Frequently Asked Questions from International Students regarding the effects of COVID-19 on fall semester 2020

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. You should check in regularly and if you have questions or concerns, please ask sooner rather than later.

To best assist you in your return to campus and to gauge how the Office of Global Affairs will need to allocate its resources, we ask that you complete our Fall 2020 Return to Campus survey if you have not done so already.

TESTING & QUARANTINE

1. How long is required for quarantine?
   - A 14-day quarantine is required for all students entering the US from international locations. After 14 days without symptoms you may resume normal activities.
   - You can shorten your quarantine period if you take a COVID-19 test and receive a negative result. However, you must quarantine for at least six (6) full days prior to taking the COVID-19 test. You may resume your normal activities after receiving your negative results.

2. Can I be tested before leaving my home country?
   - No, international travel is an activity that presents a high-risk of exposure.
   - You must be tested after 6 days in the US.

3. Where can I be tested in Greenville?
   - ECU Student Health Services can provide testing by appointment.

4. What if I need to visit Student Health Services or have questions about COVID-19?
   - SHS remains open, but please call before you come in to be connected with a medical provider. Going forward, many appointments will be done via telephone.

STUDYING ONLINE FOR PART OR ALL OF FALL SEMESTER

1. How does studying online for part or all of fall semester affect my visa status?
   - Partial study (online Block A, in person Block B): If the SEVP guidance changes and you cannot study all online in Block A and in-person in Block B, we will let you know. We will be sending further communication later regarding Block B arrival, but you need to plan to be in Greenville no later than September 30th. If you are not able to make it for Block B, your F-1 status will not be terminated so long as you meet full-time enrollment requirements; you should ensure that you are registered for online courses. Students not close to OPT may choose to prioritize other factors when deciding travel.
   - Fully online study for the entire term outside of the US: Under the current guidance your F-1 will remain active in SEVIS so long as you remain full-time. If the SEVP guidance changes and you cannot study all online and remain active in SEVIS, we will let you know. Students with heightened travel/logistical concerns may choose to prioritize other factors over CPT/OPT eligibility.

2. My multifactor authentication is connected
   - You may need to reset your multifactor authentication, which you can do through Passphrase Maintenance.
• We also suggest downloading the Microsoft Authenticator App from your app store instead of connecting your authentication process to a phone number and SMS message. Utilizing the Authenticator App means you can verify your log in credentials anywhere in the world with wifi access.

3. I am having trouble accessing certain ECU platforms
• You may want to consider downloading Cisco AnyConnect to access ECU’s virtual private network. Find more information and instructions here.

4. I am scheduled to live in campus housing but likely cannot arrive for Block A, what can I do?
• You need to let us know so we can communicate this late arrival with Campus Living.
• Campus Living will be in touch regarding the your ability to be allocated a room. They cannot guarantee which hall, specific room, or roommate at this time; however, they will prorate the fees, so you are charged only for the period of time in which you reside in the hall.

STUDYING IN-PERSON FOR FALL SEMESTER

1. When do residence halls open?
   • August 5th

2. What are the enrollment requirements for Fall 2020 semester?
   • The normal full-time enrollment requirements for F-1 students still apply, but you may take more than one class (or three credit hours) online while ECU operates as a hybrid model (mixture of face-to-face and online instruction) for Fall 2020.
   • You should try to align your schedule to standard regulations if possible. Please contact your academic adviser for assistance.

3. Do I have to return to my home country?
   • No. While the University is taking precautionary measures on campus, you may remain in the US.

IMMIGRATION AND STUDENT VISAS

Regarding enrollment

1. How does the hybrid model affect my F-1 visa compliance?
   • The normal full-time enrollment requirements for F-1 students still apply, but you may take more than one class (or three credit hours) online under the current guidance.

2. Am I required to take a face-to-face class for Fall 2020, or may I take all online classes?
   • Continuing students in the US may take all online classes for Fall 2020 and still maintain F-1 status. No face-to-face class will be required to maintain your F-1 status.

3. If I take a hybrid or face-to-face class and that class moves to online only during the Fall 2020 semester, will that impact my status?
   • No, if you are in a hybrid or face-to-face class and it moves to online only it will not negatively impact your F-1 status.

4. I would like to enroll part-time for Fall 2020. 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.

5. Since I’m allowed to take a fully online course load, may I reside elsewhere in the US while I do so?
   • We do not recommend that you do this. As a reminder, students are required to report the address where they are living in the US to the Office of Global Affairs and we are required to report this information in SEVIS. Our recommendation is to protect your F-1 status by complying with the spirit of the law which expects students to reside near the location of the school they attend. If you have specific questions related to this, please contact Dr. Mallett at mallettw@ecu.edu. If you need to update your address, please do so through this online form.
Regarding I-20s and visas

6. I received an I-20 via email with a new annotation in the comment section about a hybrid model. Should I use this when travelling back to the US for Fall 2020?
   • Yes, please use this new I-20. It would be beneficial for you to retain all Form I-20s issued to you throughout your education.

7. I received my I-20 via email, how can I get my original?
   • Please email Dr. Mallett to schedule a time to pick up your new I-20 upon arrival.

8. How can I update my US address or my address for Fall 2020?
   • Please complete this online form.

9. 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

10. I am currently in Brazil. Am I able to travel?
    • You need to contact your local US Embassy or Consulate to apply for National Interest Consideration before travelling.
    • Students who choose to apply for permission to travel should email the US embassy in their home country requesting National Interest Consideration from the Presidential Proclamation suspending travel. Students should provide their passport ID page and valid visa sticker in the email. Students should confirm sending instructions with the website of the US embassy or consulate in their home country. Please note this is not a guarantee and subject to the individual embassy to which each student applies. Students who attempt this should immediately inform ECU’s Office of Global Affairs of the outcome.

Other factors to consider from the new guidance

• SEVIS Record: Under this guidance, if you remain enrolled full-time, your SEVIS record can remain Active even if you are enrolled from abroad and in all online courses per the guidance issued by SEVP on 24 July 2020.

• Returning to the US: If you want to and are able to travel to the US during the semester, we recommend you reach out to the Office of Global Affairs in advance of your travel date so we can advise on appropriate documentation to carry with you while traveling.

• Optional Practical Training (OPT) 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. If you plan on enrolling in Fall 2020 full-time from outside the US, your SEVIS record will remain Active, but you will need to re-enter the US prior to the end of the Fall 2020 semester to apply for OPT if you are graduating in December 2020. If for any reason you are able unable to return to the US prior to your graduation date, you could forfeit your ability to apply for OPT.

STUDENT ATHLETES

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

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

**WHO TO CONTACT**

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