

Final Rule on F-1/J-1 Duration of Status

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2026-07-17/pdf/2026-14439.pdf>

Title: *Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure for Nonimmigrant Academic Students and Exchange Visitors*

Overview

A [final rule](#) published by the Department of Homeland Security on July 17 represents a major change to U.S. immigration procedures for international students and exchange visitors in F and J immigration status. It ends the **Duration of Status (D/S)** system for F and J nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors and their dependents (including J research scholars) which allowed these individuals to remain in the U.S. for the time they followed a set of rules necessary for “maintaining status”. The new rule replaces the D/S system with a fixed admission period that will require periodic DHS approval to remain in the United States beyond the initial authorized stay.

Effective Date:

The final rule takes effect September 15, 2026, and applies to:

- Individuals who enter the United States in F or J status on or after September 15, 2026, and
- Individuals who are already in the United States, even if their current Form I-94 reflects "D/S" (Duration of Status); however, a transition period will apply to students who entered with D/S and who do not leave the U.S.

Anticipated Challenges:

Under the final rule schools and exchange visitor programs should anticipate:

- Increased student and exchange visitor confusion and workload due to the new USCIS filing requirement
- Higher costs and processing delays for students and exchange visitors (filing fees, biometrics, possible interviews, possible legal representation)
- Increased unintentional violations of status
- Issues related to I-9 compliance due to changing individual work expiration dates and delays in extension processing

Key Changes:

- **Fixed Admission:** Limits periods of stay to the time listed on the immigration document issued by the school up to a maximum of four years, with the possibility of requesting an extension, and reduces the F-1 grace period from 60 days to 30

days, aligning it with the current J-1 grace period

- **Program change restrictions:**
 - Prevents students below the graduate level from changing their major or transferring to another school during their first academic year
 - Prohibits graduate students from changing programs at any point during their program of study
 - Prohibits all F and J students from pursuing another program at the same or a lower educational level after completing one degree
- **Formal Extension of Stay:** Requires students and exchange visitors seeking additional time for program completion or who wish to change program to either:
 - File an extension of stay application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), including the required form and fee (currently \$420) OR
 - Leave the U.S. and re-enter (port of entry official will determine eligibility to re-enter and new expiration date)
- **Increased Consequences for Overstays:** Under the fixed-period system:
 - Individuals who remain beyond their authorized stay may begin accruing **unlawful presence**.
 - Unlawful presence can lead to future inadmissibility consequences affecting visas, admission, or adjustment-of-status applications.
- **Transition Provisions:** Provides a transition period for students/scholars in F/J status on the effective date of the new rule to remain until the end of the current program or November 14, 2030, whichever is sooner. Students who remain in the current program and do not leave the U.S. would need to apply for an extension before that date. Students who leave while still in the program will be subject to the fixed admission procedures upon re-entry.

Impact:

These are significant changes. F and J students and scholars will need to pay greater attention to understand the effects on their individual situation and to comply with new rules governing their lawful status in the U.S. Human Resources, the Office of Academic Personnel, departments and individuals will need to track work eligibility. I-9 compliance will become more confusing and time-consuming due to changing expiration dates and the requirement to confirm that extension applications have been filed in a timely fashion to allow continued employment.

Ambiguities in the wording of the new regulation in addition to clauses which allow DHS to delay implementation of all or part of the rule make the effects even more difficult to interpret and make it even more difficult to advise individuals and the University community of the exact impact. The ISSS unit of GEO has prepared detailed explanations of rule changes as they are currently known for all F and J students and scholars who are impacted and has emailed that information to the individuals in those groups.

Further Information:

- Federal Register:
 - *PDF Version:* <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2026-07-17/pdf/2026-14439.pdf>
 - *Online version:* <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-14439>
- Student and Exchange Visitor Program References:
 - **SEVP:** [Elimination of Duration of Status Quick Facts](#)
 - **SEVP:** [Elimination of Duration of Status Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - **SEVP:** [Stakeholder webinar](#) on Monday, Aug. 31, 2026, from 2 to 3 p.m.
 - **ICE:** [Duration of Status Regulatory Impact Analysis \(RIA\)](#)