



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

## International Students and Scholars Services

# SPRING TERM GUIDE FOR NEW/INCOMING F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Below, you will find answers to frequently asked questions and the steps you should take based on your plans for the upcoming term. **Please be aware that this guidance is subject to change based on policy adjustments announced by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and any federal/state mandates that affect Drexel's reopening plans.**

In addition to this guidance, please review university messages on [Drexel Response to Coronavirus](#).

Also, our [New International Student Pre-Arrival Guide](#) contains helpful information for new incoming students.

## ISSS OFFICE STATUS AND FORM SUBMISSION/PICK-UP

The hours we are open are posted on our [website](#). Until further notice, all ISSS operations are virtual, and all in-person services are suspended. For questions and advising, please email [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu). You can schedule a phone call or Zoom appointment in [DrexelOne](#) > My Success Team.

## TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Though inconvenient, travel restrictions are necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. It is important for you to closely monitor the restrictions in place up through the time that you travel. It is recommended that you **review the current restrictions now** and **double check restrictions prior to your departure**. Restrictions can change, sometimes with little notice.

Here are some resources to assist you in understanding travel restrictions for the US and for other countries:

- [Travelers Prohibited from Entry to the United States](#)
- [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance on International Travel](#)
- [US Homeland Security Arrival Restrictions](#)
- [International Air Transport Association COVID-19 Travel Regulations Map](#)

It is generally recommended that you closely monitor your health and practice social distancing for 14 days prior to your departure as well as for 14 days after your arrival in your destination. If you are sick, you should not travel.

**STUDENTS IN EUROPE/UK/IRELAND:** It was recently announced that F-1 visa holders may travel to the US from the EU Schengen area, the UK, and Ireland, despite the travel ban. That said, we strongly recommend carrying a printout of [this webpage](#) if you plan to take advantage of this exception and travel to the US from one of these countries in case you encounter a Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agent who is unaware of this Department of State announcement. If you will be traveling/transiting through the EU, please be aware of any potential travel restrictions applicable you were in/visited previously (review the page [Travelers Prohibited from Entry to the United States](#)).

### TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

This section outlines the documents that you should carry with you when traveling to the US from abroad. You can always find general travel guidance on our web page, [Travel Information for F-1 Holders](#).

Students traveling to the US on a new I-20 and F-1 visa should carry the following:

- **Valid passport** (passport must be valid for at least 6 months from date of intended entry).
- **Valid (unexpired) F-1 visa sticker (page)** in your passport (except for Canadian and Bermudan citizens).
- **Valid I-20 form**. If you only received an I-20 from ISSS via email, include the **digital I-20 support letter** that was provided to you. If you received one via mail (UPS, DHL, etc.), carry this original “wet-ink” copy.
- **Evidence of funding**; bring a copy of whatever funding is mentioned on your I-20.
- A copy of your **acceptance letter**; you can print this from [Discover Drexel](#).
- Receipt of **I-901 (SEVIS fee) payment**.
- **UPDATE 1/26/2021**: All international air passengers over the age of two entering the U.S. are required to show proof of negative test for COVID-19 or proof of having recovered from COVID-19 before boarding their flight. This regulation requires passengers to get a test within three days of their flight to the U.S.

There have been reports of the CBP agents requesting that students produce additional documentation. In addition to the above, you may choose to travel with the following:

- Print your **unofficial transcript** and/or **proof of enrollment** from [DrexelOne](#).
- Print your **course schedule** from [DrexelOne](#); make sure it includes at least one face-to-face (FTF) or hybrid (HYB) course (for more information, see the section below, “Study In-Person On Campus”).
- **STUDENTS TRAVELING FROM EUROPE/UK/IRELAND**: a printout of [this webpage](#).

If you experience any trouble when attempting to enter the US, it is within your right to ask CBP to contact Drexel Public Safety at 215-895-2822 and connect to the ISSS emergency contact.

### STUDY PLANS & STEPS TO TAKE

Drexel is utilizing a hybrid plan to return to campus. The upcoming term’s course delivery methods are:

- **face-to-face (FTF)**
- **remote asynchronous (ASY)**
- **hybrid (HYB)**
- **online (ONL)**
- **remote synchronous (SYN)**

Visit [Drexel Central’s website](#) for complete details about these instructional methods. If you have questions about these course delivery codes, please consult your Academic Advisor.

**At this time, we are not able to comment on visa status maintenance for the following term (summer quarter/semester).** As we progress through this upcoming term and SEVP releases new updates, we will provide our own updated guidance to help you transition from one term into the other.

