



WESTCLIFF
UNIVERSITY
Educate. Inspire. Empower.



F-1 International Student Handbook 2019-2020



WELCOME TO WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY!

Congratulations! You have been accepted to Westcliff University and have been granted an F-1 visa. The decision for you to pursue your education at Westcliff University is the first step in embarking on a new adventure here in the United States and pursuing your academic and professional goals. Our International Affairs Department is here to support you through your education journey by providing personalized support and resources to ensure you succeed in your chosen program.

A wonderful feature about Westcliff University is that it is located in beautiful Southern California, nestled in a diverse community that we are very proud to call home.

Westcliff University is headquartered in Irvine, California. Irvine is a part of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Irvine is about 1 hour south of Hollywood, 15 minutes east of the Pacific Ocean, 90 minutes southwest of the Big Bear Ski Resort (elevation – 8,805 feet), and 90 minutes north of San Diego and Mexico. It is also about 4 hours west of Las Vegas. We also have a campus in Cerritos, California, which is about 40 minutes north of Irvine.

Irvine was chosen in 2008 by CNNMoney.com as the fourth best place to live in the United States. In 2012, it was ranked sixth nationally. In September 2011, BusinessWeek magazine listed Irvine as the fifth best city in the United States. Irvine consistently ranks as the safest city in America with a population over 100,000. In 2014, Irvine was named the best-run city in the U.S. by 24/7 Wall Street. Irvine is home to many corporations, particularly in the technology and semiconductor sectors.

What distinguishes the educational experience at Westcliff University in the marketplace is its relevant practicality. Our professors are very active in the industries about which they teach and are exceptionally well respected by both their professional and academic peers. We are a diverse university with over 70 countries represented by our student population. We are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all of our students during their program.

We look forward to meeting and talking with you on our campus in the months ahead. In the meanwhile, if you should have any questions or comments regarding international student affairs, you are welcome to contact our International Affairs Team at intlservices@westcliff.edu.

Warm regards,

The International Affairs Department

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Coming to Westcliff University	4
Notice of Travel Plans	4
Preparing For U.S. Arrival	4
Immigration Process at the U.S. Port of Entry	5
Maintaining Valid F-1 Status After the student Arrives in the U.S.	6
Work Authorization and Volunteering	9
Program Withdrawal	14
Readmission and Reinstatement	16
Departure Back to Home Country	16
Visa Expiration/CANCELLATION/Renewal	16
References, Informational Websites, and Forms	17
Glossary	18

COMING TO WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY

Moving to a new country can be very exciting and a life-learning experience. Adjusting to a new culture, such as our American culture, may take some time and patience. Some of the initial challenges international students encounter with the American culture may start with the clothing style, and mannerisms between people. However, this just represents the differences between cultures and the rich learning experience students will acquire when living abroad.

As students become familiar with the new culture and surroundings, students will notice the commonalities and difference between their culture and the U.S. Students are highly encouraged to be aware of the cultural customs and nuances, but still maintain their own standards and values that reflect who they are as their own unique individual.

Westcliff University's International Affairs and Student Services team are here to help international students acclimate with orientations, workshops, and events that can help with understanding life and culture at Westcliff University.

International Affairs: intlservices@westcliff.edu

Student Services: studentservices@westcliff.edu

NOTICE OF TRAVEL PLANS

Students who have been approved for a student visa must make their travel arrangements in advance to be able to report to Westcliff University within 30 days of the start date. Students' itinerary should be emailed to the admissions representative and staff from the Department of International Affairs to advise the University when the student plans to arrive in the U.S.

PREPARING FOR U.S. ARRIVAL

There are many things to prepare before one embarks in a journey to a new country. It can be very cumbersome trying to figure out what to pack to move overseas. The following are a few required and recommended items:

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS TO CARRY ON THE PLANE

Students are highly recommended to carry their immigration documents on the plane with them. Please note students should not put any immigration documents in their checked luggage because they will be presenting these documents to a Customs and Border Patrol officer (CBP) when they enter into the U.S.

- Form I-20
- Valid Passport
- F-1 student visa
- Admissions acceptance letter
- Receipt of SEVIS I-901 fee
- Financial documents
- Other documents such as health and immunization records, transcripts, diplomas, certificates

HEALTH INSURANCE

Medical accidents and injuries can unexpectedly happen and medical expenses can get very costly in the United States. Westcliff University strongly recommends that all students are covered by a health insurance plan during the student's educational period at the school.

What is health insurance?

Health insurance protects students by decreasing the cost of medical charges students may encounter during the period away from their home country.

What can health insurance can do for international students?

