



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

International Students and Scholars Services

GUIDANCE UPDATE: FALL 2020 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 fall 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, you can review [Drexel's hybrid/HyFlex plan to return to campus](#).

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

ISSS OFFICE STATUS AND FORM SUBMISSION/PICK-UP

As of this writing, ISSS remains CLOSED for all face-to-face interactions such as I-20 pickup, travel signatures etc. **We will transmit updated I-20s electronically to your Drexel email account.**

We anticipate being open for document drop-off/pickup in time for the fall quarter. For everyone's health and safety, advising appointments will continue to be conducted via phone/Zoom for the foreseeable future. There will be no face-to-face consultations.

For questions and advising, we encourage all interactions be conducted via email: iss@drexel.edu. You can schedule a phone call or Zoom appointment in [DrexelOne](#) > Academics > 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](#).

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:

- [Click here](#) to download a **letter confirming that we plan to operate using a hybrid model of instruction**. Print it and carry it with your other travel documents.
- 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/HyFlex plan to return to campus. Fall term’s course delivery methods are:

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

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 (winter quarter/spring semester). As we progress through the fall 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 jsss@drexel.edu.

STUDY IN-PERSON ON CAMPUS

If you are currently inside the US or can arrive to the US before the fall 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 credit FTF or HYB*. Any additional credits may be SYN or ASY.
- **GRADUATE STUDENTS:** You must enroll in a minimum of 9 credits total, including at least 1 credit FTF or HYB*. Any additional credits may be SYN or ASY.
- ***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 info.
- ***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 fall term.
 - If your CoS application is approved before/on the first day of fall term, you must enroll in a full-time courseload that includes at least 1 credit FTF or HYB.
 - If your CoS application is not approved before/on the first day of fall term, your I-20 Program Start Date will be deferred to the following term (winter quarter or spring semester). You will remain in your current visa status (and adhere to the regulations governing your current status) for the duration of fall 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 fall term 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 in the fall 2020 term may be an option for you. Please visit the [FAQ for Undergraduate Students](#) or the [FAQ for Graduate Students](#) to learn more and how to sign up.

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 during fall 2020, **ISSS will work with SEVIS to defer your I-20 start date to the next available program start date** (e.g. winter quarter 2021, spring semester 2021, etc.). It is important that you notify us at iss@drexel.edu as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the fall 2020 term.

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

If 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 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 - fall 2020. 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. winter quarter 2021, spring semester 2021, etc.). It is important that you notify us at iss@drexel.edu as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the fall 2020 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 fall enrollment, it is still unclear what impact that may have on your SEVIS record. Please notify us at iss@drexel.edu as soon as you decide to defer, and we will contact SEVIS directly to discuss your situation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below is a small selection of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the fall 2020 term. Please review all of our updated FAQs on the [ISSS website](#).

Q: What is Drexel University doing to support its international students?

Read Drexel University President John Fry’s message sent on July 10, [Drexel Stands in Support With Our International Students](#). Drexel is one of 180 institutions of higher education that signed the Amicus Brief submitted in support of [legislation challenging the ICE/SEVP guidance](#).

Q: Will I be required to quarantine myself when I arrive to the US?

At this time, Drexel is not planning to enforce a quarantine on arriving students. We are requesting that all new students use the [Drexel Health Tracker](#) app to report any symptoms for 14 days prior to arriving on campus. Please monitor the page [Drexel's Response to Coronavirus](#) for updates.

Q: Do I need to get a new I-20 to show I will be taking a mix of in-person and online classes?

An updated I-20 is not required (this SEVP guidance was overturned in court). If the visa officer at the US Embassy/Consulate requires a document confirming that Drexel will not be fully online in the fall 2020 term, please [click here](#) to download a letter confirming that we plan to operate using a hybrid model of instruction.

Q: Drexel plans to change to remote instruction after Thanksgiving break. Does this affect my status? Will I have to leave campus?

Your visa status will not be affected by Drexel’s plan to change to 100% remote instruction after Thanksgiving break. The Office of Housing and Residence Life will provide instructions to request to remain in on-campus housing after the break for those who choose to stay.

FALL 2020 GUIDE FOR NEW INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Q: Can I obtain a visa to study at Drexel?

While the decision about visa eligibility is made by the US Department of State, students planning to enroll at institutions offering hybrid and face-to-face classes in the fall term should be eligible to receive an F-1 visa. When you register for fall classes, you must enroll in at least one hybrid (HYB) or face-to-face (FTF) course.

Please note that your ability to obtain a visa will depend on the availability of US consular services in your current country of residence.

Q: How do I show to the visa officer at the US Embassy/Consulate and an immigration officer at the US port of entry that Drexel is operating in a hybrid model in the fall?

[Click here](#) to download a letter confirming that we plan to operate using a hybrid model of instruction. Print it and carry it with your other travel documents.

Alongside the letter, it is advisable that you carry a printout of your course registration schedule (which can be downloaded from [DrexelOne](#)) showing that you will be enrolled in at least one hybrid (HYB) or face-to-face (FTF) course in fall 2020.

Q: I transferred my SEVIS record to Drexel and am currently in the US. Can I remain in the US?

Yes, you can remain in the US. You will be able to maintain your F-1 status as long as you enroll for at least 12 credits (undergraduate students) or 9 credits (graduate students) in the fall term. Those credits can be a combination of any of the four available methods of instructions.

Q: I transferred my SEVIS record to Drexel. I am currently outside the US. Can I travel back to the US?

Yes. However, there are certain restrictions. New students currently outside the US cannot attend programs that are 100% remote. You will only be eligible to enter the US and attend your program if you enroll in at least one hybrid (HYB) or face-to-face (FTF) course in fall 2020. These two course options include both a remote and in person component which satisfies the ICE requirements.

If you do not wish to return to the US and would prefer to start your program remotely, you may choose to opt-in for the fall 2020 remote option available to both undergraduate and graduate students. It is important that you notify ISSS at iss@drexel.edu as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the fall 2020 term.

Q: I transferred my SEVIS record to Drexel but am currently outside the US. What will happen if I am unable to return to the US, but will start my program remotely?

The ISSS will work with SEVIS to defer your I-20 start date into the next available program start date. It is important that you notify ISSS at iss@drexel.edu as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the fall 2020 term.

Q: I transferred my SEVIS record to Drexel but am currently outside the US. What will happen if I am unable to return to the US, and wish to defer my program start date?

The ISSS will work with SEVIS to defer your I-20 start date into the next available program start date. It is important that you notify the ISSS at iss@drexel.edu as soon as you know that you will not be able to return to the US for the fall 2020 term.

FALL 2020 GUIDE FOR NEW INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Q: Will I be allowed to enter the US if Drexel switches from hybrid to fully remote instruction before I arrive?

No. New F-1 students will ONLY be allowed to enter the US to start their programs if they can show at the ports of entry that their schools will be operating either entirely in-person or providing hybrid instruction.

Q: Will I be allowed to stay in the US if Drexel switches from hybrid to fully remote instruction after my arrival?

Yes. If you enter the US as an F-1 student and Drexel switches from hybrid to fully remote after your arrival, even if that happens before your program starts, you will be allowed to stay and attend your program. The reason for this is that you entered with the intention of studying at least in part face-to-face in a classroom. The law cares a great deal about your intent.