

Below you will find more details about the updated [Guidance](#) and [Clarifying Questions](#) documents released by Immigration and Customs Enforcement on Friday, July 24, 2020, and newly released information from the U.S. Department of State regarding visa services and travel to the U.S.

CONTINUING STUDENTS CURRENTLY INSIDE THE U.S.

Continuing students who will study fully online and are currently inside the U.S.

- Students who enroll fully online for fall 2020 may remain in the U.S. and will maintain their F-1 immigration status
- Students will remain eligible for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) work authorizations as long as they have completed two prior consecutive semesters of study
- If the school reverts to fully online, students may remain in the U.S. to complete the term or depart the country to complete the term outside of the U.S. without interruption to their status

Continuing students who will study in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses and are currently inside the U.S.

- Students who enroll in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses for fall 2020 may remain in the U.S. and will maintain their F-1 immigration status
- Students will remain eligible for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) work authorizations as long as they have completed two prior consecutive semesters of study
- If the school reverts to fully online, students may remain in the U.S. to complete the term or depart the country to complete the term outside of the U.S. without interruption to their status

CONTINUING STUDENTS CURRENTLY OUTSIDE THE U.S.

Continuing students who will study fully online and are currently outside of the U.S.

- Students may choose to study fully online either inside of the U.S. or from outside of the U.S.
- Students who will study fully online and wish to return to the U.S. may enter the U.S. with a valid passport, F-1 visa and I-20. Our office also recommends you carry a copy of your Fall schedule with you and, if you have been outside the U.S. for more than 5 months, a travel support letter from our office ([LINK HERE](#)). We recommend you only show the schedule and letter to the customs officer if you are specifically asked for it.

- Students will remain eligible for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) work authorizations as long as they have completed two prior consecutive semesters of study
- If the school reverts to fully online, students who have reentered the U.S. may remain in the U.S. to complete the term or depart the country to complete the term outside of the U.S. without interruption to their F-1 status

Continuing students who will study in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses and are currently outside the U.S.

- Students who enroll in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses for fall 2020 may enter the U.S. with a valid passport, F-1 visa and I-20. Our office also recommends you carry a copy of your Fall schedule with you and, if you have been outside the U.S. for more than 5 months, [a travel support letter from our office](#). We recommend you only show the schedule and letter to the customs officer if you are specifically asked for it.
- Students will remain eligible for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) work authorizations as long as they have completed two prior consecutive semesters of study
- If the school reverts to fully online, students may remain in the U.S. to complete the term or depart the country to complete the term outside of the U.S. without interruption to their status

NEW STUDENTS CURRENTLY INSIDE THE U.S.

New students who want to study fully online and are currently inside the U.S.

- New students **must** enroll in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses and may not be fully online
 - *If you were present in the U.S. this spring in Active F-1 status and are starting a new program this fall, you may study fully online. Please contact International Affairs if you are unsure if this applies to you.*

New students who will study in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses and are currently inside the U.S.

- Students who enroll in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses for fall 2020 may remain in the U.S. and will maintain their F-1 immigration status.
- If the school reverts to fully online, students may remain in the U.S. to complete the term or depart the country to complete the term outside of the U.S. without interruption to their status

NEW STUDENTS CURRENTLY OUTSIDE THE U.S.

New students who will study fully online and are currently outside of the U.S.

- Students who enroll fully online for fall 2020 may not enter the U.S. to study
- Students who wish to join SAIC in-person for the spring 2021 term will work with International Affairs to obtain an I-20 with a spring 2021 start date and may use this to

apply for an F-1 visa to enter the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to the start of the spring term

New students who will study in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses and are currently outside the U.S.

- Students who enroll in a mixture of modified in-person and online courses for fall 2020 may enter the U.S. with a valid passport, F-1 visa and I-20
- If the school reverts to fully online, students may remain in the U.S. to complete the term or depart the country to complete the term outside of the U.S. without interruption to their F-1 status

F-1 VISA APPLICATIONS

The U.S. Department of State announced that U.S. Embassies and Consulates would begin a [phased reopening plan](#) to resume routine visa services. Students should locate the nearest embassy or consulate's website for details about how to apply for your F-1 visa.

