

Date & Time	August 10, 2026, 3:00 PM – Session recorded
Event	ISSS Virtual Briefing: Federal Changes Impacting International Students in F and J Status
Format	Virtual (Zoom) — Recording and slides PDF to be shared with attendees
Audience	Graduate School faculty, staff, and administrators
Note	A morning session covered identical content; this afternoon session was held to reach a broader faculty and staff audience

Presenters

Name	Title / Role
Dr. Fuhui Tong	Associate Provost & Dean, Graduate and Professional School (Opening Remarks)
Samantha Clement	Director, International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS)
Dr. Holly Hudson	Associate VP for Global Engagement & Senior International Officer
Jie Fan (Jay Fan)	Associate Director, ISSS
Amanda Brinlee	Sr. Associate Director, ISSS; Principal Designated School Official (F Program); Responsible Officer (J Program) — Lead Presenter

Background

On July 17, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a Final Rule introducing significant changes to F-1 and J-1 student immigration regulations. The rule takes effect September 15, 2026. This briefing was convened to inform Graduate School faculty and staff of the key changes and their impact on international graduate students.

DHS Rationale (as stated in the rule): Due to the increase in F and J student enrollment, DHS is implementing additional checkpoints to review and confirm that these individuals are maintaining their immigration status. This information is provided for general informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice.

Key Terms & Definitions

Term	Definition
	Document issued by ISSS. Contains degree level, program, and program end date. Master's: typically, 3 years. PhD: typically, 7 years.
	Issued by the Department of State (at embassy/consulate in home country). A travel document required to enter the U.S. May expire while the student is inside the U.S.

Term	Definition
	Issued by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at the port of entry. Records of immigration status and length of stay. Currently shows “D/S” (Duration of Status) for F/J students.
Duration of Status (D/S)	Current practice: as long as the student maintains their status, they can remain in the U.S. until the program end date on their I-20/DS-2019.
	New fixed expiration date on the I-94 replacing D/S. Will equal the I-20/DS-2019 end date + grace period OR 4 years + grace period, whichever is shorter.
	Time after program completion before the next action is required. F students: 60 days (reduced to 30 for new entrants after 9/15/26). J students: 30 days.
	Application filed with USCIS to extend the Admit Until Date beyond the initial period.
	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System — government database used by ISSS to process and monitor students.

Important Dates

Date	Milestone
July 17, 2026	Final Rule published (2026-14439.pdf, 156 pages)
September 4, 2026	Last day for Graduate School to receive MDD paperwork to change degree level, effective this fall
September 14, 2026	Last day a student can enter the U.S. under Duration of Status (D/S) rules
September 15, 2026	Rule takes full effect — Fixed Admission Period and Academic Objective Limitations apply to all F/J entries
By September 15, 2026	Mandatory Homebase module must be completed by all F/J students (registration hold applied if not completed)
Before March 18, 2027	Students who file for OPT before this date do not need to separately file an AUD extension (per the rule)
September 15, 2030	Maximum 4-year period from effective date (Actual End Date)
November 14, 2030	F student AUD: Actual End Date + 60 days
October 15, 2030	J student AUD: Actual End Date + 30 days

Summary of Key Changes

Change 1 — Fixed Admission Period (Replacing Duration of Status)

Effective September 15, 2026, all F and J students will be issued a fixed Admit Until Date (AUD) on their I-94 in place of the current Duration of Status (D/S) designation.

- Master’s students (3-year I-20): AUD = program end date + grace period.
- PhD students (7-year I-20): AUD capped at 4 years + grace period.
- F students: grace period reduced from 60 to 30 days for new entrants after September 15, 2026.

- J students: 30-day grace period (unchanged).
- Students already inside the U.S.: Their I-94 still shows D/S, but they will have an effective AUD equal to their program end date OR 4 years from September 15, whichever is shorter. F students inside the U.S. retain the 60-day grace period.
- Travel trigger: Students entering the U.S. on or after September 15, 2026, will be subject to the fixed AUD immediately upon re-entry.
- Students now have at least two dates to monitor: the program end date on the I-20 and the Admit Until Date on the I-94.

Change 2 — Extension of Stay Process

Students who need to extend beyond their AUD must now file an Extension of Stay (EOS) directly with USCIS or extend by travel (exit the U.S., renew visa if needed, and receive a new I-94 upon re-entry). ISSS no longer has the authority to extend the AUD.

