

# Advising International Students

## For questions or more Information:

[www.winona.edu/student-life/support/international-services](http://www.winona.edu/student-life/support/international-services)

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## Types of International Students at WSU:

- **Degree seeking** – Students pursuing a WSU degree; may start at WSU or transfer in
- **Visiting or Exchange** – Attend for 1–2 semesters and transfer WSU credits back to their home university

## International Student Requirements:

Most international students study on an **F-1 visa** and must meet these requirements to maintain legal status:

- Must remain enrolled full-time - **12 credits** (undergraduate) or **6 credits** (graduate)
- At least **9 credits must be in-person** (undergraduate) or at least **3 credits in-person** (graduate)
- Hybrid courses with 25% or more in-person instruction count as in-person courses
- Dropping below full-time requires academic advisor and DSO approval via the [Reduced Course Load Form](#)
- A Reduced Course Load may be approved for: first-term academic difficulties, final semester, medical issues
- An online course cannot be taken as the single, final class toward program completion
- Changes to major, minor, or program length require DSO approval (immigration update required)
- Must receive **DSO authorization before starting an off-campus internship or practicum** (paid or unpaid)
- May study abroad, but must meet with DSO to adjust immigration documentation
- Students who are suspended must **leave the U.S.**

## Employment & Internships

- **On-Campus work** is allowed **up to 20 hours/week** during the semester and up to **40 hours/week** during breaks/summer. International Students are not eligible for work-study.
- **Off-Campus work** is only allowed when authorized. Visiting/exchange students are not eligible.
  - [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) - Work authorization for an internship or practicum
    - Must be required for the degree or tied to a course within the major department
    - Approved on a semester basis with confirmed course registration
    - Requires prior academic advisor and DSO approval via the [CPT Request Form](#)
    - Approval requires an official job offer letter for a position relating to the major
  - [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#) - Work authorization for 1 year of employment post-graduation. The job must be directly related to the student's major. STEM majors can extend 2 additional years.

## Important Considerations:

- **Academic Background:** International students meet WSU admission and language proficiency requirements. They are usually strong performers at home but may not be familiar with US classroom norms or expectations.
- **U.S. Education System:** Concepts such as electives, general education requirements, core curriculum, and declaring a major may be unfamiliar. In some countries, there is a set curriculum; students cannot select courses. Students may not have flexibility to change majors which could be required by a sponsor or parents.
- **Academic Integrity:** Standards for cheating and plagiarism vary by culture. Sharing work or copying expert sources may not be considered cheating in a student's culture, leading to confusion about U.S. academic rules.
- **Cultural Adjustment:** Students are adjusting to WSU and life in a new culture; they may experience culture shock related to food, health, weather, social norms and communication. They are far from family support!
- **Financial factors:** Unexpected issues such as currency exchange rate changes or family financial disruptions can affect tuition payment and registration timing.
- **Graduation:** Post-graduation options are limited and time-sensitive. Students can apply for OPT, apply for a graduate program, transfer to another institution, or depart the U.S. within 60 days. There is less flexibility with incompletes or delayed coursework, and students should contact ISSS immediately if graduation plans change.

## Tips for Advising International Students:

A great resource: [Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education](#) (S. Shapiro, R. Farrelly, Z. Tomas)

- International students may need more direct advising during their first semester. At this stage they will still be learning about the differences in educational systems, including how to choose and register for courses.
- In some countries, grades are based solely on a final exam. Help students understand expectations around the grading system, attendance, assignment submission, and policies like academic warning and suspension.
- Visiting/exchange students will not have a DARS. Advisors will need to look at the student's international transcript or course syllabus to determine if the student has the prerequisites needed.
- Consider communication style. Limit or explain acronyms, abbreviations, jargon, colloquialisms, and idioms. Use visual aids when possible. Clearly articulate expectations, ask clarifying questions, and check for understanding.
- Cultural differences may cause communication challenges. Long silences, shaking the head for no reason, or repetition can signal confusion. Asking the student to explain their understanding can verify comprehension.

### Helpful Acronyms:

- **CPT** - Curricular Practical Training
- **OPT** - Optional Practical Training
- **DSO** – Designated School Official  
*-University staff member authorized to manage F-1 records*
- **F-1:** The primary student visa for studying in the U.S.
- **SEVIS** – Student & Exchange Visitor Information System  
*-U.S. government system that tracks international students*
- **SEVP** – Student & Exchange Visitor Program  
*-WSU is a SEVP-certified school*

### Did you know?

- WSU has been accepting international students for over 100 years, since 1913!
- Based on average GPA, international students perform as well as their domestic peers.
- International students pay to attend WSU, just like domestic students.
- You can check the [NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool](#) to see the financial contribution international students make to Minnesota and Winona.