

SEVP Current Issues & Hot Topics

ISS RP International Student Subcommittee

October 14, 2020





Introductions & Overview



Today's Speakers



- Cory Owen, Chair, ISS RP International Student Subcommittee
- Archana Sheth, University of California - Irvine

Today's SEVP Presenters



Daniella Skirsky

SEVP Field Representative
Territory 22
Central Region



Donald Delgado

SEVP Field Representative
Territory 8
Western Region

Objectives

1. Provide stakeholders with current information about SEVP regulations, policies, and processes
 2. Review changes to SEVP policy and procedures
 3. Review best practices for SEVIS processes
 4. Look ahead at what's on the horizon
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The image features a solid orange background with a white horizontal bar across the middle. In the top half, there are faint, stylized human figures in a lighter shade of orange, appearing to be in motion. The bottom half of the white bar is partially obscured by a dark red, diagonal-shaped graphic element.

Q & A

COVID-19



Many schools are planning for the rest of the school year. To ensure ongoing compliance and serve our incoming spring term international students, an extension of the current fall guidance would benefit campuses.

What can we expect concerning guidance for spring?

What is the anticipated timeline for a decision about spring 2021 COVID-19 interim measures?

COVID-19



The fall guidance has been helpful for DSOs and host institutions in serving students and maintaining compliance, but there are still some areas that not clear (e.g. RCLs, grace periods, etc.).

How can DSOs submit suggestions/requests/concerns about the fall guidance and any subsequent guidance issued to SEVP?

COVID-19 Statement Batch Uploads



The [What is SEVIS Batch Processing?](#) page on Study in the States explains how schools can use a third-party software or database to push changes to SEVIS for more efficient processing of updates to SEVIS records. While many schools have batch processing capability, many other schools must use RTI and process changes manually. For changes to large groups of SEVIS records (e.g. out of country remarks) the capability to provide **batch updates** or submit a **spreadsheet** to SEVP would be helpful. Is this a possibility?

Medical Reduced Course Loads (RCL)

8 *CFR* 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(B) states that RCLs for illness or medical conditions **cannot exceed a 12 month aggregate** per program level. Many international students are concerned about what would happen to them if they tested positive for COVID-19 and needed more than 12 months of a medical RCL.

Given these new challenges, would SEVP consider allowing DSOs to grant RCLs beyond an aggregate of 12 months for a medical RCL?

Academic Reduced Course Loads (RCL)



The [Reduced Course Load \(RCL\)](#) page on Study in the States notes states that RCLs for academic difficulties “can only be used for the initial academic term.” Continuing F students who are studying in their home country may be facing new academic difficulties due to time zone differences, unfamiliarity with **online** teaching methods or may be placed into improper course levels due to restrictions from online learning.

Given these new challenges, would SEVP consider allowing DSOs to grant RCLs beyond the initial term or multiple RCLs for academic difficulties?

Leave of Absence

The [What Should I Do If I Need to Leave the United States Due to a Personal Emergency? \(F-1 Students\)](#) page on Study in the States counts the **five months from the date the record was terminated** for Authorized Early Withdrawal. However, SEVP's Draft Guidance for Comment, [1306-07: Temporary Absence](#) (2013), proposed reactivating records after a leave of absence if the student had departed the United States within 15 days of the SEVIS termination and would seek readmission within **five months of departure**.

Since return dates and practical training eligibility are impacted by the return date, can SEVP please clarify when the five-month clock starts?

SRC and Form I-17 Processing Times



Has SEVP had an increase of calls and/or workload as a result of the spring/fall Guidance?

If SEVP has experienced an increased workload due to COVID-19, are Form I-17 adjudication times or other processing times expected to increase?

Is there other news about changes in SEVP processing times?

Mail Notice to OPT Students

On August 28, SEVP sent a Broadcast Message (SEVP to Mail Notices to OPT Students Without Employer Information) stating that a **notice will be sent to OPT students without employer information** to inform them of their “lack of employer/employment information and provides an opportunity for them to update their records either through their DSO or directly through the [SEVP Portal](#)” within 15 days of the date the notice was **issued**.

Will this be a paper letter sent to students or an email?

Will the DSO receive a copy of the communication?

Many DSOs are concerned, especially given mail delays, that 15 days from the date the notice was issued may not give students ample time to respond.

Mail Notice to OPT Students

The [Unemployment Counter](#) page on Study in the States notes that “**SEVIS Auto-Terminate functionality for exceeding the unemployment limit is currently disabled.**” We have found many errors in the calculator.

