

# SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL

L O S A N G E L E S

## International Students Policy

**Revision history:** Formerly a part of the annually revised Student Handbook. Established as a standalone policy August 2022.

**Related policies:** [LIST POLICIES].

**Scheduled Review Date:** June 2024 (SEVIS Designated School Official; Registrar's Office)

### A. Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

International students enrolled in a J.D. or LL.M. program at Southwestern are required to adhere to the requirements set forth by SEVP (Student Exchange Visitor Information Program). SEVIS allows schools and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to exchange data on the visa status of international students and scholars. It is an internet-based system used by Southwestern to maintain accurate and current information on international students and scholars with F1 visas and their dependents.

### B. Student Responsibilities

#### 1. Change of Address

An international student must notify the Registrar of any address change within 10 calendar days of their move. Students must provide a physical address. P.O. boxes or office addresses are not allowed. If it is not possible to receive mail at your residence, you must also provide a mailing address. You may not use the Southwestern Law School address as your mailing address.

#### 2. Enrollment Status

A student must remain in full-time status at all times unless the Registrar's Office has approved an underload before the start of the semester. A J.D. student is required to enroll in a minimum of 10 units per semester and a maximum of 16 units. An LL.M. student is required to enroll in a minimum of 8 units per semester

and a maximum of 16 units. Please note that dropping courses can impact your visa status if you drop below the units listed in this paragraph.

3. On-campus Check-in

F1 students are required to check-in with a Designated School Official within 7 business days from the start of each semester; summer sessions are excluded. Failure to check-in in a timely manner can result in termination of the international student's I-20.

4. Off-campus Employment

A J.D. student must complete one academic year to qualify for off-campus employment. International J.D. students must consult with the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) in the Registrar's Office and complete necessary forms before obtaining and starting off-campus. Approval from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is required. Application approval may take up to 90 days.

F1 students participating in externships must contact the PDSO in the Registrar's Office to receive curricular practical training (CPT) authorization on their I-20. Students must secure the externship training opportunity before CPT can be authorized and CPT must be authorized before the student can begin working at the externship.

5. Transfer to Another Institution

A student must notify a Designated School Official if transferring from Southwestern to another institution. A student is required to report the name of the new institution and the date that they will be transferring.

6. Failure to Enroll

If, for any reason, a student does not register for the fall or spring semester, the law school will notify SEVIS that the student is out-of-status, which will make the student subject to deportation.

7. Return to Home Country

If a student plans to travel during current enrollment, a signature is required from the Principal Designated School Official in the Registrar's Office. A signature from the PDSO is valid for one year.

8. Passports and Visas

The Registrar's Office must be informed of any change of visa status and/or type within 10 calendar days. The I-20 form, VISA and passport must be kept current at all times.

9. Graduation Date

The Registrar's Office must be notified of graduation before the program end date indicated on the I-20 form. Each international student must maintain their legal immigration status at all times to remain legally in the United States.

**C. Spouses and Dependents: Full-Time or Part-Time Study**

A spouse or dependent of an F-1 student, with an F-2 status, is not allowed to study full- or part-time at the university level. A dependent with F-2 status may only take classes that are considered recreational. Spouses must matriculate and apply for a separate F-1 student visa. Children are allowed to attend primary and secondary school (K-12).

**D. Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 students**

1. Application Timing

A student may apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) 90 calendar days before their graduation date. Applications may be submitted up to 60 calendar days after the program completion date, but no greater than 30 calendar days after the PDSO has recommended the student for OPT and signed the new I-20 form. Documents required include the following:

- a. I-765 form
- b. Two passport photos
- c. Updated I-20 form with Designated School Official approval to participate in OPT
- d. Application fee

2. Timely Submission

Documents should be mailed to the address as directed on the USCIS website ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)). Travel outside the United States after the student's completion date and before to the approval of the student's OPT is not recommended.

3. Multiple Optional Practical Training Sessions

USCIS regulations affirm that an international student is eligible for 12 months of practical training if they have completed a first and or second degree at a higher level. A student is not eligible for an additional 12 months if they seek a second degree on the same academic level.

## **E. Additional Information and Principal Designated School Official (PDSO)**

Sylvia Villalpando  
Principle Designated School Official  
Dean of Students and Diversity Affairs Office, Room W102  
(213) 738-6888  
svillalpando@swlaw.edu

Students can find additional information regarding the responsibilities of international students and the contact information for the PDSO at <https://swlawportal.swlaw.edu/registrar/Pages/default.aspx>.