Please review the options and consider each of them for yourself. Follow the ISSS instructions of your preferred plan. If you have questions, please email [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu).

### STUDY IN-PERSON ON CAMPUS

If you are currently inside the US or can arrive to the US before the next term begins to attend classes in-person, **take the following steps to maintain your visa status:**

- Be sure that your DrexelOne account is updated with your on-campus or off-campus residential address.
- **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:** You must enroll in a minimum of 12 credits total, including at least 1 FTF or HYB\* course. Any additional courses may be SYN, ASY, or ONL.
- **GRADUATE STUDENTS:** You must enroll in a minimum of 9 credits total, including at least 1 FTF or HYB\* course. Any additional courses may be SYN, ASY or ONL.
- **\*You MUST be sure that the HYB course that you are registered for REQUIRES in-person class attendance.** As a new student entering the US, registering for a course schedule with no required in-person attendance would be a violation of F-1 status.
- **\*SEVIS TRANSFER and CHANGE OF EDUCATION LEVEL STUDENTS:** You may enroll in any combination of course delivery methods (FTF/HYB/SYN/ASY/ONL) if you are already inside the US. Please see the FAQs section below for more information.
- **\*STUDENTS WITH PENDING CHANGE OF STATUS (CoS) TO F-1:** These F-1 rules/regulations apply to you *only if* your CoS application is approved before/on the first day of the term.
  - If your CoS application is approved before/on the first day of the term, you must enroll in a full-time courseload that includes at least 1 FTF or HYB course.
  - If your CoS application is not approved before/on the first day of the term, your I-20 Program Start Date will be deferred to the following term (summer or fall term). You will remain in your current visa status (and adhere to the regulations governing your current status) for the duration of the term, even if your CoS to F-1 is approved while the term is in session. Please consult your current visa's sponsor or an immigration attorney for guidance regarding your enrollment if your CoS application is not yet approved.
- Monitor your Drexel email for an invitation to complete the International Students and Scholars Services' mandatory *New International Student Orientation*.

### STUDY REMOTELY FROM OUTSIDE US

For new/incoming students, remote study from outside the US may be an option for you. **Please contact ISSS by emailing [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu) to pursue this option.**

If you choose this option, you do not need to follow F-1 regulations because you are not inside the US in F-1 status. However, be sure to follow your Academic Advisor's recommendations to meet Drexel's enrollment requirements to maintain your financial aid eligibility (if applicable). You should enroll in 100% remote courses only (SYN/ASY/ONL) because you cannot attend any courses with an in-person requirement.

**SEVIS TRANSFER and CHANGE OF EDUCATION LEVEL STUDENTS:** If your I-20 Form Issue Reason (in the first box on page 1 of your I-20) says "SEVIS TRANSFER PENDING" or "CHANGE OF EDUCATION LEVEL," SEVP requires you to be present in the US and report to your school in order to maintain F-1 status. If you do not return to the US and study remotely from outside the US, **ISSS will work with SEVIS to defer your I-20 start date to the next available program start date** (e.g. summer term, fall term, etc.). It is important that you notify us at [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu) as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the upcoming term.

### DEFER YOUR ENROLLMENT (BEGIN YOUR STUDIES IN A FUTURE TERM)

If the spring quarter/semester is your first term at Drexel and you would like to defer your admission to a future term, undergraduate students can refer to the page [Deferring Enrollment for First-Year Students](#). Graduate students should reach out to their academic department to request a deferred start term.

Once ISSS receives notice from Admissions that you have deferred your enrollment, we will take steps to defer your I-20 program start date to the term you plan to begin your studies at Drexel.

- **SEVIS TRANSFER STUDENTS:** If your I-20 Issue Reason (in the first box on page 1 of your I-20) says “SEVIS TRANSFER PENDING,” SEVP requires you to start your studies at Drexel in the next available term. If you choose to defer to a future term, **ISSS will work with SEVIS to defer your I-20 start date to the next available program start date** (e.g. summer quarter/semester, fall term, etc.). It is important that you notify us at [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu) as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the upcoming term.
- **CHANGE OF EDUCATION LEVEL STUDENTS:** If your I-20 Issue Reason (in the first box on page 1 of your I-20) says “CHANGE OF EDUCATION LEVEL” and you choose to defer your enrollment, it is still unclear what impact that may have on your SEVIS record. Please notify us at [iss@drexel.edu](mailto:iss@drexel.edu) as soon as you decide to defer, and we will contact SEVIS directly to discuss your situation.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please visit the ISSS webpage [The Impact of COVID-19 on New International Students](#) to review the most frequently asked questions.