

## International Student and Scholar Services

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**From:** International Services  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 30, 2020 3:52 PM  
**Subject:** Fall Updates for F-1 and J-1 students

**Greetings!** There are only **21 days** until the fall semester begins! Here is this week's update about issues specific to international students. As always, information about the campus, classes, etc. can be found online in [the university's reopening plans](#). *We finally received fall guidance from the U.S. government late last week. Please read this information carefully and then reply with any questions.*

**Classes begin on August 19<sup>th</sup>** in an online format. On campus instruction will begin September 8<sup>th</sup> in a hybrid format. This means that all your classes will start online on August 19<sup>th</sup> and then starting on September 8<sup>th</sup> they may be a combination of in-person meetings and online meetings and assignments depending on the class.

If you will not be in the U.S., we encourage you to reach out to your teachers to inform them that you are participating from abroad and it will be in a different time zone.

### Choose Your Class Format – *Streaming or In Classroom*

You should have received an email from the Office of the Provost on Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup> with a **Subject of Student Instructional Options**. Please read it carefully and follow the instructions. The Provost is asking you and all students to indicate your instructional preference at [webadvisor.coastal.edu](http://webadvisor.coastal.edu). Log in and go to the *Students* menu. Under the *Registration* category, select *Streaming/In Classroom Selection*. Select *Fall 2020* from the dropdown menu and use the draw-down option by each class to choose "face-to-face" or "streaming" and then check the box at the bottom if you need to request a housing waiver before choosing Submit. If you request a housing waiver, a staff member from University Housing will reach out to you. Please make your selections by *August 5, 2020*. You will be able to update your choices as needed.

## CONTINUING F-1 STUDENTS

**Continuing F-1 students can maintain an active F-1 status if they are enrolled in the minimum required total number of credit hours.** The location of the student or the format of the classes will not impact their status. This means that undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours and graduate students must be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours. These classes can be in any format and the student can be physically located in the U.S. or abroad. Students who want an entirely online schedule should submit the [COVID-19 Adjustment Request Form](#) and they should contact ISSS so we can make the appropriate notations and adjustments as needed.

If a continuing student chooses not to be enrolled in a full-time course load in the fall semester, we will have to terminate their F-1 status and they will have to depart the U.S. if they have not already. If the student contacts ISSS about their intent to remain outside the U.S. and not enroll in fall classes, we can process an Authorized Early Withdrawal Termination in SEVIS which does not have negative implications and allows us to reactive the record if they return within 5 months. If the student does not return within 5 months, we can create a new SEVIS record and issue a new initial I-20.

### SEVIS Transfers in Initial Status

New Coastal students who have transferred a SEVIS record to Coastal for the fall semester should be able to enter the U.S. on their Transfer-In Initial I-20 and should follow the guidelines for other continuing F-1 students.

## NEW F-1 STUDENTS

New F-1 students cannot enter the U.S. to be enrolled in an entirely online program. New F-1 students must be enrolled in the minimum required total number of credit hours and must have at least 1 class that is a traditional face-to-face class or a hybrid class that requires regular weekly attendance in the classroom. This means that new undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours with at least one class that is not online and graduate students must be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours with at least one class that is not online.

**IMPORTANT:** Students with a new Initial I-20 should have received an email this week about their I-20 Program Start Date. Because students on a new initial I-20 cannot enter the U.S. to be in online classes only and all classes will be online until September 8<sup>th</sup>, we are adjusting the program start dates for new students on an initial I-20 to September 1, which will allow these students to enter the U.S. as early as August 2. Classes will still begin on August 19, but they will be online until September 8.

If a new student chooses to be in an entirely online schedule, they can do so from outside the U.S. We will defer the program in SEVIS and issue an updated initial I-20 with a January start date. Students who want an entirely online schedule should submit the [COVID-19 Adjustment Request Form](#) and they should contact ISSS so we can make the appropriate notations and adjustments as needed.

If the university transitions to an entirely online format later in the semester and after students have arrived and begun their classes, the students will be able to maintain an Active visa status while completing their classes online.

Admitted students who choose to defer their admission to the spring semester should email [internationaladmissions@coastal.edu](mailto:internationaladmissions@coastal.edu). ISSS will be notified of any deferrals so that adjustments can be made in SEVIS as required.

## J-1 STUDENTS

**Continuing J-1 students can maintain an active J-1 status if they are enrolled in the minimum required total number of credit hours.** The format of the classes will not impact their status This means that undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours and graduate students must be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours. These classes can be in any format and the student can be physically located in the U.S. or abroad if they intend to continue to be enrolled in the spring 2021 semester. Students who want an entirely online schedule should submit the [COVID-19 Adjustment Request Form](#) and they should contact ISSS so we can make the appropriate notations and adjustments as needed.

If a student will complete their program in the fall semester and they are participating online from outside the U.S., we will shorten the DS-2019 as they do not need an active DS-2019 if they are no longer going to be present on campus. Additionally, we will adjust the DS-2019 start date for any new J-1 student who does not plan to come to campus for the fall semester.

## IMPLICATIONS OF SEVIS TERMINATION *(No change from our email on 07/23/20)*

### F-1 Students

It may be possible to reactive a record after an Authorized Early Withdrawal Termination if the intended return is within 5 months of the termination. Reactivated I-20s should not experience issues with F-1 benefit eligibility such as CPT or OPT. Reactivation takes about 30 days, so contact us as soon as possible after you have confirmed your intent to return to campus.

If we are required to terminate your SEVIS record for any other reason or if the reactivation is denied, either based on current or future guidance, you will need to obtain a new I-20 when you decide to return to Coastal. To issue a new initial I-20, we will need updated proof of finances sufficient to cover one year of estimated costs. New initial records require a new I-901 SEVIS fee payment. As long as your F-1 visa is otherwise valid, you will not require a new F-1 visa. You should be able to enter the U.S. on your current, unexpired F-1 visa and your new I-20. If you have to obtain a

new initial I-20, your F-1 benefit eligibility such as CPT or OPT resets. Students must have been in active F-1 status for one academic year to be eligible to apply for CPT or OPT.

## J-1 Students

The process to regain status is different for students on a J-1 visa. If you are a J-1 student and have questions about your status, please contact us with the details of your situation and we will advise you directly.

## TRAVEL *(No change from our email on 07/23/20)*

There are currently many travel restrictions. Students who have been in certain countries during the previous 14 days may not be allowed to enter the United States. Please monitor the [CDC website](#) for current information. Last week, the [U.S. Department of State released guidance](#) on National Interest Exception (NIE) waivers. **F-1 students in the Schengen Area, United Kingdom, or Ireland can enter the U.S. without requesting a national interest exception.** J-1 students from these areas must submit a request at their nearest U.S. Embassy. Students traveling on a NIE waiver must fly into one of [15 specifically designated airports](#). We recommend you carry a copy of the [U.S. Department of State guidance](#) with you when you travel. If you have any questions, please contact the U.S. Embassy in your country. You can also contact the airline or the Customs and Border Protection office where you will enter the U.S. for additional confirmation.

For a link to the COVID-19 information for the U.S. Embassy in your country, visit this site:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/COVID-19-Country-Specific-Information.html>

**Please contact us if you have any questions. Also, monitor our website for [updates](#).**



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