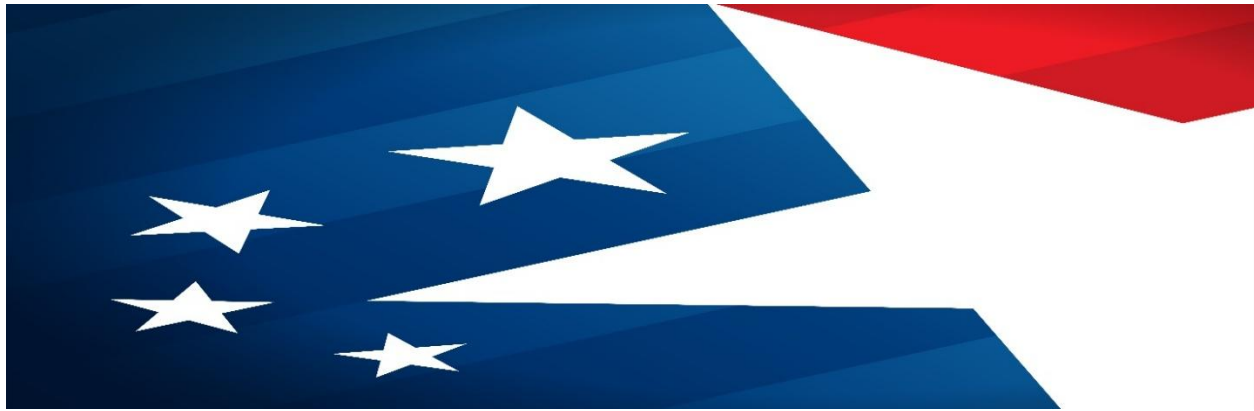




Elimination of Duration of Stay for Students

The July 17, 2026, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) final rule eliminates duration of status (D/S) for F, J and I nonimmigrants as well as restricts changes in educational objectives and transfers to other schools for F-1 students.

Before September 15, 2026: *F-1 students were generally admitted for D/S (Duration of Status). This allowed them to remain in the U.S. as long as they maintained their student status and continued their authorized program, including authorized practical training.*

Beginning September 15, 2026: *DHS changes this system to a fixed period of admission. F-1 students will generally receive an authorized period of stay of no more than four years, rather than open-ended D/S.*

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Old Rule</i>	<i>New Rule Effective 9/15/26</i>
Period of admission	Duration of Status (D/S)	Fixed period of admission
Maximum initial period	Generally tied to program/status	Generally up to 4 years
Need more time to finish studies	DSO could generally extend program in SEVIS	Student may need an extension of stay
OPT	Covered under D/S if otherwise eligible	May require additional immigration procedures/extension of stay
Oversight	Primarily through SEVIS and status compliance	Additional USCIS/CBP review at fixed points

The following is a summary of the new academic restrictions for F-1 students contained in the final regulation:

1. **No Lateral Matriculation or Reverse Matriculation for any F-1 Student.** Similar to the current regulation, F-1 students will be allowed to progress to a higher level of education. However, they will not be able to complete multiple courses of study on the same educational level. For example, F-1 students will not be allowed to complete two master's degrees. They will be allowed to complete double majors but they have to be enrolled into both majors at the same time.
2. **No Transfers Allowed For F-1 Students Below Graduate Level During First Academic Year.** F-1 students who are completing a course of study below the graduate level will not be allowed to transfer schools during the first academic year, unless the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) approves an exception for extenuating circumstances. After the first academic year, an F-1 student in a program below the graduate level will be allowed to transfer to a new institution, as long as the student has not been placed on academic probation or school suspension and/or does not have a pattern of behavior demonstrating a repeated inability or unwillingness to complete studies.
3. **Changes of Educational Level or Major on the Below Graduate Level are Restricted During First Academic Year.** F-1 students completing a course of study below the graduate level cannot change educational objectives (i.e. level or major) during the first academic year unless an exception is approved by SEVP for extenuating circumstances.
4. **No Transfers Allowed for F-1 Students on Graduate Level Unless Exception is Granted.** F-1 students who are completing a course of study on the graduate level are not allowed to transfer schools, unless SEVP grants an exception due to extenuating circumstances, as discussed above.
5. **No Changes of Educational Level or Major on the Graduate Level.** F-1 students on the graduate level are not allowed to change educational objectives (i.e. level or majors). There is no exception for extenuating circumstances.
6. **English Language Training (ELT) is Limited to 24 months.** F-1 students in ETL programs will be limited to 24 months of training, regardless of any disruptions in their studies (such as vacations spent outside the United States, illness or other extenuating circumstances). This is a lifetime limit.

Source: USCIS, AILA