Medical costs can get expensive especially during a time of medical emergency. A sound health insurance plan can provide coverage of costly medical expenses such as doctor appointments, accident costs, prescription costs, injuries, etc.

Where can I find affordable health insurance?

There are a variety of health insurance agencies and plans that can provide international students with benefits according to their own needs. International students have the option of choosing health insurance plans that is recommended by Westcliff University or through other agencies.

All students must complete Westcliff University's health insurance form before the first day of class. Westcliff University is not liable for any incurred medical cost, loss of health insurance premiums for not following the insurance policy guideline, or loss of academic privileges due to inaccurately completed waivers.

Please refer below for optional (third party) health insurance plans:

Option 1:

ISO Insurance – International Student Organization (multilingual services)

https://www.isoa.org/westcliff_university

(800) 244-1180

Option 2:

International Student Insurance

<http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/schools/westcliff-university.php>

(904) 758-4391

IMMIGRATION PROCESS AT THE U.S. PORT OF ENTRY

As mentioned above, students must be prepared to show the following documents to CBP upon arrival to the U.S. port of entry: I-20, passport, F-1 student visa, financial documents, admissions acceptance letter, and I-901 receipt of SEVIS fee.

Students who travel without all immigration documents needed to enter the U.S. might be denied of entry into the U.S. It will be up to the discretion of the immigration officer at the port of entry to allow students entrance into the U.S.

Students who enter in the U.S. by land will receive a paper form of the I-94. The I-94 card records the students' arrival and departure from the U.S.

Students who enter in the U.S. by air or sea will have their arrival recorded electronically and their I-94 can be printed from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>.

Canadian Citizens

Students who are Canadian citizens do not need to apply for a visa at a U.S. Consulate, but must enter the U.S. in F-1 status. Although Canadian citizens do not need visas to study or participate in an exchange program in the U.S., Canadian students do need to obtain an I-20 from the university, school or exchange program they plan to

attend. Students who are Canadian must have the following documents to enter into the U.S: Canadian passport, original I-20, I-901 SEVIS fee payment, financial documents, and proof of ties to Canada.

I-515A form

If a student arrives at the port of entry and is granted entry to the U.S. with insufficient documentation, the student will receive an I-515A Form at the time of entry in order to stay in the U.S. for 30 days. Students who receive an I-515A form must report to the Department of International Affairs to meet with an international student advisor.

Biometric Procedure

At the port of entry, students should expect to experience the biometric procedure: digital finger scanning and photograph.

UPON ARRIVAL

Students should schedule arrival in the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to the first day of classes as identified on the student's I-20 form. Students are also required to report to the Designated School Official (DSO) at Westcliff University no later than three (3) days after their arrival. Students need to bring to this initial meeting, their passport, I-94 and I-20.

WHAT IS A DSO?

According to Study in the States, all SEVP-certified schools are required to have Designated School Officials (DSO) to communicate with SEVP, update F-1 student record, and help students maintain your student status by providing advice, or helping your fill out important forms. While benefits like employment or driving are available to students in the United States, all F-1 students need authorization from their DSO before enjoying them. DSO's can assist with the following:

- Working in the United States
- Applying for a driver's license
- Applying for a Social Security number
- Changing your major, program, or degree level
- Changing your education level
- Transferring to a new school
- Being absent from classes
- Taking a vacation
- Traveling outside the United States
- Moving to a new address
- Changing your name
- Requesting a program extension

To contact a DSO at Westcliff University, please email intlservices@westcliff.edu.

MAINTAINING VALID F-1 STATUS AFTER THE STUDENT ARRIVES IN THE U.S.

It is imperative for an F-1 student to maintain his or her status while in the United States. Failure to maintain the terms and conditions of nonimmigrant status is a ground for removal from the United States (deportation) under INA § 237(a)(1)(C)(i). Each student receiving an I-20 will receive an 11-digit SEVIS Identification number that is maintained as part of his/her record. Updates are made to the student's record on a regular basis in order to maintain their status accurately.

