

06/14/2021

Important announcements were made by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)/Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) on April 26 and the Department of State (DOS) on April 30 related to your F-1 student immigration status. While some questions still remain unanswered, we want to share the announcements with you and provide the most up to date information as to how this applies to your student status.

April 26, 2021 ICE/SEVP Announce Continued Guidance for Academic Year 21/22

The announcement can be found here: <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/bcm2104-05.pdf>

In this announcement, ICE/SEVP announced that guidance previously issued and applied for the 20/21 academic year will continue for the 21/22 academic year. Important highlights include:

- Students who entered the US and established active F-1 status will be permitted to temporarily enroll in more than one online class toward a full course of study up to 100% online.
- Students entering the country to study in-person for the first time must have at least one flexible in-person or modified in-person course. This includes students who studied from outside the US in fall 2020 and spring 2021 and are entering the US for the first time to study.
- Students who are returning from a Leave of Absence (LOA) of more than five months or those who were studying part-time outside the US and are returning to the US with a new I-20 and F-1 visa must enroll in at least one flexible in-person or modified in-person course.

April 30, 2021 US Department of State (DOS) Expands National Interest Exception (NIE) to Students from China, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, the Schengen Area Countries, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and India.

The Presidential Proclamation Expanding the NIE can be found here:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/presidential-proclamation-on-the-suspension-of-entry-as-nonimmigrants-of-certain-additional-persons-who-pose-a-risk-of-transmitting-coronavirus-disease-2019.html>

In this announcement, DOS announced that students originating from the countries listed above may qualify to enter the US directly from any of these countries and may not be subject to the 14 day travel ban announced in the Presidential Proclamation on the same day. Important highlights include:

Students originating from India, China, Iran, Brazil or South Africa

- Students subject to these geographic COVID proclamations due to their presence in India, China, Iran, Brazil, or South Africa, **may** qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE) only if their academic program begins August 1, 2021 or later.
 - New students with a new I-20 and F-1 visa with a program start date of 08/22/2021 may enter the US beginning 07/23/2021
 - Continuing Students with an active I-20 and F-1 visa who will resume studies on 09/01/2021 may enter the US beginning 08/02/2021
- Students with valid F-1 and M-1 visas intending to begin or continue an academic program commencing August 1, 2021 or later do not need to contact an embassy or consulate to seek an individual NIE to travel. They may enter the United States no earlier than 30 days before the start of their academic studies as reflected above.

Students originating from the Schengen Area and UK

- Students subject to these geographic COVID proclamations due to their presence in the Schengen Area and UK, **may** qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE).
 - New students with a new I-20 and F-1 visa with a program start date of 08/22/2021 may enter the US beginning 07/23/2021
 - Continuing Students with an active I-20 and F-1 visa who will resume studies on 09/01/2021 may enter the US at any time this summer and have been granted an (NIE)

Students originating from all other areas

- Students not subject to these geographic COVID proclamations:
 - New students with a new I-20 and F-1 visa with a program start date of 08/22/2021 may enter the US beginning 07/23/2021
 - Continuing students with an active I-20 and F-1 visa who will resume studies on 09/01/2021 may enter at any time prior to the start of the fall term

Department of State Visa Services for F-1 Student Applicants

Website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/visa-services-operating-status-update.html>

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to severely affect the ability of embassies and consulates around the world to be able to resume routine visa services. The particular constraints vary based on local conditions and restrictions, but include local and national lockdowns; travel restrictions; host country quarantine regulations; and measures taken by our embassies and consulates to contain the spread of COVID-19. Combined, these restrictions have reduced appointment capacity during the pandemic, which has created a significant backlog of both immigrant and nonimmigrant visa applicants awaiting a visa interview. The State Department is working to reduce this backlog while ensuring the safety of our staff and applicants and protecting our national security.

If you do not currently possess an active SEVIS Record and/or an I-20 please contact us at intaff@saic.edu with the required documents. Your I-20 will be issued and sent to you via DHL in approximately 2 weeks. Your I-20 and SEVIS ID Number are needed to make an appointment so we encourage you to submit your documents as soon as you are able. Please refer to this [website](#) for required documents.

We hope this message finds you safe and healthy as you navigate the ongoing developments related to Covid-19 and the impacts it may have on you and your family. Please contact us with any questions at intaff@saic.edu.

Kind regards,
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