Keeping your stay legal, a reference for international students.

United States immigration law places responsibility upon the individual student to know and follow all relevant immigration regulations. Failure to comply with these regulations may have very severe consequences for your ability to study, seek employment, or even remain in the United States. Please read the list below carefully and contact the OIA regarding any questions you may have regarding the following regulations.

1. Make sure that your immigration documents are valid and have not expired.

   An unexpired passport valid at least six months into the future
   An I-94 card marked "F-1 D/S" or "J-1 D/S"
   An unexpired I-20/DS 20-19 that has been stamped by an immigration inspector or activated by an OIA advisor

2. Register for and complete a full course load each semester.

   Undergraduate students must always complete at least 12 credits each semester. All students are required to make normal, full-time progress toward degree completion and to complete within specified time frames. Extensions other than for medical or other unavoidable academic reasons are not permitted.
   Graduate student must always complete at least 9 credits each semester. (Design Management and Arts and Cultural Management students must register for and complete 8 credits per fall and spring semesters.) All students are required to make normal, full-time progress toward degree completion and to complete within specified time frames. Extensions other than for medical or other unavoidable academic reasons are not permitted.
   If you are only going to register on a part-time basis, obtain OIA approval BEFORE your registration is finalized. Pick up and complete our Exception to Full Course of Study. This form must be approved by the OIA by the last day to add/drop courses of any given semester!

3. Do not accept off-campus employment without written authorization from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and/or the OIA.

   Full-time students in F-1 status may accept on-campus employment of no more than 20 hours per week during the school year or full-time during vacation periods. Most forms of off-campus employment require a prior application to the USCIS that may take up to 3 months to process. Consult with an OIA advisor to learn more about your options.

4. Report any change of address to the OIA within 10 days of your move.

   F-1 and J-1 students are required to maintain a current local U.S. address and an overseas permanent address. Make any address updates within 10 days of moving.

5. Apply for an extension of your I-20 before your documents expire if you need more time to complete your program.

   Apply for an extension of your I-20 at least 30 days prior to the expiration of your document. An extension request submitted after your I-20 has expired cannot be processed. Failure to complete your program of study on time or to obtain a timely program extension constitutes a reportable violation of immigration status.
6. Contact the OIA immediately if there are any changes to your I-20/DS 20-19, to your personal or academic situation. Examples of such changes include but are not limited to the following:

- change of name or citizenship
- change of school, major, degree level, or financial sponsor
- withdrawal or termination from program due to academic or medical reasons
- departure from the U.S. for vacation, study, or a leave of absence
- transfer to another institution in the U.S.

7. Obtain a travel signature prior to departing the United States.

- In order to re-enter the United States you must obtain a “travel signature” from an international student advisor. We advise you to get a signature every six months. The signature tells the officer at the port of entry that you are maintaining your F1/J1 status.

8. If you are graduating be sure to apply for OPT before you complete your studies.

- If this is your final semester of studies, you must remember to apply for Post Completion of Studies Optional Practical Training (OPT). You can apply for OPT up to 120 days before the completion of your studies and up to 7 days before your completion date. No exceptions!

9. File your taxes on an annual basis.

- You need to file Form 8843. This is the only form you will need to complete if you did not earn income. F-1 or J-1 students with U.S. income from other sources, such as dividend income, salary or wages, scholarships or fellowships, prizes or awards will need to file form 1040NR or 1040NR EZ. The OIA sponsors an annual tax workshop for international students each spring semester, usually in late March and/or early April. A representative from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) presents the workshop free of charge.

10. Transferring to another school

- If you have been accepted to a new school you will need to have your SEVIS record released from Pratt Institute to your new school. In order to do this you will need to present to the OIA a letter of acceptance to the new school as well as complete our Student Exit Form. Failure to complete the transfer process in a timely fashion will put you out of status.

Exception to the full-course of study requirement

The exceptions to the “full course of study” requirement are limited. When a DSO/International Student Advisor approves a student to be part-time, the F1 student is considered to be maintaining status even if they are not registered for a full course of study. In most cases, they continue to be eligible for F1 benefits.

The reduced course load must be approved by a DSO/International Student Advisor prior to the student dropping below a full course of study. An F1 student who drops below full course of study without prior approval of a DSO is considered out of status.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) severely limits the reasons for which a reduced course load may be granted. Below is a list of reasons applicable for Pratt students:

- Illness or Medical Condition
- Initial Difficulty with English Language
- Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
- Unfamiliarity with American Teaching Methods
- Improper Course Level Placement
- To Complete Course Level Placement
- To Complete Course of Study in Current Term
If you will not register full time for any given spring or fall semester, you are required to complete an Exception to Full Course of Study form. This form must be completed by both you and your department before you submit it to OIA for final approval. Should you fail to complete this process by the add/drop period of the spring or fall semester, you will lose your legal F-1 status.