When is SEVP planning to activate the SEVIS auto-terminate functionality in SEVIS?

Will SEVP please provide schools with at least 60-days advance notice before activating the functionality?

OPT Completion of Program



According to SEVP's [2010 S OPT Policy Guidance](#), if a student decides to exit the United States and complete their F-1 status prior to the OPT end date, DSOs should indicate “Completing OPT and exiting the United States” with the date of exit.

Can SEVP confirm that the proper SEVIS action to take in this situation is “Complete Program?”

What type of documentation would you recommend that DSOs collect before completing the program in SEVIS?


Study in the States Resource Library

The Study in the States Resource Library has many helpful infographics and tools to clarify regulatory practice. We would suggest adding a few more helpful topics to the library could, including:

- What is the OPT end date is for an F student that transfers changes level
- When to file the OPT application (the OPT Planning Tool is helpful but can be overwhelming for students)
- Overview for non-DSOs on SEVIS (e.g. for the president of an institution)

Reporting Events on the Form I-20

Whether your school operates in semesters, trimesters, quarters or other session lengths, the pattern of reporting remains the same throughout the student's program of study. Some programs may be completed in several years, while others may take several weeks.



Reporting Regular Events:

- Register, terminate or cancel students in SEVIS within 30 days of each session start.
- DSO signs page 2 of the Form I-20 before students travel abroad.

Reporting Educational Program Events:

- Authorize drop below full course (conditions apply).
- Change of education level (e.g., from bachelor's to master's).
- Complete program.
- Transfer in/out.

Reporting Employment:

- Curricular practical training employment authorization (conditions apply).
- Off-campus employment (conditions apply).
- Optional practical training request (in conjunction with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services).

Reporting Irregular Events:

- Cancel student (if student is not using Form I-20).
- Terminate student (see termination reasons).
- Disciplinary action (e.g., convicted of a crime).

Schools are required to report specific changes within 21 days.

For more detailed information, please see related articles on the [SEVIS Help Hub](#).

For SEVIS technical questions, call: 800-892-4829 or email SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov | Contact the SEVP Response Center at SEVP@ice.dhs.gov or 703-603-3400 for policy questions | For more information, visit <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov> | Last updated MAY 2018

E-Signature on Forms I-20s

Given the rapidly changing environment we're in, can you confirm that SEVP, CBP and U.S. Department of State continue to accept electronic Forms I-20. We understand that there is no established end date for this, but that it will continue for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. Any updates?

ISS RP is reminding schools to consider:

- If all or certain types of requests would be sent electronically
 - Secure methods of delivery
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Other News and Updates from SEVP



Field Representative Unit Updates

Current Field Representative Vacancies

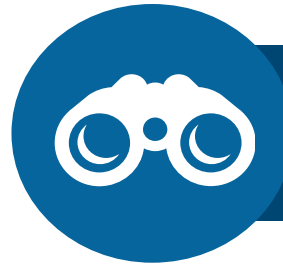
- 55 field representatives currently deployed nationwide
- Vacancies remain in:
 - Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 - Norfolk, Virginia
 - Orlando, Florida
 - Phoenix, Arizona
 - Seattle, Washington

Schools in territories with a field representative vacancy
should continue to contact SRC for assistance

Helpful Resources

New SETA Learning Modules Now Available

- Test your knowledge of SEVP's rules and regulations in the SEVP External Training Application (SETA)
- Two new courses deployed in September 2020:
 - Maintaining School Records and the Form I-17
 - Managing Exchange Visitor Records
- Seven total SETA courses are now available
 - These course provide an overview of:
 - SEVP basics and the exchange visitor program
 - Initial SEVP certification process
 - Managing designated exchange visitor programs and exchange visitor records
 - Maintaining school records and the Form I-17



