

Broadcast Message: ICE Continues March 2020 Guidance for the 2021-22 Academic Year

To: All SEVIS Users

Date: April 26, 2021

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General Information

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will extend the guidance originally issued in [March 2020](#) for the 2021-22 academic year. This guidance enables schools and students to engage in distance learning in excess of regulatory limits due to the continuing public health concerns created by COVID-19. The March 2020 guidance applies to nonimmigrant students who were actively enrolled at a U.S. school on March 9, 2020, and are otherwise complying with the terms of their nonimmigrant status, whether from inside the United States or abroad. A summary of the March 2020 guidance is available below. Significantly, there are no changes to the original guidance, which will remain in effect during the 2021-22 academic year.

Summary of March 2020 Guidance for Continuing Students

As stated in the March 2020 guidance, Active F and M students will be permitted to temporarily count online classes toward a full course of study in excess of the regulatory limits stated in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G) and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(m)(9)(v) for the 2021-22 academic year. The March 2020 guidance applies to continuing F and M nonimmigrant students who were in valid F-1 or M-1 nonimmigrant status on March 9, 2020, including those previously enrolled in entirely online classes who are outside of the United States and seeking to re-enter the country for the 2021-22 academic year. Students actively enrolled at a U.S. school on March 9, 2020, who subsequently took courses online while outside of the country can re-enter the United States, even if their school is engaged solely in distance learning.

Summary of March 2020 Guidance for Initial Students

In accordance with the March 2020 guidance, new or Initial F and M students who were not previously enrolled in a program of study on March 9, 2020, will not be able to enter the United States as a nonimmigrant student for the 2021-22 academic year if their course of study is 100 percent online. A new student should be allowed to enter the United States if they are engaged in a hybrid program, with some requirement for in-person learning. Consistent with this restriction, DSOs should not issue a Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," for a student in new or Initial status who is outside of the United States and plans to take classes at an SEVP-certified educational institution that is operating fully online.

Procedural Change Plans for SEVP-certified Schools

If an SEVP-certified school has previously submitted a procedural change plan detailing its alternative procedures, it does not need to resubmit the plan for the 2021-22 academic year, unless the school is making substantive changes. Consistent with the provisions of the March 2020 guidance, substantive changes should be submitted to SEVP within 10 business days of the

decision to implement the change. For more information on submitting a procedural change plan, please refer to Broadcast Message 2003-01, linked below.

Additional Information

Stakeholders can refer to SEVP's current policy guidance and frequently asked questions at [ICE.gov/Coronavirus](https://ice.dhs.gov/Coronavirus), under the Nonimmigrant Students and SEVP-certified Schools header:

- [Broadcast Message 2003-01: Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) and Potential Procedural Adaptations for F and M Nonimmigrant Students](#) (March 9, 2020).
- [COVID-19: Scenarios for SEVP-certified Schools for Emergency Procedures](#) (March 13, 2020).
- [Frequently Asked Questions from SEVP Stakeholders about COVID-19](#).

SEVP recently updated its [frequently asked questions](#) with information to clarify the application of the March 2020 guidance to the 2021-22 academic year and will continue to update these resources with the latest information and guidance for stakeholders. The program will continue to provide updates to the academic community through our communication channels, including Broadcast Messages, SEVP field representatives, Study in the States blog posts and social media.

Stakeholders should continue to refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of State and U.S. Customs and Border Protection for the latest COVID-19 information, visa issuance updates and specific port-of-entry screening processes, as well as any travel restrictions.

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