

SEVP Online Course Guidance for F and M Students for Fall 2020

Last Updated: July 24, 2020

- On July 24, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that nonimmigrant students and schools certified by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) should abide by SEVP guidance originally issued in March 2020, which allows some distance learning in excess of regulatory limits due to the public health emergency generated by COVID-19.
- Students who satisfy SEVP requirements as reflected on the DHS form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility) and in SEVIS may qualify for student visas.
- International students must obtain the appropriate visa before traveling, and may still be subject to visa processing and travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Students should check with the local U.S. embassy or consulate for information specific to their country.
- The United States remains the top global destination for international students, attracting students from almost every country across the globe. We recognize the serious challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has posed to universities and students alike, and we hope that many international students who had planned to study this fall in the United States will still be able to do so.

FAQ

Q. Do students at universities doing hybrid virtual / in person programs need to obtain a new I-20 form?

- Student visa applicants should bring their latest I-20 form (Certificate of Eligibility) issued by their university to their visa interview. International students must obtain the appropriate visa before traveling, and may still be subject to visa processing and travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Students

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Q. Do students who already have valid visas but are outside of the United States need a new visa before they attempt to travel to the United States?

- No, students with valid visas do not need to apply for a new visa before traveling to the United States to resume their studies. However, students may still be subject to travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Students should check with the local U.S. embassy or consulate for information specific to their country.

Q. Will a student enrolling for the first time in Fall 2020 (i.e. the student was not enrolled as of March 9, 2020) qualify for a student visa if their coursework is 100% online?

- Only students who have a valid I-20 form (Certificate of Eligibility) issued by their university may qualify for an F or M student visa. Students and the schools that admit them should follow SEVP guidance. For questions about compliance with SEVP guidance and SEVIS, we refer you to ICE. Their website is here: <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus>.
- International students must obtain the appropriate visa before traveling, and may still be subject to visa processing and travel restrictions due to COVID-19. Students should check with the local U.S. embassy or consulate for information specific to their country.

Q: Is global visa processing still suspended? How will students make it to campus on time for the fall semester if visa services are suspended in so many locations?

- U.S. embassies and consulates recently began a phased resumption of routine visa services. The resumption of routine services is on a post-by-post basis, in accordance with the State Department's Diplomacy Strong framework for safely returning our workforce to Department facilities.

- Student visas are a high priority, and we will make every effort to assist student visa applicants in a timely fashion, while keeping our staff and customers safe.
- Applicants with an urgent matter who need to travel immediately should follow the guidance provided on their nearest embassy or consulate's website to request an emergency appointment.

Q: What is the difference between F, M, and J student visas?

- The F visa is for academic students, the M visa is for technical/vocational students, and the J visa is for exchange visitors.