created by the Department of State and Homeland Security to maintain information on international students while they are engaged in studies in the United States.

Approvals

Phil Kerr
Interim Associate Vice Chancellor
Human Resources

Date

Bob Jenal
Vice Chancellor Administration
and Finance

Date

Forms / Instructions

In support of this policy, the following forms are included:

Name
NONE

Number

Appendices

In support of this policy, the following appendices are included:

Name
NONE

Number