



The Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act



Overview

Nonimmigrant students attending an English Language training program of study (ESL programs) should take note that a new law has taken effect. In accordance with the Accreditation Act, all ESL programs of study that are SEVP-certified must either possess or have applied for accreditation before Dec. 15, 2011, by a regional or national accrediting agency recognized by the Department of Education.

In accordance with the Accreditation Act, SEVP is examining two types of ESL programs of study for compliance with the Accreditation Act:

- Stand-alone ESL schools whose officials have indicated on the school's Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," the intention to offer only ESL programs of study
- "Combined schools" whose officials have indicated on the school's Form I-17 that the school offers an ESL program of study, as well as other programs of study (either contracts out the ESL program of study or wholly owns and operates the ESL program of study under the institution's governance)

Guidance for F Students and DSOs

On May 18, 2011, SEVP distributed Broadcast Message 1204-03 informing the academic community about the Accreditation Act and its requirements. Designated School Officials have an ongoing responsibility to inform F students about how the Accreditation Act will affect them if SEVP must take action against the school. SEVP will notify F students currently enrolled in an ESL program of study whose certification is withdrawn, or whose school is no longer eligible to issue Forms I-20 for ESL training, via the student's current U.S. address as listed on the Form I-20. Those students will have the following options:

1. Finish the current term and transfer to another SEVP-certified institution's ESL program of study that is in compliance with the Accreditation Act. F students will have 30 days after the end of their current session to transfer.
2. Depart the United States within 30 days of the completion of the current term.

Failure of an F student to transfer to another SEVP-certified school or to depart the United States, per guidance above, will result in termination of that student's SEVIS record, which may have implications on an F student's future ability to enter the United States.

SEVP is still in the process of determining the accreditation of all SEVP-certified ESL programs. Because of this, it is the F student's responsibility to ensure, if the student chooses to continue studies in an ESL program, that the program of study has proper accreditation.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may deny entry into the United States to an F student who has not yet entered the United States and is in possession of a Form I-20 issued by an ESL program of study with a withdrawn SEVP-certification. Any F student CBP turns away who wishes to enter the United States as an F student must obtain another Form I-20 from an SEVP-certified ESL program of study in compliance with the Accreditation Act.

SEVP will allow enrollment in that school to any F student with a Form I-20 issued prior to their ESL program of study's withdrawal from SEVP certification. However, those students must transfer at the end of the current term to another SEVP-certified ESL program. Please note that schools that offer both ESL and other programs of study may remain SEVP-certified to issue Forms I-20 for other SEVP-certified programs of study, even where the ESL program of study loses certification.

Student Questions

F students who have questions about their options should call the SEVP Response Center at 703-603-3400 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. At other times, you may leave a message, and an SEVP representative will return your call.

SEVP will provide F students who call with guidance and inform them of their options. Please inform students to be prepared to provide the following information to the SEVP staff:

- First and last name
- SEVIS ID number
- Program of Study/Institution enrolled in
- Address
- Telephone number where the student can be reached
- Email address

Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act Frequently Asked Questions

School officials who have questions about the Accreditation of English Language Training Act should visit our [Frequently Asked Question Web page \(http://www.ice.gov/sevis/esl/faq.htm\)](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/esl/faq.htm).