Guide for Academic Advisors of International Students

There are several visa regulations with which international students on an F-1 or J-1 student visa must comply in order to maintain legal status in the U.S. International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) issues and processes many of the necessary immigration documents and advises international students and scholars on the regulations of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the U.S. Department of Labor.

All F-1 and J-1 students are required to attend International Student Orientation prior to their first semester, so they should be aware of these visa requirements. However, academic advisors and other faculty and staff who interact with international students will hopefully find this information useful as well.

**Academic advisors should remind international students to make an appointment with International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) under the following circumstances:**

- **Withdrawal from a class.** If a student wishes to withdraw from a class, he/she should make an appointment with ISSS, to avoid making mistakes that might endanger his/her visa status. International students must be enrolled full-time (minimum 12 credit hours for undergraduate students, 9 credit hours for graduate students) during the spring and fall semesters.
- **Change of Major.** The student’s major will need to be updated on his/her immigration documents. In addition, if a student who is an embassy-sponsored student (primarily from Saudi Arabia or Kuwait), wishes to change his/her major, he/she will need to receive permission from his/her embassy for the change.
- **Reduced Course Load.*** Although limited, there are a few scenarios in which a visa authorization to drop below full-time may be granted by ISSS for F-1 students. Authorization for a reduced course load (RCL) must be granted by ISSS prior to the student dropping below full-time. Students may request an RCL from ISSS for (and only for) the following documented reasons:
  - The student is having difficulty with English language or reading requirements (may be used only once)
  - The student is unfamiliar with American teaching methods
  - The student has been placed in an improper course level
  - The student needs less than a full course load to complete the degree program
  - The student has a medical reason for requesting a less than full-time schedule
- **Employment/Internships.** Students may not work off-campus without prior approval for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT), or Academic Training (AT) from ISSS. This includes internships, co-ops, and other unpaid curricular training programs.
- **Other Academic/Cultural Difficulties.** Following a meeting or if problems arise with an international student, it is helpful to contact ISSS so that the student can be monitored from the ISSS perspective as well. Students who are performing poorly or who are on probation are at greater risk of jeopardizing their legal status.
- **Program Completion.*** Students must notify ISSS of their graduation date 30 days prior to completing their program so that their program end date can be adjusted on their immigration document (Form I-20).
- **Travel outside the U.S.** Students who plan on traveling outside of the U.S. anytime during their stay in the U.S. must have a valid signature by a UW-Platteville official on their I-20 or DS-2019 - and they must take it along to be re-admitted to the U.S..
- **Program Extension.*** F-1 students must file a Program Extension with ISSS if they need more time than allowed on the I-20 to complete the program of study for which the I-20 is issued.
- **Online Courses.** No more than one fully online course (3 credits) per semester may be counted toward the full-course of study requirement by F-1 or J-1 students.

*Applies only to F-1 students.
Advising International Students – General Tips

1. Understand who is considered an international student.
   “International students” are defined by UW-Platteville as students on an F-1 or J-1 visa. There may be students on campus who were born in different countries but who have permanent residency or some other type of visa status in the U.S. Degree-seeking students typically have an F-1 visa, and exchange students have a J-1 visa.

2. Learn student’s name.
   Learning the student’s name and how to pronounce it is important and will mean a lot to the student. The student will likely will not correct you if you are pronouncing his/her name incorrectly. If you don’t know how to pronounce the student’s name, ask him/her to spell it or repeat it. Don’t worry about getting it wrong, but try to get it right.

3. Clarify how students should address you.
   Help them understand how to address you so everyone is comfortable.

4. Acknowledge student diversity and learning styles in the classroom.
   Since international students come from a variety of education systems, using a combination of small group and whole class discussions; lecture and discussion; and listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities/assignments will provide opportunities for students with different kinds of learning styles to use their strengths. This will benefit not only international students, but the class as a whole.

5. Write it out!
   Highlight key words/concepts in print and have written explanations of assignments (either on the board, handout, or online).

6. Avoid acronyms and slang or be prepared to explain specific acronyms and slang.

7. Check for comprehension.
   Avoid asking, “Do you understand?” (The answer will always be “Yes.”) Instead, ask students to do something that shows they understand. Give the students adequate time to respond.

8. Emphasize the importance of regular class attendance.
   Understand that international students may come from an educational background that has not prepared him/her for regular quizzes, class participation and attendance, and intensive reading and writing.

   Understand that there are several visa regulations with which international students on an F-1 student visa must comply in order to maintain legal status in the U.S. Please view http://www.uwplatt.edu/intprog/iss/current_students/legal_status.html for the basic immigration regulations for international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa.

10. Contact ISSS.
    Please contact the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Office at (608) 342-1852 or intlinfo@uwplatt.edu if an issue arises with an international student. There are many ways in which academics and the F-1/J-1 student immigration regulations intersect, so when in doubt, ask the international student to make an appointment with the ISSS office to ensure that their actions do not put their student visa status in jeopardy.