According to NAFSA Adviser's Manual 360, the following is a quick reference checklist to maintain status:

To maintain F-1 status, a student must:

- ❑ Report to the DSO to have his or her SEVIS record Registered in SEVIS in a timely manner. In order to have a SEVIS record registered, student must submit report to the DSO upon arrival and submit their U.S. address.
- ❑ For the first entry for initial school attendance, the school listed on the visa and on the I-20 must be the same, and that is the school the student must intend to attend.
- ❑ Pursue a "full course of study" at the school listed on the currently valid Form I-20 during every academic session or semester. At Westcliff University, an undergraduate student must take twelve (12) credit hours per term and a graduate student must take six (6) credits per term, to be considered a full-time student. F-1 students are required to maintain a full-time schedule to be considered "in status" for immigration purposes. If a student drops below a full course of study without prior approval, h/she is considered to be "out of status." U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) require that the student be enrolled full-time. A student can be approved to take fewer credits if approved under the conditions for a Reduce Course Load (RCL), which is also defined in this handbook.
- ❑ Make normal academic progress towards completing the course of study, by completing studies before the expiration of the program completion date on Form I-20.
- ❑ Keep Form I-20 valid by following proper procedures for extension of stay, change in educational levels or programs of study, transfer of schools.
- ❑ Abide by the F-1 grace period rules. See 3.E.1 F-1 Duration of Status (D/S) and grace periods.
- ❑ Report a change of address to the DSO within 10 days of the change, so that SEVIS can be updated.
- ❑ Only work with proper work authorization (i.e., on-campus employment, off-campus employment with EAD, Curricular Practical Training (CPT), Optional Practical Training (OPT), etc.)
- ❑ Abide by the aggregate unemployment rules while on post-completion OPT. A student should also keep his or her passport valid. The student's passport should be valid for at least 6-months in the future. The student's country's consulate or embassy can help extend his/her passport if needed. The student should carry a color copy of his/her passport with them along with his/her I-94 card for identification purposes.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

All students must abide by the attendance policy to ensure that they will continue to make normal academic progress within their courses and throughout the program. In order to fulfill the attendance requirements, students are required to attend at least 75% of the course unless otherwise specified in the syllabus.

Absences: In order to achieve maximum benefit from educational activities, Westcliff University expects regular attendance from all students. Notices of absences that have not been received or approved by Administration are considered unexcused absences. Students are limited to one excused absence per course.

Students who have three consecutive unexcused absences for the first three weeks of instruction will have their access on the Global Academic Portal (GAP) suspended and will not be allowed to continue in the course. Non-attendance does not constitute a drop or withdraw but will result in the suspension of the student's GAP access. Students will also receive a grade "F" or "NP" unless the student formally drops or withdraws from the course. It is the student's responsibility to drop a course and to ensure their schedule is accurate.

Additional details regarding the policy can be found in the Student Catalog.

TRAVEL: VACATION AND U.S. ENTRY

All F-1 students who travel internationally are required to request for a travel endorsement signature on the I-20 by the DSO. Without the travel endorsement signature, F-1 students may run into difficulties with an

immigration officer at the airport when returning back into the U.S. Students will need to complete and submit a digital International Travel Request Form, which can be requested from intltravel_vacation@westcliff.edu.

Prior to traveling internationally, F-1 students must consider the attendance policy and maintaining their I-20 status. Westcliff University has assigned breaks and holidays that will allow students to travel internationally without violating the attendance policy. Additionally, F-1 students can also request to take long vacations. The following section will include further detail on international traveling and vacation.

TRAVELING WHILE SCHOOL IS IN SESSION

F-1 students are highly recommended to travel during University designated holidays and/or University-approved annual vacations. The University can approve international travel during school breaks and/or holiday periods as long as students return before the next term/session begins. Please note that there is a risk to traveling while school is in session as students may be questioned in detail by Custom and Border Protection (CBP) at the port of entry.

Short International Travel Requests. If students plan to leave outside of school breaks/holidays, their requests can only be approved under the condition that they will not fall out of attendance. For this reason, short international travel requests during the term or while school is in session must meet this requirement, and even then will only be granted for extenuating circumstances.

Long International Travel Requests. If travel dates exceed the number of allowed absences and students are unable to maintain attendance, they may need to request for an ‘Authorized Early Withdrawal’ termination. Students will then have 15 days to leave the country and will have the option to request the DSO to reactivate the SEVIS record. It is advised that students requests for reactivation at least 60 days prior to the intended arrival date. Please note that the reactivation of I-20 is up to the discretion of SEVP.

Important Travel Documents. When traveling outside the U.S., international students must carry important travel documents including: (1) Valid Form I-20 with travel signature, (2) Valid passport (within 6 months), (3) Valid visa.

International Travel Request Approval Process. In order to travel internationally, F-1 students must have their request approved by the Student Service Department and the International Affairs Department. Upon approval of the travel request dates, the student will receive an international travel approval email through their Westcliff email address and the DSO will give a travel signature on the second page of their Form I-20.

VACATION

According to [Study in the States](#), “F-1 international students may take the equivalent of one academic term of vacation after completing a full academic year.” In order to be eligible for an annual vacation, [Study in the States](#) also states that F-1 students “must be enrolled in a full-course load of study during all the terms other than your annual vacation.”

