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# 2013-2014

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE COURSE CATALOG AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

(a supplement to the course catalog and student handbook)

2013 – 2014



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Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute is not only a career preparation school, but “*A Welcoming Community of Practical Learners*” from all over the globe. Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute is approved by the United States Department of Homeland Security to accept and enroll international students. Forty-eight countries are currently represented by our student body. Ever since our founding in 1991, Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute has graduated nearly 6,000 students from 60 different countries representing nearly every continent.

Our caring and multilingual staff and faculty understand the challenges faced by international students. Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute welcomes international students and supports your efforts to study with us. In addition to having students from all over the world, we also teach people locally who are transitioning from one field to another in an effort to accommodate the changing and challenging job market. Therefore, you will have the opportunity to study with American students as well as other international students.

**International Students fall into 3 categories:**

1. Prospective students who wish to come from abroad to study at Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute in the United States.
2. Prospective students who are currently in the United States, but hold other categories of non-immigrant visas (for instance, B1/B2, J-1-these are the most common) and want to change status by applying for an F-1 Student Visa.
3. Prospects with an F-1 Visa who are studying at a different school in the United States and want to transfer to Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute.

**We serve our international students and prospective students by:**

1. Processing documents required of international students;
2. Guiding students through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) student visa application procedure;
3. Providing most USCIS forms; and helping students in their communication with immigration services.
4. Providing information about non-immigrant international student regulations through workshops and orientations, individual appointments, and the school website.

All the information suitable for the categories above is available on the school website at: <http://www.zg-ort.edu/InternationalStudents.html>.

**If interested in additional information, you can contact us by email [info@zg-ort.edu](mailto:info@zg-ort.edu), by phone 1-847-324-5588 x 26, or via Skype.**

This handbook is distributed to those international students who are currently enrolled in ORT programs or who are considering transferring from other schools to continue their education in the United States. It provides information on how to maintain student status and comply with DHS regulations.

NOTE: CHANGES IN FEDERAL REGULATIONS OCCUR FREQUENTLY; THEREFORE, PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS AND THAT YOU STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR.

## **Definitions you need to know**

### **Visa**

The Visa stamp in your passport is used only for entry to the United States. It states your visa category (F-1, J-1, B-2, etc.), the visa expiration date, the date the visa was issued, the visa number, and the number of entries permitted during the visa's period of validity. You must have a valid visa (a stamp inside of your passport) to enter the United States. It does not matter if your visa expires while you are in the United States; however, if you leave the country, you must have an unexpired visa in order to re-enter. The visa stamp in your passport can only be issued at a United States Consulate located abroad.

### **I-20**

An I-20 is given to students who have been admitted to a United States-based educational institution. The form is used to obtain an F-1 visa, to enter the United States (for F-1 students and F-2 spouses and dependents), and to transfer to another school. Note: If you leave the country temporarily for vacation, you must have a signed I-20 and a valid visa to re-enter. You must have your I-20 signed by an ORT PDSO or DSO before you leave. While you are in the United States, all actions done on your record (such as transfer, work permits, extensions of stay, etc.) will be recorded on the I-20. The original I-20 and any subsequent copy should be kept in a safe place, and a photocopy of the current I-20 should be carried with you at all times. Remember: your I-20 must be valid at all times! If you cannot complete your program of study by the completion date on the I-20, you must come to the office for an extension. An extension must be processed within a 30-day period prior to the expiration date of the I-20. Consult with the office prior to the completion date if you need an extension as long as you maintain your lawful status.

**PDSO and DSO = The Principal Designated School Official and Designated School Official** help you in any matters that involve your F-1 status while you are a student at Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute. They register all F-1 students that are maintaining status in SEVIS. They may further assist you by writing letters that support your change of status requests or applications for OPT.

**DHS = Department of Homeland Security** is the department of the U.S. federal government charged with protecting U.S. territory from terrorist attacks and providing a coordinated response to large-scale emergencies.

**USCIS = United States Citizenship and Immigration Services** is a bureau of the Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is responsible for the administration of immigration and naturalization adjudication functions and establishing immigration services' policies and priorities. USCIS functions include adjudication of immigrant visa petitions among other functions.