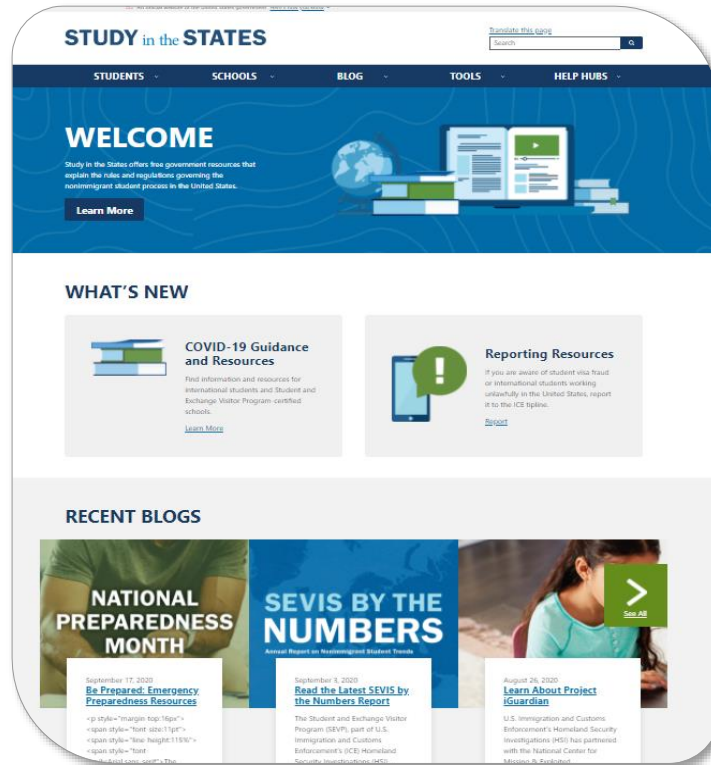
ACCESS:

Create a SETA account or log in at
SEVP.ICE.gov/SETA

Helpful Resources

Visit the Redesigned Study in the States

Directly
navigate to the
Students,
Schools, Tools
or Help Hub
landing pages



Easily locate
information using
the enhanced
Search feature



Access key
stakeholder
resources

Review recent
blog posts



Helpful Resources

Access SEVIS Resources in the Redesigned SEVIS Help Hub

Directly navigate
to information
about
maintaining
school and
student records



STUDY in the STATES

SEVIS HELP HUB

The SEVIS Help Hub is a central location for school officials to access information about SEVIS. Explore the SEVIS Help Hub to find reporting requirements, guides, and the latest on SEVIS enhancements and webinars.

NAVIGATE THE SEVIS HELP HUB

[SEVIS Basics](#)
Learn about important SEVIS pages, SEVIS passwords, and data entry standards.

[School Records](#)
Explore school certification information, including filing initial petitions, updating the Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," and completing the SEVIS annual verification.

[Student Records](#)
Find information about creating and maintaining student records, including creating Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," and managing transfers, and student employment.

SEVIS RESOURCES

- Tools**
Access useful tools, planning guides, and date calculators.
[Learn More](#)
- SEVIS FAQs**
View frequently asked questions about SEVIS.
[Learn More](#)
- Webinars**
School officials can learn about SEVIS related webinars offered.
[View SEVIS Webinars](#)
- SEVIS Enhancements**
Learn about upcoming SEVIS releases and find related release resources.
[Learn More](#)



View SEVIS
demonstrations,
webinar
recordings and
information
about upcoming
releases

Helpful Resources

Interactive School Certification Life Cycle on Study in the States



Access at StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/SEVP-School-Certification-Life-Cycle

Engage with SEVP

Stay Connected



KEY NEWS AND CONTENT

StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/Blog

- Publications
Available through GovDelivery
- SEVP Spotlight
- SEVP Outreach Bulletin



ENGAGE THROUGH CONFERENCES

Fill out the SEVP Event
Request Form at
StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/Conferences



[@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)



Facebook.com/StudyintheStates



Linkedin.com/Company/Student-and-Exchange-Visitor-Program

SEVP Contact Information



PHONE

703-603-3400

800-892-4829



EMAIL

Case-specific questions

SEVP@ice.dhs.gov

Technical issues

SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, except federal holidays
Additional contact information at StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/Contact-Us

Contact your local field representative for questions about SEVP
policies, processes and updates

Engaging with NAFSA



<http://issuenet.nafsa.org/>

International Students & Scholars

Report an Issue

Inform the International Student and Scholar Regulatory Practice Committee about emerging trends or government obstacles related to international students and scholars.



Report an Issue

Get Liaison Help

Submit a request to the Regulatory Ombudspersons Subcommittee for assistance with specific immigration cases at USCIS Service Centers.



Get Liaison Help

Connecting Our World

ISS RP reminds international educators to sign up for Connecting our World, NAFSA's advocacy tool <https://www.connectingourworld.org/>

Utilize the [Take Action Center](#) to contact your member of Congress

Sign up for [Action Alerts](#) to stay updated

Explore the [Advocacy Toolkits](#):

- [Schedule a Meeting](#) with members of Congress
- [Prepare for a successful meeting](#) on with elected representatives
- [Host a member of Congress](#) at your campus
- [Attend a Town Hall](#) and ask your member of Congress a question
- [Request a Floor Statement](#) from your member of Congress
- [Utilize Social Media](#) for more advocacy