During a University-approved annual vacation, F-1 students’ SEVIS I-20 records will remain in ‘active’ F-1 status. They may study part-time, travel internationally, travel within the U.S., and/or do Curricular Practical Training (CPT) (must also be enrolled in the internship course).

Students requesting vacation must review the policy below, as well as complete and submit the digital Vacation Request Form before the deadline date. Students can request the form by contacting

intltravel_vacation@westcliff.edu. Please be sure that any outstanding balance is cleared with the Billing Department before submitting a request.

All requests must be submitted by the deadline, which is a minimum of 3 weeks prior to the vacation request start date. Any submissions after the deadline will not be accepted. Vacation requests will *not* be approved if student is entering or on their *last* term.

F-1 students must meet the following requirements of their respective program level in order to request for vacation time (All credits must be accumulated at Westcliff University, transfer credits and internship courses do not count):

Undergraduate Level

- **Summer:** Undergraduate students must attend at least 2 consecutive sessions at Westcliff University before requesting a vacation.
- **Non-Summer:** Undergraduate students must have been enrolled in a full course of study for at least one academic year (24 credits) at Westcliff University before requesting for a vacation.

Graduate Level:

- **Summer & Non-Summer:** Graduate students must have been enrolled in a full course of study for at least one academic year (18 credits) at Westcliff University before requesting for a vacation.

Upon request before the application deadline and if determined eligible, students may be approved for vacation for *only one full term* and can *only* be granted vacation from the start of a given term:

Fall Term Session 1

Spring Term Session 3

Summer Term Session 5

Any required program courses or concentration courses that are not offered upon returning from vacation will require students to enroll in other courses to maintain a full course load of study.

WORK AUTHORIZATION AND VOLUNTEERING

Any F-1 students working on-campus or off-campus must receive proper approval prior to beginning employment.

- **On-campus employment:** If positions are available, students are eligible to work on-campus part time, which will be limited to twenty (20) hours per week during the academic year.
- **Off-campus employment:** Work authorization must be approved through the International Affairs Department and USCIS. Be aware of employment authorization application procedures, eligibility, deadlines and rules for maintaining status during OPT.

Any employment would be considered a violation the student's F-1 status without proper approval. Consequences include loss of legal immigration status in the U.S., possible deportation, and an impact on future. Therefore, in order to maintain active F-1 status, a student must receive work authorization in order to work in the United States.

F-1 students with permission to work are not required to pay Social Security taxes, but are subject to income tax withholding and must file an income tax return before April 15th of each year. It is important that the student retains his/her W-2 Forms (tax withholding statements from the previous year issued by employers each January). Students will need their W-2 Forms when leaving the country.

INTERNSHIP COURSE REQUIREMENT

All students enrolled in graduate degree programs are required to take an internship course and engage in an internship – as an integral part of the established curriculum of Westcliff University. The internship course allows students the opportunity to gain practical training and real-life experience pertaining to their current program of study and provides students with networking, educational, and career advancement opportunities.

Students are required to complete at least one term of an internship prior to graduation. Students have the option to acquire an internship opportunity either on-campus or off-campus. On-campus part-time internships (20 hours or less) are based on availability and do not require Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Off-campus internships will require CPT authorization for F-1 students. CPT can be paid, or unpaid, and can either be full-time or part-time. We can offer assistance in finding an opportunity through our career services department and we can also guide you through the CPT process.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

Practical training may be authorized to F-1 students who have been lawfully enrolled in a full course load for one full academic year. Students can be authorized for 12 months of practical training and become eligible for another 12 months of practical training. An employment authorization for practical training can be requested if the position is directly related to his or her degree. The different types of practical training are described below:

Curricular Practical Training (CPT): CPT is authorized by the DSO who updates the student's SEVIS record with the student's employment start and end date; employer name and address; whether the authorization is for part-time or full-time CPT; and an explanation of how the employment is integral to the degree.

Optional Practical Training (OPT): OPT is authorized by USCIS. These are the types of OPT:

- Pre-completion OPT
- Standard Post-completion OPT
- STEM extension OPT

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

According to NAFSA Adviser's Manual 360, there is no regulatory limit on either the number of times or the length of time a student may engage in either part-time or full-time CPT. In addition, regulations do not prohibit multiple or concurrent CPT employers. However, F-1 students engaging in an aggregate of 12 months or more of full-time CPT (over 20 hours of work per week) will not be eligible for OPT. Engaging in part-time CPT (less than 20 hours of work per week) does not affect eligibility for post-completion OPT. The use of 12 months of full-time CPT only affects eligibility for optional practical training (OPT) at the same educational level.