Please note the resumption of routine visa services will occur on a post-by-post basis, in coordination with the Department's Diplomacy Strong framework for safely returning our workforce to Department facilities. This means that not all Embassies and Consulates in all countries may reopen before the start of the fall semester.

NATIONAL INTEREST EXCEPTION FOR STUDENTS TRAVELING FROM THE SCHENGEN AREA, UK AND IRELAND

An exception was announced for F-1 students traveling from the Schengen area, UK and Ireland that permits students to travel directly to the U.S. from these regions. The Department of State states:

Students traveling from the Schengen Area, the UK, and Ireland with valid F-1 and M-1 visas do not need to contact an embassy or consulate to seek an individual national interest exception to travel. Students seeking to apply for new F-1 or M-1 visas should check the status of visa services at the nearest embassy or consulate; those applicants who are found to be otherwise qualified for an F-1 or M-1 visa will automatically be considered for a national interest exception to travel.

Previously students were required to travel outside of these regions for 14 days prior to enter the U.S. to be permitted to enter the country. This exception allows students from the Schengen Area, the UK, and Ireland to fly directly to the U.S..

TRAVEL TO THE U.S.

Students are reporting delays upon entry to the U.S. and have asked for guidance about reentry and questions that may be asked by a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer at the Port of Entry. Some have also reported hearing news of students being turned away and denied entry. While some of these reports have been confirmed, we encourage students to follow the guidelines below to facilitate your entry to the U.S.. CBP has a limited amount of time to evaluate your documents for reentry and the primary inspection desks and it is important to have all of your documentation in order for an efficient review.

Please note that CBP is charged with reviewing each student upon entry to the U.S. to verify their eligibility for reentry to establish F-1 status. If additional time is needed, students may be sent to secondary inspection where an officer can review your documentation to complete the process.

Here are some tips for reentering the U.S. and how to best prepare for the interaction

- Always have your primary travel documents ready an in-hand. These include your:
 - Passport valid for at least six months into the future
 - Valid F-1 visa issued by the Department of State
 - Canadian students are visa exempt and must use their passport and I-20 for entry to the U.S.
 - Valid I-20
 - **Returning students** should have a valid travel signature on page 2 of their I-20 that will be no more than 12 months old at the time of reentry
 - **New students** entering the U.S. for the first time DO NOT need a travel signature. This includes students who have transferred the SEVIS Record and I-20 to SAIC and were issued a new transfer-in I-20
- Have your support documentation available and only present them when asked (*most students are never asked for these documents*)
 - Support documentation could include your I-901 receipt, financial documents, a copy of your Fall schedule, or travel support letters
 - DO NOT present these documents unless you are asked as it can delay the review of your primary documents and may result in needing additional time and being placed in secondary inspection
- Be calm and listen
 - The CBP officer may ask you “what is the intent of your visit” and you should inform them of your plans to study at SAIC
- Do not elaborate unless asked
 - Oftentimes students offer information beyond what is being asked and it may confuse the officer. Do your best to only answer the question that is asked
- Ask the officer to repeat the question if you did not fully understand
 - Immigration inspection may be busy with many people entering the U.S. at the same time. If you did not hear or understand the question, kindly ask the officer to repeat the question
- You are applying for entry as an nonimmigrant F-1 student

- As an F-1 student, your intent is to study, complete your degree program, possibly apply for OPT, and then depart the country upon completion of your work authorization
- Any plans that indicate any intent to stay in the U.S. beyond your F-1 status could jeopardize your approved entry
- Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may call SAIC Security if they have any questions to verify your F-1 status
 - CBP has contacted SAIC Security if questions arise during the reentry process. Oftentimes it is to verify your identity, valid F-1 status or your fall enrollment. The number to the 24-hour SAIC Security is 312-899-1230. Security will contact International Affairs, and has done so in the past, to assist in your reentry and verify any information needed.

Please contact International Affairs if you have any additional questions by emailing intaff@saic.edu.

Kind regards,
International Affairs

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