- USCIS filing fee: Approximately \$420. No premium/expedited processing is available.
- Processing time: Several months. Students must plan well in advance.
- ISSS role: ISSS may recommend a student for the extension process. The student then submits directly to USCIS with required fees and documentation.
- USCIS may require biometrics exams, interviews, proof of financial support, and documentation of a valid reason to extend.
- Compelling academic reasons per the rule: unexpected research problems (advisor change, funding delays, etc.), documented illness, or circumstances beyond the student's control. Note: Change of major at the graduate level is NOT a compelling reason.
- Academic probation, failed courses, or failure to demonstrate academic progress may result in a denied extension of application.
- If denied: student loses status and may begin accruing unlawful presence; must leave the U.S. immediately; legal counsel is required.
- While extension is pending, Students may continue to enroll. Work authorization may continue for up to 240 days; they must stop working after 240 days.
- No cap on the number of extension requests; students must demonstrate academic need each time. No required recurring schedule — extensions are based on the specific request.

Change 3 — Academic Objective Limitations

Effective September 15, 2026, F-1 and J-1 students face new restrictions on changing academic programs or degree levels. These restrictions apply to changes occurring on or after September 15, 2026.

Undergraduate Students:

- Cannot transfer schools or change major until completing one full academic year in F status.
- May only complete one bachelor's degree; cannot move to a lower degree level.
- May move upward (bachelor's to master's).

Graduate Students:

- Cannot transfer to a different institution “unless an exception is authorized by SEVP for extenuating circumstances”.
- Cannot change major or degree level to a lower level (e.g., PhD to master's as primary program).
- Cannot start additional programs at the same level after entering a program.
- Concurrent degrees entered simultaneously (e.g., JD + MBA): permitted.
- Earning a master's en route to a PhD (listed as secondary on I-20): permitted.
- Changing PhD to master's as primary curriculum after September 15: NOT permitted from an immigration standpoint — student may be able to earn the degree, but will lose F-1/J-1 status, cannot work in the U.S., and cannot pursue OPT or STEM.

Additional Clarifications:

- Changes made through September 14, 2026, carry no immigration consequences.
- A department updating a program's CIP code is NOT considered a change of major.
- Thesis to non-thesis at the same level with the same CIP: generally permitted.
- If a faculty advisor transfers to another institution: students would NOT be permitted to transfer with the faculty member “unless an exception is authorized by SEVP for extenuating circumstances”.
- Certificate programs: not addressed in the final rule; ISSS is awaiting DHS guidance.
- Academic change is distinct from immigration's consequence: the University may still permit an academic change, but the immigration consequence may result in loss of status.

Groups Most Impacted

- Doctoral students in programs with typical time-to-degree exceeding 4 years. University median is 6.2 years without a prior master's degree.
- Students who need to master out of a PhD program — immigration status implications must be carefully considered.
- Students with specialized programs involving certificates or dual credentials (e.g., dentistry).
- Students who change research direction, advisor, or experience research-related delays.
- Students from countries with fewer visa options — potentially slower processing and higher denial risk.
- Neurodiverse students who may require additional academic flexibility.
- Students applying for OPT and STEM extensions — additional applications and fees are now required.

Next Steps — ISSS Actions

- Congressional Review: Congress has 60 days to negate the rule. No information received as of August 10, 2026; planning proceeds with full implementation on September 15.
- Homepage Module: ISSS is completing a mandatory online orientation module for all F/J students, organized into three audience-specific groups. Must be completed by September 15 or a registration hold will be applied. Module will also be made available to faculty and staff. Completion unlocks access to student webinar sign-up links.
- Student Webinar Sessions: Dates and times not yet finalized. Students gain access after completing the Homepage module.
- J-1 Research Scholar Session: A dedicated session on impacts to J-1 research scholars is scheduled for Wednesday, August 12, 2026. Contact ISSS to receive an invitation or recording.
- Proactive Student Outreach: ISSS will encourage all students to review their immigration documents and make any necessary changes (program, degree level) before September 15.
- Offer Letter / Application Portal Language: ISSS is exploring verbiage options for offer letters. The Graduate School is already adding language to the application portal to inform prospective students of these changes.
- Website and Portal Updates: ISSS will continue updating the website, portal, and final rule page as additional guidance is received from DHS, CBP, and the Department of State.
- This briefing is the first in a series. Additional webinars will be scheduled and communicated.

Resources

Resource	Details
Final Rule (Official)	<u>Publication No. 2026-14439.pdf</u> — Published July 17, 2026 (156 pages)
ISSS Final Rule D/S Page	Duration of Status Final Rule Global Engagement
SEVP Quick Facts & FAQs	Final Rule: Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure Quick Facts Study in the States Final Rule: Establishing a Fixed Time Period of Admission and an Extension of Stay Procedure FAQ Study in the States
Immigration Attorney Resources	<u>List of immigration attorneys and legal resources</u> — available on ISSS website
Contact ISSS	Email or Teams message: Samantha Clement, Jie Fan, or Amanda Brinlee