Quick Facts of CPT at Westcliff University:

- **Preconditions:** Undergraduate students must have been lawfully enrolled as a full-time student for one full academic year before being eligible for CPT. Graduate students can start CPT immediately if required by the program.
- **Location:** Students may engage in CPT at the employment location specified in the Employee Offer Letter provided to the DSO during the CPT approval process.
- **Duration:** The DSO grants CPT for the duration of one full term (two sessions) in which the students can request to renew their CPT every term.
- **Hours per week:** Part time CPT is considered as 20 hours or less of work per week, while full time CPT is considered anything over 20 hours of work per week. It is between the employer and the student to determine whether the employment is part-time or full-time.

- **Field/level of work:** The internship must be an integral part of the student's established curriculum and be related to the student's major field of study.
- **Offer letter from employer:** The student must have an offer letter of employment signed by the employer describing the details of the student's job and responsibilities.
- **Effect on other work authorization:** Use of full-time CPT for one year or more will affect the student's eligibility for OPT. Use of part-time CPT does not affect eligibility for OPT.
- **Approval process:** The student must submit the required documents (see below) to the DSO for approval. Upon approval, the DSO will update the student's I-20 with CPT authorization. The student cannot begin CPT until the CPT employment start date is recorded in SEVIS. The DSO will also print out the updated Form I-20 reflecting the CPT authorization. The student will need this when completing Form I-9 for the employer. Please note that USCIS approval is not required, and no EAD is issued.
- **Attendance requirement:** Students must continue to maintain attendance and a full course of study in F-1 status during the period of employment. Students must also be enrolled in an internship course for the respective degree program throughout the period of employment. If the student violates the attendance policy, the student may be at risk of having his/her CPT cancelled.

CPT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Undergraduate Degree Level Students. Undergraduate students must have been enrolled in school full-time for at least one academic year (24 credits) and must have maintained attendance with a valid F-1 status. Student eligibility to participate in CPT is subject to the following GPA requirements:

- Students earning a GPA of 2.50 or above are eligible for Full Time or Part Time CPT
- Students earning a GPA of 1.50 – 2.49 are eligible for Part Time CPT only
- Students earning a GPA of 1.49 and below are not eligible for CPT

Graduate Degree Level Students. Student eligibility to participate in CPT is subject to the following GPA requirements:

- Students earning a GPA of 3.00 or above are eligible for Full Time or Part Time CPT
- Students earning a GPA of 2.50 – 2.99 are eligible for Part Time CPT only
- Students earning a GPA of 2.49 and below are not eligible for CPT

DURATION OF CPT AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CPT authorization will only be given for one term (two sessions) if the student applies for CPT from the first session. However, if the student applies for CPT from the second session the CPT authorization will be given for one session. CPT can be renewed every term by submitting a CPT Renewal form.

CPT Internship Course & Requirements

- All coursework is done online
- Internship courses are Pass/No Pass
- One credit per term
- Students are required to answer weekly online discussion questions as a part of attendance on GAP
- Students must receive a 70% or above to pass the class

Note: If a student earns an overall failing grade in their internship course(s) in a given term, then they will be ineligible for CPT in the following term. Ineligible students may re-apply for CPT after one full term.

Students interested in participating in CPT may contact the International Student Advisors at the following emails:

- cpt_masters@westcliff.edu
- cpt_bachelors@westcliff.edu
- cpt_doctorate@westcliff.edu

Please allow between three and five (3-5) business days to process the application.

OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING (OPT)

International students in the U.S. in valid F-1 immigration status are permitted by USCIS to work off-campus in Optional Practical Training (OPT) status both during and after completion of their degree. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization. Rules established by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) govern the implementation of OPT, and all OPT employment requires prior authorization from USCIS and from their school's Department of International Affairs.

PRE-COMPLETION OPT

According to USCIS, students may apply for Pre-Completion OPT after they have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year at a SEVP-certified college, university, conservatory, or seminary. If a student has been authorized to participate in Pre-Completion OPT, the student may work part-time (20 hours or less per week) while school is in session. If there is a school break or a student is approved for an annual vacation the student may work full-time (more than 20 hours per week). For more information, please see section under 'Vacation.'

OPT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

- Employment must be "directly related" to the student's major
- Student must maintain lawful F-1 status
- Student must apply for OPT before completion of all work towards a degree
- Students who have engaged in 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) are not eligible for OPT
- OPT is permitted for up to 12 months full-time in total – part-time OPT (while still in school) reduces available full-time OPT
- If students drop below the required credit load for any other reason, they put themselves out-of-status, which affects their employment and practical training eligibility, and they will need to be reinstated to proper immigration status. Please discuss any course load reduction with the international department.

