I-20 Reinstatement – Information and Process

**Definition:**
Failure to maintain proper F-1 status results in the termination of your I-20. International students in this situation should apply for reinstatement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

**Examples**
A student may fall “out of status” by:
- Failure to maintain full-time enrollment during required terms (without a valid exception as defined by DHS regulations)
- Failure to complete the I-20 transfer procedure on time when changing schools or degree programs
- Failure to apply for an extension of program before the I-20 expires

**Who Qualifies?**
A non-immigrant alien who has failed to maintain status may apply for reinstatement to lawful status at the discretion of DHS, but only under limited conditions specified by federal regulations. An application for reinstatement may be considered if the following can be documented:

- You have not been out of status for more than 5 months
- You do not have a record of repeat violations
- You are pursuing, or will be pursuing in the next available term, a full course of study
- You are not engaged in unauthorized employment
- You are not deportable on any grounds other than the status violation
- The status violation was beyond your control
- You failed to submit a Program Extension before your I-20 expiration
- You failed to seek approval for below full-time enrollment

**Pending Reinstatement**
You are not in legal F-1 status again until your application for reinstatement is approved. Until then, you are in “pending status” once your petition for reinstatement has been filed and received by USCIS. *Pending status* is better than *out of status*. Filing for reinstatement does not imply or guarantee approval.

- **School attendance**: An applicant for reinstatement to F-1 status must maintain full-time academic enrollment while the application is pending.
- **Employment benefits**: No F-1 employment benefits are available until the reinstatement is approved.
- **Drivers License**: The Dept. of Driver Services (DDS) conducts a secondary verification process when non-U.S. citizens apply for or renew their driver’s licenses. If an individual is out of status (such as a terminated I-20), this process will result in a denial. Approval is possible again when normal status is approved.
Travel
An alternative to applying for reinstatement in the U.S., is to depart and re-enter the U.S. using a new “initial attendance” I-20. Please note that this type of travel will restrict your eligibility for practical training. Please consult with ISSO to discuss this option.

How to Apply
Please make an appointment with the ISSO and bring the following documents with you to your appointment:

1. $300* check or money order; payable to Department of Homeland Security (*current; subject to change)
   (On Part 2, Question #1a, write "reinstatement to F-1 student status; on Part 3, Question #1, write "D/S")
3. All previously issued I-20s
4. I-94 card
5. passport, with visa
6. proof of financial support
7. dependent’s documentation: passport, I-94, I-20 (if applicable)
8. personal letter explaining your situation and the basis of your request for reinstatement
9. copy of academic transcripts (unofficial copies are acceptable)
10. If you have been out of status more than 5 months, a receipt for the payment of a new SEVIS Fee ($200) is required. [www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/)

Copies of your original documents will be made at your appointment and a new I-20 for Reinstatement will be issued.

Suggestions for Personal Letter
A strong persuasive letter but succinct letter should clearly establish why you are out of status by stating the specific violation and the reason(s). State how failure to receive reinstatement approval will affect you; state that you are currently pursuing or intending to pursue a full course of study and specifically request that the Department of Homeland Security reinstate you to “active” F-1 status. Be sure to state that you have not violated any other immigration regulations and have not been employed without proper authorization. If that is not the case, leave this out; don’t lie about it.

Processing the Reinstatement
Once your application is complete and has been reviewed by ISSO, it will be submitted to the Vermont Service Center for adjudication. In a few weeks you will receive a “Notice of Action” from the Service Center. This notice informs and documents for you that the Service Center has received your application; it does not mean that the application has been approved.

Read it carefully. If the Service Center is requesting further information, gather what is asked for and contact ISSO. Processing time is unpredictable and may take a few months to reach completion. You must be attending school full time and stay in compliance with all F-1 student regulations. Failure to do so can result in denial of your reinstatement. When you receive your final adjudication (outcome) letter, you must inform the ISSO so that your immigration (SEVIS) records can be adjusted accordingly.