**ICE = Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement** is the principal investigative arm of the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

**SEVP = Student and Exchange Visitor Program** is a part of the National Security Investigations Division and acts as a bridge for government organizations that have an interest in information on non-immigrants whose primary reason for coming to the United States is to be students. On behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), SEVP manages schools, nonimmigrant students in the F visa classifications and their dependents while they visit the United States and participate in the U.S. education system.

**SEVIS = Student and Exchange Visitor Information System** is administered by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It is a computer database that maintains information on foreign students and exchange visitors before and during their stay in the United States. For more information about the SEVIS program, please visit the ICE website: [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov) or follow here: <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/sevis.html>.

The student must register her/his details in SEVIS; it is a mandatory part of the program. The registration should be done within a definite period of time depends on program. SEVIS also maintains information on the schools that are approved to enroll F-1 visa holders. **Failure to properly maintain information in SEVIS could result in the loss of student status.**

**OPT = Optional Practical Training** is a period during which students with F-1 status who have completed any Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute program of study at least nine months long (excluding English-as-a-Second-Language) can be approved by USCIS to work for up to one year toward getting practical training to complement their chosen field of studies. F-1 students are permitted a total of 12 months toward practical training.

#### **EAD = Employment Authorization Document**

Once you submit the OPT application by mail to USCIS, it can take between 60 and 120 days, sometimes longer to receive an answer. If approved, USCIS will send you an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). You may not legally begin your employment until you receive this card and the beginning employment date listed on the card has been reached. If your plans change after you receive the EAD and you do not work, it is usually not possible to cancel the EAD and change the authorized dates of employment.

#### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the international student's responsibility to maintain international student status. You will be provided with a packet at the time of enrolling in a Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute program that contains a set of documents and forms to help you successfully and responsibly maintain your valid F-1 status. **Failure to comply may result in loss of your status and deportation.**

Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute's International Student Coordinator and DSO, Raisa Slutskaya, is your source of information as she is trained and ready to help you with any problems or questions you might have while staying in the United States. She can be reached at: [rslutskaya@zg-ort.edu](mailto:rslutskaya@zg-ort.edu) and 847-324-5588 ext. 26.

**In order to remain in status you must follow the following rules:**

**1. Maintain Full-time Enrollment Status**

As an international student, you must always be enrolled in a full course of study, which is 18 contact hours per week, or 12 credit hours per semester.

**2. Reduce Course Load only in Limited Circumstances**

Immigration regulations permit exceptions to the full-time registration requirement in very limited circumstances and only with prior approval from your International Student Coordinator or DSO. Students who drop below full-time status without that approval will be reported to SEVIS. As a result, your SEVIS record will be terminated and you will lose your lawful F-1 status, including employment eligibility and benefits (if applicable).

Students may be considered for a reduced enrollment based on the reasons listed below:

**a. Academic Reasons**

Academic reasons for dropping below full-time include improper course placement or initial English language difficulties. The Dean of Academic Affairs must recommend the reduced enrollment. Reduced enrollment for academic reasons may be approved for no longer than five (5) months during the student's degree or certificate program. Students should consider this carefully before requesting an approved reduced enrollment for academic reasons since it can only be used once.

**b. Health Reasons**

Students may also drop below full-time for physical or mental health reasons. The reduced enrollment must be recommended by a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist. Reduced enrollment for health reasons may be approved for no more than a cumulative period of six (6) months during the student's program of study. The letter need not detail the diagnosis or treatment, but must specify whether the recommendation is for part-time study or no study (zero credits), also referred to as Leave of Absence.

Approval for reduced enrollment will be given for only three months at a time; thus, continuing health problems may need more than one approval if it continues beyond the 3-month time period. In the most severe cases, a reduced course load for a medical condition

can be granted for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months, while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level.

To request a Reduced Course Load due to medical reasons, please see the Office of the Registrar.

### **3. Keep Your Passport Up-To-Date**

During your stay in the United States, your passport must not expire. If your passport is within six (6) months of expiring, it is crucial that you contact your country's consulate to get an updated passport. You can find the nearest consulate at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

If you are admitted into the United States for the duration of your studies (often abbreviated in your passport as "D/S"), you may stay in the United States as long as you are a full time student. Even if your visa expires while in the United States, you will still be in legal student status. However, if you depart the United States with an expired visa, you will need to obtain a new one—only by applying at an Embassy abroad--before being able to return to country to resume your studies.

