

On 15 July 2020, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued an Frequently Asked Questions (or FAQ). The 15 July 2020 FAQ comes as a resolution reached by ICE with Harvard/MIT in connection with a lawsuit filed challenging the 6 July 2020 directive that, if implemented, would have blocked the ability for many international students to remain in or enter the United States and take fully online courses.

Based on the new court resolution, ICE agreed to cancel the 6 July 2020 directive and revert to a policy that existed in March 2020. As a result, on 24 July 2020, ICE issued [Clarifying Questions for Fall 2020](#). This document represents our best interpretation of the ICE guidance and regulations.

What is the current policy?

On 15 July 2020, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) issued an [FAQ document](#) for universities to follow with respect to international students in Fall 2020. This FAQ replaces a previous 6 July 2020 directive blocking online only students in the United States. On 24 July 2020, ICE issued clarifying questions to supplement this guidance.

Does the current policy apply to continuing F-1 international students with an active SEVIS record?

Yes. Continuing international students can take classes in various modes: in-person, hybrid, or fully remote (100% online) while in the United States.

I am a new international student scheduled to start classes in fall 2020. Will I be able to start my studies as planned?

Yes, but take note of the following:

- New international students with an INITIAL SEVIS I-20 may enter the United States and take only one (1) online or hybrid course per semester towards their full-time enrollment.
- New international students with an INITIAL SEVIS I-20 may not enter the United States to take 100% of their classes online. This is not allowed.
- New international students outside of the United States may take classes 100% online while they remain outside of the United States.

What if I start the fall 2020 semester under an in-person or hybrid model but the class then moves to online during the semester?

According to the July 24, 2020 guidance, students pursuing studies in the United States for the fall 2020 school term will be able to continue studying from within the United States if a university moves online.

Can a new international student take a fully online course load from outside the United States?

Yes. An I-20 and active SEVIS record are not required to enroll in online courses from outside the United States. New international students will not be activated in SEVIS in fall 2020, but they will be activated after arrival in the United States and enrollment in in-person classes.

Can a continuing F-1 international student take a fully online course load in fall 2020 from outside the United States? What happens to the SEVIS record?

Yes. If the student has an active SEVIS record, the student can take a fully online course load in fall 2020 from outside the United States. The SEVIS record will remain active as long as the student maintains full-time enrollment in a Radford University program.

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If I enroll full time while in the U.S. and my visa expires, do I need to renew my visa?

No. As long as you remain in the United States, you do not need to renew your visa because your valid stay is governed by your I-94 and your I-20 or DS-2019. However, if you leave the United States while your visa is expired, then you will need to renew your visa before you can re-enter the U.S.

If I am a continuing student and remain outside the United States, do I need to get a new F-1 visa?

No. If your F-1 visa is still valid, you do not need to apply for a new visa regardless of your SEVIS status. However, if your visa expires while you are outside the United States, then you will need to renew your visa before you can re-enter the U.S.

I heard that U.S. visas are being issued. Is this true?

Yes. The Department of State announced a [phased resumption](#) of routine visa services on July 14, 2020. The resumption of visa services will occur on a post-by-post basis so long as it is safe for Department of State personnel to return to work. Students should check with the specific consulate site to its operations by going to <https://www.usembassy.gov/>.

The proclamations from the White House restricting certain travelers from entering the United States due to COVID-19 remain intact. Notably, the Department of State [announced](#) on July 16, 2020 that F-1 international students would be exempt from the proclamations banning certain travelers from the Schengen Area, UK, and Ireland.

Information contained herein may be subject to change without prior notice.