POST-COMPLETION OPT

F-1 students may apply to participate in Post-Completion OPT after completion of their program of study. To be eligible for Post-Completion OPT, the student must be in lawful full-time F-1 status for one full academic year, must be conditionally approved to graduate on a set program end date, has not accrued 12 months or more of full-time CPT, and must not have previously had OPT for the same degree level. If the student participated in Pre-Completion OPT for the current degree level, USCIS will deduct that amount of time from the authorization period for Post-Completion OPT.

STEM OPT EXTENSION

Certain F-1 students who majored in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) may apply for a 24-month extension of their Post-Completion OPT. To find out more information in applying for STEM OPT Extension, please see USCIS webpage for [Optional Practical Training Extension for STEM Students \(STEM OPT\)](#).

APPLYING FOR OPT

To apply for OPT; students can contact opt@westcliff.edu to inquire about eligibility. If eligible, the DSO will issue and endorse a new I-20 with OPT recommendation. Along with the OPT recommendation I-20, students will need to gather documents required for the specific type of OPT they are applying for. Please check the USCIS website for more information on required documents. Students also do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT. The International Affairs Department can assist in reviewing OPT applications before they are mailed to USCIS. OPT application processing time may take up to 3-4 months, so students are recommended to plan ahead and apply early.

VOLUNTEERING

Students who wish to engage in any ‘volunteer’ work must be sure it would not impact their immigration status. It is a very complex area in which immigration regulations and labor laws intersect. A common misconception between employment and volunteering is that employment is paid and volunteering is unpaid. However, based on U.S. labor laws, there is more to distinguish between employment and volunteering. Unpaid work may still be considered employment that necessitates F-1 off-campus work authorization.

According to the Department of Labor, a volunteer is an “individual who performs hours of service... for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered.”

The Department of Labor considers a number of factors to determine whether an individual is a true volunteer. No single factor is determinative. Below list include the factors:

- Is the entity where the one plans to volunteer a nonprofit organization?
- Is the activity part-time?
- Are the services offered freely and without pressure or coercion?
- Are the services of the kind typically associated with volunteer work?
- Have regular employees been displaced to accommodate the volunteer?
- Does the worker receive (or expect) any benefit from the entity to which it is providing services?

To be considered a volunteer, the work performed by the student must meet the following criteria:

- No expectation of compensation,
- The services provided by the volunteer should not be the same services for which he or she was previously paid and/or expects to be hired and paid for in the future and the volunteer cannot displace a genuine employee;
- Services are performed for a non-profit organization for public service, religious or humanitarian objective. Work for a for-profit entity is considered employment and must be paid. The only exception is made for training programs where the trainee functions are supervised and provides no significant measurable work for the employer. The trainee must not take the place of a paid employee. There is also a difference between volunteer work and unpaid internship.

Volunteering refers to donating time with an organization whose primary purpose is charitable or humanitarian in nature, without remuneration or any other type of compensation (i.e. local homeless shelter, charitable food pantry, etc.). On the other hand, an internship can be paid or unpaid, and must be authorized and related to the student’s major field of study. Please refer back to CPT in the previous section.

PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL

In the event that a student needs to withdraw from the program because h/she wishes to be transferred to another institution or have to return to his/her home country, the student must follow the withdrawal process for his/her specific request. The following section includes the process to withdraw from the program to transfer out or return home.

TRANSFERRING OUT

F-1 students are required to maintain legal status while studying in the U.S. This is also applicable while requesting to transfer out to another SEVP-approved institution. It is important to understand the University's transfer policies and SEVP's regulations as it may affect your status during the transfer process. Students can be transferred out in *active*, *terminated*, or *completed* status.

Students that wish to transfer out must abide by university policies and complete any required documentation as part of the transfer-out process. All F-1 students must be enrolled in a full course load of study or be engaged in OPT until the transfer release date. F-1 students cannot decide to transfer in the middle of a term and immediately stop attending classes. Such action would be a violation of status and, if it occurs, will result in the SEVIS record being terminated. Therefore, any students who stop attending classes prior to the transfer release date will be terminated for "Unauthorized Drop Below Full Course of Study".

Students that have been terminated may search for another institution that will accept their record to be transferred in terminated status, in which case the student must file an application for reinstatement of status with the new school. It is the student's responsibility to confirm with the Transfer-In School that they will accept students in terminated status.

As part of the transfer-out process, the F-1 student will be asked to meet with an advisor from Student Services and International Affairs Department to discuss the transfer out request. The advisor will discuss any concerns leading to the transfer out decision, will recommend any potential options available to support the F-1 student, and will ask for feedback on the student's experience at Westcliff University. Regarding any refund inquiries, please refer to the catalog for the Refund Policy and contact billing@westcliff.edu if you have any questions.

