

International Center

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Date: June 24, 2021

To: F-1 International Students

From: Leonardo A. Villalón, Dean, UF International Center
Martine Angrand, Director, F-1 International Student Compliance Services

RE: Academic Year, Summer B 2021 through Summer A/C 2022
Online Course Registration Guidelines for F-1 International Students

Dear F-1 International Students,

On March 19, 2021, the University of Florida announced its plans to return to a largely normal set of course offerings for summer B and fall 2021. Following this announcement, we advised the UF community to plan for F-1 international students to be required to register according to the standard, pre-pandemic full time registration requirements. Then, on April 26, 2021, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP, the federal agency governing F-1 student regulations) released its updated [COVID-19 FAQ](#). With some of the responses open to interpretation, we contacted SEVP for clarification regarding what this would mean for a school which plans to return to face-to-face courses, with a normal selection of online courses and a nearly typical classroom experience for summer B and fall 2021.

We stressed that although UF plans to return to a largely normal course offering for summer B and fall 2021, we understand that the world as a whole is not back to pre-pandemic levels. Our incoming/initial international students and many of our F-1 international students who qualify as "continuing students" under the SEVP March 2020 guidance continue to be greatly affected by travel restrictions and by U.S. embassy and consulate closures or limited services. We understand that initial students who are unable to secure an F-1 visa are not yet F-1 and therefore not subject to the F-1 regulations. However, many of our continuing international students who were F-1 as of March 9, 2020, who departed the U.S. due to the pandemic and have continued their enrollment 100% online, have not been able to return to the U.S. due to the limited visa services or travel bans.

We are pleased to let you know that the SEVP has clarified as follows:

"In this context, "normal operations" refers to the time period after the COVID-19 emergency is over. SEVP recognizes that many schools will return to what the school may consider "normal operations" for the 2021-22 academic year. However, for the purposes of this guidance, SEVP considers "normal operations" as the time period after the special COVID-19 guidance is rescinded. Eligible F and M

students who meet the criteria in the COVID-19 guidance may remain in Active status in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). ICE will reassess the situation closer to the 2022-23 academic year and provide any updated guidance."

Given this announcement, the SEVP guidance will continue to apply at UF for the academic year beginning with the Summer B 2021 through Summer A/C 2022. Pending availability of courses, **F-1 international students may continue to enroll in more online classes than would typically be allowed.** We are able to confirm the following:

- ***New F-1 students arriving in the U.S. must enroll full time and must have at least one course that meets the physical presence requirement(s).*** This includes students in the following situations:
 - Any student who was issued an I-20 for reason of "Initial Attendance" for fall 2020, spring 2021, summer A/B/C 2021, fall 2021, spring 2022, or summer A/C 2022 whether they were specifically admitted or deferred to one of the above mentioned semesters due to inability to study within the U.S. with admission in the 2020-2021 academic year.
 - Any student who was issued an I-20 for reason of "Initial Attendance – Change of Status Requested," if the change of status is approved prior to the drop/add deadline for the program start date on the I-20.

- ***Continuing F-1 students who were enrolled at a U.S. college as of March 9, 2020 must enroll full time (unless they are all but thesis/dissertation, or in their final semester) and may enroll 100% online in Summer B 2021 (if semester of admission), and in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, whether the student is present in the U.S. or abroad.*** This includes the following students:
 - Any F-1 student who was in the U.S. as of March 9, 2020, studying at UF in a degree program that began as of spring 2020 or earlier and who has maintained continuous valid F-1 status until the present time.
 - Any F-1 student who completed a timely change of education level to begin a new program at UF as long as the student had already established F-1 status as of March 9, 2020 and has continuously maintained valid F-1 status since then.
 - Any F-1 student who was in the U.S. in spring 2020 at another SEVP certified school, has maintained continuous valid F-1 status since then, and has completed or will be completing a SEVIS transfer to the University of Florida, as long as the student is inside the U.S. and completes the check-in requirement with the University of Florida International Center.
 - Any F-1 student who was engaged in post-completion practical training (OPT or STEM OPT) during 2020 - 2021 and will subsequently begin a new degree program at UF, provided the student obtained a timely transfer pending I-20 (if doing a SEVIS transfer between schools) or a timely change of education level I-20 from UF and has maintained continuous valid F-1 status since March 9, 2020.
 - Any F-1 student who began a degree program at UF in summer 2020 (within the U.S.), and continued full time enrollment in fall 2020 and spring 2021 while still present in the U.S., will be considered a continuing student for fall 2021.

New F-1 students who are not able to enter the US by the program start date on their I-20:

- Undergraduate students: must notify their F-1 Advisor to request an updated I-20
- Graduate students: must notify their academic advisor to request they submit a **New International Student Update Request** to the international center.

The notification must be made within

- **15 days** of the start of classes for **transfer-in F-1 students**
 - Tuesday, September 7, 2021 for Fall 2021
 - Thursday, January 20, 2022 for Spring 2022
- **30 days** of the start of classes for **initial F-1 students**
 - Wednesday, September 22, 2021 for Fall 2021
 - Friday, February 4, 2022 for Spring 2022

Also, please note:

- If the academic unit has an earlier deadline than those shown above, the academic department's deadline takes priority.
- F-1 international students with assistantships are expected to begin their assistantship on August 16, 2021 (for Fall 2021) or on January 1, 2022 (for Spring 2022). Questions regarding this requirement should be directed to your academic unit for further guidance.
- The academic departments' and the Graduate School's deadlines cannot occur after the dates provided by the international center.

Travel to the U.S.

For students who are currently abroad, and subject to the Presidential Proclamation stated below, please keep the following travel restriction in mind:

- [Presidential Proclamation on the Suspension of Entry as Nonimmigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(Last Updated: May 12, 2021\)](#)
- [National Interest Exceptions for Certain Travelers from China, Iran, India, Brazil, South Africa, Schengen Area, United Kingdom, and Ireland \(Last Updated: May 27, 2021\)](#)

If the student is subject to the travel restriction:

- Students who have an I-20 with a program start date in January 2021 or before may travel to the U.S. as of July 2, 2021 or after. Refer to [Travel Requirements](#) for more information.
- Students who have an I-20 with a program start date on or after August 1, 2021 may travel to the U.S. as of the "EARLIEST ADMISSION DATE" stated on the I-20 in the PROGRAM OF STUDY section on page 1. Refer to [Visa Process & U.S. Port Of Entry](#) for more information.

U.S. Travel Proclamations and Updates resources:

- [U.S. Visas News](#)
- [Fragomen Immigration Update: Coronavirus](#)
 - Students may verify information for the country they are travelling from, will travel to/through, and the United States.

Leave of Absence

Continuing F-1 students who are not able to register full time must submit a [Leave of Absence](#) request prior to the start of classes for the semester.

- For Fall 2021, submit request by August 22, 2021
- Spring 2022, submit request by January 4, 2022

This is the information which we can confirm at this time. We will update it if we receive any further guidance from SEVP.

UF Support Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

UF International Center: Reach out to your [international student advisor or drop in during our virtual office hours with](#) any questions or concerns related to maintaining your legal status and regulations concerning travel, or advice on special accommodations for medical or other emergencies.