Frequently Asked Questions about International Students

How many international students attend the University of Wisconsin-Platteville?

International students at UW-Platteville represent approximately 24 countries from around the world. Total enrollments of degree-seeking international students (F-1 visa) have increased from 72 in 2011–12 to 102 in 2014–15 (a 42 percent increase) with significant increases expected over the next several years due to increased strategic international marketing and recruitment efforts as well as the expected growth of the English Language Program which was launched in the summer of 2014. In 2014-2015, approximately 18 students studied in the university’s new English Language Program (ELP).

Enrollments of incoming exchange and visiting students (J-1 visa) has nearly doubled in the past year from 35 exchange students in 2013-2014 to 68 exchange students in 2014-2015. This growth is due in large part to the numbers of students coming to UW-Platteville on the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP) through the Institute of International Education (IIE).

Who is considered an international student?

“International students” are defined as students who are enrolled at institutions of higher education in the United States who are not citizens of the U.S., immigrants or refugees. International students at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville hold either an F-1 or J-1 visa. There are many students at UW-Platteville who may be originally from a country other than the U.S., but unless they are on an F-1 or J-1 visa, they are not considered bona fide international students. Nonetheless, the Office of International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS) welcomes all students to take part in activities and events sponsored by our office or by the International Student Club.

What is the difference between F-1 and J-1 students?

- **An F-1 visa** is a non-immigrant visa issued for someone to pursue an educational objective that is privately funded and not part of an official government exchange program or government sponsorship. F-1 status allows for a temporary stay in the U.S. until the stated academic program is completed.

  Typically, students in F-1 status at UW-Platteville are degree seeking students who start and finish their degree in the United States.

- **A J-1 visa** is a non-immigrant visa issued by the United States to exchange visitors (students, professors, etc.) participating in programs that promote cultural exchange. All applicants must meet eligibility criteria and be sponsored either by a private sector or government program, or their exchange program must be carried out according to an agreement between the U.S. government and a foreign government, a written agreement between American and foreign educational institutions, an American educational institution and a foreign government, or a state or local government in the United States and a foreign government.
Typically, students in J-1 visa status at UW-Platteville are exchange students who are here only for 1-2 semesters. Visiting professors from abroad also would be J-1 visa holders.

Where are the international students attending UW-Platteville from?

The international student population at UW-Platteville is actually quite diverse, with between 20-30 countries represented each semester. The largest populations of degree-seeking international students at UW-Platteville come from Saudi Arabia, South Korea and China. The largest populations of J-1 students tend to come from Brazil, Germany, countries in Western Europe, and China.

What is the difference between an I-20 (or DS-2019) form and an F-1 (or J-1) visa?

• A visa is stamped in a passport and allows the student to enter the U.S. during the period of time indicated on the visa. A visa can expire while the student is in the U.S., but the visa must be renewed when the student departs and then wishes to re-enter the U.S. (if visa is expired upon re-entry).

• An I-20 or DS-2019 form allows F-1 and J-1 students to study at UW-Platteville (or a specific SEVP-certified U.S. educational institution) for the duration of an academic or exchange program. An I-20 or DS-2019 must be kept up-to-date at all times and the student must complete his/her program by the program end date listed on the I-20 or DS-2019, unless granted an extension in SEVIS.

What is SEVIS?

SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) is the electronic reporting system that tracks international students from the time they apply for a visa until they complete their academic program and leave the US. SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit electronic information and event notifications via the Internet, to the ICE and Department of State (DOS) throughout a student or exchange visitor’s stay in the United States. The system will reflect international student or exchange visitor status changes, such as admission at Port of Entry (POE), change of address, change in program of study, and other details. SEVIS will also provide system alerts, event notifications, and basic reports to the end-user schools, programs, and Immigration related field offices.

Can international students take online courses?

No more than one fully online course (3 credits) may be counted toward the full-time course load requirement for F-1 and J-1 international students.

Can international students drop below full-time for any reason?

Although limited, there are a few scenarios in which a visa authorization to drop below full-time may be granted by ISSS. 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:

• Difficulty with English language or reading requirements (may be used only once)
• Unfamiliar with American teaching methods
Improper course level placement
Less than a full course load is needed to complete the degree program
Documented medical reason for requesting a less than full-time schedule

Can international students get a social security number?
Yes; however, they must have a job offer in order to apply for a social security number. For off-campus employment, they must also have employment authorization from the International Student and Scholar Services Office (ISSS) or the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Can international students get a driver’s license?
Yes. Please see the ISSS website at http://www.uwplatt.edu/isss/driving-us for more information.

