Frequently Asked Questions from International Students regarding the effects of COVID-19 on Fall 2021

Please find below some answers to questions we have recently received. If you have other questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Global Affairs. We will do our best to assist you. Please note, the policies informing our guidance can change. The most important of these is the guidance issued from the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP or SEVIS). At the moment, the current guidance was released on 24 July 2020. You should check in regularly and if you have questions or concerns, please ask sooner rather than later.

TESTING & QUARANTINE

1. Is a quarantine required, and if so, for how long?
   - Vaccinated students (on and off-campus) will not be required to quarantine. However, CDC encourages self-isolating upon arrival.
   - We recommend you limit social contacts for a period of two (2) weeks, wear a mask when and maintain social distance of six feet when interacting with others. During travel it is required you wear a mask, and recommended you use hand sanitizer and monitor your body for signs of illness.
   - Non-vaccinated students staying on-campus:
     - Must arrive seven (7) days before orientation for a quarantine period.
     - Will be housed at College Hill beginning 1 August. Those arriving earlier should rely on public sector accommodation.
     - ECU will provide food service from 10 August. Those arriving earlier should rely on private sector food delivery services.
   - Non-vaccinated students staying off-campus should:
     - Arrive seven (7) days before orientation for a self-quarantine period
     - Expect to rely on private sector food delivery services
     - Be aware of the option to complete quarantine at College Hill. This service is $70 per day.

2. Will I be required to test?
   - US federal law requires that you provide test results no older than 72 hours prior to boarding your flight to the US or show proof of recovery from covid-19.
   - Vaccinated students will be tested upon arrival.
   - Non-vaccinated students will be tested upon arrival and on the 7th day.
   - Depending on your port of entry, you may undergo further public health screening by CDC staff.

3. Where can I be tested in Greenville?
   - ECU Student Health Services can provide testing by appointment.
   - Please call SHS at 252.328.6841 for further questions or to book a noncovid-related appointment.

4. Where can I see estimated airport wait times?
   - Customs and Border Patrol provides airport wait times at https://awt.cbp.gov/
   - Preclearance queue times are available at https://pqt.cbp.gov/
   - Canada and Mexico border wait times can be found at https://bwt.cbp.gov/

STUDYING ONLINE FOR PART OR ALL OF FALL SEMESTER

1. Will ECU conduct Block A and B 8-week classes or 16 week classes for Fall 2021?
   - The high majority of classes will be conducted in 16-week format.
   - If you have 8 week block classes, please get in touch to discuss how this may affect you.
2. Will ECU conduct hybrid or in-person classes for Fall 2021?
   - ECU has announced that the university is open for Fall 2021 and will return to pre-covid levels of face-to-face class offerings. Per SEVIS guidance, this means that you are required to meet F-1 status requirements by being enrolled full-time and in face-to-face classes.
   - The above means that fully online study for the entire term outside of the US would result in the termination of your I-20. Students with heightened travel/logistical concerns may choose to prioritize other factors over CPT/OPT eligibility.

3. My multifactor authentication is not connected.
   - You may need to reset your multifactor authentication through Passphrase Maintenance.
   - We suggest downloading Microsoft Authenticator from your app store instead of connecting your authentication to a phone number and SMS message. The Authenticator App allows you to verify your login credentials anywhere in the world with wifi access.

4. I am having trouble accessing certain ECU platforms
   - You may want to consider downloading Cisco AnyConnect to access ECU’s virtual private network. [Click here for more information and instructions.]

**STUDYING IN-PERSON FOR FALL 2021 SEMESTER**

1. When do residence halls open?
   - Move-in begins 16 August 2021.

2. What are the enrollment requirements?
   - Normal full-time and face-to-face enrollment requirements for F-1 students will apply in Fall 2021.
   - Please contact your academic adviser for assistance.

3. I have heard that the SEVP regulations are the same from last year and Spring 2021. Why am I now required to be face-to-face?
   - The relief from the federal government on the face-to-face requirement was an attempt to assist F-1 students who could not access face-to-face classes because they were not being offered; the relief is therefore based on the institution’s operating procedures and applies only as long as the university is altering operational class offerings due to covid-19 (for example, offering a reduced number of face-to-face classes due to health and safety concerns).

**IMMIGRATION AND STUDENT VISAS**

**Regarding enrollment**

1. How is my F-1 visa compliance affected?
   - The normal full-time enrollment and face-to-face requirements for F-1 students will apply in Fall 2021. This means in-person and no more than three online hours would go back into effect.

2. If I take a hybrid or face-to-face class and that class moves to online only during the semester, will that impact my status?
   - Under the current guidance no, if you are in a face-to-face class and it moves to online only it will not negatively impact your F-1 status. We are seeking further clarification from SEVP.

3. I would like to enroll part-time. Is that possible and if so, what are the considerations?
   - F-1 students are still expected to enroll full-time unless they qualify and are approved for a Reduced Course Load for medical reasons or if it’s your final semester of study. If you wish to apply for this, please complete an I-20 Update Request. Please book an immigration advising appointment if you have further questions.
Regarding I-20s and visas

1. I received my I-20 via email, how can I get my original?
   • Please book a document pick-up or a Current student - in-person meeting to collect your I-20.

2. How can I update my US address or my address?
   • ECU expects all F-1 students to complete the US local address online form at the start of each term.

3. What if my visa is expired or expiring soon?
   • You can stay in the United States with an expired visa provided you maintain your student status and your I-20 has not expired. If you are outside the US, you must have a valid visa to return to the United States. It is not possible to renew your visa from inside the US.

Regarding travel

1. I am currently in an area under a covid-related regional travel ban. Am I able to travel?
   • Students in the Schengen/EU area, UK, and Ireland with valid visas are allowed to travel to the US without applying for permission to travel, per the US Department of State.
     o Students in Brazil, China, India, Iran, and South Africa with valid F-1 visas beginning their program after 1 August 2021 do not need to apply for National Interest Exceptions.
   • Students in Brazil, China, or Iran have varying requirements based on a combination of visa type and physical presence in a particular country.
     o Click here for Brazil FAQs
     o Click here for China National Interest Exception and travel FAQs.
     o Click here for India FAQs.

Other factors to consider

• Returning to the US: If you want and are able to travel to the US, please reach out to the Office of Global Affairs in advance of your travel so we can advise on proper documentation to carry while traveling.
• Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Eligibility: You cannot apply for OPT from abroad. You must be inside the US with a SEVIS record that has been Active for at least one (1) academic year to be eligible to apply for OPT. Please get in touch to discuss OPT or CPT eligibility.

STUDENT ATHLETES

• Immigration inquiries should be directed to international@ecu.edu, 252.737.4378 (phone), +1.252.737.5412 (WhatsApp message), or Book an appointment.
• NCAA eligibility queries and scholarship/funding questions should be directed to Compliance.
• Class scheduling and timetabling queries should be directed to your assigned athletic academic adviser, coach, and/or sport administrator.

OTHER RESOURCES

• Please find ECU’s library of resources for returning to campus here.

WHO TO CONTACT

Dr. Bill Mallett, Assistant Director for International Student Advising
Email: mallettw@ecu.edu | Phone: 252-328-1939
ECU Immigration Advising: Book an immigration advising appointment

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