### **4. Keep Your Contact Information and Mailing Address Up-to-Date**

It is mandatory that you let Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute know where you are living and how to contact you. Please give the DSO your current mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address whenever they are changed. It is the student's responsibility to notify USCIS about a change of address. This can be done online at <https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=coa>, or the student can fill out the form (included in your packet) found at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/ar-11.pdf>, which should be mailed to USCIS. Any address change will be recorded by the DSO in SEVIS.

### **5. Tell Us if You Plan to Travel Abroad**

If you plan to travel outside of the United States while you are on an F-1 Visa, you must see the DSO before making your travel plans, as you must have a current and valid I-20 with a DSO's signature on the last page in order to be able to get back into the country. Students that remain outside of the United States for more than five (5) months will have their F-1 visas automatically invalidated by the USCIS.

### **6. Apply for an I-20 form Extension**

There is an expiration date on your I-20 form. You must apply for an extension at least 30 days before the expiration date on your I-20 if you wish to remain in the country.

### **7. Attend and Participate in your Classes**

The academic success of each student depends on his/her attendance and classroom participation. You are learning English to be able to use it in order to succeed in your future career and in order to successfully communicate in your personal and professional life. Please remember that more you practice English, you become more proficient in it. Speak only English during your classes and during the breaks in the hallways. Every international student is expected and encouraged to maintain regular, consistent attendance, participate in all academic activities and complete all assignments in order to remain in good standing. Students should attend classes on time and should not be absent for any session of instruction. If a student expects to be absent or late, he or she must notify the Institute by calling the Registrar or by notifying the instructor in advance.

“Tardiness” is when a student arrives late to class. Tardiness tends to disrupt classes which are already in progress. It is expected that students will be at their assigned places when classes begin. Tardies are documented in 10-minute increments. An “early departure” is when the student leaves before the instructor dismisses the class. If a student is tardy or leaves early, the length of time for tardiness and/or early departure will be recorded on the attendance roster which affects the total percentage of attendance for the purpose of graduation requirements.

Excessive tardiness and/or early departure may affect the student’s satisfactory academic progress, grades, attendance and may be grounds for Warning, Probation and consequently Termination from the Institute for violating Department of Homeland Security regulations.

Students must attend classes regularly and adhere to the attendance requirements as stated above. Students must maintain at least **90%** attendance of the scheduled hours at each evaluation point (mid-point and program completion for certificate programs and the end of each semester for degree programs), and 100% of externship hours. Absenteeism of 10% or greater will result in failure for the course. It is the student’s responsibility to follow the attendance and grading policies. A student who has missed fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days will be considered as withdrawn.

Any student can get a make-up assignment to prevent a course failure. A student is responsible for arranging with the instructor a make-up midterm or final exam. Only one make-up exam per student per course is permitted. If a student fails a course, s/he is required to pay to take the course again. Note that you are only allowed to retake a course one time.

**a. Attendance Termination**

An international student will be terminated if, while on attendance probation status, he or she fails to meet attendance requirements at the end of the second probationary period. A student will be terminated if at any time he or she has missed more than 10% of the maximum time frame hours for the program. Students who are terminated due to failure to meet attendance requirements are responsible for meeting their financial obligations to the Institute.

**b. Grading System**

Based on the student's academic performance, the instructor assigns a letter grade at the end of each course in accordance with the letter grading system denoted in the catalog. Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute is operating on a 4.0 grading scale. It is the requirement of DHS that international students maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average (GPA) to be considered in good standing. An international student with a cumulative GPA lower than 2.0 will be ineligible to apply for OPT, and is subject to F-1 status termination in SEVIS.

**c. Satisfactory Academic Progress**

To be considered as making Satisfactory Academic Progress, students must complete a minimum number of semester credits hours and achieve a minimum grade point average (GPA) at the end of each evaluation period. International students are expected to graduate at the 100% evaluation point with a minimum of 2.0 GPA, complete all the required credits with passing grades, and meet the graduation requirements outlined in Student Handbook and Course Catalog. International Students are not subject to Maximum Credits toward Graduation requirements, as that is specific to federal financial aid recipients.