Transfer-Out Student Checklist:

- Make normal progress and be in good academic standing
- Continue to maintain status until transfer release date
- Contact Registrar's Office to ensure your financial account is cleared
- Meet with an advisor from Student Services
- Provide acceptance letter from the Transfer-In School
- Provide transfer form from the Transfer-In School
- Complete Westcliff University's F-1 Transfer and Program Withdrawal Form
- Contact an advisor from the International Affairs Department

AUTHORIZED EARLY WITHDRAWAL

According to [Study in the States](#), F-1 status nonimmigrant students can request for a temporary absence or withdrawal from school due extenuating circumstances such as a family emergency, personal matter or another circumstance that calls for the student to leave the United States prior to their program's completion. Upon approval for a temporary absence or withdrawal from school, the DSO will grant an F-1 student an "[Authorized Early Withdrawal](#)" or a permitted temporary absence from their course of study. The DSO will change the student's I-20 status in SEVIS to 'Terminated' for 'Authorized Early Withdrawal' and student will be permitted a 15-day grace period to depart the United States.

However, please be advised that an F-1 status is based on an international student's full-time enrollment. If any of the following reasons apply, then you will need to submit a request for an 'Authorized Early Withdrawal':

Program Withdrawal, Temporary Absence, and/or Long International Travel. If you are planning to withdraw from the program or will be traveling internationally for an extended period of time due to an emergency (more than the allowed period for international travel), your I-20 record will need to be terminated under 'Authorized Early Withdrawal.' In addition, if you are only leaving temporarily, you will need to take a 'Leave of Absence' from your program at Westcliff University.

Switching to Online Campus. If you plan to continue to study online abroad or and have other means of legally staying in the U.S., you have the option to switch to online courses and take an 'Authorized Early Withdrawal.' Please be sure to complete the 'Change in Program Location' Request Form and 'Change of Status' Form (if applicable).

Joining the Military. If you will be joining the U.S. military or Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program, please be sure to communicate with the International Affairs Department in order to coordinate when you will be leaving for basic training.

Implications of Authorized Early Withdrawal Termination. Upon termination of your SEVIS I-20 record, please note that all F-1 benefits including internship/employment (such as CPT, on-campus employment) will NOT be in effect. Additionally, when approved for an 'Authorized Early Withdrawal', the SEVIS records of your F-2 dependents will also be terminated which means that your F-2 dependents will not be able to remain in the U.S. as long as your I-20 record is in 'terminated' status.

SEVIS TERMINATION PROCESS

In order to request more information about an Authorized Early Withdraw, please contact intlservices@westcliff.edu.

Before Your Departure from the U.S.

(Applicable Only to Temporary Absence, and/or Long International Travel Requests)

We recommend that you receive a travel signature on your most updated I-20. You will need that I-20 with travel signature in order to come back to the US. Please submit the following documents:

- Copy of your valid passport
- Copy of your valid visa
- Copy of your flight schedule
- Your most recent I-20 (original copy only)

However, if you are not able to come to campus to receive a travel signature on your I-20, we will need to send you an updated I-20 with a new travel signature to your location overseas. You can either email us a shipping label or you can purchase a shipping label through eShip Global.

Returning to the U.S. & SEVIS I-20 Reactivation *within 5 Months*

One month before your intended return back to the US, you must complete the “SEVIS I-20 Reactivation Form” and submit to intlservices@westcliff.edu . The approval of the I-20 reactivation will be at SEVP’s discretion. Please note that SEVIS I-20 reactivation will only be possible if you are returning to the US within 5 months from your termination date.

Returning to the U.S. & SEVIS I-20 Reactivation *past 5 Months*

If you are returning back to the U.S. past 5 months, the option to reactivate your SEVIS I-20 record will not be possible. In this case, you will need to apply for a new I-20 with a new SEVIS number.

The effective withdrawal date is determined when all F-1 transfer documents are submitted to the University. Before the full termination process completes, please speak with the Billing Department (billing@westcliff.edu) to check if you have any pending balances or refunds that will need to be settled before your departure. Please note that transcripts will not be released until pending balances are completed. Please see the Westcliff University Tuition Refund policy for additional information related to the return of tuition paid.