What types of challenges are magnified for international students studying in a U.S. university?
- Visa-related work restrictions
- Language barrier (acronyms, accents, field-specific terminology, communication styles)
- Unfamiliar education system (teaching/learning styles, attendance, tests, study skills)
- Culture shock
- Lack of existing support networks/relationships - i.e. having to make all new friends; family members in different time zones and thousands of miles away
- Transportation (Getting outside of Platteville)
- Finding a place to go during the holidays and semester breaks
- Discrimination
- Intensified feelings of homesickness or isolation

How do international students benefit the University community and the U.S. as a whole?
- Enable all who are part of the University/Platteville community to have direct contact with those from outside their national borders and help U.S. students, faculty, staff, and community members to learn how to interact with people from various cultures, develop skills to operate in an interconnected society, and gain knowledge about the world.
- Contribute to “Internationalization at Home” by their contributions to classroom discussions and projects
- Organize and participate in cultural programming, such as the International Night Dinner and International Education Week
- Help facilitate relationships or partnerships between UW-Platteville and educational institutions abroad
- Contribute to University’s institutional revenue and positively benefit the local and U.S. economy, whether they remain in the U.S. or return to their country
- Impact future international business or organizational partnerships between international and domestic students and/or faculty who met at the University
- And much more!
Can international students work on campus while they are enrolled at a U.S. university?

Yes; F-1 students may work at any qualifying on-campus job that does not displace a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (LPR). They can work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session, and they may work full-time during those periods when school is not in session or during the student's annual break. In order to work on campus, the student must apply for a social security number. For more information about on-campus employment for F-1 students, please visit the ISSS website at http://www.uwplatt.edu/isss/campus-employment.

Can F-1 international students work off-campus while they are enrolled at a U.S. university?

Yes; F-1 international students can work off-campus in a job related to their field of study if they apply for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) work authorization.

What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?

According to U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorizes F-1 students to work off-campus before degree completion in a job, internship, practicum, or co-op program that is an integral part of the established curriculum and directly related to the student's major area of study. Employment must be related to your field of study, and you must earn course credit and/or the employment or internship must be a required part of your degree program. CPT may be authorized only part-time (20 hours or less) when classes are in session, and full-time (40 hours) during summer and semester breaks. For more information about CPT, please visit the ISSS website at http://www.uwplatt.edu/isss/cpt.

What is Optional Practical Training (OPT)?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is granted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and allows an F-1 student in the US to be authorized for temporary work, or training, directly related to his/her major area of study. OPT can be authorized before or after completion of studies. The total period of authorization cannot exceed the equivalent of 12 full months during a program of study. Processing of OPT by USCIS takes 2-4 months and requires a fee. A job offer is not required before applying for OPT. For more information, please visit the ISSS website at http://www.uwplatt.edu/isss/opt.

How do I get involved with the international programs, activities, and organizations on campus?

Please visit the ISSS website for an up-to-date list of international programs and activities on campus: http://www.uwplatt.edu/isss/get-involved.

What options do F-1 international students have after they graduate?

International students who are in the U.S. on an F-1 visa may choose to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) (12-month work authorization in their fields of study), pursue another degree/change degree level at the same institution or transfer to another institution, apply for a change in visa status, or depart the United States within 60 days of their program end date. Students who have completed 12 months of OPT and whose degree is in a
certified STEM field on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](https://www.i20certification.org/) may also choose to apply for a 17-Month STEM Extension to work in the U.S. for an additional 17 months in their STEM field.

**What is the difference between OPT and CPT?**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>CPT</th>
<th>OPT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authorization Period</strong></td>
<td>Pre-completion only</td>
<td>Pre-completion OR post-completion, but most commonly post-completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Offer Required to apply?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Must receive academic credit/meet academic requirement?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td>No processing fee, but may have to pay for course credits</td>
<td>$380 fee + postage</td>
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<td><strong>Authorization/Denial Issued By</strong></td>
<td>ISSS</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Waiting period after application</strong></td>
<td>1-7 days</td>
<td>2-4 months</td>
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<td><strong>Part-time authorization</strong></td>
<td>Unlimited, but may not be granted more than 12 months at a time</td>
<td>Part-time practical training (20 hours a week or less) is subtracted from the available 12 months at half the full-time rate</td>
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<td><strong>Full-time authorization</strong></td>
<td>If students participate in 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training, they will not be eligible for post-completion optional practical training (OPT)</td>
<td>12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extension period</strong></td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>17-month STEM extension (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Authorization documents</strong></td>
<td>I-20 with CPT authorization</td>
<td>EAD card and I-20 with OPT authorization</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Must be related to student's field of study?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td><strong>Must choose start/end date?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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