**8. Take Vacation only between Programs of Study**

An F-1 student at ORT Technical Institute is considered to be "in-status" during the vacation only if the student has completed the equivalent of one (1) academic year prior to taking the vacation. A Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute student can be on vacation between programs of study, or after completing OPT for no more than 60 days.

**9. Do not become a "No-Show"**

If an international Student is a "No-Show" for the start of the program listed on his/her I-20, that student will be dismissed from school and the SEVIS record will be terminated within 21 days of the scheduled class start. To continue to stay in the United State and continue studies, said students will need to apply for reinstatement of status.

**10. If you are terminated, apply for Reinstatement to F-1 Status**

In order to continue to study, international students whose records have been terminated or completed in SEVIS must apply for reinstatement. Candidates for reinstatement must first meet with a DSO to discuss their case. Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute students whose records have been terminated or completed in SEVIS should talk to the DSO about the possibility of applying for reinstatement before requesting a transfer.

If the DSO determines that the student has a legitimate case for reinstatement, he/she will work with the student to assemble the following:

- a. A request for reinstatement, written by the student, explaining why he/she fell out of status
- b. Any supporting documentation
- c. DSO letter of support
- d. A new, original I-20 created by the DSO for the purpose of reinstatement, which is signed and dated by the student and the DSO
- e. A completed Form I-539 with “REINSTATEMENT” written in red ink at the top of the form. In Part 2, question 1, the student should check “C” and write: “Reinstatement to F-1 status”
- f. Financial documentation showing one (1) year of tuition and living expenses
- g. Copies of Passport and Visa
- h. Copies of all I-20s previously issued to the student
- i. A bank check or money order payable to “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services” in the amount of \$290
- j. Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute I-20 processing fee of \$95 and other relevant fees

Students with pending reinstatement requests must attend school. They will not be permitted to take vacation until a full academic year is completed. Students with pending reinstatement requests who do not follow school guidelines regarding maintenance of status (see **Maintain Full-Time Enrollment Status** section above) will have their reinstatement requests cancelled in SEVIS.

#### 11. **Do not Work**

An international student is not allowed to work off campus unless approved for OPT after program completion. Note that on-campus employment cannot exceed 20 hours per week, if such position is available.

#### 12. **Apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

OPT is a period during which students with F-1 status who have completed any Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute program of study at least nine months long (excluding English-as-a-Second-Language) can be approved by USCIS to work for up to one year toward getting practical training to complement their chosen field of studies. F-1 students are permitted a total of 12 months toward practical training.

Students can apply for OPT after being enrolled in a program of study for at least nine (9) months. Students have thirty days to submit an application for OPT before the end of the program; however, applications cannot be submitted any more than two (2) weeks after the completion. Note: Instructions on how to apply for OPT and the eligibility form are included in the International Student Packet.

It is recommended that you keep documentation on all your employment. In the future, you may be asked to provide proof that your employment during OPT was in your field of study. Specifically, you should maintain evidence — for each job — of: the position held; proof of the duration of that position; the job title; contact information for your supervisor or manager; and description of the work. If it is not clear from the job description that the work is related to your studies, we highly recommend that you obtain a signed letter from the employer's hiring official, supervisor, or manager stating how your field of study is related to the work you performed. Keep this in your personal records.

**a. Multiple employers**

Students may work for more than one employer, but all employment must be related to the student's degree program. Employment during pre-completion OPT cannot exceed the allowed per week cumulative hours.

**b. Work for hire**

“Work for hire” is a phrase that means that an individual performs a service based on a contractual relationship, rather than an employment relationship. It is sometimes called “1099 employment” because people who “work for hire” receive Internal Revenue Service Form 1099-MISC from the contracting company, showing how much money was earned for a particular year. If requested by DHS, students must be prepared to provide evidence showing the duration of the contract periods and the name and address of the contracting company.

**c. Self-employed business owner**

Students on OPT may start a business and be self-employed. In this situation, the student must work full time (or 40 hours per week). The student must be able to prove that he or she has the proper business licenses and is actively engaged in a business related to the student's degree program.

**d. Employment through an agency**

Students on post-completion OPT must be able to provide evidence showing they worked an average of at least 20 hours per week while employed by the agency.