READMISSION AND REINSTATEMENT

Students who are dismissed or self-withdraw from the University are able to seek readmission by submitting a Readmission Petition. The readmission process provides an opportunity for students to re-enroll and complete their chosen program. It is important to understand that readmission is different from reinstatement. Readmission is to become readmitted back to the University, whereas reinstatement is to have the SEVIS I-20 record reinstated with USCIS. In the event that the Form I-20 is terminated from a student’s dismissal, the student will also have to file a reinstatement with USCIS after being readmitted into the University. Please refer to the Readmission Petition application for more details or email readmission@westcliff.edu. Students requesting to reinstate their SEVIS record must contact intlservices@westcliff.edu for additional instructions.

DEPARTURE BACK TO HOME COUNTRY

The student has sixty (60) days upon completion of his/her program to leave the United States under his/her F-1 visa. To remain in the U.S., the student will need to re-enroll in a higher program, transfer to another school to receive a new I-20 form, or apply to change his/her visa status.

VISA EXPIRATION/CANCELLATION/RENEWAL

Individuals who were admitted for duration of status (D/S) must depart or extend their visas types according to the regulations governing their visa types. There are serious consequences for nonimmigrants, including students, who violate immigration rules even in minor ways, particularly for those who stay in the U.S. beyond the authorized period of stay.

The U.S. entry visa of any individual who overstays by even one (1) day will be cancelled. This is even if the visa is for multiple entry and is valid many years into the future. These individuals will be unable to obtain a new visa except by applying at a U.S. Consulate in their home country prior to returning to the U.S. F-1 students must extend his or her stay at least 30 days before the expiration of their I-20, or depart no later than 60 days after the completion of his or her education program or after their I-20 expires (see item 5 on the I-20), whichever comes first.

REFERENCES, INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES, AND FORMS

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)	https://www.ice.gov/
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)	https://www.uscis.gov/
Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) & Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)	http://www.ice.gov/sevis/
Student Process Steps: How to Navigate the U.S. Immigration System	http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students
Student Visas: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs	https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student.html
Visa Appointment & Processing Wait Times	https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/wait-times.html/
U.S. Embassy & Consulates	http://www.usembassy.gov/
Nonimmigrant Visa Applications:	https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/forms.html
I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment Tutorial	http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm

WESTCLIFF UNIVERSITY FORMS AND IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Admissions Department	admissions@westcliff.edu
Application for Admissions:	http://www.westcliff.us/forms-for-admissions/application-form/
Catalog/Student Handbook:	http://www.westcliff.edu/students/student-handbook/
Curricular Practical Training (CPT)	cpt_bachelors@westcliff.edu cpt_masters@westcliff.edu cpt_doctorate@westcliff.edu
Optional Practical Training (OPT)	opt@westcliff.edu
Registrar:	registrar@westcliff.edu registrarsupport@westcliff.edu
International Student Services:	intlservices@westcliff.edu
Student Services	studentservices@westcliff.edu
Travel & Vacation	intltravel_vacation@westcliff.edu

GLOSSARY

BCIS:	Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services
CBP:	Customs and Border Protection (Responsible for immigration and customs inspections at U.S. ports of entry)
CPT:	Curricular Practical Training
DSO:	Designated School Official
D/S:	Duration of Student Status
DHS:	Department of Homeland Security (Oversees CBP, ICE, and USCIS)
DS 157:	With most visa applications, male and female applicants fill out the same forms in the same manner. However, due to security concerns, some male applicants may need to provide additional information on their applications. For example, Form DS-157 (Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application) must be completed by any male applicant between the ages of 16 and 54 who is filing for a nonimmigrant visa.
DS 160:	The DS-160, Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application form, is for temporary travel to the United States, and for K (fiancé(e)) visas. Form DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State website via the Internet. Consular Officers use the information entered on the DS-160 to process the visa application and, combined with a personal interview, determine an applicant's eligibility for a nonimmigrant visa
EAD:	Employment Authorization Document
F-1:	Category of Visa required of all non-immigrant students
I-20:	Establishes the individual meets the basic criteria for nonimmigrant student status
I-539:	Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status.
I-901:	Form to pay SEVIS fee of \$350
I-94:	Arrival/departure card, received from the airline during the flight
ICE:	Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Responsible for maintaining the student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) conducting immigration investigations, detentions, and removals –deportations)
OPT:	Optional Practical Training
POE:	Port of Entry
SEVIS:	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
SEVP:	Student and Exchange Visitor Program
USCIS:	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

THANK YOU!

The administration, staff and faculty thank you for considering Westcliff University. We look forward to helping you in achieving your dreams as a global citizen and becoming an integral part of Westcliff University!



Westcliff University

**Irvine Campus
16715 Von Karman Ave #100
Irvine, California 92606**

**Cerritos Campus
18000 Studebaker Rd #300
Cerritos, CA 90703**

www.westcliff.edu