

# International Student Services

Soka University of America’s student body is currently composed of about 50% international students. International applicants complete the same application and are evaluated by the same criteria as U.S. citizens. All instruction at Soka University of America is given in English, unless otherwise noted.

Soka University of America provides services regarding regulatory topics and will verify a student’s status, issue an I-20 form as well as other documents needed to obtain an F-1 student visa. Staff members provide regulatory information related to non-immigrant status and have been designated by the university as Designated School Officials (DSO). As the DSO, OISS staff provide documentation and support services to F-1 students. The Office of International Student Services (OISS) is available to assist international students in maintaining their legal non-immigrant F-1 Student status while here in the U.S. OISS is available to assist students individually in their transition to life at Soka University of America and the United States.

OISS is the source of information regarding the regulations and policies of the U.S. government as they pertain to international students. Any international student with questions regarding his or her F-1 Student status should contact OISS for counseling on their specific situation. OISS will address questions related to employment, maintaining valid status, obtaining a new visa or Form I-20 and related topics.

It is the responsibility of each student to maintain his or her valid status in the U.S. Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) records of international students are maintained through OISS in order to provide information to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on each student as required by law.

Should an international student misplace their original I-20 form while outside the U.S., a replacement I-20 form can be reissued by the Office of International Student Services.

Soka University of America assumes no responsibility for the adverse consequences regarding an applicant’s U.S. immigration status that may result from fulfillment of our study abroad requirement. Please view the Internship/Study Abroad section of this catalog for more detailed information.

## Registration Requirements

International students must be registered for a full course of study during Fall and Spring semesters.

For Undergraduate students - A full course of study is 12 units

For Graduate students – A full course of study is 9 units

For Extended Bridge Program students - A full course of study is 21 contact hours

For Summer Bridge Program students – A full course of study is 21 contact hours

International students who plan to be enrolled for less than full-time must submit the Reduced Course Load (RCL) form to OISS prior to dropping below full-time. There are only a few exceptions to the full-time enrollment requirement for the Fall and Spring semesters as listed below.

Academic Difficulty RCL (once per degree level)

Medical RCL (must provide a letter from a medical doctor)

Final Semester RCL (once per degree program)

Each exception has its own criteria, which is explained during the International New Student Orientation workshop each August.

\*Do not drop any classes that will make you fall below full-time enrollment unless you have spoken with an academic advisor and your RCL has been approved by OISS. Students who drop below full-time enrollment without the proper pre-authorization from OISS will be considered out of status.

## Practical Training

### Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a training or work benefit for students with F-1 visa status. It is designed to provide students with an opportunity to gain actual experience in their chosen profession for a maximum of one year, before or after completing a degree program. OPT is approved by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Please set up an appointment with OISS if interested in applying for OPT.

### Curricular Practical Training

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of off-campus work authorization that allows F-1 students to participate in paid or unpaid off-campus academic internships, fieldwork or practicums during their degree program and where the internship must be considered an integral part of a student's degree program. An international student on an F-1 visa may apply for CPT after completing their first full academic year at Soka. Interested students should contact Career Services.

## Program Extension

A program extension must be filed at least 3 weeks BEFORE the I-20 expiration date. It is the student's responsibility to check the Program Completion Date on their I-20 form and request an extension on their I-20 form in a timely manner. OISS's processing time for program extensions on the I-20 form is 2 weeks. If the Program Completion Date has already passed, an extension is not possible.

Eligibility requirements for a delay in completion of a program must be due to one of the following reasons:

- Compelling academic reason (change of Concentration, change in Capstone topic, unexpected research problems, etc.)
- Compelling medical reason (documentation is required from a U.S. licensed medical physician)

A student must have sufficient funds to cover the additional time needed to complete program requirements.

Make an appointment with the OISS at least 3 weeks before the expiration date of the I-20 form.

If you have any questions regarding the information listed in this section, please feel free to visit OISS or contact us at the information below.

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