**e. Unpaid employment**

Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, as this does not violate any labor laws. They must work at least 20 hours per week if on post-completion OPT. These students must be able to provide evidence from the employer that the student worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment.

### **13. Apply for a Social Security Number**

If you are invited to work on campus or you are approved for OPT, you will have to get a Social Security Number (SSN), you will be required to have one for tax reporting purposes. You may apply for a SSN after you have received the EAD card and the begin date on the card has been reached.

If you already have a SSN, do not apply for a new one. Social Security Numbers are for life. You do not need your SSN to begin working.

### **14. Stay Employed while in OPT**

After being approved for OPT, each day the student is not employed in a qualifying job is counted toward the limit on unemployment time. The maximum period of unemployment is 90 days. If you travel outside of the United States while unemployed, the time spent outside the United States will count as unemployment against the 90-day limit.

#### **a. Consequences of exceeding the allowable period of unemployment**

If you exceed the allowable period of unemployment while on post-completion OPT, you are considered to have violated your status.

#### **b. If you cannot find employment that meets the definition of OPT employment, you may have the following options:**

- Continue your education by a change of level or transferring to another Zarem/Golde ORT Technical Institute program of study
- Depart the United States
- Change status to another legal status if possible

### **15. Do not End OPT Early**

#### **a. Abandoning OPT**

If you decide to abandon your OPT before the end date of your EAD and leave the United States, you must notify the International Student Coordinator or DSO so that your SEVIS record can be ended. We will end your SEVIS record effective the date you indicate you plan to leave the country or the date you notify us, whichever is later.

#### **b. Starting a New Program at ORT**

During the period you are authorized for OPT, you may decide to apply to another academic program. Once you are admitted to another program and a new I-20 is issued, your OPT will

be terminated. You have to meet with your new program coordinator to discuss your transfer credits and adjust the tuition amount. Please refer to a catalog for more information.

**c. Transfer to another school in the U.S. in order to begin a new degree program.**

Authorization for OPT is not transferable. Your authorization for OPT ends on the transfer release date. If you wish to complete OPT, set the release date for a date *after* the OPT ends. You can set the transfer release date to occur during the 60-day grace period following post-completion of OPT. On your transfer release date, you must stop employment regardless of your EAD card's appearance of validity.

In order to maintain your F-1 status, a new I-20 for change of academic level, new degree program, or transfer must be issued before the end of your 60-day grace period.

**16. During OPT, Keep your Status Current**

If you change your immigration status during the period of your OPT (e.g. from F-1 to H-1B, F-2), your OPT ends on the effective date of the USCIS action notice and any unused OPT time is lost. Note that you cannot have both F-1 OPT status and another status at the same time; you also cannot return to OPT if your new status is terminated.

**17. Know the Grace periods**

A 60-day period is given to F-1 Visa students after the completion of a program of study that allows the student time to: (1) prepare for departure from the United States; (2) apply for a transfer to another SEVP-certified school; (3) request a change of level to continue at the current school; or (4) take steps to otherwise maintain legal status.

**18. Cooperate with Career Services**

Every international student is required to attend and pass the Employment Preparation course (EP 101) regardless of OPT approval. Upon OPT approval, an international student is eligible to seek assistance from the Career Services Department in job search, resume preparation, interview preparation, as well as other assistance. It is the responsibility of every international student to report employment to the Career Services staff and to the International Student Coordinator in order to maintain F-1 status.

**19. Abide by rules requiring disclosure of information and prohibition on criminal activity.**

As an F-1 student, you are required to disclose fully and truthfully all information requested by DHS immigration bureaus regardless of whether the information requested was material. Students are also required, as a condition of their admission, to obey all federal and state laws that prohibit criminal activity.

20. **Understand your obligations.**

The F-1 foreign student's obligations under U.S. immigration regulations are to:

- a.** Provide evidence that the unsubsidized cost of tuition for any academic study in the United States is paid in order to obtain and maintain F-1 visa;
- b.** Have sufficient financial resources for the anticipated stay in the United States;
- c.** Have a residence abroad to return to upon completion of the program in the United States; and
- d.** Maintain lawful immigration status while in the United States by keeping a valid passport, not working without authorization, and leaving the United States upon expiration of the visit or securing an extension of permission to stay if needed.